

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR: PERCEPTION AND MEANING OF SMOKING HABITS IN EVERYDAY ROUTINES AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to consider the effects of cigarette break during work day on socialization and interaction at work place, between smoker employees, but also among non-smokers employees and smoker employees. Another purpose is to reveal how this habit impacts on socialization and professional performance among employees. This topic is related also with work stress and the perception of workers that smoking reduces stress at workplace. The research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods, survey and semi-structured interviews, on private sector employees.

The main results reveal that many of employees that participated in the research claim that cigarette consumption helps them deliver higher returns at the workplace. As a result of our research, we have concluded that employees attach greater importance to the workplace cigarette, which helps them achieve better communication with colleagues / partners, most of them claiming that they can communicate better with their colleagues during cigarette break and at the same time this habit helps them relax after their work in the organization. Moreover, most of them are satisfied with respecting work and break schedule at their job.

Keywords: smoking, workplace, behaviour, interaction, perception, employees.

1. INTRODUCTION

Engaging with and experiencing smoking is a major topic in anthropological and sociological studies (Marron, 2017). The starting point of our research was based on empirical evidence that show that co-workers spend break together, whether they are smokers or non-smokers. Given the harmful effects of tobacco use, a first question that emerged was: "Why would anybody be willing to be exposed to cigarette smoke if he/she is a non-smoker?" This article is not about discussing the effects and risks of tobacco on consumers' health. As previously mentioned, we want to understand what kind of behaviours, attitudes and interactions take place between smoker employees and also among non-smokers employees and smoker employees, during the work break. Most of the studies that explore the relationship between work and smoking focus on smoking restrictions at the workplace (Brownson et al., 2002; Jeffery et al., 1994), smoking bans in relation with work and life satisfaction (Parry et al., 2000; Odermatt and Stutzer, 2015), cost-benefits of workplace smoking (Raaijmakers and Borne 2003), work stress and smoking (Kouvonen et al., 2005; Tagliacozzo and Vaughn 1982). The aim of this paper is to explore the relation between smoking behaviour and interaction among co-workers and superior, perception about benefits of the cigarette break for work, the feeling given by the behaviour of smoking at work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW - SMOKING AT WORK

Tobacco consumption marked the 19th and 20th centuries (Marron, 2017) making smoking at work a common behaviour in our contemporary society, despite the fact that the proportion of people who use tobacco has decreased over the last centuries. Cigarettes are associated with modernity, consumerism (Brandt, 2007) and the appearance of visual culture (Tinkler, 2006). Marron (2017) summarizes that consumption of tobacco can

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be found over several major sociological concepts which mark the changes in society, such as: "shifting beliefs about liberalism, freedom and social order; the growth of capitalist production and the advent of consumer culture; and the newfound dynamism and intensity of modern experience". In studies related to smoking habit we find several related topics such as work break (Sarna et al., 2009), work stress (Kouvonen et al., 2005), health of employees (Shields, 1999; Raaijmakers, 2003).

Nowadays, when most people spend half of their active day at work, the benefits of break during the daily work are clear. Thus, Kühnel and her team (2017) show in their study that taking short breaks increase the daily level of work engagement. Moreover, healthy lifestyle (Stan, 2018) and psychological well-being (Nica, Manole, Brişcariu, 2016) in organizations are approaches that extend in human resource management practices and which make break an important issue for both employees and employers.

A survey conducted in 34 hospitals, on 2589 staff nurses (Sarna et al., 2009) brings empirical evidence that reveal smokers are less likely to miss breaks, compared to non-smokers. The study also points out that there is a correlation between the routine of smokers and non-smokers related with work break. Thus "those who did not smoke were twice as likely to miss their work breaks as compared to smokers" (Sarna et al., 2009). Same article acknowledges that nurses are planning their workday around the work break for a cigarette.

Wilson, Parsons and Wakefield (1999), mentions that there are three main arguments why the health system should analyse the effects of smoking on quality of life: the first refers to the relationship of subjectivity between the assessment of quality of life and the real dimension of health, the second appoint to the effect of factors externalities on health such as stress and addictions and the latter highlights the benefits to approach the subject of smoking behaviour for the health directly and indirectly.

Furthermore, when investigating work stress and smoking status, Kouvonen et al. (2005) findings seem to reveal that workplace stress influences in particular the number of cigarettes smoked and the maintenance of the smoking habit rather than the smoking status itself. In accordance with this hypothesis, there is more evidence for an association between job strain and smoking intensity than for job strain and smoking status.

3. HABITS, BEHAVIOURS AND PERCEPTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SMOKING POPULATION IN ROMANIA

The most recent representative data for Romanian population regarding habits, behaviours and perceptions associated with smoking is provided by IRES – Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES, 2016), in 2016, for a sample of 2074 respondents, representing adults aging more than 18 years old, with a maximum tolerated error of $\pm 2,2\%$. Starting from this statistical data we were able to portray the smoking habit issue and the behaviours associated to it. Data from 2016 show that in Romania 25% of the population consumes tobacco, 17,5% smoke on a daily basis, respectively 7,1% smoke rarely, the habit being more common among people from urban areas (28,3%) by comparison with rural areas (20,3%). Smoking is more common among men, who smoke every day, 22,5% and not on a daily basis, 8,6%. By contrast, 12,8% women smoke daily, respectively 5,7% women smoke with a lower frequency. Most smokers are to be found in the 18-35 age category (36%), followed by 36-50 age category (30%) and decreases the more people tend to get older. Thus, in the 51-65 age category 17,8% are smokers, while for people ageing more than 65, 7,8% are smokers. This study also indicates that smoking behaviour can be traced back before the age of 15, as 18% of the respondents declared having started smoking before turning 15, 30% of smokers began smoking between 16 and 18 years old and 30% became familiar with this type of behaviour between 19 and 22 years old. Smoking habit was experienced by more than one third of respondents (34%), who at the moment of the research did not use to smoke anymore. Related to habits associated with smoking, for more than half of the respondents smoking is not forbidden at home and the law prohibiting smoking in public areas did not change at all their smoking routine.

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4. AIM AND METHODS

The purpose of the research is to identify the meaning of the cigarette break in the workplace among the employees. To extend the relation between work and smoke this study explores the meaning of cigarettes break for employees (smokers and non-smokers) and the relationship between co-workers during smoke break, trying to grasp whether smoke break has any influence in maintaining good relationships at work and improving communication in organization.

In terms of objectives, the paper is aimed at identifying tobacco consumers' perceptions about the cigarette break, whether the cigarette break contributes to the cohesion of the working group and whether this type of activity correlates with wellbeing at work. The main research question was: "What kind of relation is between smoke break and work achievement?"; another concern was related to: "Why employees are willing to expose themselves to cigarette smoke at work place if they are non-smokers?"

5. DESIGN AND SAMPLE

Based on the literature review presented in the first part of this paper, and the purpose, objectives and research question previously mentioned, the study was conducted using the quantitative research methods. We started with an explorative approach in order to build an analytical framework to develop the quantitative instrument (Mina-Raiu, 2015, p. 26, p. 44). The quantitative approach was developed using a sociological survey for collecting empirical data, the questionnaire being designed with opinion question, and question about the type of organization and the profile of respondents. The questionnaire was applied online and face to face among employee's smokers and non-smokers with and full time job in private and public organization. The sample is one of non-probabilistic type or in other words "sampling that includes the selection of the most available subjects, based on a predefined purpose" (Babbie, 2010, p. 260). Sample included employees, with age between 18 and 60 years old, working in Bucharest, and being smokers and non-smokers that attend smoking breaks during workday. Data collection was done during two months in October – November 2018, with a sample of 140 respondents, employees from public and private organization. All of respondents of survey reported that are participating at break during workday.

6. RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATE

Categorized responses to questionnaires are shown in Table 1. Respondents are organized by smokers and non-smokers, age, gender, education level, work sector. As we can see in Table 1, sample is composed mostly by young respondents working in private organizations. Additionally to the profile that includes socio-demographic attributes smokers are divided in three types according to the number of cigarettes consumed per day: heavy smokers (between 10 to 14 cigarettes per day, and more then 14), moderate smokers (between 6 to 9 cigarettes per day), light smokers (between 1 to 5 cigarettes per day). The data shows that the number of cigarettes consumed by smoker respondents varies considerably splitting them in three major categories, which correspond to those encountered in the academic literature: heavy smokers (32%), moderate smokers (35%) and light smokers (33%).

Referring to the participation at work break, the assumption that non-smokers spend this time with smokers is confirmed as 78.6% (all the time) and 21.4% (sometimes) from the sample of non-smoker mention that they go outside on a smoke break. In order to get a better understanding about perception and meaning of smoke break for employees, they said it is an opportunity for "communication with co-workers" (41%), "relaxing" (52%), "enrich new information" (21%), "disengage from work staff " (38%). Perception about co-workers at cigarette break is that they are communicative (chatty) (62%), fearless/ extroverted (11%), jokers/humourist (27%), and few of them are introverted (6%) or angry (4%). These results were calculated for all sample, smokers and non-smokers.

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TABLE 1. RESPONDENTS PROFILE – SMOKER EMPLOYEES AND NON-SMOKER EMPLOYEES

	Smokers (n=91) %	Non-Smokers (n=49)%
<i>Age (years)</i>		
18 – 20	15.38	20.4
21 – 30	57.14	59.18
31 – 40	17.58	14.28
41 – 60	9.9	6.14
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	61.53	55.10
Male	38.47	44.90
<i>Education level</i>		
High School	35.16	28.57
Bachelor's degree	26.38	38.78
Master degree	38.46	32.65
<i>Work sector</i>		
Private	64.83	73.46
Public	23.07	18.36
NGO (non-governmental)	12.1	8.18

The moods associated with cigarette break were both positive and negative, but most of the respondents associate positive feelings as: relaxation, happiness, freedom, carefree with break smoke, and the negative feeling were less mentioned, as stress and angry. Also the association with positive and negative moods, suggests that the affective states underlying smoking are relatively diverse. This evidence is in accordance with Shapiro et. al. (2002) who highlight that smokers give a higher importance to work break due to the feelings they experience during this time. The positive perception associated with cigarette break is a factor that positively impacts work engagement and work motivation. Table 2 indicates that for employees cigarette break is a way to detach from tasks (44%), and also manage tasks better (26%).

Both smokers and non-smokers seem to perform better task management, however the correlation is stronger for non-smokers, revealing the meaning non-smokers employees attach to their deliberate exposure to tobacco smoke. Continuing to explore the reasons why non-smokers usually spend work break with smokers, it seems that it is a matter of interactions between co-workers and information they share during cigarette break, such as: having an overview about department/other departments (16%), changes in organization (35%), better communication with co-workers (40%), informal relation with supervisor/manager (9%).

TABLE 2. PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEES (SMOKERS AND NON-SMOKERS) ABOUT HOW SMOKE BREAK DURING DAY WORK AFFECT WORK

To manage better my work task	26%
Detach for a short time from task	44%
Improve my relation with coworkers	17%
To know personal information about some colleges/team	11%
Others	2%

Overall the employees believe that after a cigarette break they have a better job performance, as two-thirds of respondents give a very high and high importance to smoke break impact on their performance. Smoke break is also associated with a release during work day and refreshment before other task, these results being very significant for smoker employees, and less for non-smokers. As a conclusion of the data analysis, non-smokers participation at the cigarette break is underpinned by the need of belonging to the group and being inform about

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organization and co-workers, while for smokers besides these reasons, there is a need to smoke as a habit that make them experience freedom, refreshment, recharge for the upcoming tasks.

7. DISCUSSIONS

Through the data gathered, that evidence shows that employees largely believe that this break helps them achieve higher job performance. This is a perception and it was not tested on the research because of lack at data. According to the research questions identified, the dates reveal that about half of the employees believe that this cigarette break is beneficial for relaxing and for having the best communication with their co-workers. Also, most of them, said that the break helps them to clear even for a relatively short time certain problems encountered either at work or in their personal life. Regarding the first research question which refers to the relation between smoke break and work achievement, cigarette break its benefits as better communication with coworkers, information about department, organization and co-workers, task management, informal relation with supervision. The second research question about reasons of non-smokers to participate at cigarette break related with work achievement that we say above is even in a strong relation for non-smokers. For smokers, cigarette break it's also a mood chance that give the refreshment, freedom, detach and relaxation. Fasih-Ramandi et. al. (2019), evidence that role, relationship and peer support dimension of smoking at work, are gathered in three dimension: "demands, control and chance". Were demands is about work environment, work load and work pace; the control is about relation between co-workers at work; and change is about organization, management, notification at work. These three dimensions summarize the relation between organization – smoke break – employees.

This analysis is useful from the perspective of organizational management for both employees and employers. The behaviour of employees in the workplace, how they organize their time and activities are determined by routine habits during the work schedule. What the research highlighted is not only the fact that the cigarette break is an opportunity to relax, recharge, but it is also a way to communicate between colleagues, to consolidate relation between co-workers, organization engagement. Of course the smoking itself has a bad effect on health and organization can't encourage such a habit, but maybe they can replace the cigarette break with a healthier habit for their employees!

This study has some limitations such as the fact that the sample is not probabilistic, making the correlation not statistically significant and therefore results are not representative for the whole population. Secondly the data were partially collected online and we cannot be sure about the honesty of the respondents that is why the answers can be damage by bias. Nevertheless, this is the first research on this topic applied in Romania, and the lack of empirical and theoretical evidence about this specific population can lead to a partial image about the subject. In future it will be useful to conduct similar surveys with bigger sample size, probabilistic, better variables and more ample results.

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