(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

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The Relevance of structured onboarding in the assimilation of organizational culture

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Abstract

This article presents as its theme the relevance of structured onboarding in the assimilation of organizational culture. In this context, the conceptualizations related to organizational culture were developed based on the research of several authors who deal with the onboarding theme. The general objective of this scientific article, taking into consideration the theoretical definitions used in the development of this work, was to analyze the relationship and impacts that the onboarding process has on organizational culture. The specific objectives established seek to reflect and describe the onboarding process, the relationship with the Human Resources sector and organizational culture, and finally, to analyze how a structured process aligned with organizational culture occurs. In this context of objectives, this article used bibliographic research methodology, through theoretical sources that provide data to be explored. Following this perspective, it was found that the impact of the employee's onboarding strength contributes to the appropriation of organizational culture. It is concluded, therefore, that the importance of the notions of organizational culture are better assimilated in the work environment from the perspective of a structured onboarding process.

Keywords: Organizational culture; Onboarding; Human Resources; Work Environment

1. Introduction

Onboarding can be defined as the process that serves as a company's major business card, where newly hired employees begin to evaluate if what was conveyed during the selection process matches the routine and demonstrates an important role as an integrator to the organizational culture. According to Basaglia (2019), the onboarding process, also defined as socialization, aims to assist newly hired employees in adapting to the new work environment through learning about the activities, customs, and behavior of the company [1].

When it comes to organizational culture, it generally holds an implicit meaning, making it uncommon to read about the subject within an organization, regardless of its business segment. Observations indicate that employees refer to it based on the information they absorb in the daily routine. According to Bittar (2009), studies in the field emphasize the importance of organizational culture for internal social balance, highlighting the relevance of organizations using didactic processes during the integration of new employees [2].

"It is up to organizations, through continuous interaction with people, to create the stimulus and concrete conditions for their professional and personal development. The organization, by performing its role, will be able to leverage its competitiveness through people [3]."

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Dias (2013) points out that organizational culture functions as a system of shared values and beliefs that seeks to interact with people, the organization's structures, decision-making processes, and control systems to produce norms of behavior, that is, a direction of how things should be done in an organization [4].

Regarding organizational cultures, they can be considered relevant to business success for their contribution to achieving objectives. Through in-depth contact, it is possible to perceive how the company responds to changes, considering that culture should not remain inert. Such information should be conveyed to employees from the first moment of contact with the company since well-elaborated integration generates engagement and acculturated employees. Institutional communication is of fundamental importance in this process, to prevent the organizational culture from being dissipated in the daily routine and to stimulate the feeling of belonging to the organization on the part of the employee.

For the present article, the research method was developed based on a qualitative data approach. Regarding the type of research, it can be considered exploratory. The general objective of this research is to analyze the relationship and impacts that the onboarding process has on organizational culture.

The specific objectives are: to reflect and describe the onboarding process, the relationship with the Human Resources sector, and organizational culture; to analyze how a structured process aligned with organizational culture occurs. To discuss the importance of HR in the onboarding process and the maintenance of organizational culture.

The article was organized into four topics. In the first, the introduction was presented with a focus on the objectives that delimit the theme addressed. In the second, the theoretical foundation related to the researched topic was developed. In the third, the methodology used for the research was explained, and in the fourth topic, the final considerations were elaborated enriched with the researcher's positions.

2. Material and methods

For the purpose of this article, the research method was developed based on a qualitative data approach. Vieira and Zouain (2006, p. 15) explain that the qualitative approach ensures the richness of data, allows for a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon, and facilitates the exploration of contradictions and paradoxes. They also claim that it guarantees objectivity, the possibility of causal relationships, and the possibility of generalization [5].

Regarding the type of research, this can be considered as exploratory, in which Gil (2008) defines that the purpose of this type of research is to develop, clarify, and modify concepts and ideas, considering the formulation of more precise problems or researchable hypotheses for subsequent studies. In this type of research, it is common to use a literature review [6].

Through the literature review, relevant information is gathered for the structure of scientific research. According to Boccato (2006), the literature review performs the gathering and critical analysis of published documents on the topic to be researched, with the aim of updating knowledge and contributing to the research. With the definition and delimitation of the topic, the basis of the literature review is constituted by books, theses, articles, and other published documents that contribute to the resolution of the problem presented in the research [7].

Dias' (2013) studies are essential to understanding organizational culture, as he characterizes it, complemented by Chiavenato (2010), who also defines it as a conditioning factor in people management. In addition to these, Basaglia (2019) defines the onboarding process, comparing it to socialization, a concept also used by Lacombe (2011) who considers it one of the most important aspects in the integration of a new employee. Finally, Brum (2020) reinforces the importance of integration in the employee's journey and the return that this can generate for the organization [1]; [4]; [8]; [9]; [10]; [11].

3. Literature Review

In this section, the concepts used as the basis for this study are presented in a more in-depth manner, which allowed for the understanding of the topic and the formulation of the methodology steps, thus contributing to the results related to the research.

2.1 Onboarding

The reception of new employees is an important and decisive moment for their retention in the organization. Therefore, onboarding cannot be treated as an individualized process. It is defined as a series of actions organized by companies to make newly hired employees feel like they belong, to be received and integrated into the work environment and organizational culture.

According to Bauer and Erdogan (2011), the onboarding process, also known as socialization, can be characterized as the action that assists newly hired employees in learning the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to achieve success in the organization [12].

Basaglia (2019, p. 25) states that "the fact that a company does not have an onboarding process can hinder employee engagement and cause high turnover rates [1]."

Thus, it is essential to understand that this process should not have a limitation and be limited to the first week of contact with the new employee. For the onboarding and integration process of new employees to be effective, it should start from the announcement of hiring and extend until the person is firmly established in their work location.

In addition to being considered a part of the scope of the Human Resources area, as Laurano (2013) points out, productivity, engagement, retention, and absorption of information can be conceptualized as some of the main reasons that have led companies to be concerned about the implementation of onboarding for new employees, as shown in Figure 1 [13].
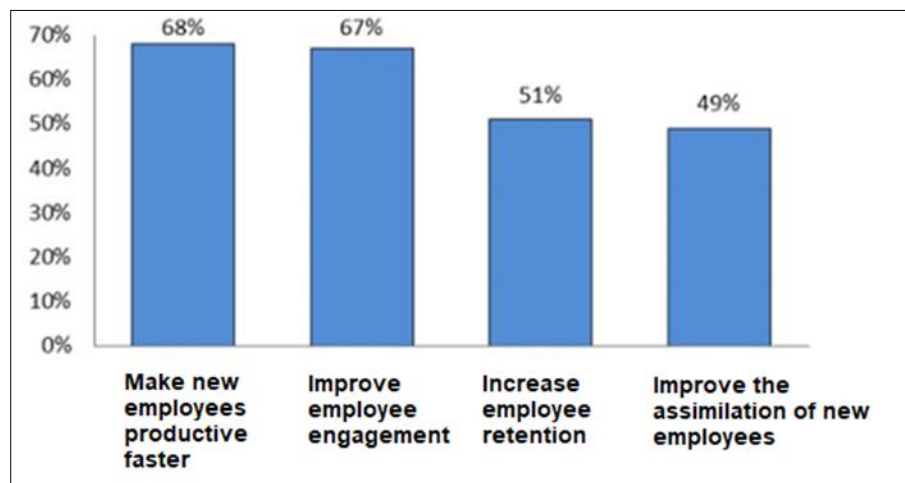

Figure 1 Reasons that have led companies to carry out onboarding Source: [13]

As it is the employee's first in-depth contact with the company, onboarding needs to be done clearly and offer the necessary conditions for understanding and adapting the new collaborator to the work context. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) created a guide for the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), suggesting that for the effective implementation of onboarding, it should involve four central aspects (4 Cs), defined as:

- Compliance: referring to the learning associated with the rules and regulations related to the basic policies of the company;
- Clarification: ensuring that the collaborator understands their work activities and the expectations generated around them;
- Culture: providing clarity to hired professionals regarding organizational norms, whether formal or informal;
- Connections: referring to interpersonal relationships and the network of information that collaborators need to build [12].

Through onboarding, it is possible to build a solid foundation for the intangible characteristics that differentiate the organization's culture and use it in attracting and retaining talented professionals.

2.2 Organizational Culture

Culture is a broad term, which can be generally defined as the learning acquired within the company together with what is done by people who are inserted in social groups, considering each one as the result of the cultural environment in which they are socializing. When addressing this issue, organizational culture can be translated as the way the company projects its personality and conducts its directions, symbolizing a common recognition among some people or groups, aiming for adherence among them.

According to Dias (2013), in general, culture can be characterized as a set of values, beliefs, ideologies, habits, customs, and norms shared by individuals in the organization that result from social interaction. Through this, collective behavior patterns are developed that establish an identity among its members, enabling identification with the organization to which they belong and distinguishing them from others [4].

The reflection that an organization transmits can be observed through culture, as it becomes relevant through the way it operates in defining aspects of the company's functioning, stimulating the development of a sense of identity. Chiavenato (2010) points out that organizational culture presents itself as a way of interpreting the reality of the organization and constitutes a way of modeling to deal with organizational issues. In view of this, it is considered as conditioning for people management [9].

When the values of an organization inspire respect, sharing, acceptance, and commitment from its employees, it can be characterized as a strong culture. In contrast, when there is indecision, inconsistencies, and ambiguity, the culture is defined as weak. When evaluating the strength of culture, it is fortunate to affirm that in addition to impacting employee behavior, it will influence the reduction of organizational turnover, as employees choose to stay where they feel they belong.

An organizational culture can be constituted by many characteristics that act in contributing to becoming a collective composition of shared meanings. Among them, some can be considered universal. For this, Table 1 brings together the main characteristics tangent to the already addressed concept.

Table 1 Universal characteristics of organizational cultures

Universal characteristics	Acts in the development of the identity of the belonging members;
	Unique and distinct, since each organization has its own culture and this is the factor that differentiates it from the others;
	Explicit by the members, but has an implicit character in the formal structure of the organization;
	Tendency towards perpetuation by attracting and receiving people with values a nd beliefs similar to those transmitted;
	Although it manifests itself through the elements that make up the organization, it is unattainable in its entirety;
	Disseminated to new members;
	Means of development of the members, being through the collective experience;
	Although changes generally happen slowly, the organizational culture is constantly changing, remaining in continuous transformation, happening gradually and imperceptibly to the members;
	It manifests itself through signs;
	Accepted by most members;
	It configures itself as an open system, which has constant and restricted interaction with the environment that surrounds it.

Source: [20]

When analyzing the characteristics that make up organizational culture, some aspects are more noticeable, while others are more discreet. Chiavenato (2014) states that culture can be reflected as an iceberg, in which a small part that stays above the water level is configured as the visible part, formed by formal aspects, while the most significant portion refers to informal aspects, remaining submerged [14].

2.3 Structured Onboarding Process

According to the recommendations of Dias, Cremonesi, and Lopes (2021), for the onboarding process to be effective in the company, it is necessary to [8]:

- Be transparent at the time of hiring: relevant information such as salaries, benefits, probationary period, start date, among others, must be clear at the time of hiring, and can also be sent by email to facilitate assimilation.
- Plan the arrival time: it is necessary to make the newcomer aware that he or she was being expected. The planning starts days before the start date, with internal communication informing employees of the arrival of the newcomer and preparing the team that will receive him or her. In addition, it is interesting to plan ahead the training that will be provided on the admission day and during the probationary period.
- Receive courteously: on the start day, it is important that employees are aware of the arrival time of the newly hired employee, so they can introduce themselves or there can be a presentation and integration dynamics with as many employees as possible.
- Take a tour of the company: a tour of the company during the first day, even if briefly, helps with the familiarization of the new work environment and team. This moment also works as a more informal introduction to other employees and common areas such as the bathroom and kitchen, for example.
- Introduce the work sector: at this stage, there must be a partnership between the Human Resources department and the responsible leadership, so that important information is clearly conveyed.
- Organize the work environment: taking care of the organization of the environment will help the new employee not to feel displaced on their first day. Simple actions such as organizing the materials they will use, leaving everything separated, and providing access passwords and extension numbers, for example, will demonstrate that the company paid attention to their arrival.
- Apply a personalized training: in addition to the standard integration training, containing general information such as mission, vision, values, and other important aspects to be known by the new employee, it is important that specific knowledge about the peculiarities of performing activities is passed on. With the help of a mentor responsible for training, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Evaluate the onboarding process: after the first week of the new employee's start, it is important to evaluate how their first contacts with the company were, from reception, arrival, and insertion into the work environment. This can be done through forms and feedback moments [8].

The mentioned steps function as an initial and basic alignment, since the onboarding process of an organization must be constantly revisited, updated, and improved. Effective onboarding programs directly and significantly affect the engagement of new employees, making them internalize the company's brand and properly align it with their personal behaviors and perspectives [15].

When good planning occurs, positive impacts can be visible and generate lasting results. Through adequate approach and effective actions, the integration will occur satisfactorily, reducing doubts during the adaptation period and contributing to the success of the business.

According to Brum (2020), integration has become relevant lately because it marks the beginning of contact between employer and employee, becoming a singular process in the Employee Journey. Thus, understanding and planning this journey in an assertive way is an excellent way to achieve a satisfactory ROI (Return on Investment) in the scope of new hires [11].

2.4 The Importance of HR in Onboarding Process and Organizational Culture Maintenance

Society is constantly changing, and the organizational environment needs to be aware of these transformations. Due to the scenarios that can develop, it is considered fundamental to observe the organization's external context so that it is possible to adapt internal behavior aligned with future direction, and the HR area has great relevance in this action, besides being one of the business areas most impacted by changing scenarios.

Rocha et al. (2021, p. 05) emphasize that:

Before the employee joins the company, he must first be attracted to it, for example, salary compensation, benefits offered, professional growth, among other issues. With an excellent organizational culture, this employee will be attracted to the company and will do his best to be hired and remain in it [16].

Integration can be considered one of the HR department's responsibilities and is directly influenced by how culture is maintained within the organization. For these processes to occur assertively, since they work continuously, the company needs to be allied with the organization's HR department, as the dissemination of information to newly hired employees is expected, contributing to the understanding of culture and reinforcing its relevance to the company's growth.

Freitas (2005) points out that, from a cultural perspective, the so-called basic assignments of the HR department, such as recruitment, selection, training, and development, have gained new importance in the business environment, where operational activities receive the classification of strategic. In view of this, it is stated that:

The transmission of organizational culture is part of the activities of every executive or manager, but it is the human resources administration that takes care of all the instruments capable of promoting culture. It defines profiles, ritual programs and ceremonies, chooses and distributes laurels to champions, explains the rules of the game and the conditions for obtaining prizes, collects and disseminates important testimonials, harmonizes values and rewards or punishments, creates models to be followed, etc. Human resources activities have been expanded, although responsibility is everyone's [17].

During the onboarding or socialization process, value creation stimulus resulting from culture strengthening is worked on. Therefore, the HR area must also act by focusing its attention on desired results and not just on the activities to be performed, as these will help determine actions within the company.

Onboarding plays an important role in building the axis of solidity for the intangible characteristics that act on differentiating organizational culture. It is also used as a strategy for attracting and retaining professionals, as a constant search for alternatives is necessary to involve and engage employees regarding their sense of belonging to the institution.

According to Lacombe (2011), one of the most important aspects in the new employee's integration is socialization. At this point, it is necessary to encourage the newcomer to communicate and get to know his new team colleagues. In this sense, "Programs that accelerate socialization tend to reduce turnover [10]."

In the first contact with the company, the employee goes through a journey in his experience with the work environment and the team. Chiavenato (2020) points out that this first contact constitutes a strong emotional connection, generating engagement and identification with the organization [18].

When it comes to the role of HR management, Marras (2014) points out that it is essential not only for the implementation of a formal model of identification and contribution to the reinforcement of organizational culture, but especially for its preservation over time [19].

HR can be considered a great motivator and promoter of improvement in the development of organizations, maintaining an alignment posture with companies, where it has access to methodological tools available for capturing and interpreting the needs of its employees, obtaining engagement from the moment of onboarding and using culture as a competitive advantage.

4. Conclusion

Due to the constant transformations that the business environment is conditioned to experience, such as new work formats and globalization itself, it is clear that internal practices and norms of companies need to undergo constant reviews and adaptations, including those related to organizational culture.

In this scenario, it is necessary to raise awareness among companies about the effective integration of new employees, given that each organization defines its culture based on what it considers relevant to add value to the institution. Only

through a more detailed understanding of the subject, it is possible to assess what is considered a difficulty for the onboarding process and how alignment with organizational culture can help achieve organizational objectives.

The knowledge of the existing relationships within the organization and how they manifest contributes to understanding the company's profile. To develop a sense of belonging, it is fundamental that the conceptualizations that make up the organizational culture be expressed clearly, making the correct execution of tasks, behavior in the internal and external environment, and the most assertive strategy for dealing with business explicit.

Considerations on onboarding point out that through its correct application, the company can not only integrate but also engage new employees, allowing alignment with relevant aspects of history, mission, vision, and values. It is fortunate to point out that this process contributes to the creation of an employee-employer connection and accelerates the assimilation process of organizational culture.

Analyzing the culture of an organization, it is concluded that it is the guiding principle of business strategies due to its influential role in guiding collective standards and behaviors of organizational members. Due to a lack of clarity in defining the basic and structural elements that sustain its understanding, the need for its study was raised.

Although there are limitations, it is also concluded that the research contributed academically by analyzing a theme that, despite being part of the business reality and showing a growth trend, lacks bibliographic support regarding onboarding, which does not match the degree of updating and relevance of this context in today's society.

Finally, considering the overall information presented through the literature review, it is suggested that future studies deepen the analysis of the relationship between the onboarding process and organizational culture. It is fortunate to point out that with planning, assertive structuring, and the use of innovative and engaging methods, it is possible to bring positive results by considering the role of culture in adapting to the demands and limitations imposed by the environment on the organization.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors assure that there is no conflict of interest with the publication of the manuscript or an institution or product mentioned in the manuscript and/or important for the result of the presented study.

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