

Information As A Cause Of Anxiety In Organizations

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Abstract

The present work aims to reflect on the impact of information and its possible problems that affect the health of subjects in the context of organizations. When observing the current scenario of organizations, we analyze that information is capable of modifying the behavior of subjects in different ways. Therefore, at the same time that we must consider information as a resource for organizations, we must also understand its impacts on workers' health. The use of information causes numerous triggers in organizations, however, we highlight a behavior developed by workers that needs to be analyzed: informational anxiety. Given this scenario, it is essential that organizations use structured processes to minimize this type of behavior, and thus enable the full use of information as a resource. Therefore, the strategic use of the people management process becomes important, since this process already works directly with employees. In this way, the bibliographic survey on the topics, information as a resource that triggers anxiety and people management as a process, was used as a research method. After a bibliographic survey, a preliminary analysis of information as an organizational resource was carried out, as well as People Management as a process capable of minimizing the impact of information on workers' illness. As a result, the research presents initial guidelines aimed at activities in the people management process that can minimize the impact of information anxiety in the context of organizations.

Keywords: Information Anxiety; Worker's health; Organizations; People management

ABSTRACT

This document aims to reflect on the impact of information and its possible problems that affect the health of subjects in the context of organizations. By observing the current scenario of organizations, we analyze that information can modify the behavior of subjects in different ways. If we must consider information as a resource for organizations, we must also understand its impacts on the health of workers. The use of information causes numerous triggering factors in organizations; However, we highlight a behavior developed by workers that must be analyzed: information anxiety. Given this scenario, it is essential that organizations use structured processes to minimize this type of behavior and allow the full use of information as a resource. Therefore, the strategic use of the people management process is still important, as this process works directly with employees. A bibliographical survey on themes was used as a method of investigation, information as a triggering resource for anxiety and the management of people as a process. After a bibliographic survey, a preliminary analysis of information as an organizational resource was carried out, as well as the management of people as a process capable of minimizing the impact of information on illness on workers. As a result, the investigation presents initial guidelines for the activities of the people management process that can minimize the impact of information anxiety in the context of organizations.

Keywords: Information anxiety; Occupational health; Organizations; Persona management

INTRODUCTION

The research aims to approach people management concepts as a strategic resource to maximize the health of individuals in organizations, thus focusing on informational anxiety. Therefore, this research addresses two of the main resources in organizations, people and information.

When observing the organizational dynamics, we find a small contingent of workers with an accumulation of activities and functions. These activities and functions are surrounded by information from the organizations' internal and external environments, and as a result they are impacted by an 'avalanche of information', which makes them develop information anxiety behaviors.

In this sense, the people management process stands out as a strategic process, since this process has the function of valuing and reducing the impact of variables surrounding workers. However, for People Management to actually achieve these results, it is necessary to consider information as a resource in this context, as this way information can be worked on in a structured way by the people management process.

The research seeks to relate all these factors, emphasizing the importance of organizational subjects as strategic resources for organizations, as well as the impact of information on their health. As a result, the integration of these components becomes fundamental for the construction of initial people management guidelines that aim to minimize the informational anxiety behavior developed by workers in organizations.

METHODS

The research carried out a survey of information on the topics Anxiety in the context of Information, People Management, Occupational Health and Organizations through bibliographical research, using as a source books and

articles that address the topics mentioned, thus making the research exploratory . *Gil*¹⁾ points out that bibliographical research is “[...] developed based on already prepared material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles. Although almost all studies require some type of work of this nature, there is research developed exclusively from bibliographical sources”.

At the end of collecting information on the themes, they were analyzed and related. By relating the concepts and reflections found, from these concepts it was possible to construct new reflections regarding the importance of considering the behavior of information anxiety in the context of worker health, as well as minimum guidelines to support the people management process as a strategic tool in organizations.

Information in the context of the organization

Before understanding the information, it is necessary to understand the organization as a space responsible for bringing together resources and people to build products and/or provide services. Its relationships are dynamic and have countless relationships, in this sense, *Capra*² defines organization as “[...] a totality integrated through different levels of relationships, its nature is dynamic and its structures are not rigid, but flexible and stable. It results from the interactions and interdependence of its parts.”

These relationships are responsible for generating a large amount of information. *Valentim*³ defines information as “[...] at the same time, object and phenomenon, since it can be highlighted and analyzed by itself and can also be part of a process”. *Choo*⁴ treats information as an intrinsic component in all activities carried out by the organization.

It is important to understand that information is a constantly changing resource, which changes and changes all the time. In this sense, when conceptualizing information in the organizational context, it becomes necessary to make delimitations between two other components that relate, interact and undergo transformations in the relationship with information: “data” and “knowledge”. *Davenport and Prusak*,⁵ *Valentim*⁶ and *Pérez-Montoro*⁷ conceptualized data, information and knowledge in the light of information management.

“Data” are simple observations about the state of the world, data recorded with the help of some support, usually with the help of some technology. “Information” is data endowed with relevance and purpose, with the data being understood (attribution of meaning) and contextualized by an organizational subject. Meanwhile, knowledge is something that resides in the human mind, built in the organizational subject's relationship with the environments in which they operate. *Davenport and Prusak*⁵ systematize these concepts as shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 Data, information and knowledge

Dados	Informação	Conhecimento
<p align="center">Simples observações sobre o estado do mundo</p>	<p align="center">Dados dotados de relevância e propósito</p>	<p align="center">Informações valiosas da mente humana. Inclui reflexão, síntese, contexto</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilmente estruturado; • Facilmente obtido por máquinas; • Frequentemente quantificado; • Facilmente transferível. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requer unidade de análise; • Exige consenso em relação ao significado; • Exige necessariamente a mediação humana. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De difícil estruturação; • Difícil capturar em máquinas; • Frequentemente tácito; • De difícil transferência.

Source: Adapted from *Davenport and Prusak*⁽⁵⁾ (p.18).

When observing the relationship between data, information and knowledge, it is possible to infer that this relationship is cyclical. In this process, the organizational subject relates to the three components all the time, from the data in a given context and, based on their own perception and understanding, the worker adds meaning and contextualizes them, a fact that results in the transformation of data into information . The worker appropriates this information through his cognitive processes and thus begins the construction of knowledge in his mind.

By externalizing and recording the knowledge built on some type of support within the organization, the worker transforms knowledge into data again, which, in turn, will be latent to be interpreted and contextualized by other subjects that make up the organization, and these in turn time, they will be able to generate new knowledge.

Information Anxiety, its beginning and impact on the health of organizational subjects

Understanding the psychological impact provided by information to workers becomes a starting point for possible constructions in the context of people management. Thus, *Wurman*⁸ mentions that information was once considered one of the most sought-after commodities, just like rare wines, and that it is currently treated like a cat's claw vine, being good for keeping out of the world. This comparison demonstrates the current *status* of information in the current context of society. This situation occurs thanks to technologies, after all, through them it is possible to obtain unlimited access to any type of information at any time.

The main technology for the above is the internet, as it currently acts as a means of accessing this information. Through the internet, all subjects in society are leveled, after all, a teenager and a century-old institution now have the same information

and consequently the same role and value. It is important to highlight that, before the internet, access to information was restricted, and unlike today, access and acquisition of information (through books) required a lot of financial capital. ⁸

At the same time that the internet seems to be the solution to all problems regarding access to information, it makes access difficult, after all, the internet enhances the insertion of information and exponentially increases the volume of information, after all, we are currently consumers and producers of information on the internet.

Therefore, the big challenge is not access, but rather filtering this information, as the volume of information on the internet is increasingly growing and the filtering process becomes complex. Another important point is the use of filtered information, since the same filtered information can be correct and useful for one group of people and incorrect and worthless for another group.

When we combine the complexity provided by the internet in the context of organizations, workers and informational demands are generated all the time in an intense manner, after all, *Choo* ⁴⁾ states that information within the organization is an intrinsic component in all organizations' activities. Author ⁴ also points out that, "...] Without an understanding of the organizational processes through which information is transformed into perception, knowledge and action, companies are not able to realize the importance of their information sources and technologies".

It is observed that workers inevitably receive an avalanche of information, without even needing to look for it. This informational avalanche occurs regardless of the organization's segment. *Evans* and *Wurster* ²⁾ mention that the physical world is shaped by information and mention that a high-tech car has the same computing power as a good personal computer.

At the moment that we consider information as a fundamental and basic resource in the organizational context, especially for the subjects that compose it, we need to consider the consequences of this information overload, since its excess leads to frustration and illness for the subjects. A frequent behavior seen in individuals who make up organizations is information anxiety, a term coined by *Wurman* .⁸ *Shedroff*¹⁰ mentions that information anxiety takes several forms, among which the author highlights, frustration due to the inability to “stay in the know”, frustration with the quality of what is offered to the subject, guilt for not being more informed and, arrogance of “knowing before others”. In this way, we consider these 4 forms presented that refer to information anxiety behavior, as can be seen in [table 2](#) .

Chart 2 Information anxiety behavior

Tipo de comportamento	Descrição
Frustração pela incapacidade de ‘ficar por dentro’	A tentativa de ‘ficar por dentro’ de todos os dados que rodeiam a vida profissional dos sujeitos. Destaca-se que, o volume de dados que estão em torno da vida profissional de um sujeito é incalculável, afinal, esses dados são muitas vezes modificados e dão origem a outros incontáveis dados. Essa frustração permeia as atividades que esses sujeitos realizam nas organizações, uma vez que esses sujeitos atuam com dados internos e externos e muitas vezes não possuem a percepção destes dados nos processos que realizam nas organizações. Com isso os sujeitos sentem a necessidade de sempre estarem atentos e buscarem atualizações de dados/informações.
Frustrações diante da qualidade do que é oferecido ao sujeito	A insegurança quanto a qualidade dos dados/informações disponíveis e oferecidas aos sujeitos das organizações podem gerar sensações de baixa qualidade, tornando os sujeitos inseguros e disparando a necessidade de buscar cada vez mais dados/informações que os dê a sensação de qualidade.
Culpa de não estar mais informado	A frequente sensação de não estar informado o suficiente gera o sentimento de culpa por não estar informado o suficiente. Assim como as demais formas de ansiedade de informação, esta forma dispara a necessidade de busca e atualização de dados/informações.
Arrogância de ‘saber antes dos outros’	O saber antes dos demais é um sentimento provocado pelas pressões das organizações e dos demais sujeitos que compõe estas organizações. Nesse sentido essas pressões fazem com que os sujeitos estejam sempre alerta quanto a dados/informações relacionados com as organizações.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on *Shedroff* .⁽¹⁰⁾

In short, it is necessary to understand that information anxiety has to do with the way we relate to the data around us. In this sense, it is important for organizations to equip themselves with strategies that enable greater awareness of this behavior. Among countless possibilities, we identified the people management process as a tool in this context.

People Management as a strategic process

People management acts in the mobilization, guidance, direction and administration of people as resources in the organizational environment, understanding the diversities of this management in different organizational contexts.¹¹ As a result of a world in constant change, workers began to be considered “collaborators”. These employees are part of organizations and need to be flexible to ensure the organization's competitive advantage. For this reason, the people management process has become strategic for organizations.

This strategic context involves understanding people as a resource capable of providing a competitive advantage for the organization. In this sense, these resources act in the use of planning; analysis of coherence between policies and practices of organizational activities (internal alignment); integration of activity policies and practices with the business strategy (external alignment); proactive rather than reactive management and; decision-making on aspects of the employment relationship considering the highest level in the hierarchy.¹²

In line with *Sisson & Storey*,¹² *Gil*¹³ highlights the importance of people management as a strategic process and mentions the activities that this process carries out:

- *Planning and evaluation*: Feeding the information system with data about the people who are part of the organization, allowing managers to anticipate

the supply and demand for human resources available within the organizations;

- *Supply*: Ensures that employees are qualified for their positions - thus aligning employees with the organization's activities and strategies;
- *Compensation*: Develops compensation that is not limited to remuneration, but also develops and provides benefits and incentives;
- *Development*: Prepares employees through different types of training and other tools to be able to take on the challenges of organizations;
- *Labor relations*: Having policies in view of labor requirements;
- *Opportunities*: Ensures equality to diversities through the construction of strategies;
- *Health and safety*: Promotes and maintains occupational hygiene and safety factors, as well as ensuring physical and mental health.

For strategic people management to develop, a holistic and systemic view of organizational processes is necessary. It is also necessary to reflect on the behavioral, structural and operational aspects to understand the motivations, needs and other aspects related to employees.

Managers, regardless of their area, need to implement the people management process in their routine, and with this, align the process with organizational strategic planning, thus outlining the objectives that must be achieved, and then align people so that they are partners on this journey. Human values must always be taken into consideration and working on employee motivation can provide quality in their activities.

When we consider people management (PM) as a structured process and not as an area/department, organizations regardless of their size become capable of implementing PM as a process.

Information anxiety in the context of worker health as a challenge in the people management process: an initial perspective

Identifying the triggers, as well as the possible variables capable of creating informational anxiety behavior, becomes essential to then consider this behavior and the relationship with organizations, as well as the possible relationship with worker health. In this sense, it is up to the people management process to develop strategies and activities with the aim of reducing workers' information anxiety behaviors.

The [figure](#) presents people management as a process in the context of organizations, as well as the data, information and knowledge inserted in the internal environment of an organization. In parallel, possible processes are presented that relate directly or indirectly to the organization, which are responsible for generating and consuming, even if unconsciously, an infinite amount of data, information and knowledge.



Fig. - Employees and data, information and knowledge of the organization's internal and external environment.

As the central actor in these processes and consequently the most impacted by the information are the employees. These subjects receive, analyze and use information from the internal context of organizations, both consciously and unconsciously. After all, it is information generated within organizational operations, and is considered implicit resources in all activities carried out within the organization.

As a result, employees, in addition to considering the data, information and knowledge contained in the internal environments of organizations, also need to be concerned with information that is in the external environment and that has an impact on organizations. When we consider organizations, in this scenario, it becomes more complex for employees, since they increasingly have a greater number of activities, after all, organizations are moving towards lean structures.

Employees are the central actors in the aforementioned context, after all, they are responsible for the entire process of prospecting, filtering, selecting, analyzing and using information and transforming information into knowledge. It is noteworthy that these activities are normally carried out by these subjects using information technology, however, they are tools for accessing information, increasing the volume and not allowing filters for data and information.

Therefore, the relationship of these employees with data, information and knowledge from the internal and external environments are more intense, thus causing information anxiety behavior. In view of the above, it is up to the organization to develop strategies aimed at reducing the impact of this behavior on employees.

Among the possible strategies used for this purpose, the implementation of activities in the people management process with a focus on issues of employee behavior in the face of information stands out. In this way, initial people management guidelines were created focused on the use of information that can be developed in organizations ([table 3](#)).

Table 3 The activities of the people management process and proposals for working with information aimed at reducing forms of anxiety

Gestão de pessoas	Proposta para o trabalho com a informação voltada para a redução das formas de ansiedade
Planejamento e avaliação	Construir estratégias voltadas para o melhor aproveitamento das pessoas quanto as informações. Nesse sentido cabe a organização realizar atividades capazes de demonstrar para as pessoas quais são as informações que podem proporcionar impacto na organização. Com isso espera-se que as pessoas consigam coletar informações corretas e perder menos tempo, tornando-se mais assertivas dentro da avalanche informacional que encontram-se.
Suprimento	Desenvolver atividades que proporcione aos colaboradores compartilharem boas práticas e ferramentas quanto ao uso da informação e com isso, diminuindo o retrabalho e possíveis <i>stress</i> no contexto informacional.
Compensação	Analisar as demandas e motivações das pessoas que compõe a organização é ponto inicial para construir compensações no âmbito da informação. Nesse sentido, integrar os processos informacionais dentro das compensações existentes visam construir um cultura voltada para a valorização da informação pela organização.
Desenvolvimento	Construir competências informacional nos colaboradores com enfoque na prospecção, monitoramento e uso. Essas competências são desenvolvidas por meio de treinamentos, participação de eventos entre outras ações voltadas para o tratamento da informação enquanto recurso. Sugere-se o desenvolvimento de uma escala sobre competência em informação dentro da organização, pois, os sujeitos que possuem maior competência informacional (estarão em uma escala maior), podem colaborar com os sujeitos que estão em uma escala menor competência. Com isso identifica-se os sujeitos e seus níveis quanto ao uso da informação.
Relações de trabalho	Desenvolver conjuntamente com os colaboradores as regras, diretrizes e demais aspectos que podem auxiliar os trabalhadores quanto a 'avalanche informacional' que estão expostos. Sugere-se que esse desenvolvimento tenha como base as questões jurídicas que envolvem aspectos da relação entre os colaboradores e as organizações.
Oportunidades	Com o desenvolvimento de escalas, tratadas no desenvolvimento, o colaborador passa compreender de maneira clara todas as oportunidades disponíveis na organização quanto ao uso da informação enquanto recurso. Nesse momento deve-se alinhar a integração das inúmeras diversidades existentes na organização e com isso possibilitar igualdade de tratamento.
Saúde e segurança	Compreender a dinâmica da informação enquanto recurso é importante para que a mesma possa ser analisada enquanto processo e recurso, bem como impacto que provocam nos colaboradores. Com isso é necessário o desenvolvimento de ações voltadas para conscientização e prevenção do impacto da informação enquanto recurso na vida do colaborador. Após isso cabe a organização desenvolver estratégias, ações e eventos com enfoque na saúde mental desses sujeitos, bem como a construção de estratégias que visem desconectar os colaboradores de dispositivos digitais.

Source: Developed by the authors.

When looking at the proposals for employees aimed at reducing forms of anxiety, it is possible to see the importance of incorporating them into the people management process as functions included in their activities. Therefore, to the same extent that information is valued, it begins to be worked on in an organized manner and with balanced intensity.

It is important to mention that when integrating the parameters proposed in table 3, it is expected to work with information as a resource and, therefore, enable its control, use and the effects it has on the worker's health. It is noteworthy that more and more organizations operate with a reduced number of people, thus accumulating a greater number of activities, which provides an 'informational avalanche'. Therefore, the importance of working with information in the context of reducing its impact on employee health is evident.

PARTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

When analyzing the dynamics of society in the face of the information explosion, it is observed that this leads to numerous information anxiety behaviors. When these situations are directed towards organizations, we observe that they act more intensely, since organizations are inserted in complex competitive processes.

In this sense, the People Management process can act as an important strategic component for organizations that aim to minimize the negative impacts of information on the health of their employees. With this, the people management process becomes support for reducing information anxiety.

The research is ongoing and sought to draw preliminary attention to the relationship between People Management and Occupational Health in the context of information anxiety in Organizations. Currently, research is in the process of deepening the practical relationships between the themes covered in this work,

especially in companies in segments where employees are submerged in information.

Thus, the next step of the research will be its application and analysis in the universe of Information Technology professionals and with this, validating the People Management guidelines outlined preliminarily in this research, aiming to minimize problems with information anxiety. It is recommended to analyze other professional universes, since it is possible that each of them causes information anxiety in other formats.

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