

SOCIOECONOMIC, EPIDEMIOLOGICAL AND LABORAL CHARACTERIZATION OF CONTRACT WORKERS OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY*

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ABSTRACT: Objective: to analyze the socioeconomic, epidemiological and work characteristics of contract workers of a public university in the south of Minas Gerais. Method: quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional study, performed between December 2016 and February 2017 with 316 contract workers. A characterization questionnaire was used for the data collection and descriptive statistics for the data analysis. Results: the profile found was of female workers (54.4%), in the 30 to 39 years age group (31.3%), married/with partner (58.2%), with children (69.3%), with a family income from 1.5 to 3.5 minimum wages (51.6%), that did not practice physical activities (42.7%), did not have chronic diseases (69.9%), had performed contract work for up to 10 years (81.3%), with a workload of 44 hours per week (84.4%) and that had worked in the current institution for less than four years (63.9%). Conclusion: identifying the profile of these workers allows the adoption of promotion and prevention strategies capable of improving the quality of the work and social life.

DESCRIPTORS: Workers; Contract Services; Worker's Health; Universities; Nursing.

CARACTERIZAÇÃO SOCIOECONÔMICA, EPIDEMIOLÓGICA E LABORAL DE TRABALHADORES TERCEIRIZADOS DE UMA UNIVERSIDADE PÚBLICA

RESUMO: Objetivo: analisar as características socioeconômicas, epidemiológicas e laborais dos trabalhadores terceirizados de uma universidade pública do sul de Minas Gerais. Método: estudo quantitativo, descritivo e transversal, desenvolvido entre dezembro de 2016 e fevereiro de 2017 com 316 trabalhadores terceirizados. Na coleta de dados, utilizou-se o questionário de caracterização e na análise dos dados, a estatística descritiva. Resultados: constatou-se trabalhadores do sexo feminino (54,4%), faixa etária de 30 a 39 anos (31,3%), casados/com companheiros (58,2%), com filhos (69,3%), renda familiar de 1,5 a 3,5 salários (51,6%), que não praticava atividades físicas (42,7%), não possuía doenças crônicas (69,9%), em serviços terceirizados há até 10 anos (81,3%), com carga horária de 44 horas semanais (84,4%) e atuação na atual instituição há menos de quatro anos (63,9%). Conclusão: conhecer o perfil desses trabalhadores permite a adoção de estratégias de promoção e prevenção capazes de melhorar a qualidade de vida laboral e social.

DESCRIPTORES: Trabalhadores; Serviços Terceirizados; Saúde do Trabalhador; Universidades; Enfermagem.

CARACTERIZACIÓN SOCIOECONÓMICA, EPIDEMIOLÓGICA Y LABORAL DE TRABAJADORES TERCERIZADOS EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA

RESUMEN: Objetivo: Analizar las características socioeconómicas, epidemiológicas y laborales de los trabajadores tercerizados de una universidad pública del sur de Minas Gerais. Métodos: Estudio cuantitativo, descriptivo y transversal, desarrollado entre diciembre de 2016 y febrero de 2017 con 316 trabajadores tercerizados. Datos recolectados mediante cuestionario de caracterización, analizados mediante estadística descriptiva. Resultados: Se constató presencia de trabajadores de sexo femenino (54,4%), faja etaria de 30 a 39 años (31,3%), casados/en pareja (58,2%), con hijos (69,3%), ingreso familiar de 1,5 a 3,5 sueldos mínimos (51,6%), no practicantes de actividad física (42,7%), sin enfermedades crónicas (69,9%), trabajando como tercerizados desde no más de 10 años (81,3%), con carga horaria de 44 horas semanales (84,4%) y actuación en su actual institución durante menos de cuatro años (63,9%). Conclusión: Conocer el perfil de estos trabajadores permite adoptar estrategias de promoción y prevención apuntando a mejorar su calidad de vida laboral y social.

DESCRIPTORES: Trabajadores; Servicios Externos; Salud Laboral; Universidades; Enfermería.

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● INTRODUCTION

Hiring methods such as contracting have gained prominence in the job market. Many workers carry out their work activities deprived of certain labor rights and guarantees, with various weaknesses in the trade union context⁽¹⁾.

Contracting has emerged in response to the needs of companies for efficient and accelerated production and has resulted in flexibility of labor rights, based on the delegation of non-essential services to other companies, in order to reduce costs⁽²⁾.

Intensification of work, increased risks and work accidents, the emergence of occupational diseases and the fragmentation and crushing of trade union organizations have made working conditions more precarious. In addition, instability, unemployment and turnover in the services also exist. These factors contribute to an increase in the informal market, a reduction in the quality of jobs and a loss of human dignity⁽³⁾.

Therefore, it is important to highlight the relevance of identifying the risks in the work environment, whether physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic or psychosocial, as well as determining the way in which this global production process influences the worker's health and quality of life⁽⁴⁾. In the work this should be directed toward healthy productivity, human development and personal and organizational well-being⁽⁵⁾.

Given the context presented, as well as the lack of studies that approach the subject, this study is justified by the importance of analyzing the socioeconomic, epidemiological and work characteristics of contract workers. The aim was to provide knowledge so that health providers, including nurses, can act in the prevention of accidents and illness and in the promotion of the health of this worker. This also allows the adequation of the activities of the professionals so that the employer can provide better quality of life in the work environment and the worker can be more productive.

In addition, the results can help in the elaboration of institutional and public policies in order to prevent illness in this worker due to the conditions experienced in the work environment, as well as to provide a better interaction between the worker and the work environment. It is believed that transformations can be made in the world of work so that the dynamics of the service are maintained without compromising the health of the worker.

In view of these points, this study aimed to analyze the socioeconomic, epidemiological and work characteristics of the contract workers of a public university in a city of southern Minas Gerais.

● METHOD

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional study with a quantitative approach performed in a public university in a city of southern Minas Gerais, from December 2016 to February 2017. The study population consisted of all contract workers who provided services to the university, which included 343 workers.

The population of workers was chosen due to the importance that work occupies in the life of people, as well as it being a relevant factor in the formation of the identity and social insertion.

Considering the inclusion (18 years of age and older and having at least three months of service in the company) and exclusion criteria (workers who were on sick leave, maternity leave or vacations), the sample consisted of 316 workers.

For the data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire was used, with 19 questions to evaluate the socioeconomic, epidemiological and work data of the workers.

It should be highlighted that this instrument was prepared by the authors and underwent a refinement process by a group of expert judges with experience in the construction of research instruments and/or experience in the subject. Subsequently, the instrument was submitted to a pilot test with contract workers with characteristics similar to those of the workers analyzed.

Data collection was performed in the workplace, however, care was taken that the procedure did not interfere with the progress of the activities or the dynamics and routine of the service. The instrument was delivered inside an envelope, completed by the worker and, on the same day, returned to the researcher, also inside the envelope.

The collected data were grouped in a database using a spreadsheet. Double data entry was performed to avoid possible transcription errors, with the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 used for the descriptive statistical analysis.

Considering Resolution CNS/MS 466/2012⁽⁶⁾, which covers research involving human subjects, this study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, under authorization number 1.623.102 (CAAE: 57208316.6.0000.5142). The contacted companies that provided services to the university mentioned were asked for permission to carry out the study and approach of their employees.

● RESULTS

It was evidenced that 172 (54.4%) of the contract workers evaluated were female. The most frequent age group was 30 to 39 years, with 99 (31.3%) workers (mean of 38.7 years and median of 37.0 years). With regard to marital status, 184 (58.2%) workers were married or cohabiting. Regarding religious beliefs, a total of 222 (70.3%) interviewees reported being Catholic, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Distribution of contract workers according to the variables "gender", "age group", "marital status" and "religious beliefs". Alfenas, MG, Brazil, 2017

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Female	172	54.4
Male	144	45.6
Age group		
19 to 29 years	80	25.3
30 to 39 years	99	31.3
40 to 49 years	83	26.3
50 or more	54	17.1
Marital status		
Single	90	28.5
Married/with partner	184	58.2
Separated/divorced	37	11.7
Widowed	5	1.6
Religious beliefs		
Catholic	222	70.3
Evangelical	76	24.1
Atheist (No religion)	9	2.8
Spiritist	8	2.5
Agnostic	1	0.3

Regarding the number of children of the participants, 151 (47.0%) workers had one or two children. The monthly family income with the highest frequency among workers was R\$1,501 to R\$3,000 (equivalent to 1.5 to 3.5 minimum wages), with 163 (51.6%) workers (mean of R\$2,642.71 and median of R\$2,200.00). It should be noted that 12 (3.8%) of them did not report their family income. In the variable housing type, most workers owned their own home, corresponding to 185 (58.5%). Regarding education, 117 (37.0%) had completed high school and only 1 (0.3%) was illiterate, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - Distribution of contract workers according to the variables "number of children", "monthly family income", "housing type" and "education". Alfenas, MG, Brazil, 2017

Variables	n	%
Number of children		
Without children	97	30.7
One child	81	25.6
Two children	70	22.2
Three children	49	15.5
Four or more children	19	6.0
Monthly family income *		
Not reported	12	3.8
Up to R\$1500.00	66	20.9
From R\$1501.00 to R\$3000.00	163	51.6
From R\$3001.00 to R\$4500.00	48	15.2
R\$4501.00 or more	27	8.5
Housing type		
Owned	185	58.5
Rented	76	24.1
Owned with financing	38	12.0
Lives with parents or relatives	10	3.2
Borrowed	5	1.6
Shared	2	0.6
Education		
Illiterate	1	0.3
Incomplete elementary education	54	17.1
Complete elementary education	26	8.2
Incomplete high school education	21	6.6
Complete high school education	117	37.0
Incomplete higher education	46	14.6
Complete higher education	40	12.7
Postgraduate education	11	3.5

*Considered the value of the national minimum wage of R\$937.00, effective in 2017.

Regarding the epidemiological characterization of the study population related to the evaluation of the distribution of the workers and the practice of physical activity, 135 (42.7%) did not practice any physical activity. It should be noted that a significant number of respondents exercised on some days of the week, totaling 75 (23.7%). In addition, 54 (17.1%) practiced rarely and 52 (16.5%) practiced daily.

In the distribution of the workers, it was verified that 95 (30.1%) had some chronic disease. Systemic hypertension (SH) was the most prevalent, reported by 46 (48.4%), followed by thyroid diseases, 19 (20.0%), respiratory diseases, 14 (14.7%), diabetes mellitus (DM), 10 (10.5%), gastritis, 5 (5.3%) and mental disorder, 4 (4.2%). It should be noted that the same worker could present more than one type of chronic disease.

It was found in this study that 122 (38.6%) workers made continuous or daily use of some medication. Antihypertensive drugs presented the highest frequency, with 70 (57.4%) reports, followed by contraceptives, with 28 (22.9%), thyroid hormones, with 18 (14.7%) and antidepressants/anxiolytics, with 18 (14.7%).

When evaluating the work characterization data of the contract workers according to the professional category, the highest frequency was found in laboratories assistant services, representing

56 (17.7%) workers, administrative assistants, 55 (17.4%), secretarial assistants 50 (16%), cleaners, 40 (13%), caretakers, 24 (7.6%), general service assistants, 18 (5.7%) and janitors, 18 (5.7%). The remaining 55 (16.9%) comprised other categories and functions, such as drivers, electricians, dental assistant services, firefighters, locksmiths, hardware technicians, kitchen workers and gardeners, among others.

When analyzing the distribution of the workers according to the length of time working in contracted services, it was noted that 257 (81.3%) of them worked in this category for up to 10 years (mean 6.8 years and median 5.0 years). Furthermore, it can be seen that the length of time working in the institution of greater frequency among the studied population was less than four years, with this reported by 202 (63.9%) of the study participants (mean of 2.7 years and median of 3.0 years). With regard to the working hours in the institution, it was found that 267 (84.4%) of the workers studied worked 44 hours per week, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3 - Distribution of contract workers according to variables related to work activities "length of time working in contracted services", "length of time working in the institution", "working hours in the institution". Alfenas, MG, Brazil, 2017

Variables	n	%
Time working in contracted services		
Up to 10 years	257	81.3
11 to 20 years	47	14.9
21 years or more	12	3.8
Time working in the institution		
Up to one year	51	16.1
Two years	61	19.3
Three years	90	28.5
Four years or more	114	36.1
Working hours at the institution		
36 hours per week	4	1.3
40 hours per week	5	1.6
42 hours per week	40	12.7
44 hours per week	267	84.4

With regard to the work shift, 271 (85.8%) worked in the morning and afternoon. When questioned about having another job, 58 (18.4%) participants stated that they had other employment; of these, 38 (65.5%) worked in the other job for up to 20 hours per week, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4 - Distribution of contract workers according to variables related to the work activities: "work shift in the institution", "other employment" and "working hours in the other job". Alfenas, MG, Brazil, 2017 (continues)

Variables	f	%
Work shift in the institution		
Morning and afternoon	271	85.8
Afternoon and night	21	6.6
Night	20	6.3
Variable times	4	1.3
Other employment		
No	258	81.6
Yes	58	18.4

Workload in the other job*		
Up to 20 hours per week	38	65.5
More than 20 hours per week	20	34.5

*Only workers who had another job

● DISCUSSION

In this study, it was observed that the sample consisted of female contract workers (54.4%), most frequently in the 30 to 39 years age group (31.3%), married or cohabiting (58.2%), with high school education (37.0%) and a family income of 1.5 to 3.5 minimum wages (51.6%). These findings corroborate the results of other studies⁽⁷⁻⁸⁾.

In a study carried out with 106 contract workers of a public university in Baixada Santista, São Paulo state, it was found that 68% were female, with a mean age of 34.58 years and a predominance of complete high school and higher education⁽⁷⁾.

In another investigation carried out in three contracted companies in Portugal, which had different functions, with 264 contract workers, it was verified that in the three companies there was predominance of female workers, accounting for 61.4%, 72.5% and 92.3% of the workers, with the mean age ranging from 26.5 years to 37.9 years and predominant education of up to high school education⁽⁸⁾.

With this, it is possible to perceive that the social representations referring to genders are changing all over the world. In the past, roles and responsibilities related to the public sphere, competition, strength and orientations for results were attributed exclusively to men, while roles related to the private domain, based on emotional, relational and aesthetic characteristics, were attributed to women. Accordingly, it appears that women are currently pursuing gender equality and performing previously male functions⁽⁹⁾.

In relation to age, in a study carried out with the aim of making a salary comparison between contracted workers and those employed directly by the companies, it was found that the mean age of the contract workers was 34.7 years and 37.9 years for the directly employed workers⁽¹⁰⁾.

Regarding education, the present study corroborates data from other studies, in which, regardless of the area of concentration of the work, the highest percentage had high school education. It should be mentioned that a higher level of education is associated with the non-occurrence of risk behaviors, preventing the appearance of chronic noncommunicable diseases (CNDs)⁽¹¹⁾.

In addition, in terms of salary levels (monthly income), a study showed that workers who perform low-skill activities, when contracted, have 12% lower remuneration when compared to non-contract workers⁽¹⁰⁾.

Considering marital status, the literature shows that living without a partner can have an impact on life habits, socioeconomic resources, health behaviors and emotional well-being and can predict the onset of chronic diseases, as well as mortality for those of greater ages. Having a companion and a long marriage is a variable that constitutes a protective factor, thus promoting healthy behaviors⁽¹²⁾.

Regarding religious beliefs, the Brazilian religious profile has been changing, in which in the past almost the entire population was Catholic. Data from the Demographic Census of 2010 showed a decline in this trend, revealing the increase of people belonging to other religious groups⁽¹³⁾.

In addition, religiosity and spirituality, closely related themes, play a very important role in the various areas of people's lives, helping them to tolerate the different negative events of daily life⁽¹⁴⁾.

Regarding the practice of physical activities, 42.7% of the contract workers stated that they did not exercise. In this context, it is emphasized that physical inactivity can cause physiological problems and is strongly related to the onset of CNDs. Accordingly, regular exercise reduces risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as blood pressure and cholesterol control. It is also capable of reducing

blood glucose levels and assisting in weight reduction, as well as preventing the onset of some types of cancers⁽¹⁵⁾.

Therefore, the importance of health providers, especially nurses, is emphasized in the motivation to practice physical exercise in part of the population, through counseling that facilitates lifestyle changes and optimization of intervention strategies for health promotion and the prevention of harm. The development of programs related to the practice of physical activities in the collective and individual context is also recommended, with the aim of eliminating sedentary behaviors and improving physical functioning, health and well-being⁽¹⁵⁾.

The presence of chronic diseases was also evidenced in the workers evaluated in this study, with emphasis on hypertension, thyroid diseases, respiratory diseases and DM. Regarding the consumption of continuous or daily medications, the antihypertensive class and contraceptives were the most used. Some of these findings are similar to results of other studies⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁷⁾.

In an investigation carried out in a contracted company of occupational medicine, through the analysis of 366 medical records of workers of a construction company in the metropolitan region of Campinas-São Paulo state, it was verified that of the 145 overweight workers, 116 did not have any chronic disease. However, among the diseases presented by the workers, those that stood out were SH and DM⁽¹⁶⁾.

In addition, in a study carried out with 340 outpatient clinic workers attending the Brazilian Nation Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS) in the city of Pelotas-Rio Grande do Sul state, there were self-reports of different CNDs, with emphasis on SH, respiratory diseases, DM and cardiovascular diseases⁽¹⁷⁾.

It can be seen that in the different work sectors, the most frequent NCD is SH. There are several risk factors associated with the development of this disease, including family history, being overweight or obese, excessive salt intake, sedentary lifestyle, smoking and alcohol abuse. Therefore, health providers linked to primary care, including nurses, play an essential role in the implementation of strategies for prevention, diagnosis, monitoring and control of SH.

The nurse is the health provider that has greater contact with the population, performing several actions to control blood pressure, among them the encouragement of lifestyle changes, which are often effective in this control without the need for pharmacological treatment⁽¹⁸⁾.

However, lifestyle changes alone are not always sufficient to control CNDs, requiring pharmacological therapies, with the use of only one drug or an association of more than one. There are several antihypertensive classes and they are selected according to the needs of the person, considering the presence of comorbidities, lesions in target organs, family history, pregnancy and age⁽¹⁸⁾.

The data from this study are similar to the national data, which show that in Brazilian urban areas 32.7% of women aged 15-49 years use oral or injectable contraceptives⁽¹⁹⁾. The high use of contraceptives in this study can also be justified by the fact that 54.4% of the workers interviewed were female.

In relation to the work activities, as in the university of the present study, the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) also hires contracted work forces, with the aim of increasing efficiency and quality and reducing the costs of the services supplied, which are not seen to be required on a permanent basis, so that they can be performed by contractors⁽²⁰⁾.

At UFJF, there are several positions and functions of contract workers, ranging from general service assistants to computer technicians. However, the most frequent functions are general service assistants (cleaning, laboratory assistants), caretakers, administrative assistants and attendants⁽²⁰⁾. These functions are similar to the results of the present study, in which service assistants in laboratories, administrative assistants, secretarial assistants and cleaners were highlighted.

Regarding the length time of working in the current contracted company and the weekly workload, the literature shows a mean of 31.64 months in the current contracted company and a mean number of hours worked per week of approximately 42 hours, with a maximum of 44 hours per week⁽¹⁰⁾.

In this study, 85.8% of the workers performed their duties during the day and morning shifts. This

corroborates an investigation carried out with 157 contract cleaning workers from a public university hospital in Rio Grande do Sul, which found that 80.9% of them performed their activities during the day shift⁽²¹⁾.

Some workers also reported having another job/employment relationship, with a workload of up to 20 hours per week. This fact is directly related to the increase in the number of hours worked, which may interfere with the capacity to work and contribute to the development or worsening of morbidities⁽²²⁾. Often the motivation to have another job can be explained by the dissatisfaction with the salary, the need to supplement the family income, the absence of a career plan and seeking better social status⁽²³⁻²⁴⁾.

The limitations of this study are related to the sampling, since the collection was not performed with the total population of contract workers, a fact that was already expected, given that some workers would be on vacation and health or maternity leave. However, it should be noted that almost all of the company's contract workers participated in the study.

● CONCLUSION

Identifying the profile of contract workers allows managers to comprehend their workers and, together with a work nurse, design strategies to prevent illness due to the work environment and the occurrence of work accidents. In addition, it should be highlighted that the presence of a work nurse in companies is indispensable for the promotion of health and the prevention of injuries due to the work environment, since he/she will work with the most varied motivational strategies to combat the triggering factors of the most varied disorders of the world of work. Finally, managers will be able to institute measures to provide better adaptation of the employee to the work, adequate working conditions and better interactions between the workers, which will lead to a better quality of work and social life.

It is suggested that studies are carried out in other public and private universities, as well as in other types of contracted services. This is necessary for an in depth identification of contract workers with regards to their socioeconomic, epidemiological and work profile. Longitudinal studies that can detect factors that are associated with worker health should also be performed.

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