

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIONS IN COMPANIES: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTRIBUTION*

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the health promotion actions of Specialized Services of Work Safety Engineering and Occupational Medicine from companies and the health promotion actions of companies in their official websites.

Method: Qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study with 34 occupational health and safety professionals from seven companies in southern Brazil. The interviews were conducted in 2015 and documentary research was performed in 2016 for Content Analysis.

Results: Two categories of analysis were constructed and named "Health promotion activities: professionals' report" and "Health promotion activities: public communication of companies".

Final considerations: Health promotion actions are implemented by companies. The actions carried out by health and safety professionals are targeted to workers and the work environment, and the actions disseminated by the companies are focused on integrated management of the work process, personal development, environmental, social and economic responsibilities.

DESCRIPTORS: Worker's health; Occupational Health Services; Health promotion; Workplace.

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AÇÕES PROMOCIONAIS À SAÚDE DO TRABALHADOR EM EMPRESAS: CONTRIBUIÇÃO INTERDISCIPLINAR

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar as ações de promoção à saúde de Serviços Especializados em Engenharia de Segurança e em Medicina do Trabalho de empresas e as ações de promoção à saúde de empresas em suas páginas oficiais na internet.

Método: qualitativo, exploratório e descritivo, com 34 profissionais da saúde e segurança do trabalho de sete empresas do Sul do Brasil. Entrevistas realizadas em 2015 e pesquisa documental, em 2016, para Análise de Conteúdo.

Resultados: duas categorias de análise foram construídas e intituladas "Atividades promocionais à saúde: relato dos profissionais" e "Atividades promocionais à saúde: comunicação pública das empresas".

Considerações finais: as ações de promoção da saúde são realizadas no âmbito organizacional, sendo que as ações dos profissionais são voltadas ao trabalhador e ambiente de trabalho e as ações propagadas pelas empresas são voltadas à gestão integrada no processo de trabalho, desenvolvimento pessoal, responsabilidades ambiental, social e econômica.

DESCRITORES: Saúde do Trabalhador; Serviços de Saúde do Trabalhador; Promoção da Saúde; Ambiente de Trabalho.

ACCIONES PROMOCIONALES A LA SALUD DEL TRABAJADOR EN EMPRESAS: CONTRIBUCIÓN INTERDISCIPLINAR

RESUMEN

Objetivo: evaluar las acciones de promoción a la salud de Servicios Especializados en Ingeniería de Seguridad y en Medicina del Trabajo de empresas, así como las acciones de promoción a la salud de empresas en sus páginas oficiales en internet.

Método: cualitativo, exploratorio y descriptivo, con 34 profesionales de la salud y seguridad del trabajo de siete empresas de Sur de Brasil. Las entrevistas se realizaron en 2015 y la investigación documental, en 2016, para Análisis de Contenido.

Resultados: se construyeron dos categorías de análisis que se intitularon como "Actividades promocionales a la salud: relato de los profesionales" y "Actividades promocionales a la salud: comunicación pública de las empresas".

Conclusiones: las acciones de promoción de la salud se realizaron en el ámbito organizacional; las acciones de los profesionales están direccionadas al trabajador y ambiente de trabajo; y las acciones propagadas por las empresas están direccionadas a la gestión integrada en el proceso de trabajo, desarrollo personal, responsabilidades ambiental, social y económica.

DESCRIPTORES: Salud del Trabajador; Servicios de Salud del Trabajador; Promoción de la Salud; Ambiente de Trabajo.

INTRODUCTION

The Ottawa Charter, a document that became a reference in health promotion worldwide, in 1986, concerns the process of empowering the community so that the individuals can improve their quality of life and health, and have greater control of this process⁽¹⁾. In addition, the document describes five strategies for health promotion: building healthy public policies; creating favorable environments for health; strengthening community action; development of personal skills; and reorientation of health services⁽¹⁾.

The Brazilian Ministry of Health redefined the National Health Promotion Policy⁽²⁾, in 2014, to promote equity and improve living conditions and lifestyles, enhancing individual and collective health and reducing vulnerabilities and health risks arising from social, economic, political, cultural and environmental determinants. According to this policy, health promotion is perceived as a health production strategy, way of thinking and operating integrated with other policies and technologies developed in the health system, which contributes to the construction of actions capable of responding to social health needs.

Greater focus has been given to the workers' healthcare field following the Ottawa Charter and the implementation of the National Health Promotion Policy. It is regulated by the current national health care legislation, with emphasis on the National Worker's Health Policy (PNSTT)⁽³⁾, which aims to define the principles, guidelines and strategies to be observed by the three spheres of management of the Unified Health System (SUS), for the development of comprehensive health care for workers, with emphasis on surveillance, aiming at the promotion and protection of workers' health and the reduction of morbimortality resulting from development models and production processes. Thus, according to the PNSTT, companies can be considered one of the spheres of actions targeted to promote workers' health.

In the business scenario, these actions can be carried out by the Specialized Service in Safety Engineering and Occupational Medicine (SESMT), which aims to promote health and protect the integrity of workers in the workplace and is provided by a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team consisting of Occupational Physician, Occupational Health Nurse, Occupational Nursing Technician, Occupational Safety Engineer and Occupational Safety Technician. The size of this team is established according to criteria such as the total number of employees in the company and the degree of risk of the main economic activity (1 to 4)⁽⁴⁾.

Therefore, health promotion in the workplace is carried out through policies and activities designed to help employers and workers to increase workers' control over their health in order to improve it, thus stimulating corporate productivity and competitiveness and contributing to enhance the countries' economic and social development⁽⁵⁾.

Thus, it is necessary to understand that work is a direct determinant of the health-disease process of the working population, since productive processes cause health damage and are responsible for the degradation of the environment, and particularly, work environments⁽⁶⁾.

In addition to the determinant (factor) work, an unhealthy lifestyle also contributes to health problems, absenteeism, reduced work ability and lower productivity in the workplace. Health promotion programs in the work environment are aimed to improve lifestyle and hence, health, capacity and productivity at work⁽⁷⁾, e.g. by encouraging the practice of physical activity and healthy eating. Therefore, the results obtained in employee health promotion programs may include improved quality of life, a more engaged and motivated workforce, improved safety performance, greater reliability in production, and healthy corporate culture⁽⁸⁾.

The companies disseminate their various actions in the digital media, and such actions can be directly and/or indirectly related to workers' health. Thus, it can be assumed

that actions developed by SESMT professionals in the companies, which are targeted to the promotion of health within the companies, are ultimately disseminated to the local community, municipality and region. Based on this assumption, the following questions are posed: what are the actions carried out by the SESMT professionals of the companies? What are the actions disseminated in the official websites of companies that may be related to health promotion actions? Thus, the present study aims to analyze the health promotion actions developed by the Specialized Service in Safety Engineering and Occupational Medicine (SESMT) of the companies and the actions disseminated by the companies in their official websites.

Thus, the present study aims to analyze the health promotion actions developed by the SESMT of companies and the actions disseminated by the companies in their official websites. It also intends to reveal that other actions carried out by the companies also promote workers' health.

METHOD

Qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study with 34 professionals from the Occupational Healthcare and Safety areas, as follows: eight occupational health nurses, six occupational physicians, six occupational safety engineers, seven occupational nursing technicians and seven occupational safety technicians. These professionals make up the SESMT teams of seven companies from two municipalities in the South Macro-region of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

The companies were deliberately selected because they had Occupational nurses in their staff who accepted to participate in the study after receiving a Cover Letter. Thus, the group of participants included all the nurses from the companies in the region, as well as one professional from each one of the occupations of the SESMT, indicated by the nurses, who were willing to participate in the study. The total sample was composed of 34 professionals.

Data was collected between January and April 2015, and started with pilot interviews with professionals who did not compose the group of participants of the study. After re-evaluation and re-adaptation of the guide, interviews previously scheduled with the workers in their workplace were conducted. They lasted in average 42 minutes. The guide used in the interviews contained questions related to the professionals' work, such as their activities (either performed individually and with other SESMT professionals), the organization of the work, work object and instruments used.

The database was created for use in a master's thesis. In the present study, it was re-analyzed based on the understanding of each health promotion strategy, according to the Ottawa Charter⁽¹⁾, as follows:

- Healthy Public Policies: health should be a priority for politicians and leaders at all levels and sectors, considering complementary approaches such as legislation, fiscal measures, taxation and organizational changes;

- Development of Personal Skills: support personal and social development through dissemination and information, health education and enhancement of vital skills;

- Favorable Health Environments: monitoring the impact of environmental changes on health is essential and must be followed by actions that ensure positive health benefits for the population;

- Reinforcement of Community Action: concrete and effective community actions aimed to increase the power of the communities;

- Reorientation of Health Services: individuals, communities, groups, professionals

and health institutions must work together to create a health system that improves health, taking into account cultural peculiarities, individual and community needs.

To complement the analysis and discussion of these data, a documentary survey was carried out on the official websites of the seven companies represented in this survey between June and July 2016, with the purpose of identifying the institutional actions cited and described in the websites that could be also associated with health promotion strategies.

Thematic Content Analysis (Categorical thematic analysis and frequency analysis) was used for data analysis⁽⁹⁾, constituting two categories of analysis named "Health promotion activities of health: professionals' report" and "Health promotion activities: public communication of companies". The thematic unit of the categories was formed by the health promotion action; context units were formed by health promotion strategies, and recording units, by the activities that were related to each strategy.

In the first category, absolute (n) and percentage (%) frequencies were added, regarding the number of professionals who referred each recording unit (n), considering a total "n" of 34, and included their statements. In the second category, absolute (n) and percentage (%) frequencies were added, regarding the number of times that such action was identified in the companies' websites, considering a total "n" of seven.

The ethical and scientific requirements recommended for studies with human beings were observed, and the project was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of Universidade Federal de Rio Grande, under protocol no 1.011.952. The participants signed the Informed Consent Term at the time of the interview and were identified by initials of each profession (NUR: nurse, PHY: physician, ENG: engineer, OST: Safety technician and ONT: nursing technician) followed by the number corresponding to the company (1 to 7).

RESULTS

The 34 study participants were aged 31-40 years; there was a prevalence of female subjects; specialization was the highest level of schooling; who have been working in their profession from 1 to 10 years; most workers had indefinite duration employment contracts weekly workload of more than 31 hours; monthly income of ranging from BRL 3,001 to 5,000 ,with emphasis on physicians and engineers who reported the highest incomes, ranging from BRL 5,001 to 20,000.

As for the companies examined in the present study, six are located in the municipality with the largest port complex in southern Brazil, and one company represents another municipality whose economy is based on the extraction of coal and electricity generation, both of social and economic importance for the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the country. Three companies (42.8%) have less than 1000 workers; two (28.6%) have 1,001 to 3,500 workers and two others (28.6%) have 3,501 to 8,000 workers. In all of them, the main economic activity is classified as degree of risk 3.

Also, four are privately-owned companies and three are public companies that operate in several fields, such as construction of large vessels; petroleum refining products; manufacture of manure and fertilizers; electric power generation; terminal operations and uptake, treatment and distribution of water.

Health promotion actions: Professionals' reports

Analysis of the statements of the 34 occupational health and safety professionals about the development of joint actions of care in workers' health and safety was based on the health promotion strategies and comprised the first category of analysis (Table 1).

Table 1 – Summary of the category: Health promotion actions: professionals' reports. Rio Grande, RS, Brazil, 2015

Thematic Unit	Context Units	Recording Units
Health Promotion Activities	Healthy Public Policies	Document of the Environmental Risk Prevention Program
	Development of Personal Skills	Document of the Medical Occupational Health Control Program
	Supportive Environments for Health	Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Illnesses
		Monitoring and Surveillance of the Work Environment

Source: Database ⁽¹⁰⁾

The recording units linked to the first context unit were named: Document of the Environmental Risk Prevention Program (PPRA) [18 (52.6%)] and Document of the Medical Occupational Health Control Program (PCMSO) [30 (87.6%)].

The recording unit linked to the second context unit was named: Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Illnesses [24 (70.2%)].

As for the recording unit of the third context unit it was named: Monitoring and Surveillance of the Work Environment [29 (84.7%)].

The other health promotion strategies (Strengthening community action and Reorienting health services) were not related to the joint activities of the SESMT professionals of the companies.

Health promotion actions: public communication of companies

The information contained in the official websites of the seven companies was also analyzed for health promotion strategies, forming the second category of analysis (Table 2).

Table 2 – Summary of the category: Health promotion actions: public communication of the companies. Rio Grande, RS, Brazil, 2016 (continues)

Thematic Unit	Context Units	Recording Units
Health Promotion Activities	Healthy Public Policies	Integrated Management Certifications
	Development of Personal Skills	Desenvolvimento de Carreira (Career Development) Biblioteca do Trabalhador (Workers' Library) Jovem Aprendiz (Young Apprentice) Projeto Pescar (Fishing Project) Sponsoring of Paralympic Athletes
	Supportive Environments for Health	Projetos Produtivos Sustentáveis (Sustainable Productive Processes) Projeto Cinema Ambiental (Environmental Films Project) Projeto Quintal Orgânico de Frutas (Organic Fruit Yard Project) Plantio de Mudanças de Árvores (Planting of Tree Seedlings)

Health Promotion Activities	Strengthening Community Action	Semana da Responsabilidade Social (Social Responsibility Week) Criando Laços: ação voluntária (Creating bonds: voluntary action) Campanha do Agasalho (Winter Clothing Donation Campaign) "Sacola Literária" Project (aimed to stimulate reading and storytelling) Dia das Crianças (Children's Day) Apoio a Museus e Rádio (Support to Museums and Radio) Estímulo ao Comércio e Serviços Locais (Encouragement of Local Trade and Services) Geração de Emprego Local (Generation of Local Jobs)
	Reorientation of Health Services	Enfrentamento ao Abuso Sexual de Menores (Coping with Sexual Abuse of Minors) Programa de Prevenção de Álcool e Drogas (Alcohol and Drug Prevention Program) Cegonha Project (targeted to pregnant women)

Source: Research data, 2016.

The recording unit linked to the first context unit was named Integrated Management Certifications (two (28.6%)) related to company ISO 9001 (Quality Management), ISO 14001 (Environmental Management) and OHSAS 18001 (Occupational Health and Safety Management) certifications.

The recording units linked to the second context unit were named: Career Development [three (42.9%)]; Workers' Library [one (14.3%)]; Young Apprentice [one (14.3%)], Fishing Project (vocational education) [one (14.3%)] and Sponsoring of Paralympic Athletes [one (14.3%)].

The recording units linked to the third context unit were named: Sustainable Productive Processes [six (85.8%)]; Environmental Films Project [one (14.3%)]; Organic Fruit Yard Project [one (14.3%)] and Planting of Tree Seedlings [one (14.3%)].

The recording units linked to the fourth context unit were named: Social Responsibility Week [two (28.6%)]; Creating Bonds: voluntary action [two (14.3%)]; Winter Clothing Donation Campaign [one (14.3%)]; "Sacola Literária" [one (14.3%)]; Children's Day [one (14.3%)]; Support to Museums and Radio [one (14.3%)]; Stimulus to Local Trade and Services [one (14.3%)] and Generation of Local Jobs [one (14.3%)].

Finally, the recording units linked to the fifth context unit were named: Coping with Sexual Abuse of Minors [one (14.3%)]; Alcohol and Drug Prevention Program [one (14.3%)] and Cegonha Project [one (14.3%)].

Table 3 includes a comparison between the health promotion actions reported by SESMT professionals and those identified in the official websites of the companies.

Table 3 –Comparison of health promotion actions. Rio Grande, RS, Brazil, 2016 (continues)

SESMT professionals	Companies Websites
Healthy Public Policies	
Document of the Environmental Risk Prevention Program	Integrated Management Certifications
Document of the Control Program Occupational Physician	

Development of Personal Skills	
Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Illnesses	Desenvolvimento de Carreira (Career Development) Biblioteca do Trabalhador (Workers' Library) Jovem Aprendiz (Young Apprentice) Projeto Pescar (Fishing Project) Sponsoring of Paralympic Athletes
Supportive Environments for Health	
Monitoring and Surveillance of the Work Environment	Processos Produtivos Sustentáveis (Sustainable Productive Processes) Projeto Cinema Ambiental (Environmental Films Project) Projeto Quintal Orgânico de Frutas (Organic Fruit Yard Project) Plantio de Mudanças de Árvores (Planting of Tree Seedlings)
Strengthening Community Action	
-	Semana da Responsabilidade Social (Social Responsibility Week) Criando Laços: atuação voluntária (Creating bonds: voluntary action) Campanha do Agasalho (Winter Clothing Donation Campaign) Sacola Literária project (aimed to stimulate reading and storytelling) Dia das Crianças (Children's Day) Apoio a Museus e Rádio (Support to Museums and Radio) Estímulo ao Comércio e Serviços Locais (Encouragement to Local Trade and Services) Geração de Emprego Local (Generation of Local Jobs)
Reorientation of Health Services	
-	Enfrentamento ao Abuso Sexual de Menores (Coping with Sexual Abuse of Minors) Programa de Prevenção de Alcool e Drogas (Alcohol and Drug Prevention Program) Cegonha Project (targeted to pregnant women)

Source: Research data, 2016.

The number of health promotion actions identified in the company's official websites is clearly much higher than those identified in the statements of the SESMT professionals. Moreover, these actions are not only developed by SESMT professionals, but also involve other areas of the companies, e.g. administrative, financial and environmental and social responsibilities.

Of the 21 actions identified in the official websites, most of them were disclosed by three companies, as follows: one private company in the field of "large vessel constructions", with 13 of these actions; a public company in the field of "electric power generation", with six actions, and a public company in the field of "refined petroleum products", with five actions.

On the other hand, there was a public company where no action related to any health promotion strategy was identified. It should be noted that some actions were identified in more than one official website.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the “healthy public policies” strategy, the Document of the Environmental Risk Prevention Program (PPRA) and the Document of the Medical Occupational Health Control Program (PCMSO) documents can be analyzed from the perspective of health promotion, since these healthy policies combine several complementary approaches, including legislation, and these documents are legal.

In this regard, the Certifications of Integrated Management Systems were identified on the companies’ official websites. These certifications are considered a key tool for organizations that want to become more competitive, by performing adaptations in order to adhere to quality, environment, health and safety standards applicable in the workplace.

In the “development of personal skills” strategy, actions to prevent accidents and work-related diseases are considered health promotion strategies. In turn, the population, including the working population, can exercise greater control over their own health, in addition to exercising lifelong learning habits, preparing themselves for the various stages of existence, which includes coping with chronic diseases and external causes⁽¹⁾. Thus, through such actions the SESMT can raise workers’ awareness of the risks inherent to their role in the workplace, as it can be seen in the participants’ statements.

Moreover, the actions identified in the companies’ websites, such as career development and those targeted to workers, students and athletes, reveal a broader understanding of skills development that goes beyond the scope of companies and meets the expectations of society.

We noted with satisfaction that the participants’ statements indicated a great concern with health prevention. In this context, there is the concept of health prevention as interventions aimed to avoid the emergence of health problems, reducing their incidence and prevalence in populations, and the concept of health promotion as interventions not focused on a specific health problem, but aimed at improving health and well-being, emphasizing changes in living and working conditions, which require an interdisciplinary approach⁽¹³⁾. Then, preventive actions are translated into health promotion strategies, demonstrating the preventive character of the service provided by SESMT professionals.

As for the “creation of health-friendly environments”, systematic monitoring of the impact of changes in the environment, which interfere with health (in particular at work, it is essential and should be followed by actions that ensure positive health benefits for the population. Production processes interfere in the relationships developed in the ecosystems because they determine and contribute to the existence of risk conditions or situations, which interfere in the health standards of the populations⁽¹⁴⁾, in this case, the working population in their work environment.

The participants of this study conduct inspection and surveillance actions in the workplace to prevent that the characteristics of the productive processes directly impact workers’ health and safety. Therefore, these are undoubtedly health promotion actions.

The strategy “reinforcement of community action” was related to several actions identified in the official websites of the companies. Thus, the core of a health promotion process is the empowerment of communities, i.e., they possess and control their own efforts and destinies, which requires total and continuous access to information, opportunities for learning about health issues, as well as adequate financial support⁽¹⁾. Therefore, although we did not identify any actions by SESMT professionals related to this strategy, the companies showed concern with the local community through voluntary and economic and social responsibility actions.

Regarding the “reorientation of health services”, there has been a considerable debate about health promotion actions in the workplace. The most common barriers

encountered for the implementation of such actions are lack of employer support, lack of human resources, exorbitant costs, lack of interest of workers, lack of adequate physical space and conflicts of interest with production⁽¹⁵⁾. Therefore, the return on investment deserves more attention of employers, since there is usually a positive return on investment from health promotion actions in the workplace⁽¹⁶⁾.

The actions should be focused on the workers' needs and work environments, as well as on the particular characteristics of the different types of economic activities, which requires a thorough analysis of the entire work process and the negative impacts on the workers' health-disease process.

The present study had some limitations such as the geographical delimitation of the region and the fact that only companies that had occupational nurses were selected, which resulted in a small sample, although this has not diminished the importance of discussing the topic.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to the Ottawa Charter, health promotion strategies made it possible to classify the different joint activities of SESMT professionals and the actions disclosed by companies in their official websites, demonstrating that health promotion activities are carried out in the companies and, particularly, in work environments.

The results obtained showed that the actions carried out by the SESMT are directly targeted to workers and the work environment, through compulsory programs to control health and safety, prevention of accidents and diseases, and inspection and surveillance actions, demonstrating that the service has a preventive character.

The present study also provided knowledge about the actions disclosed by the companies. These actions are broad and extrapolate their limits and the SESMT focus, through the implementation of strategies focused on integrated management in the work process, personal development and environmental responsibility, social and economic actions.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that the companies meet the health promotion standards set by national and global policies. It is essential that SESMT professionals and employers recognize the benefits and investments made to support effective actions for the workers' population.

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