

# An approach of the in-company restaurant at the workplace: a multiple case study from the point of view of workers' quality of life

***Uma abordagem sobre os refeitórios no ambiente de trabalho: um estudo de caso múltiplo do ponto de vista da qualidade de vida dos trabalhadores***

Clodoveu Florentino da Silva<sup>1</sup>   
Barbara Stolte Bezerra<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract:** The commute home/work is responsible for most of the daily displacements in urban areas, and which also occurs during the lunch break. Therefore, the following study aims to address the issue of the in-company restaurant and conduct a study of opinion about the restaurants inside the companies. A questionnaire for the employees of 10 companies in the region of Bauru was applied to evaluate companies with and without a restaurant, seeking to analyze the commute times and their influence on the quality of life of the worker. The survey also examined the modes of transport used by staff and the time spent in the commute.

**Keywords:** Quality of life; In-company restaurants; Employees.

**Resumo:** O percurso casa/trabalho é responsável por boa parte dos deslocamentos diários nas áreas urbanas, e que também ocorre durante o intervalo de almoço. Por isso, este trabalho tem o objetivo de abordar a questão dos refeitórios dentro das empresas e realizar um estudo de opinião sobre os refeitórios no ambiente de trabalho. Foi aplicado um questionário para funcionários de 16 empresas da região de Bauru para avaliar as empresas que possuem refeitórios e as que não possuem, buscando analisar os tempos de percurso e sua influência na qualidade de vida do trabalhador. A pesquisa analisou também os modais de transporte utilizado pelos funcionários e o tempo gasto em cada modal no trajeto casa/trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Qualidade de vida; Refeitórios nas empresas; Funcionários.

## 1 Introduction

The movements that approach Quality of Life at Work (QWL) have been absorbed and debated by some large and medium-sized Brazilian companies, which have been adapting models of QVT programs of American companies, with the objective of reducing health care costs, to improve the safety and well-being of workers through the adoption of a holistic human resources policy focused on QWL (Pitta, 1999).

The origin of QWL studies is attributed to Eric Trist and his colleagues who in 1950 developed several surveys at the Tavistock Institute in London,

based on the analysis and restructuring of tasks, with the aim of making the lives of workers less painful. However, although this terminology has been widely diffused in the last decade of the twentieth century throughout the world, it still incorporates a conceptual imprecision and has not always been used correctly. The difficulty of conceptualization is perhaps linked to the fact that it is a comprehensive expression and endowed with great subjectivity (Rodrigues, 1998). The concept of QWL relies on notions of motivation, satisfaction, health and safety at work and involves

<sup>1</sup> Programa de Pós-graduação em Engenharia de Produção, Faculdade de Engenharia de Bauru, Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP, Av. Eng. Luiz Edmundo C. Coube 14-01, CEP 17033-360, Bauru, SP, Brasil, e-mail: clodoveu.silva@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Programa de Pós-graduação em Engenharia de Produção, Departamento de Engenharia Civil e Ambiental, Faculdade de Engenharia de Bauru, Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP, Av. Eng. Luiz Edmundo C. Coube 14-0, CEP 17033-360, Bauru, SP, Brasil, e-mail: barbara.bezerra@unesp.br

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recent discussions about new forms of work organization and new technologies. In the last 30 years, quality of life at work (QWL), based on the emergence of new paradigms, has emerged in the scientific community as an important tool for researching and evaluating individuals' health benefits through a holistic vision. The results have also helped as one of the criteria for new approaches in interventions. In this way, the use of innovative practices of production management has been disseminated in organizations as well as quality of life programs at work. The dilemma arises as to whether or not there is a simultaneous relationship between these two important focuses of the world of work.

Within the issues surrounding QWL is the relationship between sustainable cities and the expansion of cities that have increased the distances between work and housing. In this context emerges the issue of meals that impacts the distance that the individual travels to perform such meals, especially lunch, which can put the worker at risk of a road accident; or impact on the quality of the meals, which have impacts on the quality of life of individuals (Gomes-Carneiro et al., 1997), in the index of work accidents in companies (faults and health licenses, without being maternity leave) and in the sustainability of cities (MRSC, 2011).

Social Security data show that more than a third of the traffic accidents that occurred in Brazil in 2010 (Brasil, 2012) were counted as work accidents. In addition, the overweight rate and obesity in the Brazilian population has been advancing in recent years. With this, an in-company diet program can ensure that the employee will eat more balanced meal as recommended by nutritionists, which can contribute to reducing absenteeism, medical expenses, and

illness prevention. Concomitantly with the benefits directly related to the health of the worker, the food and nutrition unit in a company can be directly related to the traffic accidents or road accidents occurred during the workers' meal time, as pointed out by Gregolin et al. (2013).

In view of the foregoing, the objective of this research is to address the issue of in-company dining areas in terms of workers 'quality of life and obtain employees' opinions on this topic.

## 2 Method

The present study was developed through a multiple case study, through interviews with the Human Resources Departments of companies/industries, and employees of these companies / industries, located in the cities of Bauru, Jaú, Botucatu, Marília, Lençóis Paulista and Presidente Prudente, located in the Midwest region of the State of São Paulo. A brief description of the companies is presented in Table 1.

In all, 595 employees were interviewed, and at least 10% of the employees were interviewed in all companies. During the interviews with the employees, the questionnaire presented in Appendix A was applied. The questionnaire was elaborated as a result of the bibliographic research carried out on QWL, and a pilot test was carried out to evaluate the coherence of the responses.

The results were analyzed by descriptive statistical analysis and using the averages -T test for two independent samples for  $\alpha$  of 5% using the Excel add data analysis. For the choice of the appropriate T-test, the F-test for the variances was performed before.

**Table 1.** Brief description of the companies.

Company	Activity	Nº of employees	City
A	Metallurgic	400	Bauru
B	Metallurgic	550	Bauru
C	Electronic	150	Presidente Prudente
D	Electronic	300	Presidente Prudente
E	Chemistry	980	Lençóis Paulista
F	Metallic Structures	300	Lençóis Paulista
G	Automotive	3500	Botucatu
H	Automotive	500	Botucatu
I	Food	700	Marília
J	Food	10	Marília
k	Retail	38	Jau
L	Services	650	Bauru
M	Services	156	Bauru
N	Plastic	700	Marília
O	Retail	10	Marília
P	Insurance	38	Bauru

### 3 Results and discussions

The summary of the main results of the questionnaires (Appendix A) applied is presented below, with 16 companies interviewed with 670 questionnaires answered. Of the 16 companies, 9 have an in-company in the workplace and 7 do not. Thus 56.25% have a restaurant and 43.75% do not have a restaurant in the working environment. Table 2 shows the results of the interviews with the human resources managers of the companies'. With the data in Table 2 it was possible to calculate the accident rate by the number of employees. As the index led to very small numbers in order to facilitate the comparison index was multiplied by a thousand. In this way, Figure 1 shows: the index of commute accidents, the index of commute accidents in the lunch time; the index of work-related accidents at lunchtime and the total work-related accident rate for companies with and without in-company restaurant. Figure 2 shows these indices for companies with ISO quality programs and the like. From Figure 1, it can be seen that companies with restaurant have lower rates in almost all accidents. Company J did not have any work accidents registered in 2014, it is worth mentioning that it is a small company with only ten employees, and all employees live in the vicinity of the company with a driving time of less than 30 minutes. In the company's L and O it is observed that the work accidents that occurred in the

lunch time were all commute accidents. However, through t-test for averages for independent samples,  $\alpha$  of 0.05, the existence of in-company restaurant had no difference between means for all accident rates, ie, the hypothesis H0 is accepted that no difference between the means at the level of significance of 0.05.

In Figure 2 the accident rates are presented by the companies that have some quality program in their management. As can be seen, companies that have some quality program have lower accident rates than companies that does not. In P company the commuting accidents occurred outside lunch hours and unlike other companies with quality programs is the one that does not have ISO certification, it uses only as a quality program 5s tool.

Excluding the company of P which does not have ISO, the rates are even more favorable; indicating that the adoption of ISO standards reflects in a reduction of accident rates both commute and the total labor accident. This is corroborated by the data in Table 3, through to -T test, companies that have ISO have different accident index indices for typical work accidents and for typical work accidents at lunch time, that is, reject H0 that the means are equal. Already for the rates for commute accidents it is accepted H0 that the means are equal.

It can also be observed from Table 2 that the companies that have commute mapping and carpooling

**Table 2.** Results of the interviews with the human resources managers of the companies.

Company	Commute accident	Commute accident lunch	Work accident lunch	Work accident total	n° of employee	Restaurant*	Lunch hours (h)	Leisure Area*	Commute mapping*	carpool*	Labor gym*	Body mass index (BMI)	Quality Programs (ISO)
A	3	0	6	23	400	1	1	1	0	0	1	28.52	0
B	4	1	3	15	500	1	1	1	0	0	0	27.49	0
C	2	0	1	6	150	1	1	1	0	0	0	25.79	0
D	3	1	5	21	300	1	1	1	0	0	1	26.7	0
E	2	0	0	9	980	1	1	1	0	1	1	25.34	1
F	3	0	2	11	300	1	1	1	0	0	0	25.14	0
G	2	2	5	16	3500	1	1	1	1	1	0	26.94	1
H	1	0	0	4	500	1	1	1	1	1	1	27.81	1
I	1	0	0	6	700	1	1	1	0	0	1	27.04	1
J	0	0	0	0	10	0	2	0	0	0	0	26.39	0
K	1	0	0	3	38	0	2	1	0	0	0	27.69	0
L	3	3	3	21	650	0	2	0	0	0	0	28.31	0
M	0	0	0	3	37	0	2	0	0	0	0	23.64	0
N	0	0	2	5	80	0	2	0	0	0	0	26.32	0
O	2	2	2	6	45	0	2	0	0	0	0	26.75	0
P	1	0	0	1	16	0	2	0	0	0	0	24.49	1

\*1 = yes; 0 = no.

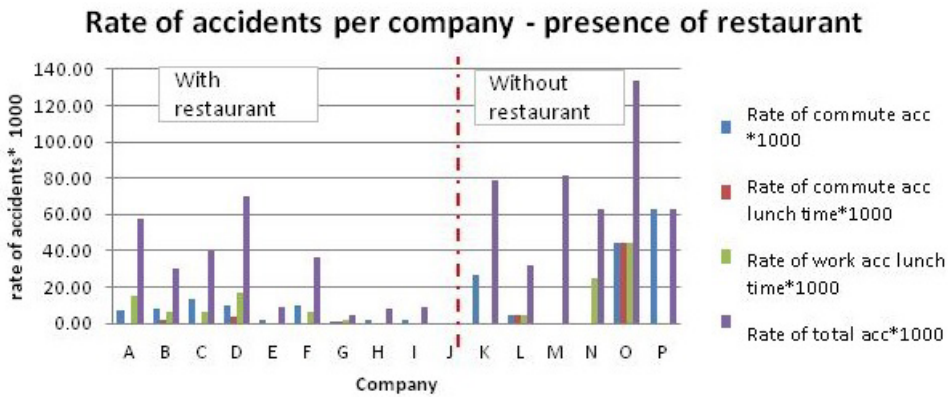


Figure 1. Index of accidents per company with and without in-company restaurant.

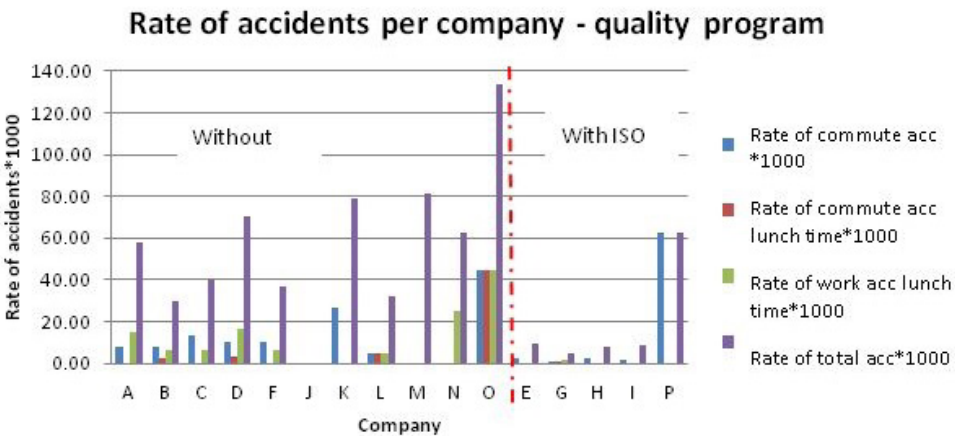


Figure 2. Index of accidents per company with and without quality programs.

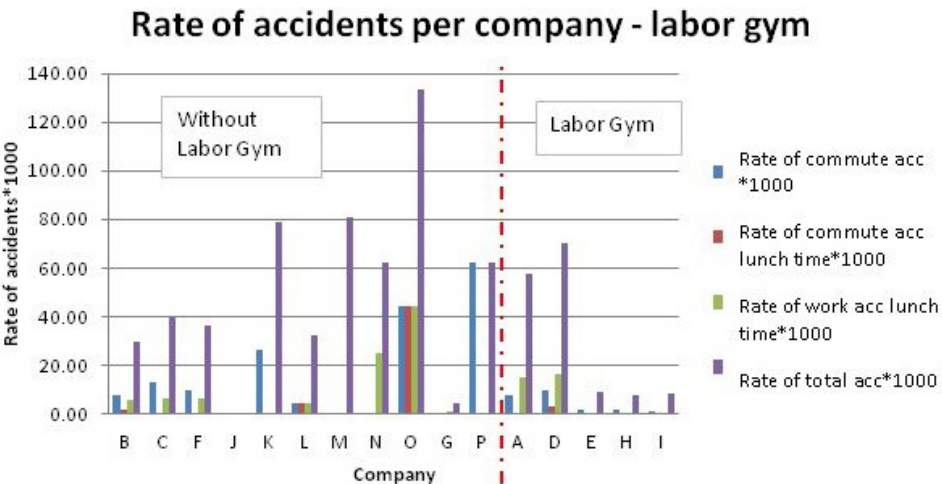


Figure 3. Index of accidents per company with and without work gymnastic.

also have the lowest accident rates. In relation to work gymnastics, it is also possible to observe lower indices for companies that have this activity focused on the quality of life at work, especially with commute accidents (Figure 3). However, according to the data in Table 4 there was no difference between the means of

the accident rates of the companies surveyed. On the other hand, the commute mapping shows a difference between the means of commute accident rates, typical accident rates both at lunchtime and in the normal period, and for the commute accident rate at lunchtime, there was no difference between the means.

**Table 3.** Average accident rates for restaurant and ISO parameters.

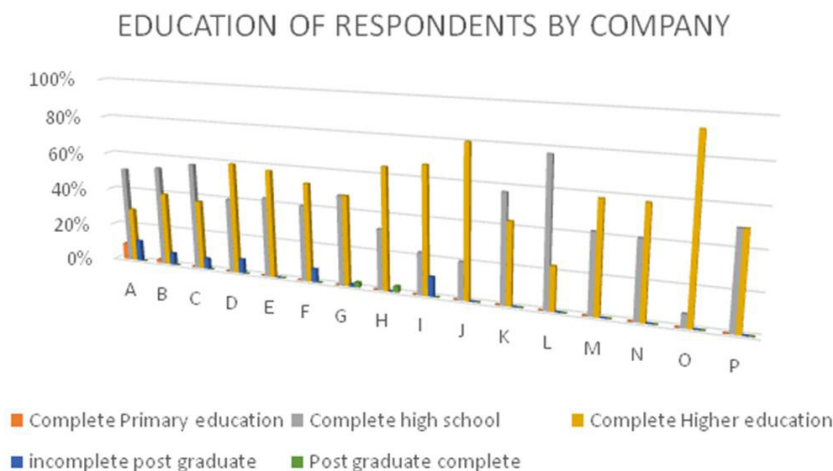
Accident rate*1000 average	without restaurant	with restaurant		With ISO	Without ISO	
Commute accident	19.7	6.10	p>0.05*	11.3	1.5	p>0.05*
Commute accident lunch time	7.0	0.7	p>0.05*	4.9	0.1	p>0.05*
Work accident total	64.4	29.4	p>0.05*	56.6	7.6	p<0.05*
Work accident lunch time	10.6	5.9	p>0.05*	11.4	0.4	p<0.05*

\*Test – T for mean difference  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

**Table 4.** Average accident rates for restaurant and ISO parameters.

Accident rate*1000 average	without gym	with gym		without commute mapping	with commute mapping	
Commute accident	15.4	4.6	p>0.05*	7.5	1.3	p<0.05*
Commute accident lunch time	4.7	0.7	p>0.05*	0.8	0.3	p>0.05*
Work accident total	51.1	30.6	p>0.05*	36.0	6.3	p<0.05*
Work accident lunch time	8.6	6.3	p>0.05*	7.3	0.7	p<0.05*

\*Test – T for mean difference  $\alpha = 5\%$ .



**Figure 4.** Education of respondents by company.

However, in relation to the average BMI of the employees surveyed of the companies that have workout programs have a higher average (27.1) when compared to companies that do not have (26.2). This information should be viewed with caution, since a more detailed study should be elaborated, since the implantation of the work gymnastics may have been implemented precisely to reduce the BMI of the employees, which was not object of research of this work. Another interesting fact is that the existence of a restaurant in the company has little influence on the IMC (26.7) when compared to the companies that do not have a IMC restaurant (26.2). However, the mean BMI of all companies, with the exception of M and P companies, is overweight and obese 1. This indicates that individuals are not in an adequate quality of life and incurring future health

problems. Also in the T - test there was no difference in the mean BMI between companies regardless of whether or not they had gymnastics or in-company restaurant at work.

### 3.1 Results and considerations on company results

The following graphs show the general results obtained with the research carried out in the field, as well as a brief interpretation of them. The respondents were 45% female and 55% male. With the exception of company L, where 100% of the interviewees were male, due to the fact that the worker interviewed was typically male.

Most of the employees are between 25 and 45 years of age, meaning that the employees who responded are

at full productive age. The level of education of the respondents presented in Figure 4 shows that the vast majority of employees have complete high school and under graduation, as well as in some cases the level of specialization with a full graduate are present with some respondents in companies A, B, C, DF and I, that is, with a predominance of mean age between 35 and 45 years. This is no longer the case for companies with the same age profile in Companies L, M, N, O and P. In the first group, the companies are transformation companies, industries of different natures, and the second groups are companies focused on retail and services.

And respondents' average company time is in the range of up to five years. The hours of entry of companies A, B, C, D, K, L, M, N, O, P are at 8 o'clock in the morning and the others have variable time at entry depending on the assignment of employees. Respondents have functions distributed in administrative

area and production with balance of answers, except for companies J and L, that the respondents are more production oriented, due to the nature of the company and specific activities. The working day is in the range of 8 hours a day, with activities on Saturdays, to complete 44 hours a week.

Figure 5 shows the time of the employee's journey between the residence and the work place, but in time between 30 minutes and 1h prevails throughout the group of companies.

Figure 6 shows that the vast majority of respondents have the car as the most used mode of transportation to get to work. But, buses chartered by companies have a considerable share to get to work, especially in manufacturing activities that require great human contingency to produce the products.

Figure 7 shows that despite the reduced time (<30 minutes) of commute and the great use of the car to reach the work environment, a large majority

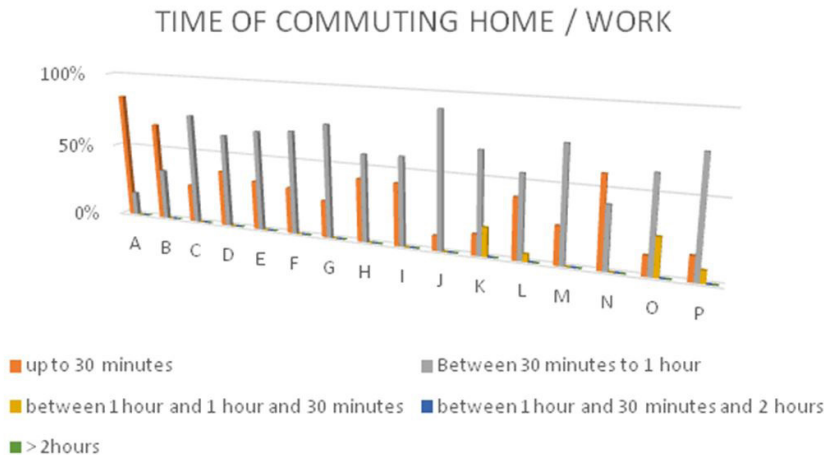


Figure 5. Time of commuting home / work of the respondents by company.

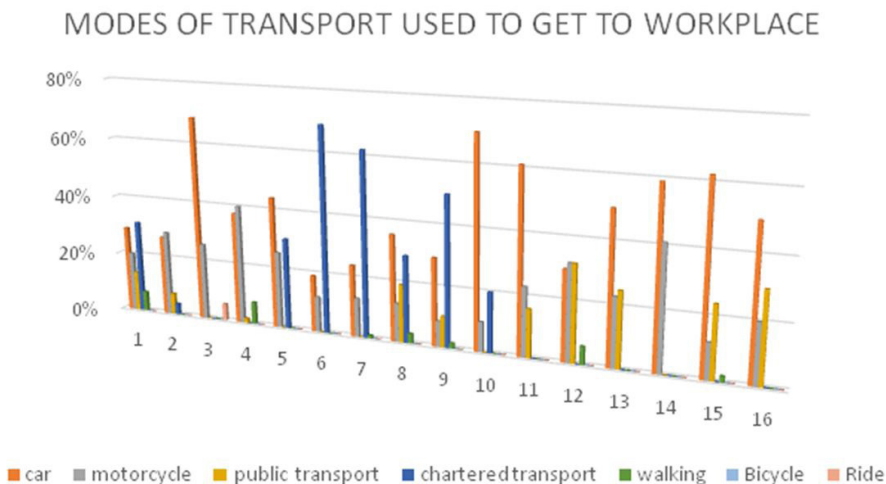


Figure 6. Modes of transport used to get to the workplace.

of respondents would like an alternative mode of transportation they currently use to get to work, that is, there is the need and the demand for another modal option.

Figure 8 shows that transport alternatives most cited by respondents were: public transportation, ride the charter bus and on foot. However, the car was highly cited by the respondents of some companies showing the important relevance of this modal by the respondents. Another aspect that can be observed is that the use of public transportation can be a good option, when well planned and with a certain level of comfort, the workers perceive positively an improvement in the quality of life. The carpool programs are still incipient within the companies, being present in only 3 companies interviewed, but that could have a greater growth, which could bring greater convenience for the employees, mainly for the companies where the public transport does not attend properly to the demand.

Figure 9 shows the relative percentage of respondents who have already suffered commute accidents throughout their professional career in the respective companies. The group of Companies H, O and P 100% of the employees did not suffer commute accidents.

Regarding the lunch break, in companies that have a restaurant, the lunch break is 1 hour and in companies that do not have the interval is 2 hours, which is established by labor legislation. Figure 10 shows that in spite of receiving the meal voucher the respondents of companies L, M, N O and P employees prefer a shorter travel time to get to the place of meal.

Already for the lunch place for the respondents of the Group of companies that do not have restaurants or canteens in the workplace; they make the meal in the residence or in restaurants near the place of work. In some companies, although they have no restaurant, employees have the option of using the kitchen in the workplace. Regarding the value of the meal vouchers that the respondents receive, we have the

### OTHERS MODE OF TRANSPRT THAT WOULD LIKE TO USE TO GO WORKPLACE?

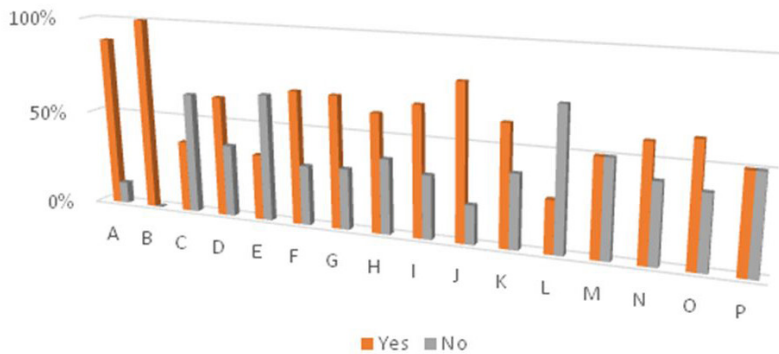


Figure 7. Other modes of transport that would like to use to go to work.

### WHO ANSWERED YES, WHAT THE ALTERNATIVE CHOICE?

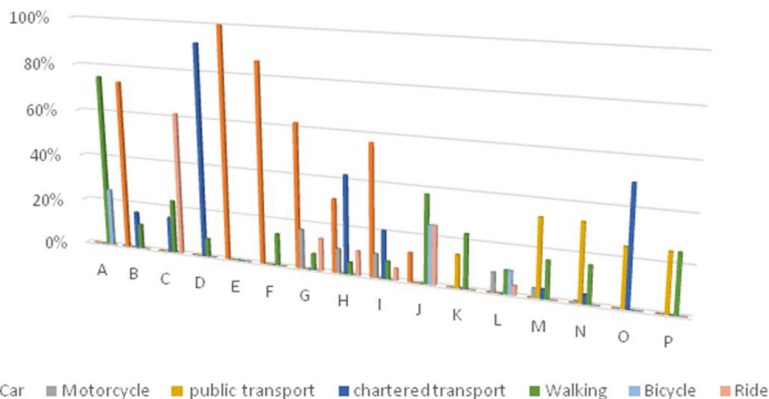


Figure 8. Alternative modal choice.

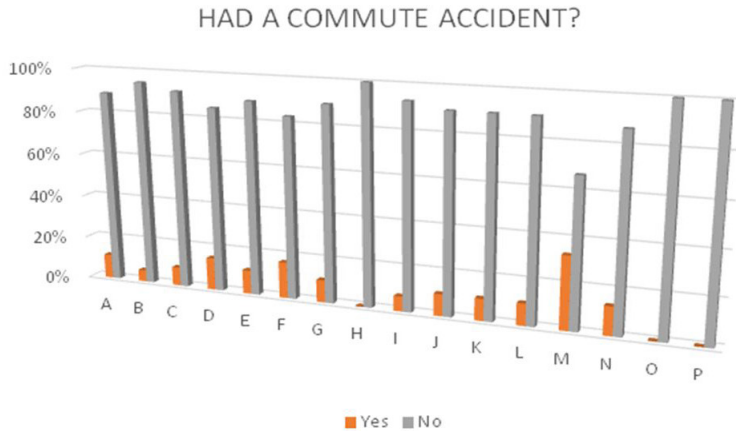


Figure 9. Had a commute accident.

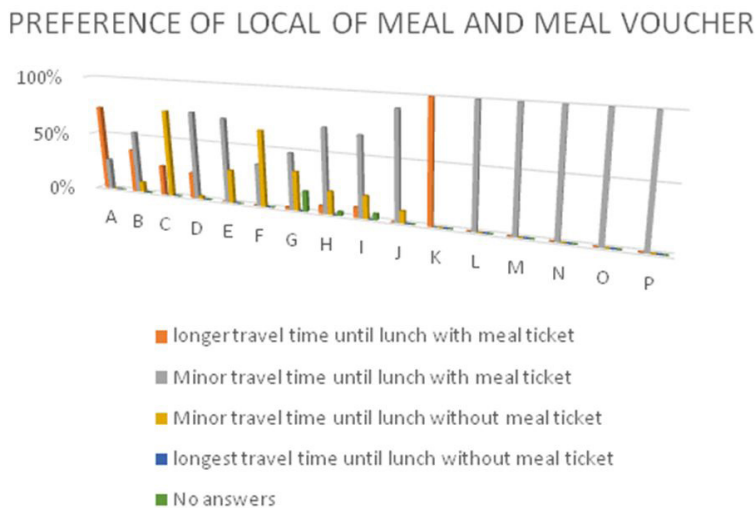


Figure 10. Preference of local of meal and meal voucher.

Group of Companies from A to I, which they do not receive, since there is a restaurant in the companies surveyed. The Group that goes from K to P, employees receive the vouchers of more than R\$ 20.00 per day and Company J the value of the voucher is between R\$ 10.00 and R\$ 20.00.

Practically all respondents would like the meals to be made in the workplace, both for companies that have restaurants or those that do not have restaurant in the workplace. In addition, through the interviews with the employees in loco, it was possible to verify that the restaurant inside the work place allows certain comfort and quality of life for the employees. Well, it can be a way of preventing health through providing a balanced and nutritionally adequate diet, and a stress reduction factor of commuting work / home movement at lunchtime or work / restaurant.

Figure 11 shows the mode of transportation of the respondents from the workplace to the lunch meal

site. The Group of Companies from A to I, has the predominant transport on foot, as companies make the canteens available to employees. On the other hand, the other company besides the option to walk has another option that is the car for this displacement.

Figure 12 shows that the group of companies that do not have on-site restaurant, the K, L, M, N, O, and P group, employees use the lunch break for other activities. However, the other group, from the companies that have lunchrooms and the reduced lunch interval, the vast majority of employees do not use the interval for other activities, but there are respondents who use it for personal activities, especially bill payment.

Figure 13 informs that respondents who use the lunch break for other activities do varied activities. However, the predominance of activities performed by respondents of companies that do not have restaurants in the environment is between paying bills and making purchases. Another important issue is that when the



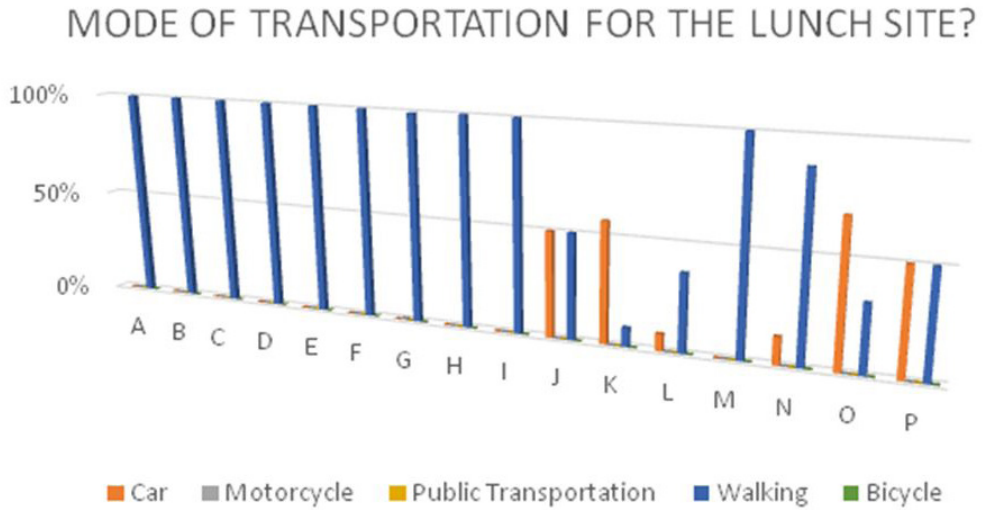


Figure 11. Mode of transportation for the lunch site.

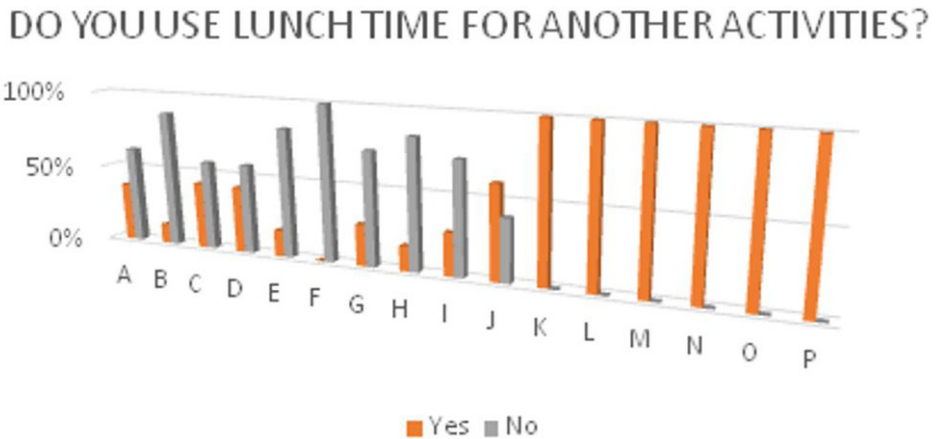


Figure 12. Use of lunch time for other activities.

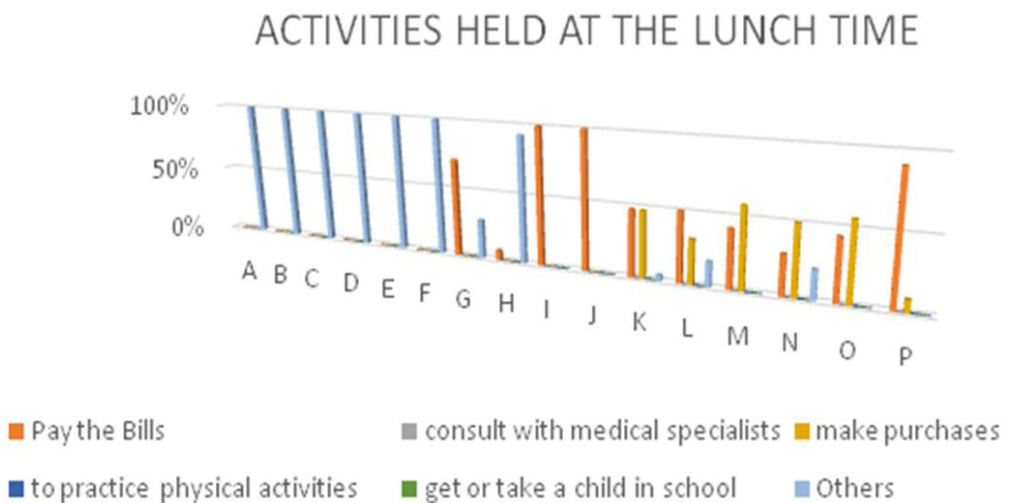


Figure 13. Activities held at lunch time.

lunch break is two hours, typical of businesses that do not own a restaurant, employees tend to resolve personal issues during this time, especially bill paying. In this sense, there is a good situation, since it is possible for the employee to have a “useful time” during business hours. On the other hand, performing tasks in this range may incorporate an additional stress component that can lead to a road accident and / or work. In this way, companies can help employees by providing computers with internet access to pay bills and / or ATMs inside their premises, the latter for medium to large companies. It can be a form of prevention, simply changing behavior in relation to the payment of bills, showing that the culture represents an important factor for the reduction of risks within companies and in the path of employees.

Figure 14 show that respondents in the group of companies that do not have a restaurant in the workplace, if they could choose, would choose a workplace closer to home. As for the group of companies that

have restaurant, the options are very varied, with a slight predominance for the option of NOT choosing a company closer to home, and for company C for most respondents this aspect is indifferent.

Figure 15 shows that respondents have an interest that the lunch interval be reduced. On the other hand, the companies that do not have restaurant with the predominant option did not reduce the interval, despite having a longer lunch interval.

Figure 16 shows the BMI of the employees per company, thus showing that the majority of the respondents are overweight regardless of whether the company has in-company restaurant or not in the workplace. And evaluating the average BMI of companies already without the indicated classification, it is verified that the average BMI value is in the range of 25, indicating overweight of the interviewees. In the T - test, there was no difference between the means of BMI between the companies with and without restaurant. Figure 17 show that many of the respondents practice

### IF YOU COULD, WOULD YOU CHOOSE A CLOSER TO HOME TO WORK?

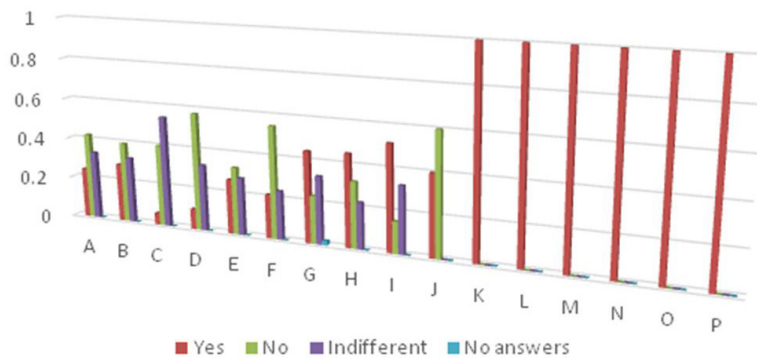


Figure 14. If you would choose a company closer to home to work.

### WOULD THE LUNCH TO REDUCE LUNCH TIME?

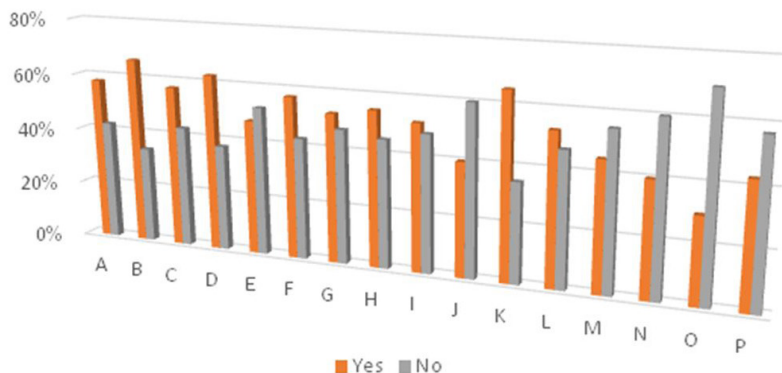


Figure 15. If you would like to reduce lunch time.

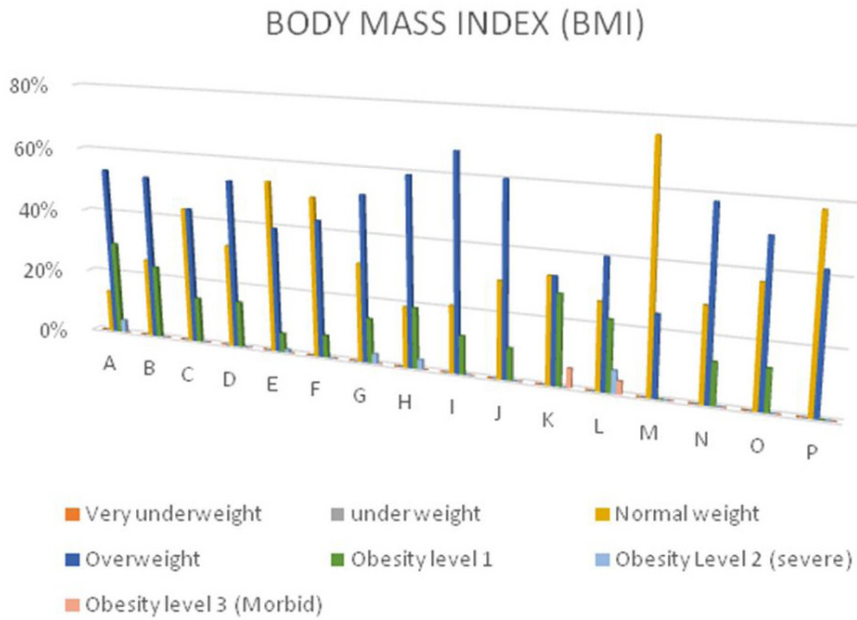


Figure 16. BMI of the employees surveyed.

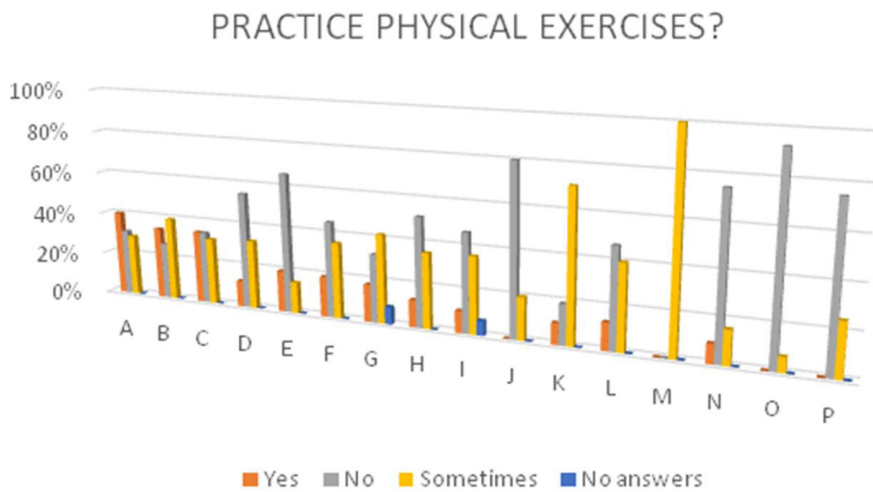


Figure 17. Practice of physical exercises.

physical activity on a regular basis or during a few days of the week. In companies E, J, L, N O and P, many respondents stated that they did not perform any kind of physical exercise.

Another aspect that can be observed is that the use of public transportation can be a good option, when well planned and with a certain level of comfort, the workers perceive positively an improvement in the quality of life. The carpool programs are still incipient within the companies, being present in only 3 companies interviewed, but that could have a greater growth, which could bring greater convenience for the employees, mainly for the companies where

the public transport does not attend properly to the demand.

#### 4 Final considerations

In this research it was observed that commute accidents have significant representativeness in work accidents. This shows that road accidents should be considered as an important item in work accident prevention programs involving employees, which should include actions from public authorities and unilateral actions by companies such as the adoption of ISO 39001 that deals with the management of transport systems.

One of the objectives of this research was to identify if restaurants in the workplace tend to contribute to the reduction of commute accident rates, since it would reduce the exposure of employees to unnecessary risks of displacement during the lunch break. Because, when meals are carried out in the premises of the company the displacements are reduced. In this research the T - test was performed for the difference between the means of the accidents rates for commute and work typical for both the lunch and the normal period, and it was found that there is difference between the means only for the typical accidents without being at lunch time. It was also observed that the rate of commuting accidents occurred during lunchtime was higher in companies that do not have in-company restaurants and for employees of companies that, for the most part, eat their meals outside the workplace. However, the results point to a relationship between accident rates and the existence of in-company restaurant, quality programs, work gymnastics, carpooling and road mapping.

Another important factor to be analyzed was the number of accidents occurred in smaller cities and with less flow of vehicles. In other words, employees are at greater risk in places with greater flow of vehicles. It was also observed that the distance between the home and work place is also a risk factor for the occurrence of commuting accidents.

However, there are issues that escape the scope of the company that is an appropriate urban planning, which is fundamental to the quality of life and to the mitigation of traffic accidents in general. Thus, the idea that people should look for work close to their home would allow people to travel shorter distances. Allied to this must be linked a public policy that generate employment in residential neighborhoods or mixed use. Many construction builders in the large centers already promote buildings that have offices and residences in the same venture, as can be seen on Berrini Avenue in the city of São Paulo.

The theme of this research is not simple and due to its complexity it must be approached in new research, involving more companies, so that it is possible to characterize better the influence of quality of life programs and quality programs in work accidents. Thus, it can contribute to the continuous

improvement of quality of life programs at work and to reduce exposure to the unnecessary risks suffered by employees.

Although, with not very comprehensive conclusions this research serves as an alert for companies on the need to invest in programs of this nature and to seek the reduction to the commute risk exposure. This, of course, could lead to a lower risk of road accident, and would increase the worker's quality of life and quality of life at work. This is how all companies, employees, government, and society gain, with a reduction in social security expenditures, due to the economic and social costs of a work accident, not to mention the psychological trauma of the victim and the family members involved.

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**Appendix A.** Questionnaire for employee.

**Basic data**

1-) Sex  Masculine  Feminine

2-) Age  underage  
 18 to 25 y  30 to 45 y  
 25 to 30 y  more than 45 y

3-) Education  
 Elementary School  Graduate incomplete  
 High School  Graduate  
 Undergraduate

4-) Department  
 Production  
 Administrative  
 Commercial

**Commute route**

5-) How many years working in the company?

less than 1 y  5 to 10 y  
 1 to 3 y  10 to 20 y  
 3 to 5 y  more than 20 y

6-) What entry time in the company?

6:00hs  8:00hs  
 7:00hs  9:00hs

7-) How long workday?

< 6 hours  7 hours  more than 8 hours  
 6 hours  8 hours

8-) How much time do you spend on the commute?

30 min  2 h  
 1 h  1h 30 min  more than 2 h

9-) What means of transportation do you use to get home / work and work / home?

Car  Transit  On foot  rideshare  
 Moto  Chartered bus  Bicycle

10-) Would you do it another way if you could?

yes  No

If yes, what other means of transportation would you use?

car  Transit  On foot  Bicycle  
 Moto  Chartered bus  rideshare

11-) Have you ever had a commute accident?

- yes
- no

If yes, what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

**Meals**

12-) How many hours do you have for lunch?

- less than 1h
- 1h
- 1 h30 min
- 2 h
- more than 2 h

13-) Where do you have lunch?

- In-Company Restaurant
- Home
- Restaurant outside the company
- Company kitchen (company location with table, refrigerator and food heating equipment)

14-) What is the value of the meal ticket?

- R\$5,00
- R\$5,00 to R\$10,00
- R\$10,00 to R\$15,00
- R\$15,00 to R\$20,00
- more than R\$ 20,00
- They do not receive – in-company restaurant.

15-) if you could choose during lunch, you would?

- longer travel time to lunch location with meal ticket
- Minor travel time to lunch location with meal ticket
- Minor travel time to lunch location without meal ticket
- longer travel time to lunch location without meal ticket

16-) How do you get to where you have lunch?

- Car
- Moto
- Bicycle
- On foot
- Transit

17-) Use lunch time to do other activities?

- yes
- no

If so, which ones?

- Pay bills
- Doctor Appointment
- Shopping
- Doing physical activity / going to the gym
- Pick up children at school
- Others

18-) What's your height? \_\_\_\_\_

19-) What's your weight? \_\_\_\_\_

20-) Do you exercise during the week?

- yes
- no
- sometimes

If not, specify .....

21-) Would you like the meals to be made in the company?

yes                       no                       Why? \_\_\_\_\_

22-) If you could choose, would choose a company closer to home to work, which would be your choice?

yes                       no                       indifferent

23-) If you could choose, would choose a company closer to home to work, which would be your choice??

yes                       no Why? \_\_\_\_\_