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Stress, retaliation and perception of injustice in organizations: proposal for an integrative theoretical model

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Abstract

This article is intended to advance the reflections on the phenomena stress, retaliation and perception of injustice, and through the analysis of their interrelations, propose an integrating theoretical model. The literature has shown that the perception of injustice can be considered as a variable prior to occupational stress being developed and, in turn, retaliation becomes effective. Thus, the perception of injustice is considered the connection between occupational stress and retaliation. This relationship seems timely because both research relating to occupational stress and retaliation have perception of injustice as a relevant factor, but no available research to date, describes the theoretical articulation of these phenomena. After the demonstration model that integrates the phenomena, a research agenda is presented, which includes methodological and thematic perspectives.

Keywords: Occupational stress. Retaliation. Perception of injustice.

Estresse, retaliação e percepção de injustiça nas organizações: proposição de modelo teórico integrativo

Resumo

Este artigo tem por finalidade avançar nas reflexões sobre os fenômenos denominados *estresse, retaliação* e *percepção de injustiça* e, por meio da análise de suas inter-relações, propor um modelo teórico que os integre. Para tanto, a literatura especializada demonstrou que a percepção de injustiça pode ser considerada variável antecedente para que o estresse ocupacional se desenvolva e, por sua vez, a retaliação se efetive. Assim, a percepção de injustiça é considerada a conexão para o entrelaçamento entre estresse ocupacional e retaliação. Essa relação parece oportuna porque tanto as pesquisas referentes ao estresse ocupacional como as pesquisas sobre a retaliação colocam a percepção de injustiça como fator relevante para ambos os temas, mas nenhuma das pesquisas disponíveis vislumbrou a articulação teórica desses fenômenos. Após a demonstração do modelo que integra os fenômenos supracitados, apresenta-se uma agenda de pesquisa que inclui perspectivas metodológicas e temáticas.

Palavras-chave: Estresse ocupacional. Retaliação. Percepção de injustiça.

Estrés, represalia y percepción de injusticia en las organizaciones: propuesta de un modelo teórico integrador

Resumen

Este artículo tiene la finalidad de avanzar en las reflexiones sobre los fenómenos denominados estrés, represalia y percepción de injusticia y, mediante el análisis de sus interrelaciones, proponer un modelo teórico que los integre. Para ello, la literatura ha demostrado que la percepción de la injusticia se puede considerar la variable antecedente para que el estrés laboral se desarrolle y, a su vez, la represalia se haga efectiva. Por lo tanto, la percepción de la injusticia se considera el factor que origina la relación entre el estrés laboral y la represalia. Esta relación parece oportuna debido a que tanto las investigaciones relacionadas con el estrés laboral como con la represalia colocan la percepción de la injusticia como un factor relevante para ambos, pero ninguna de las investigaciones disponibles, vislumbró la articulación teórica de estos fenómenos. Después de la demostración del modelo que integra los fenómenos arriba mencionados, se presenta una agenda de investigación que incluye perspectivas metodológicas y temáticas.

Palabras clave: Estrés laboral. Represalias. Percepción de la injusticia.

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INTRODUCTION

This article proposes an integrative theoretical model to contribute to understanding the phenomena of stress, retaliation, and perception of injustice, present in organizations.

Studies on occupational stress have gained relevance due to the acceleration of organizational changes and contemporary trends related to work and employment restructuring, and the implementation of management models (BOHLE, QUINLAN and MAYHEW, 2001). The deterioration of individuals' quality of life is connected to these changes, which impacts in a daily routine that is increasingly demanding, and with increasingly stressful situations (CHANLAT, 2005; ROSSI, PERREWÉ and SAUTER, 2005; ZILLE, 2011).

Retaliation in organizations, during the last decade of the twentieth century alone, has obtained more attention from researchers (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004). The little research on organizational retaliatory behavior may be explained by the fact that studies on organizational behavior neglected for a long time the negative or antisocial aspects of behaviors considered negative or counterproductive to the organization, as is the case of retaliation (ASSMAR, FERREIRA and SOUTO, 2005; MENDONÇA, TORRES and ZANINI, 2008).

Retaliation may be understood as a set of negative behaviors that usually occur in response to the perception of injustice, in which the individual punishes the organization or its representatives to restore their psychic balance (SKARLICKI and FOLGER 1997; MENDONÇA, 2003). The "new" labor relations started to be perceived as unfair, leading the employee to respond through retaliatory behavior (MENDONÇA and MENDES, 2005) or by developing occupational stress (TAMAYO, 2001, 2008).

Stress and retaliation, therefore, cause responses (behavioral deviations) that imply in costs for the social actors involved. Robinson and Bennett's (1995) studies in the United States have shown an estimated loss of USD 6 to 200 billion annually from employee's behavioral deviations. The authors' findings led to argue that from 33% to 75% of employees engage in some of the following behaviors: robbery, fraud, misappropriation, vandalism, sabotage, absenteeism, and aggression.

In Brazil, spending because of stress is estimated to reach 3.5% of the GDP per year (ROSSI, 2005). A recent study has shown that Brazil is one of the countries that has the world's most stressed professionals (ISMA, 2010), which confirms the 75.7% stress level of Brazilian workers indicated in global studies comparing the countries.

The damages caused by the behavioral deviations indicate the need for research focusing on the systematic analysis of such behaviors, and retaliation and stress are among them.

Considering that the perception of injustice strongly influences the attitudes and behaviors observed in the work environment (FOLGER and KONOVSKY, 1989; SKARLICKI and FOLGER, 1997), this issue plays a significant role in the development of stress and retaliatory behavior.

Therefore, people tend to react when subjected to organizational injustice, or when perceiving injustice in their work environment. Organizational injustice may trigger problems such as suffering at work, lack of commitment at work, burnout, occupational stress, and retaliatory behavior (REGO, 2000, 2001; MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004, 2008; ASSMAR, FERREIRA and SOUTO, 2005).

Therefore, the perception of injustice seems to work as a link that justifies the interweaving between occupational stress and retaliation. This relationship seems timely because the studies both on occupational stress and on retaliation consider the perception of injustice as a relevant element, but none of these studies have observed theoretical connections around the three phenomena.

Thus, this study poses the question: what is the relation between perception of injustice, stress, and retaliation in organizations?

The general objective is to present an integrative theoretical model that considers these constructs and then to propose a research agenda that addresses both methodological and thematic aspects.

The next section of this article presents a theoretical framework that encompasses stress, retaliation, and injustice in organizations, followed by a section presenting an integrative theoretical model. The proposal of a research agenda is presented with methodological and thematic perspectives, followed by the final reflections.

OCUPATIONAL STRESS

The robust theoretical models explaining stress (COOPER and DEWE, 2007; LAZARUS, 2007; MONROE, 2008) use numerous research works to understand why some individuals are more resilient to stressors than others, as observed in the model by Cooper, Sloan, and William (1988), which is the most used model in research in Brazil (ANDRADE, GUIMARÃES and ASSIS, 2010).

Carl Cooper is one of the most important authors in the international literature on stress. The author published a series of books and articles on the subject, with the collaboration of several scholars: Cooper, Sloan and William (1988); Williams and Cooper (1998); Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001); Nelson and Cooper (2007). These authors agree that stress is an adjustment response seeking to restore balance by providing adequate means to cope with pressures that are unpleasant for the individual.

The Occupational Stress Model by Cooper, Sloan and William (1988), analyzes stress based on the relationship between the organization and the individual. It identifies the stressors, and the characteristics of their personality determine the stress propensity. The individual can present symptoms related to physical and mental illnesses and organizational dysfunctions. When identifying them, they can adjust (eustress) or not (distress), allowing the development of several pathologies (COOPER, SLOAN and WILLIAM, 1988).

The sources of stress presented in this model (such as factors intrinsic to job, role of the individual in the organization, and interpersonal relationships) are mediated by the characteristic of the individual's personality (type A or B, internal or external locus of control), and producing the symptoms above (COOPER, SLOAN and WILLIAM, 1988).

Type A people tend to be more susceptible to stress because they are at an accelerated rate; for being impatient, competitive, anxious, perfectionist; and for feeling guilty when they relax. People with the personality type B can work patiently, calmly and at a slow pace, relaxing without feeling guilty and, because of these characteristics, are less prone to stress (COOPER, SLOAN and WILLIAM, 1988).

The locus of control, on the other hand, assesses the extent of control that individuals think they have about certain situations, and how they would react. People with an internal locus of control understand that they have mastery over what happens, and their decisions and actions influence their results, thus are less susceptible to stress. However, those individuals with an external locus of control see a small and restricted possibility of influence on the events that affect them, making them more prone to stress (COOPER, SLOAN and WILLIAM, 1988; PAIVA and COUTO, 2008; ZILLE, 2011).

Among the defense strategies the individual develops in the face of perceived stress, there is the search for social support, time management, rationalization and practice of hobbies. However, there is the possibility that the individual does not return to their balance, resulting in negative impacts regarding physical and mental health (increased blood pressure, shoulder and spine pain, anxiety, crying, depression, alcoholism, chemical/physical dependence, irritability, alienation, etc.). These personal conditions affect organizational dysfunctions, such as the increase of absenteeism, turnover, difficulties in personal and hierarchical relationships, and a decrease in quality and productivity (COOPER, SLOAN and WILLIAM, 1988; JOHNSON, COOPER, CARTWRIGHT et al. 2005).

RETALIATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

The American researchers Skarlicki and Folger (1997) were pioneers in studying retaliatory behavior in the field of organizations. Before them, however, Folger and Konovsky (1989), Folger, Davison, Dietz et al. (1996) and Folger and Skarlicki (1998) presented studies on related issues such as maltreatment at work, violence and hostility at work, violence and aggression as responses to the perception of injustice and violent behavior.

For Skarlicki and Folger (1997), retaliation is a subset of negative behaviors that occur to punish the organization or its representatives in response to perceived injustices. In general, individuals do not self-report their retaliatory behavior to avoid potential reprimand. However, they are likely to report such behavior from another person (SKARLICKI, FOLGER and TESLUK, 1999).

Regarding the predictors of retaliation, the studies show that this behavior is directly related to the perception of injustice. In this sense, the greater the perception of injustice, the greater the prevalence of organizational retaliation; however, this relationship between the perception of injustice and retaliation is not always linear and may involve some moderating factors related to personality (SKARLICKI, FOLGER and TESLUK, 1999).

Thus, the personality factors that also influence retaliatory behaviors are negative affectivity, which tends to mediate the relations of exchange between the individual and the organization; and the agreeableness, which has to do with the inclination engage in a confrontation (SKARLICKI, FOLGER and TESLUK, 1999).

If a person has a high level of negative affectivity, i.e., show to be more upset, frustrated, impatient, and angry, it means that they are more likely to attack when witnessing unfair treatment than those with a low level of negative affectivity. Likewise, being predisposed to antagonism and confrontation, i.e., presenting low agreeableness, may lead to engaging in retaliatory behavior quicker than the observed with a cooperative person (JUDGE and MARTOCCHIO, 1995; SKARLICKI, FOLGER and TESLUK, 1999).

The results of the Skarlicki, Folger and Tesluk (1999) research reinforce an interactive perspective of retaliation since they verified the risks of framing only variables of the context or individual variables without the inclusion of the interaction that occurs between them.

In this sense, the studies of Townsend, Phillips and Elkins (2000) showed influences of personality aspects, as observed by Mendonça and Tamayo (2004, 2008) in Brazil.

In Brazil, the works by Mendonça and Tamayo (2004, 2008), Mendonça, Flauzino, Tamayo et al. (2004), and Mendonça and Mendes (2005), are referential in this area. The authors observed that people react differently to unfair treatment, depending on personality aspects such as affectivity and agreeableness (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004, 2008).

It should be noted that retaliation can be observed in obvious behaviors, "through aggressive and flagrant acts" (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004, p. 192), such as verbal aggression; and in subtle acts, through boycotts and omissions (the second mode prevailing over the former). Individuals less influential in relation to the source of injustice, tend to react, at first, in a subtle way. They cease presenting citizenship behavior, posing resistance (JERMIER, KINIGHTS and NORD, 1994; MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004), withdrawing their collaboration with the team (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004), to later present more explicit deleterious behaviors such as thefts, sabotage (JERMIER, KINIGHTS and NORD, 1994), fraud, waste (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004).

Two components of retaliation should also be highlighted, namely affective and conative. The first reflects serious indignation towards an unjust situation, which promotes resentment, disappointment, and contempt. The conative is related to the tendency of the individual to behave consciously in a specific way that mirrors the tendency of the organization in its negative behaviors (MENDONÇA, FLAUZINO and TAMAYO, 2004).

Finally, the evaluation of the retaliatory behaviors of the members of the organization can be carried out considering two dimensions: the perceptive and the evaluative. The first is related to how frequent workers show retaliatory behavior when they feel wronged at work; and the second shows how workers consider that their response in the face of the injustices suffered in the workplace is fair (MENDONÇA, FLAUZINO, TAMAYO, et al., 2004).

In short, retaliatory behaviors arise from the perception of injustice. They are intermediated by unsatisfactory exchange relationships and the individual's personality aspects, but the perception of injustice is of significant importance in this process (MENDONÇA, TORRES and ZANINI, 2008).

INJUSTICE IN THE ORGANIZATIONS

In the last decade of the twentieth century, studies on human behavior, well-being in labor relations and injustices in organizations have gained space in the research agenda (MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2008; ASSMAR and FERREIRA, 2008). The context of the organizations and work has become one of the most fertile areas for studies on injustice (MIKULA, 1986), which is one of the few central concepts to human social interaction (GREENBERG, 1996).

Justice is an essential element for social groups since their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are affected by the evaluations they make about the justice or injustice of the events that happen (ASSMAR, 1997; SOUSA and MENDONÇA, 2009). In this sense, organizational justice can be understood as the analysis of justice applied to work environments, focusing on the perceptions of injustice existing in the relations between employees and organizations (ASSMAR, FERREIRA and SOUTO, 2005).

According to Mendonça and Tamayo (2004), studies on organizational justice have focused on its distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions.

Distributive justice is based on the judgment of how a certain distribution of resources and rewards to people is fair (ADAMS, 1965). However, procedural justice deals with the analysis of rules and protocols regarding the distribution of rewards (LEVINENT, 1980; CORPAZANO and FOLGER, 1989; BARLING and PHILLIPS, 1993). Finally, interactional justice refers to the quality of the relationship between the subordinate and their superior (BIES and MOAG, 1986; REGO, 2002).

Kim and Mauborgne (1998) explain that the various faces of justice lead to different forms of individuals' behavior and organizational performances. When employees perceive they are fairly treated in distributive terms, they feel satisfied and seek to carry out their tasks as requested by the organization. They also feel a high degree of procedural and interactional justice, experiencing feelings of affective commitment and trust towards the organization and their superiors, feeling acknowledged and then working to achieve their goals (REGO, 2002).

In addition, there is empirical evidence that people react not only to the injustice experienced but also to that imputed to others (MOSSHOLDER, BENNETT, KEMERY et al., 1998; REGO, 2000, 2001, 2003). Thus, in evaluations of justice, people rely on the information they exchange with other members in the organization and consider these perceptions (AMBROSOS, HARLAND and KULIK, 1991; FOLGER, DAVIS et al., 1996).

The next section presents studies on the relation between the three constructs: stress, retaliation, and perception of injustice.

RELATIONS BETWEEN STRESS, RETALIATION, AND PERCEPTION OF INJUSTICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

The publications exploring the relationship between injustice and stress at work are scarce (VERMUNT and STEENSMA, 2001). Also, stress is a complex phenomenon, because it involves different risk factors and presents different effects on individuals, which makes it hard to establish a cause and effect relationship (ABRAHÃO and CRUZ, 2008). It is known that stress may develop when the individual evaluated the situation and perceived it as demanding, discrepant, *unfair* and/or *iniquitous* (JUDGE and COLQUITT, 2004, emphasis added).

After researching databases such as Google Scholar and Ebsco, we identified few studies that integrate the justice theory and occupational stress. The research by Judge and Colquitt (2004) stands out. They analyzed the impact of perceptions of injustice on stress in a group of 174 employees of 23 U.S. universities and found that unfair treatment jeopardizes the organization, resulting in unpleasant experiences and employee outrage.

Tepper (2001) pointed out another consequence of the organizational injustice for health. The author observed that procedural justice and psychological distress are stronger when there is poor distributive justice, concluding that injustice can generate stress at work.

Hamilton's (2000) research on justice and stress studying Russian military showed effects of injustice on the organizational commitment, outcome evaluation, anxiety, depression, and hostility, which are aspects closely related to stress. In this same line of research, other studies integrated these two constructs, such as Weiss, Suckow, and Cropanzano (1999), Vermunt and Steensma (2001) and Elovainio, Kivimauki, Eccles et al. (2002).

On the other hand, the great majority of the research on retaliation relates it to organizational injustice (SKARLICKI and FOLGER, 1997; TOWNSEND, PHILLIPS and ELKINS, 2000; MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004, 2008; MENDONÇA and MENDES, 2005; MENDONÇA, TORRES and ZANINI, 2008).

In the research by Sims (2010), the author observed a differential when analyzing retaliatory behavior during the Hewlett-Packard (HP) spy scandal. She concluded that retaliation was caused by the perception of injustice caused by the employees reduced autonomy and threats to their social identity, incorporating other elements into the process.

Observing some particular aspects of retaliation and perception of justice, Paiva and Leite (2011), in a study carried out with public servants, showed different perceptions as to the way the rewards were distributed in the institution (distributive justice). Most respondents disagreed as to whether there was equity in the organizational policies (procedural justice) and were angry about the organizational injustices (affectivity component of retaliation).

The research by Morganson and Major (2014) is also an interesting example, the authors explored retaliation as a coping strategy for sexual harassment, and presented findings confirming that retaliation occurred because of perceived injustice.

Therefore, these works reinforce the perception of injustice as a significant variable and antecedent of retaliatory behavior (SPECTOR, FOX, PENNEY et al., 2006; KELLOWAY, FRANCIS, PROSSER et al., 2010; CERESA, BAVARESCO, VENTURINI et al., 2014; PAIVA, MACEDO, IRIGARAY et al., 2015).

In short, it is observed that injustice plays a substantial role in the relations between employees and organizations, as well as in the study of the phenomena focused here, stress and retaliation. Thus, it is worthwhile to explore the possible relations between stress, the perception of injustice and retaliation, proposing a conceptual model of analysis that integrates them.

INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the literature reviewed, it was observed that stress and retaliation are usually treated separately. However, theoretically, there is a significant point of tangency between them, that is, the perception of injustice. The possible relation between these three phenomena can contribute theoretically and methodologically to new research perspectives. This is the main contribution of this article.

To demonstrate the possibility of a relationship between stress, retaliation and the perception of injustice, a comparative conceptual framework was developed (Box 1), based on elements they have in common.

It is important to take into consideration that a comparison between stress and retaliation allows to identify that there are complementary and similar elements in the two concepts. Both phenomena occur in response to a situation that has caused malaise, emotional imbalance, suffering and illness at work. In this sense, there are conceptual similarities, such as the stages, the way they occur, the behavioral characteristics, the form of reaction and the damages caused to the organization (Box 1).

Box 1

Comparative analysis between the concepts of stress and retaliation

Phenomena	Occupational stress	Retaliation
Concept	Stress is an adjustment to recover the balance, triggered by work situations where there are high-level demands, pressures and where the person has little control.	Retaliation is a subset of negative behaviors that occur to punish an organization or its representatives in response to perceived injustice.
Stages and components	There are three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.	There are two components: affection and conative; and two dimensions: perception and evaluation.
Individual's roles	It can have a positive role (eustress: good performance) or a negative role (distress: excessive stress), as it tends to recover the balance and helps the individual to return to the state of adjustment/health.	It can have a positive or a negative role, as it tends to recover the perception of justice and helps the individual to return to the state of adjustment/health.
Objective	Seeks to recover the individual's internal balance.	Seeks to recover the perception of justice.
Types of behavior	Subtle behavior is common. It is rare that the stress manifests violently at the beginning, but it can trigger aggressive behavior.	Subtle and/or aggressive behavior. It can be aggressive or even violent.
Characteristics of the behavior	Turnover, absenteeism, sick leave, low productivity, anxiety, other physical and mental disorder.	Turnover, absenteeism, sick leave, low productivity, omission, boycotts, verbal aggression, theft, resistance.
Types of strategy	Coping strategy.	Coping strategy.
Individual's awareness of the behavior	Often, the individual acknowledges the stress and the usual symptoms such as anxiety, headaches, and hostility.	Often, the individual does not self-report the retaliatory behavior, due to potential reprimand. However, they are more explicit when talking about the behavior of others.
Antecedent variables	The main antecedents are the unsatisfactory exchange relationships between the organization and the individual, and the factors of the personality types A or B; internal or external locus of control).	The main antecedents are the unsatisfactory exchange relationships between the organization and the individual, and the factors of the personality (negative affectivity and agreeableness).
Common antecedent and mediating variable	**Perception of injustice**.	**Perception of injustice**.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Conceptually, it is observed that stress and retaliation are mechanisms used by individuals as a response to circumstances that are unpleasant and caused a significant degree of demand, imbalance, and injustice in the organization. The stress process is divided into three subsequent stages: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. The latter can lead to aggressive behaviors and even to depersonalization, i.e., the psychic distance between the individual and his object of work. The second phenomenon consists of two components (affective and conative) and two dimensions (perceptive and evaluative). Such components and dimensions are directly related to the individuals' assessment of the relationships established between the organization and themselves, whether they are considered fair or unfair. Also, stress and retaliation may have both a positive or negative role in the individual's life, as it allows them to return to a state of adjustment and/or health.

In the case of stress, the main objective is to reestablish the individual's balance while retaliation seeks to recover the perception of justice. Both phenomena are usually identified in subtle behaviors, but retaliation is prone to behavior that is more aggressive. In any case, both stress and retaliation can be considered as coping strategies, with a positive or negative role for the individual, whether in the sense of self-defense or attacking.

In both phenomena, some behaviors are similar, such as turnover, absenteeism, sick leave, and low productivity. It is worth remembering that, for the organization, these behaviors are counterproductive or negative, since they lead to losses (COX, GRIFFITHS and RIAL-GONZÁLEZ, 2000).

From the individual's point of view, the most common symptoms of stress, which are widespread and socially accepted, are easily acknowledged and reported by the person, as opposed to retaliatory behaviors, which are strongly reprimanded in organizations, and may produce cognitive dissonances in the individual, depending on the values they share. Thus, it is easy to understand the results of studies showing that the employee is more explicit when talking about another person's retaliatory behavior.

On the unsatisfactory exchange relationships between the organization and the individual, there are the personality factors (in the case of stress: types A or B and internal or external locus of control; in the case of retaliation: negative affectivity and agreeableness). These directly influence the type of behavior that the individual presents in stress and retaliation, but the phenomenon of perception of injustice is considered an antecedent and mediator between them.

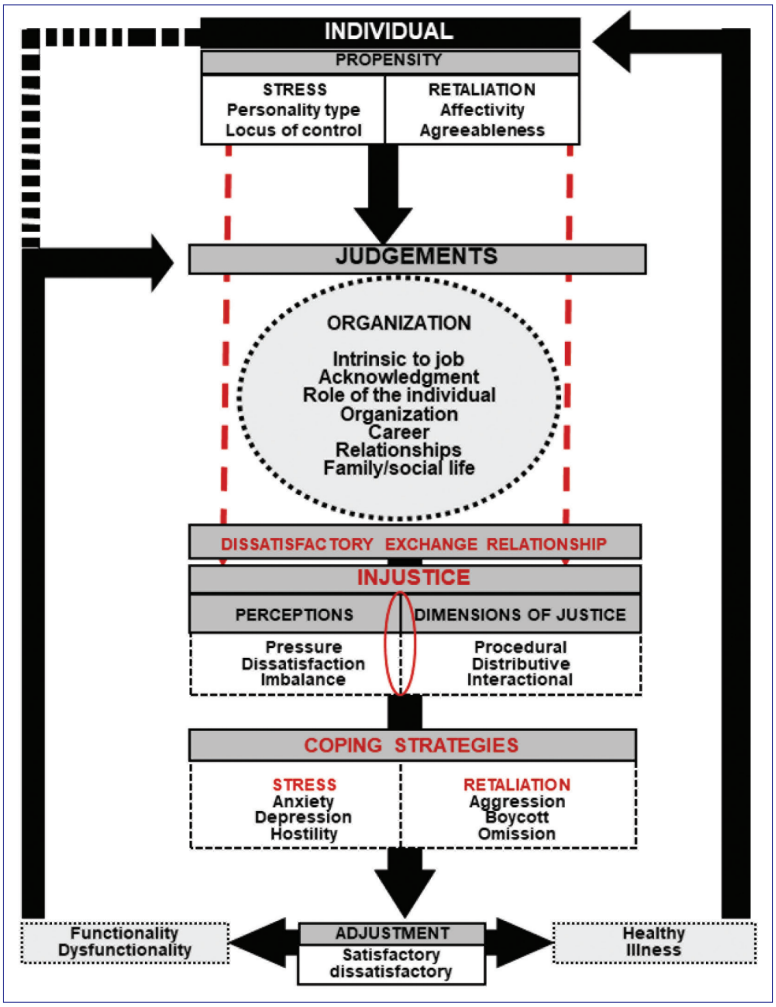
Identifying this phenomenon as mediator of the others recognizes its important role, and allows to sketch an integrated conceptual model, rather than about the concepts separately. In addition, studies of organizational retaliation are overwhelming in considering injustice as the main variable for retaliatory behavior; whereas in the case of occupational stress, there is little research that explores the relation of this phenomenon with injustice and retaliation in the organizations.

As for occupational stress and organizational injustice, Assmar and Ferreira (2008) analyzed the few existing works that seek to develop and contribute to an approach that combines justice and stress. They found conceptual relations and empirical data that support the connection between stress and organizational justice (JUDGE and COLQUITT, 2004; ASSMAR and FERREIRA, 2008). Regarding stress, their results revealed that the perception of injustice is a significant source of stress. As for justice, the findings show that perceived injustice can develop standard reactions of stress, such as anxiety, depression, and hostility, concluding that a theoretical model that integrates injustice-stress, such as the one proposed in this study, is potentially fruitful (ASSMAR and FERREIRA, 2008)

Therefore, for an integrated analysis of these three organizational phenomena, the conceptual model presented in Figure 1 was developed.

Figure 1

Integrative model for stress, injustice and retaliation



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

This integrative conceptual model shows how the relations between the three phenomena occur, based on the relationship established between the individual and the organization. It was observed that the context of significant changes in jobs changed both the perception of the individual and their behavior in organizations, generating conflicts and experiences of injustice and suffering that led employees to experience stressful situations, pressure, and unfairness.

Along with the innumerable changes in the work, there are influences from the personality of the individual (personality types A and B, the internal and external locus of control, negative affectivity and agreeableness). The theories of stress and retaliation consider these influences as possibilities of adjustment that may produce functionality or dysfunctionality, from the organization's point of view (FRIEDMAN and ROSENMAN, 1974; PAIVA and COUTO, 2008).

Thus, these personality factors directly influence the development of stress and retaliation. The exchange relationship between individual and organization is assessed (judgment) as satisfactory, or dissatisfactory, by both parties involved. When there is a dissatisfactory exchange, the individual presents the perception of injustice.

The perception of injustice usually develops feelings of dissatisfaction, anger, and imbalance that lead the individual to evaluate it through the dimensions: procedural, distributive and interactional.

In this scenario, it is likely that stress initially develops in its mildest form through signs of anxiety, sadness, and hostility as coping strategies of the individual in the face of the perceived stress. However, if the demand posed by this unjust situation is more intense and lasts longer, the stress state may worsen and cause retaliatory behaviors that can vary from subtlety to obvious.

In retaliation, the coping strategy is based on the counterattack, in an attempt to punish the organization or its representatives in response to perceived injustices. In this situation, various types of behavior can be observed, such as boycotts, aggression, omission, which occur in a variety of ways: not passing on a call to work colleagues (boycott); not passing on information (omission); and verbal aggression directed at the organization or the people who are part of it (aggression).

Even with the use of these coping strategies in stress and retaliation, adjustment possibilities can be both satisfactory (functionality for organization and health for the worker) and unsatisfactory (dysfunctionality and illness, respectively), and independently, for each social actor considered (organization and individual).

In this way, it is possible to reflect on research possibilities that encompass different methodologies and thematic connections.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Regarding methodological perspectives for future research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches could be used. As for quantitative research, we suggest studies involving uni, bi and multivariate statistical techniques, including structural equation modeling (SEM) (MALHOTRA, 2004; HAIR JUNIOR, BLACK, BABIN et al. 2010), which examines the potential effects of one or more variables on the others (as it occurs with the personality factors pointed out in this study). When testing the influence and significance among the variables of the integrated concepts, it is possible to obtain the type of association (direct, mediating or moderating) (MALHOTRA, 2004; HAIR JUNIOR, BLACK, BABIN, et al. 2010) that best describes the relations between them. With these results, it would be possible to develop other data collection instruments (inventories, scales, questionnaires), aiming at the construction of more robust models.

As for qualitative research, they would allow a better understanding of the quantitative data collected, considering that the reality is built in the interaction of individuals with their social world (MERRIAM, 2001).

In addition, methodological triangulations (COLLIS and HUSSEY, 2006) would also contribute to the integrated study of the phenomena, since they would be complementary in terms of amplitude (quantitative), depth (qualitative), and promoting a more precise understanding of the relations and processes involved.

The choice of data collection instruments directly affects the selection of data analysis techniques. Several combinations are possible, as long as consistency is maintained with the type of data collected (MAY, 2004; VERGARA, 2009), that is, statistical tools for quantitative, and analysis of content or discourse for qualitative data.

Finally, after presenting some methodological possibilities for future research on the phenomena studied here, it is possible to point to a research agenda that suggests thematic aspects.

However, it is important to observe that the themes presented in the model proposed in this article (stress, the perception of injustice and retaliation), offer already a robust material of study, encouraging future research to investigate other facets of reality connected to the concepts, as reported in the literature reviewed.

There is a line of research that combines occupational stress and quality of life at work (ROSSI, PERREWÉ and SAUTER, 2005; ROSSI, QUICK and PERREWÉ, 2009), with organizational commitment (BASTOS, SIQUEIRA, MEDEIROS et al., 2008; OLIVEIRA and BARDAGI, 2009; KILIMNIK, BICALHO, OLIVEIRA et al., 2012). There are also studies connecting these aspects with burnout syndrome (FERREIRA and ASSMAR, 2008; PAIVA, DUTRA, BARROS et al., 2013). It is worth mentioning that all these topics may be connected to each other in further studies.

Organizational justice and retaliation are themes usually worked together (SKARLICKI and FOLGER, 1997; MENDONÇA and TAMAYO, 2004; MENDONÇA and MENDES, 2005; PAIVA and LEITE, 2011), but there is also evidence of unplanned connections such as individuals and work dysfunctions, turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism in organizations.

In addition, organizational justice has been associated with other themes, such as the forms of employees' involvement with the organization, analyzed in the organizational commitment (REGO, 2002, 2003; REGO and SOUTO, 2004; RIBEIRO and BASTOS, 2010; PRESTES, MENDONÇA and FERREIRA, 2013), and the employees' relation to the processes of health, well-being, pleasure and suffering at work (TEPPER, 2001; MOREIRA, PINHEIRO and OLIVEIRA, 2008; SOUSA and MENDONÇA, 2009; SCHUSTER, DIAS and BATTISTELLA, 2014). The latter aspects are particularly relevant to this study, considering that the perception of injustice can be unpleasant, cause discomfort and suffering that tend to develop stress and are expressed in the form of retaliatory behaviors.

As for the study environment, some workspaces have shown to be differentiated when it comes to labor relations, such as call centers (PAIVA, MACEDO, IRIGARAY et al., 2015; PAIVA and DUTRA, LUZ, 2013), public safety agencies (BALAN, CORCETTI and SOUZA, 2012; FIGUEIREDO and BATITUCCI, 2014), banks (FERNANDES and SILVA, 2013; MELO, SOUSA FILHO and FORTE, 2014). These workspaces are unique places of interaction between individuals and have the potential to reveal other features of these relations, contributing significantly to the gradual comprehension of the relation between the topics addressed.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The integrative model presented does not exhaust the discussion of the studied phenomena, and contributes to better understand complex processes that mirror the multiple interfaces between individuals and organizations. This effort results in a research agenda that contemplates thematic and methodological possibilities, observing aspects related to the study environment.

The research possibilities related to methodological aspects favor both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to investigate the types of association that would best describe possible interrelationships between such constructs, and to study in depth other issues such as coping strategies and their consequences on the health and productive behavior of individuals in organizations, promoting a multilevel analysis.

These efforts allow for the development of data collection instruments more closely related to studies in this field of organizational behavior.

Thus, it is recommended to consider the different productive spaces mentioned, as well as the different publics (young, with disabilities, religious, LGBT), to strengthen the proposed model.

In this sense, this study may contribute to bring empirical contributions after using the suggested methodologies, especially about the possibility of more effective people training and development programs dealing with counterproductive behavior in organizations. These programs may contribute to minimize these behaviors and understand them, as well as help to promote fairness and egalitarian remuneration practices, and effective people management policies especially in the relation between managers and subordinates, considering that the theory shows that the perception of injustice, stress, and retaliatory behavior are present when this relationship is not fair and healthy.

Finally, the suggestions presented in this article seek humanization in the work environment and enable deeper studies on complex issues that deserve more attention in the organizational daily life, especially considering processes that may or may not be subject to influences that produce positive or negative outcomes for individuals and organizations.

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