



## LABORAL GYMNASTICS: EXPERIMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION WITH THE SERVERS OF A PUBLIC HEI IN THE NORTHWEST REGION OF RS

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### SUMMARY

The present work was developed in a public higher education institution in the Northwest Region of the State of RS, with an emphasis on the People Management area, with the objective of verifying the contributions of the experimental implementation of a Labor Gymnastics program in group development, mainly with regard to productivity, interpersonal relationships and health of the participating employees. Initially, data was collected through interviews, a questionnaire and a lecture applied to a certain group of employees who declare themselves interested in the program. Subsequently, an analysis of the data collected was carried out comparing them with other studies already existing in this same theme,

**Key words:** Labor gymnastics. Benefits. Group development.

### Introduction

Never before has there been so much talk about quality of life and health as in recent times, which was just cause for concern or fad, today it has become a necessity. We know that the human being is subjected daily to an enormous amount of pressures and responsibilities, and this is due to evolution, which allowed the development that happens before the eyes, generating in our daily life more comfort and convenience through technological devices that are increasingly more accessible to all of us. This development facilitates our day-to-day activities, but it also ties us to tasks that steal our time, reducing or eliminating our leisure and physical activities (SOUZA, 2015).

Souza (2015) states that physical inactivity acts as a risk factor for the onset of diseases and, consequently, it has made people progressively request medical help and resort to therapies to relieve muscle pain, headaches, stress and several other symptoms resulting from daily activities performed under pressure in the workplace. In parallel to this process,

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institutions are recognizing the importance of investing in human capital, a concern linked to people management, which focuses on reducing the series of consequences generated by changes in work and increasing risk factors, both for servers as for institutions.

Reis (1998, p.21) clarifies that “among the tools used in the search for this improvement in the quality of life, Labor Gymnastics has taken a prominent place in several segments” and as a result it has become increasingly evident in Brazil in the recent years, being used as an important tool within the set of measures that aim to prevent the onset of diseases and injuries related to the activities of the work environment.

According to Vilarta and Sonati (2007), Labor Gymnastics is based on the valorization of the practice of physical activities as an instrument to promote the improvement of the quality of life of the worker, this practice of physical exercises performed during the working day, prescribed in according to the function performed by the server, it aims to compensate for the negative effects that the work activity can cause, resulting in benefits for the servers and for the organization.

The objective of occupational gymnastics is to maintain the health of employees through physical exercises, this is done through postural re-education, stress relief, decreased physical inactivity, increased mood for work, health promotion, greater body awareness, increased social integration, improvement in professional performance, reduction of tensions accumulated during work, prevention of injuries and diseases due to cumulative traumas such as RSI (Repetitive Strain Injuries) and WMSD (Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorder), decreased visual, body fatigue and mental through pauses for exercises (SCHMITZ, 1990).

Based on that, the objective of this work is presented, through which we tried to verify the contributions of labor gymnastics in improving the quality of life of Technical-administrative servers in Education of a public higher education institution located in the Northwest Region of the State of RS, as well as ascertaining the acceptance of civil servants in the face of a decision to permanently implement Labor Gymnastics in the Institution, in order to reduce expenses due to the number of absences from work (absenteeism) and the incidence of occupational diseases (RSI / WRMSD ), in addition to raising public awareness of the importance of practicing physical activities and adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

## **2 Theoretical aspects**

The theoretical framework of this work is divided into four sections: the first deals with issues related to Human Resources Administration, the second deals with Labor Gymnastics, its benefits and classifications, the third brings some important considerations on

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the Quality of Life at Work and the last section will cover issues related to physical activities and workers' health.

## **2.1 Human Resources management**

Human Resources (HR) or People Management, as it is most known today, is one of the areas that most felt the changes in the contemporary world, with a strong impact on work professionals. Due to this, companies started to worry about the attraction, development and retention of employees with growth potential (DA COSTA et al., 2014).

Despite this, it is known that there is a great controversy about the contribution of human resources management to the performance of companies, as well as questions about whether their practices should be universal or relativistic (Evans, Pucik, & Barsoux, 2002). Tanure (2005), when analyzing the convergent and divergent approaches, defends a third current, called convergent divergence, more adequate to face the paradoxes that companies have been facing, since the intensification of globalization. Practices such as those of people management must adapt to regional and individual company specificities, while other practices linked to dimensions of the organization, such as strategy, can be universal. In this context, to meet the demands of global organizations, HR needs to assume increasingly complex, even paradoxical, functions.

In many Brazilian companies, HR is restricted to the processes of registering and moving people, fulfilling a bureaucratic notary function. These strategies are easily identifiable in small and medium-sized companies, but they are also present in large companies. In these, HR practices and policies can be sophisticated, but there is no consistency with the organization's strategy. This aspect is central to understanding the inclusion of the executor's face in the model (Tanure et al., 2007). This reality is not restricted to Brazilian companies. Elvira and Dávila (2005), analyzing the role of HR in Latin America, demonstrate that there are also idiosyncrasies and regional approaches also in companies in the various countries surveyed, similar to those found in Brazil. Multinational corporations coexist in the same space,

## **2.2 Labor Gymnastics and its Benefits**

As its name implies, Labor Gymnastics is the performance of physical exercises in the work environment, during office hours, to promote the health of employees and avoid injuries from repetitive strain and occupational diseases. In addition to physical exercises, Labor Gymnastics consists of stretching, muscle relaxation and joint flexibility. Although the

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practice of Labor Gymnastics is collective, it is shaped according to the function performed by the worker (DE OLIVEIRA, 2007).

For Pinto and Souza (2006), Labor Gymnastics, when adopted appropriately, regularly and associated with ergonomics, can be a means of increasing the health and quality of life of workers, allowing, among other things, more correct occupational postures for the development of work tasks, reducing fatigue at work and increasing productivity.

Currently, greater attention has been paid to the quality of life of the worker, in the hope of promoting involvement and motivation in the work environment, thus providing an increase in productivity. It is sought with the quality of life at work, to make sure that the satisfaction of individual needs is achieved in the very environment where people carry out their work activities on a daily basis.

It is well known that Gymnastics at Work generates benefits for both the company and the worker. In addition to preventing RSI / WRMSD, it has shown faster and more direct results with the improvement of interpersonal relationships and the relief of bodily pain (GUERRA, 1995; MENDES, 2000; OLIVEIRA, 2006). Among the benefits for the institutions can be mentioned the decrease in the occurrences of absences from work for medical reasons and also the decrease in accidents at work. On the other hand, administrative workers, as is the case studied, are affected by postural, muscular and visual problems, thus, a good program of activities for these employees may help to reduce injuries due to such factors.

In this sense, the implementation of a Labor Gymnastics program seeks to awaken in workers the need to change their lifestyle as a whole and not just in the moments of guided exercises within the company. According to Nahas and Fonseca (2004), from the business point of view, developing actions to promote health and quality of life for workers represents an investment with a guaranteed return in the medium and long term. Well-informed workers who are aware that their behavior can determine the greater or lesser risk of falling ill will certainly be healthier, more productive and possibly happier.

In a study, carried out by Luchese, at Banrisul (Bank of the State of Rio Grande do Sul), a company with almost ten thousand employees, in which the guided exercises were performed during the working day, from 2003 to 2006, was recorded a 44% reduction in new cases of RSI / WRMSD after the implementation of Gymnastics at Work (Revista Confef, 2007). 232 agencies participated in this program. Based on this assumption, evidence has shown that Workplace Gymnastics, on average, after three months to a year of its implantation, in a company, presents benefits, such as: reduced cases of RSI / WRMSD,

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lower health care costs, relief body aches, reduced absences, lifestyle changes and, what matters most to companies, increased productivity.

### 2.2.1 Classification

Labor Gymnastics has been classified by different authors in different ways, creating some confusion regarding its execution objectives. In this review, the different opinions of authors referring to Labor Gymnastics, classified into four types: a - preparatory, b - compensatory, c - relaxing and d - corrective.

a - Preparatory Labor Gymnastics: physical activity performed before starting work, warming up and awakening the employee, in order to prevent accidents at work, muscle strains and occupational diseases (DIAS, 1994).

Targa, apud Cañete (2001), defines preparatory or pre-applied gymnastics as a set of exercises that prepares the individual according to their needs for speed, strength or resistance for work, improving coordination. However, it can be noted that the most appropriate definition for Preparatory Labor Gymnastics are exercises performed before the workday, with the main objective of preparing the individual for the beginning of the work, warming up the muscle groups requested in their tasks, awakening them so that they feel more willing (ALVES and VALE, 1999; OLIVEIRA, 2006).

b - Compensatory Labor Gymnastics: one of the precursors of Labor Gymnastics in Brazil has been defined by Kolling (1980) as gymnastics whose objective is precisely to make the corresponding muscles work and relax the muscles that are in contraction during the greatest part of the workday. From this point of view, it is clear that, in a Compensatory Labor Gymnastics program, it is necessary to strengthen the weakest muscles, that is, the least used during the workday, in addition to stretching the most requested, thus providing the compensation of agonist muscles to antagonists, in a balanced way.

Following the same reasoning, Dias, apud Cañete (2001), reports that Compensatory Labor Gymnastics is composed of physical activities performed during working hours, acting in a therapeutic way, that is, exercising muscles that were overworked during the working day. work, providing physical, mental and social well-being to the employee. Therefore, physical exercises performed during or after the workday act in a therapeutic way, reducing stress through stretching and relaxation (MARTINS, 2001).

c - Labor Relaxation Gymnastics: it is of great importance to develop specific relaxation exercises, mainly in work with excessive hours or in intellectual services. In this sense, Mendes (2000) points out that the Labor Gymnastics for Relaxation, practiced at the

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end of the day, aims to relax the body and, specifically, to release tension from the regions that accumulate more tension. Thus, exercises practiced after working hours, aim to provide muscle and mental relaxation to workers (OLIVEIRA, 2006).

d - Corrective Labor Gymnastics: it has been registered by Targa, apud Cañete (2001), that the purpose of Corrective Labor Gymnastics is to establish muscle antagonism, using exercises that aim to strengthen weak muscles and stretch shortened muscles, aiming at individual with morphological, non-pathological deficiency, and being applied to a small group of people.

### **2.3 Quality of Life at Work**

Themes related to quality of life at work are increasingly being studied and present in the daily lives of organizations that aim for better results by offering their employees better working conditions. For Cañete (1996, p.78), Quality of Life at Work (QVT) “is the dynamic and contingent management of physical, socio-psychological and technological factors that renew culture and determine the organizational climate, reflecting on the worker and productivity of companies”. Excessive work, inadequate posture, constant repetitions of the same movement and critical conditions of materials, equipment and installations of the company, trigger great tensions in the body, which cause great ills that are responsible for the removal or even permanent disability of the professional.

According to Lacombe (2005), until the middle of the 20th century, people worked to “earn a living”, today it is the work that earns the lives of most individuals. It is unquestionable, but correct to say that, today, most people are consumed by work, making it an end in human life. It is clear, therefore, that work gains people's attention as a priority, essentiality and takes control of human life. Quality of life at work is related to the actions developed by companies in order to promote improvements in the working conditions of employees.

The change occurs mainly with the culture of the organization, adding values that take into account the importance of the human being for the organization. For Freire (2013) with the development of the world and its globalization, companies began to see that it is no longer technologies that have the preponderant factors for their success, more and more, companies understand that the intellectual capital they have makes all the difference in that context. One of the aspects that influenced the advancement of policies aimed at QWL was the globalized economy that exerts continuous pressure in relation to the ability of people to adapt to new work methods and technologies, with which it became a requirement to apply

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some models that aimed to facilitate changes in lifestyle, combining actions and campaigns for awareness,

Cañete (1996) affirms that it is an age-old wisdom regarding the benefits of physical activities for human beings, not only in the sense of guaranteeing a better physical shape and general health conditions, but also in the direction of the development and improvement of moral qualities. Movement and physical exercise are fundamental for the balance, prevention and maintenance of human health. Nowadays, it is widely accepted that people who exercise regularly are healthier and less likely to get sick than those who do not. Improved physical fitness coincides with an improvement in mood, feeling of well-being, health and performance at work.

Experts say that physical activity reduces anxiety, improves well-being, mood, reduces depression, stress and negative emotional states, increases imaginative or creative capacity, reduces tension, improves self-esteem and self-concept and facilitates cognitive functioning. In addition, they increase people's sense of autonomy and effectiveness as well as their self-confidence. Which generates greater motivation and energy to face the challenges. Consequently, the individual values his work more and is really committed. People who practice some physical activity, even for 10 minutes, three times a week realize the importance of taking care of other aspects of their health, such as weight control and quality of food (CAÑETE, 1996).

### **3 Methodology**

The research in question was conducted in two methodologically distinct phases: a qualitative and a quantitative step. According to Malhotra (2006), qualitative research provides a better view and understanding of the problem context, while quantitative research seeks to quantify the data and, generally, apply statistical analysis.

In the qualitative phase, documents already existing in the institution related to the research topic were analyzed, observations were made of the individuals and some in-depth interviews were conducted with part of the administrative technicians. In the quantitative phase, data were collected using a structured questionnaire, with only 32 of the 63 technicians participating in the survey.

The individuals surveyed are of both sexes, with ages varying between 21 and 50 years old, all of them working eight hours a day (forty hours a week), with a defined break of one hour that is used for lunch. Most of these servers have characteristics common to individuals with a sedentary lifestyle.

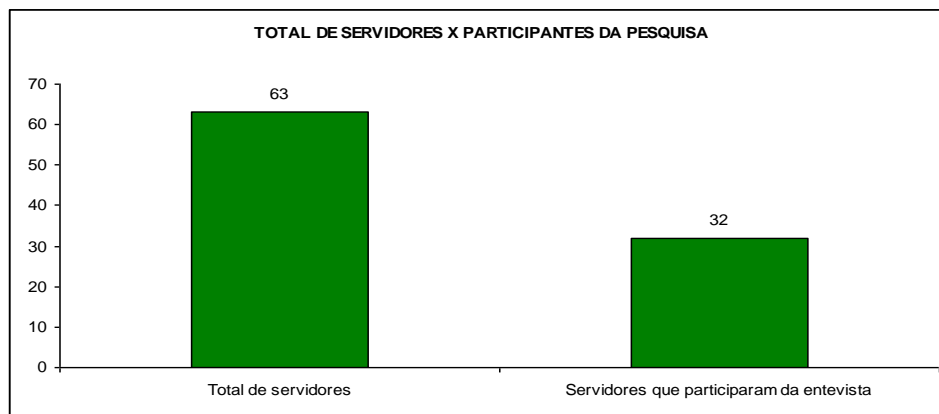
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The experimental Labor Gymnastics program developed, promoted 15-minute gymnastics / exercises sessions, which were held three times a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 1:15 pm to 1:30 pm. This experimental program was carried out in the months of June and July 2016 and the sessions consisted of stretching, flexibility and relaxation exercises, with an emphasis on the upper and lower limbs and cervical spine, aiming to prepare workers for the work activities that are developed in the institution under study.

### 4 Analysis and discussion of results

In this section we will present, analyze and discuss the results obtained through this study, which initially proposed to verify the advantages of implementing an experimental program of Labor Gymnastics in the institution, so that, if these advantages are confirmed, we can suggest to the management the implementation of a permanent program.

Starting the presentation of the results, we can check in the Graph. 01 the total number of IES administrative technical servers and the number of respondents to the applied questionnaire, who declared themselves willing to participate in the Labor Gymnastics Program in this experiment phase.



Graph 01 - Total servers x participants

Source: Authors' elaboration

Labor Gymnastics brings great benefits to companies, which is why the activity is stimulated and implemented by several organizations. From this, we are developing the practice of Labor Gymnastics on an experimental basis in the institution, to encourage employees to practice some exercise and also to verify their acceptance if it is implemented on a permanent basis.



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Among the 32 civil servants who participated in the research, 12 are male and 20 are female, all between 21 and 50 years of age and with a Complete Higher Education and Postgraduate Degree concluded or in progress.

When asked how they felt when they started their workday, a significant majority of the employees replied that they felt in a good mood. However, when asked how they felt at the end of their journey, one server stated that he often felt unwell, nine said they were still willing and the vast majority, twenty-two servers said they felt unwilling.

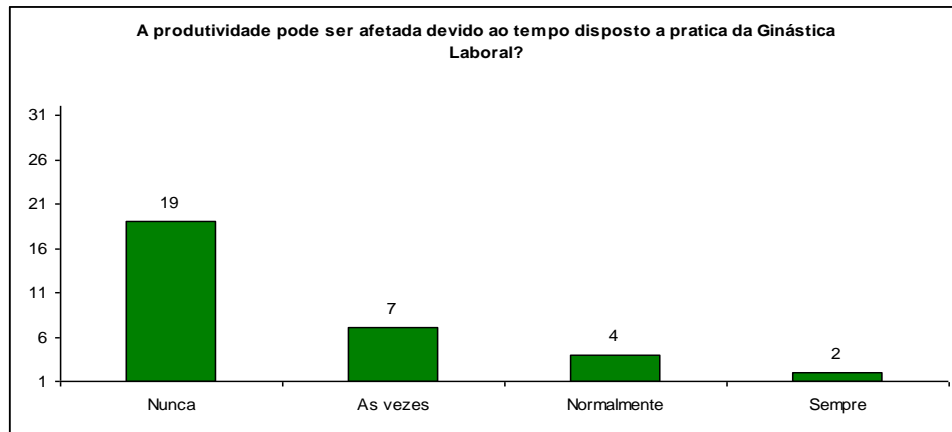
It is known that the only way to prevent the ills of inactivity is to remain active, preferably in all stages of our life. We have found that health is, for the most part, a factor that we can control and that we can prevent the onset of some diseases. From this, the servers were asked about how they felt physically, the vast majority answered that they feel good or satisfied, however when asked if they feel any pain, discomfort or malaise during the day-to-day at work, twenty-three employees answered that they sometimes feel some discomfort, seven feel these discomfort frequently and only two said they never felt any pain or discomfort.

Asked about the part of the body where they feel the most pain and / or discomfort, the servers highlighted the following: head, neck, shoulders and spine. Some still feel pain in their wrists, arms and hands, due to the work they do daily, this is due to the high repetition of the same pattern of movement and incorrect posture during the working day. Therefore, physical activity is indicated, as it improves posture and helps to fight bad habits. Even so, out of the total of respondents, only three have ever left work at any time to attend consultations or some type of therapy due to problems related to pain or discomfort in some part of the body, related to inadequate posture or repetitive movements.

As we verified in the literature review made earlier, these absences could often be avoided if people were not so sedentary and took care of their posture at workstations daily, this is often due to lack of knowledge of the servers and lack of attention and disclosure organizations, who could take greater care and care for their employees.

When we asked the servers if they believe that productivity can be negatively affected due to the time available for the practice of Labor Gymnastics, nineteen people answered that they believe that this would never happen, seven believe that it can happen sometimes, four answered that this could normally happen and two employees believe that productivity will be negatively affected, due to the time available to carry out the activities, as we can see in the graph below.

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Graph 02 - Productivity

Source: Authors' elaboration

From the graph we can see that a significant portion of the interviewees believe that the time available for performing Gymnastics at Work can affect productivity in some way. This type of judgment can often be made by those people, who for lack of knowledge or prejudice, taboos, discrimination and values, are opposed at all times, hindering the practice of activities that can generate the welfare of all employees and consequently the organization.

### 5 Final considerations

The opportunity to develop this work, with an emphasis on Labor Gymnastics, sought to meet the collective needs, resulting in a growth of learning and enabling us to achieve the objectives defined in this study, as well as in the institution and part of its employees.

Based on the data obtained through bibliographical surveys and from the experience of implementing Gymnastics on an experimental basis with part of the employees of the Public HEI, it can be said that, if performed correctly and often it reduces absences due to occupational diseases and absences to work due to pain, excessive tiredness and fatigue. Labor Gymnastics when performed properly and assisted can bring individuals effects of relaxation, relaxation, increased disposition and reduction of pain and symptoms of physical and mental stress.

It is certain that Gymnastics at Work is a positive achievement for most of the interviewees, who believe that it should be implemented through a permanent program, due to the beneficial results that it brought to the participating individuals. It is important to note that any institution can and should implement Labor Gymnastics, however, it is essential that there

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is a real commitment to the idea after making the decision, as it is good to remember that a new proposal always generates expectations and if the experience is bad successful, creates an unfavorable climate and conditions for further attempts.

Since there was a great acceptance of the servers in this experimental practice, we suggest to the institution and the People Management sector to hire a professional specialized in the area and definitely implement a Labor Gymnastics program, as it was found that it brings benefits to the servers and the institution as a whole. This can be said, because with the experience carried out with the institution's employees, with the practice of work exercises, we found great satisfaction and excitement on the part of those who participated in the initial phase of implementation, which was only of an experimental nature and lasted a few weeks.

By developing Compensatory Labor Gymnastics, and providing workers with muscle warm-up, awakening them to work, relieving tensions, strengthening muscles (CAÑETE, 2001), we will be offering employees the incentive to practice physical activity, motivation and prevention of illnesses, and for the company, the return will be satisfactory due to the decrease in leave due to occupational diseases and a good relationship between the employees, generated by the well-being and socialization that group gymnastics provide.

Knowing how to manage is to use planning as a technique that, combined with knowledge, anticipates success or alerts potential risks and opportunities. In this case, we can say that it was successful, because in addition to proving its viability, we increased our knowledge and we can pass this on with credibility to the institution.

Thus it is concluded from the results obtained, that in the absence of daily physical exercises, our bodies become deposits of accumulated tensions and, without natural outlet channels for these tensions, our muscles become weak and tense. The ideal is to practice physical activity throughout your life, but regardless of that, you can recover a healthier and more rewarding existence at any age. The activity should be a voluntary practice, when the server gives himself to the exercise with relaxation and motivation, because only in this way it becomes possible to recognize the importance and benefits.

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