ARE PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS MORE STRESSED THAN PRIVATE?
A study of work stress considering value congruence

Valentina Ramos¹ & Filomena Jordão²
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
University of Porto

1 va.ramos@gmail.com
2 filjordao@fpec.up.pt

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research is to compare private and public organizations according to their work stress and value congruence. For this reason, we applied an inventory in a private and public organization to measure the perception of the work stress and the value congruence considering person-organization fit, value conflict and value recognition. Samples were matched in order to make comparisons according to gender, age and employed time in the organization (Nprivate=149, Npublic=140). Our results indicate a statistically significant correlation between stress and gender (βmen=.20, p<.05), stress and value conflict (β=.21, p<.05) and stress and type of organization (βprivate=.339, p<.05). Correlations between stress and value conflict were previously found by Morais, Ramos, and Jordão (2012).

In the case of gender, we found several studies that show similar results and others that contradict them. According to the type of organization, we also found studies that confirm our results, however other authors had different outcomes. This research represents a contribution to the comprehension of differences that exists between public and private organizations according to stress levels.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the relationship between the work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations?

RQ2: What is the role of individual (demographic variables) and organizational variables (sector) in the relationship between job stress and value congruence?

METHOD

MATERIAL and PROCEDURE

To collect data we used an inventory for measuring the perception of job stress and value congruence. Perceived work stress was measured through a general question: "To what degree are you feeling stressed because of your work?" to be answered according to a Likert scale of five points. The value congruence was measured using the AFQ Inventory of Ramos et al. (2012).

An email with the link to the Inventory was sent to all collaborators from the organizations, inviting them to participate in the study. In the case of the public organization, the Inventory was distributed in paper format to workers that do not have access to the net. For the filling online we used Google Docs.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1. The correlation matrix of work stress and value incongruence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stress (men)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stress (women)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Value conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Value recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main element of the value congruence that correlates significantly and positively with the stress is the value conflict, in organizations of both sectors. The significant correlation found between job stress and conflict confirms previous results obtained by Bouckenooghe et al. (2005) and Lamers et al. (2010), and in the case of Portuguese context by Morais (2011).

Correlations between gender and stress pointed out that women significantly experience more work stress than men. In the case of differences considering the organization sector, our results corroborate the findings of Ramos and Jordão (2012) for the private sector. In the Portuguese private sector there is no difference between men and women according to work stress. The main differences were given by the existence of sources of stress and coping strategies that would be typical for each gender (Ramos & Jordão, 2012).

In the case of the public sector we found that it is women who significantly experience more work stress than men. Those research indicating that women are more stressed point out that this is due to the existence of female exclusive sources of stress such as the double responsibility between work tasks and family task (Choi & Shen, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

Our research determined the value conflict as the element of the value congruence that relates significantly and positively to the experience of work stress in both organizations analyzed. Our results also indicate the importance of considering the sector of the organization and the importance of considering the gender of the worker in studies on job stress.

REFERENCES

Ramos, V., & Jordão, F. (2012). A articulação entre valores individuais e organizacionais e a s... (in press)