

## Externalization: does the Academy answer the doubts of society?

### Abstract

**Objective:** Based on the Brazilian scenario that discusses the potential impacts of the externalization of organizational activities, in view of the imminent political decision, the objective in this study is to address the current discussions on externalization through the results of academic empirical studies.

**Method:** Therefore, the articles published in Brazilian Administration and Accountancy journals between 2011 and June 2015 were surveyed and analyzed. The 44 articles analyzed were collected from the journals ranked under Qualis A1, A2 and B1, using the words: externalization and outsourcing. Then, the most frequent themes in the discussions on the theme in Brazil were determined, based on media approaches, and analyzed from the perspective of the Stakeholder theory.

**Results:** The results show that highly significant academic production exists on the discussed themes and that the evidence strengthens the viewpoint against externalization more than the defenders of the practice.

**Contributions:** The study contributes to the discussion on the theme in view of the emerging nature of the theme in the Brazilian society, consolidating different empirical evidences that go against the current political decision, and enables social groups to substantiate their discussions and decisions.

**Keywords:** externalization. outsourcing. bibliographic study.

### Gabriel Grubel Bandeira

M.Sc. in Accountancy from the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos). **Contact:** Santa Rita de Cássia 1.500, 202, Coloninha, Florianópolis (SC), CEP: 88090-352.  
**E-mail:** gabrielpericiacontabil@gmail.com

### Luiz Henrique Figueira Marquezan

Ph.D. in Accountancy from the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos) and Professor at Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). **Contact:** Rua dos Salsos, 115, Res. Lopes. Pinheiro Machado. Santa Maria (RS). CEP: 97030-770.  
**E-mail:** luizmarquezan@gmail.com

### Carlos Alberto Diehl

Ph.D. in Production Engineering from Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and Professor at University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos). **Contact:** Déa Coufal, 1380, Casa 12, Ipanema, Porto Alegre (RS). CEP: 91760-020.  
**E-mail:** carlosadiehl@gmail.com

### Maicon Manoel Benin

M.Sc. in Accountancy from University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos) and Professor at Universidade de Passo Fundo (UPF). **Contact:** Av. Brasil Oeste, 677, apto. 1006, Centro, Passo Fundo (RS), CEP: 99025-001.  
**E-mail:** maicon.benin@gmail.com;  
maiconb@upf.br

## 1. Introduction

With the processing and approval of the Bill of Law 4.330 (2004) in the chamber of deputies in April 2015, which regulates outsourcing in Brazil, the discussion on this topic has become frequent in news and social network media. Based on political discussions with a clear polarization of positions and defense of interests, the final text was enacted by the President of the Republic in March 2017 (Law 13.429, 2017). Outsourcing, a concept linked to the transfer of internal activities to an external agent (Schneider, Diehl & Hansen, 2011) is the most common form of externalization and the term used in the media and beyond academic discussions and texts, is the base for this study.

Supporters of the new legislation, as the BBC journalist Luis Guilherme Barrucho (Barrucho, 2015) shows, argue that it aligns Brazil with the most modern labor practices in the world, putting an end to legal insecurity, increasing the competitiveness of companies and generating more jobs. On the other hand, those who are against approval claim that these regulations would lead to a reduction in employee salaries, a loss of service quality, an increase in occupational accidents, a reduction of rights and a worsening of working conditions. The topics of interest identified in the Brazilian media mainly involve externalization as a way of modernizing activities, with concerns related to the bond that the employee will have and consequences for himself, the direct employer and the contractor. Other themes are the union relations and the quality of the conditions to perform the job activity.

Around the world, outsourcing also figures on the discussion agenda. On the BBC website, journalist Natália Antelava (Antelava, 2015) tackles another point: the return of jobs to the United States. She notes that, in 2003, 150,000 jobs were sent out of the country, while 2,000 returned. In 2013, the number was 40,000 places out and 40,000 returning to the country. This return, according to the matter, was due to the demand for skilled labor. This was not without consequences for the Americans though. Robert Reich (Reich, 2015), former Secretary of Labor under the Clinton administration, reports in his blog that the flexible economy in force in the US, a response to low Chinese costs, results in a “hell” for workers’ lives: he refers to the practice of just-in-time scheduling, which, in short, means paying the worker only for the hours worked.

Analyzing the current situation of the discussions on externalization in Brazil and the US reveals a discrepancy in the phases of each. While, in Brazil, outsourcing is in the early stages, such as regulation, in the US, this discussion has already reached more advanced stages, such as the return of outsourced companies and measures to reduce the difference in labor costs between the US and destination countries of the outsourced companies. Activity externalization actions already take place in organizations in Brazil though, and scientific studies on their motivations and effects are found in the academic literature. Thus, discussions at the political level, in the media, in organizations and in society, can make use of that evidence, which is the central motivation of this study.

In the academy, empirical studies have addressed the practice as an option to reduce costs, such as Lacity and Hirschheim (1993b), Baron and Kreps (1999), Hoecht and Trott (2006). These defend the view of outsourcing based on the concept of externalization, focused on maximizing the wealth of the investor (organizational view), to the detriment of a broad approach, seeking to discuss the impacts for the company, employees, customers, suppliers, among others, which are affected by decisions to outsource or internalize activities, addressing different stakeholders.

In this sense, studies point out that there is dissatisfaction with externalization, including loss of control over activities (Veltri, Saunders & Kavan, 2008; Whitten and Leidner, 2006), supplier dependence (Alexander & Young, 1996) and risk of loss of employees’ identity with the company (Belcourt, 2006). In these, the cost reduction view permeated the analyses, but the relations with other actors can be identified, especially with the employees. This evidence points to the range of stakeholders, using the Stakeholders’ theory as a basis for research, considering the need for organizational decisions to consider the impacts on different interest groups.

Thus, the objective of this study is to address the current discussions about outsourcing through the results of empirical academic studies. In this way, it permits a broad reading of the effects of externalization, adopting the scientific view, compiling the results of several studies carried out in Brazil. This

approach permits contributions to the theme, presenting results that diverge from the political decision, and promotes a better base for the discussions and decisions of social groups, particularly organizational managers and employees. In addition, it contributes to the literature by addressing different aspects linked to externalization and by compiling studies that aim to clarify social demands. At the end, recommendations are provided to the stakeholders.

Besides this section, the study adopts the following division. In section 2, the literature review is presented, with studies on externalization and how it is perceived in the Stakeholder theory; section 3, methodological procedures, discusses the procedures used to develop the research; in section 4, results and discussions, the main outcomes are presented, including discussions on outsourcing in Brazil; in section 5, the final considerations are presented, followed by the list of studies analyzed.

## 2. Externalization according to Stakeholder theory

Initially, some definitions of externalization are needed for the sake of a better understanding and discussion. Externalization is the act of systematically replacing an activity, performed internally, by the execution by an external agent, counting on the contractor's technical support (Lacity & Hirschheim, 1993a). In addition, according to Besanko, Dravone, Shanley and Schaefer (2007), in the value chain, the decision between producing or buying services or products determines the internalization or externalization for the company, also seen as a form of operational management strategy (Schneider *et al.*, 2011), characterized by the contracting of third parties for the execution of works pertinent to the activities of the contracting companies.

In this sense, the term "externalization" is better suited to what is seen in the discussions in Brazil and presents a more comprehensive concept, being used in the study to the detriment of the term outsourcing, while "outsourcing" limits the concept to the transfer of internal activities to an external agent (Schneider *et al.*, 2011).

As a result of the work objective, the approach chosen was precisely to give voice to the primary groups of interest affected by these decisions: investors (organization) and employees. The Stakeholders theory considers that the effects of the company's actions should not be one-way, as proposed by theories that seek to maximize organizational performance and need to weigh uncertainties, losses and gains to the other groups that can receive those impacts. The fact that we consider the points of view of all those who are affected is not by chance, as these perspectives help managers to have a more complete view of their strategy, providing information that results in a more detailed analysis of organizational actions (Freeman & McVea, 2000).

Particularly in this study, at least the primary stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) need to be perceived in view of the idea of outsourcing an activity, these being the company (proxy of the shareholder figure) and the workers. This perception can be reinforced, to the detriment of criticism against the theory, by the chain of studies on the theory of corporate strategies, discussing the alignment of the stakeholders' interests in order to be successful (Freeman & McVea, 2000). The theory seeks to counteract the notion of hierarchy of interests to be defended in an organization, and the reconciliation between the interests of organizations and workers seems to be the central axis of the discussions on the externalization of activities. With this more comprehensive analysis premise, the research discusses some evidence in a less restricted focus, trying to identify the multiple impacts of these decisions.

This broad view is necessary because the focus of the research targets the financial interests of the organizations, as the externalization appeared with the primary objective of reducing costs, particularly against the background of the theory of Transaction Costs. In this sense, empirical studies, such as Lacity and Hirschheim (1993a), show that cost reduction is one of the main benefits of externalization, and the company's secondary activities are more suitable alternatives for this. The search to identify activities conducive to externalization became relevant and the focus of research, as in Baron and Kreps (1999), who developed a model for the diagnosis of main and secondary activities.

In line with this view, Hoecht and Trott (2006) argue that externalization was confined to peripheral services, unrelated to the company's core business. The externalization of these activities became one of the main reasons for cost reduction though (Jennings, 1997; Quélin & Duhamel, 2003). Nevertheless, Quélin and Duhamel (2003) look for factors indicative of conditions necessary to reduce costs, such as, for example, economies of scale in the externalized company. This can be achieved when the company develops the same activities for several others (Belcourt, 2006).

Another point is that externalization allows the manager to share the risk of committing resources, providing mobility, by not using capital in an activity (Quélin & Duhamel, 2003). By opting for externalization, the company becomes lighter, responsive to adapt to sudden changes, including, for example, information technology innovations that occur in short time frames. Engaging resources in the development of technologies to reach the same market level may be impracticable, in which case externalization promotes access to technology and market expertise (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2002). Souza, Bacic and Rabelo (1995) point out that this strategic advantage is not limited to the flexibility to respond to future events, but also as a strategy to expand investment options. In the perspective of cost reduction and, consequently, in the company's perspective, one externalization alternative that represents a lesser capital effort results in resource savings and, consequently, cost reduction, in line with Alexander and Young (1996).

In addition, access to the best technology on the market is considered one of the effects of externalization, a potential cost reduction resulting from the gain of scale (Belcourt, 2006). Companies should not be obsessed with cutting costs and transferring their production though, as this may lead to loss of product innovation, resulting in implications for following market trends and innovations of competitors. Alternatively, the company should focus on developing products and services from the technology they master in combination with the market technology (Hoecht & Trott, 2006). Gilley, Greer and Rasheed (2004) found innovation related to externalizations of the human resources, training and payroll areas, demonstrating innovations in company performance and efficiency, such as know-how and new technologies, as a result of the expertise of the service provider.

On the other hand, the failures and risks related to the externalization need further analysis. Failures in this decision are related to the view of mere cost reduction, with problems in the relationships between the parties, in the quality of services and loss of control of the factors critical to the activity (Freytag, Clarke & Evald, 2012). Lacity and Hirschheim (1993a) emphasize that, if the objective is only cost reduction, an alternative to be considered is the restructuring of the company to provide the same service more efficiently.

This other aspect of externalization includes social risk, which consists in the loss of company identity, when the employees perceive that they lose value, affecting the service provision. In addition, there is a risk of technology transfer, which may lead to the creation of competitors (Belcourt, 2006) and the transfer of information among competitors served by the same company, facts that are mainly related to the externalization of key activities (Jennings 1997, Quélin & Duhamel, 2003).

In this sense, Hamel (1991) alerts to the loss of competitive differential, as the service an externalized company provides to the entire market transforms the differential into a standard, a situation Bower and Keogh (1997) observe. Also, related to the technological aspect, excessive reliance on core activities may lead to the loss of the contractor's know-how, resulting in stagnation in innovation (Quinn & Hilmer, 1994).

In addition, there is a need to hire the right supplier, who provides the service for a long time and advances in technology and market (Earl, 1996). On the other hand, a long-term contract can lead to the loss of the flexibility that externalization provides (Belcourt, 2006). Also, in studies such as Bielski (2006) and Shahani (2007), some controversy is shown in the sustainability of the production chain, questioning the ability of externalized companies to meet the chain's service demand.

In an opposite movement of the companies, the studies by Veltri *et al.* (2008) and Whitten and Leidner (2006) verified the desire for the internalization of externalized activities. This is mainly due to loss of control, bad relationships between companies and contractual problems. A recent example is found in Lenovo, through the incorporation of at-home after sales support (Li, Huang, Cheng, Zheng & Ji, 2014).

### 3. Methodological Procedures

#### 3.1 Classification of research and material collection

Concerning the analysis of the published articles, this study is characterized as a bibliographical research, as it uses published theoretical references to obtain the scientific contributions on a subject (Cervo & Bervian, 2002), particularly on externalization. In order to do so, 44 publications were analyzed (Table 1), published between 2011 and June 2015, Brazilian articles, in order to verify if the subjects discussed by the Brazilian society, based on recurring subjects in the media, are also being discussed in the academy, analyzed from the viewpoint of Stakeholders theory, promoting a parallel between the discussions about outsourcing and the themes addressed by the academy in Brazil, collected in July 2015. The research procedures involved three phases

- a. Step 1: delimitation of the scope of analysis. It includes the theme (externalization) and the decision to use scientific journals, in accordance with the research objective, resulting in the selection of scientific journals by two criteria, quality (Qualis A1, A2 and B1 in the area Public and Business Administration, Accounting and Tourism) and nationality (Brazilian);
- b. Step 2: selection of articles, based on the words: externalization; outsourcing. The search was carried out through the ISSN of the selected journals on the Capes journal website;
- c. Step 3: data collection. After the first mappings, the authors and the themes used in the articles were verified, aiming to direct the theme. Next, the objectives, method and main contributions of the articles were mapped, in order to compare them with the themes discussed in the media.

Table 1

**Brazilian articles on externalization 2011 – June/2015**

Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal data
Albuquerque, Morais & Lima	2015	Contracting in health: an arena of dispute between public and private interests	Ciência & Saúde Coletiv, 20(6), pp. 1825-1834
Almeida, Morrone & Ribeiro	2014	Trends in incidence and mortality rates by occupational accidents in Brazil, 1998 till 2008	Cadernos de Saúde Pública, 30(9), pp. 1957-1964
Almeida & Porto	2014	Expertise maintenance: an interdisciplinary approach based on organizational learning, knowledge and memory	Informação & Sociedade: Estudos, 24(2), pp. 19-33
Assunção & Camara	2011	Job insecurity and accident production in tree harvesting	Caderno CRH, 24(62), pp. 385-396
Augusto, Souza & Cario	2013	Governance structures and strategic resources in distilleries in the state of Paraná: an analysis based on the complementariness of ECT and VBR	Revista de Administração, 48(1), pp. 179-195
Bandeira, Mello & Maçada	2012	Flexibility elements in logistic outsourcing contracts: the case of a telecommunications company	Produção, 22(2), pp. 237-248
Brito, Marra & Carrieri	2012	Discursive practices of outsourced workers and social constructions of exclusion identity	Revista de Ciências da Administração, 14(32), pp. 77-91
Calderón & Lourenço	2011	Private higher education: expansion of teaching labor cooperatives	Cadernos de Pesquisa, 41(143), pp. 642-659
Carnevalli, Miguel & Salerno	2013	Application of modularity in the automobile industry: a survey-based analysis	Production, 23(2), pp. 329-344
Cerra, Maia, Alves Filho & Nogueira	2014	Supply chains of manufacturers in the automobile and white goods sectors-a comparative analysis through case studies	Gestão & Produção, 21(3), pp. 635-647
Furtado, Carrieri & Bretas	2014	Humor on the internet: workers use a new strategy to protest against resignations and outsourcing	Revista de Administração, 49(1), p. 33-44

Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal data
Giampaoli	2013	Social service in companies: consulting and service provision	Serviço Social & Sociedade, 114, pp. 266-289
Guimarães & Carvalho	2012	Outsourcing in long-term care-a risk management approach	Ciência & Saúde Coletiva, 17(5), pp. 1179-1190
Guiraldelli	2012	Farewell to the sexual division of work: gender inequality in the clothing production chain	Sociedade e Estado, 27(3), pp. 709-732
Hirata	2011	Recent trends of social and job insecurity: Brazil, France, Japan	Caderno CRH, 24(1), pp. 15-22
Lacorte, Vilela, Silva, Chiesa, Tulio, Franco & Bravo	2013	The bottlenecks of the network for the eradication of child-juvenile labor in jewel and costume jewelry production in Limeira – SP	Revista Brasileira de Saúde Ocupacional, 38(128), pp. 199-215
Magalhães, Carvalho	2011	Práticas gerenciais relacionadas à qualificação de trabalhadores terceirizados: um estudo de caso no setor de mineração	Organizações & Sociedade, 18(57), pp. 227-244
Neto & Saraiva	2011	Management practices related to outsourced worker qualification: a case study in the mining sector	Organizações & Sociedade, 18(57), pp. 227-244
Marcelino & Cavalcante	2012	Towards a definition of outsourcing	Caderno CRH, 25(65), pp. 331-346
Marsiglia	2011	Profile of primary health care workers in the city of São Paulo: North and Central regions of the city	Saúde e Sociedade, 20(4), pp. 900-911
Martins & Xavier	2011	Attributes of transport service in industry-retail relationship	Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios, 13(39), pp. 193
Mathias, Kubota & Miguel	2012	An analysis of publications on modularity in the automobile sector in the main journals on production engineering in Brazil	Exacta, 10(2), pp. 223-236
Oliveira Neto, Contador, Shibaio & Vendrametto	2013	Ranking method for performance criteria and indicators for hiring logistic operators: case study in the metal sector	Exacta, 11(3), pp. 259-283
Osterne & Miranda	2014	Analysis of management models adopted at the Penitentiary Institute Professor Olavo Oliveira II (IPPOO-II) in shared management and by the state of Ceará	Revista Meta: Avaliação, 6(16), pp. 1-28
Padilha	2014	Disgust, humiliation and control in shopping mall cleaning in Brazil and Canada	Caderno CRH, 27(71), pp. 329-346
Paiva & Souza	2012	Maintenance outsourcing model contract: a principal-agent approach	Production, 22(4), pp. 796-806
Peixoto & Bastos	2012	Use and effectiveness of production and work management practices: a survey of the Brazilian industry	Revista Eletrônica de Administração, 18(2), pp. 372-399
Pessanha & Artur	2013	Labor rights and workers' organization in a context of changes in the job world: effects on health workers	Revista Ciência & Saúde Coletiva, 18(6), pp. 1569-1580
Pinto, Gouvêa & Oliveira	2014	Quality assessment of outsourced maintenance service in commercial buildings: the case of a public organization	Gestão & Produção, 21(2), pp. 389-403
Prado & Cristofoli	2012	Results of information technology outsourcing in Brazilian organizations	Gestão & Regionalidade, 28(84), pp. 77-88
Prieto & Miguel	2011	Adoption of the modular strategy by companies from the automobile sector and the implications for activity transfer in product development: a multiple case study	Gestão e Produção, 18(2), pp. 425-442
Sanchez & Martins	2013	Value perception in IT infrastructure outsourcing announcements: an event study involving Brazilian companies	Revista Base, 10(2), pp. 154-168
Santos & Campos	2013	Outsourcing model for supply management and IT service operation: multiple application cases	Gestão & Produção, 20(1), pp. 218-233
Santos, Moraes & Passos	2012	Performance and decision indicators on outsourcing in a public laboratory network	Revista de Saúde Pública, 46(3), pp. 456-465

Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal data
Saraiva & Mercês	2013	Outsourcing in maintenance management: case study of a mining company	Revista de Administração da Unimep, 11(1), pp. 1-24
Sato, Martins, Kato, Martins & Silva	2013	The outsourcing process of hotel services: motivations and theoretical background	Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Turismo, 7(1), pp. 129-148
Silveira, Martins, Lopes & Alves	2013	Antecedents of production efficiency in manufacturing activities: experiences from the Brazilian furniture sector	Revista de Ciências da Administração, 1(1), pp. 154-169
Souza & Rozemberg	2013	Educational macro politics and the micro policy of school management: repercussions in occupational health	Educação e Pesquisa, 39(2), pp. 433-447
Stal & Morganti	2012	Brazilian multinationals in information technology: software production and service outsourcing	RAI: Revista de Administração e Inovação, 8(4), pp. 182-205
Takahashi, Silva, Lacorte, Ceverny & Vilela	2012	Job insecurity and accident risk in civil construction: a study based on collective work analysis (CWA)	Saúde e Sociedade, 21(4), pp. 976-988
Tavares Neto & Godinho Filho	2013	Optimization by ant colony for the task sequencing problem in a single machine with permitted outsourcing	Gestão & Produção, 20(1), pp. 76-86
Tigre & Noronha	2013	From mainframe to cloud: innovations, industrial structure and business models in information and communication technologies	Revista de Administração, 48(1), pp. 114-127
Vanalle	2011	Client-supplier relationship: evidences from studies on the automobile sector	Exacta, 9(1), pp. 13-28
Vanalle, Santos & Santos	2011	Personnel management practices: a multiple case study in capital goods companies	Exacta, 9(2), pp. 179-196
Zilber & Koga	2011	Carbon credit market in Brazil and the role of intermediary agents: challenges and opportunities	Organizações Rurais & Agroindustriais, 13(1), pp. 139-153

Source: research data.

### 3.2 Analysis categories

The objective of this topic is to delimit the subjects that are discussed in the country, on the theme externalization, in the period parallel to the first vote of the bill in the Chamber of Deputies, establishing the following analysis categories, based on the perception of the primary stakeholders: investors (organizations) and employees. Therefore, reports were read about the topic of outsourcing (generic term used by the media), in the period before the collection of the articles (July 2015), when the doubts and discussions are similar. Here are some of these reports, from different media organizations, serving as the basis for defining the categories.

Initially, in its news website, the newspaper *Estadão* (Skaf & Freitas, 2015) points out the externalization of the company's end-activities as one of the controversial topics; entrepreneurs argue that it is impossible to modernize the economic activity without facilitating externalization.

Another controversial point raised by Marta Cavallini (Cavallini, 2015), on the website G1, is which company these employees are affiliated with. According to the aforementioned news item, the law determines the subsidiarity of the contracting company on the labor rights, but the labor rights would no longer be negotiated with the unions of the categories that originated the services provided, but rather with the trade union of outsourced workers. At this point, there is the matter of the worker's loss of identity, in relation to both the company and the professional category.

Another element raised by the opponents of the regulation is the allegation of an increase in occupational accidents, according to news from the *Diário do Centro do Mundo* (Outsourced, 2015). The news, linked to the website of the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), shows that occupational accidents with outsourced workers increase significantly due to the job insecurity, the increase in hours worked and a lack of individual protection equipment, as a result of changes in the work conditions. These claims may explain the loss of quality, loss of control and dissatisfaction of some companies with the externalized services. It would also explain some internalization decisions of companies, and some companies' mistaken misdiagnosis at the moment of the externalization, which can be identified in the studies mentioned, leading to the investigation of satisfaction with the results of the decision.

Based on these news items, along with the analysis of other media consulted, aiming to cover most of the media viewpoints with ideologies in favor of and against the theme, including the website of the newspapers *Estadão* and *Folha de S. Paulo*, and the magazine *Carta Capital*, the most discussed themes were verified, the categories of the study being:

- modernization of activities through externalization;
- employee affiliation (labor, company and union relationship);
- conditions for work activity;
- satisfaction with the externalization decision.

Some studies analyzed addressed more than one category, as the presence of one does not imply the exclusion of another. A secondary category was also analyzed, related to the positioning of the article, whether it is "favorable" or "unfavorable" to externalization, with intermediate scales of "neutral", "favorable neutral" or "unfavorable neutral".

To be classified as "favorable", the article should openly express in its results, when reporting on the option of externalization, that this is a way to "modernize the activities" for example, or "reduce the occupational accidents", or even "point out externalization as a correct decision". To be unfavorable, it should explicitly point out externalization as a cause of insecurity, increased accidents, inefficiency of the service, loss of bonding or inefficiency in modernizing the contracting company.

To be considered a "neutral" article, externalization should be mentioned as an alternative in the literature, without judging whether it is good or bad. The classification of "Favorable Neutral" is when the article mentions that externalization can be an alternative to improve the problems faced. This judgment is based on the literature and not on the results of the article itself. "Unfavorable Neutral" follows the same reasoning, however, inverse to the "Favorable Neutral", when there is some indication that the externalization is harmful, based on the literature, not verified in the article itself.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Scientific production on the theme

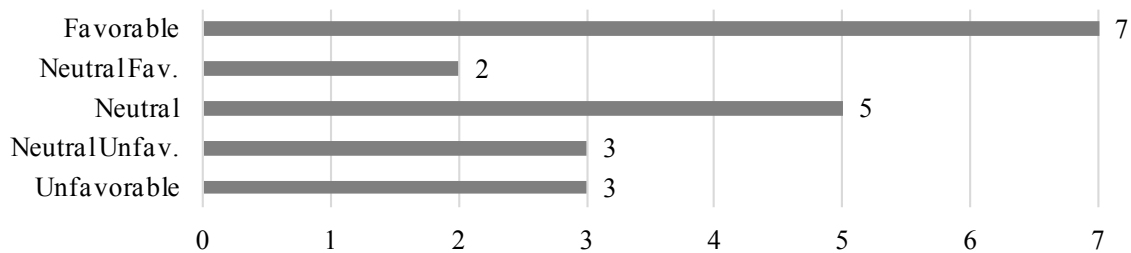
Journals A1, A2 and B1 were investigated, using the keywords described in the method, resulting in 24 journals, with at least one identified article and 65 publications in total. After reading the abstract and analysis of the articles, those publications were discarded in which: (a) the keyword was employed in a different sense than in the research, 15 articles, psychology studies for example; (b) 6 articles in foreign languages were also discarded because, although published in Brazilian journals, their focus is international. In total, 44 articles remained for analysis, only two of which did not discuss the analysis categories (topic 3.2).

The scientific production on the theme externalization peaked in 2013 and, from that point onwards, the production dropped by half in the next year, and to very little in 2015 (first semester), with only one article. The choice to maintain 2015 was due to the fact that the theme was strongly present in the media that year. In the next topics, the analysis categories are discussed.



## 4.2 Modernization through externalization

Modernization through externalization seems to be one of the most used arguments by its defenders, figuring in 20 articles, with the most favorable bias among the four categories. In 45% of these articles, the theme appeared with a positive bias, addressed as one of the solutions for innovations and an important factor for modernization of practices or new technologies. In Figure 1, the division of opinions on the theme is shown.



Source: research data.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of opinions on modernization through externalization (20 articles)

Even with a favorable bias, however, part of the articles points out failures in the search for modernization through externalization. One example is the study by Osterne and Miranda (2014), who carried out a research on the externalization of the administration of the prison system in the State of Ceará, in order to reduce costs. Externalization would be a way of managing the public good more efficiently, with the expectation that the know-how of the administrator would permit the reduction of costs that the public entity would not be able to adopt for some reason.

Nevertheless, the study found that not only the expected quality improvement did not happen, but there was insecurity of the public good managed. The reason for choosing externalization is to reduce the management cost of the state; on the other hand, the expected result was not achieved, as the modernizations of administrative practices brought by the concessionaire did not take place. The study by Quelin and Duhamel (2003) has already alerted on specific conditions for cost reduction by the service provider and, contrary to the allegations, it seems that the administrators did not reach the know-how to provide the service effectively.

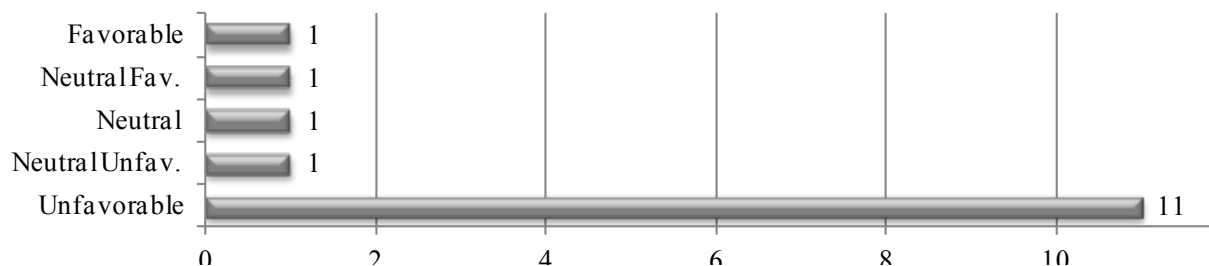
On the other hand, in the study by Martins and Xavier (2011), about the logistics of a supply chain, the findings showed that the inclusion of more links in the chain (more subcontractors) makes it more modern, agile and efficient; it also eliminates inventory maintenance costs by eliminating the need for specific infrastructure for this purpose, diluting the investment among the other members, a fact that confirms the spray view of investments risks as found in the study by Quelin and Duhamel (2003).

In the study by Carnevalli, Michael and Salerno (2013), the relationship between suppliers and companies in the automotive industry is explained, demonstrating that, when there is outsourcing, combined with the modularity technique, there is a reduction in the cost of installation, labor and fixed investment in the production line, which enhances the companies' investment power or, as seen, a dilution of the investment risk in modernization. Also, even if the dilution of the risk of problems in the assembly line is identified as an advantage, the cost reduction was the main factor of the externalization, without verifying its use by the companies for the modernization of their production factors. Also, it is important to highlight the risk of technology transfer and loss of know-how in this kind of situations (Belcourt, 2006; Jennings, 1997; Quélin & Duhamel, 2003).

More enlightening is the article by Oliveira Neto, Contador, Shibao and Vendrametto (2013), which deals with strategies for the outsourcing of logistics operators; the articles observes that externalization practices in Brazil are not up to date with practices in the rest of the world. While the priority here is to reduce costs, in other countries, there is concern about the alignment with the strategy of the company and the outsourced company. In view of this observation, it should be noted that these differences in research, a focus on cost reduction versus externalization with a strategic focus, suggest the success of externalization or its complete failure. In the first case presented in this topic, the government is involved while, in the second case, there are only private companies, and the difference between the cases and the success and failure deserve a more in-depth analysis, and a comparison between these two cases could contribute to the better understanding of the success elements of externalization.

### 4.3 Employment relationship

Another point both defenders and opponents of externalization discuss is the employment relationship. Among the articles analyzed, 15 address this theme, 11 with an unfavorable approach. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the positions.



Source: research data.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of opinions on employment bond (15 articles)

Figure 2 illustrates that the opinions expressed in the articles on the employees' relationship are largely unfavorable towards externalization. In their study, Calderón and Lourenço (2011) discuss the emergence of the hiring of higher education teachers by cooperatives, with the sole purpose of reducing costs. The research points out that the practice started in the State of São Paulo, with negative repercussions in the media of São Paulo, pointing towards the insecurity of the education system, a fact corroborated by the study. Although the quality of the supplier is an important factor for successful externalization (Earl, 1996), Calderón and Lourenço (2011) demonstrate a case of outsourcing of an end-activity with lower levels of agent quality due to training and preparation problems of the teachers, and of the company, due to the greater labor liabilities generated.

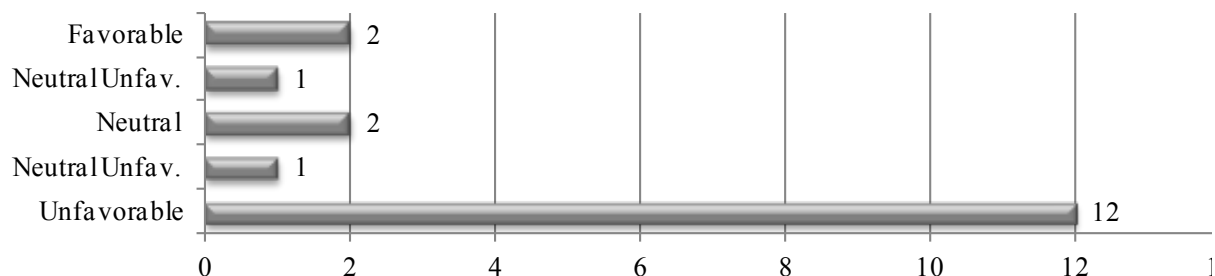
Another negative point highlighted by Lacorte *et al.* (2013), when analyzing a supply chain of jewelry and costume jewelry supplies, was the increase of child labor, in which the contracting companies claimed that they could not supervise their subcontractors, exempting themselves from the guilt. There was no improvement whatsoever in the employees' bond in this case, and, on the contrary, the study highlights the objective of cost reduction with reflections in risks of labor liabilities and, in the case of child labor, criminalization, with more severe legal processes.

The only article that indicates a favorable position about the labor relations was a literature review on the Brazilian automobile industry, which verifies the adoption of the modularity strategy as a benefit for the employment relationship, making the suppliers economically stronger, consequently suggesting the bond supplier-manpower as beneficial. The article does not go into detail on how the employment bond becomes better after the externalization though (Vanalle, 2011). It emphasizes the transfer of the extinguished functions in the outsourcing company to the suppliers and, as the study did not go into this detail, the proviso became necessary. Another highlight is the strengthening of the supplier, in line with Earl (1996).

In the study by Marsiglia (2011), in the area of health, aiming to survey the professional profile of the hospital workers in the city of São Paulo, in the comparison between a health service that adopted outsourcing and one without outsourcing, no disadvantages were found of one professional related to the other, presenting neutral results. Pessanha and Artur (2013), however, in a study on health professionals, found the difference in rights between contracted professionals and outsourced workers. This difference of rights is suggested as a form of labor cost reduction for hospitals and, in the study by Belcourt (2006), it figures as one of the causes of loss of identity with the company, entailing a reduction in the quality of the service provided.

#### 4.4 Conditions for work activity

The working conditions, with emphasis on occupational accidents and the insecurity of working conditions, were discussed in 18 articles, also with high representativeness, and again with a large portion (12 surveys) being unfavorable to externalization. Their conclusions point to outsourcing as a cause of increased accidents and precarious conditions. Figure 3 shows the distribution of opinions in the articles.



Source: research data.

**Figure 3.** Opinions on occupational accidents and insecurity (18 articles)

Again, the vast majority of articles opposing outsourcing are highlighted. In the article by Asuncion and Camara (2011), it was verified that there was not only the insecurity of work in the lumber sector, but also the increase in accidents after the externalization, noting that contractors, focusing exclusively on cost reduction, often do not offer security equipment essential to the activities. Again, specific conditions are needed in the externalization to achieve cost reduction, without compromising employee safety, as observed.

The article by Hirata (2011) reinforces this view of insecurity as a result of excessive cost cutting, with the sole purpose of increasing corporate profits. The behavior of identity loss and employee dissatisfaction is highlighted in its approach. In this sense, Hoecht and Trott (2006) point out that the obsession with cost reduction is not the best way for companies, which could be solved by internal restructuring (Lacity & Hirschheim, 1993a).

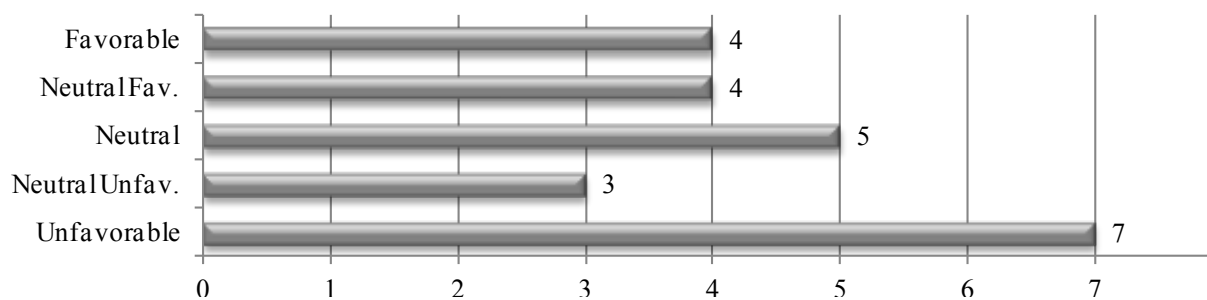
In Padilha's study (2014), interviews with outsourced employees from Brazil and Canada were used, verifying the insecurity in both countries, keeping similarities with the news addressed in the introduction of this article. In Brazil, the study addresses this insecurity as a consequence of the maximum cost reduction and the reduction of salary levels to the minimum wage. In Canada, another wage condition was verified, although the author did not demonstrate the Canadian wage reality for comparison.

In contrast to the others, the work by Almeida, Morrone and Ribeiro (2014) points out externalization as one of the factors that helped to reduce occupational accidents. This study is one of the few that raises the possibility of this correlation though. In summary, there is a lot of empirical evidence more favorable to relating the increase in accidents and job insecurity than to the reduction of these factors. This may be related to the companies' biased diagnosis, observing only the costs that would be reduced, neglecting other aspects of the decision (Freytag *et al.*, 2012).

#### 4.5 Satisfaction with outsourcing

In total, 23 articles addressed the topic of satisfaction on outsourcing, being therefore the most commented topic in the surveys, with seven papers indicating dissatisfaction regarding externalization. The concern with the performance of externalization is a natural theme, as the company is interested in the quality of the contracted service, while the employees claim that the quality of the service provision drops, which is a strong argument against externalization, as the two parties dislike it. Figure 4 shows the distribution of opinions on the subject.

In the distribution, articles that speak unfavorably about the companies' satisfaction with the externalization stand out, that is, a negative experience. The same is true for the neutral articles, which alert on the risks of outsourcing and the care with the quality of the service provision.



Source: research data.

**Figure 4.** Distribution of opinions on satisfaction with externalization (24 articles)

The study by Magalhães, Carvalho Neto and Saraiva (2011) about the company Vale do Rio Doce presents the contractual concern with including clauses that focused on the quality of the contracted service, in lign with Bielski (2006), Earl (1996) and Shahani (2007), in the sense of safeguarding the quality. This concern with the quality, in Vanalle's study (2011), resulted in the satisfaction of the car manufacturers and outsourced suppliers, supporting the earlier study. Furthermore, Guimarães and Carvalho (2012) demonstrated, through a case study, that an approach with risk management, monitoring the externalization contract, can be an alternative to avoid dissatisfaction with the decision.

In the study by Santos, Moraes and Passos (2012), an analysis of outsourcing in the public health sector demonstrates that there was no significant improvement in costs in the provision of services. This finding goes against the study by Marsiglia (2011), which did not observe the insecurity resulting from externalization. It should be noted that the opinion refers to the satisfaction of the contracting company with the externalized company, so this opinion relates to the managers of the contractors. This observation shows that unsuccessful externalization is not occasional.

Among the unfavorable studies, Prado and Cristofoli (2012) stand out, focusing on the externalization of Information Technology (IT). Using questionnaires with users of externalized IT services, the great dissatisfaction of these users was verified; the users who invest more in IT externalization do not always achieve a better return in this sector. This study discusses a counterpoint to the expectation of externalization as a source of modernization, as there was dissatisfaction due to the lack of modernization. Their findings corroborate studies by Veltri *et al.* (2008) and Whitten and Leidner (2006) on dissatisfaction with externalization and the desire to return the activities to the company's direct management.

## 4.6 Consolidation of positions

It was found in the studies analyzed that only one of the current discussion points is favorable to externalization: the positive effects of modernization. There are still arguments against this statement though, like in the study on IT and in the experience with the externalization of the administration of the imprisonment system in Ceará. Among the articles favorable to externalization, except for the article by Almeida, Marrone and Ribeiro (2014), none of the articles address the employee's point of view, only referring to results for the company. Thus, if the objective was to "modernize" or "reduce costs" and this was achieved, a positive interpretation of the fact occurred. This unilateral view was not concerned with observing effects for the employees (of the contracting and contracted companies), tax collection, employment and income generation, environmental impacts, among other factors that would make the analysis multifocal, diverging from the line proposed by the Stakeholders theory.

On the other hand, the point of view of externalization critics, which deal much more with employment bond issues and the insecurity of working conditions, all studies point to negative factors in both subjects, some of which are related to the company's dissatisfaction with the externalized service due to the poor quality and precarious working conditions. Another important point is that most of the unfavorable studies point out that the perceived externalization, with the myopia of exclusively reducing costs as one of the causes of these negative factors, reinforces the need for a broad approach to the impacts on the participants in the externalization process.

Finally, there is a clear gap to be filled with new research, relating the main motive of externalization to the success or failure of this practice, that is, when the motivating factor of the decision can hamper the manager's judgment to detect the actual problem. Based on the theory discussed in this research, a multifocal approach is necessary to understand the quality of the decision, on the aspects of the motivation, of the analysis performed prior to the act, as well as on the maintenance of the processes in an externalized model.

One point that deserves particular attention is the association of insecurity with the exclusivity of the search for cost reduction, a fact that seems to be intrinsically linked to strategic cost management, as demonstrated by Souza *et al.* (1995). The company should adopt a strategic view on externalization, without remaining limited to a narrow view of cost reduction, requesting analyses structured by the Stakeholder theory.

## 5. Final Considerations

With the purpose of verifying if the aspects of externalization, before the moment of the political decision, on the discussion agenda in Brazil, are also topics of academic research at the national level, this study shows that, of the 44 articles identified, only two did not address the analysis categories highlighted in the research. Thus, it can be affirmed that the subjects under discussion in Brazil are also the focus of academic analysis, collaborating towards the synergy between science and society.

Analyzing the results of those studies, it was clear that the main objective of the companies, when adopting externalization, is the reduction of costs, apparently the only reason considered. This point of view is reinforced by the conclusions of the studies in that they detected an effective cost reduction by the companies, demonstrating such data or collecting the perception of the stakeholders in a unilateral view (company), which this research tried to endorse with effects on another stakeholder - the employee. Considering this behavior, it is evident that the companies that opted for externalization neglected other aspects of this decision, such as quality clauses, verification of supplier potential, impacts on labor relations, among others.

Another issue is the loss of control, which is highlighted in the articles that addressed the theme of "satisfaction with externalization", which point out that the lack of control over the service is one of the main causes of dissatisfaction. Solutions such as specific contractual clauses on quality levels are indicated for example. Also, tools linked to Interorganizational Cost Management could overcome such difficulties though. Shared control is possible even in market relations, and companies should envisage this in their contracts and researchers should consider them in new studies.

An item that deserves new studies is identified in Furtado, Carrieri and Bretas (2014), in which the authors analyzed workers' dissatisfaction with externalization. The reports indicate that the employees have been betrayed by the company, a feeling of "children abandoned by their mother", very similar to the Antelava report (2015), which showed a similar feeling among American workers.

Finally, the contribution of this study should be highlighted. In addition to raising this issue, it demonstrated that, if the scientific contributions deriving from research are not considered in their analysis, the discussions might result in the same consequences as in the USA. This subject is broad and there is still a lack of empirical evidence to demonstrate externalization as a mutual benefit for the company and the employees, apparently the two main stakeholders, due the direct impact of externalization and internalization decisions. A broader view may contribute to an increase in the legal security and modernization of companies, with beneficial effects on the quality of services provided and on the professional and business relationships, as the critics' arguments nowadays have more empirical evidence than those of the defenders.

In addition, in view of the analyses, the article contributes to the literature on externalization, compiling and comparing the responses of several studies on four different aspects. This broad view of externalization contributes to the discussions about its effects on different stakeholders, especially companies and employees, also entailing results for the consumers of products and services. Thus, it contributes to the society in its discussions, underlying opinions and decisions based on scientific analysis. Nevertheless, it is up to the academics to broaden their view when discussing this issue, reducing possible biases in the focus on cost reduction and in the exclusive view on the company or the worker.

The limitations of this study lie in the methodological choices, due to the qualitative approach and its data. Being an interpretation of articles, the data are secondary, which results in an "interpretation of an interpretation". Knowing these limitations, however, we tried to compensate this with greater rigor in the collection, treatment and analysis of the data.

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