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The importance of social responsibility is undeniable. Although it is a subject that has already been studied in recent years, companies have started to become increasingly aware of it due to the advance in globalization and the increase in business competitiveness. Despite the importance of this topic, there is a lack of literature bringing together the discussion linking social responsibility to logistics activities, which is an activity that involves different human resources. This research a...

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Logistics and social responsibility: an analysis of a retail company

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Abstract. The importance of social responsibility is undeniable. Although it is a subject that has already been studied in recent years, companies have started to become increasingly aware of it due to the advance in globalization and the increase in business competitiveness.

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Despite the importance of this topic, there is a lack of literature bringing together the discussion linking social responsibility to logistics activities, which is an activity that involves different human resources. This research aims to identify the policies and practices of internal social responsibility applied to a retail company operating in Portugal. This research began with a literature review that provided the study of the most important concepts related to the theme. The results showed that there is a strong correlation between internal social responsibility, highlighting corporate policies, organizational justice, and work culture. It should also be noted that the dimension of complementary benefits showed a weak relationship with initiative behavior. Regarding work culture and initiative behavior, there is a moderate relationship between these two dimensions.

Keywords: Logistics; Social responsibility; Retail; Portugal; Work culture; Initiative behavior.

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a hot topic due to society's growing interest in this topic and an ever-increasing expectation regarding companies' contribution to society. This aspect has led companies to bet on the adoption of socially responsible behavior with a view to sustainable business, which has gained an increasingly remarkable space in organizational policies. Despite the importance of this topic, there is a lack of literature bringing together the discussion linking social responsibility to logistics activities.

Having in mind this gap, this research aims to identify internal social responsibility (ISR) policies and practices applied to a retail company operating in Portugal. Social responsibility and innovative behavior are interrelated concepts in the corporate world. Companies that prioritize social responsibility tend to exhibit more innovative behavior because they are motivated to have a positive impact [1]. Social responsibility initiatives often require companies to think creatively and outside the box to address social and environmental issues, which can lead to new and innovative products' development, services, and processes. Innovative companies are also more likely to be socially responsible because they understand the importance of sustainability and the role that they play in creating a better future for all stakeholders. This way often results in cost savings and improvement of the company's reputation, leading to increased consumer loyalty and brand recognition.

This research is organized as follows, Section 2, presents the theoretical background regarding the logistics, supply chains, and social responsibility. Section 3 presents the

methodology used in this research, namely the survey applied in the logistics department of a company. Then, the results obtained are exposed in Section 4, and the main finds are described in Section 5.

2. Theoretical background

Due to the increasing importance of CSR in different industrial activities, this topic has become strategic for different companies, being logistics activities one of those. Logistics activities can be defined as a strategic area for companies operating in different sectors since it aims to move goods, raw materials, and products, from supplier and customer in a supply chain [2]. The authors defend that logistics have been a key area for competitiveness in industries from the time when it appeared in the military domains. Over the last few years, the increased concerns of companies for operating in line with the concepts of Industry 4.0 has contributed to supply chains around the world developing initiatives focusing on two main aspects, namely the technologies and social issues [3].

Considering the emergence of instability of supply chains due to the current scenario caused by the pandemic Covid-19 and the War, the need for delivering goods to both suppliers and customers has forced companies on performing their activities considering the impacts of its activities on the environment, and all members of the supply chain, meaning internal or external ones. The need for considering these elements can be a direct impact on developing logistics activities, be it positive or negative [4-5]. Also [6] defend that the Covid-19 crisis forced the organization to innovate their logistics activities in all phases of the process of delivering goods ranging from technology to humanitarian activities. Altogether, these aspects have contributed to an increase in the competitiveness between companies. In the global scenario in that companies are operating; the logistics costs can be seen as a key to enabling companies to compete through the supply chains. From the supply chain perspective, the use of logistics as a way to companies compete in a sustainable manner there is a need to better understand the intra and inter-organizational process, bringing to the discussion all stakeholders involved in the process [7].

Concerns regarding considering social aspects of industrial activities have been increasing over the years, which is no exception for logistics activities. The need to rethink the way that workers developed their activities in warehouses, assembly lines, and transportation has been an increasingly urgent need for this sector. It can be justified due to the need for safety, exposure, and environmental impacts in these activities [8]. The research developed by [9] discusses evidence from the benefit of companies that have resources for the development of corporate social responsibility in partnership with logistics providers. The results stand out in the strengthening of

collaboration with workers, institutional learning process, and trust.

According to [10] aspects such as the integrity of workers, and analysis of normative, and cognitive factors are important features to be considered in workforces from logistics activities. The authors defend that as logistics activities involve high risks for staff, organizations operating in this area should pay attention to these operations and develop efforts to support staff working safely, as well as considering their social needs. In the current literature, there is a tendency to harmonize companies according to international models of quality and productivity, which currently includes people management, ethics, and responsibility. The need arises for companies to adopt new ways of managing their production processes, innovating so that they can always meet the global demands of the market, competing with other companies, associated also with a relevant impact in people management and the need to attract and retain human capital [11]. The innovation that organizations intend to develop has been poorly related to the human resource management policies of organizations [1]. According to European Innovation Scoreboard, the second group of Strong Innovators includes 7 member states (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, and Portugal) with average performance between 95% and 125% of the EU (European Union) [12]. Managers are faced with numerous ethical and moral problems and dilemmas. In many cases, we witness less ethical or morally questionable behaviors - they are justified with the ends gained. There is space for corruption, lack of ethics, and social irresponsibility. The reality is that the adoption of ethical and socially responsible values and s can contribute to promoting the company [11].

Thus, it is important to understand whether corporate responsibility policies can promote or have an impact on teams. Innovative is a dimension that encompasses the part of the person identifying a problem, generating ideas related to the problem, and possible solutions, and implementing useful ideas, transposing them into reality. It is widely recognized in the literature and is considered a crucial resource in business environments [1]. In fact, organizations are formed by people and exist because of them, so a poorly defined internal policy by an employee at any hierarchical level can fatally affect the brand and image of the organization, with negative consequences on its performance. We can thus state that the organization should act toward its stakeholders based on the following aspects [11]. The innovation process contributes to the company developing the foundations of its future development. It is the present innovative initiatives that give rise to the organization's new products, services, and processes, thus sustaining its growth in the medium and long term [13].

Innovation is the entrepreneurs' specific tool, how they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or service. It can be presented in the form of discipline, learned, and practiced. Entrepreneurs have to deliberately look for the forces of innovation, the changes, and the symptoms, that signal opportunities for successful in-

novation. And they must know and apply the principles of successful innovation [14–17]. The business world in the “new economy” is changing at an astonishing pace and now, more than ever, companies must innovate or die [18]. The wide recognition of the need for innovation and the difficulty of stimulating and sustaining innovation and entrepreneurship in organizations has spawned a mini-industry of research and management consulting focused on the issue of innovation. Through new products, services, and processes, not only the market supply is renewed, but also the internal management practices [19]. There have been some studies that illustrate how innovation and human resource management can contribute to business success [5, 20–22]. Companies that disclose more information about internal human resource management processes, tend to also disclose more information about innovation [15].

3. Research methods

In this research, to achieve the objective proposed, different steps for developing the work were considered, namely: (1) an analysis of the current literature focusing on logistics activities and social responsibility; (2) based on the literature review a questionnaire was designed to identify the policies and practices of internal social responsibility (ISR); (3) then a retail company operating in Portugal was used as case study strategy to assess ISR; (4) from the results achieved, a statistical analysis was developed to understand the impact of social responsibilities measures have in the company; (5) finally the main findings are discussed followed by the conclusions and directions for future works.

In this research, an online survey was applied to the logistics department of the retail company from an international group based in Portugal with over 225 years of experience in the food business. The survey was developed, based on the research developed by Turker’s [23], related to the measurement of Corporate Social Responsibility. The survey was designed aiming to understand how Internal Social Responsibility (ISR) interferes, positively or negatively, with the work culture (WC) and Innovative (IB). Additionally, this research intended to understand the influence of ISR on business policies (BP), organizational justice (OJ), training and reconciliation of professional and personal life (PPL), and complementary benefits (CB), as the conceptual model describes (Figure 1). For each dimension of the study, a set of items was selected, inquiring about the level of agreement (on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) of a set of sentences. The detailed survey can be found in [24].

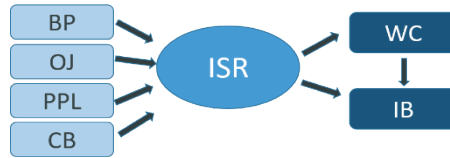


Figure 1- Proposed Conceptual model

From the logistics department of the company, 107 valid answers were obtained. The statistical analysis was performed resorting to BM SPSS v.28.

4. Main findings

4.1. Profile of the logistics department worker

From the research conducted the results showed that the majority of the workers in the logistics department are male (59%). The most common age is between 42 and 49 years (28%), and the majority finished High School (51%). In the logistics department, there are several categories for work, namely administrative (25%), warehouse operator (25%), and supervisor (15%), among others.

Regarding the working conditions, 91% have an open-ended contract, ensuring stability for the worker. Besides, 23% do not have a schedule, while 31% have a morning shift, 6% have a night shift, and 40% have a rotated shift schedule. The results also put in evidence that the workers recognize that the company has social responsibility practices (93%) and have knowledge of them mainly by company formation (75%) and company website (19%).

4.2. Social Responsibility

Business policies, organizational justice, conciliation of professional and personnel life, and complementary benefits are interconnected that can contribute to a sustainable and successful organization. By considering these concepts, companies can create a workplace culture supporting employee well-being and productivity.

Table 1 summarizes the main results of Social Responsibility dimensions. For this analysis, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated, and they are all above 0.882. Both, inter-item correlations and inter-item composite-scale correlations are higher than 0.3 and 0.5, respectively. Most of the items were answered using most of the scale, giving a general idea that there are different opinions about social responsibility initiatives. Excluding one item (BP1), the remaining one presents neutral values

or agreement with the sentences presented. Additionally, the Synthetic indices were produced for each dimension, using the average values of the respondent's responses. It is possible to observe that the level of agreement with the politics of social responsibility of the company is positive, with values above the neutral point 3.

Regarding the non-parametric tests, the results showed that Mann-Whitney U when there are only two independent samples to analyze or Kruskal-Wallis when there are three or more independent samples, it is possible to observe that all dimensions present significant differences, especially when academic qualifications or leadership positions are the factors to differentiate the samples. The p-values marked in bold are those with values below 0.05, denoting significant differences in the responses.

4.3. Organizational Culture and Initiative

In this research organizational culture was also analysed, and the results are in line with the current literature that discusses the importance of Work culture and innovative behavior being closely intertwined, and positive work culture can enhance employees' ability to generate innovative ideas and approaches. Organizations that prioritize creating a culture that values and rewards innovation can foster a more innovative workforce that is better equipped to adapt and thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic business environment.

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics, reliability and non-parametric tests related to Social Responsibility dimensions

	Descriptive Statistics					Non-parametric tests (p-value)			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Cronbach's Alpha	Mann-Whitney U (gender)	Kruskal-Wallis (academic qualifications)	Mann-Whitney U (leadership positions)	
Business Policies (BP)	BP1 - I consider that I receive a reasonable salary to maintain an acceptable quality of life.	2.85	1.123	1	5	0.888	0.706	<0.001	0.226
	BP2 - Company policies provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees.	3.63	0.947	1	5		0.014	0.035	0.034
	BP3 - Company policies encourage employees to develop their skills and careers.	3.4	0.93	1	5		0.421	0.001	0.206
	BP4 - The company implements flexible policies to provide a good work-life balance for employees.	3.21	1.019	1	5		0.799	0.011	0.399
	BP5 - The company complies with the Labor Code.	3.87	0.778	2	5		0.194	<0.001	0.006
	BP6 - The company promotes equality between men and women.	3.87	0.991	1	5		<0.001	0.031	0.006
	BP7 - The company supports the professional integration of people with disabilities.	3.79	0.833	1	5		0.273	<0.001	0.187
	BP8 - The company guarantees job security.	3.96	0.764	1	5		0.263	0.001	0.038
	BP9 - The company guarantees the timely payment of wages and benefits.	4.50	0.744	1	5		0.038	0.122	0.022
	Synthetic index	3.68	0.662	1.778	5				
Organizational	OJ1 - Company management is primarily concerned with the needs and wants of employees.	3.21	0.952	1	5	0.901	0.185	0.018	0.029
	OJ2 - Management decisions relating to employees are generally fair.	3.27	0.967	1	5		0.496	<0.001	0.001
	OJ3 - I believe that the company provides equal opportunity to all its employees.	3.15	1.139	1	5		0.094	0.003	0.012
	Synthetic index	3.21	0.934	1	5				
Professional and Personnel	PPL1 - The company supports employees who want to acquire additional education.	3.93	0.677	1	5	0.882	0.587	0.067	0.882
	PPL2 - I believe that the company considers the needs of reconciling the professional, family and personal lives of employees when scheduling appointments.	3.21	0.981	1	5		0.836	0.029	0.17
	PPL3 - The company presents support measures for employees with special family situations.	3.83	0.758	1	5		0.959	0.004	0.016
	Synthetic index	3.66	0.638	2	5				
Complementary Benefits (CB)	CB1 - The company has health and/or life insurance and/or pension funds for employees.	3.78	0.872	1	5	0.876	0.088	0.034	0.117
	CB2 - The company has established agreements with a view to providing services in the areas of health, culture, leisure and sports for employees.	3.92	0.741	1	5		0.179	0.006	0.345
	CB3 - The company develops activities linked to the promotion of health and well-being.	3.79	0.749	1	5		0.294	0.013	0.096
	CB4 - The company has protocols with support services for family members.	3.88	0.655	2	5		0.169	0.004	0.01
	CB5 - The company grants monetary or in-kind benefits beyond those provided for by law, for maternity/paternity reasons to employees or in other special circumstances to support the family.	3.85	0.698	2	5		0.381	0.001	0.055

Table 2 describes the level of agreement that the company's employees have on these two dimensions. All answers have an average above 3.2. there is no significative difference between the answers given by both genders, but a notorious difference when the academic qualifications are considered.

Table 2 - Descriptive statistics, reliability, and non-parametric tests related to work culture and innovative behavior

		Descriptive Statistics				Non parametric tests		
		Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Cronbach's Alpha	Mann-Whitney U (gender)	Kruskal-Wallis (academic qualifications)
Work culture (WC)	WC1 - There is a sense of family among the employees.	3.16	1.038	1	5	0.948	0.623	<0.001
	WC2 - People feel free to communicate frankly and openly with superiors.	3.33	1.044	1	5		0.284	0.074
	WC3 - People feel that they can learn continuously.	3.53	0.883	1	5		0.649	0.002
	WC4 - People are concerned about the welfare of others.	3.24	0.989	1	5		0.867	<0.001
	WC5 - Supervisors keep their promises.	3.40	0.97	1	5		0.097	0.308
	WC6 - People are comfortable showing that they disagree with their supervisors' opinions.	3.31	1.013	1	5		0.118	0.175
	WC7 - People can put their creativity and imagination at the service of work and organization.	3.36	0.915	1	5		0.761	0.011
	WC8 - There is great team spint.	3.15	1.071	1	5		0.1	<0.001
	Synthetic index	3.311	0.849	1	5			
Innovative Behavior (IB)	IB1 - I often come up with creative ideas (new and useful ideas).	3.61	0.774	1	5	0.880	0.361	0.106
	IB2 - I promote and support the ideas of others.	3.75	0.631	1	5		0.117	0.065
	IB3 - I seek and raise necessary funds to implement new ideas.	3.52	0.718	1	5		0.36	0.188
	IB4 - I develop suitable plans and timetables to implement new ideas.	3.40	0.763	1	5		0.162	0.124
	IB5 - I am an innovative person. who seeks to put into practice the ideas he has.	3.75	0.66	2	5		0.241	0.352
	Synthetic index	3.606	0.585	1.4	5			

Finally, Table 3 presents the results for Spearman's correlation, which was calculated for each dimension of internal social responsibility, relative to work culture and innovative behavior (Table 3).

Table 3 - Spearman's correlation (** p-value >0.01)

Dimension	BP	OJ	PPL	CB
WC	0.725**	0.813**	0.556**	0.412**
IB	0.480**	0.464**	0.421**	0.395**

For this analysis, the results showed that the values obtained show that there are significant correlations between the internal social responsibility dimensions and the work culture and innovative behaviour.

5. Conclusions

Social responsibility policies and practices can contribute to innovation, by providing opportunities for employees to work on projects that align with their personal values and contribute to the development of society. This alignment can enhance employees' motivation and engagement, and therefore, could foster their creativity and innovative thinking.

Results put in evidence the role of organizational culture and innovative which are highly interrelated concepts, that play a significant role in an organization's success. Work culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that characterize an organization and shape its employees'. On the other hand, innovative refers to the ability of employees to generate, develop, and implement new ideas that create value for the organization.

In this research, factors such as organizational culture and quality of life are issues that people feel safe at work. On the other hand, rewarding employees increases their motivation.

For Chiavenato [25], there is a distance between the processes to keep employees in the company and the rewards processes. In this investigation, it was concluded that the employee would feel more secure at work if the company guaranteed the timely payment of wages and benefits and if the company's policies encourage employees to develop their skills and career. With the analysis of the organizational justice dimension, a strong relationship was detected between the items that make up this dimension, that is, the company's concern with the needs and desires of employees, the generally fair decisions that the company makes and the promotion of opportunities equal to all employees are strongly related. These results are in line with the study developed by Costa [26], which showed several factors with positive contours, organizational justice being one of these factors. Regarding the dimension of innovative behavior, it was concluded that employees often present creative ideas and support the ideas of co-workers. This result is in line with the result obtained by Beuren et al., [27], which showed that sharing information in collaborative contexts stimulates innovation, mainly by strengthening relationships and enhancing relationships.

From the logistics perspective, the results presented in this research highlight the need to consider the social aspects of logistics activities, as well as the importance of companies operating in this area to rethink the way that workers developed their activities.

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