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Influence of total quality-based human issues on organizational commitment

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Abstract

Most studies generally report consistent evidence that private sector employees exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment, comparing to employees in public sector organizations.

This paper focuses on the understudied public sector, and assesses the contribution of total quality-based human resources practices to enhancing employees' organizational commitment, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction in such relationship. A structural equation modeling approach was applied to data collected in three organizations belonging to the Portuguese public social security system.

The findings are, to a large extent, in agreement with earlier fragmented studies, since they confirm the idea hypothesized according to which total quality-based human resources practices would have a significant effect on each of the dimensions of organizational commitment. Moreover, there is evidence of a mediation effect of employees' job satisfaction on the relationship between total quality-based human resources practices and affective and normative dimensions of employees' organizational commitment.

Keywords

Total quality management; Human resources; Organizational Commitment; Public Services; job Satisfaction.

Index

Thanks	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Figure List.....	v
List of Abbreviations	vii
1. Problem Statement	1
2. Background and hypotheses	4
2.1 - Organizational Commitment	4
2.2 - TQM-Based HRM.....	5
2.3 - TQM-based HRM and OC	8
3. Research design methodology	14
3.1. Procedures and sample	14
3.2 - Measurement and scale development	14
3.3 - Descriptive statistics and measures validity.....	16
4. Results and Discussion	18
4.1 - Profile of Survey Participants.....	18
4.2 - Assumptions of the analysis methods.....	18
4.3- Validation of the measurement model.....	19
4.4 - Validation of the proposed model.....	20
4.5 - Discussion	22
5- Conclusions and Contributions	25
5.1 - Final Remarks.....	25
5.2 - Contributions	25
5.3 - Limitations and future research directions	27
6. References.....	29
7. Attachments.....	36

Figure List

Figure 1 - Structural analysis model.....	13
Figure 2 - Structural model with standardized coefficients	21

Table List

Table 1 - Means, standard deviations and correlations	16
Table 2 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis - Model Fit Measures	19
Table 3 - Structural Model Fit Indices.....	20
Table 4 - Testing Mediation based on AMOS Bootstrapping output.....	21

List of Abbreviations

OC - Organizational Commitment

TQM - Total Quality Management

HRM - Human Resources Management

ISS, I.P. - Instituto de Segurança Social, I.P.

II, I.P. - Instituto de Informática, I.P.

IGFSS, I.P. - Instituto de Gestão Financeira da Segurança Social, I.P.

1. Problem Statement

At the root of the resource-based view of the firm is the belief that organizations may add value and simultaneously create competitive barriers, through the development of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. However, organizations may take potential risks when investing strongly in the development of such resources. Indeed, since employees who possess valued capabilities may opt for leaving and joining competitors, in order to make sure that advantages gained through investments in human resources are sustained over time, organizations should also cultivate employee commitment (Gellatly et al., 2009).

Over the last three decades the issue of organizational commitment (OC) has received significant attention, and a growing number of studies have focused on the identification of causal antecedents. Such particular interest may be connoted, in part, to a common idea according to which OC is one of the key determinants of organizational effectiveness. For example, highly dedicated employees appear to contribute significantly to organizations' sustainable development (Karia & Asaari, 2006), to higher levels of job performance (Riketta, 2002), and to lower turnover (Culpepper, 2011), among other positive outcomes.

However, despite the widespread recognition of the value of OC, and although many studies have focused on OC, most of these have studied the level of commitment specifically in private sector organizations (e.g. Stallworth, 2004; Su, Baird & Blair, 2009), while few papers approached commitment in the public sector context (Steijn & Leisink, 2006; Su, Baird & Blair, 2013). Most of the studies conducted on this issue have focused on employees' attitudes and behaviour in for-profit-sector workplaces. Indeed, the need to study OC in other contexts such as public and non-profit organizations has been largely recognized in literature (Steijn & Leisink, 2006).

This is certainly a gap in literature, especially considering the strong differences between both types of organizations frequently highlighted throughout literature. As referred by Markovits et al. (2010), employees in public and private sectors experience different working conditions and employment relationships, and thus, it may plausible to assume that attitudes toward jobs and organizations are also different. Some studies have directly compared levels of OC between public and private sector employees. Most of these reported consistent evidence that private sector employees exhibit higher levels of OC, comparing to employees in the public sector (e.g., Balfour & Wechsler 1996; Goulet & Frank, 2002). These differences are generally attributed to reasons as goal ambiguity, or inflexible procedures, characterizing public sector organizations. Zeffane's (1994) results strongly suggest that public sector employees are relatively less committed to organizations' goals and values than their private sector counterparts.

Notwithstanding, over last decades, the public sector has experienced a fast expansion, undergoing a process of deep transformations characterized by growing changes in scale and scope, and looking for principles as transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, quality improvement, applied by for-profit private businesses for a long time. In such a context, the need to look at alternative new organizational models, simultaneously less bureaucratic, more efficient, and customers-centered, was brought to the public agenda, and governments are increasingly expected to take all the measures needed to meet growing requirements in what higher levels of performance concerns, while satisfying citizen's needs and expectations. These trends have been influencing the management of public organizations, which have been engaged in quality improvement strategies, especially regarding issues as providing better public services, improving efficiency and efficacy in the use of available resources, or ensuring employees' increasing education and training needs.

Relevant literature has argued that quality improvement strategies based on Total Quality Management principles may be considered as a significant option to achieve competitive advantages and to increase organizational performance (Demirbag et al., 2006; Powell, 1995; Valmohammadi, 2011). For the last three decades, a number of organizations have paid a great attention toward TQM principles, driven by the common idea that TQM-based strategies yield higher performance, and also on national quality awards-based studies showing that prize-winners generally outperform financially comparable average companies. Although its popularity as a research issue seems to be declining, TQM has inspired many widely recognized excellence models and still represents the right direction for many companies and the point towards which industries in many developed countries has been and is currently moving (Perdomo-Ortiz, González-Benito & Galende, 2009).

Moreover, current human resource management research has a strong focus on how organizations may increase OC (Malhotra, Budhwar & Prowse, 2007). Indeed, job-related attitudes, such as job satisfaction, and OC seem to be enhanced as TQM-driven efforts increase (Karia & Asaari, 2006). TQM has been found to have a significant influence on employees' affective reactions to organizational life within a TQM environment (Allen & Brady, 1997; Boon, Arumugam, & Hwa, 2005; Guimaraes, 1996). In addition, the soft side of TQM appears to be more significant than is the hard side in enhancing individual collaborators' attitudes at work. In fact, several studies suggest that soft TQM practices, such as employees' involvement, suggestion programs, teamwork and empowerment may have a significant influence on employees' work-related attitudes, especially in what OC concerns (Karia & Ahmad, 2000; Karia & Asaari; 2006).

To our knowledge, no previous study has investigated the specific influence of TQM-based human resources management in employees' work-related attitudes in the public sector. Our research brings insights into the influence of TQM on OC, from a human resources

perspective. More specifically, the objective in this paper is twofold: first, we seek to analyze the relationship between TQM-based HRM practices and OC. This will give us an indication of whether TQM-based HRM practices' contribution to enhance employees' OC in the public sector is significant. Second, we seek to determine whether job satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in such relationship.

The paper starts with a brief overview of the concepts of OC, TQM-based HRM practices, and job satisfaction, as well past findings concerning the hypothetical relationships between these variables. We then describe the sample and methodology for the present study. Empirical findings are then presented and discussed. The paper ends with possible implications both for theory and practice, and directions for future research.

2. Background and hypotheses

2.1 - Organizational Commitment

The concept of OC in the workplace has been a central issue in fields, as HRM, organizational behaviour or operations management. Indeed, rooted in a strong belief that OC may be highly beneficial due to its potential to leverage employees and organizational performance, during the last decades, hundreds of studies have been conducted, focused on a strategic interest in understanding OC, its antecedents, and outcomes. Broadly stated, OC reflects the strength of relationships experienced between employees and the organization they belong to (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). OC may be characterized by three related factors: *i*) a strong belief in organizations' goals and values, *ii*) a willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf, and *iii*) a strong desire to maintain membership (Fiorito et al., 2007).

Although several multidimensional conceptualizations of commitment have been proposed, the main approach to studying commitment in the workplace has been the three-component model of OC proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991), rooted in Becker's (1960) side-bet theory, and Porter's et al. (1974) approach. This model is surely the most extensively researched, and is based on the idea that the construct is composed of three different dimensions: *i*) affective, *ii*) continuance, and *iii*) normative commitment.

Affective commitment reflects employees' emotional attachment to their organization. *"Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so"* (Meyer & Allen, 1991:67). Employees, committed on an affective basis, decide to keep working for their organization because they strongly identify with its goals and values (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Rooted in Becker's 'side-bet' theory, **continuance commitment** refers to employees' commitment based on the benefits they would give up by leaving the organization. *"Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so"* (Meyer & Allen, 1991:67). Continuance commitment level depends on both range of alternative employment opportunities, and perceived costs involved in leaving the organization (Meyer et al., 2002).

Normative commitment refers to employees' commitment based on a feeling of obligation to remain, because they believe that it is morally the right behaviour: "... *normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991:67).*". Normative committed collaborators generally feel a moral obligation to repay the organization for investing in their development and well-being.

Although some limitations may be considered regarding this model (limited predictive validity, conceptual ambiguity of continuance commitment, and concept redundancy between normative and affective commitment), several advantages are generally recognized: good psychometric properties of the current scales, acceptable discriminant validity of all three dimensions, and research findings that showed the usefulness and acceptable content validity of the three-dimensional approach (Cohen, 2007).

2.2 - TQM-Based HRM

Total Quality Management (TQM) issues have been receiving a special significant attention from business and management research, especially because of the considerable evidence pointing to its strategic importance to achieve special competitive advantages.

The TQM body of knowledge, as developed by the so-called quality gurus (e.g. Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989), is a holistic system with an organization-wide focus on quality management, and a strong emphasis on issues as customer satisfaction, continuous quality improvement, and philosophy and a set of guiding principles for managing an organization, and involves a mutual co-operation of everyone in an organization and associated business processes to meet or even exceed customers' needs and expectations (Dale, 1999).

However, for a long time, the main contributions to the development of TQM have come from fields as operations management, statistics, or engineering and, led to a strong focus on "hard" aspects of TQM, while less attention has been paid to the "softer" side. More recently, the evolution of literature attest a shift from "hard" production-based TQM elements (e.g. data collection and measurement, statistical process control, quality tools) to the "soft" side of TQM, characterized by a greater emphasis on human resource concerns, and related to issues like top management commitment and full support (Dale, 1999), employees' involvement (Oakland, 1989), continuous training (Dale, 1999), team working (Waldman, 1994), and employees' empowerment (Vouzaz, 2004), among other principles. Indeed, there are growing evidences that the success of TQM-based improvement programs depend highly

on a strong awareness about human factors in quality issues. Based on the assumption that employees who are closest to the daily operations are in the best position to understand and improve quality of procedures, TQM may be considered, at least in part, as a people-oriented approach that aims to create an environment in which employees *i)* are prompted to participate in achieving organizations' quality goals, *ii)* feel motivated to do their best, *iii)* are held accountable for quality, and *iv)* are provided with tools and training to fulfill their responsibilities (Karia & Asaari, 2006).

Perdomo-Ortiz, González-Benito, & Galende (2009) identified and operationalized three main principles guiding HRM under the philosophy of total quality. The dimensions proposed are: *(i) Training* (training in quality issues, incentives for training, development of multiple competences and skills, knowledge about processes, training for problem solving), *(ii) Teamwork* (problem-solving in work teams, incentives for teamwork, methodologies for teamwork, selection of personnel based on teamwork criteria, delegation and participation in work teams), and *(iii) Motivation*, subdivided into controlled and autonomous dimensions (Controlled - awards for suggestions leading to improvement, performance-based complementary remuneration, commitment to quality goals, and Autonomous - sense of work equity, sense of belonging to the firm, development of professional careers, and participation in decision-making).

Education and training is found to be a major driving factor for implementing TQM, and its critical role for an effective/efficient implementation in both manufacturing and service industries is well documented (Pinho, 2008; Salaheldin, 2009; Yang, 2004). TQM focuses on appropriate training of employees, including general training, and specific training, providing a basis for communication of new organizational strategies (Khanna, Sharma, & Laroia, 2011). Training in TQM environments generally includes quality control and management tools, and problem-solving techniques (Collin, 1996). However, training in mechanical and statistical techniques must be complemented by an education program focused on new ways of doing things (Seetharaman, Sreenivasan, and Boon, 2006). Indeed, training and education helps in creating quality attitudes, loyalty toward organization and co-operation among employees (Khanna, Sharma, & Laroia, 2011).

From the initial quality circles to the widespread Self-Managing Teams, quality programs and teamwork have been closely linked in theory and practice (Cooney & Sohal, 2004). Recent manufacturing strategies, together with growing competitive pressures, require employees to assume more responsibility, and as a result, team-working has been extensively implemented, especially in manufacturing industry.

Teamwork is a key issue in TQM environment to foster employees' responsibility in managing quality, and to facilitate information sharing, and collaborative efforts to solve quality

problems. Indeed, organizations have been reporting several benefits, including increased job performance, better quality, less absenteeism, and plant structures more effective, among other outcomes (Harris, 1992).

Those organizations whose employees lack motivation, or are dissatisfied, on the grounds of the limitations imposed by the system's restraints or of a poor implementation of the TQM elements, may reach poor quality levels and little effectiveness in the implementation program (Lloréns Montes, Verdu Jover, & Molina Fernandez, 2003). Issues as rewards and recognition (Dayton, 2001; Yang, 2004), and empowerment (Karia & Ahmad, 2000; Karia & Asaari, 2006), among others, have been found to be critical driving factors for quality improvement process in TQM environments, especially in what employees' motivation concerns. Appropriate reward and recognition systems have been recognized as key instruments to stimulate commitment to quality improvement (e.g. Allen & Kilmann, 2001).

Literature suggests that quality improvement program should provide effective measures to reward and recognize employees' quality-driven efforts, since one of the key factors in their support for such projects is the perceived benefit expected. More specifically, to secure effective support from employees for quality efforts, TQM-based quality programs should provide a complementary benefits system (e.g. financial benefits, improved working condition) aimed at public recognition to employees' performance with respect to their involvement in quality issues, especially in what suggestions leading to improvement concerns.

Empowerment has also been recognized as a way to increase employees' motivation, and as one of the key tenets of the TQM philosophy (Ooi et al., 2007). Empowerment may be understood as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among employees, through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness, and through their removal by both formal and informal practices of providing efficacy information (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Empowerment means providing employees with authority and responsibility to manage their work and make their decisions to maximize their contribution, performing more efficiently and effectively (Karia & Ahmad, 2000). Although some findings find inconsistencies in what the influence of empowerment on work outcomes concerns (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005), empowerment has been advocated by researchers as having a positive influence on employee behaviour, leading towards higher motivation (Silver & Randolph, 2004).

2.3 - TQM-based HRM and OC

Studies have highlighted the key role HRM practices may play in nurturing OC. Positive work-related behaviours are highlighted as highly dependent on employees' perceptions regarding how organizations care about their well-being and value their contribution (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003). This perspective is consistent with the view of social exchange theorists, who argue that psychological contracts between employees and organizations are key determinants of organisational behaviour, stressing that employees interpret HRM initiatives as indications of an organization's commitment to them depending on perceptions of the organization's commitment, employees will respond by adjusting their behaviour towards the organization accordingly.

Authors describing TQM approaches generally urge practitioners to increase OC (Allen & Brady, 1997), and TQM has been found to have a significant influence on employees' affective reactions to organizational life (Boon, Arumugam, & Hwa, 2005). Education and training, employees' participation, and teamwork are relevant for excellence purposes and for people-oriented issues from a TQM perspective (Dale, 1999). Indeed, a number of studies find positive relationships between TQM-based programs and OC. Allen & Brady (1997) found that OC was significantly higher in organizations implementing TQM. Similarly, Guimaraes's (1996) research on the influence of TQM on personnel attitudes towards their jobs enhances significant improvements in OC.

Boon, Arumugam, and Hwa (2005) observed that employees exposed to high level of soft TQM practices experience higher levels of OC. Furthermore, Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that a given antecedent variable may contribute to the development of any or all of the dimensions of OC, depending on how it is perceived. For example, training opportunities may contribute to a sense of desire, obligation, or a need to remain with the organization, depending on whether it is viewed as a reflection of organizational support, a benefit requiring reciprocation, or an investment of time to acquire organization-specific skills, respectively (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

While Mowday et al. (1982) highlighted four general categories of affective commitment's antecedents (structural, personal, and job-related characteristics, as well as work experiences), Meyer and Allen (1991) summarized these antecedents into three categories: *i*) personal characteristics (demographic characteristics and personal dispositions), *ii*) organizational structure (e.g. decentralization of decision making, and formalization of policy and procedure), and *iii*) work experiences.

These researchers stressed that strong affective commitment is mostly the result of work experiences that satisfy employees' basic needs and expectations and/or are compatible with their values and goal achievement, and divided work experience variables into two categories: *i*) comfort variables - that satisfy employees' needs to feel physically and psychologically comfortable (confirmation of pre-entry expectations, equity in reward distribution, organizational dependability, organizational support, role clarity and freedom from conflict, and supervisor consideration), and *ii*) competence-related experiences - that contribute to employees' feelings of competence (accomplishment, autonomy, fairness of performance-based rewards, job challenge, job scope, opportunity for advancement, opportunity for self-expression, participation in decision-making, and personal importance to the organization).

Findings provide evidence suggesting that various HRM initiatives play a key role in the development of affective commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Buck & Watson, 2002; Gould-Williams, 2003; Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007; Meyer & Smith, 2000; Paré & Tremblay, 2007), suggesting that organizations may enhance affective commitment by fostering awareness of several HRM opportunities. For example, training may enhance employees' perceptions of being supported and, in turn, lead to affective commitment (Bambacas & Bordia, 2009). These considerations lead to the following research hypothesis:

H1. Employees' perception of TQM-based HRM initiatives are positively related to Affective Commitment

While the role of HRM initiatives in the reinforcement of affective commitment has received strong support, the relationship with continuance commitment remains unclear. Continuance commitment occurs when employees recognize high levels of personal sacrifice or wasted investments associated with ending an organizational membership, and thus remain due to lack of alternatives or costs associated with leaving. As explained by Meyer and Allen (1991), the threat of wasting the time and effort spent acquiring non-transferable skills and education, of losing attractive benefits, of giving up seniority-based privileges may be perceived as potential costs of leaving.

While affective commitment is expected to have the strongest positive relation with desirable on-the-job behaviors (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior), followed by normative commitment, continuance commitment is expected to be unrelated, or related negatively, to such behaviors (Meyer et al., 2002). Indeed, a profile based mostly on continuance commitment is the most problematic (e.g. source of stress and conflict at home), since it may foster a state of feeling 'trapped' in the organization, especially when affective and normative commitment levels are weak (Meyer et al., 2012; Meyer and Hamilton, 2013). This feeling may manifest in behaviours such as tardiness, and absenteeism, leading to lower

levels of performance, which has been generally found to be enhanced in contexts characterized by high levels of affective commitment, or by commitment profiles such that employees are “devoted” to their organization rather than “trapped” (Gellatly et al., 2009).

Although studies found no significant relationship between HRM initiatives and continuance commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Buck & Watson, 2002; Meyer & Smith, 2000), others have suggested that continuance commitment is positively influenced by a bundle of HRM initiatives (Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007; Paré & Tremblay, 2007). For example, according to Bambacas and Bordia (2009), training that offers employees benefits which are perceived as non-transferable to another organization make it too costly to leave, increasing thus employees’ OC level. Based on these evidences, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. Employees’ perception of TQM-based HRM initiatives are positively related to Continuance Commitment

Normative commitment may result from employees’ familial or cultural socialization experiences (Wiener, 1982), or when organizations invest in employees’ development and incur significant costs (Meyer and Allen, 1991), and thus when an employee’s debt to an organization increases (Scholl, 1981).

Employees’ recognition of such investments may generate an imbalanced employee-organization relationship and foster employees to feel a moral obligation to reciprocate, remaining loyal until the debt is repaid (Scholl, 1981). Such behaviour is generally explained through Gouldner’s (1960) norm of reciprocity, according to which employees might develop feelings of obligation as they try to rectify the imbalance or theories as social exchange theory. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), normative commitment may develop based on a psychological contract between employees and the organization. This psychological contract concluded between parties involved in an exchange relationship refers to both parties’ beliefs regarding their reciprocal obligations.

Although some studies found no significant relationship between HRM initiatives and normative commitment (e.g. Buck & Watson, 2002), others have proposed that various HRM initiatives play a key role in the development of normative commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007). Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that once employees understand the importance of training, they may develop a moral obligation to stay at the job. Although frequently excluded from studies, based on the idea that normative commitment has been found to correlate somehow with affective commitment and to share common antecedents and consequences (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010), we believe that it is important to expand the body of knowledge about this dimension, especially in this field of

TQM-based HRM and, as a result, based on the previous arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. Employees' perception of TQM-based HRM initiatives are positively related to Normative Commitment

2.4 - TQM-based HRM and Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the variables most frequently investigated, and a huge body of literature has been developed on this issue, along the last four decades. Briefly, job satisfaction may be described as a positive affective reaction by employees toward their work. As highlighted by Spector (1985), job satisfaction is typically referred to as an emotional-affective response to a job or specific aspect of a job. Scholars have highlighted insignificant or negative relationships between TQM and job satisfaction, arguing that TQM programs may lead to loss of motivation and to dissatisfaction, in a more challenging environment, requiring greater individual skill and high involvement (Boje & Winsor, 1993; Luthans, 1996).

In contrast, a number of studies provided findings supporting the idea that employees exposed to high levels of soft TQM practices, experience higher levels of job satisfaction (Arsic et al., 2012; Chang, Chiu & Chen, 2010; Guimaraes, 1996; Jun, Cai, & Shin, 2006; Karia & Ahmad, 2000; Ooi et al., 2007; Prajogo & Cooper, 2010). For example, Boselie and van der Wiele (2002) found that positive perception of employees on soft TQM elements leads to a higher level of satisfaction. More specifically, Ooi et al. (2008) found a positive and significant relationship between teamwork and employees' job satisfaction. Examining the impact of TQM practices on work-related attitudes, Karia and Asaari (2006) found that employees' perception of training and education, empowerment, and teamwork do have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. This leads to the following research hypothesis:

H4. Employees' perception of TQM-based HRM initiatives are positively related to job satisfaction

2.5 - Job satisfaction and employees' organizational commitment

OC and job satisfaction are often viewed as interrelated variables (Chen, 2006), and have been considered as factors reflecting positive attitudes towards organizations, and important in assessing employees' intention to leave, and their contributions to the organization. As stressed by Harrison, Newman, and Roth (2006), job satisfaction and OC overlap somehow and should be both considered when studying attitudes and behaviours. Notwithstanding, both attitudes are yet distinguishable; while job satisfaction represents affective responses to specific aspects of the job and denotes the positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of the job, OC reflects affective responses to the whole organization, and the degree of attachment employees feel towards the organization (Guimaraes, 1996).

Studies generally report positive relationships between job satisfaction and OC (Meyer et al., 2002; Westover, Westover, & Westover, 2010), supporting the thought that satisfied employees are more committed than dissatisfied ones.

The idea is that high levels of job satisfaction may enhance OC, since employees satisfied with their jobs may perceive greater benefits in remaining in their organizations compared to employees whose job is less enjoyable (Guimaraes, 1996). Nevertheless, findings report that job satisfaction may influence differently the dimensions of OC.

For example, Gunlu, Aksarayli, and Perçin (2010) found that job satisfaction has a significant influence on both affective and normative commitment, while job satisfaction does not have any significant influence on continuance commitment. Yousef (2002) revealed that job satisfaction influences directly and positively both affective and normative commitment, but negatively continuance commitment. Based on these evidences the following hypotheses were derived:

- H5. *There is a positive relationship between employees' job satisfaction and Normative Commitment*
- H6. *There is a positive relationship between employees' job satisfaction and Affective Commitment*
- H7. *There is no relationship (or negative) between employees' job satisfaction and Continuance Commitment*

Some researchers stress that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between several antecedents (e.g. workplace activities, job opportunities, or job characteristics), and

employees' behaviour on the job (e.g., organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours) (e.g. Crede et al., 2007).

Thus, when employee experience uplifts or hassles, their will to remain or leave depends on thoughts and emotions related to the satisfaction they have with their job (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Weiss & Beal, 2005). As a result, considering the above hypotheses there is a possibility that Job satisfaction may play a mediating role in the relationship between TQM-based HRM and OC. In other words, TQM-based HRM may have also an indirect effect on OC through Job Satisfaction. Indeed, several researchers have proposed causal models of OC in which the influence of the different independent antecedents on commitment is fully or partly mediated through their effect on job satisfaction (e.g. Meyer & Smith, 2000). Such prediction is highlighted in the following hypothesis:

H8: Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between TQM-Based HRM and OC

On the basis of the above discussion, Figure 1 presents the research model of the relationships among TQM-based HRM practices, job satisfaction, and the dimensions of OC. These hypothesized relationships are tested in the empirical research model that follows.

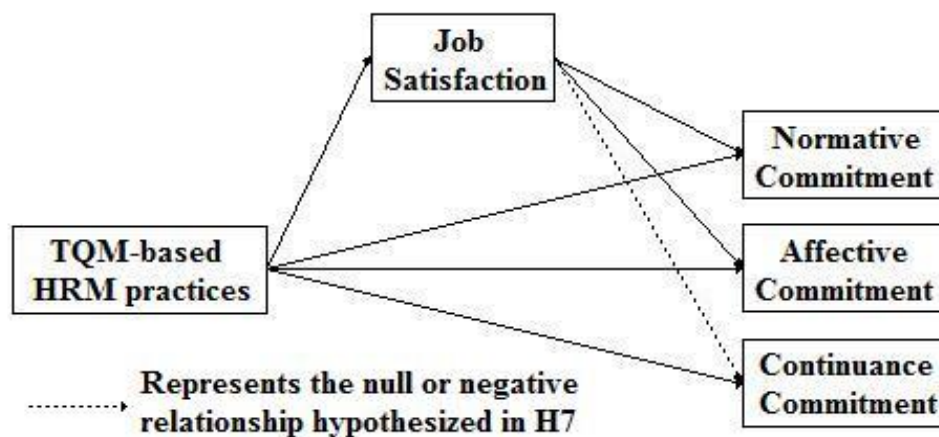


Figure 1 - Structural analysis model

3. Research design methodology

3.1. Procedures and sample

Data was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire applied in three organizations belonging to the Portuguese public social security system. Since the focus of this research deals with TQM-based human resources practices, these organizations were chosen because *i)* all these are undergoing changing processes toward quality improvement, but *ii)* each one has reached a different step toward excellence: *i)* ISS, IP [*“Committed to Excellence”* EFQM’s Recognition (*European Foundation for Quality Management*)], *ii)* II, IP [*“Recognized For Excellence”* 3star EFQM’s Recognition], and *iii)* IGFSS, IP [ISO 9001 Certification since 2007 and *“Recognized for Excellence”* 5star EFQM’s Recognition, among other distinctive quality awards]. The number of potential respondents in our sample was 10,896 employees.

To collect data effectively and, because of the known difficulties associated with printed surveys, an internet-based survey was used. To test its consistency, the questionnaire was pre-tested by 10 employees with different professional categories, from two different units of a Portuguese Regional Centre. After confirming that the instrument was free from misunderstandings, a Web site was designed with an online questionnaire, accessible from 6th of June 2011 to 8th July 2011.

Since using internet to collect data implies several key methodological issues, the survey was designed and implemented following Dillman’s (2000) guidelines. The instrument facilitated the collection of data, since respondents were requested to answer to all the questions, before moving on, allowing no missing data. A total of 788 completed and usable observations was received and retained for further analysis; the sample was considered acceptable, according to rules highlighted in Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

3.2 - Measurement and scale development

The research model exhibited in figure 1 highlights the hypothesized relationships between a set of latent variables, not allowed to correlate in the model.

TQM-based HRM Practices - To measure TQM-based HRM Practices we used an adapted version of the instrument designed by Perdomo-Ortiz, González-Benito, & Galende (2009), based on three core dimensions: *i*) training, *ii*) teamwork, and *iii*) motivation. **Training** was operationalized with a five-item measure scale. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as “*Our organization provides us with training in specific topics related to quality*”, and “*Our organization provides us with training focused on solving problems at work*”. **Teamwork** was assessed through a five-item measure scale. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as “*Our organization clearly promotes the formation of working teams*”, and “*The selection process of personnel in our organization is clearly based on teamwork criteria*”. **Motivation** was evaluated through a seven-item measure scale. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as “*Our organization usually rewards us for suggestions leading to change and improvement*”, and “*Our organization clearly promotes our participation in decision-making processes*”. All the dimensions were measured through a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), to ensure a significant statistical variability among survey answers.

Job Satisfaction - To measure job satisfaction, we considered that the use of the Brayfield-Rothe Job Satisfaction Scale would be a valid and reliable measure. The instrument benefits from being *i*) brief, *ii*) a global measure, and *iii*) not job-specific (O'Neill, 2005). Moreover, the scale's reliability and validity has been supported and reported in several previous studies (e.g., Brooke, Russell, & Price, 1988).

Proposed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951), but commonly employed in organizational research, for decades (e.g. Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006), this unidimensional scale is a measure of job satisfaction that has both affective and cognitive components (Ilies & Judge, 2004). More specifically, job satisfaction was assessed through a five-item version of the Brayfield-Rothe satisfaction scale, still extensively used in job satisfaction research, both in private and public sector contexts (e.g. O'Neill, 2005).

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as “I feel fairly satisfied with my actual job”, and “I consider my job rather unpleasant” (reverse scored), through a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Organizational commitment - The three components of OC were assessed through the 19-item

Three Component Model scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1997), and measured through a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Reflecting employees' emotional attachment to the organization, **affective commitment** was assessed through six items, including, as example “*I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own*”. Reflecting employees' moral obligation to remain with the company, **normative**

commitment was assessed through six items, including, as example "I would feel guilty if I left my organization now". Reflecting employees' perceived cost/benefit analysis of remaining with the organization, **continuance commitment** was measured through seven items, including as example "Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave my organization right now", among others.

The reliability analysis of the measurement scales was performed through the internal consistency method estimated by Cronbach's alpha, usually used in studies based on constructs assessed through multiple Likert scales. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha value obtained for each variable. As observed, results indicate acceptable and good values for all the scale variables used in our research, ranging from 0.825 to 0.929 (clearly above the typical 0.70 cut-off value), suggesting that the theoretical constructs exhibit appropriate psychometric characteristics (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978), and thus suitable levels of internal consistency. The table 1 also displays descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), as well as Pearson correlations between all of the constructs used in our research.

Table 1 - Means, standard deviations and correlations

	Mean	SD	Alpha	AC	CC	NC	Training	Teamwork	Motivation	JobSat
AC	5.23	1.26	0.854	1						
CC	4.65	1.22	0.825	.141**	1					
NC	4.39	1.32	0.836	.549**	.316**	1				
Training	4.18	1.45	0.920	.418**	.171**	.416**	1			
Teamwork	4.03	1.38	0.929	.468**	.165**	.478**	.782**	1		
Motivation	3.32	1.39	0.912	.372**	.099**	.427**	.676**	.725**	1	
JobSat	5.24	1.22	0.880	.636**	.095**	.527**	.474**	.519**	.468**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

3.3 - Descriptive statistics and measures validity

When self-report questionnaires are used to collect data, common method bias (CMB) may be a concern (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010). Most researchers agree that CMB (i.e., variance attributable to the data collection method rather than to the measures considered) is a potential problem in behavioural research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Since we collected all the information used in this research from a single instrument, CMB could present a problem.

To address this threat, several recommendations proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were considered (e.g. pretest, anonymity safeguard). In addition to these procedural advices, we

also performed the Harman's single-factor test (Harman, 1967), one of the most widely used instruments to address the issue of CMB, as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). In accordance, an unrotated principal component factor analysis was performed, including all the variables of the model.

The basic assumption of Harman's single-factor test is that if a substantial amount of CMB is present, either a single factor will emerge from the factor analysis, or one general factor will account for the majority of the covariance among the measures (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The factor analysis (using the Eigenvalue greater-than-one criterion) enhanced six distinct factors, accounting for 65 per cent of the variance. Moreover, the first factor captured only 35 per cent of the variance.

Results also show that all primary loadings are significant (0.513 to 0.846) with all items loading cleanly on a single factor (no items cross loading above .15), suggesting a clean six-factor solution in which convergent and discriminant validity are evident. Thus, results suggest that common method bias may not be a serious threat to the validity of our study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 - Profile of Survey Participants

In order to provide additional information about the sample, the questionnaire designed for this study also collected additional basic demographic variables (i.e. age, gender, marital status, educational level), and work-related variables (i.e. organizational and position tenure, supervising/leading role). Results show that seventy three per cent (537) of participants were male and twenty seven per cent (202) of these were female. Respondents' average age was 44 years (Standard deviation = 8.9), ranging from 23 to 66 years, and only one-third of them (34%) were not married (single, divorced or cohabiting). Regarding respondents' educational level, data analysis highlighted that 41.4% hold primary or secondary school qualifications, while 58.6% have higher levels of education.

Respondents were asked to report both the tenure with the firm and the tenure within their actual position. The majority of employees had worked at their present organization for eleven years or more, with organizational tenure ranging from 1 to 42 (Mean = 17 and Standard deviation = 11). Moreover, results also show that the average position tenure was around 11 years (Standard deviation = 11). Finally, data analysis also highlight that 74.2% of respondents have supervising/leading roles in their organization.

4.2 - Assumptions of the analysis methods

The analysis of the different assumptions was conducted according to several recommendations prescribed by Hair et al. (2010). The assumption of normality was checked through measures of asymmetry [skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (Ku)]. The values of |Sk| ranged from 0.011 to 1.215 and those of |Ku| ranged from 0.087 to 1.171, suggesting that there is no violation of this assumption (see Kline, 2004; Hair et al., 2010).

Linearity was analysed through Pearson correlations. Significant linear relationships were found (significance level of 1%) between all the variables, confirming thus the assumption. Moreover, scatterplot matrices were visually inspected. None of the relationships in the analysis showed obvious violations of linearity. Regarding multicollinearity, we used the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) and the Tolerance values (T). According to Hair et al. (2010),

values of $VIF \leq 10$, and $T \geq 0.1$ indicate a low degree of multicollinearity. All the measures computed indicate a low degree of multicollinearity with $T_s \geq 0.296$ and $VIFs \leq 3.354$. Finally, regarding the detection of multivariate outliers, we used the Mahalanobis distance. Results highlighted 100 atypical observations that were removed from the study.

4.3- Validation of the measurement model

Following the two-stage model-building process recommended for structural equation modelling (SEM), we first performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity of the measurement model - whether the data fit the hypothesized measurement model. The maximum likelihood method was used for this purpose, for being the most common approach used in structural equation analysis, due to its robustness (Hair et al., 2010).

From the analysis of the diagram with standard measures and the fit measures report generated by the software used (IBM SPSS AMOS, v.19.0), the factorial validity of the measuring model was assumed, as all the observed variables had high factor loadings ($\lambda > 0.5$) and suitable individual reliabilities ($R^2 \geq 0.25$). Furthermore, to test the convergent validity, we computed the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. According to the results, convergent validity was assumed, since values were within acceptable thresholds (cut-off value: 0,5 - Hair et al., 2010); the lowest AVE value observed was 0.562. Discriminant validity confirmation was performed according to suggestions proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Results suggest that our measurement model does have adequate discriminant validity, since the AVE value for any two dimensions exceeded the square of the correlation between those two dimensions.

Finally, the relative, absolute and parsimony fit measures computed, are summarized in Table 2. Findings show that all the several measures computed are better than the threshold values usually recommended, suggesting that a good model fit has been achieved.

Table 2 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis - Model Fit Measures

FIT MEASURES	VALUES	ACCEPTANCE LEVEL (see Hair et al., 2010)
Absolute Measures		
CMIN/DF	2.867 (*)	<2 (good) 5 (acceptable)
GFI (<i>Goodness of Fit Index</i>)	0.892	>0.9 (good) 0.95 (very good)
RMSEA	0.050	<0.05 (very good) 0.08 (good) 0.1 (poor)
Relative Measures		

CFI (<i>Comparative fit index</i>)	0.936	>0.9 (good) 0.95 (very good)
Parsimony Measures		
PCFI (<i>Parsimony Comparative Fit Index</i>)	0.834	>0.6 (reasonable) 0.8 (good)
PGFI (<i>Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index</i>)	0.740	>0.6 (reasonable) 0.8 (good)

(*) CMIN = 2,095.434 (p=0.000) and DF = 731

4.4 - Validation of the proposed model

In order to test the full theoretical research framework illustrated previously in Figure 1, the Maximum Likelihood method of estimation was kept. Table 3 shows that the structural model also presents reasonably satisfactory fit indices.

As observed, except for the GFI, all fit indices are well within acceptable limits, providing strong evidence of model fit, and consequently, internal and external consistency. Even so, the GFI value was considered acceptable as it is very close to the reference value.

Table 3 - Structural Model Fit Indices

FIT MEASURES	VALUES	ACCEPTANCE LEVEL (see Hair et al., 2010)
Absolute Measures		
CMIN/DF	2.978 (*)	<2 (good) 5 (acceptable)
GFI (<i>Goodness of Fit Index</i>)	0.898	>0.9 (good) 0.95 (very good)
RMSEA	0.052	<0.05 (very good) 0.08 (good) 0.1 (poor)
Relative Measures		
CFI (<i>Comparative fit index</i>)	0.931	>0.9 (good) 0.95 (very good)
Parsimony Measures		
PCFI (<i>Parsimony Comparative Fit Index</i>)	0.843	>0.6 (reasonable) 0.8 (good)
PGFI (<i>Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index</i>)	0.748	>0.6 (reasonable) 0.8 (good)

(*) CMIN = 2,209.37 (p=0.000) and DF = 742

This research analyzed a chain of relationships between TQM-based HRM practices, job satisfaction, and OC, in the public sector. As observed in Figure 2, all the first seven hypotheses proposed were supported.

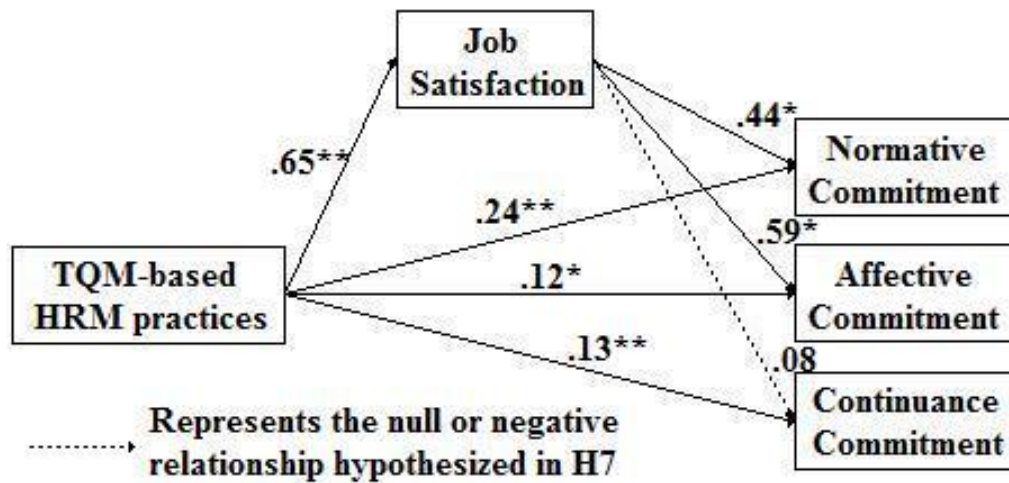


Figure 2 - Structural model with standardized coefficients

To check whether job satisfaction mediated the relationship between TQM-based HRM practices and OC (H8), the bootstrap re-sampling method was used, due to its precise calculation of confidence intervals for mediating effects, as suggested by various researchers (e.g. Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The number of samples was adjusted to 1,000 repetitions, as suggested by Cheung and Lau (2008).

Findings summarized in Table 4 confirm the hypothesized partial mediation effect, in what affective and normative dimensions concerns. In fact, the results highlight a significant indirect effect of TQM-based HRM practices on both affective commitment ($\beta=0.378$, $p=0.009$) and normative commitment ($\beta=0.286$, $p=0.011$), confirming the mediating role played by job satisfaction, and showing that the total effect of the predictor variable on the dependent variable is considerably greater than the direct effect shown in the structural model with standardized coefficients.

The significance of the indirect effect is considerable, since around 76% and 55% of total effects are mediated through job satisfaction, for affective and normative dimensions, respectively. The results obtained support therefore partially the hypothesis H8, according to which "Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between TQM-Based HRM and OC".

Table 4 - Testing Mediation based on AMOS Bootstrapping output

	TQM-BASED HRM			JOB SATISFACTION
	Direct Effect	Indirect	Total Effect	
JOB SATISFACTION	0.646**	0	0.646**	0
NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	0.236**	0.286*	0.522**	0.443*
CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT	0.127*	0.050	0.177**	0.077
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	0.119**	0.378**	0.497**	0.586*

Note: Method used for bootstrap confidence intervals: Bias-corrected percentile

* Significance level of 5% ** Significance level of 1%

4.5 - Discussion

The importance of nurturing employees' commitment is not new. Indeed, studies on OC have gained a growing importance among researchers all over the world, and more and more organizations realize that their competitiveness depends highly on ensuring employees' commitment and loyalty.

However, despite the widespread recognition of the value of OC, and although many studies have focused on OC, previous research has failed in investigating potential strategies to enhance employees' OC in public and non-profit organizations, especially because most of the studies conducted on this issue have focused on employees' attitudes and behaviour in for-profit-sector workplaces. This is certainly a gap in literature, since literature reports consistent evidence that public sector employees are relatively less committed to organizations' goals and values than their private sector counterparts (e.g. Zeffane, 1994), especially because of differences generally attributed to reasons as goals' ambiguity, or inflexible procedures, characterizing public sector organizations.

Public organizations are generally described as top-down hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, and managed through a large set of structured rules and procedures. In Hazlett and Hill's (2000) study, public organizations are characterized as: lack of clear customer focus; too many procedures; people working in divisional 'silos'; too many targets; lack of awareness of strategic direction; domination by stakeholders, among others. Within a context characterized by numerous and wide external changes (competitive, technological, and regulatory shifts), a large set of reforms are taking place in public organizations, focusing on improving factors as efficacy and competitiveness. Such environment is pushing these organizations to modify their typical bureaucratic structures and adopt new managerial strategies, involving often the adoption of models developed typically for the private sector.

TQM has been found to have a significant influence on employees' affective reactions to organizational life (e.g. Allen and Brady, 1997; Boon, Arumugam, and Hwa, 2005; Guimaraes, 1996), although the knowledge on the influence of TQM dimensions on OC remains quite unclear, at least useful, both for theoretical and practical purposes, considering the contradictory results observed throughout literature, and the corresponding lack of agreement between researchers.

The overall objective of this research was to study the influence of TQM-based HRM practices on OC within the context of public services. The findings indicate that soft TQM practices may be considered as a significant option to develop employees' job-related attitudes. More specifically, results provide evidence that support the hypothesized significant influence of

TQM-based HRM practices both on job satisfaction, and on OC (*H1 to H4*) in line with other previous findings suggesting a significant influence of TQM issues on employees' affective reactions to organizational life within a TQM environment.

The results corroborate findings of previous studies, suggesting that TQM-based HRM initiatives as education and training, employees' participation, or teamwork play a key role in the development of affective commitment (e.g. Gould-Williams, 2003; Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007; Paré and Tremblay, 2007), continuance commitment (Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007; Paré and Tremblay, 2007), and normative commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1997) stressed that a given antecedent variable may contribute to the development of any or all of the dimensions of OC, depending on how it is perceived.

The findings support the idea that TQM-based HRM practices may contribute to a sense of desire, obligation, or a need to remain with the organization, depending on whether it is viewed as a reflection of organizational support, a benefit requiring reciprocation, or an investment of time to acquire organization-specific skills, respectively (Meyer and Parfyonova, 2010). Such evidence is consistent with the view of social exchange theorists, who argue that psychological contracts between employees and organizations are key determinants of organisational behaviour, stressing that depending on perceptions of organizations' commitment, employees will respond by adjusting their behaviour towards the organization accordingly. In fact, according to the social exchange theory, employees' organizational commitment depends on their perceived balance of rewards over inputs (see Gouldner, 1960): the more favourable this exchanges from employees' viewpoint, the greater their commitment toward the organization.

Furthermore, our research corroborates findings of many studies across different countries and industries, enhancing strong positive relationships between both variables (Meyer et al., 2002; Westover, Westover, & Westover, 2010), and supporting the assertion that satisfied employees are more committed to continued employment than dissatisfied employees. Moreover, the results of this study are in line with other studies (Gunlu, Aksarayli, & Perçin, 2010; Yousef, 2002), showing job satisfaction to be significantly and positively related to both affective and normative commitment, but insignificantly or negatively related to continuance commitment, corroborating the idea that job satisfaction may influence differently the various dimensions of OC, and thus supporting the research hypotheses *H5 to H7*.

Finally, job satisfaction was hypothesized to play a mediating role between TQM-based HRM and OC (*H8*). Findings confirm that TQM-based HRM does have an indirect effect on OC through **job satisfaction**, in line with results of several researchers who proposed causal models of OC in which the influence of the different independent antecedents are fully or

partly mediated through their effect on job satisfaction (e.g. Meyer & Smith, 2000). Our results corroborate some research lines stressing that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between employees' behaviour on the job (e.g., organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours) (e.g. Crede et al., 2007), and several antecedents (e.g. workplace activities, job opportunities, or job characteristics).

5- Conclusions and Contributions

5.1 - Final Remarks

To our knowledge, no previous research has studied the specific influence of TQM-based HRM in employees' work-related attitudes in public organizations. Our research brings insights into the influence of TQM on OC, from a human resources perspective. More specifically, the objective in this paper was twofold: *i)* to analyze the relationship between TQM-based HRM practices and OC, and *ii)* to determine whether job satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in such relationship. Results confirm our hypotheses, showing the significant contribution of TQM-based HRM practices in enhancing OC in the public sector. In addition, findings also confirm the mediating role of job satisfaction in such relationship.

5.2 - Contributions

Public administration researchers have highlighted a need for a wide understanding of employees' organizational commitment in public organizations considering its importance for organizations effectiveness (Su, Baird, and Blair, 2013).

The last couple of decades have witnessed a strong debate regarding what motivates public sector employees (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Indeed, many studies support the idea that unlike their private counterparts, public employees are less motivated by monetary issues (e.g. Brewer & Selden, 1998), and have a higher degree of intrinsic motivation (e.g. Houston, 2000).

Our findings are important in advancing the TQM research literature, since they contribute empirical evidence regarding the relationship between TQM-based HRM practices and OC. In fact, the TQM literature is essentially characterized by assumptions in what the association between these issues concerns, lacking clearly strong empirical support. Indeed, theoretical arguments and empirical findings are critically and widely dispersed, contributing to a knowhow too fragmented about such issues. This research extends previous studies conducted in several different contexts and provides great potential by advancing the TQM literature towards a better understanding of the relationship between TQM issues and OC in services in general and in the public sector in particular.

Moreover, showing a strong relationship between TQM-based HRM practices and OC, our findings provide additional support for the ideas of social exchange theory, according to which employees who perceive favorable treatments (something valuable) from employers are likely to return such favour, based on a sense of reciprocity (feeling obligation).

Literature comparing levels of OC between public and private sector employees reported consistent evidences that private sector employees exhibit a higher level of OC, comparing to employees in public sector organizations, for a number of reasons (e.g. goals' ambiguity, inflexible procedures). Our findings have significant managerial implications, as they suggest that TQM-based quality improvement programs are good options for public organizations wishing to enhance OC.

Over last decades, the public sector has been undergoing a process of deep transformations characterized by growing changes in scale and scope, looking for principles as transparency, effectiveness, or efficiency. In such a context, TQM-based quality improvement programs have been considered as alternative new organizational models for public institutions, providing higher levels of performance. In addition, our results suggest that public institutions wishing to embark in a TQM-based strategy will be able to raise employees' commitment. Specifically, our results underline the importance for public organizations to improve employees' perceptions of TQM-based HRM practices, including training and development opportunities, teamwork, and motivation-based initiatives, and thus meet their expectations.

The key importance of developing employees' organizational commitment has been a research issue for several years, and several studies have been stressing that rather than forcing employees' compliance with organizational goals, through close supervision, standardization of processes/outcomes, and extensive rules and procedures, organizations should follow a high-commitment approach, attempting to create the conditions necessary to facilitate voluntary employee involvement and identification with organizational goals (e.g. Gellatly et al., 2009). Because organizations' performance is highly dependent from beneficial behaviours, especially of key groups, our results suggest that public organizations should clearly consider developing TQM-based human resource management systems, clearly focused on encouraging employees to exhibit discretionary behaviours, and discouraging counterproductive ones.

Administrators in such environments should foster the development of human resource management systems focused on providing clear opportunities to participate in substantive decision-making processes regarding organizational outcomes, through TQM-based initiatives as quality circles, information sharing, suggestion schemes, incentives and other performance-based rewards, and opportunities to interact with other workgroups, among others. According to our results, such organizational behaviour would allow to reinforce employee's capabilities and signal positive assessments of employees' efforts, and thus

leading to employees' identification (emotional connection), and involvement with their organization, resulting in higher reciprocal commitment levels.

Furthermore, getting funding for TQM/OC-focused HR training initiatives is generally difficult, especially for organizations in the public sector. We are convinced that these research findings could assist greatly (especially as they are conducted in an EU country), providing insightful positive arguments to support financially such investments.

Finally, we believe that our results are also important for companies or associations that develop and sell training packages into public services environments, specifically in what programs' development concerns.

5.3 - Limitations and future research directions

Despite its contributions, our research has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. Our results, combined with some methodological, and contextual limitations point to a few issues where further research would be valuable both to academicians and managers. In fact, the outcomes of this research provide an impetus for further studies to explore more deeply the relationship between TQM-based human capital management strategies and OC.

Firstly, results are context-specific and, should be interpreted cautiously if extended to different contexts, in generalization attempts. Data was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire applied to employees of three organizations belonging to the Portuguese public social security system. As a result, future studies across other different context in the public sector, as well as across different countries are strongly recommended, toward subsequent efforts searching for a set of propositions generalizable to a variety of contexts.

Furthermore, although we are able to show that TQM-based HRM practices do have a positive effect on job satisfaction and OC, our research is still not sufficient to understand clearly and fully the nature of such relationships, as our research is cross-sectional in nature. Indeed, literature generally suggests that both TQM-based quality improvement strategies and OC are long-term and dynamic in nature, requiring significant investments over time, and thus positive outcomes may not be immediately recognized.

As a result, it may be reasonable to believe that the nature and significance of these relationships can vary over time, and thus, several extensions to this research may provide

further insights into the complex nature of employee commitment. However, such reasoning would lead to the use of alternative research approaches, longitudinal in nature, which would provide additional insights from the dynamic nature of the relationship, allowing further refinements of our findings.

Therefore it is critical for new advancements in both TQM and OC theory that further studies are conducted, based on longitudinal perspectives, which may capture such hypothetical reasoning, and yield new insights not fully captured in the actual literature body. For example, a longitudinal study would be able to capture the changing nature of the relationship between TQM-based quality improvement strategies and OC throughout employees' tenure.

Our opinion is that, attending to the insufficiencies of quantitative studies, this future line of research would have to be developed through qualitative approaches. In such a perspective, our research would be a valuable ground, since, to our knowledge, no previous research has focused on the influence of TQM-based human resources management in employees' work-related attitudes in the public sector.

Finally, future studies would contribute significantly to the literature by collecting data from both public and private sectors and comparing the effects of TQM-based HRM practices on the levels of OC between these two broad sectors.

6. References

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7. Attachments

Attachment 1 - Cover letter work



A IMPORTÂNCIA DOS RH NA MELHORIA DA QUALIDADE

O trabalho a desenvolver, sob a forma de dissertação de mestrado, versa sobre o tema "A importância dos RH na melhoria da qualidade" e trata, essencialmente, da importância que este tema tem actualmente nas Organizações modernas.

Efectivamente, o desafio será ver a sua aplicação ao Sector Público, mais especificamente à Segurança Social, já que os mais recentes estudos nesta área se aplicam, essencialmente, ao Sector Privado.

O objectivo deste estudo é analisar mais detalhadamente a relação que pode existir entre a Gestão de Recursos Humanos (HRM) e a Gestão da Qualidade Total (TQM) – HRMtqm - identificando variáveis que possam influenciar decisivamente a performance das Instituições envolvidas. Ou seja, pretende-se descobrir se existe de facto um conjunto de práticas de HRM que facilita a implementação da TQM.

A HRM é o elemento chave na implementação da TQM, desenvolvendo práticas ou procedimentos alinhados com os objectivos da TQM, em particular o conhecimento das pessoas, das equipas de trabalho, bem como a criatividade são importantes factores para o sucesso desta estratégia. Um adequado alinhamento da HRM irá suportar coerentemente a aplicação da TQM, retirando-se desta forma evidentes vantagens competitivas.

Desta forma, o ISS, IP, o IGFSS, IP e II, IP poderão conhecer e caracterizar melhor os seus colaboradores, o seu grau de satisfação relativamente ao trabalho que desenvolvem, bem como a percepção que têm da qualidade do trabalho que executam, permitindo aferir, ainda, o seu comprometimento e sentimento de pertença com a Organização.

Paralelamente, este estudo disponibilizará informação pertinente aos dirigentes para que tenham outra objectividade no relacionamento com os seus colaboradores, fazendo com que os mesmos se revejam na gestão diária dos processos e métodos utilizados.

Para tal, torna-se necessário a recolha de informação através de um inquérito por questionário on-line, com a denominação "*Práticas de Gestão de Recursos Humanos orientadas para a Qualidade Total e Empenhamento Organizacional*" dirigido a todos os colaboradores, independentemente da sua categoria profissional.

Este inquérito está já disponível através da ligação:

<http://172.26.35.60/index.php?sid=49532&lang=pt>

Ficam garantidos o anonimato e a confidencialidade das respostas, com os resultados do inquérito tratados de forma agregada, não permitindo qualquer identificação pessoal. As respostas terão um tratamento meramente académico.

Em suma, a execução deste trabalho visa contribuir para a melhoria do sistema de segurança social, utilizando uma nova abordagem.

Com os mais sinceros e gratos cumprimentos,

Jorge Pedro dos Santos Jesus

Attachment 2 - Questionnaire



Questionário

Práticas de Gestão de Recursos Humanos orientadas para a Qualidade Total e Empenhamento Organizacional

O presente questionário destina-se à recolha de dados necessária ao desenvolvimento da minha tese, elemento final para a conclusão do 2º Ciclo de Gestão na Universidade da Beira Interior.

O questionário divide-se essencialmente em dois grupos distintos de questões.

Numa primeira parte procura-se medir a sua concordância quanto a um conjunto de afirmações relacionadas com o empenhamento organizacional, o desempenho no trabalho, as práticas de Gestão de Recursos Humanos orientadas para a qualidade total, a percepção do suporte organizacional e a satisfação no trabalho. Para isso solicita-se que assinale para cada afirmação, o número que melhor expressa o seu sentimento, utilizando a seguinte escala:

1. Discordo totalmente
2. Discordo bastante
3. Discordo um pouco
4. Não concordo nem discordo
5. Concordo um pouco
6. Concordo muito
7. Concordo totalmente

A segunda parte visa recolher alguns dados sócio-demográficos e de caracterização profissional, solicitando-se que indique com uma cruz a opção que melhor caracteriza a sua situação ou que preencha os espaços em branco deixados para o efeito.

O questionário é de natureza confidencial e o tratamento dos dados é efectuado de uma forma global, não sendo assim sujeito a qualquer tipo de análise individualizada, assegurando a garantia do anonimato.

Desde já, agradeço a sua disponibilidade e colaboração

1. Empenhamento Organizacional

Numa escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 7 (concordo totalmente), indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações:

Concordo (ou não) com...	Grau de Concordância						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Não me sinto "emocionalmente ligado" a esta Organização							
Esta organização tem um grande significado pessoal para mim							
Não me sinto como "fazendo parte da família" nesta organização							
Na realidade sinto os problemas desta organização como se fossem meus							
Ficaria muito feliz em passar o resto da minha carreira nesta organização							
Não me sinto como fazendo parte desta organização							
Acredito que há muito poucas alternativas para poder pensar em sair desta organização							
Seria materialmente muito penalizador para mim, neste momento, sair desta organização, mesmo que o pudesse fazer							
Uma das principais razões para eu continuar nesta organização é que a saída iria requerer um considerável sacrifício pessoal, porque outra organização poderá não cobrir a totalidade de benefícios que tenho aqui							
Neste momento, manter-me nesta organização é tanto uma questão de necessidade material quanto de vontade pessoal							
Uma das consequências negativas para mim, se saísse desta organização, resulta da escassez de alternativas de emprego que teria disponíveis							
Muito da minha vida iria ser afectada se decidisse querer sair desta organização neste momento							
Como já dei tanto a esta organização, não considero actualmente a possibilidade de trabalhar noutra							
Eu não iria deixar esta organização neste momento porque sinto que tenho uma obrigação pessoal para com as pessoas que trabalham aqui							
Sinto que não tenho qualquer dever moral em permanecer na organização onde estou actualmente							
Mesmo que fosse uma vantagem para mim, sinto que não seria correcto deixar esta organização no presente momento							
Sentir-me-ia culpado se deixasse esta organização agora							
Esta organização merece a minha lealdade							
Sinto que tenho um grande dever para com esta empresa							

2. Desempenho no trabalho

Numa escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 7 (concordo totalmente), indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações:

Concordo (ou não) com...	Grau de Concordância						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O meu desempenho é melhor do que o dos meus colegas com qualificações similares							
O meu desempenho é melhor do que o de trabalhadores com qualificações similares em organizações similares							
O desempenho da minha organização é melhor do que o de organizações similares							

3. Práticas de Gestão de Recursos Humanos orientadas para a qualidade total

Numa escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 7 (concordo totalmente), indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações:

Concordo (ou não) com...	Grau de Concordância						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A organização proporciona-nos formação específica na área da qualidade							
A organização proporciona incentivos à educação e formação							
A organização aposta em nós ao nível do desenvolvimento de múltiplas competências e capacidades							
A organização proporciona-nos um conhecimento global da estrutura e funcionamento interno desta							
A organização proporciona-nos formação orientada para a resolução de problemas no trabalho							
A organização aposta na resolução de problemas através do trabalho em equipa							
A organização proporciona-nos incentivos à formação de equipas de trabalho							
A organização fomenta o uso de metodologias de trabalho em equipa							
O recrutamento de novos trabalhadores baseia-se na capacidade de trabalho em equipa							
A organização fomenta a delegação e a participação em equipas de trabalho							
A organização atribui prémios para sugestões de mudança e melhoria							
A organização atribui prémios associados ao bom desempenho							
A organização premeia o nosso empenhamento na melhoria da qualidade							
A organização promove o sentido de equidade no trabalho							
A organização promove o sentimento de pertença à Instituição							
A organização aposta no desenvolvimento de carreiras profissionais							
A organização fomenta a nossa participação na tomada de decisão							

4. Satisfação no trabalho

Numa escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 7 (concordo totalmente), indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações:

Concordo (ou não) com...	Grau de Concordância						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Estou realmente satisfeito com o meu actual trabalho							
Na maioria das vezes, estou entusiasmado com o meu trabalho							
Cada dia de trabalho parece nunca mais acabar							
Sinto um real prazer no meu trabalho							
Considero o meu trabalho algo desagradável							

5. Percepção do Suporte Organizacional

Numa escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 7 (concordo totalmente), indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações:

Concordo (ou não) com...	Grau de Concordância						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A Organização valoriza o meu contributo para o seu bem-estar							
Se a organização pudesse contratar alguém para me substituir, com um salário mais baixo, fá-lo-ia							
A organização falha na apreciação de qualquer esforço extra da minha parte							
A organização considera fortemente os meus objectivos e valores							
A organização ignoraria qualquer queixa minha							
A organização ignora os meus interesses quando toma decisões que me afectem							
A organização disponibiliza ajuda quando tenho um problema.							
A organização preocupa-se com meu bem-estar							
Mesmo se eu fizesse o melhor trabalho possível, a organização não notaria							
A organização está disposta a ajudar-me quando eu preciso de um favor especial							
A organização preocupa-se com a minha satisfação geral no trabalho							
Se tiver a oportunidade, a organização aproveitar-se-á de mim							
A organização mostra muito pouca preocupação por mim							
A organização valoriza as minhas opiniões							
A organização tem orgulho do meu rendimento no trabalho							
A organização tenta tornar o meu trabalho tão interessante quanto possível							

6. Variáveis demográficas

Idade (Anos):	
Sexo:	
Estado Civil:	
Tempo na Organização (Anos):	
Tempo no Actual Serviço (Anos):	
Habilitações Literárias:	
Exerce Funções de Chefia?	
Posição/Categoria Profissional:	

Mais uma vez, muito obrigado pela sua colaboração.