ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, PEOPLE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND INTENTION TO SEEK PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY WITH PROFESSIONALS FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL AREAS

CULTURA ORGANIZACIONAL, PRÁTICAS DE GESTÃO DE PESSOAS E INTENÇÃO DE BUSCAR ATENDIMENTO PSICOLÓGICO: UM ESTUDO EXPLORATÓRIO COM PROFISSIONAIS DAS ÁREAS ADMINISTRATIVA, CONTÁBIL E FINANCEIRA

CULTURA ORGANIZACIONAL, PRÁCTICAS DE GESTIÓN DE PERSONAS E INTENCIÓN DE BUSCAR AYUDA PSICOLÓGICA: UN ESTUDIO EXPLORATORIO CON PROFESIONALES DE LAS ÁREAS ADMINISTRATIVA, CONTABLE Y FINANCEIRA

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: To analyze the effect of certain variables considered relevant in the psychosocial work context—such as organizational climate and work overload and stress—on the intention to seek psychological assistance among professionals in the administrative, accounting, and financial sectors.

Methodology/approach: This is an experimental study with a quantitative approach, based on vignettes. The research scenario was built with manipulations of the variables organizational climate and work overload/stress. Data were collected through an online questionnaire applied to professionals in administrative, accounting, and/or financial roles. The statistical technique used was ANOVA, aiming to assess the effects of the independent variables on the intention to seek psychological assistance.

Main findings: The results showed that the interaction between the independent variables (organizational climate and work overload/stress) was not statistically significant. However, a trend was observed: the intention to seek psychological assistance tends to increase primarily due to work overload, and is further intensified in highly competitive work environments.

Theoretical/methodological contributions: The study contributes to the field of organizational behavior by integrating the concepts of organizational culture, people management, and mental health through an experimental design with manipulated variables. It highlights the importance of organizational practices that promote psychological well-being in the workplace.

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Relevance/originality: The originality of the study lies in the articulation between organizational culture, people management practices, and the intention to seek psychological support, applied to an experimental model focused on professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial roles. The findings reinforce the need for healthy work environments and organizational cultures that prioritize emotional well-being as a strategic element.

Keywords: Organizational Culture. People Management. Organizational Climate. Work Overload. Mental Health at Work.

RESUMO

Objetivo do estudo: Analisar o efeito que determinadas variáveis, consideradas relevantes no contexto psicossocial do trabalho — como o clima organizacional e a sobrecarga de trabalho e estresse — exercem sobre a intenção de buscar atendimento psicológico entre profissionais das áreas administrativa, contábil e financeira.

Metodologia/abordagem: Trata-se de uma pesquisa experimental, com abordagem quantitativa, baseada na aplicação de vinhetas. O cenário proposto foi construído com manipulações das variáveis clima organizacional e sobrecarga de trabalho e estresse. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de questionário online aplicado a profissionais das áreas administrativa, contábil e/ou financeira. A técnica estatística utilizada foi a ANOVA, com o objetivo de analisar os efeitos das variáveis independentes sobre a intenção de buscar atendimento psicológico.

Principais resultados: Os resultados revelaram que a interação entre as variáveis independentes (clima organizacional e sobrecarga de trabalho e estresse) não apresentou significância estatística. No entanto, observou-se uma tendência: a intenção de procurar assistência psicológica aumenta primeiramente em função da sobrecarga de trabalho, sendo intensificada em contextos de maior competitividade organizacional.

Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas: O estudo contribui ao campo do comportamento organizacional ao integrar os conceitos de cultura organizacional, gestão de pessoas e saúde mental, utilizando metodologia experimental com manipulação de variáveis. A pesquisa destaca a relevância de práticas organizacionais que favoreçam o bem-estar psicológico dos colaboradores.

Relevância/originalidade: A originalidade do estudo reside na articulação entre cultura organizacional, práticas de gestão de pessoas e a intenção de buscar apoio psicológico, em um modelo experimental com foco em profissionais das áreas administrativa, contábil e financeira. Os achados reforçam a importância de ambientes de trabalho saudáveis e de uma cultura organizacional que priorize o bem-estar emocional como elemento estratégico.

Palavras-chave: Cultura Organizacional. Gestão de Pessoas. Clima Organizacional. Sobrecarga de Trabalho. Saúde Mental no Trabalho.

RESUMEN

Objetivo del estudio: Analizar el efecto de determinadas variables consideradas relevantes en el contexto psicosocial del trabajo—como el clima organizacional y la sobrecarga laboral y el estrés—sobre la intención de buscar atención psicológica entre profesionales de las áreas administrativa, contable y financiera.

Metodología/enfoque: Se trata de un estudio experimental con enfoque cuantitativo, basado en viñetas. El escenario de la investigación fue construido con manipulaciones de las variables clima organizacional y sobrecarga laboral/estrés. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante un cuestionario en línea aplicado a profesionales de las áreas administrativa, contable y/o financiera. Se utilizó la técnica estadística ANOVA para analizar los efectos de las variables independientes sobre la intención de buscar ayuda psicológica.

Principales resultados: Los resultados indicaron que la interacción entre las variables independientes (clima organizacional y sobrecarga de trabajo/estrés) no fue estadísticamente significativa. Sin embargo, se observó una tendencia: la intención de buscar atención psicológica tiende a aumentar principalmente por la sobrecarga de trabajo, y se intensifica en contextos organizacionales altamente competitivos.

Aportes teóricos/metodológicos: El estudio aporta al campo del comportamiento

organizacional al integrar los conceptos de cultura organizacional, gestión de personas y salud mental, mediante un diseño experimental con manipulación de variables. Destaca la importancia de prácticas organizacionales que promuevan el bienestar psicológico en el trabajo.

Relevancia/originalidad: La originalidad del estudio radica en la articulación entre la cultura organizacional, las prácticas de gestión de personas y la intención de buscar apoyo psicológico, aplicada a un modelo experimental centrado en profesionales de las áreas administrativa, contable y financiera. Los hallazgos refuerzan la necesidad de entornos laborales saludables y culturas organizacionales que prioricen el bienestar emocional como elemento estratégico.

Palabras clave: Cultura Organizacional. Gestión de Personas. Clima Organizacional. Sobrecarga de Trabajo. Salud Mental en el Trabajo.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture and people management practices play a decisive role in employee well-being, shaping the work environment and influencing quality of life. Workplace conditions and interactions significantly affect the mental and physical health of employees. In this context, the aim of this study is to analyze the effect of two key psychosocial work variables—organizational climate and work overload—on the intention to seek psychological assistance among professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial roles.

This topic stands out amid the increasing number of mental health issues at work. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), mental disorders such as depression and anxiety result in an estimated global productivity loss of US$1 trillion annually. In Brazil, data from the National Institute of Social Security (INSS, 2020) show that mental disorders are among the leading causes of sick leave and disability benefits, generating high costs for the social security system and productivity losses for companies. Additionally, research by Conexa (as cited in Redação, 2023) reveals that 87% of companies re-

ported employee absences due to mental health issues, reflecting the growing relevance of this issue in organizational contexts.

Previous studies indicate that stress, depression, and workplace harassment are common in dysfunctional work environments (Dejours, 2009; Robbins, 2010; O'Donnell & Boyle, 2008). According to Zanelli (2004), poorly implemented institutional guidelines and management policies compromise worker well-being. In high-pressure environments, many employees are reluctant to seek help—even when facing significant physical and psychological impacts.

Effective people management practices are essential to preventing and addressing psychosocial problems. Working conditions, workload, and interpersonal relationships can either pose risks or serve as protective factors for mental health. Although conceptual disagreements remain regarding well-being at work, scholars such as Paschoal (2008) emphasize the role of organizational support in fostering positive employee attitudes and values.

Despite advances in promoting workplace quality of life, stressors such as intense competition, exhausting workloads, fear of unemployment, and hostile environments continue to contribute to mental health deterioration (Paula & Motta, 2021). Prolonged exposure to these stressors can result in physical and emotional symptoms. Furthermore, the stigma surrounding mental health in some organizations discourages help-seeking behavior. Conversely, management practices that foster awareness and institutional support can reduce this stigma and encourage psychological care without fear of professional consequences. An organizational culture that values mutual support, open communication, and teamwork can facilitate decisions to seek treatment.

Although mental health at work has gained more attention in recent years, there is still a scarcity of experimental studies—particularly quantitative studies with experimental designs—on how organizational culture and people mana-

gement practices influence the intention to seek psychological assistance. The predominance of qualitative approaches and case studies limits the generalizability of findings, reinforcing the need for experimental methods that test causal relationships between organizational variables and mental health-related behaviors.

To investigate this issue, an experiment using fictional vignettes and a quantitative approach was conducted. Participants—professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial fields—were recruited online through social networks and emails distributed to students and contacts at the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel). A questionnaire adapted from the literature was administered via the SurveyUFPel platform. It included questions on the intention to seek psychological assistance (dependent variable) and manipulations of organizational climate and work overload (independent variables). Data were analyzed statistically using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to assess significant differences between experimental conditions.

Preliminary findings showed no statistically significant differences between groups. However, there was a trend toward increased intention to seek psychological help in scenarios characterized by higher work overload and competitiveness. These results emphasize the importance of management practices that mitigate such factors in organizational settings, supporting employee health and performance.

The relevance of this topic, along with the rise in mental health-related absences, motivated the present investigation, which also aims to foster analytical skills in the field of organizational behavior. After this introduction, the article is structured into the following sections: (1) theoretical framework; (2) methodology; (3) results analysis; (4) discussion; and (5) conclusions and practical implications.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Psychosocial Work Context

Mental disorders are highly prevalent in contemporary society, affecting one billion people in 2019, according to the WHO World Mental Health Report (2022). In the workplace, 15% of adults suffer from some form of mental disorder. Work-related psychological distress is complex and involves multiple factors, making it difficult to directly establish a causal link between the work environment and mental health (Borsoi, 2007). The WHO (2022) has warned that work-related mental disorders have increased due to transformations in working conditions, such as remote work and digitalization. Similarly, Pereira et al. (2023) report a growing prevalence of depression and anxiety in the workplace, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The concept of causality between work and illness is discussed by scholars in occupational health and organizational psychology, such as Dejours (1992), who emphasizes the importance of considering each individual's personal and professional history. According to Glina et al. (2001), a detailed representation of the work environment is needed to understand its influence on illness. This is supported by Dollard and Karasek (2021), who state that work overload and low social support are crucial factors contributing to psychological distress.

Understanding work organizations and their impact on health is essential for intervening in situations that cause suffering. Work plays a central role in the relationship between individuals and society, as well as in the formation of the individual self (Heloani & Lanchman, 2004). Changes in the world of work generate instability and threats, often leading to de-skilling and anxiety among workers (Dejours, 1999). Green et al. (2020) observe that such changes—especially digitalization and remote work—intensify the pressure on workers.

According to Gaulejac (2014), the more societies develop, the greater the psychic tensions. Maslach and Leiter (2021), in their research on burnout syndrome, highlight that the pursuit of success and the pressure to build a successful career can fill an existential void, leading to what Linhart (2014) calls "subjective precariousness," marked by anxiety, insecurity, and isolation. Pagès et al. (1993) argue that personal values are replaced by organizational values, with individuals integrating into organizations in a submissive manner, believing they have autonomy while actually assuming responsibility for errors and failures.

Studies show the relationship between mental disorders and aspects of work organization, such as low social support, work overload, and poor working conditions (Santana et al., 2016). Mendes (2007) points out that new forms of management contribute to overload-related and violence-related pathologies. A poor organizational culture leads to dissatisfaction with work and personal life, increasing levels of stress and burnout. While stress is a natural response in certain situations, it becomes problematic when prolonged, affecting both workers and organizational outcomes.

Burnout syndrome is a consequence of chronic occupational stress, negatively impacting personal and professional life and, consequently, organizational performance (Cosenza, 2021). Psychological distress in the workplace has intensified due to increasing professional demands that often exceed workers' capacity for adaptation.

The psychodynamics of work, particularly in the contributions of Dejours (1992, 2007) and Clot (2006), offers tools to understand how work organization affects mental health. Dejours emphasizes that suffering arises when there is a lack of recognition, barriers to cooperation, and restrictions on creativity, which can lead to psychological pathologies. Clot, in turn, distinguishes between prescribed work and actual activity, highlighting that the inability to act autonomously and transform the work context compromises professional identity. This approach emphasizes the worker's active role in mediating between environmental demands and their own health, which is fundamental for developing strategies for illness prevention and well-being promotion within organizations.

In addition to these transformations, technological advancement and the growth of remote work are reshaping labor relations. While this model offers flexibility and autonomy, studies by Bloom et al. (2020) and Eurofound (2020) indicate that it also intensifies feelings of isolation, work overload, and difficulty separating personal and professional life. These changes—alongside the flexibilization of employment relations and the weakening of organizational ties—present new challenges for people management, requiring approaches that consider the complexity of contemporary work experiences (Spurk et al., 2022).

Overview of the Psychodynamics of Work (PDW)

A Psicodinâmica do Trabalho (PDT) investiga os aThe Psychodynamics of Work (PDW) investigates the psychological and subjective aspects of work relations and organization. It considers work as central to the construction of individuals' health and identity, influencing not only the workday but also family life and leisure time (Bandt, Dejours & Dubar, 1995). PDW studies mechanisms such as cooperation, recognition, suffering, motivation, and defensive strategies developed in the work environment.

Reflecting on one's own work allows individuals to reappropriate their work reality, driving necessary changes to make work healthier. This reflection often occurs in groups, broadening the public space for discussion and transforming individual understandings into collective reflections (Dejours, 1995). Recently, the practice of work reflection has been emphasized as essential for worker development, especially in academic environments (Oliveira, Franco, & Gutierrez, 2021).

From the Dejourian perspective, PDW examines the relationship between work organization and the worker through two dimensions: context and content. Contextual dimensions include working conditions, work organization, and

socio-professional relations (Silva et al., 2021). Working conditions refer to structural elements of the productive environment, such as physical, chemical, and biological factors, as well as aspects related to hygiene and safety (Freitas; Facas, 2013; Dejours, 2017). Content dimensions encompass psychodynamic concepts such as work and subjectivity, pleasure and suffering, recognition, and defense strategies. Dejours (2006) describes work as a set of actions involving gestures, know-how, intelligence, reflection, and responsiveness. The worker's subjectivity allows them to sublimate the challenges of prescribed work, transforming suffering into pleasure (Dejours; Deranty, 2010).

PDW does not seek to eliminate suffering, but rather to prevent it from turning into illness. According to Dejours and Abdoucheli (1993), suffering can take on creative, pathogenic, or ethical forms. Practical intelligence, based on workers' experience and knowledge, is crucial to understanding real work (Dejours, 1999; 2012a). Freitas (2006) and other authors highlight that suffering at work results from emotional exhaustion and lack of recognition, while pleasure manifests through gratification, accomplishment, and being valued at work. The relationship between suffering, recognition, and pleasure remains a relevant issue for contemporary research on occupational health (Pordeus et al., 2023).

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FPsychosocial Work Factors (PWF)

Psychosocial work factors (PWF) exert a significant influence on workers' health and vary widely across different occupational contexts. This diversity makes it impractical to adopt stan-

dardized strategies for all organizations. Concern over PWF and their negative impact on occupational health is not new. As early as the 1980s, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted the relevance of these factors alongside physical, chemical, and biological risks (International Labour Organization [ILO], 1984).

PWF may differ according to the work environment, as well as individual and cultural aspects. For instance, the factors present in a law firm differ from those in a hospital or a tech company. PWF involve the interaction between environment, working conditions, organization, job roles, effort, and individual or family characteristics (ILO, 1984). Among the factors widely recognized as harmful to health are work overload, underload, lack of control over tasks, social isolation, role conflicts, and absence of social support (Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1998). These factors are generally grouped into three dimensions: individual (personal needs and expectations), occupational (working conditions and interpersonal relationships), and external (private life, commuting, etc.) (ILO, 1984).

Recent studies reinforce the need for mentally healthy workplaces, emphasizing practical strategies aimed at prevention, promotion, and support of mental health (Harvey et al., 2021). Organizational pressures—such as excessive targets and authoritarian management—can result in disproportionate effort without adequate recognition, increasing the risk of physical and psychological disorders, including depression, chronic stress, burnout, and, in extreme cases, suicide (Pereira, L., 2011; Traesel & Merlo, 2014). One of the most relevant explanatory models is the effort–reward imbalance (ERI) model, which posits that workers become ill when they perceive a mismatch between the efforts they invest and the rewards they receive (Siegrist, 1996).

Work organization may also contribute to adverse conditions, such as excessive working hours, unattainable goals, and so-called "toxic" environments that intensify psychosocial stress. According to Pereira, M. C. (2011), occupational stress arises from unfavorable organizational conditions, including task overload, conflicting interpersonal relationships, and lack of institutional support, all of which contribute to workers' physical and mental health problems. In this regard, Resolution CFP No. 14/2023 regulates the work of psychologists in the assessment of work-related psychosocial risks, highlighting the importance of identifying and intervening in these factors as a strategy to promote mental health (Conselho Federal de Psicologia [CFP], 2023).

Additionally, beginning in 2025, Brazilian companies will be required to include psychosocial risks in their Risk Management Program (PGR) assessments, as mandated by the updated text of Regulatory Standard No. 1 (NR-1), published by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2024). This requirement reinforces the role of organizations in adopting preventive actions and fostering healthier work environments.

People Management Practices

The organizational environment and changes in the labor market pose challenges for human resource management, highlighting the need to understand human behavior and social interactions at work (Estivalete, Costa, & Andrade, 2014). Companies have significantly changed people management due to socioeconomic transformations, despite a gap between valuing the human factor and actual practices (Santos, 2004).

Strategic human resource management aims to rethink people management strategies and policies considering contextual variables and multiple stakeholders (Harry et al., 2011). People are seen as an essential strategic resource for organizations and should be valued and developed (Santos, 2004). People management practices govern employee behavior to optimize the functioning of company sectors.

The literature confirms the importance of internal strengths for better results and the need to investigate well-being and quality of work life (Cunha et al., 2013; Magnier et al., 2020). Leaders must support employees, prioritizing well-being over financial performance. Employees are pro-

tagonists in the work environment, and this perspective leads to better outcomes (Demo et al., 2018).

Strategic people management explores how organizations manage work relationships to achieve goals and provide well-being (Legge, 2006). People management policies and practices identify and develop behaviors necessary for organizational strategy (Wright & McMahan, 1992). People management practices include recruitment and selection, training, compensation, performance evaluation, career management, communication, and leadership (Fleury & Fischer, 1996).

Leadership plays a central role in creating and maintaining organizational culture, directly influencing individual and collective behaviors (Schein, 2004). However, work overload and pressure for results can generate dissatisfaction and conflicts (Abrahão & Torres, 2004). Thus, people management practices must be aligned with the organization's strategic planning, promoting satisfaction and balance in labor relations (Demo et al., 2018).

People management practices are essential to obtaining and maintaining competitive advantage (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). Knowing the variables that affect and are affected by people management practices is fundamental for academic and strategic advancement in organizations (Demo et al., 2018). It is recommended that managers implement continuous psychological support programs, active listening, and workload review, as proposed by Day and Randell (2014), as well as consider broader organizational interventions aimed at preventing psychosocial risks (Nielsen & Randall, 2013; Harvey et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of people management practices in promoting mental health has been reinforced by studies with greater methodological robustness. Systematic reviews, such as Harvey et al. (2017), show that well-structured organizational interventions contribute to reducing symptoms related to stress and burnout. Nielsen et al. (2017), through meta-analysis, concluded that management practices focused on health and well-being improve not only subjective indicators of quality of work life but also organizational performance.

Furthermore, the debate on mental health and people management has gained relevance in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In the United States, Quick et al. (2013) analyze how organizational well-being strategies positively impact workers' psychological health. In the United Kingdom, Cooper and Cartwright (1994) highlight the importance of interventions based on emotional support and balancing demands. In Canada, research by Gilbert et al. (2018) points out that organizational environments with institutional support increase employees' willingness to seek psychological help, contributing to reducing stigma related to mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Research Characterization and Means of Investigation

The study aimed to analyze whether factors of organizational culture and people management practices impact the intention of professionals in the administrative, accounting, and financial areas to seek psychological counseling. The approach was quantitative, allowing the analysis of numerical data to address the research hypothesis (Sousa, Driessnack, & Mendes, 2007). The research was descriptive, focused on describing a reality and gathering opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of the population (Gil, 2008; Nogueira, 2006).

The sample consisted of professionals from the administrative, accounting, and financial areas, with emphasis on random selection conducted among students of the Federal University of Pelotas and professionals through social networks. The field research involved the collection and analysis of real data, with the objective of obtaining information about a problem or hypothesis (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003).

Of an experimental nature, the research selected similar groups, subjecting them to different treatments to verify whether the differences in responses were statistically significant (Fonseca, 2002). The researchers actively participated

by controlling variables and observing the effects on the study object under pre-established conditions (Fontelles et al., 2009). The controlled manipulation of variables minimized biases, providing greater reliability in the results.

The Experiment

This study analyzed the influence of factors related to organizational culture and people management practices on the intention to seek psychological counseling among professionals in the administrative, accounting, and financial areas. An experiment was conducted using vignettes simulating reality, employing a 2x2 factorial design.

The model tested two independent variables: organizational climate (competitive or non-competitive) and workload and stress (high or low). These variables were manipulated by combining their levels (high/low workload × competitive/non-competitive organizational climate), as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

High and low levels of the independent variables

Independent Variable		Workload	
		High Workload	Low Workload
Organizational Climate	Competitive	You noticed that your colleague has a competitive profile, and you are feeling overloaded and stressed with the situation	You noticed that your colleague has a competitive profile, but you are not feeling overloaded and stressed with the situation
	Non-Competitive	You noticed that your colleague does not have a competitive profile, but you are feeling overloaded and stressed with the situation	You noticed that your colleague doe not have a competitive profile, and you are not feeling overloaded and stressed with the situation

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

The independent variables of the study were selected based on the four most prominent types of values related to organizational culture and people management practices found in the literature. These were based on the values presented in both the short and full versions of the "Brazilian Instrument for the Assessment of Organizational Culture – IBACO[1]," which refer to organizational value factors, organizational practice factors, hierarchical power structure rigidity values, and people management practices developed by Demo (2014; 2018).

The research was conducted online through the SurveyUFPel[2] platform, with a link randomly distributed among students of the Federal University of Pelotas, as well as through participation invitations on social media. Each participant received one of the four combinations of vignettes, randomly assigned, ensuring a randomized experiment. Randomization was achieved through the use of an introductory question.

(...) In an experiment, investigators may also identify a sample and generalize to a population; however, the basic purpose of an experiment is to test the impact of a treatment (or an intervention) on an outcome while controlling for all other factors that might influence that outcome. As a means of control, researchers randomly assign individuals to groups. When one group receives a treatment and another does not, the experimenter can isolate whether it is the treatment—and not the characteristics of the individuals in the group (or other factors) that influences the outcome (Creswell, 2007/2003, p. 162).

The sample consisted of students and professionals from the administrative, accounting, and financial fields, randomly selected. The objective was to test the impact of the manipulated variables on the intention to seek psychological counseling, while controlling for other factors.

1 The IBACO (Brazilian Instrument for the Assessment of Organizational Culture) is based on a questionnaire with 94 items divided into 7 dimensions—4 related to Organizational Values and 3 related to Organizational Practices. After tabulation, the results are summarized in 7 bars representing profiles with distinct cultural typologies.
2 SurveyUFPel is a solution for the UFPel community based on LimeSurvey technology. The platform allows users to quickly create online question-and-answer surveys. The service is recommended for conducting quantitative research.

The purpose of manipulating and measuring variables in the experiment is to understand their cause-and-effect relationships (Sampieri et al., 2013).

Development of the Vignette and Manipulation Check Questions

The survey was distributed online to participants through social media and email sent to management students. Data were analyzed using the statistical model of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), grounded in the theoretical framework.

The vignette was designed to reflect a realistic scenario, aiding decision-making (Junior, de Oliveira, & Kilimnik, 2010). According to Wason, Polonsky, and Hyman (2002), a vignette is a hypothetical narrative that requires respondents to make decisions or judgments. Kirschbaum and Hoelz (2014) emphasize that vignettes describe fictional situations so that respondents can express their views, while Wason, Polonsky, and Hyman (2002) define them as brief descriptions that assist in decision-making or evaluation. Porter (2004) considers scenarios useful tools for dealing with uncertainty in strategic choices.

In the experiment, the vignette described a scenario in which participants—professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial fields—faced changes such as new codes of conduct, leadership transitions, increased authority, and new human resource management practices. When challenged, the new manager would respond harshly.

Each group received one of the four vignette variations, defined based on a factorial design. After reading the vignette, participants answered a question regarding their intention to seek psychological counseling, using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 meant "very unlikely" and 7 meant "very likely".

Vignette Checks

The realism of an experiment can be evaluated based on how closely the testing conditions resemble the reality experienced by the participants (Correia, 2009), as well as the perceived relevance of the experimental scenario (Polyviou et al., 2018). To assess the realism of the

vignette used in this study, participants responded to two questions on a 7-point Likert scale: the first measured the tangibility of the scenario (1 = "not realistic" to 7 = "very realistic") and the second, the relevance of the scenario (1 = "not interesting" to 7 = "very interesting").

Manipulation checks were employed to confirm whether participants adequately understood the independent variables presented (Libby et al., 2002). Hora and Klassen (2013) emphasize the importance of these checks to ensure the internal validity of the experiment. Responses were collected using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Additionally, specific attention questions were included to verify the consistency and validity of the responses provided by the participants.

The Pre-Test

The pre-test aimed to apply the preliminary version of the research instrument to verify its validity and suitability. It was conducted online in December 2023 via the SurveyUFPel platform, initially targeting management students at the Federal University of Pelotas and later the general community. The questionnaire was available from December 3rd to 10th and included measures to assess the realism of the vignette—using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "not realistic" to 7 = "very realistic")—and relevance (1 = "not interesting" to 7 = "very interesting").

The analysis utilized IBM SPSS software and the ANOVA technique to examine differences between means (Montgomery, 2017). The pre-test had 116 respondents, of whom 39 provided valid responses after filtering out missing data and errors in attention-check questions. These questions verified whether respondents understood the experimental scenario, requiring, for example, the correct identification of elements such as "professional in the administrative, accounting, and financial area" and the task "to prepare an accounting-financial report" (Dillman, 2007).

ANOVA was used to assess whether the independent variables (organizational climate and workload and stress) were significant. The

realism of the vignette obtained mean scores of 5.85 and 5.38, respectively, indicating that the scenario was perceived as realistic by the participants (Hora & Klassen, 2013). Although some responses revealed difficulties in interpreting the manipulated scenarios, the results confirmed the validity of the instrument and the suitability of the experiment for the final application, without the need for modifications.

Research Questionnaire, Data Collection, and Processing

A questionnaire with 19 questions was developed: 10 using a 7-point Likert scale regarding the realism and manipulation of the vignette; 5 single-response questions about attention, most demanding role, company size, and gender; and 4 open-ended questions about position, length of service, employment relationship, and age.

The questionnaire was carefully structured to cover all variables necessary for the research and to ensure a representative sample of the target population, allowing for the generalization of results. Adapted based on the literature, the instrument considered the intention to seek psychological counseling as the dependent variable, and organizational climate and workload and stress as independent variables. Validated through a pre-test conducted in December 2023 (Rungtusanatham, Wallin & Eckerd, 2011), the questionnaire was administered to the target audience between February 4th and 11th, 2024.

The questionnaire link was sent to students of the Federal University of Pelotas and to professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial areas via email and social media. The dissemination included information about the participation duration and the nature of the research, which was conducted through the SurveyUFPel platform.

During the pre-test, to meet the requirement of randomness and randomization of manipulations, due to limitations of the software used in the research in providing an A/B test—that is, allowing randomization across different versions of a question—it was necessary to create an initial question to direct each participant to a scenario. In the pre-test, the participant had to choose

among scenario alternatives 1, 2, 3, or 4, without prior knowledge of the manipulation in each scenario and without the possibility to change their answer. Although the chance of choosing any scenario was equal, a tendency for participants to select the first scenario was identified during the pre-test. For this reason, for data collection with the target audience, it was decided to change the introductory question to avoid potential bias in the data.

To that end, an introductory question was used to ensure randomness in the allocation of experimental scenarios based on the last digit of the CPF (Brazilian individual taxpayer registry). For numbers 1 or 2, scenario 1 was presented; for numbers 3, 4, or 5, scenario 2; for numbers 6 or 7, scenario 3; and for numbers 8, 9, or 0, scenario 4. This modification aimed to prevent participants from favoring the first scenario presented. In total, the link received 87 accesses: 6 people did not start the questionnaire and 34 did not complete the initial questions, resulting in 47 valid responses.

Data Analysis Technique

A Análise de Variância (ANOVA) foi utilizada comAnalysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used as the statistical technique to compare multiple data sets and identify significant differences between groups (Montgomery, 2017; Walpole et al., 2009). It is a widely employed tool for testing hypotheses about differences between population means (Sousa et al., 2012). ANOVA allows for the assessment of homogeneity among means of different groups. However, to specifically identify which means differ from each other, the null hypothesis must be rejected, which justifies the application of complementary post hoc tests (Field, 2013).

In this study, ANOVA was applied to examine how organizational climate and workload and stress influence the intention to seek psychological counseling among professionals in the administrative, accounting, and financial areas. The hypotheses are: (H1) A competitive organizational climate increases the intention to seek psychological counseling; (H2) high workload and stress increase the intention to seek psychological counseling. The theoretical model of the research, which relates these variables to the in-

tention to seek psychological counseling, is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Theoretical Model
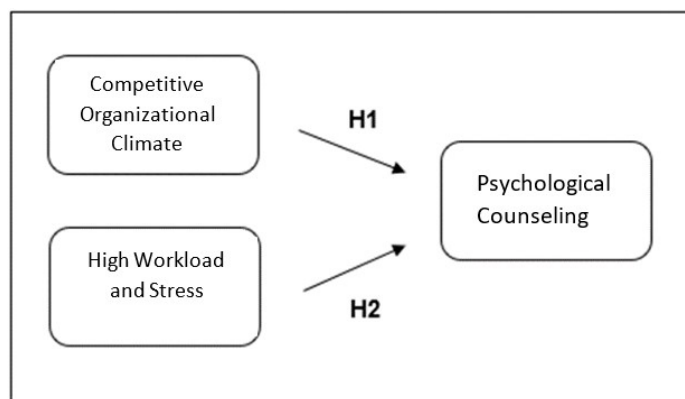
Source: Own elaboration (2024).

In general, it is of interest to perform various correlated comparisons between treatments. Multiple comparisons between means can be particularly useful when complex contrasts are not defined in advance, allowing for the identification of significant effects in a broader manner.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characterization and Sample Profile

The study sample was characterized based on different demographic and professional aspects of the participants. The distribution of job positions reveals that the majority of respondents are composed of analysts, assistants, and aides (51.06%), followed by managers, supervisors, and coordinators (19.15%). A significant portion of participants (29.79%) held other positions or did not declare their roles.

Regarding activities that require the most hours, administration stands out (31.91%), followed by accounting (17.02%) and finance (12.77%). The average age of the participants is 31 years, with an average time of 6.38 years working in the area and 5 years in their current employment.

The sample includes professionals from companies of different sizes, with 38.6% belonging to large companies, 15.9% to medium and small companies, and 9.1% to micro-enterprises.

The gender distribution shows a female predominance (55.32%), while 25.53% are male.

The scenarios evaluated in the research were: Competitiveness and high workload: 21.3%; Competitiveness and low workload: 10.6%; Non--competitiveness and high workload: 34%; Non--competitiveness and low workload: 34%. The randomness of the scenarios was confirmed by the Chi-Square (x^2) test, with p = 0.065417, indicating that the distribution did not violate randomness. The average probability of seeking psychological care was 3.47, with a standard deviation of 1.977.

Experiment Checks

Attention Check

Attention checks are increasingly common in opinion research to filter out careless respondents (KUNG; KWOK; BROWN, 2017). In this study, the initial sample included 47 participants, of whom 4 did not answer the attention questions correctly, as shown in Table 1. Two participants missed both questions, one missed only the first question (selecting "manager"), and one missed the second question (answering "request"). Additionally, one participant discontinued the questionnaire after the second question and was excluded from the sample.

Table 1
Attention Check

	Scenario	Who are you in the context?	What is your main concern/problem?
Valid	47	44	43
Missing	0	3	4

Source: Research data, 2024.

The first question referred to the main character of the vignette, who could be a professional from the administrative, accounting, or financial area, or a newly hired manager, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Who are you in this context?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Professional	44	93,6	93,6	93,6
Missing	Manager	3	6,4	100	100
	Blank	0	0	0	
Total		47	100,00%	100,00%	

Source: Research data (2024).

In the second question, the participants indicated their main concern: whether to prepare or request an accounting-financial report for the previous year (Table 3).

Table 3
What is your main concern / problem?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Prepare report	43	91,5	91,5	91,5
Missing	Request report	3	6,4	0	97,9
	Blank	1	2,1	0	100
Total		47	100,00%	91,49%	

Source: Research data (2024).

These data demonstrate the effectiveness of the attention check questions in filtering out respondents who did not adequately understand the proposed scenario.

Realism Check

The realism of the scenario was assessed using a Likert scale. The mean of 5.53 (standard deviation 1.692) indicates that participants considered the scenario quite realistic, while the mean of 4.91 (standard deviation 1.730) suggests that the scenario was perceived as moderately interesting.

Manipulation Check

After excluding 7 participants due to missing data or attention errors, 40 valid responses remained. The manipulation of organizational climate and workload was evaluated using factorial ANOVA.

ANOVA for Organizational Climate:

● F = 6.512, p = 0.015

● Mean (Competitive): 4.92 (standard deviation 1.929)

● Mean (Non-Competitive): 3.25 (standard deviation 1.878)

ANOVA for Workload and Stress:

● F = 5.562, p = 0.024

● Mean (High Workload): 5.14 (standard deviation 1.859)

● Mean (Low Workload): 3.56 (standard deviation 2.382)

The results showed high variability in the responses, indicating difficulties in interpreting the scenarios. Data analysis suggests that both organizational climate and workload and stress are significant factors that affect the intention to seek psychological care.

Stakeholder Reliability Analysis

Organizations interact with a complex network of stakeholders that influences their performance. To assess the influence of stakeholder pressure on the intention to seek psychological care, the reliability of the scale used was tested. Reliability, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, indicates the internal consistency of a scale. It is one of the main quality criteria of an instrument (Terwee et al., 2007).

The study included 47 participants, of whom 40 were considered valid. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the perceived stakeholder pressure. The questionnaire addressed five categories of stakeholders, evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7.

Stakeholder Statistics:

● Department colleagues: Mean = 3.43, Standard Deviation = 2.024

● Immediate supervisor: Mean = 3.93, Standard Deviation = 2.246

● Other employees: Mean = 3.18, Standard Deviation = 1.947

● Clients/users: Mean = 3.52, Standard Deviation = 2.075

● Managers from other areas: Mean = 3.08, Standard Deviation = 2.129

Scale and Reliability Statistics:

The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.602, indicating substantial reliability, although below the ideal threshold. This suggests that the scale has good internal consistency, but does not reach the desired level of high reliability. Reliability is crucial to ensure the validity of the results; however, even with this level of reliability, the instrument may not fully measure what it is intended to.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in an experimental study also includes calculating correlations between variables, specifically between those that are manipulated and those affected by the manipulation. However, experimental data may not conclusively demonstrate causal (cause-and-effect) relationships between variables. Such relationships

can only be interpreted as causal based on external (non-statistical) theories known to the researcher, but they cannot definitively prove causality.

Independent variables are those that are manipulated, while dependent variables are only measured or recorded. In this study, the independent variables were organizational climate and work overload and stress, as presented in Figure 1, aiming to analyze whether these factors influence the dependent variable: the intention to seek psychological counseling. Accordingly, the alternative hypotheses stated that a competitive organizational climate and high work overload and stress influence the intention to seek psychological support among professionals working in administrative, accounting, and/or financial roles (Figure 2). The null hypothesis, in turn, generally represents the opposite of the alternative hypothesis.

To operationalize the experiment, the stimuli were grouped into four independent scenarios: high competitiveness with high workload (ACAST), high competitiveness with low workload (ACBST), low competitiveness with high workload (BCAST), and low competitiveness with low workload (BCBST). As shown in Table 4, the comparison between scenarios indicates that the intention to seek psychological counseling tends to increase as workload increases, especially when combined with high competitiveness (ACAST).

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of the Intention to Seek Psychological Counseling

Scenario	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
ACAST	3,57	7	1,272
ACBST	3,20	5	2,280
BCAST	3,47	15	1,959
BCBST	2,77	13	2,166
Total	3,23	40	1,928

Source: Research data (2024).

The opposite occurs in low workload scenarios, especially in less competitive environments, where the intention to seek psychological counseling is less pronounced. Although the differences in the means among the four groups are not statistically significant (Table 5), the order of the results — ACAST > BCAST > ACBST > BCBST — clearly indicates a trend: the increase in the intention to seek psychological assistance is driven primarily by work overload, and subsequently by workplace competitiveness.

Table 5

ANOVA (Scenario Comparison)

ANOVA Table			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Dependent * Scenario	Between Groups	(Combined)	4,42	3	1,473	0,377	0,770
	Within Groups		140,55	36	3,904		
	Total		144,97	39			

Source: Research data (2024).

The lack of confirmation of statistically significant differences between the scenarios is undoubtedly a limiting factor, but one that must be analyzed within the context of the study. First, it is important to consider that the absence of statistically significant differences does not necessarily imply that such differences do not exist. The observed order of group means (ACAST > BCAST > ACBST > BCBST) aligns with the theoretical framework reviewed by Paula and Motta (2021), Mendes (2007), Freitas (2006), Abrahão and Torres (2004), and Sauter et al. (1998).

Second, the size and characteristics of the sample must be taken into account. The groups were relatively small and showed high variability, particularly in the two low workload groups, where the standard deviations exceeded two. As reported in Table 6, the collected sample came close to violating the assumption of randomness, as the significance probability (0.065) slightly exceeded the commonly accepted threshold ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 3

Means and Standard Errors of Respondents' Intention to Seek Psychological Counseling in Each Scenario
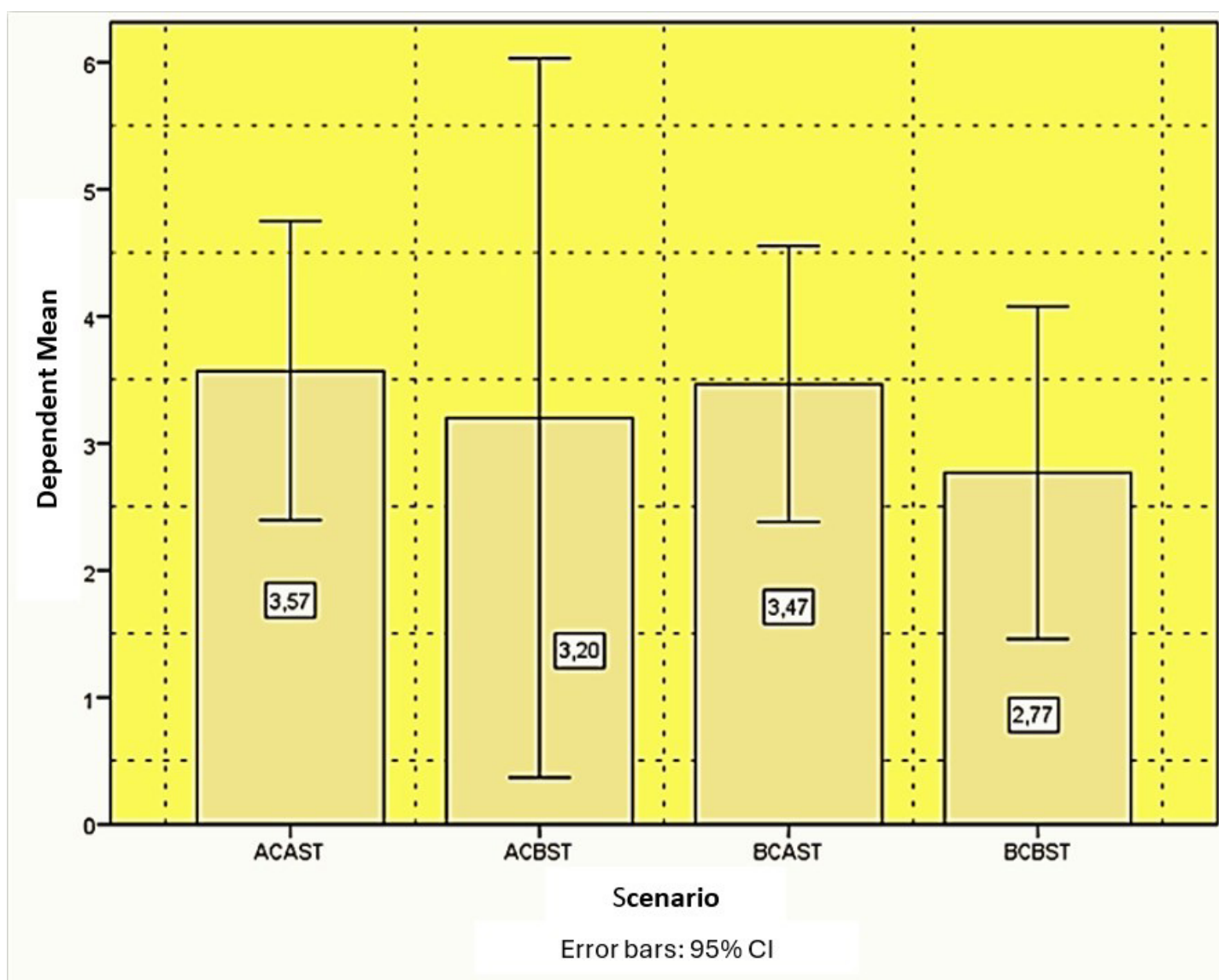
Source: Research data (2024).

The authors acknowledge, however, that some of the vignettes presented to respondents may have been misinterpreted, particularly in the ACBST scenario, where the number of responses is limited and the standard deviations are high, making it difficult to draw more precise conclusions. The presence of responses with wide variability does not invalidate the analysis of the means, but it is important to note that the interpretation of the scenarios should be approached with caution, as a more uniform interpretation could have yielded clearer results. Moreover, the broad range of standard errors may account for inconsistencies in the conclusions, especially in

scenarios with low workload.

The findings align with theories and approaches such as those of Dejours (1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017, and 2018), who, in his works, explores the relationship between work and subjectivity, highlighting how working conditions, occupational stress, and interpersonal relationships in the professional environment can influence workers' mental health.

Although the results obtained did not reach statistical significance, it is important to consider some limitations that may have influenced these findings. The small sample size compromised the statistical power of the analysis, making it difficult to identify subtle effects between the experimental groups. Additionally, the uneven distribution among scenarios (vignettes) may have led to dispersion that affected data interpretation. These factors limit the generalizability of the results and underscore the need for caution when drawing conclusions.

The lack of statistical significance may be related to the heterogeneity of participants and the subjective interpretation of the vignettes, which may have caused variability in responses. The dispersion observed in the groups indicates that other uncontrolled factors—such as prior experiences with mental health or specific organizational variables—may have influenced the responses. This finding highlights the complexity of the subject and the need for more refined analyses.

CONCLUSION

Organizational culture and people management practices play a central role in employee well-being. This study investigated, through a scenario-based experiment, how organizational culture and people management practices influence the intention to seek psychological counseling among professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial fields.

In this regard, the study analyzed the factors related to organizational culture and people management practices on the intention to seek psychological help using a scenario-based experiment. The data analyzed comprised 40 valid responses involving four versions of a descriptive vignette, presented with written information and a common module.

The results indicated that the variables showed significant differences between the groups when analyzed separately. ANOVA generates an F statistic, which compares variability between groups with variability within groups. The higher the F value, the stronger the evidence against the null hypothesis, suggesting significant differences between group means. Considering a p-value lower than the significance level (usually 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. This value represents how much the variability between groups exceeds the variability within the groups themselves, indicating greater or lesser significance in the observed differences.

The absence of statistical significance may be attributed to relevant methodological limitations. Firstly, the small sample size compromised statistical power, making it difficult to detect real effects. Additionally, the limited clarity of the vignettes may have hindered participants' understanding of the scenarios, leading them to respond based on personal experiences. Lastly, possible biases in data collection — such as failures in randomization or exclusion of subgroups — may have compromised sample representativeness. These factors underscore the need for methodological improvements in future research, such as using larger samples, clearer stimuli, and more robust data collection methods.

In the context of statistical analysis, when the F-test value exceeds 5, this generally indicates a significant difference between group means. In other words, it suggests that at least one group differs statistically from the others in terms of the variable of interest. However, results should be interpreted carefully, considering the specific context of the research and other relevant information. Although high F-test values indicate substantial differences, they must be interpreted with caution, as they may be influenced by factors such as sample size.

Moreover, when aggregated, the scenarios did not show statistical significance. Howe-

ver, comparing the scenarios revealed that the intention to seek psychological counseling tends to increase with work overload, especially when combined with high competitiveness. Thus, the trend of increased intention to seek psychological support is primarily driven by work overload and, secondarily, by competitiveness in the workplace.

This study contributes to the literature by confirming the documented association between organizational environments marked by overload and competitiveness and a higher intention to seek psychological counseling, supporting previous findings on the impact of organizational climate on mental health. However, it goes further by applying this analysis to professionals in administrative, accounting, and financial fields — a population still underexplored in studies of this nature. The main contribution lies in the adoption of an experimental methodology with simulated scenarios, allowing for the examination of intentional worker behavior in different organizational contexts. Thus, the research fills a methodological and scope gap by offering initial evidence on how organizational factors influence the search for psychological help in this specific group.

Although the results are not statistically significant, they point to a relevant trend: the perception of work overload appears to increase the intention to seek psychological support. This finding reinforces the importance of organizational policies aimed at promoting mental health. It is recommended that managers adopt measures such as active listening programs, leadership training for emotional support, flexible work schedules, and preventive actions against overload. Additionally, creating confidential and accessible communication channels for psychological care can encourage mental health awareness in organizations.

Regarding the discriminant power between scenarios, the lack of statistical significance does not imply that one scenario is more likely than another. However, it is observed that individuals in more adverse situations tend to seek psychological counseling more than those in less adverse situations. Therefore, it is possible to state that factors related to organizational culture and people management practices influence the

intention to seek psychological counseling. This pattern, even without robust statistical significance, is already a relevant finding.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the academic literature by identifying organizational factors, such as a competitive organizational climate and high work overload, as capable of affecting the behavior of professionals in the administrative, accounting, and financial sectors. Furthermore, the results confirmed that these variables can independently influence the intention to seek psychological counseling among the study's target audience.

These results are consistent with previous studies on the relationship between organizational climate and mental health but also open the door for new discussions about the impact of these factors in different organizational contexts. Based on this, it is recommended that managers and HR professionals adopt concrete strategies to reduce work overload, such as redistributing tasks, monitoring working hours, and clearly defining priorities. Moreover, promoting healthier organizational environments through actions such as psychological support programs, encouraging work-life balance, and fostering a culture that values employees' mental well-being is essential.

Among the study's limitations, it is noted that the results represent only a small portion of professionals in the studied field, preventing generalization to other professional areas. Therefore, further studies are recommended to investigate the intention to seek psychological counseling in other organizational areas. Additionally, the results indicated participants' difficulty in understanding and interpreting the hypothetical scenario. However, there is no guarantee they interpreted the textual stimulus correctly. It is likely that participants drew on their own professional experiences to respond. For future research, it is suggested that the presentation of scenarios be accompanied by illustrations and clearer examples, such as applying each scenario in distinct contexts like classrooms.

It is also suggested to conduct experiments using new variables and methods to investi-

gate whether the intention to seek psychological counseling is influenced by other variables not considered in this study, such as job autonomy, social support, rewards, role clarity, safety, harassment, and workplace conflicts. These psychosocial factors, involving the work environment and interpersonal relationships, can impact mental health, well-being, and employee performance.

A proper understanding and management of psychosocial factors are essential to promote healthy work environments, prevent occupational stress, reduce the incidence of mental health problems, and improve worker satisfaction and productivity. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate the impact of different leadership styles on employee well-being and mental health, considering how authoritarian, democratic, or transformational leaders can influence factors such as workload, social support, psychological safety, and motivation. Future studies could also explore how leadership can mitigate or intensify the negative effects of organizational climate on mental health, contributing to more effective and humane management practices.

Another recommendation concerns the randomness in the distribution of the study's scenarios. If the tool chosen for this randomization is an introductory question about the participant's CPF (tax ID), it is suggested to use the last two digits instead of just one. For example: from 00 to 24, from 25 to 49, from 50 to 74, and from 75 to 99. Alternatively, the survey platform itself should generate the random distribution of scenarios when possible.

Although the results were not statistically significant, the study contributes to the academic literature by reflecting on topics relevant to organizational studies, including concepts and characteristics that permeate people management research. It also contributes to research by paving the way for future studies. For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to observe how prolonged exposure to different organizational environment characteristics affects workers' mental health over time.

It is also recommended to apply statistical techniques complementary to ANOVA, such as multiple linear regression or mediation and moderation analysis, which can offer a deeper understanding of the relationships between variables. The inclusion of a moderator variable influences the strength and/or direction of the relationship between a dependent and an independent variable. In simple terms, it helps to understand the conditions under which this relationship is stronger, weaker, or even reversed. By considering moderation, researchers can gain more detailed and contextual insights into the patterns of association between different variables.

It is important to highlight that, in this study, the application of more robust statistical models, such as multiple linear regressions, was considered. However, due to the small sample size, such analyses could compromise the statistical validity of the results. For future studies, the use of multivariate techniques with larger samples is recommended to more precisely explore the interactions between the variables investigated.

Furthermore, it would be relevant to investigate the impact of different leadership styles — such as transformational, autocratic, or laissez-faire — on psychological well-being and the intention to seek psychological counseling, considering the dynamics of power, emotional support, and task distribution within organizations.

Additionally, it is important to note that the reasons why an employee seeks psychological help are highly individual and may be influenced by a variety of complex factors. Nevertheless, it is essential that organizations are aware of these potential impacts and implement measures to promote a healthy work environment. This can include actions such as wellness programs, psychological support, effective workload management, promotion of work-life balance, and the creation of a corporate culture that values employees' mental health.

In this sense, it is essential that organizations adopt policies that encourage mental health care and promote an environment of psychological support — but also that this commitment transcends corporate boundaries. The research highlights the importance of raising awareness of

workplace mental health as a social issue that demands integrated action among managers.

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