Improving job satisfaction: a systematic review

The study was conducted based on the motivation to seek the understanding of a growing theme in the literature in recent years: the improvement in job satisfaction. The topic has generated interest by researchers, mainly due to the absence of job satisfaction or lack of employee engagement. There is a phenomenon of considerable proportion in the movement, whether voluntary or quiet quitting. The systematic analysis of the literature presents 196 articles from 1992 to 2022 and indicates a substantial increase in publications in the last five years. In particular, the United States has the highest concentration of publications. The main aspects identified are the quality of organizations' management, leadership, and performance. Such elements are related to the employee's motivation and commitment to the organization. There are indications of a possible gap in the working relationships between managers and their direct reports, which may be related to trust. A second highlight refers to the high volume of publications in the nursing and healthcare field, which represents a consequence of the pandemic and the pressure on health professionals. Finally, there is a perception of the absence of publications on the subject in Brazil, which opens up a new opportunity for research.

Palavras-chave: Job satisfaction improvement; Systematic analysis; Bibliometrics.

Melhoria da satisfação no trabalho: uma revisão sistemática

O estudo foi realizado a partir da motivação de buscar o entendimento de um tema em crescimento na literatura nos últimos anos: a melhoria na satisfação com o trabalho. O tema tem gerado interesse por pesquisadores, principalmente em função da consequência da ausência de satisfação no trabalho ou falta de engajamento do funcionário. Há um fenômeno de grande proporção no movimento seja de demissão voluntária ou silenciosa. A análise sistemática da literatura apresenta 196 artigos no período de 1992 até 2022, e indicou grande aumento de publicações nos últimos cinco anos. Em destaque, os Estados Unidos têm a maior concentração de publicações. Os principais aspectos identificados são a qualidade de gestão das organizações, liderança e desempenho. Tais aspectos se relacionam com a motivação e o comprometimento do empregado com a organização. Há indícios de uma possível lacuna nas relações de trabalho entre gestores e gerenciados, o que pode estar relacionado com a confiança. Um segundo destaque se refere ao alto volume de publicações no campo de enfermagem, o que representa uma consequência da pandemia e a pressão sobre os profissionais da saúde. Por fim, há uma percepção de ausência de publicações no tema no Brasil, o que abre uma oportunidade nova via de pesquisa.

Keywords: Satisfação no trabalho; Análise sistemática; Bibliometria.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic motivating a complete transformation in the work environment, a mandatory adaptation of the professional to the "new normal" has been observed. This may have caused a highlight and greater attention to job satisfaction. On the other hand, the increased productivity experienced by administrators with telework (or "home office") may have increased worker dissatisfaction. According to a report by McKinsey (2022), the U.S. Center for Labor Statistics reported that in 2021 approximately 4.4 million professionals voluntarily resigned, increasing the gap in job fillings in the U.S. market, which has approximately 10.9 million open jobs, to 6.3 million new hires. The event is treated as the "Great Resignation."

Talent retention remains a critical point in organizations. Companies have increased their dependence on talented professionals to adapt to market changes successfully. However, the same changes have caused dissatisfaction with work. Employee turnover theories have suggested that job satisfaction has a significant factor in this process (BOSWELL et al., 2005; HOM et al., 1995; LEE et al., 1999; LEE et al., 1996; MOBLEY, 1982; STEEL, 2002).

Job satisfaction has generated more studies in the last five years. This was observed with the analysis of publications made in this article on the theme. The discovery of preponderant factors that influence job satisfaction has motivated the elaboration of this study of bibliometric analysis. According to Hoppock (1935), job satisfaction is a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental conditions that make a person feel satisfied with his work. Weiss (2002) adds that the core definition of job satisfaction refers to a professional's judgment about his work, whether positive or negative. However, the theoretical basis of job satisfaction varies widely according to the focus of the study. Some survey confusion defines job satisfaction as an emotional response to work and includes satisfaction metrics focused on positive or negative judgment for work rather than an affective reaction (BACHARACH et al., 1991).

Job satisfaction is the employee's positive evaluation of their employment and its positive effect (LINKZ, 2003). It can also be defined as the employee's attitudes towards salary, supervision, benefits, promotion, awards, colleagues, and other work-related factors (NADERI et al., 2012). Research (U.L.U. et al., 2016) indicates that employees with high job satisfaction are less likely to look at new challenges outside the organization. This is also supported by Ali's study (2014), which argues about the significant influence of job satisfaction and employee well-being.

The theme of job satisfaction is relevant since it directly affects the loss of talent in organizations. When an organization loses employees, so is their knowledge lost. Losing knowledge can cost the organization a competitive advantage (OMOTAYO, 2015). Losing highly qualified employees can result in unrecoverable recruitment, hiring, and training costs. It can also result in intangible costs such as reduced productivity, loss of knowledge, and low team morale (KANTOR et al., 2016). The retention of qualified professionals is a dominant concern in an organization with a high turnover rate (term used for turnover of professionals in a company) that is being observed, as well as an increase in competition for talent in the

market (SAMUEL et al., 2009). Finally, job satisfaction levels are critical for talent retention (DOCKEL et al., 2006). There are some studies that associate job satisfaction with happiness.

Happiness is a life goal with high priority (DIENER, 2000), and due to its benefits, different researchers in administration became the result of the study (KOLODINSKY et al., 2017) (LEE et al., 2017). Happiness is also a matter of interest to companies, which invest a lot in their workers, promoting positive attitudes that bring results (SMITH, 2012). Maslow (1954) initially introduced the concept of positive psychology to examine the notion of quality of life.

In recent years, the rise of a modern management style based on more democratic structures has been witnessed, opposing the traditional hierarchical relationship and control model (CHIVA, 2014) (LALOUX, 2014) (HUANG et al., 2016). The emergence of these democratic models can be explained by the advent of a business consciousness that seeks the common good – including employee satisfaction and understands that the employee plays a decisive role in the viability of the company. Furthermore, studies show that employees perform better individually when they do not need to follow specific guidelines and are not constantly monitored by their superiors (BENOLIEL et al., 2010) (SWEARINGEN, 2017). This led to the expansion of a management style concerned with improving employee motivation, commitment, and satisfaction through participatory practices in democratic organizational structures (GUEST, 2017) (SALAS-VALLINA et al., 2020). This governance system deviates from management by control and submission and focuses on managerial trust with employees (CHIVA, 2014). Therefore, trust is a central component in organizations that apply participatory management.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a concept studied in the literature for its benefits, such as productivity, personal well-being, and organizational commitment (AZIRI, 2011). The theme is probably the most extensive study in subjectivity related to well-being at work (BAKKER et al., 2011). According to Locke (1969), job satisfaction is an emotional state of pleasure caused by the feeling that work helps individuals to approach and identify with their values. The author also considers that people configure their values voluntarily or unintentionally to guide their actions and decisions throughout their lives. In contrast, dissatisfaction at work represents an unpleasurable emotional state because professionals consider performing the work frustrating and limit them in achieving their values (LOCKE, 1969). Also, according to the author, satisfaction and dissatisfaction depend on the difference between reality and what would be the ideal job for the employee. The employee feels satisfied if such a difference is zero or too small. Locke (1969) concludes that an individual's job satisfaction is part of a set of variables that form work, including salary, quality of supervision, and work climate. Aziri (2011) defines job satisfaction as a collection of feelings and beliefs the employee has about his work. Therefore, job satisfaction represents the feeling that expectations at work are compensated. Satisfaction relates to the experiences and situations that involve work. In other words, job satisfaction is the

employee's positive affective response to their work, resulting from the comparison between desired and current objectives (JUDGE et al.,2012).

Organizational literature indicates that interpersonal confidence increases job satisfaction (BARUN et al., 2013) (GUINOT et al., 2014) (MATZLER et al., 2006). However, studies that relate the confidence component to job satisfaction are mostly "bottom-up," i.e., from employees to leadership. The literary review by Guinot, Monfort, and Chiva (2021) indicates that little is known about the impact of the manager's trust in the employee on job satisfaction, that is, "from the top-down." The studies conducted by Silva and Alves (2010) related the worker's confidence with the perceived profile concerning the management system adopted in the company. The results showed a significant direct relationship between employee confidence in the company and its perception of its management system. Thus, the more structured the company's management is about the factors of recognition, participation, and organization, the better the employees' confidence. According to Drumond (2007), the behavior of leaders and managers in organizations is perceived as an extension of the organization, directly interfering with the perception of employees' confidence levels.

Trust

The role of trust in organizations has been examined in the field of organizational research. Trust is essential for creating a healthy work environment and the employee's well-being (BAPTISTE, 2008). Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand more about the concept of trust. Therefore, studies are done exploring trust in different definitions. A widely used one is proposed by the study by Maye, Davis, and Schoorman (1995):

> the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

Another similar definition of trust is the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about the intentions or behaviors of the other (ROUSSEAU et al., 1998). In this sense, vulnerability means that the trust relationship implies something at stake and, therefore, can be lost by the confident party.

Methodological Procedure

The methods of research practices are evolving, such as traditional ones merging with modern methods supported by technology. Among these practices, data mining (text analysis) has been highlighted. This approach method analyzes content, metrics, variables, reliability, and accuracy in data analysis, which guarantees a model that can be tested with statistical techniques or experiments and the observation of hypotheses and theoretical constructs. This type of analysis is characterized as quali-quanti approach, using both simple word frequency analysis and complex statistical analysis.

This study is characterized as a content analysis with quantitative techniques where bibliometric analysis is used for collecting, identifying, and presenting data regarding the topic addressed. It uses the

database of the Web of Science system (2022), which provides access to millions of studies in various disciplines of science.

Data Analysis

We start our analysis with some bibliometric statistics on the data set (196 articles) analyzed. The analysis period comprises thirty years (from 1992 to 2022), which, at first, may mask some results, including a few citations with low h-index, among others. Nevertheless, we will be careful in the analysis to map it in the best feasible way. Fourteen (14) articles were produced in the 1990s, twenty-nine (29) articles in the first decade of the 21st century, and one hundred and fifty-three (153) articles from 2011, including the current year. Figure 1 indicates an increase in interest and publications in the theme from 2017.
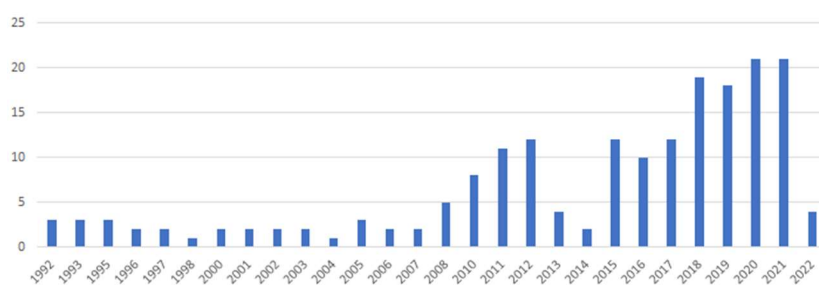

Figure 1: Articles by year

Some data helps us understand the search field. Total articles produced in the analysis period (196), 97 different journals, 646 keywords of the authors, which is an important indicator, especially for textual analysis, average citations per article (30.91) follows a pattern of academic research, but in this case, relatively high due to the research period of the theme, 558 different authors, the appearance of authors (570), 31 authors without co-authorship, and their counterpoint 527 authors in collaboration, number of articles per author (0.351), average authors per article (2.85), co-author per article (2.91) and collaboration index (3.21).

The authors' index per article is calculated as the ratio between the total number of articles and the total number of authors. The index of co-authors per article is calculated as the average number of co-authors per article. In this case, the index considers the author's appearances, while for "authors per article," an author, even if he has published more than one article, is counted only once. Finally, the collaboration index is a co-author index per article calculated only using the set of articles by multiple authors. In general, the indicators demonstrate an area of research in his childhood.

The large concentration of articles is concentrated in English-speaking countries, led by the USA with 45 articles. K.U.K. with thirteen, Australia with twelve, South Africa with six, and Canada with five. China's role with eleven articles is relevant. We cannot say, however, that there is a concentration outside this cluster, whether among researchers from Europe or Asia.

We cannot consider the most productive among the authors because there is excellent dispersion. The central partnership between authors from different countries occurs between the USA and the United Kingdom. However, there is a growing contribution among Chinese and North American researchers.

Endogeny, the publication among authors from the same country, takes place among researchers from Australia, South Korea, and Italy, where it was not possible to identify international partnerships. The most significant partnerships between researchers were identified with Dutch researchers with 75% external participation (three articles out of a total of four), followed by Finland with 66.7% (four articles in six) and Sweden with 40% (two articles out of five).

On total citations and their mean (Figure 2) the United States has 3,314 citations (73.64 - average), followed by the United Kingdom with 573 (44.08), Canada with 377 (75.40), Germany with 185 (108.33), China with 182 (16.55), Italy with 170 (34) and Finland with 110 (18). The other countries with more than fifty citations are Slovenia, Holland, Israel, Belgium, Spain, Greece, and Sweden. In particular, the most cited author, on average, is from Germany, Mr. Ringle (2020), professor of management at the Technological University of Hamburg, with an average of 156.50 citations per year. In this case, the author stands out in the production of texts related to structural equation modeling and partial Least Squares - Structural Equations Modeling (PLS-SEM), which evidences the character of quantitative research in the area. Finally, in the total volume of citations, Fred Luthans, a professor at the University of Nebraska, United States, with 633 citations.
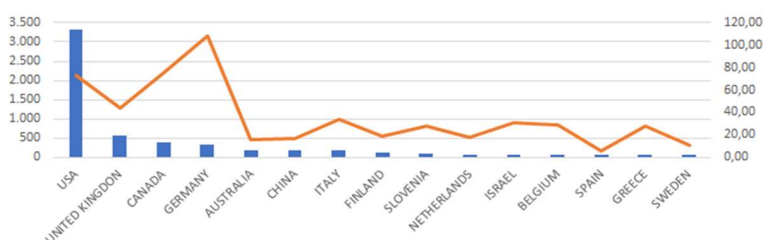

Figure 2: Countries and citations.

Briefly, the articles with more than 100 citations (Figure 3) and their annual average are: Luthans (2202) [633; 31.65], Reichheld (1993) [463; 15.97], Burris (2008) [316; 22.57], Ringle (2020) [313;156.50], Leiter (2011) [252;22,91], Robert (2000) [238;10,82], Chen (2011) [230;20,91], Sullivan (1992) [1 62; 5.40], Leach (2003) [134; 7.05], Cortese (2010) [128; 10.67] and Purdy (2010) [111;9.25].
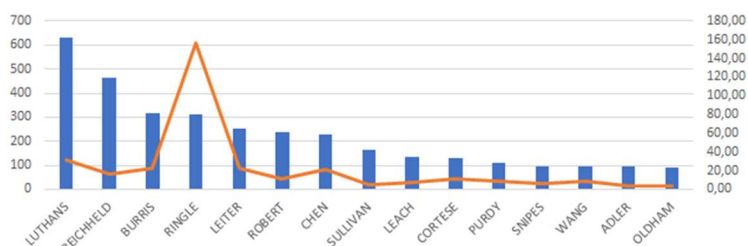

Figure 3: Authors and citations.

Before a specific analysis of the management area, it should be noted that there is much work in health and personal care. Thus, the Journal of Nursing Management, with an impact factor - of JCR - 3,325 (Clarivate Analytics, 2020) and published by Wiley, deals with, among others, the issue of management practice, innovation, and leadership in health care and nursing. The journal presents 28 articles being the isolated leader in publications. Following is the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, with Impact Factor 3,968, published by Taylor and Francis, which works on the issue of understanding the

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phenomena that occur in work and organizational environments with six articles. Thus, the two leading journals are multidisciplinary, which reflects this study. Following, we have Employee Relations, Human Relations, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, and Personnel Review, each cited with five articles, all multidisciplinary.

When a document refers to another text, it is called a citation. The pattern of these citations is more naturally represented as a network of cocitations (Figure 4) where nodes are the documents and links are the citations between documents. An analysis of the citations in the texts on "Job satisfaction improvement" can determine a kind of "pedigree" from the research area. It is possible to observe the constitution of three clusters. The first (in blue in Figure 4) of them from Fornell (1981) and Podsakkoff et al. (2003) refers to SEM and common esthetes to the method, respectively, which shows a quantitative cluster. The second (in red in Figure 4) is Hackman (1975, 1976, 1980) on behavior in organizations, Herzberg (1959) on motivation theory, and Baron and Kenny (1986) on moderating variables and mediators in social psychology research. Judge, Bono, Patton, and Thoresen (2001) work on job satisfaction and performance. The third cluster (in green in Figure 4) includes research by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) as well as Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) on measuring organizational commitment beyond the issue of turnover. Also, we have the work of Meyer and Allen (1991) about organizational commitment and its model of three components: affective, continuity, and normative.
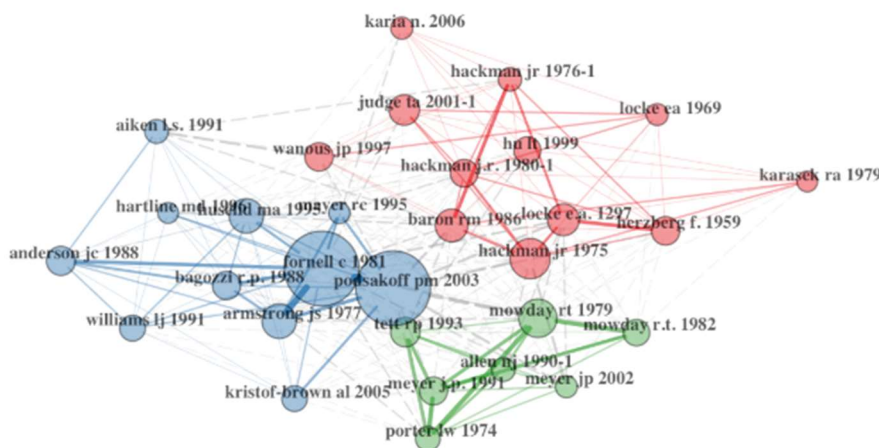

Figure 4: Network of cocitations.

The word cloud (Figure 5) is a visual element that presents the frequency of words in a corpus of analysis. This study used the keywords of the article on a word cloud. There are 646 keywords. It follows Zipf's Law with a regression equation of $4.4249 - 0.7302X$, with a job with 60 occurrences (3.8486), satisfaction (3.7203), management (2.5657), and quality (2.1808) being the most significant for Zipf's Law. Its relative frequency determines each word's size in the selected text's cloud. The more a word is found, the more meaningful it is in the cloud. For example, figure 5 shows the word cloud for "Job Satisfaction Improvement." It represents the 196 articles with 646 keywords from 1992-2022; for 2022, it is incomplete. The frequencies of the words are displa'ed in parentheses for each 'eyword. The most frequent words are job (60), satisfaction (58), management (40), quality (34), performance (33), organizational (30), employee

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(27), work (26), leadership (21), service (16), nursing (15), commitment (15), human (15), employees (14), care (13), motivation (11), nurses (10), health (10) psychological (9) and structural (9).

Figure 5: Word cloud for frequency of words. **Note:** tests for Zipfian distribution (4,4249 – 0,7302X)

The social network graph (Figure 6) highlights four clusters between keywords. First, a grouping is organizational, commitment, and motivation, which indicates that organizational behavior and commitment and motivation represent job satisfaction. The second grouping is management, performance, employees, and human, which indicates the human tone in employee performance management. The third group covers nurses (ing), care, quality, service, and leadership, which indicates the concentration of articles in the nursing and health care segment, which in recent years has undergone intense pressure due to the reflexes of the pandemic. Finally, the fourth grouping has job, satisfaction, work, and employee, which concentrates on the search keywords of the articles.

Figure 6: Social network graph.

Next, the dendrogram chart (Figure 7) defines six clusters, three of which are isolated: "organizational," "work," and "employee." The others are constituted by: "job + satisfaction" (theme of the research); "management + quality," highlighting the considerable influence of quality of management in the

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achievement of work. Finally, a large grouping stands out: "performance," followed by "leadership," and two sub-clusters. The first sub-group focuses on nursing health care, followed by "nurses" and "care" due to the workload and pressure on health care during the pandemic. The latter consisted of two sub-clusters: "employees + human" and "service + commitment."
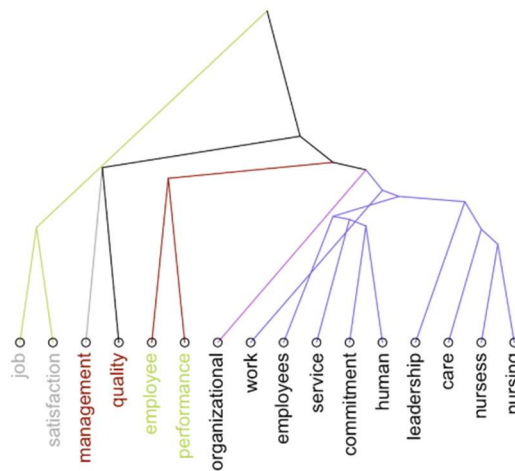

Figure 7: Dendogram.

CONCLUSIONS

The theme of job satisfaction is still a field with much room for study. This work represents an initial step in exploring the main dimensions that relate to job satisfaction. It was observed that in the last five years, from 2017, there was a gradual increase in publications each year. The identified highlights refer to the quality of management as a vector of high relevance to job satisfaction, which also connects with the worker's commitment, motivation, and performance. Organizations' quality in management is subject to deepening and actioning, as it touches directly on their leadership scope and professionals managers. It is an alert that should be observed, as it directly reflects the performance and commitment of the professional to the organization. One suggestion for future studies is to evaluate the dimension of trust with management and its relationship with job satisfaction. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, there is an impact on the degree of trust of leadership with its leaders, and consequently reflects on satisfaction when performing their functions in the organization.
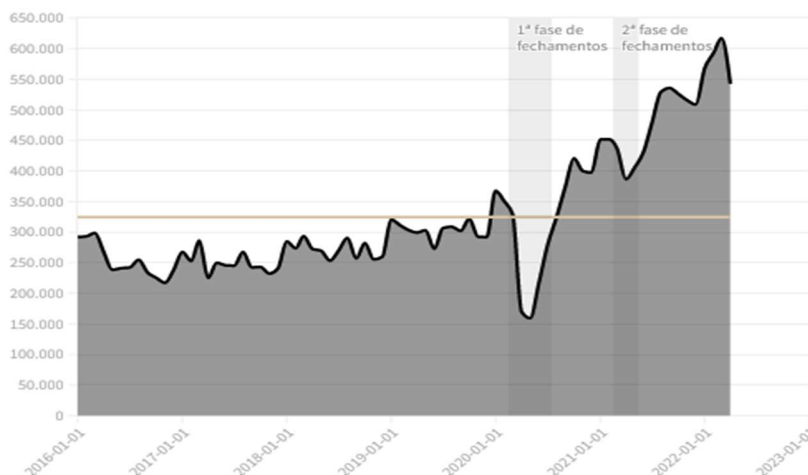

Figure 8: Voluntary Resignations in Brazil

Another aspect observed in this study is the concentration of work in the health field, with personal care and nursing. This is reflected in the consequences and pressures suffered by these professionals during the pandemic, which directly impacted job satisfaction. Still, even in the health field, the leadership dimension is a relevant topic with satisfaction in the work environment. This refers to the initial observation, where organizations, of any segment, of health or others, need to explore the management practice, its quality aligned with the perspective of the leaders. There are signs indicating a necessary deepening in the relationship between managers and direct reports, a relationship that encompasses varied dimensions and is not simply limited to the description of functions.

Finally, the study identified that Brazil does not yet have a publication on this theme of job satisfaction, which generates an opportunity for future studies. Although the effect of the "great resignation" does not yet have complete statistical data published in the country, there is a publication made by the magazine "Voce SA" in February 2022 (Figure 8) that presents data from the General Register of Employees and Unemployed (CAGED). The data indicates a significant increase in voluntary layoffs compared to historical references. The increase between 2021 and 2022 is visible. This alerts Brazilian organizations to the theme of job satisfaction and, consequently, a space for future studies focused on the country. In addition, there is a demand to understand the emotional relationship of the worker with his/her employment and his/her employers, which indicates that they are linked to worn-out management models and new behavior in the labor force.

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