

The Importance of Human Resource Management in Corporate Social Responsibility Practices: A Case Study from a Brazilian Public Company Focused on Energy Operations Service.

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been increasingly demanded by stakeholders, being characterized by the stakeholder's ongoing commitment to ethical behavior in the environmental and social sphere. By means of a unique, in-depth and qualitative case study, this research sought to study the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in CSR practices at a Brazilian Public Company Focused on Energy Operations Service. To this end, data were collected in interviews with the company's executives, in official documents and in press releases, based on the theoretical concepts of CSR and HRM. The results analysis pointed out that several CSR practices are currently incorporated both in the internal environment of the institution and externally, so that the HRM area is responsible for the development and implementation of these practices. Thus, the main contributions of the study consist in: offering a synthesis on the two themes and analyzing the role of the HRM area in the development and implementation of CSR practices in the organizational environment.

Keywords

Human Resource Management, Social Responsibility, Organizational Environment, Energy Service Operations

1. Introduction

Social Responsibility (SR) is defined as the legal, ethical, and transparent behavior that guides decision making in order to contribute to sustainable development, listening to internal and external stakeholders, this being a concept that applies to all types of organizations, whether private, public or civil society (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards, [ABNT], 2012). It means the responsibility assumed by an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment. The concept is multidisciplinary and dynamic according to the context and, for business, presents challenges and opportunities that impact from its implementation to the consumer's purchase decision. So it can become routine, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) needs to permeate organizational processes (Engert et al. 2016), i.e., not be concerned with getting only a "seal" for the department or product. Although there is no common consensus on the definition of CSR, it is understood that its practices encompass doing what is expected by stakeholders, balancing business economic prosperity, social integrity, and environmental protection (Bansal and Song 2017; Engert et. al. 2016).

In the implementation of CSR, some challenges pointed out by McWilliams and Siegel (2011) are: dependence on senior management for integration into organizational routines; extra demand for financial, human and material resources; no uniformity to measure its costs, nor its returns - which may be due to the variety of constructs to define CSR so far presented by theories (Bansal and Song 2017; Khojastehpour, & Saleh, 2019). On the other hand, it also brings benefits, for example, due to improved image and reputation, which in turn can increase employee engagement, motivation, and innovation; compliance, which increases investor interest due to lower perceived risk (McWilliams, & Siegel, 2011); maximization of efficiency and profitability, as it decreases information conflicts with local stakeholders (Khojastehpour and Saleh 2019) and innovation, offering new sources and ways to compete (Golicic and Smith 2013).

Beyond what is stated about CSR intentions, what matters is how organizations can translate their socially responsible principles into effective actions and implementations. In this regard, it is believed that Human Resource Management (HRM) has an important role to play in ensuring the implementation of successful CSR practices in organizations (McWilliams and Siegel 2011). The main argument is that HRM can potentially provide a promising managerial framework supporting organizational efforts in converting CSR strategies into practical managerial actions, especially within the internal organizational environment (Jamali et al. 2015).

Therefore, this study seeks to present an analysis on the role of the Human Resources Management area in the development and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility practices in the organizational environment, referring to practices currently performed by a Brazilian Public Energy Service Company.

This article is divided into three sections. First, theoretical concepts about Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Resources Management are systematized. The second section presents the data collection, which took place through interviews with managers of the organization, as well as its analysis, conducted inductively, using theory to explain qualitatively a phenomenon in its real context. Finally, implications and conclusions are presented.

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2. Literature Review

When identifying the core of the research, the methodological basis is built through literature review, focusing on the main concepts to serve as a support for the work according to the point of view of several authors specialized in Human Resource Management and its application in the public sector, checking evidence of Corporate Social Responsibility practices, using scientific articles and journals. This survey is necessary to compose the theoretical foundation, to present the scientific disposition of the research and present the researcher's ideas.

According to the process defined by Tranfield et al. (2003), the literature review of this study was structured in three stages: planning, conduction, and dissemination. The planning phase establishes the search keywords, identifies the databases and the search period. In the conducting phase, the research is conducted and then the analysis and segregation of results is accomplished, which are followed by data extraction and synthesis. The dissemination phase presents the results of the analysis in an orderly manner.

2.1 Planning

In this step the Web of Science and Scopus databases were selected, the keywords chosen were: Human Resource Management AND Public; there were no objections or exclusions regarding the research period, and all articles that were returned in the search were analyzed. Also, only open access articles, which had their content available in such bases, were preferred. The search was performed by choosing the keywords related in the Title field of the document.

2.2 Driving

Considering search filters, reading of the abstracts and reading of the selected articles were performed. The Figure 1 present the selection process of the articles for the literature review of this study.

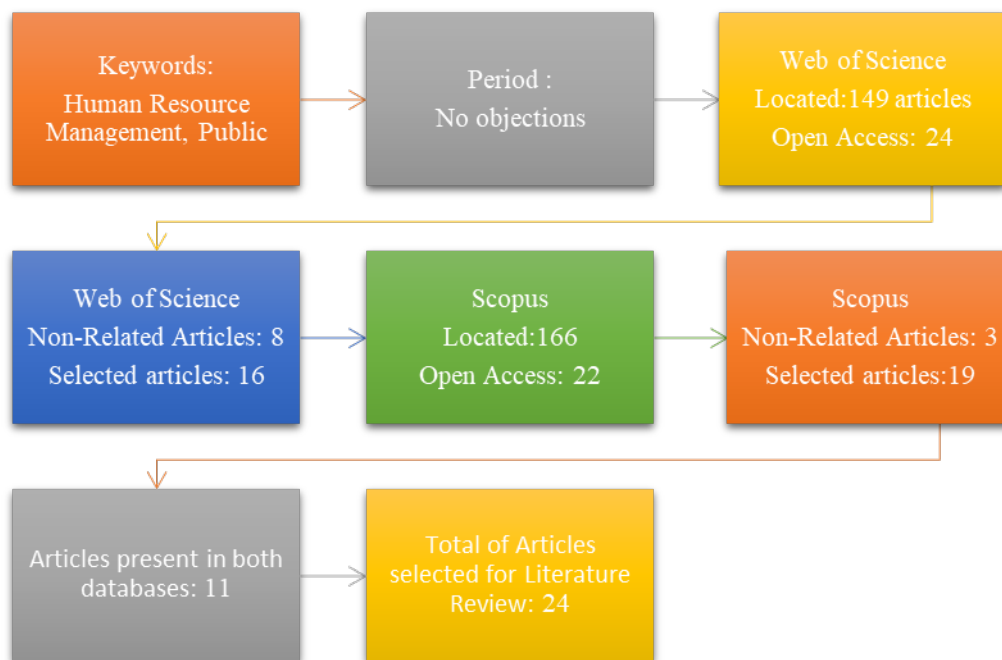


Figure 1 - Literature review process

During this step, 34 articles were identified, 22 from Scopus and 24 from Web Of Science, 12 of which were presented in both bases. When performing the literature review by reading the articles from the Scopus database, seven documents from the Web Of Science base were excluded from the selection, two from Scopus and one of the twelve that were in both bases simultaneously. Such exclusions were motivated by verifying that such articles addressed specific issues and without direct relation to the object of this study. Remaining for the completion of this literature review, 5 articles were exclusive of the Web of Science, 8 of the Scopus and 11 of both bases. Resulting in 24 articles selected for the study.

2.3 Dissemination

This part of the literature review process presents the findings identified after performing the full reading of the selected articles, it is found that a large part of the articles selected for this study are recent (2010 to 2021), and most

were published in the last 5 years). The literature review was conducted in order to base it according to theoretical concepts of representative publications; to know previous research, state of the art and gap; and to justify the filling of theoretical and practical space.

Corporate Social Responsibility

With the rapid industrialization that has occurred since the 1950s, while societies have improved their quality of life, there has been a loss in other aspects. For example, communication and logistics - symbols of globalization - reduced geographic distances between countries, taking information, products and services across continents and influencing individual and social consumer behavior. On the other hand, by making decisions to generate only economic shareholder value, companies have caused problems that negatively affect not only themselves or their value chain, but third parties as well, resulting in environmental disasters and social inequality. The environment and society are impacted by the decisions of social groups, among which organizations are included (Nobre and Ribeiro 2013), and their results can be positive and negative, internal, and external, momentary, and future.

The interconnection between these social groupings goes beyond geographical borders, and crises have local and global effects. Thus, in the late 1980s "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987, ch. 2) was proposed as sustainable development. For companies, it can be applied through corporate sustainability: the success of companies is not only about profit. Elkington (1998) proposed the sustainability tripod concept, whereby the company's competitive advantage is associated with the economic, environmental, and social perspectives in an equal, connected and balanced manner, so that the organization sustains, that is, maintains itself in the long term. One of the corporate sustainability strategies is called corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is: "Responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through ethical and transparent behavior that: contributes to sustainable development, including the health and welfare of society; it takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; complies with applicable legislation and is consistent with international standards of behavior; and is integrated throughout the organization and is practiced in its relationships." (ABNT, 2012, p.1).

Although there is empirical evidence that the stock market rewards socially responsible companies and punishes irresponsible ones, it is difficult to measure the benefits of CSR because it is usually an intangible resource (McWilliams and Siegel 2011). For example, one of the gains associated with CSR practices is the improvement of image and reputation, which are associated with legitimacy and license to operate. Internally, it is highlighted the increased motivation of employees, talent retention and innovation. For McWilliams and Siegel (2011), CSR can be a way to innovate both in the product and in the process - however, as its results are also linked to reputation or image, it becomes difficult to isolate its effects and measure its costs and benefits.

Human Resources Management and CSR Practices

CSR can also be considered a policy, as it represents a means of interaction between business, government and civil society actors, so that they influence the adoption of social and environmental practices in search of legitimacy. This definition allows emphasizing the changes in institutional conditions of a globalized business environment and its implications for the CSR of an organization (Voegtlin and Greenwood 2016).

Ethical practices as sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR) integrates critical HRM competencies into courses structured in the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) guidebook, used to align HRM curricula and courses around the globe (SHRM 2018).

Human Resources Management is seen as the implicit administrator of working conditions, not only for the direct employees of the company, but also for people who work indirectly for the organization (Voegtlin and Greenwood 2016). Actions aimed at motivation, employee engagement, training activities and encouragement of social volunteering can generate positive results for stakeholders (Greenwood 2013; Redington 2005; Schoemaker et al. 2006).

According to Mirvis (2012), volunteering can be used as a tool capable of generating greater engagement among employees, since they begin to have practical experience in activities that demand availability of time, energy and skills along with the company's resources, creating a stronger bond between the organization and its employees.

Thus, the HRM stands out in the implementation of CSR practices with employees when the practice of volunteering is performed together with the company's colleagues and the resources sponsored by it, generating pride on the part of employees in making the world better. This program establishes minimum requirements of respect for workers' rights and implementation of policies that ensure balance and quality of life at work, as well as continuous learning (Fuentes-Garcia et al. 2008).

HR managers can contribute to the definition of CSR within the corporation, identifying the relevant actors for the CSR strategy, adapting the reality of each case and playing an important role in liaising with top leadership to drive and strengthen the CSR agenda (Jamali et al. 2015). Below are presented six responsibilities identified from the selected articles: a) training and development; b) performance evaluation; c) recruitment; d) innovation; e) management tool and f) human resource planning, which can also be viewed in the Figure 2 .



Figure 2 - Key Responsibilities of Human Resource Management

a) Training and development

Many of the selected articles highlight the importance of training and development as one of the premises for the efficient management of people, always seeking a better performance of employees and the organization itself, emphasizing the need for social responsibility in carrying out the organization activities. Thus, Battaglio (2020); Nebot (2019); Radonic and Milosavljevic (2019); Roche and O'Riordan (2021); Urpia et al. (2018) define training and development as key factors for the success of HRM. Roche and O'Riordan (2021), in their work present the systems: performance management and leadership management in the Irish public service - called Senior Public Service, which include functions such as: mentoring and executive coaching, training and development, and 360° feedback for professional development (Senior Public Service, 2017). Battaglio (2020) states that the development of individual skills is essential for organizational well-being. For Urpia et al. (2018), investment in HR development has become of great importance to cope with changes in the business environment, and a strategy is needed for the team to acquire skills in leadership, subordinates, organizational structure and culture. Nebot (2019) reports that it is necessary to offer skills development that favor the behavior of employees to assume risks and responsibilities,

conflict management and management of multidisciplinary teams; (de la Nuez Sánchez-Cascado, 2018) also establishes that the result of these trainings should be rigorously evaluated, especially regarding its usefulness to the organization. Radonic and Milosavljevic (2019) exposes that many authors define training as a strong relationship with organizational performance should be used to improve staff and consequently the performance of the organization (Punia and Kant 2013).

b) Performance evaluation

In their research, Urpia et al. (2018) present that performance appraisal is one of the practices by which the needs of the organization's workforces are met, maintained and developed. Thus, the importance of effective performance appraisal is emphasized, which presents a significant impact on organizational excellence (Boselie et al. 2021; Nebot 2019; Roche and O'Riordan 2021; Urpia et al. 2018). Nebot (2019) reports that organizations should have tools for performance evaluation and offer counseling for the development of professionals, thus enabling them to reach their full potential. The authors Roche and O'Riordan (2021) indicate that the public service should be guided through mission, vision and objectives, promoting accountability for performance, cites as an example the Irish public service that established a system of performance development management, linking them to criteria for increment in pay and eligibility for promotions. Finally, Boselie et al. (2021) state that employees demonstrate positive attitudes such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, and excellent quality service when they are motivated through appropriate performance evaluation and feedback.

c) Recruitment

A fair recruitment with consolidated criteria should be established for the recruitment of adequate workforce to the organization, (Jonczyk 2015; Nebot 2019; Roche and O'Riordan 2021; Urpia et al. 2018) emphasize to this importance. Urpia et al. (2018) argues that the appropriate process for recruitment and retention of the workforce should be differentiated. Roche and O'Riordan (2021) report that in the current Irish public service, recruitment systems are open to external candidates at any point in their careers and provide managers with the ability to adjust the workforce more quickly in case of need. Jonczyk (2015) addresses the creative process of innovation in Polish public hospitals, where he reports the possibility of selecting people open to change and with creative skills. Nebot (2019) makes evident in his research the CSR when commenting that the selection processes should be valid and fair, considering the efficiency and equality in the selection process; however also presents that the model of tests for access to the civil service has not changed significantly in the last 40 years, because they favor candidates from families that can afford the opportunity costs in spending several years studying without working, in addition to the costs with directed private study. This has consequently the selection of people who do not represent all social groups, contributing to the low intellectual diversity of the public service. Finally, it advocates the creation of bodies specialized in selection techniques using new formalized protocols of evaluation criteria.

d) Innovation

Innovation in the Human Resource Management process aligned with Social Responsibility is a topic of significant relevance to the field (Nebot 2019; Radonic and Milosavljevic 2019; Uslu 2015). Nebot (2019) presents employees as should be innovative, strategically oriented, flexible, creative and motivated. In this way, Radonic and Milosavljevic (2019) link human resource management as a key enabler of intellectual capital and innovation, identifying internal communication as crucial to employee engagement in the face of significant correlation with an organization's innovation. Uslu (2015) states that innovation can generate excellent organizational results, as well as workers satisfied with their workplaces are able to activate new ideas, techniques and methods, seeking the improvement of organizational performance.

e) Human resource planning

Nebot (2019) and Urpia et al. (2018) indicate that the practice of human resources planning is essential for organizations, because it identifies the needs and resources required for the success of a project, in addition to presenting quantities and competencies to achieve the organizations' objectives. The strategic planning applied to the personnel policy is essential for determining the number of employees and structure required for operations over time, through projections of scenarios that estimate the impact of these actions (Nebot 2019).

f) Other management tools

Battaglio (2020) exposes the methodology of the "nudge", used to improve the results of people, achieving goals, fulfilling organizational missions, and consolidating strategic objectives. A "nudge" should change behavior in a

way that is predictable, although it does not prohibit alternatives, as examples, cites the warnings on cigarette packs, energy efficiency labels and nutritional information of foods. It also presents the application of mid-level managers and supervisors to listen to employees and end harassment in public organizations (Battaglio 2020). Then Nebot (2019) indicates the need for connectivity between people and machines to increase organizational efficiency. In their work Kravariti and Johnston (2020) report the situation seen in the public sector, different from the private sector, because in the public sphere there may be an innate desire to contribute to public service without the pursuit of financial reward. Gadomska-Lila (2016) corroborates that Human Resource Management practices are designed to support the organization's goals and values, as well as the current trend in the Polish public sector aims to seek the improvement of its effectiveness by the use of "hard" management tools, including complex control system, and need for constant monitoring reports.

3. Research Method

Considering that the present research investigates how a phenomenon occurred in its real context, it adopted case study as a method, following Yin (2014) guidelines. Given the scarcity of recent studies on the subject, a unique case study like this one is chosen due to its peculiar characteristics, which can generate useful insights due to its depth. Conclusions may find application in other objects, breaking down barriers to learning and transferring knowledge that otherwise would be private (Mariotto et al. 2014). The analysis of the collected data was conducted through a qualitative approach, interpreting content such as websites and institutional reports and interview speeches, inductively, in order to infer theoretical concepts from observed phenomena (Bhattacharjee 2012; Mariotto et al. 2014). The chosen primary data collection tool was the interview with two managers of the organization. The initial field of contact was decisive: based on the context and content exposure, we found it feasible to understand the contribution of the Human Resources Management area for the promotion of CSR practices.

The interview script was structured according to the guiding theoretical concepts, and with open questions beginning with "what", "which" and "how", aiming to obtain a detailed background that could strengthen the data analysis. This type of question allows, as recommended by Yin (2014) the interviewee to be original and eliminate biases that could appear depending on how the question is asked in the case of biased and closed questions. The two interviews were applied at independent times and, for content complementations, other sources were consulted, especially the organization's website and its social responsibility policy, in order to use multiple sources of evidence to increase the validity of the case study (Mariotto et al. 2014; Yin 2014). The interviews were recorded, revisited and discussed among the authors with the purpose of answering the research question. The recording enabled the re-analysis of the answers throughout the data interpretation, in order to understand at what points the theory corroborates or not the real case. Figure 3 shows the workflow of the case study methodology, as recommended by Yin(2014).

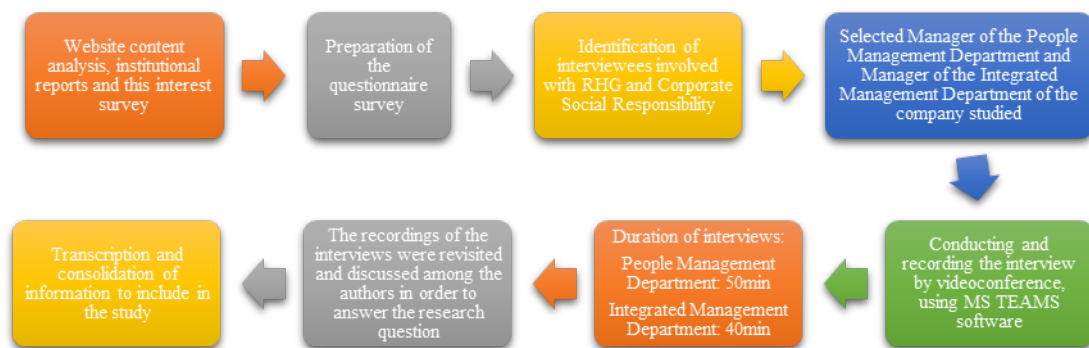


Figure 3 – Research Methodology Workflow

4. Data Collection

As unit of analysis, a Brazilian energy services company were researched in reports published online and confirmed by interviews conducted with managers from the Human Resources and Sustainability areas. The company's practices and actions reflect this focus on sustainability, aligning it with its strategic guidelines, mission, vision and corporate values. These practices are developed in accordance with the Sustainability Policy, whose guidelines go

beyond internal activities and extend to encouraging the sustainable performance of suppliers and in favor of the community. Due to its responsible and competent performance, based on the balance between economic, environmental and social aspects, this company has achieved promising results, generating value for its stakeholders and increasingly earning the recognition of society.

The HRM policies of this company enable suitable conditions for development, retention and appreciation, through programs and actions that seek continuous improvement of quality of life and working conditions. In addition to the resources and guarantees required by law, the company offers several benefits and advantages agreed upon in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, it has verified several Human Resources Management practices aligned with Social Responsibility, the main ones being:

4.1 Organizational climate surveys

The monitoring of the level of employee satisfaction through the Great Place to Work (GPTW) platform by the census methodology, i.e., all employees are asked to respond to it, in order to identify their expectations and level of satisfaction. The survey allows an evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of the Company. With internal work groups, the company studies and implements actions aimed at improving employee satisfaction.

4.2 Benefits

It invests in its workforce and offers its employees, in addition to the benefits provided by the labor legislation, attractive corporate packages that contribute to the health, safety and quality of life of the employee, also considering the interests of his or her family. These packages are compatible with those of the best companies in the country and serve all employees proportionally.

4.3 Professional development - training and capacity building

Prioritizes the training and development of its employees, always keeping qualified and experienced professionals, allowing everyone to exercise their potential in an environment that supports the development of their career and skills. In 2019, it invested R\$ 1.9 million in capacity building and training actions, both for its own and outsourced employees. It has an Education Aid program, where the employee can take up to two undergraduate and/or graduate courses with tuition subsidized by up to 80%, respecting a maximum ceiling (provided they are aligned with an area in which the company operates), foreign language tuition, where tuition is subsidized by the company and partnerships with educational institutions that offer a discount to employees and their dependents. Also noteworthy are the Manager in Action Program (PGA) and the Leadership Workshops, which seek the continuous development of leaders and develop, above all, the quality of "Caring for People".

4.4 Performance evaluation

The corporate Performance Management program establishes a standardized way to monitor and evaluate employee performance. It is composed of two axes: Organizational Competencies, related to the behavior expected from each employee, and Results, referring to the business goals. The program subsidizes promotions, meritocracy, functional adaptation, conferences, training, scholarships for graduate studies in foreign languages, among others. In performance evaluations, actions related to ethics, respect for colleagues and leadership, care for oneself, for others and for the environment are also analyzed, across the board, in the profiles of those who demonstrate such traits and those who do not.

4.5 The volunteer programme

An initiative instituted in 2004 to encourage volunteer work and the development of attitudes of citizenship and social responsibility among employees, it allows them to use up to four hours a month - or eight hours every two months - of their working time to perform voluntary and spontaneous community actions that contribute to the sustainable development of society in broad aspects, whether cultural, professional or educational.

4.6 Diversity programme

The Diversity Program fosters equal rights, opportunities and recognition for all people, with a focus on vulnerable groups and those subject to discrimination. The Program is linked to the Permanent Diversity Committee, whose role is to determine which actions are priorities and how they will be carried out. Within its scope, it seeks to propose and support internal actions in line with public policies and movements focused on diversity, planning, executing and monitoring actions aimed at its six pillars: gender, race, sexual orientation, accessibility, age and religion. Throughout its existence, the Committee has contributed to the promotion of Human Rights, especially by aiming for more egalitarian labor relations. The encouragement and good management of diversity provide greater productivity and employee engagement, generate better social, economic and financial performance and positively influence stakeholders to adopt best practices related to the topic. As the access to job openings in this company is through public competition, there is no distinction in the selection processes, avoiding the risk of discrimination at this stage. The CISAs (Internal Commissions for Sustainability) are established to encourage voluntary work, which seek to develop female equity programs by increasing leadership positions for women, valuing their competence.

4.7 Prevention of sexual and psychological harassment

The company aims to create a rewarding work environment that is conducive to generating productivity, in order to prevent any kind of harassment, it has several channels for denunciation that preserve the identity of users, keeping them anonymous. One of the main examples is the Commission for Analysis of Complaints of Moral Harassment (CADAM), which establishes rules for handling complaints of moral harassment, and is responsible for analyzing and guiding employees in relation to prevention against this practice, in line with social responsibility and best corporate governance practices. CADAM exists since 2009 - being a pioneer in the country in the implementation of a commission with this purpose, there are also the ombudsman channels, Ethics Guidance Council (COE).

4.8 Promoting occupational health and safety

It has an occupational health service and offers its employees an agreement to take diagnostic tests for diseases that may affect their ability and productivity at work. It also has a series of formal health and safety actions and committees, one of the main ones being the Internal Commissions for Accident Prevention (CIPAs). The engagement of employees with the theme also occurs through monthly meetings, by department and location, called Safety Sectors.

4.9 Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

HR coordinates the alignment of actions aimed at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), prioritized for the electric sector in the Human Resources Management, including them in the strategic objectives, unfolded in goals and initiatives of the company. The extended maternity leave of six months is provided to the employed mothers and, subsequently, the reduced working hours for two months more, as well as additional aid to employees who have children with disabilities, women who suffer domestic violence and support for cases of chemical dependency.

4.10 Social and environmental actions

The area of Socio-Environmental Responsibility coordinates and monitors accessibility works, lectures in schools, community gardens, education aid, seeking the strengthening of human and labor rights. According to Swaen (2009), in relation to HRM with CSR, organizations must adopt responsible behaviors, encouraging changes with respect to daily activities, as well as culture and organizational structures, making CSR one of their core strategies.

5. Results and Discussion

This research, by exploring a real situation where CSR practices are relevant in the organizational environment, sought to align with studies focusing on the theoretical implications of CSR in HRM, so that the actions practiced in a publicly traded energy company were explored in a single case study.

CSR currently plays a significant role in the corporate environment, considering that society proves to be increasingly aware of corporate social responsibility behaviors. At the same time, it is understood that the GP occupies a strategic position in organizations accounting for human capital, it stands out as an essential resource for growth - innovation, as it highlights the continuous search for strategies aimed at the dissemination of actions and values that contribute to a socially responsible corporation (Beer et al. 2015). For Roselen and MacLennan (2016), the strategic role of the GP used to be seen as a personnel department, where it addressed only operational functions, over time the area of Human Resources Management needed to adapt its activities aiming to meet strategic demands, to achieve better results in the business environment.

6. Conclusion

The case studied is an example of Brazilian origin that despite having great experience and previous capabilities of CSR, the area of GP still has the challenge of promoting more and more objectives associated with economic, environmental and social sustainability in the long term, aimed at the internal public, always seeking continuity in the improvement of actions. Considering the previous arguments, the analysis of the results of this research showed significant relationship regarding the role of Human Resources Management in corporate social responsibility practices of the company studied, so that the research conducted contributed to explain constructs linked to strategy and management, collaborating to the implementation of socially responsible practices in other organizations, serving as a guiding case for other companies seeking this improvement facing the challenges of Social Responsibility.

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