1681

Socio-psychological foundations of organizational norms?

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Research studies emphasize the influence organizational norms have in promoting or hindering meaningful activities and participation at work. The question about the core for the existence of organizational norms needs to be addressed, in order to increase knowledge about the role organizational norms have. The aim for this review paper is to elaborate on socio-psychological foundations of norms. Why do employees have norms? Do employees share some social or/and psychological needs that trigger emergence of specific organizational norms in working environment? The literature search was carried on in following databases: OTseeker, ArticleFirst, PubMed, PsycInfo, Pro-Quest, First Search, PsycARTICLES and Academic Search Elite. The search resulted in 22 articles with relevant focus, which have been reviewed. The results suggest that socio-psychological foundations of organizational norms are theoretically discussed, based on rationalistic epistemology. The review in present study suggest that employees might share some core social and psychological needs which can trigger the emergence of organizational norms. There are several hypotheses about what those needs might be: (a) the need for survival, (b) the need for avoidance of anxiety, (c) the need for validation of social reality, (d) the need to shape the identity, and (e) the need for simplification of working process as a pragmatic solution in order to manage everyday life. However, no empirical studies that support or reject any of the hypothesis where found. Present study underlines that further research is needed in order to shed light on socio-psychological foundations of organizational norms. Stronger evidence base within occupational therapy theory regarding the issue is necessary, in order to understand how to promote meaningful activities and participation at work. Initiating empirical studies in the future, both qualitative and quantitative, is especially important. Occupational therapy assessment and intervention in working environment should pay attention both to norms and the core for their existence.