

# **Moral harassment at work: the relationship with organizational culture**

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## **Key Words**

Moral harassment; bullying; organizational culture.

## **Abstract**

*In labor organizations, moral harassment has been worsening in the last few years and it has called the attention of professionals of a wide range of areas, such as medicine, law and psychology, because this phenomenon involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that intends to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. The aim of this work is to evaluate how the organizational culture can enhance moral harassment at work. The sample was composed of a hundred and fifty bank workers and a hundred and fifty private practice workers, with ages between eighteen and forty-nine years old and an average social class. The instrument used consists on the application of a questionnaire to measure the incidence level of moral harassment at work in terms of auto perception. It was used the NAQ-R and to analyze the kind of organizational culture we used FOCUS-93. In order to evaluate the relationship existent between organizational culture and moral harassment we followed two lines of orientation, one based on the Quinn's competing values model and the other one based on the theory of moral harassment of Hirigoyen. The obtained results showed that the organizational culture enhances moral harassment and the goals' culture is the predominant one. According to Heinz Leymann (1996) this type of culture valorizes stability and control, as orientation to competitiveness in the organization. This culture has an explanative variation of 90% of the total of moral harassment in the organizations of our study. On the other hand it has been verified the dominance of vertical descendent harassment, that is performed by a hierarchic superior. We also concluded by the results that this phenomenon is understood by employees and only 11.7% in three hundred participants were not harassment victims.*

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## **Introduction**

In the last 15 years moral harassment has been target of recognition all over the world, as a work and social problem, this phenomenon has been assumed in social terms, specially due to the divulgation by the media of criminal cases with characteristics of moral nature, resulting in exemplary court decisions in some more developed countries (England, Germany, Sweden). On the order hand it has become a working problem because workers are increasingly suffering moral harassment in the organizations as cited in the forth questionnaire of the European Quest under working conditions, conducted by the European Foundation, that includes interviews to thirty

thousand workers of thirty-one countries, and 5% in every twenty workers admitted to be victim of moral harassment. (Parent-Thirion et al, 2007)

The knowledge of this situation has evolved through uncountable investigation made in the range of social and organizational psychology, in order to explain and understand this phenomenon, since the publication of the first book of Leymann in 1986 and posteriorly with the model proposed by Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper (2003) it has been defended that moral harassment appears from the combination of organizational culture, cultural and socioeconomic variables and personal factors.

Various conferences are being promoted abroad in order to promote and divulge the knowledge in this area, for example in 2006 held in Dublin, *The Fifth International Conference on Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace*. These conferences are having a great adhesion not only in what concerns the number of countries involved, but also in quantity and quality of the data presented, for example Seigne (1998) found that victims believed that the bully's difficult personality was ultimately responsible for them having been bullied and presented the paper to the first conference took place in Staffordshire in 1998. The eighth conference is scheduled to June 2012, in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Some factors present in the daily life of organizations result in a climate of rivalry between individuals, such as: hierarchy, age differences, ethnics, internal competition, work stress, gifts and awards, lack of communication, dismissals, among others. It is under these conditions that moral harassment appears and reduces the respect for the well-being and dignity of the human being. Based on these factors, the main goal of this investigation is to find out the relationship between the organizational culture and the occurrence, or not, of the moral harassment at work.

With this study, we hope to contribute to the scientific understanding of moral harassment, as well as to identify the kind of organizational culture that favors this phenomenon. It is our intention to understand it so that we can design intervention actions which may bring fair climates of work.

### **Moral harassment at work**

Moral harassments exist since the first work relationships appeared, but only in the last few years it has been widely discussed, mainly due to the huge changes in the work ambiance, with the event of globalization, which created unemployment and competition. With this came the submission of employees to outrageous situations when faced with the difficulties of the working market and the reduced opportunities to find a job. For Rezende (2006) this fact is due to the contractual bond that the worker begins to develop and also due to be considered an individual with rights. To understand the concept of moral harassment it is needed to be aware that this phenomenon does not happen only at work, but also at school, at home and others. It is assumed that moral harassment is an action of one person towards another, which is a subordinate or

dependent, as it is defended by Hirigoyen in his book "Harassment, coercion and violence in daily life", published in 1999. .

It was in 1986 that the studies about moral harassment began, with the publication of a clinical trial of Heinz Leymann, in Switzerland. However, moral harassment had already been defined in 1976 by the American psychiatrist Carrol Brodsky:

*Repeated and persistent attempts of a person to frustrate or break the resistance of another person, with the objective of obtaining a reaction. It is a way of treatment which applied with persistency can bother and intimidate the victim.*(Brodsky, p.7, cit in Soares, 2008, p.27)

Leymann introduced the concept of bullying to describe the harassment happened at work. Since then uncountable investigations took place to define how the phenomenon manifests, which traces of personality and organizational factors are associated, as well as the consequences. (Leymann, 1996). As an example, the journalist Andrea Adams disclosed this phenomenon through the media, using two radio programs of BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). After these programs, the journalist received countless letters of victims of moral harassment, what provided the realization of various studies, through an on-line questionnaire that led to the comprehension of the gravity and extension of this phenomenon in England (Lee, 2000). On the other hand, the psychiatrist, analyst and professor Christophe Dejours published in 1998 his book "Souffrance en France: la banalisation de l' injustice sociale", widening previous analysis about the universe of work and the effect of the organization at work and its effects on mental health of employees.

In this way, the concept of moral harassment at work is connected with the continued exposition to negative and aggressive behaviors, of psychological nature, describing situations in which hostile behaviors directed systematically to one or more colleagues or subordinates, conduce to stigmatization and victimization of the targets of these behaviors. (Einärsen, 2000)

This process is so broad and complex that each area of knowledge adopts a definition according to its own specialty. However, Marie-France Hirigoyen describes a very pertinent definition of this "moral violence":

*Every abusive conduct that manifests specially in behaviors, words, acts, gestures, written words, that can affect the personality, dignity or physical or psychological integrity of a person, putting her job at risk or destroy the working ambiance.*(Hirigoyen, 2002, p.15)

Despite the adopted definition it is important to reflect that what characterizes this phenomenon is systematization and repetition. Each isolated aggression is not truly serious, but the cumulative effect of damages suffered with each aggression is, but a continuum of aggressions during a minimum of six (Hirigoyen, 2002). To the author an

isolated act is not considered harassment. However, according to Tehrani (2005), there is an exception when this isolated act has a negative impact in time, which means, when the behavior is so serious, as physical violence or threat, that the victim acquires a permanent fear. This exception is not a consensus among the researchers of this theme.

However it is important to remember that this phenomenon is hard to prove. Elisabeth Grebot (2007), considers that it is a task of the administrators to manage the conflicts so that those do not evolve to harassment. They can do this by limiting the use of attack techniques in professional relationships, the manipulation of information and the paradoxical communication, that "poisons" the organizational climate.

### **Classification of moral harassment**

Studies made by Leymann (1996), through the application of a 186 people questioner, noted that 58% of moral harassment cases come from the administration, 29% from the bosses, 12% from the colleagues and 1% from the employees.

Moral harassment, when practiced by a hierarchical superior, is named descendent vertical or bossing (from the word *boss*). This constitutes the most frequent type of moral harassment. When it is practiced by colleagues it is named horizontal harassment. In this case the persecutions are made by colleagues with the same hierarchical level and are motivated by factors like: competitiveness, feelings of envy and others. There is another type of moral harassment which is named mixed harassment, and occurs when horizontal harassment prolongs until become descendent vertical harassment, becoming the hierarchical superior an accomplice of the aggressor, by omission, once did nothing to solve the situation. At last, the less common type is the ascendant vertical, which happens from an employee towards a hierarchical superior. This type of harassment happens when a colleague is promoted without previous knowledge of the others, or when a person whose style and methods are unapproved is hired, making the colleagues believe that this person does not have enough capacities for the function which performs. (Pacheco, 2007).

According to Pacheco (2007), vertical descendent harassment is the most harmful for the health of the victim, once it makes the victim more vulnerable and weak, leading to isolation and to a difficulty in surpassing the situation.

The process of moral harassment not only has various types but also has different stages, which has a common and starting point the lack of communication. This way, according to Hirigoyen (1999), there are the following stages: i) refusal of direct communication; ii) disqualify; iii) disbelief; iv) isolation; v) humiliation, vi) sexual harassment.

For example, the research of Parent-Thirion, Macías, Hurley and Vermeylen (2007), done with European workers, concludes that young women are more susceptible

to moral harassment. The susceptibility decreases in both sexes between thirty and forty-nine years-old, and then significantly increases in both sexes after the fifty.

## **Organizational Culture**

The concept of organizational culture was first marked by Pettigrew (1979), and had a great development during the eighties, due to the conscience of the researchers of the importance that culture factors have in management and the belief that organizational culture is a factor that distinguishes between well succeeded organizations and less well succeeded ones.

The culture consists in the real way of being and doing of the organization, which means, in its collective personality, that is made by the way people think and act in group, considering the organization as a whole. This way the organizational culture is nothing more than a system of shared meanings, a conjunct of the key characteristics that the organization values. (Robbins, 2004)

To Edgar Schein (2004) the culture is an abstraction, underlining that one of the more enigmatic aspects is that it points towards a phenomenon that happens under the surface, being powerful in its impact, but invisible and even unconscious. As Bilhim (2009, p. 83) affirms "The culture is to the organization as the personality is to the individual".

More recent studies consider the Organizational Culture indispensable for the good working of an organization and for the determination of its efficacy. (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008). Culture theoreticians have repeatedly noted the paradoxical nature of organizational functioning and relevant cultural orientations (e.g., Cameron, 1986; Denison, 1990; Quinn, 1988).

Denison (2000) contends that the four major cultural traits of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission highlight major tensions or contradictions faced by modern organizations to perform effectively—most specifically, the trade-offs between stability and flexibility and between internal focus and external focus.

We chose the Quinn's competing values model(1985) as a guide of orientation to the investigation of organizational culture, because it has a rich typology in terms of theoretical and methodological references and because this model centers in the tensions and conflicts that exist inside the organization in organization and human levels, between the dimensions that oppose each other, deserving the designation of contrasting.

## The competing values model

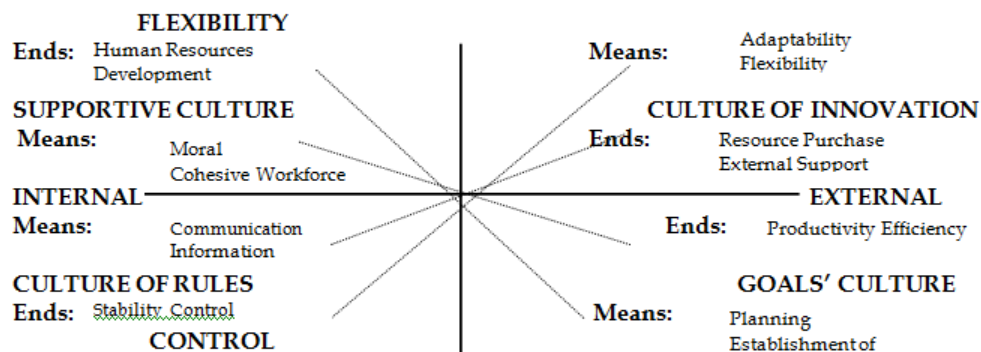
This model was first proposed by Quinn and McGrath in 1985 to the organizational culture and pretends to be an innovator way of approaching the culture dynamics evolution problem.

According to Quinn (1996), does not exist one single culture, instead each organization fits in various cultural vectors, which means, there may be emphasized one certain culture in a certain moment and then privilege another cultural framework, or in a certain moment, facing different situations, use simultaneously different cultures.

In figure 1, there are represented the four culture models in which the organizational may act, according to this author. This model is based on the analysis of three axis: i) Vertical axis - focuses on the flexibility or control, predominates an orientation for stability or change; ii) Horizontal axis - focuses on people' development or organizational competitiveness; iii) Diagonal axis - there is a directional tendency to the means (planning) and to the ends (productivity), the orientation consists on the processes or the results. From the combination of these three axis result four quadrants, which represent four management orientations.

According to the competing values model each type of culture has its opposite with who contrasts and its parallels with those that share characteristics. Because of this, the support culture that emphasizes flexibility and intern orientation contrasts with goal's culture whose importance is the control and external orientation; share similarities with innovation culture because both share the emphasis given to flexibility and has also similarities with culture of rules because both emphasize the internal. Innovation culture's opposite is culture of rules. While the first gives importance to flexibility and the external, the second values the control and the internal. Innovation culture shares characteristics (flexibility) with supportive culture and (external) with goals' culture.

Figure 1: Model of Organizational Culture



Source: Adapted from Quinn & McGrath (1985)

## **Method**

### **Objectives**

The objectives result from the revision of the literature already presented. As previously noted, violence at work, particularly moral harassment is a serious problem in social, professional and human terms, which demands an answer. It is fundamental to evaluate the relationship between organizational culture and the appearance of this phenomenon, and this constitutes the general objective of this work. The study that is now presented intends to achieve the following objectives: i) evaluate the perception of employees of the existence of moral harassment; ii) analyze the type of organizational culture that potentiates the appearance of this phenomenon.

### **Variables in study**

In this study we can define three types of variables: demographic, organizational culture and moral harassment.

Demographic variables include the elements of personal (age, sex, social class, among others) and professional characters. Organizational culture is an independent variable, defined according the model of contrasting values of Robert Quinn, and it consists on the values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions whose meaning is shared by the members of an organization. As a dependent variable we have moral harassment at work, defined according the concept of harassment of Hirigoyen (2002), with the goal of measuring the frequency of the behaviors referred by the author.

“Every abusive conduct manifested especially by behaviours, words, acts, gestures, writes, that may affect the personality, dignity or physical and psycholocal integrity of a person, can put in danger the job of the victim or degrade the climate at work.” (Hirigoyen, 2002, p.15)

### **Participants**

In this investigation participated 300 (three hundred) subjects, 150 (one hundred and fifty) private practice health workers, in the area of Dental Medicine, and 150 (one hundred and fifty) bank workers of Caixa Geral de Depósitos (CGD) agencies.

After obtain the authorization of all the organization, it was determined a probabilistic sample (Pestana & Velosa, 2002) through the random stratified selection proportional to the population in each organization, with the help of human resources which gave us a database with the existent functions, so that we could act equally to the staging in terms of professional category, where we opt for a classic staging in six levels: General direction, intermediate direction, superior technique, professional technique, administrative and auxiliary people, according to Table 1.

**Table 1** – Hierarchic level of the sample.

Professional category	CDG		Dental Medicine		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Auxiliary people	25	8.3	87	29,0	112	37.3
Administrative people	50	16.7	14	4.6	64	21.3
Professional technique	35	11.7	11	3.7	46	15.4
Superior technique	16	5.3	32	10.7	48	16.0
Intermediate direction	14	4.7	4	1.3	18	6.0
General direction	10	3.3	2	0.5	12	4.0

The results obtained in Table 5 show that the majority of participants of our sample has a low hierarchic level. We have 37.3% auxiliary people, 21.3% administrative people, 15.4% professional techniques, 16% superior techniques, 6% in intermediate direction and only 4% in general direction.

The characterization of our sample about gender, age and social class can be visualized in Table 2. In terms of gender 54% of the sample is composed of men (n=162) and 46% by women (n=192).

**Table 2** – Demographic and social characteristics of the sample.

Variables	CDG		Dental Medicine		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Men	86	28.7	76	25.3	162	54.0
Women	64	21.3	74	24.7	138	46.0
<b>Age</b>						
18 - 25	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.3
26 - 33	14	4.7	17	5.7	31	10.4
34 - 41	117	39.0	111	37.0	228	76.0
42 - 49	19	6.3	21	7.0	40	13.3
<b>Social class - current</b>						
High	10	3.3	2	0.7	12	4.0
Medium high	42	14.0	19	6.3	61	20.3
Medium	28	9.3	32	10.7	60	20.0
Medium low	50	16.7	64	21.3	114	38.0
Low	15	5.0	30	10.0	45	15.0
No response	5	0,0	3	0,0	8	2,7

Participants' age is between eighteen and forty-nine years-old with a bigger incidence between thirty-four and forty-one years-old.

In what concerns to social class, the majority of our sample belongs to a medium class.



## **Instruments**

It has been used a questionnaire composed by thirteen pages, initiated by a characterization plug. Then, in order to evaluate the type of organizational culture we used the Focus-93 questionnaire (*First Organizational Climate and Culture Unified Survey*) of De Witte and Van Muijen, 1994, once it is already validated to Portuguese population by Neves e Jesuíno em 1994. It consists on a questionnaire that operates perceptions of working climate through the variables: Support, Rules, Objectives and Innovation, structured in a scale *Likert*-like with six options of response. At last, to evaluate the occurrence of moral harassment at work, we chose an already validated scale, previously used by other authors in this investigation area, the questionnaire (NAQ-R - *Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised*) of Einarsen and Hoel, 2001. We used a version validated by Ana Verdasca (2010) that consists on a version constituted by nineteen items with five options of answer, structured in a *Likert* scale, each one corresponding to a certain degree of occurrence of expressive behaviors in the content of the items, according to the respondent. After that the participants were asked to answer a variety of questions related to this phenomenon, such as, gender of the aggressor, duration of the aggression, number of aggressors, among others.

## **Procedures**

In order to obtain the necessary information to this study, it was previously scheduled a date by telephone with the administrations of each organization where it was given an explanation about the theme and its objective, clarifying the confidentiality of information, it was then signed the written informed consent. It was scheduled another day to the fulfillment of the questionnaire by the respective workers of each organization.

In the date and local previously agreed we went to the organizations in order to fulfill the questionnaire (adapted from the questionnaire used by Doctor Ana Verdasca, after receiving e-mail authorization) in group after explaining the objective of the study. Each participant was given a presentation form, with new reassurance of confidentiality, promoting the full honesty of the answers. The informed consent was orally and simultaneously made to all participants before the delivery of the questionnaires and after clarifying some doubtful aspects. The duration was flexible to the individual needs of participants.

All this bureaucratic process involving meetings with the administration of each company, the clarifying session and the fulfillment of the respective questionnaire happened between January and April 2011.

After data collection, we proceeded to the investigation evaluation, according to the proposed objectives. The results were target of statistic procedures PASW (Predictive Analytics Software), version 18 (eighteen) for Windows. We used parametric statistic when the distribution normality and the variance homogeneity were respected

and we resorted to statistical, nonparametric when these parameters were not respected. For example, the sample had been characterized by means of descriptive statistics, analysis of distributions and frequencies. In what concerns to the questions under investigation, those were studied through a variety of procedures and statistical analysis according to the questions in study. The variables were tested taking into account a previous study of parametric characteristics, in other words, verify if they had interval nature, if followed a normal distribution and if there was homogeneity of variance in the distribution of the independent variable related to the dependent one.

## Results

The first objective of this study consists in the evaluation of employers' perception of the existence of moral harassment at work in the last 12 months. Of the 300 (three hundred) participants of this study, only 11.7% (n=35), never suffered moral harassment in the last 12 (twelve) months, as demonstrated on table 3.

**Table 3** - Distribution of answers about having suffered moral harassment at work in the last 12 months.

	Frequency n	Percentage %
Yes, at least once a day	34	11.3
Yes, at least once a week	42	14.0
Yes, at least once a month	106	35.3
Rarely	83	27.7
Never	35	11.7
Total	300	100.0

After that, in order to evaluate the type of harassment existent in these organizations, we analyzed aggressors' hierarchical positions, and we understand that harassed employers are more persecuted by hierarchical superiors (66.9%), than by colleagues (21.4%). About the question of persecution carried out by a subordinate worker, none of our respondents answered affirmatively (0%), as we can see from the analysis of table 4.

According to the data in table 4, we found out that the most usual type of harassment in our sample is the descendent vertical, that is practiced by hierarchical superiors. We have 66.9% of harassment victims, in which harassment was practiced by the boss.

**Table 4 - Hierarchy position and aggressor gender**

Aggressor	Hierarchy Position						Totals (N=300)			
	Superior		Colleague		Subordinator		NA			
Sex	Freq*	%**	Freq*	%**	Freq*	%**	Freq*	%**	Freq*	%**
<b>Feminine</b>	58	19.3	30	10.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	88	29.3
<b>Masculine</b>	112	37.3	26	8.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	138	46.0
<b>Both sexes</b>	31	10.3	8	2.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	39	13.0
<b>Not</b>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	35	11.7	35	11.7
<b>Total</b>	201	66.9	64	21.4	0	0.0	35	11.7	300	100.0

\*) Freq- Frequency; (\*\*) %- Percentage; NA - Not Applicable

The second objective of this study consists in analyzing which type of organizational culture potentiates this phenomenon. First of all, our respondents were asked to identify the kind of culture they consider to predominate in the company they work for. To perform this analysis, we proceeded to the introduction of four new variables, which consisted in the calculation of the mean of all constituent variables of each dimension (Support, Innovation, Rules and Goals), in respected of its contents (The Competing Values Model of Quinn & McGrath, 1985). Then we compared the obtained results. It was noticed that there is a predominance of "Goals" factors. As listed in table 5, the average frequency of this is not far from the factor "rules", on the other hand the difference between this factor and "Support" is statistically significant.

**Table 5 - Comparison of the types of cultures.**

FACTORS	CULTURE	
	Media	Standard Deviation
<b>Support</b>	2.30	0.57
<b>Innovation</b>	3.21	0.50
<b>Rules</b>	3.71	0.62
<b>Goals</b>	3.85	0.46

According to the results in table 5, the respondents described the corporate culture as a goals' culture ( $\mu=3.85$ ), on the other hand the lowest values were achieved by supportive culture ( $\mu=2.30$ ).

After that, as the main objective of this study is to determine whether the organization culture potentiates moral harassment at work, we first proceeded to the study of the relationship between moral harassment and organizational culture, through the Spearman's correlation test.

**Table 6** - Relationship between organizational culture and moral harassment.

SPEARMAN'S RHO	Moral Harassment		Organizational Culture	
	r	p-value	r	p-value
<b>Moral Harassment</b>	1		0.546	0.0134
<b>Organizational Culture</b>	0.546	0.0134	1	

Level of significance 1%

The results of table 6 show that the relationship between moral harassment and organizational culture is statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), on the other hand show us that organizational culture is positively correlated with moral harassment ( $r = 0.546$ ), so we can consider a strong relationship ( $r > 0.50$ ).

In order to improve the viability of the results we used a multiple regression analysis, with moral harassment as dependent variable and the subscales of organizational culture (support, innovation, rules and Goals) as independent variables. The results in table 7 indicate the existence of a strong relationship between the goals' culture and moral harassment ( $r = 0.978$ ), as there also is a strong relationship between moral harassment and the culture of rules, which implies that when a state increases the other does too. Supportive culture has a weak relationship with moral harassment ( $r = 0.266$ ). On the other hand, the coefficient of determination tells us that the goals' culture presents an explanatory variation of 90% from the total appearance of moral harassment and culture of rules presents an explanatory variation of 50.6%.

**Table 7:** Multiple regression analysis between moral harassment and the organizational culture subscales.

	Moral Harassment				
	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t	P-value
<b>Supportive Culture</b>	0.236	0.189	0.220	4.126	0.723
<b>Culture of Innovation</b>	0.389	0.261	0.283	4.936	0.148
<b>Culture of Rules</b>	0.582	0.506	0.113	1.452	0.000
<b>Goals' culture</b>	0.978	0.903	0.029	0.354	0.000

Level of significance a 5%; R (correlation coefficient); R<sup>2</sup> (coefficient of determination); t (observed value).

## Discussion and Conclusion

With the analysis of the obtained results, we can say that the organizational culture in these companies increases the chance of moral harassment. Obviously the results have meaningful explanation for cases where the predominant factors are the goals or/and the rules.

These data cannot be reported to the general population because this is a relatively small sample (n=300) and had only been made in the central region of the country.

By analyzing the results, we found out that moral harassment is perceived by employees. On the other hand, we found that the organizational culture encourages moral harassment, what is consistent with Leymann's theory (1996) that considers organizational factors related to organization and quality of leadership behaviors the principal causes for the occurrence of moral harassment and we can thus say that the results of our research match those obtained by Heinz Leymann in 1996, which pointed to the fact that the descendent vertical harassment has a greater predominance.

We can conclude from these data that, according to the Quinn's competing values model (1996), in these companies is given great importance to productivity, performance, attainable goals and achievement. From these two sources we also conclude that in a company does not prevail a single culture, but a set of rules that can be more directed to the internal or external "focus", depending on objectives.

In a global analysis of data we can understand that these companies emphasize mostly on control and external focus and give more importance to criteria such as effectiveness, planning and achievement of goals (as means) and productivity and efficiency (as ends), which confirms once again the Competing Values Model, which formed the basis of this research. Organizational culture of these companies is oriented to external competitiveness and to maximize results, classified as Goals' culture.

In these companies there is a predominance of the goals' culture, which enhances stability and control and orientates to the competitiveness.

This study focused on the evaluation of the level of respondents' perception about the existence of moral harassment in the organization where they work and observed the relationship with the organizational culture.

It constituted an important contribution to issues related with the research of moral harassment. This can be a situation of denouncing silent but very painful when it comes to victims. It was also important in order to realize the importance of mental organization of companies in what regards to how it is perceived and managed by the human resources.

According to the prevalence of bullying, these results suggest that organizations are being managed in an inappropriate way in what regards the aspects related to human factors and organizational tasks. It is indispensable a change that contemplates the whole of the organizations and that can be undertaken in a safe and efficient way.

The physiological pressure underlying moral harassment promotes stressing stimuli of negative effect with consequences that can be severe to the worker and the organization.

In spite of the sample of this study being too reduced and not being possible to generalize to the general population, it may have provided contribution to the reflection about organizational procedures, in a way to sensitize and aware that the recognition and prevention of this phenomenon can promote a better quality of life to workers, increasing their level of resilience and endow the organization with a collect insight that may potentiate the search of alternative daily ways.

Still in the context of the presented results, it is notable that this is an unfinished research with an emerging necessity of new studies in order to better understand moral harassment at work, and associating it to other components of organizational and/or individual behavior from both the aggressor and the victim.

It is also necessary to inform and aware the employees about all the aspects of moral harassment, including the ways it comes out, the involved responsibilities and the consequent risks to health, without forgetting about the importance of solidarity between colleagues in relation to the victim, as a result of our study.

We consider as an imminent need to preserve the psychological health of workers, which is one of the values inherent to human dignity itself. This way, the promotion of prevention and defense from moral harassment by means of information, prevention and multidisciplinary intervention is of crucial importance.

The completion of this study allowed us to understand that the perception of moral harassment is real but is still hidden by the fear of retaliation due to the inexistence of a platform of intervention, so we hope to have contributed to give emphasis to the study of this phenomenon in a continuous and global way.

We must not forget that we can be “the next victim” anytime. It is important to remind that fear reassures the power of the aggressor!

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