

Societal Impact Highlights



Researcher: Patricia Costa

Research Group: Organizational Behavior & Human Resources

Case study: Organizational and interpersonal determinants of team effectiveness and wellbeing

Summary

Patricia Costa has been working on the determinants of team effectiveness and well-being in the last years, and focuses particularly in the health sector. The research, published in top journals, shows that interpersonal processes are fundamental for the emergence of shared motivational states that impact on the effectiveness of the teams and on the well-being of team members. This work has been developed in connection to health services, and it has been translated in specific diagnostics and interventions, therefore impacting on workplace practices and practitioner debate.

Underpinning research

Two main research projects were developed that approach the topic of team effectiveness and professionals' well-being from an organizational and interpersonal perspective.

The first one was "Improving quality and safety in the hospital: The link between organizational culture, burnout and quality of care", ORCAB. This was a 5-year project, starting in 2010 and founded by the European Commission (7th Framework Program). In this project participated 9 European countries: Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia, United Kingdom and Ireland. The key objectives of the project were to determine the specific factors of hospital organization culture that increase burnout among physicians and therefore decreases quality of care, to monitor burnout and its association with quality of care among physicians, to

identify bottom-up solutions for the problems of organizational culture and burnout, as well as its impact on patient safety and, finally, to develop a network for hospital managers and associated stakeholders for the communication of relevant interventions. This project was coordinated by Efharis Panagopoulou (Aristotle University, Greece) and, in Portugal, by Ana Margarida Passos (BRU-IUL). The national team was also composed of Sílvia Silva, Susana Tavares, Sara Ramos and Patrícia Costa (BRU-IUL), as well as Ema Sacadura Leite, Luís Galaio and Olena Shapovalova (Serviço de Saúde Ocupacional, Hospital de Santa Maria, Centro Hospitalar de Lisboa Norte). The national data was obtained in Hospital de Santa Maria, using both qualitative (interviews and focus groups) and quantitative (surveys) methods. In the final phase of the project, an action-research process in one specific service of the Hospital was developed, together with the professionals (doctors and nurses) of that same unit. During the 5-years of the project, the international team met regularly to provide information on the national activities, to coordinate efforts and to make strategic decisions concerning the project's objectives. Overall, the research studies under this project highlighted the divergent perceptions of what is meant by "Quality of Care", considering doctors, nurses and patients. It was also evident that some organizational constraints negatively affected the work of the professionals and their well-being (material resources, human resources, rewards system). Also, interpersonal relationships affected the work of physicians, namely because of the existence of conflict, ineffective leadership, lack of coordination or backup behaviours. However, the national team had many difficulties in trying to implement changes, as the power dynamics in the participating services blocked further actions following an initial diagnostic.

The second project's team was composed of Patrícia Costa and Ana M. Passos (BRU-IUL), and of Arnold B. Bakker (Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands). This project's main goal was to understand the affective and motivational dynamics in work teams that affect their effectiveness. From 2010 to 2014, several empirical studies were conducted – surveys to a sample of participants in a management simulation, surveys to workers and students, observation and video content analysis - and simultaneously a theoretical model and two measurement instruments were developed. These studies provided evidences for the relevance of considering teams as units of analysis, as they develop collective affective-motivational states that influence not only their performance but also the teams' ability to work together in the future. Moreover, it was found that interpersonal processes, such as managing conflict, managing affect or motivation, are fundamental for team effectiveness to the extent they are able to maintain a balance between the existence (and expression) of energetic/emotionally

positive behaviour and a more task-focused attitude, encompassing the discussion of divergent perspectives on the task (task conflict).

References to the research

- Costa, P., Passos, A. M. & Bakker, A. B. (in press). Direct and contextual influence of team conflict on team resources, team work engagement and team performance. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*
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- Costa, P., Passos, A. M., Silva, S. A., Sacadura-Leite, E., Tavares, S., Spanu, F., Dimitrova, E., Basarovska, V., Milosevic, M. Turk, M. Paganoupoulou, E. & Montgomery, A. (2014). Overcoming job demands to deliver high quality care in a hospital setting across Europe: The role of teamwork and positivity. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 30, 105-112. doi: 10.1016/j.rpto.2014.11.001
- Costa, P., Passos, A.M., & Bakker, A.B. (2014). Team work engagement: A model of emergence. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. 87, 414–436. doi: 10.1111/joop.12057
- Costa, P., Passos, A. M., & Bakker, A. (2014). Empirical validation of the team work engagement construct. *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, 13, 34–45. doi: 10.1027/1866-5888/a000102

Details of the impact

Influence on Workplace practices:

The research, and especially the one within the action-research framework, was conducted with the involvement of the health professionals at several levels in one specific organization. During both the qualitative phase and the action-research phase, researchers established communications with key people at the hospital, from the Director of a specific Service, the Chief nurse, older and younger professionals, both doctors and nurses. From the meetings and discussions held with these professionals, it became clear to them that the effectiveness of their work is not only related to the technical capabilities of professionals. The relevance of interpersonal and affective processes, such as conflict management, emotional ventilation or coordination became explicit. Therefore, project team developed a document with specific

recommendations, which were discussed with both the Chief Nurse and the Director of the Service. In that document, practices were divided in three main areas: How the work was organized (e.g. “Regulate the times of the various welfare activities”); Teamwork (e.g. “Increase information sharing”) and Well-being (e.g. “Creating a time and space to talk about the anguish derived from dealing with patients and families”). This document was intended to influence the professional standards, guidelines and training of the professionals, as well as to change professional work into a more collaborative practice. The Director of Service considered that information sharing was one of the key aspects that should be translated into changes in the filling of patient files. He became willing to guide professionals in improving this capacity. This impact was restricted to the service directly involved in the research.

Influence on planning of management services:

One of the members of the Portuguese team (Ema Leite) was at the time and is still the head of the Occupational Health Service from the Hospital Santa Maria. Fruitful collaboration within the project led her to consider the hiring of a psychologist to the service, in order to attend to specific situations brought in by different professionals, as well as to develop together some specific programs on such themes as conflict management. This proposal still has to be accepted by the Hospital’s Administration.

Influence on Practitioner debate:

Following the need to disseminate the results of the ORCAB project, some members of the team (namely the project coordinator, Efharis Paganopoulou), promoted the first International Meeting on Well being and Performance in Clinical Practice (Well-Med), that took place in Greece in June 2014 and in which Ana Passos (BRU-IUL) was a member of the scientific board. This event (<http://www.wellmed.gr>) brought together medicine practitioners, organizational behavior, management and psychology scholars to discuss different perspectives and successful interventions in what the well-being of health professionals and their effectiveness is concerned. The success of this event has led to its second edition (Well-Med 2), in May 2016.

Plus, the main results of the first phases of the study are in press in a national practitioners’ journal, Saúde em Números, which reaches the whole population of health professionals in the country.

Finally, the existence of an European network of scholars and practitioners is alive beyond the end of the project. Other projects have been designed with some of the previous participants that also tackle the issue of well-being and health at work. One example is the project

“Participative Prevention of Psychosocial Emergent Risks in Small and Medium Enterprises”, led by Sílvia Silva (BRU-IUL), with the collaboration of Anthony Montgomery (University of Macedonia, Greece).

Sources to corroborate the impact

- Well-Med Conference: <http://www.wellmed.gr>
- Reports from the ORCAB project: http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/93344_en.html
- Costa, P., Ramos, S., Silva, S. A., Passos, A. P., Tavares, S. M, Bretones, F. D., Delgado, A., Doulougeri, K., Georganta, K., Giacominielli, B., González, J. M., González, R., Montgomery, A., Pasini, M. (2015). Participative prevention of psychosocial emergent risks in small and, medium enterprises: Overview of a collaborative project. *The European Health Psychologist*, 17, 146-151.