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**STRATEGIC
ORGANIZATIONAL
DIMENSIONS THAT
INFLUENCE CUSTOMER
SERVICE**

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Abstract: In the article “Customer service as a decision-making factor in a Mozambican Telecommunication Company”, Chacha and Figueiras (2017), publish the thesis “Customer service as a driving factor of relationship marketing” of company “A” with its customers. The interest in this research stems from the fact that customer service has become a critical tool for customers to evaluate companies. In this research, service is studied from two dimensions: strategic and operational. Thus, the present article, also built from the thesis, proposes to determine the strategic dimension with the greatest influence on service. This objective goes beyond helping managers to optimize investment in customer service, as it benefits society by offering an adequate and humane approach, which constitutes a competitive advantage for the company. This is a mixed survey. For data collection, we opted for a standardized, self-completed questionnaire applied to a probabilistic sample of 232 elements, aided by an interview with *focus group*, applied to 186 participants, intentionally chosen, totaling 418 respondents. For data processing, triangulated multivariate statistics were used with the path analysis method and content analysis, respectively for quantitative and qualitative data. The organizational climate appears to be the strategic dimension that exerts the greatest influence on customer service, with association coefficients of 0.6217 and 0.8388, in both perspectives of the trajectory model.

Keywords: attendance, organizational climate, worker behavior and physical evidence.

INTRODUCTION

The service, defined by Houaiss et al. (2003) and Pessoa (2004), as the art or the process of assisting someone, is, in essence, a communication or interpersonal relationship between entities: the one who serves and the one served. It is affected by strategic dimensions

- internal variables that the organization has control over and can act on them and non-strategic ones - of external origin, not controllable by the organization to react on them. The purpose of this article is to answer the question: Which of the three strategic dimensions of care, organizational climate, worker behavior and physical evidence, exerts the greatest influence on it and to what extent? To answer this question, three hypotheses were presented, H1: physical evidence is the dimension that exerts the greatest influence on care; H2: workers' behavior has the greatest effect on service and H3: organizational climate has the greatest influence on service. Thus, the work was reduced to the verification of the proposed hypotheses and, for that, a descriptive, applied and empirical research was carried out with a mixed approach that confirmed hypothesis H3, having refuted the remaining two. This knowledge is critical for organizational managers in optimizing their resources, investing more in the determinant dimension of service, for quality assurance. Thus, clients, users, consumers and the general public can benefit from a more adequate and humanized service through the humanization of the work of those who make up the service chain.

SERVICE AND ITS STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS

In an organizational context, the service, relates the organization and its customers, creating, between them, a relationship of interdependence. The definition by Ferreira and Mendes (2001, cited by Chacha, 2020), considers service as a complex service, putting different interlocutors on the scene in a social interaction mediated by different needs (p.56). It is an interaction facilitated or hindered by (1) structural influencers, such as contextual factors of the infrastructure, (2) psychological,

such as attitudes and behaviors of those involved in the interaction and (3) those factors that express the congruence between expectations, individual values and interests and the company's guidelines, combining the humanization of work with the improvement in production - organizational climate. The contextual factors of infrastructure, also known by Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2014), as the environment where the company interacts with the customer" or service scenario, for Bove and Johnson (2001) and physical evidence, for Lovelock (2006) , are, in Shostack's view (1977), a differentiation strategy, when technology, products and prices are undifferentiated. Although not consciously perceived, physical evidence affects clients' emotional well-being to the point of impacting their behavior. The physical evidence essentially consists of the tangibles of the company that the customer experiences at the points of service. Baker, Grewal and Parasuraman (2002), highlight design factors, those essentially visual, palpable, functional and aesthetic, such as decorative elements; social, interactions between employees, with customers and between customers, such as the introduction of those who serve; and environmental ones, to factors that affect the five human senses, such as music, temperature, lighting and noise. Behi and Norchene (2017), refer that Kotler (2000), anchored in environmental psychology, developed a platform that shows organizational managers the need to project robust physical evidence to produce specific emotional effects on customers. Thus, it can be admitted that physical evidence strongly influences care. That is, H1: physical evidence is the greatest influencer of care. In general, there is a strong interaction between those who attend and those served in the attendance theatre. In this regard, Behi and Norchene (2017) also show the

power of the smile of those who attend, in transmitting the feeling of availability to help the person served, as one of the factors that generate positive emotions in the client and influence the favorable evaluation of the quality of the service. attendance. Contributions from several authors such as Vasconcelos (2009), Freitas-Magalhães (2007) and others, associate the smile with positive feelings such as happiness, pleasure, fun, friendship; as a calming and stabilizing agent of balance and that it contributes to the reinforcement of human interaction. The contact with a look accompanied by a smile, makes the interlocutor (client) at ease. From the relationship between these aspects and the behavior of the client, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that relates the behavior of workers to the service. In a first phase, the frontline workers and in the second, all workers in the service (value) chain, that is, H2: The behavior of workers has the greatest effect on service. In fact, this hypothesis arises for a double reason: those who attend are part of the physical evidence and the solution, thus influencing the behavior of the person assisted and, therefore, the attendance. In the same direction, Brum (2015) presents the hypothesis about the direct relationship between an organization and individuals, understood as reciprocal. In this relationship, environmental factors are highlighted, including the relationship patterns and behaviors established by the environment. Associating this hypothesis of Brum with the thinking of Gremler (1994) and Bispo (2006), the relationship combines the improvement of production with the humanization of work and is mediated, to a large extent, by the human resources policy, management model, process of communication, business mission and human and professional development.

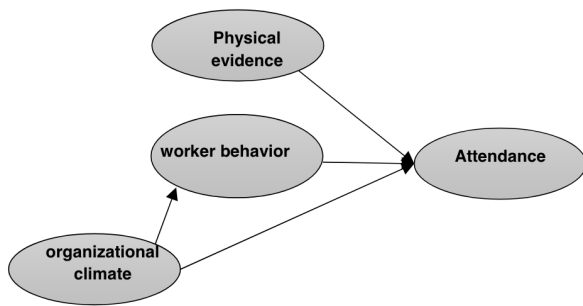


Fig 1. Simplified theoretical model of the hypotheses. Source: Adapted from Chacha (2020, p.145)

The aforementioned combination results in the organizational climate, which for a good business performance is required to be favorable. Our experience, on the other hand, shows that individuals will never be indifferent when experiencing different environments, meaning that when subjected to certain environmental conditions, they behave in a certain way, and, by changing those environmental conditions, their behavior also changes. In our understanding, if the behavior of workers is stimulated or influenced by the organizational climate, then, due to the transitive property of mathematics, the organizational climate influences service. Hence, the hypotheses H3: The organizational climate is the greatest influencer of service and H4: The organizational climate influences the behavior of workers. The hypotheses, H1, H2, H3 and H4, appear as provisional answers, subject to verification (Gil, 2002, Lakatos and Marconi, 1995), of the problem that originated the investigation.

METHODOLOGY

A standardized, self-completed questionnaire was chosen (Appolinário, 2012, Marconi and Lakatos, 2007) that facilitated data comparison, Malhotra (2006) and its digitization (Mattar, 2001, Churchill and Brown, 2007). The questionnaire followed the criteria of both quantitative and qualitative

paradigms, Hussey (1977), and was applied to a simple random probabilistic sample of 232 elements, selected by lottery technique. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested and validated, Carmines and Zeller (1979) and Lindeman (1974, cited by Bittencourt et al., 2011), using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A Likert-type summation scale was used, ranging from 1 to 5 points, with 1 being the degree of total disagreement and 5 being the maximum degree of agreement. Techniques used for data analysis include (1) descriptive statistics with means and proportions used to describe the participants' opinion regarding the measured aspects, (2) confidence intervals, with which we assess the existence of statistically significant differences between groups, considering the socio-graphic characteristics of the participants. (3) For the constructs, factor analysis of principal components or multivariate statistics was used, Hair et al.(2005) and Bakke et al.(2008). The hypotheses of the relationships under study, between the dimensions of care, were analyzed using the statistical technique called Path Analysis. Participants' opinions were analyzed based on the percentage frequencies presented in the segmented bar graphs. Statistical significance was considered $p < 0.05$ for an absolute difference greater than 1.96. The statistics were supported by a statistical program Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The operationalization of the qualitative paradigm variables was mediated by a focus group interview, also known as a focused interview, Patton (1990, cited by GmbH, 2005, p.116). The focus group interview is appropriate for case studies, Yin (2010), as a method and strategy and for offering the combination of efforts through the confrontation of ideas when degenerating into group debate, in addition to the time savings it provides. Due to these properties, the focus group technique, which included,

in this case, “the group debate, has become an essential source of knowledge” Blumer (1969, cited by Flick, 2005, p.117). For the analysis of qualitative data, content analysis was chosen (Bardin, 2009). To this end, the data, representing the opinions of the 186 respondents, were segmented by units of meaning, which allowed for an increase in the exploitation of its spectrum, after being checked and corrected to ensure its fidelity. The research initially went through the exploratory phase, which for Mattar (2001), Creswell (2010), Gil (2002), Ramos and Naranjo (2014), is appropriate in the initial stage of the investigation and has essentially become descriptive. , applied and empirical in nature, with a mixed approach involving a total of 418 respondents. The discussion of data (quantitative and qualitative) is carried out simultaneously after triangulating the qualitative data of the different focus groups).

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The sociodemographic data indicate that the research focused on a sample, mostly made up of men and young people. Only 4 out of 10 participants are women and at least 7 are aged between 25 and 40 years. Education is a valued element in the company, as 9 out of 10 participants have, at least, an average degree and two thirds of the respondents are senior technicians. The data indicate two hypothetical associations all linked to the monthly salary. The first is statically significant, between schooling and salary, and the second relates professional experience to monthly salary. All empirical data on workers' behavior, organizational climate and physical evidence were summarized using segmented bar graphs as illustrated in figure 2, of one of the organizational climate constructs, for reasons of space we only present the organizational climate graph.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE DIMENSION

The organizational climate was, in a first phase, evaluated with the help of its three constructs, trust, communication and commitment, in that order.

For the trust construct, 18 indicators were evaluated and opinions were issued around all of them, and it was found that in 10 of them, at least half of the respondents have an opinion divided between the extreme categories of appreciation: agree or totally agree. In general, for the construct, taking into account the compensations, it can be noted that the majority of workers 87% are not satisfied with their salary, as they consider it unfair in relation to the work they perform and in relation to the salary. market average for workers equivalent to them. About 89% of respondents think that the company does not have a fair system of promotions and, finally, 67% are satisfied with the level of teamwork, spirit of cooperation, training and the human consideration provided in the company. From the factor analysis, three factors were retained, explaining approximately 58% of the total variance. The most important factor of the three, accounts for around 36% of the total explained variance and is strongly associated with training, as a critical aspect in the professional development of workers. It was also verified that the opinions of the participants are independent of sex and age, as the differences between them are statistically insignificant. The introduction of the “t” test, which hypothesized the equality of opinions of the workers (men and women) respondents (significance level $p>0.05$) allowed us to infer the result of the sample for company “A” as a whole. That is, it proved the hypothesis that everything that is said for the sample is valid for the entire population, since no evidence was found to prove the opposite, refuting the hypothesis. Regarding the segmentation by

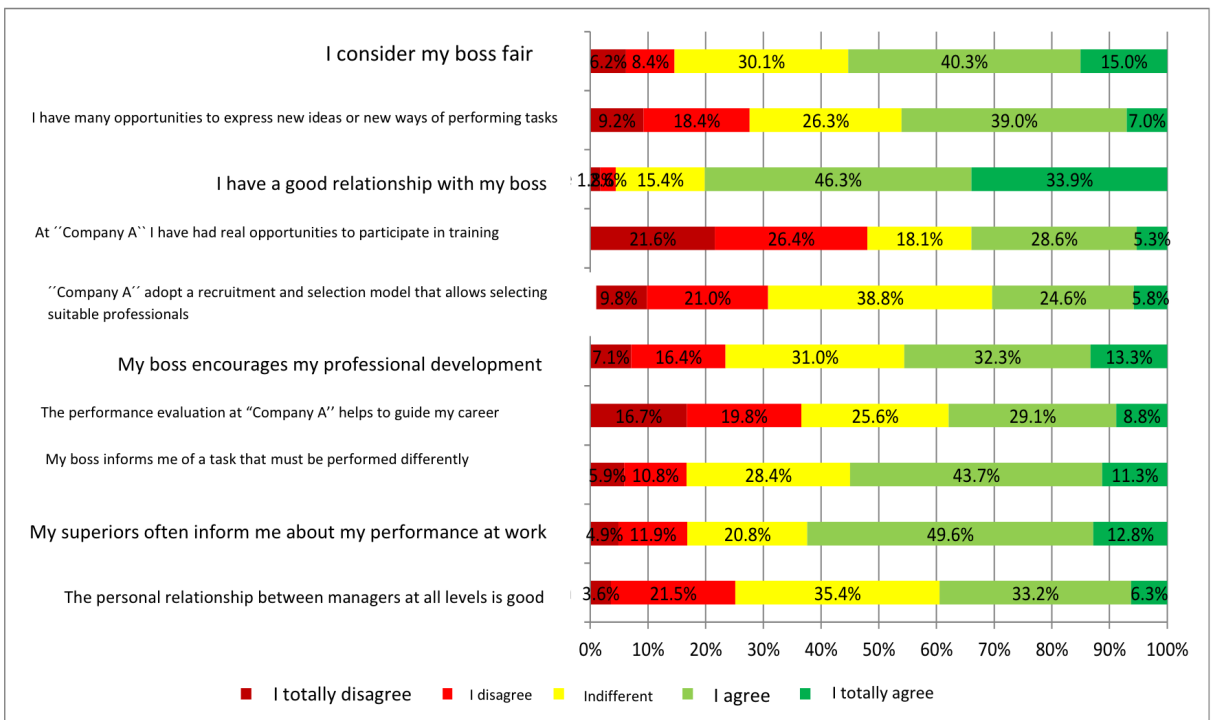


Figure 2. Evaluation of participants in relation to indicators of the trust construct. Source: Chacha, 2020, p 145.

sex, age, professional experience at Company "A" and monthly salary, the data indicate that the differences observed regarding the confidence index are statistically significant only in relation to professional experience. ($t_{(187)} = 2.121, p < 0.01$) and monthly salary ($F_{(2,186)} = 8.181, p < 0.001$). These results suggest that the trust index is, to a certain extent, influenced by two sociodemographic variables: professional experience and the employee's monthly remuneration. Trust contributes favorably to the organizational climate.

For the communication construct, only 10 indicators were evaluated and opinions were issued around all of them, highlighting the relationship between the subordinate and his/her respective boss, and in relation to the employee's feeling about the justice of his/her boss. These two indicators were selected due to their specific relevance to the organizational climate and attendance. The term justice is associated with the idea of looking at the

communicative dimension not simply as the exchange of information, but "thinking of communication as a process of building internal relationships" (Marchiori, 2010, p. 148). This requires Shaffer's "unity in word and deed" (2002, quoted by Marchiori, 2010, p. 154), meaning the existence of coherence between what the boss says and does. In this sense, justice is the way in which this coherence is perceived. The indicators assess how much communication is used to incite new relationships within the organization, capable of creating opportunities for the development of workers through the social negotiation of meaning. According to the results, employees appreciate the communication they have. In 8 of the 10 indicators, 4 out of 10 respondents have a split opinion between the two extreme categories of positive appreciation. From this analysis it was found that workers use communication as a process of building their internal interpersonal relationships towards their professional development. From the

factor analysis, only one factor was retained that contributed to explain approximately 46% of the total variation observed in the data. It is a robust construct from the point of view of internal consistency, $\text{Alpha}=0.824$ and refers to the interaction between staff and managers in the work environment. The results indicate that for the 4 segmentation variables the differences observed are not statistically significant, that is, communication in company "A" does not depend on any of them. From the point of view of qualitative research, the customer contact workers indicated, reinforcing their statements from the quantitative research, that horizontal communication is deficient, especially when they request the support of colleagues attached to the service support areas. Despite the deficiencies in communication between service support workers and service workers, workers indicate that there is recognition of the value of communication, in particular, the knowledge on which it depends, internal coordination, mutual support between the different sectors of the chain. services, as defended by Marchiori (2010), Kunsh (2003), Maximiano (2000) and Torquato (2004). In our view, it is positive that there is a theoretical recognition of communication, but the absence of practice reduces its impact on workers' motivation, team integration and on generating the sought-after commitment of workers to organizational goals. Communication contributes to the continuous improvement of business management processes and directs organizational behavior. Communication has a positive contribution to the organizational climate of company "A".

For the commitment construct, 10 indicators were also proposed. In 7 of the 10, at least half of the respondents have an opinion divided between the two categories of positive opinion-agree or strongly agree. The analysis of the data related to this

construct (commitment) shows that the workers of Company "A" have a high level of commitment, which translates into their loyalty to the company. A relative frequency of 90% is of workers proclaiming that the company means immensely to them. With equal value, they say they feel and experience the company's problems as their own. Factor analysis of impairment retained two factors that contribute to explain about 62% of the total observed variance. However, the most important factor aggregates 39% of the total variance of commitment, explained by the factors. Similar to communication, the commitment index is not influenced by any of the sociodemographic variables. Commitment is also favorable to the organizational climate. Our understanding is that the three constructs contribute to a favorable organizational climate in company "A" and, therefore, capable of influencing a good performance in the company's service to its customers. The organizational climate is influenced by such sociodemographic variables as the worker's professional experience and his monthly remuneration, which influence trust, although these variables are not statistically significant for the remaining two constructs: communication and commitment.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE DIMENSION

The analysis of the physical evidence dimension was based, at first, on the evaluation of employees' opinions in relation to 5 indicators, including the presentation of those who attend; the environment of the place of service, the at ease; the comfort that the place offers to customers and, finally, aspects related to hygiene. In a second moment, the evaluation was based on the opinions of clients and workers collected in the debates during the interviews in focus groups. The opinion of workers is generally positive. At least half of the respondents, at

least, agree that the service takes place in clean, tidy, comfortable, calm and attractive places. The appreciation of employees, in terms of proportion, in the first three aspects mentioned, reaches two thirds of respondents. The factor analysis of the physical evidence retained one factor, with a strong association with the 5 indicators, (all with factor loadings greater than 0.65), which contributed to explain half of the observed variance. As for the comparison of the average score according to sociodemographic groups, the differences observed are statistically significant only in relation to professional experience in the company ($t_{(208)} = 2.731, p < 0.01$). This indicates that the opinion in relation to the physical evidence is strongly influenced by the professional experience of the workers of Company "A". According to the customers, in the focal interviews, the stores in terms of the design were carefully designed. They argue that they are spacious enough, organized and tidy, fresh, pleasant, comfortable and without visual or noise pollution. As for those who attend as part of the physical evidence, customers referred to the possibility of betting on their uniformity or standardization of clothes, making them more suitable for the task. Customers showed recognition of the role of physical evidence as the greater the customer's perception of physical evidence, the greater the perceived quality of service.

DIMENSION BEHAVIOR OF WORKERS

In the description of the opinions of the participants regarding the Behavior of the Workers, it must be noted that, similar to the physical evidence, to assess the opinion of the employees, 5 indicators were selected related to empathy, punctuality, attendance and attitude towards the customer. The data reveal that more than half of the

participants, at least, agree with the following propositions: we behave with courtesy; we never get into baseless arguments with customers; empathy helps to dynamize a good relationship with the customer. In the factor analysis of workers' behavior, the factor that emerged, robust from the point of view of internal consistency, $Alpha = 0.764$, contributes to explain approximately 52% of the total variance. The factor reflects more the cordiality in customer service as well as the awareness on the part of the workers themselves, of the importance of service for the success of the company. The data also indicate that among the four sociodemographic variables: age, sex, salary and professional experience, the differences observed are statistically significant only for these three ($t_{(207)} = 3.35, p < 0.01$ in the case of the age variable, $t_{(203)} = 3.667, p < 0.01$ for professional experience in the company and, $F_{(2, 202)} = 28.779, p < 0.001$ in relation to the monthly salary). Therefore, worker behavior is influenced by salary, age and work experience. From a qualitative point of view, workers stated and customers confirmed that they serve as they would like to be served, showing respect and consideration mediated by empathy. In this regard, Johnston (1995) mentions that empathy makes workers care for customers, Chandon et al. (1997) makes them understand customers and, finally, Wels-Lips et al. (1998), with them making additional effort to identify the latent needs of customers. In fact, these three aspects (taking care of customers, understanding customers and making an effort to identify their undeclared needs, form the basis of service). Customers also mentioned that service workers inspire confidence, exude enthusiasm, friendliness and courtesy and that the smile in their facial expression conveys human warmth, a sense of welcome and the worker's readiness to serve them. In

another development, they referred to the tone of voice that remains unchanged during the service and to other positive aspects highlighted in the works of Bettencourt and Brown (1977) and Price et al. (1955). There was a greater emphasis on the behavior of those who attend as a key factor in the service, especially because those who attend are part of the service and, consequently, of the functional quality, influencing the customer's perception in relation to the quality of service. Therefore, in the opinion of both workers and customers, the behavior of the worker appears to be the most influential factor in customer service.

PATH ANALYSIS MODEL

The Path Analysis Model is, in essence, an extension of the multiple linear regression model, with the aim of decomposing the association between variables into different effects, direct and indirect.

In it, the standardized values of the regression coefficients are presented, as well as the result referring to the significance test of each one of them. All trajectories are statistically significant (at 1% significance level). The organizational climate has a direct effect on customer service (0.4167) and an

indirect effect, mediated by the worker's behavior (0.4205 $0.4874=0.2050$). Thus, the total effect of the organizational climate on service is 0.6217.

FOR THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The direct observable effect of physical evidence on attendance, in the same diagram, is estimated at approximately 0.1830, which is much smaller than those observed in relation to organizational climate.

WORKER BEHAVIOR

The worker's behavior, in turn, has a direct effect on attendance, of 0.4874. If the organizational climate did not have the indirect effect, worker behavior would be the dimension with the greatest effect on service. We are comparing 0.4167 to 0.4874.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The result of the focus groups, in the qualitative analysis, highlighted the behavior of those who attend as the determining factor of attendance, particularly because those who attend are part of the physical evidence, they directly influence the behavior of the client and the attendance. Its effect, however, is much smaller, although it was thought that

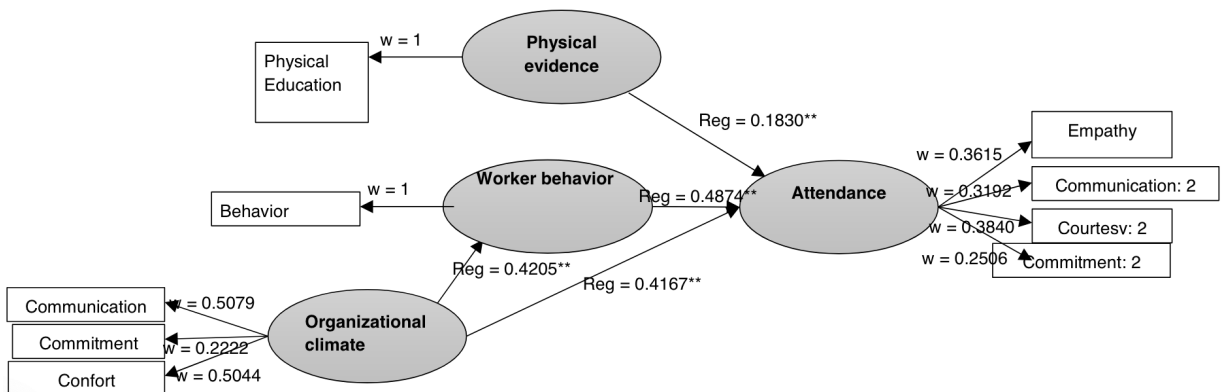


Figure 3. Analysis of the hypothesis model using the "Trajectory analysis" model.

Source: adapted from Chacha, 2020, p. 168.

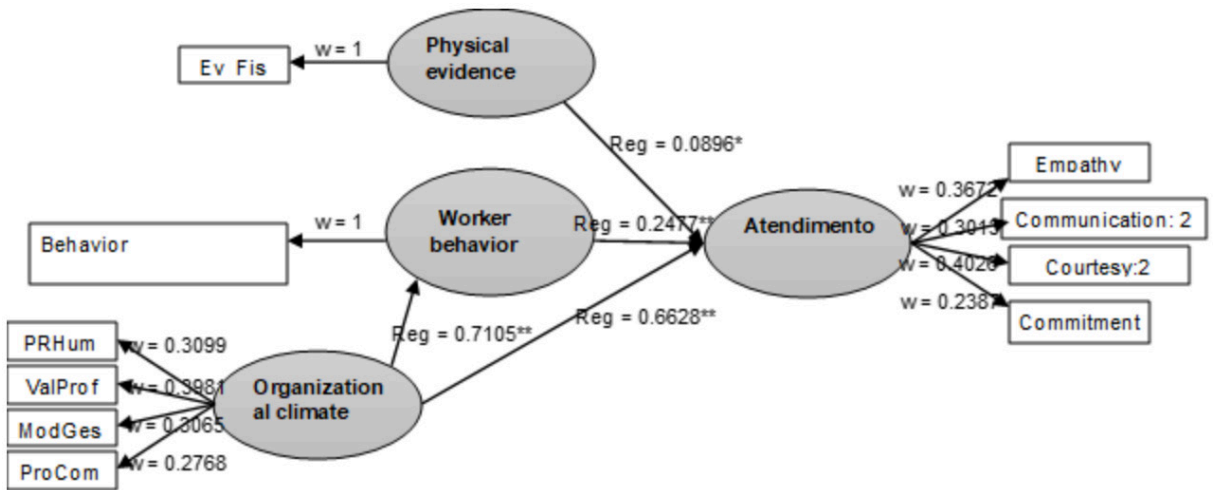


Figure 4: Model of the perspective hypotheses II. Source: Adapted from Chacha, 2020, p. 170.

this would be the most robust dimension, due to the fact that the worker is part of the context of care, influencing the behavior of the person assisted and the attendance. Because the thesis used two types of constructs to describe the organizational climate. The article, once based on the thesis, follows the same logic, as illustrated in figures 3 and 4.

Using the reasoning applied in perspective I, in the new configuration of the trajectory analysis model, the organizational climate continues with two effects on service: a direct 0.6628 and an indirect mediated by the worker's behavior (0.7105 0.2477) =0.1760, resulting in an effect total on the service, of 0.8388. The effect of worker behavior on care is 0.2477 and that of physical evidence on care is 0.0896. The new constructs of the organizational climate (human resources program, professional development, management model and communication process) gave rise to interesting changes in the trajectory model. The direct effect of this on worker behavior and attendance almost doubled from 0.4205 to 0.7105 and from 0.4167 to 0.6628, respectively. In particular, the organizational climate increased by 25% in perspective II compared to the initial perspective value. In contrast, the value of

the worker behavior dimension decreased by 97% and that of physical evidence was, more serious, by almost 100%. These events lead to a hypothetical conclusion that the new organizational climate constructs are more robust and effective than the constructs used in perspective I of the trajectory analysis model. As "group influences significantly affect individual behavior" (Robbins, 2004, p. 92), he expected changes in worker behavior to be in the same direction and proportion as those in the organizational climate. From the substantial reduction in the direct effects of physical evidence and worker behavior on care, the following questions can be formulated for future research: If the organizational climate influences worker behavior and care, how, taking into account the postulate of Robbins (2004), understand that the increase in the effect of the weather on the behavior of the worker does not increase the effect of the latter on the service? On the other hand, those who attend are part of the physical evidence, influence the behavior of those assisted, at the moment of truth and also the service. How is it that, despite all this, the behavior of those who attend does not seem to have the greatest effect on the attendance?

	perspective I	perspective II
organizational climate	0.6217	0.8388
worker behavior	0.4874	0.2474
physical evidence	0.183	0.0896

Figure 5. Comparison of the effects of dimensions on service.

The analysis report of the hypothesis model using the trajectory analysis model for the two perspectives, the first being that the organizational climate is described by the 3Cs (trust, communication and commitment) and the second, in which the 3Cs are replaced by Human Resources policy, management model, communication process and human and professional valorization, indicates: (a) there is a considerably weak linear association between physical evidence and service in the approximate order of 0.183, in the first perspective and 0.01, in the second, as illustrated in figure 5; (b) there is a reasonably reasonable linear association between worker behavior and service in the approximate order of 0.50, in the first perspective and 0.25, in the second, as illustrated in figure 5, and (c) there is a considerably strong linear association between the organizational climate and service in the approximate order of 0.6 in the first perspective and 0.80 in the second, as illustrated in figure 5. It can be said and concluded that the organizational climate is the dimension that has the greatest effect on the service, followed by the behavior of the worker, being the physical evidence, the dimension that has the least effect on care. Thus, both hypotheses H1: physical evidence is the greatest influencer of care and H2: worker behavior has the greatest effect on care. They are disconfirmed (refuted) and hypotheses H3: The organizational climate influences the behavior of workers (0.4205 and 0.7105), respectively, in perspectives I and II and H4: The organizational climate is the biggest

influencer of service, are confirmed.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main idea of this article is to answer the research question formulated in the following terms: among the strategic dimensions that affect care, which one has the greatest influence on it and to what extent? The debate revolved around three main hypotheses: (H1) physical evidence exerts greater influence on care; (H2) the worker's behavior exerts a greater influence on the attendance and (H3) the organizational climate exerts a greater influence on the attendance. From the analysis of the organizational climate constructs, it was concluded that it is influenced by such sociodemographic variables as professional experience and workers' monthly remuneration. These variables are only statistically significant for trust, not for communication and commitment. In general, the organizational climate dimension is considered favorable for the service. Physical evidence is influenced by workers' experience and behavior, age, work experience, and workers' salary. The research allowed the disconfirmation of the hypotheses about the behavior and the physical evidence and the confirmation of the hypothesis about the organizational climate. Thus, it concluded, based on the methodological resources identified above, that the organizational climate is the strategic dimension of the service that has the greatest effect on it, with a value of 0.62 and 0.84, respectively, in the first and second perspectives. The following reflections were raised for future investigations on the subject: "(1) The organizational climate exerts a strong influence on the behavior of the worker and this on the service. How can we understand that the increase in the effect of the weather on the behavior of the worker leads to a considerable reduction in the effect of the latter on the service? (2) Those who

attend are part of the physical evidence, they influence the behavior of those assisted, at the moment of truth and, also, the attendance. How can we understand that, despite this, the behavior of those who attend does not seem to have the greatest effect on care?”

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