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# VOLUNTARY WORK AS A PRACTICE OF JANITORIAL PUBLIC SERVICES IN BRAZIL

Trabalho voluntário como prática de serviço público de zeladoria no Brasil

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# **ABSTRACT**

This research has the purpose to study the use of volunteer workmanship with the purpose of solving janitorial service problems in the city of São Paulo. By means of technology and human capital, it is expected to promote social and economic impact on target audience, i.e., individuals from peripheral and of low-income areas of the city. The research results demonstrate that the volunteer work practice is present in the society since the primordial years of small towns and cities and the Human Capital Theory evidenced the importance to use and educate the human workmanship, as, according to this theory, this is the major economical agent of transformation. Linking the historic context with the janitorial and maintenance problems found in the city, we get to the hypothesis of joining the volunteer work with care of public services, promoting social impact and urban transformation. These characteristics are fundamental to make the city smart. It was concluded that São Paulo does not have an efficient management nor an innovative management to solve the analyzed problems; therefore, it is essential to present proposals with alternative solutions, which in a simple manner may be able to improve the efficiency using more technology and promoting a social-economical impact.

**Keywords:** Public Services; Cooperativeness; Social-economic Impact; Voluntary work.

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# TRABALHO VOLUNTÁRIO COMO PRÁTICA DE SERVIÇO PÚBLICO DE ZELADORIA NO BRASIL

Voluntary work as a practice of janitorial public Services in Brazil

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#### **RESUMO**

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo estudar a utilização da mão-de-obra voluntária com a finalidade de solucionar problemas do serviço de limpeza na cidade de São Paulo. Por meio da tecnologia e do capital humano, espera-se promover impacto social e econômico junto ao público-alvo, ou seja, pessoas da periferia e de baixa renda da cidade. Os resultados da pesquisa demonstram que a prática do trabalho voluntário está presente na sociedade desde os primórdios das pequenas cidades e a Teoria do Capital Humano evidenciou a importância de se utilizar e educar a obra humana, pois, segundo esta teoria, esta é a principal agente econômico de transformação. Articulando o contexto histórico com os problemas de zeladoria e manutenção encontrados na cidade, chega-se à hipótese de articular o trabalho voluntário com o atendimento aos serviços públicos, promovendo impacto social e transformação urbana. Essas características são fundamentais para tornar a cidade inteligente. Concluiu-se que São Paulo não possui uma gestão eficiente nem inovadora para solucionar os problemas analisados; portanto, é imprescindível apresentar propostas com soluções alternativas, que de forma simples possam melhorar a eficiência utilizando mais tecnologia e promovendo um impacto socioeconômico.

Palavras-chave: Serviços Públicos; Cooperatividade; Impacto socioeconômico; Trabalho voluntário.

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# INTRODUCTION

Urban and social maintenance demands of a Brazilian city increase substantially as its population grows. When there is no effective service to solve these demands, small impediments may become great problems to the urban environment. However, the resolution of some problems are not complex. In the city of São Paulo, for example, the problem is in the lack of resources, such as the human capital and technology, which are used to handle the several complaints reported to the City Council.

"The acceleration of the population growth led to two conflicting issues: On the one hand, it is noted the need to excessively explore the resources, the increasing of the pollution and an insufficient number of services available. On the other hand, there is the need to implement the principles of sustainability to overcome such critical situations" (Genari, et al., 2018 p. 71).

The Smart Cities, present all over the world, are examples of how the technology, allied to the common objective of the population and their leaders may provide for a more productive and sustainable environment. The use of several resources, such as Big Data, provides a greater assertiveness in populations more and more diverse each day and which require faster and handy solutions. The technological resource is a key element to make available proper structure and services to the population and for the development of a fast response capacity in case of emergencies (Lee; Lee, 2014).

To be a Smart City, the main objective should be the quality of life of the people living and moving around it. "A smart city uses technology to provide urban services in a more efficient way, improve the quality of life of the people and relationship between local entities, companies, and citizens" (Cunha, et al., 2016, p. 28). In this context, in São Paulo, part of the population may become the key point for the lack of janitorial and social assistance services.

By joining the public initiative, the community, and the private initiative, it is possible to create smart and feasible solutions. This article comprises the current scenario of the City of São Paulo in the scope of janitorial issues, with the purpose of presenting a solution in which the persons help, on a voluntary basis, to answer the complaints received by the City Council.

# 1. THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO

The city chosen for the conduction of this project and which will be presented in this article is São Paulo, the Capital city of the State of São Paulo, located in Brazilian Southeast region. With a total of approximately 12.18 million inhabitants, distributed over 1,521 km<sup>2</sup>, the city that already has a history of 466 years, is also known as the financial heart of Brazil. São Paulo has a heterogeneous population, mainly influenced by Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Italian immigrants and migrants from the Northeast region, which gave to the city a rich cultural and architectonic tradition.

Owner of the most famous postcards of several types, such as parks, avenues, and museums, São Paulo also has several deficits related to public service, among which are the difficult to provide janitorial and maintenance services of common areas and public organizations of the city. Every inhabitant has already faced a hole on streets or avenues, noticed parks without the due gardening services, sidewalks and walls without painting maintenance, and dumps on the sidewalks.

This normality, according to the City Council of São Paulo (2019), is due to the number of claims made to the ombudsman service 156 (Portal to receive citizens' complaints regarding municipal issues) which increased 55% in the first semester of 2019, when compared to the same period in the previous year. For pothole filling service, for example, the average waiting time was of up to 45 days (Soares, 2020)<sup>1</sup>

120

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://agora.folha.uol.com.br/sao-paulo/2020/02/disparam-queixas-na-ouvidoria-da-prefeitura-de-sao-paulo.shtml

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# 1.1 City Council of São Paulo's service demand data

Due to the great number of occurrences, the public service tends not to satisfactorily meet the claim requests. The seasonality highly contributes to the accumulation of occurrences, for example: During the Summer, when the city faces strong rains later in the afternoons, the complaints to the ombudsman usually increases, as there are more chances of occurrences, such as tree falling, landslides, floods, and inundations. Then, other less urgent services are postponed.

The long waiting period is the main reason for population dissatisfaction, according to the City Council. This period was as long as 45 days for the maintenance of potholes in 2019, and the data does not show any improvements for year 2020. In January 2020, the city registered 7 thousand potholes that were waiting for paving in the city of São Paulo. This data indicates that there are not enough resources to serve all the capital city, the lack of human capital and the limited machinery have a direct influence on this trend.

Other recurrent problem in the city is the incorrect disposal of waste. There are 3814 requests to remove waste thrown over streets and avenues in the city. As a consequence, these roads and sidewalks have their circulation condition limited, which may cause accidents. When the waste is on the sidewalk, pedestrians have to walk through the road, risking themselves among the vehicles, and when the waste is on the road itself, it causes traffic jams and inconvenience to drivers.

Among other demands, we also highlight the services of painting of markings on streets and avenues, and maintenance of curbs, which accounted for 152 and 620 requests, respectively, in January 2020 (City Council of São Paulo, 2020). Considering that the demand remains similar over the year, it is estimated that more than 7 thousand curbs will require maintenance up to December 2020. Therefore, it is necessary to address the two causes observed so far, the lack of human capital and limitation of resources to better serve the population of São Paulo. For this purpose, we will analyze the population data that might help us to reach to a potential solution, the unemployed and citizens with low education level.

# 1.2 Unemployment

The unemployment in the city of São Paulo is a social problem that affected about 15 % of the inhabitants in 2018, i.e., 1,469.545 unemployed people, among which 28% is aged between 16 to 2<sup>2</sup>4 years (Goes, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. Among the main causes for this indicator, we may list the lack of professional qualification, increase in automation of productive process at companies and the technological advances which, in extreme cases, have extinguished some occupations.

"The technological advances started in this period have been molded over the time and today they are more present than ever in our economic context, and the result is the same as that seen in industrial revolution, i.e., the continuous implementation of technological process to the detriment of human workforce use in production process. In this sense, a questionable issue is raised as for the potential worsening of one of the biggest social and economical problems of all times known as unemployment" (Cintra, 2018, p. 9).

Another point to be mentioned is the worker's low qualification, which prevents him/her of, for example, getting operational level jobs for not having basic educational level, communication and expression problems, and lack of technical knowledge. In 2019, a review was made with the data from employment collective effort groups of year 2018 that showed that unfortunately from 5,800 job vacancies and 10,800 candidates, only 3,800 of the candidates had professional qualification to fill that vacant job (Chiara, Gavras, 2019)<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the facts presented, another issue that affects the unemployment is the economic recession a country may experience as a result of several political, social, and market influences, when the entrepreneur is not confident to risk his/her ideas. As a consequence, there are no job vacancies and no production demand.

To Seligmann-Silva (1994), the social isolation as a consequence of the unemployment pushes the individual away from his/her main activities and references of his/her daily life and then, he/she may take refuge

https://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br/2019/02/19/28-dos-desempregados-da-cidade-de-sao-paulo-sao-jovens/

https://economia.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,sem-qualificacao-parte-dos-brasileiros-nao-consegue-ocupar-vagas-basicas,70002852842

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in the disease. According to researchers, the unemployment brings losses in self-esteem, social depreciation, depression, among others, as well as cases related to suicide. "The seriousness of this problematics was noted by Angerami and Santos (1984) when interviewing suicide survivors in different emergency rooms in the city of São Paulo, where 33% of the interviewees tried suicide due to unemployment" (Pinheiro, Monteiro, 2007, p. 6).

In addition, among other consequences of unemployment are family relationships affected, lack of subsides for the maintenance of human survival, and individual's social wearing.

# 1.3 Education

The target public of this project are unemployed citizens, with low education levels and lack of instruction or professional experience. The unemployment becomes a point to be fought, as technological evolution has worsened this indicator all over the world (Cintra, 2019), and formal occupation is also seen as a criterion for social location, bringing visibility to the citizen (Wickert, 1999). The low education level is also considered as a premise for social invisibility and should be eliminated. When this social disparity is not fought, it results in the non-existence of professional qualification of the individuals. "Basic education becomes the root of the problem because all of the future education will depend on its efficiency, besides constituting the minimum level required to contemporary life". (Paiva, 2001 p. 186).

The criteria of National Household Sample Survey 2018 (PNAD), shown that the population of Young adults and adults, older than 25 years, comprise a substantial percent of 33.1% of the individuals with incomplete primary education. The access to primary education is a right ensured by the Constitution to all Brazilian citizens (Federal Constitution Art. 208, Paragraph 1); however, besides those individuals who have lost their constitutional right of access to education, many others also find difficulties along the way which prevents them from completing this step.

The data from the National Household Sample Survey – PNAD of 2018 concluded that the region where São Paulo is located in, the Southeast region of Brazil has the lowest illiteracy rate when compared to the other regions. However, the illiteracy affected 11.3 million of people older than 15 years in 2018; if all of those people were gathered in a single city, this would be the second largest city in Brazil, being only behind the city of São Paulo.

It is estimated that the illiteracy eradication process in Brazil will only be reached in year 2024 (IBGE, 2018); however, the application of primary and professional education initiatives may reduce this term. In addition, the Brazilian education system finds difficulties to introduce contents related to the planet sustainable development, according to the Global Educational Monitoring 2016, prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016), in Brazil 60% of the students aged 15 years only have basic knowledge regarding environmental and social responsibility subjects. This data indicates that, in addition to better access conditions to primary education, the Brazilian population lacks a better approach of subjects that are relevant to a sustainable expansion.

# 1.4. Smart City Project

With the purpose of reaching the target public of people with low education level and difficulty to access the labor market, the incentive to primary education and its completion will be addressed, as well as the opportunity of getting in the labor market and professional qualification. In addition, public-private partnerships are desired to make feasible discounts on household fees. In return, the project participants will be able to voluntarily assist the City Council in janitorial services.

People who did not complete primary education will be encouraged to participate in preparatory courses to take the National Exam for the Certification of Skills of Youth and Adults - ENCEJA. This course was prepared with the collaboration of volunteering university students from the Universidade São Judas Tadeu (USJT) to teach the contents of primary education, so as to complete the Primary and Secondary Education. At the same time the project aims at implementing qualification opportunities to the individual, the participation in volunteer work will be an add-in to the subject's curriculum and provide for unachievable gains, through the contact with new environments, expanding network, and improvement to solve problems affecting the city's daily life.

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The problems recorded in the call center 156 of the City Council are varied. We may mention the paving service, rescue of homeless people, tree pruning, sidewalk painting, among others. As observed before, these problems are not only solved by public initiative and their workers, therefore, there is a need of civil society intervention.

To handle this demand, the recruitment of volunteers will be made by an application that connects the citizen with the service requests received by the City Council. The volunteers will register in the application, with pertinent information regarding the level of education, location, age group, availability, and skills. With this registry, the application will analyze the data collected and indicate the best way to assign this volunteer in activities close to his/her location, to ensure a better convenience and, at the same time, it will refer the participant to a preparatory or vocational course, or to discounts in household fees.

The projects considers that it is possible to work for the benefit of a sustainable growth of the city, linking the volunteer work to a problem found in the city. The idea also requires other efforts to be feasible, such as the involvement of public initiatives.

# 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESULT

As a methodology for the study development, bibliographic and document researches, statistic data, and quantitative field surveys were performed with individuals resident in the city of São Paulo and Great São Paulo area for a better progress of the project and formulation of hypothesis. For the development of initial steps of the research, books and documents were used, as well as official channels to collect educational, unemployment, and income data. The main data source is the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

Field surveys require formulation of structured questionnaires to be applied on people resident in all regions of the city. 14 questions were grouped by means of Google Forms platform, and were made available in social networks Facebook and WhatsApp. The field survey is important to analyze opinions and habits of the analyzed population.

Then, being the man capable of contributing with volunteer workforce, it was necessary to identify in contemporary society if there is an interest in the practice of volunteer work to reduce the time to handle janitorial and maintenance services. For this end we applied a questionnaire in two steps. The first step aimed at identifying the respondents' profile. The questions were about the gender, age group, approximate family income, zone in which resides, current occupation, and whether he/she had access to Internet.

The second step sought information regarding the problem to be solved, i.e., janitorial and maintenance occurrences. In addition, the second step also queried about the desire of becoming a volunteer in their own neighborhood and whether some "rewards" would encourage other people to participate in this kind of social movement. The research was conducted between May 7 to 21, 2020, in online form, and at the end of application period, the following results were obtained.

The field survey gathered a sample comprised by 135 residents in the city of São Paulo and Great São Paulo area, to whom a 14-question questionnaire was applied. Among the 135 interviewees, 55.6% were women and 44.4% men, most of them were young adults aged 18 to 24 years (55.6%) followed by age group from 25 to 32 (17.9%) and 33 to 40 (15.6%). The remaining individuals were older than 40 years (11%). The current Brazilian age pyramid is similar to the sample collected, with a greater part of the population being comprised by youths and adults. When questioned about the region of the city where they lived, 40.7% stated they lived in South Zone, 17% in the East Zone, 16.3% in North Zone, 11.1% in West Zone, 8.9% in Great São Paulo area, and only 5.9% informed they lived in Downtown, most of the interviewees (99.3%) said they had access to internet.

The research respondents' interest in participating in volunteer work in their neighborhood, 37% of the people said they were interested in participating in some kind of volunteer activity, 34% said they were in doubt as for their participation, and 29% would not participate. It is important to observe people's willingness to participate in volunteer work, since the human resource is one of the main trigger of the project, and without the involvement of citizens the idea would not even become feasible.

According to Souza and Medeiros (2012), the reasons why individuals do volunteer work are diverse, whether for religious, political, familiar or personal motivation, the individuals dispose of their time and work for

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the benefit of the society in which they live and they expect to receive a non-monetary reward in return, such as learning opportunities, personal growth and a feeling of collaboration.

The 2017 study Other Forms of Work realized by the IBGE showed that the number of people participating in social work in Brazil grew 12.9% when compared to the previous year, reaching 7.4 million people. The study showed the low involvement of younger individuals, most part of the Brazilian volunteers are women with complete higher education, and who are engaged in other activities besides social work.

Several reasons may be the cause of the low involvement among young individuals in volunteer work. It is possible to list the difficulty to get information about social activities and the low interest for 'traditional' forms of volunteer work. To Souza and Medeiros (2012) it is essential that there is a real interest for the activities developed and the compatibility with the project or institution's causes and objectives. Dohme (2001) also points out that when the volunteer works in an activity that he/she identifies with and that he/she picked himself/herself, the work delivered is enhanced.

To identify potential incentives to do volunteer work, we asked the interviewees, who in summary belong to classes E, D, and C, whether incentives such as discounts in power or water bills would make them willing to participate in volunteer activities. The result for the incentive question shows that 99.3% of interviewees believe that discounts in permanent bills are another form of incentive. The acceptance may be explained by the fact that basic bills represent a great part of the personal budget of Brazilian families, especially in low-income families.

The search for identification with the cause, which was mentioned above by Souza and Medeiros (2012) as the key point for self-motivation and productivity, may be achieved when there are options in different segments, as well as the convenience of being close to home. When asked about janitorial and maintenance occurrences in their neighborhood, the research respondents were not satisfied with the high recurrence of problems such as waste on streets, abandoned squares, potholes on the streets, etc. Each individual reported at least 2 janitorial or maintenance problems in their neighborhood.

In addition to the dissatisfaction, there is also the interest in helping in some way, which shows the support to the volunteer work cause in the neighborhood they live in. Dohme (2001) mentions as the reason for volunteer work involvement the desire for harmony and support to the collective objectives of a community. According to the author, the volunteer is someone who has their own personal objectives and point of view of the social reality around and, therefore, tries to project their objectives towards the community, with an effective participation in the achievement of results, besides the acceptance of a group.

As for the occupation of individuals who answered the survey, 51.1% had formal jobs with registry in the CLT (Brazilian labor regulations), 23.7% were unemployed, and 20% had informal jobs. The remaining were self-employed or full-time students. IBGE research (2017) also identified that most part of the volunteers had other occupations besides social work, as well as most part of the field research sample showed interest in social work. However, the involvement of the unemployed public is necessary, as they have more free time and would benefit themselves with the experiences in new working areas, besides taking advantage of the vocational courses and discounts in water and power bills. Social work is also considered as a stand-out characteristic in labor market by recruiters.

"Volunteer work becomes an interesting alternative to those wishing to improve their curriculum and developing their communication, team work, time management and organizational skill<sup>4</sup>s, among other important features to professional activity. All of these characteristics are valued by recruiters and, in some cases, the volunteer activity becomes a tiebreaker factor between candidates with similar profiles. (Bortoluci, 2019, p. 1)<sup>4</sup>.

Most part of the individuals involved with volunteer work is the public with some educational level (IBGE, 2017). Therefore, the project objective is to reach that portion of people with lower educational level. The reward program proposed by the activity aims at providing courses in several areas, to encourage those wishing to improve their educational level and training themselves to the labor market. It is clear that people with higher educational levels have occupations with better salaries.

In addition, the problem of the low educational level of the population of the State of São Paulo should be fought, as seen in the topic related to educational level in this article; the eradication of illiteracy in Brazil is expected to occur in 2024 only, and the youth and adult population is the most affected by this condition. This

<sup>4</sup>https://administradores.com.br/artigos/trabalho-voluntario-no-curriculo-como-ele-pode-ajudar-a-conseguir-um-emprego

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fact does not disqualify this part of the population in the exercise of social work, on the contrary, by means of volunteer work, we aim at facilitating the access to education and, consequently, enable the income increase.

"The Human Capital Theory defends that an improvement to the national investment in education - essentially in vocational training - will inevitably lead to an improvement in national income, i.e., will cause an acceleration in the country's economical growth. In the same way, the improvement of individual or familiar investment in education will lead to an improvement of the individual or familiar income". (Rodrigues, 1997, p. 217).

Therefore, it is understood that the social work proposed herein brings benefit to people of different social classes, different age groups, and different occupations, and this fact will contribute for an increased involvement and democratization, impacting positively the collective. The biggest benefit expected with the application of this initiative is the improvement in urban quality of life of all population. As seen over the bibliographic review, this feature is considered by many authors as the fundamental premise to understand a Smart City.

# **CONCLUSION**

As seen over the study, the migration of the man to the city was the factor that contributed to the emergence of volunteer work, as well as the Catholic Church activities. Then, the link with the church made many people believe that they would be forgiven by their sins in life, in case they did some social activities. Currently, many people do not participate in volunteer work, for reasons such as lack of information and lack of identification with any cause. Considering these two points, if the information is given in a simplified way and is closer to the reality experienced in the neighboring areas of the individual's residence, then the involvement would possibly be greater. That is why the project's volunteers will promote social activities for the benefit of the neighborhood or the city they live in.

Therefore, the project will help not only the people willing to directly participate in the cause, but it will also help millions of the inhabitants of the city of São Paulo, who would get rid of the minor urban impediments.

The search for the involvement of unemployed population with low educational level was necessary, since this is the population that will obtain the most benefit by the educational, placement in labor market, and income preservation incentives. Alike incentives have already been used in corporate environment, such as tax exemptions offered in exchange of social activities, as shown in this study, it is possible to take this same concept to the individual environment. It was noted that the best way to apply this concept is to benefit the most socially vulnerable population. In São Paulo, a great part of the population facing the unemployment does not have proper occupational and educational qualifications to get certain job vacancies, due to the long time waiting to be replaced in labor market many people often get disheartened, giving up their search for a formal job.

Targeting this type of reality, that is becoming more and more common, the proposed project bring efficient and innovative solutions so that these people are easily reallocated in labor market, and in return, they help the city to solve recurrent problems that have been experienced for years, such as the problem with urban planning. Using the technology allied with the human capital and proactiveness, it is possible to do more than just improve the service offered exclusively by the City Council, but it may also transform the lives of its residents with the incentives to education and study resumption projects, so that these people may have a higher educational level. One of the basis of a smart city, besides technology, is a developed population that is why one of the main objectives of the project is to improve the educational level of its volunteers.

Upon completion of this article, it was concluded that São Paulo does not have an efficient management nor an innovative management to solve the analyzed problems; therefore, it is essential to present proposals with alternative solutions, which in a simple manner may be able to improve the efficiency using more technology and promoting a social-economical impact. We expect this article to be used for the benefit of the city and that proposals like this are analyzed and studied for the implementation of projects around the city so that with the aid of the population's volunteer work São Paulo may achieve higher efficiency and productivity in services that directly affect the quality of life of the population.

One of the limitations identified is that the characteristic of volunteer work may be better studied, especially its social application in larger scale, and the impact on the improvement of quality life of those people involved with it. In addition, other quantitative researches with more heterogeneous group of the population of the city of

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São Paulo is required to better represent the population diversity. As a proposal for a future study, the project feasibility should be investigated before public organizations, with the purpose of analyzing the applicability of the discount on household fees and State taxes.

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