

## **MORAL AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICE: CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTS ON REMOVAL REQUESTS AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN NORTHERN REGION OF BRAZIL**

**ASSÉDIO MORAL E SEXUAL NO SERVIÇO PÚBLICO: CARACTERÍSTICAS E REFLEXOS NOS PEDIDOS DE REMOÇÃO EM UMA INSTITUIÇÃO DE ENSINO SUPERIOR DA REGIÃO NORTE DO BRASIL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to analyze the occurrence and characteristics of moral and sexual harassment in a Federal Institution of Higher Education in northern region of Brazil, and, thus, assess its effects on removal requests. Therefore, a field survey was carried out by a questionnaire. The sample used was simple random probability consisting of 251 people interviewed. The data processing was quantitative, and it used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multiple linear regression (MLR). Factor analysis had detected the occurrence of four factors, which explained 66.05% of the variance. Such factors were: (a) Induce to error (19.52%); (b) Disqualify (16.53%); (c) Isolate and refuse communication (16.50%); and (d) Verbal, physical, and sexual violence (13.50%). Multiple linear regression showed that 20% of the variance from removal requests were due to harassment. The findings reinforce the need of policies to clarify and fight moral and sexual harassment in the institution.

**Keywords:** Educational Institutions. People Management. Power. Violence.

## **RESUMO**

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a presença e as características do assédio moral e sexual em uma Instituição Federal de Ensino Superior da Região Norte do Brasil e, assim, mensurar seus reflexos nos pedidos de remoção. Para tanto, foi feita uma pesquisa de campo com a utilização de questionário. A amostra foi probabilística aleatória simples e resultou em 251 entrevistados. O tratamento de dados foi quantitativo e utilizou análise fatorial exploratória (AFE) e regressão linear múltipla (RLM). A análise fatorial captou a presença de quatro fatores, que explicaram 66,05% da variância. Os fatores foram induzir ao erro (19,52%), desqualificar (16,53%), isolar e recusar comunicação (16,50%) e agressão verbal, física e sexual (13,50%). A regressão linear múltipla revelou que 20% da variância dos pedidos de remoção eram explicados pelo assédio. A conclusão reforça a necessidade de políticas de esclarecimento e combate ao assédio moral e sexual na instituição.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência. Instituições de Ensino. Gestão de Pessoas. Poder.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Work is a fundamental aspect of life in society, and the interaction among workers and the workplace affects different aspects of human life. At the organizational level, the worker and the work environment relationships have strong consequences related to important aspects for the company, such as motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, engagement, productivity, among others. In the personal aspect, work can influence how workers feel and how they are perceived in their personal and social relationships (HERZBERG, 1966, 1980, 1996).

Thus, despite work being essentially one of the aspects of human valorization, there has often been conflicting relationships, manifestations of prejudice at work that can sometimes take violent forms. In this sense, concerning about violence at the workplace has gained greater prominence since the end of the 20th century, becoming more often one of the organizational concerns. Freitas (2001) highlights that gradually the debate on violence in the organizational environment has gained scientific shape to identify its causes as well as to find alternatives for prevention and control.

Classified among the forms of violence, moral and sexual harassment, which is sometimes equally violent, is part of the negative aspects of labor relations and can be understood as a consequence of the omission of organizational management, that is, the values that guide the company's behavior are precarious or poorly defined. Discriminatory violence brings serious personal and organizational losses, since the harassment, even when directed at a single person, creates a hostile environment that reflects negatively on other workers, therefore, it ends up affecting the organization. Hirigoyen (2000, p.17) defines moral harassment as: "[...] any abusive behavior, manifesting itself, above all, through words, acts, gestures, writings that may harm the personality, dignity, or physical or psychological integrity of a person, that endangers their job, or degrades the work environment."

On the other hand, sexual harassment is recognized by the European Union as a form of discrimination that occurs whenever there is "[...] unwanted behavior of sexual nature [...] with the purpose or effect of violating the person's dignity, in particular, when it creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment" (JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2004, p.40). Hirigoyen (2006), Freitas (2007), Guedes (2008), and Mattos *et al.* (2010), among others, highlight that some organizations by mistake promote the idea that competitiveness among their members will provide greater individual and collective

performance. Thus, the unbalanced practices aiming to pursuit professional excellence can be used to justify perverse and hostile behavior as part of the organization's routine.

In this way, detailed studies focusing on moral and sexual harassment can contribute to create strategies that inform, guide, discuss, restrain, and punish violent practices that violate human dignity, especially those of a perverse nature. Discussing moral and sexual harassment at the organizational level can promote the consolidation of behaviors based on morality and ethical principles allowing to distinguish different postures from those accepted by the organization.

On the other hand, Caran *et al.* (2010) complement and highlight that harassment cases at private organizations are usually more noticeable and usually last for a shorter time, resulting in the dismissal of the harassed person. However, these authors point out that in public organizations, harassing violence can last for years due to the job's stability, an aspect that in certain extent ends up protecting the aggressor, forcing the harassed person to attempt to be transferred to another sector or department or even to accept their situation, which will inevitably lead to illness and, often, to the option of leaving the organization.

In this context, this study focused on analyzing the occurrence and characteristics of moral and sexual harassment in a Federal Institution of Higher Education in the northern region of Brazil and, thus, assessing its effects on removal requests. Thereby, the research's question that guided this investigation was, "What are the characteristics of moral and sexual harassment at the institution studied and how does it influence removal requests?" The innovative character of this study is to systematize information aiming to assess the effects of moral and sexual harassment on the internal movement of personnel, which impacts, to a certain extent, on new socialization processes and more spending on staff training and development.

The results obtained in this study enabled to characterize moral and sexual harassment in four factors called "Induce to error" (main factor), "Disqualify", "Isolate and Refuse Communication", and "Verbal, Physical, and Sexual Violence", and show that there is a positive association to their occurrence and the movement of personnel through removal requests. These aspects justify the policies to fight and prevent moral and sexual harassment, providing a more productive and ethical work environment, being able to reflect the modern perspective of labor activity.

## **2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE**

### **2.1 MORAL HARASSMENT: ORIGIN, EVOLUTION, AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Violence at workplace dates back to antiquity, since the beginning of the man's exploitation as a work force. However, according to Costa *et al.* (2015), studies on moral harassment, identified as a form of violence, gained prominence in developed countries only at the end of the 20th century, when it started to be understood as a destructive practice among labor relations, workers, and organizations. However, observed since the mid-1970s, moral harassment has taken a long period of maturation to be recognized as a form of organizational violence and its manifestation characterized as such.

According to Einarsen, Nielson and Glasø (2017), the work entitled "The harassed worker", written by the American psychiatrist Carroll Brodsky (1976), is the first work in which characteristics of scientific studies on moral harassment could be recognized. In this work, the researcher has defined harassment as a repeated, continuous, and persistent practice, aiming to torment and chase the other to intimidating him. However, until then, little had been known about the potential harm of moral harassment to the values of a group, and the discussion concerning the organizational management has not progressed (EINARSEN; NIELSEN; GLASØ, 2017), since the research by Brodsky (1976) was focused on socio-medical conditions of work, motivated then by the recent publication of labor rights in Sweden.

Structuring the dimensions of harassment, the studies that introduced the moral perspective were presented some years later, in the 1990s, by the Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann, a researcher in the field of occupational psychology. Leymann (1990) identified a violence form consisted of coercive characteristics, which was identified as "psychoterror" (MATTOS *et al.* 2010), with comprehensive characteristics; Leymann had classified the use of hostile and unethical communication as violence, initiated by one or more individuals addressed systematically to a specific individual. Thus, the harassed person subjected to hostile actions was placed under an unprotected condition, essentially defenseless and conditioned to remain this situation of submission (LEYMANN 1990, 1996).

Leymann's studies (1990, 1996) resulted in the expression *mobbing* gaining preeminence in European countries as the equivalent of what is known today as moral harassment. Helonai (2004) highlights that this expression probably had started to be used

well before the Leymann's work by the Austrian zoologist Konrad Lorenz, around the 1960s, who used the expression to point animals' aggressive behavior, aimed to expel an unwanted member from the group.

Having the studies evolved, moral harassment had started to gain attention in many sciences field, especially from the works published by the French psychiatrist Marie-France Hirigoyen, who is considered one of the main references in the study of moral harassment until today. In 1998, she expanded and systematized the understanding of moral harassment in the work "*Le Harcèlement moral: la violence perverse au quotidien*" (HIRIGOYEN, 2000).

In Brazil, studies aimed at this violence fashion intensified after a master's thesis being published by physician Margarita Barreto (2000), entitled "A journey of humiliation". This study, along with a sample composed of just over 2000 industrial workers in the State of São Paulo, showed worrying results until then unknown. Among the results, 42% of the interviewees reported stories of humiliation at work, and women showed the highest frequency (65%), reporting some humiliating and degrading experience during their work shifts. Barreto (2004) highlights that moral harassment is more common in authoritarian, asymmetric, and unethical hierarchical relationships, which results in the tripod destabilization - worker, work environment, and organization.

Costa *et al.* (2015) reinforce that the definition of a complete concept related to moral harassment could not have been done yet, as there is still a comprehensive field of study to be explored, and its consequences have not yet been fully listed, due to the multiplicity of scope of moral harassment related to different fields of knowledge, such as medicine, psychology, psychiatry, law, and administration.

The causes that trigger moral harassment are unknown; however, as highlighted by Hirigoyen (2000) and Barreto (2003), harassment could be caused by envy, prejudice, jealousy, competitiveness, individualism, or even rivalry, fostered by the organization itself, and it can be worsened by job instability. It is certain that all those who differ from the group are potential victims, regardless of situations by which they differ, whether by color, sex, education, culture, work's potential, income, age, sexual orientation, physical limitations, among others. The reason for an individual being a target of harassment is his uniqueness faced with the aggressor's behavioral deviation (HIRIGOYEN, 2000; BARRETO, 2003).

Heloani and Barreto (2015) state that the lack of solidarity caused by dispute for positions leads to a spiral of competitiveness stimulated by the search for stability and



placement in the labor market. Abuse, stress, fear of being fired, and control naturally result in a market extremely competitive, which may lead to the emergence and intensification of moral harassment in the organization. Therefore, when the organization standardizes the behavior of its members, it enables managers to justify objectively their actions, which limits the possibility for different interpretations. In this sense, when there is no clear rules of conduct, it is difficult to identify harassing practices due to sheer lack of knowledge, further weakening the harassed person (FITZGERALD; ORMEROD, 1991).

## 2.2 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

On the other hand, sexual harassment is sometimes confused with “flirting” and can be understood at first as an episode with no or low severity. However, Freitas (2001), when discussing the theme, points out differences of “flirting” from sexual harassment. According to the author, the first situation could be a skillful seduction proposal aiming to convince the other to accept the advances of the interested party. Sexual harassment, on the other hand, assumes an authoritarian and perverse nature, which uses punishment as a form of coercion. Anecdotes, sexual conversations, sexual favors, voyeurism, pornographic environment, and unwanted physical contact are behaviors that can be considered elements of sexual harassment at workplace (DEUTSCHMAN, 1991; DIAS, 2008). Thus, harassing the victim happens in an ostentatious fashion through offenses, insistent phone calls, gifts, chasing them on the street and at places frequented by the victim (NOBREGA, 2016), and may reach extreme behaviors of sexual abuse, which is the final result and more serious form of sexual harassment (DIAS, 2008).

Costa (1995) addresses the advantages offered on a sexual exchange such as promotions, wage increase, and work stability. This author considers inappropriate attitudes since subtle ways (look and speech) to punishments, when there is a negative answer, such as dismissal and physical violence. The risk of not remaining employed is not only a direct threat, but also an indirect threat to well-being in the workplace.

The International Labor Organization (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001, p.41) defines sexual harassment as “[...] persistent, persecutory conduct, which, by seeking to obtain sexual favors, results in violating sexual freedom” and expands on this notion when it adds the concept of sexual freedom as “[...] the notion of free disposition of the body, supported in the sphere of freedom rights, which presents itself as

constitutionally guaranteed legal goods” (p.47). Thus, the violation of this right is no longer just a problem between the two parties (harasser and harassed), but also begins to violate the rights guaranteed to every citizen.

When harassment becomes a sexual aspect, it constitutes violence materialized by the exercise of power, whether hierarchical, sexual gender, or economic (COSTA,1995; ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; DIAS, 2008; PINA; PAGE, 2015; NÓBREGA, 2016; BENDIXEN; KENNAIR, 2017). It is noteworthy that Brito (2011) and the International Labor Organization (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001) make it clear that reciprocal sexual advance does not constitute sexual harassment. Therefore, for harassment to be configured, it is essential that the harassing acts, that is, the unwanted and persistent actions are repudiated by the victim.

Sexual harassment can be classified into two forms: (a) sexual harassment due to intimidation or environmental harassment, characterized by the creation of a sexualized environment, thus establishing a hostile and intimidating environment (MEJÍAS; GARCIA, 2001; ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; MORAIS; MÚRIAS; MAGALHÃES, 2014; BRITO, 2011) and (b) sexual harassment by blackmail or *quid pro quo*, characterized by the existence of hierarchy and authority in labor relations (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; BRITO, 2011; PIERUCCI *et al.* 2014).

When sexual harassment occurs due to intimidation or due to the environment, it is notice that there is a dispute for professional space. The harasser makes use of sexual harassment instead of moral harassment when he finds a fragile person in the organization or socially, being, in most cases, women and homosexuals. Another characteristic of sexual harassment by intimidation is that the power relationship in the hierarchical sense is not a *sine qua non* condition for the occurrence of this harassment kind (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; MORAIS; MÚRIAS; MAGALHÃES, 2014).

In sexual harassment by intimidation, violence is characterized by the attack on the freedom to deny sexist actions. It is also noteworthy that, in this harassment kind, the victim is not necessarily punished or his position at work position is impaired. Thus, sexual harassment by intimidation is usually performed by co-workers (PIERUCCI *et al.*, 2014), consisting as a civil, labor, and administrative offense (BRITO, 2011).



Sexual harassment by blackmail or *quid pro quo*, on the other hand, is characterized by the existence of hierarchy and authority in labor relations (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; BRITO, 2011; PIERUCCI *et al.*, 2014). According to the International Labor Organization (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001) and Brito (2011), threatening the working, economic, and moral situation leads the victim to the understanding that he will have material damage if he does not accept the situation, or he will have professional advantages subject solely to his consent if he accepts that situation.

This type of harassment is a crime typified in the Brazilian Criminal Code (BRASIL, 1940) since 2001, after the enactment of Law No. 10,224 of May 15, 2001 (BRASIL, 2001), which amended the Decree-Law of No. 2,848 of December 7, 1940, in its Art. 216-A, which there is the fulfillment of the requirement to be considered “[...] hierarchical superior or ascendance inherent to the exercise of employment, position, or function” (BRASIL, 1940).

In Brazil, sexual harassment is only considered a crime when it occurs in the workplace and if it is done by a hierarchical superior. In accordance with Art. 216-A of the Brazilian Criminal Code (BRASIL, 1940), sexual harassment is legitimated as a way of achieving sexual favor or advantage due to the harasser occupying a higher hierarchical position, whose function or position shows some form of ascendancy and power over the victim. However, even though not being characterized as a crime, the harassment suffered by a co-worker, client, or subordinate is a real problem at the workplace environment.

In this context, Freitas (2005, p.15) refers to the “moral health” of the organization as a permanent critical behavior, regarding the practices of organizations and of its workers, guided by ethical, fair, and honest principles and commitments, able to achieve the entire network of organizational relationships – workers, competitors, and society. Thus, the role played by the organization becomes a condition for reducing cases of sexual harassment. Researchers related to the organization’s posture and values (HULIN; FITZGERALD; DRASGOW, 1996; FITZGERALD *et al.*, 1997; PRYOR; MEYERS, 2000; WILLNESS; STEEL; LEE, 2007; PINA; PAGE, 2015) show that tolerance in the organizational environment favors sexual harassment occurrence and its recurrence. On the other hand, organizations that have policies of intolerance to abusive behavior inhibit the acting of harassers as well as encourage the victims to defend themselves without fear of retaliation.

Therefore, as in moral harassment, the aggressor may find groups in the organizational

environment that confirm these harassing practices. Using anonymity as a protection to the harasser practice, a hostile and abusive environment is created (PRYOR; MEYERS, 2000; PINA; PAGE, 2015), in which responsibility is diffuse, making the crime not being pointed out to a single guilty, but to an acceptable behavior of a collectivity (CHAMBERLAIN *et al.*, 2008; PINA; PAGE, 2015).

Burges and Borgida (1997) complement and highlight that harassment is seen as something common, considering the belief that women at the corporate environment are not only co-workers, but potential sexual partners, an aggravated perspective at the workplace in which sexuality is not controlled. According to the International Labor Organization (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001), sexual harassment is a component that influences directly equal opportunities among men and women, since it is supported by the social structure of power and as such must be fought.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

According to Gil (2014), this study is classified as a descriptive investigation, carried out by a survey, with probabilistic sampling and quantitative data processing. The research universe was composed of 5,408 civil servants, allotted to a Federal Institution of Higher Education in the northern region of Brazil, consisting in administrative technicians and professors in management positions or not. The sampling was simple random probabilistic (Equation 1) (GIL, 2014), being calculated with a 90% safety margin and 6% error, which resulted in 251 valid survey questionnaires:

$$n = \frac{\sigma^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2(N-1) + \sigma^2 \cdot p \cdot q} \quad (1)$$

In which, n=sample size;  $\sigma^2$ =confidence level (in number of standard deviations); p=percentage with which the phenomenon occurs; q=complementary percentage; N=population size; and  $e^2$ =squared sampling error.

Data were obtained by a questionnaire organized into two sections: (a) the first section gathered sociodemographic information of respondents such as age, education, position, marital status, professional experience, among others; and (b) the second section was composed of forty-four affirmative statements characterizing moral and sexual harassment forms and the responses were obtained on a Likert scale composed of ten items, ranging from

one (1) for never happens to ten (10) for always occurs. The ethics committee for research approved the research with human beings under the protocol CAAE: 79380217.0.0000.0018.

Data processing used multivariate techniques; the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was selected to identify the characteristics of moral harassment, and multiple linear regression (MLR) was used to verify how moral and sexual harassment are related to removal requests. Thus, an attempt was made to observe dependency relationships among variables, therefore, to identify whether or not there was a relationship between requests for removal and the occurrence of harassment. According to Hair, Sant'Anna, and Gouvêa (2009), factor analysis is a data analysis technique, classified among the interdependence techniques, which stands out for its competence to summarize a large data volume in a limited number of latent factors or variables. Factor analysis can be expressed by Equation (2) (DILLON; GOLDSTEIN, 1984):

$$X = \alpha F + \varepsilon, \quad (2)$$

In which,  $X$  is the  $p$ -dimensional, transposed vector of observable variables, denoted by  $X = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_p)^t$ ;  $F$  is the  $q$ -dimensional, transposed vector of unobservable variables or latent variables, identified as common factors, expressed by  $F = (f_1, f_2, \dots, f_q)^t$ , being  $q < p$ ;  $\varepsilon$  is the  $p$ -dimensional, transposed vector of random variables or single factors,  $\varepsilon = (e_1, e_2, \dots, e_p)^t$ ; and  $\alpha$  is the matrix  $(p, q)$  of unknown constants, called "factor loadings".

In this study, according to Hair, Sant'Anna, and Gouvêa (2009), factorial scores were used, which can replace the original variables, and are expressed using the linear combination (Equation 3) (DILLON; GOLDSTEIN, 1984), in which, for each factor  $f_j$ , the  $i$ -th factorial score is defined by  $F_{ij}$ :

$$F_{ij} = b_1 x_{i1} + b_2 x_{i2} + \dots + b_p x_{ip}; \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, n; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, p \quad (3)$$

In which,  $b_i$  are the regression coefficients estimated for the  $n$  common factor scores; and  $x_{ij}$  are the  $n$  observations of  $p$  observable variables.

As for multiple linear regression (MLR), it is a dependency technique used to "estimate a mathematical function aiming to describe the behavior of a certain variable, called dependent, based on one or more variables values, called independent" (WEDGE; RABBIT, 2009, p.132). Thus, in the context of this study, multiple linear regression was used to assess the influence of harassment (independent variables), expressed by factor scores (3) on removal requests (dependent variable). Multiple linear regression can be expressed by Equation (4) (CUNHA; COELHO, 2009).

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_n x_n + e \quad (4)$$

In which, Y is the dependent variable;  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$  are independent variables;  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$  are the regression parameters; and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term or the residual of the regression.

## **4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1 INTERVIEWEE PROFILE**

The sample consisted of Brazilian people (98%), heterogeneous sex, but there was a slight predominance of women (52%) over men (48%). Among the interviewees, the most common age group was between twenty-six and forty-one years old (49%), and the interviewees were high educated, ranking at a level of educational specialization in most of the observations (35%). The married (40%) and self-declared dark skinned (60%) interviewees were professionals in stable positions (97%), mostly in technical-administrative positions (78%), who would not receive rewarded function nor were in a management position (56%). Professional experience ranked in the strata from one to five years (29%) and over twenty years of employment at the institution (33%); as for the workplace, the institutes presented almost half of the sample (43%).

### **4.2 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Data were initially treated with exploratory factor analysis, and the adequacy of the data matrix was verified. The determinant was different from zero, and the KMO tests (KMO=0.920) and Bartlett's sphericity tests ( $\chi^2=4,853.19$ , p-value=0.000) showed values considered high, an aspect that confirmed the matrix adjustment to the use of factor analysis. To determine the number of factors, the eigenvalue criterion was used, combining extraction by the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Varimax orthogonal rotation.

These procedures enabled to summarize the forty-four original variables into twenty-four, distributed into four factors that explained 66.05% of the data variance and showed satisfactory internal consistency according to Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.912 (Factor 1), 0.882 (Factor 2), 0.863 (Factor 3), 0.859 (Factor 4), and 0.936 for all variables together. Thus, the factors were considered reliable and unbiased, according to the parameters shown in Kline (1998) and Hair, Sant'Anna, and Gouvêa (2009), who consider Cronbach's alphas greater than 0.600 and 0.700 to be adequate (Table 1).

**Table 1** Factors, eigenvalues, explained variance, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Factor	Number of variables	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
1	7	4.68	19.52	0.912
2	6	3.97	16.53	0.882
3	6	3.96	16.50	0.863
4	5	3.24	13.50	0.859
Total	24	15.85	66.05	0.936

KMO=0.920, Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2$ ) = 4.853.19, 1% significant  
Number of factors determined by the Eigenvalue criterion  
Factor extraction by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and orthogonal rotation by the Varimax method

Source: Field Research by Authors (2019).

**Tabela 2** Factors, variables, factor loadings and commonalities

Factor	Affirmative Statements	Variable	Factor loading	h <sup>2</sup>
1	Deliberately, needed information was omitted to carry out the tasks	V01	0,821	0,719
1	An excessive amount of tasks was assigned, making it impossible to fulfill them with quality and on time	V02	0,754	0,714
1	Third parties were addressed to transmit the message you, even if in your presence	V03	0,741	0,675
1	Situations was created to favor errors that were attributed to you	V04	0,727	0,689
1	Outdated information about the activities to be carried was transmitted to you	V05	0,665	0,565
1	Any contact with you was refused, even visual contact	V06	0,656	0,671
1	Despicable or humiliating tasks were assigned to you	V07	0,650	0,629
2	Aggressive or unbalanced attitudes were attributed to you	V08	0,783	0,694
2	Malicious, prejudiced, or derogatory comments about you were done	V09	0,777	0,718
2	Physical contact considered offensive was done and made it seems to be accidental	V10	0,732	0,635
2	You were excluded from the activities carried out by the work teams	V11	0,682	0,657
2	Ironic jokes were made about any difficulty or disability you have	V12	0,659	0,574
2	Your work was criticized unfairly or exaggeratedly	V13	0,625	0,607
3	The existence of conflicts or misunderstandings was denied, even when they were evident	V14	0,842	0,745
3	Deliberately, events promoted by the institution were failed to be communicated to you	V15	0,802	0,722
3	Sexual and offensive proposals were carried out to you, justified by your physical appearance and availability	V16	0,786	0,671
3	You were excluded from the activities carried out by the work teams	V17	0,745	0,615
3	It was insinuated that you were inferior to others	V18	0,742	0,652
3	Deliberately, the difficulty level of activities that would specifically fit you was increased	V19	0,573	0,553
4	You were attacked physically (pushing, pulling something aggressively, etc.)	V20	0,738	0,697
4	Sexually offensive comments about your dressing style or behaving were made	V21	0,707	0,640
4	Some of your characteristics (nationality, origin, private life, etc.) was mocked.	V22	0,707	0,729
4	They talked to you loudly	V23	0,690	0,619
4	You were insulted with obscene and degrading terms	V24	0,650	0,672

Source: Field Research by Authors (2019).

The factors explained most of the variance of the variables, showing commonalities greater than 0.553 (Table 2). The naming of the factors occurred through the semantic

interpretation of the variables. Thus, Factor 1 gathered seven variables and was called “Induce to error”. Factor 2 with six variables was identified as “Disqualify”. Factor 3, also with six variables, was identified as “Isolate and refuse communication”, and Factor 4, with five variables, caught forms of “Verbal, physical, and sexual violence”, and was named as such.

The first factor, "Induce to error" (Table 2), explained 19.52% of the variance, as: (a) gathered the information omitted for performing the tasks (V01); (b) the assignment of an excessive amount of work, making it impossible to perform it with quality and within the timeline (V02); (c) ignoring the victim's presence, addressing to third parties, so they retransmit the message (V03); (d) the creation of situations that leads to errors that can be attributed to the harassed person (V04); (e) the transference of outdated information (V05); (f) the refusal of contact, even visual (V06); and (g) in addition to assigning despicable or humiliating tasks (V07). This set of actions is usually adopted by the harasser (HIRIGOYEN, 2000; GUEDES, 2008; BARRETO, 2003) aiming to lead the victim to make mistakes that can be cunningly used to denigrate the professional image and even harm the professional self-assessment of the harassed person.

Thus, the victim of harassment often does not realize that his mistakes were caused by the aggressor's action. According to Hirigoyen (2000) and Guedes (2008), an atmosphere of mistrust is created for that worker. He ends up stigmatized as the culprit in serious errors in his activities what can make the victim unable to defend himself. The victim may react with anger to the own mistakes, suggesting to others that he has an unbalanced and aggressive behavior. In this sense, according to Leyman (1990), Hirigoyen (2000), and Guedes (2008), the victim starts considering the removal and performing humiliating and despicable tasks imposed by the harasser to be fair, since opportunities to show competence were given to him, to which he did not answer satisfactorily.

The second factor, identified as "Disqualify", explained 16.53% of the variance and gathered among the harassing actions: (a) the aggressive or unbalanced attitudes attributed to the harassed person (V08); (b) malicious, prejudiced, or derogatory comments about the victim (V09); (c) causing physical contact offensively and making it appear accidental (V10); and (d) showing no interest when transferring information to the victim (V11).

By disqualifying the victim, the aggressor limits his ability to react, since the image of the harassed person weakens before the group due to essentially unbalanced aggressive reactions that are constantly attributed to him (HIRIGOYEN, 2000; GUEDES, 2008).



Reacting to negative, derogatory, malicious, and ironic-laden comments becomes increasingly difficult, because, when disqualified, the victim loses the support from co-workers or professionals from the higher levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Often, to disqualify the victim, the aggressor uses sexual harassment, especially to target vulnerable workers, often women and homosexuals (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001). Thus, offensive and embarrassing physical contact is justified as accidental, and often aiming to create a hostile and intimidating environment (ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; BRITO, 2011; MORAIS; MÚRIAS; MAGALHÃES, 2014). Sexual harassment is also one of the ways to discriminate and disqualify the harassed person (JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2004), as his complaints are called into question by the aggressor, who gives a distorted perception of the facts.

Disqualification permeates through the unfair and exaggerated criticism at the workplace, which undergoes strong vigilance, and non-interest showed when transferring information. For Zabala (2003), neither co-workers nor the harassed person realizes the disqualification game, since the lack of confidence in performing activities occurs exclusively due to the individual's inability to fulfill them satisfactorily.

The third factor, "Isolate and refuse communication", explained 16.50% of the data variance and gathered the denial of communication as a way to isolate the harassed person. Positioned among the forms of moral harassment, isolation expresses one of the most common harassing practice in labor relations (LEYMAN, 1990; HIRIGOYEN, 2000). Thus, when the harasser interrupts communication with the harassed person, the harasser makes any form of understanding and overcoming any disagreement impossible (MATTOS *et al.*, 2010). Isolation makes the victim feel excluded from the group, as if they no longer belonged to that environment (LEYMAN, 1990). For Deutschman (1991) and Dias (2008), isolation is one of the common practices in sexual harassment (V16), which creates a favorable environment to passive reaction to unwanted sexual proposals.

By making the level of individual activities difficult (V19), the harasser makes impossible to the victim finishes his tasks, justifying to everyone else why the harassed person may be excluded from activities and events carried out by the organization in the future (V15). Dismissed from participating in work teams (V17), the harassed person distances himself from other co-workers and, alone, without the support from others, he

becomes weakened. Thus, this worker starts to feel increasingly isolated in the organization, due to his image of inferiority created by the harasser (V18). Hirigoyen (2000) and Guedes (2008) emphasize that denying the existence of conflicts (V14) is also a way to refuse communication, as there is nothing to discuss about the problems that, supposedly, are only in the mind of the harassed worker. In this aspect, the power exercised over the victim and other co-workers by the harasser affects directly the harassed person's behavior and the image realized about him by others (DAHL, 1957; ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; ZABALA, 2003; GUIMARÃES; CANÇADO; LIMA, 2016). As a result, Nunes and Tolfo (2014) emphasize that isolation and lack of communication cause physical and psychological issues, in addition to influencing directly the dismissal or retirement of the worker who is the victim of harassment practices.

The fourth factor, “Verbal, physical, and sexual violence”, gathered extreme behaviors that show the harasser's actions. Studies carried out by Hulin, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1996), Fitzgerald *et al.* (1997), Pryor and Meyers (2000), Willness, Steel, and Lee (2007), and Pina and Page (2015) show that exacerbated tolerance in the organizational environment facilitates the occurrence of verbal, physical, and sexual violence and their recurrence. Heloani and Barreto (2015) highlight that such violence expresses the aggressor's regular habits and the lack of control from the organization over its employees. Thus, in many cases, the factor “Verbal, physical, and sexual violence” is considered the last stage of a series of aggressions considered to be a minor fact.

In this context, harassment occurs when using offensive sexual comments, either because of the dressing style or the judgment of behavioral mode (V21). It increases when the person's dignity is attacked, through screams insults (V23), using obscene and degrading terms (V24), mocking some personal characteristic (V22), and reaching physical violence due to the aggressor's lack of control when pushing or pulling something untimely (V20). Although these aspects can occur with anyone, the erotic approach of an eminently sexual nature is more common when approaching women (COSTA, 1995; ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO, 2001; PINA; PAGE, 2015; BENDIXEN; KENNAIR, 2017).

#### 4.3 MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION

After factor analysis being done, multiple linear regression (MLR) was used to analyze the incidence of moral and sexual harassment in removal requests and, therefore, identify dependency relationships among the variables under study. The Backward method was used, considering the statement “I have already been transferred from other departments due to some form of harassment” as the dependent variable (DV), and the values of the factor scores as independent variables (IV). The scores (IV) were 1% significant and the results from regression are shown in Table 3.

**Tabela 3** Multiple linear regression to the influence of harassment on removal requests

Dependent Variable (DV): I have already been transferred from other departments due to some form of					
Independent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T Test	P-value	VIF
Constante	5.087649	0.176027	28.90263	0.0000	
F1 – Induce to error	0.773514	0.176379	4.385524	0.0000	1,00
F2 – Disquality	0.781346	0.176379	4.429928	0.0000	1,00
F3 – Isolate and refuse communication	0.527037	0.176379	2.988092	0.0031	1,00
F4 - Verbal, physical, and sexual violence	0.767304	0.176379	4.350315	0.0000	1,00
R-square	0.213331	DV Meam		5.0988	
Adjusted R-square	0.200540	DV Standart Derivation		3.1190	
F-test	16.67775	D Estatistic		1.6916	
P-value (F-test)	0.000000				
Jaque-Bera Test (2,1297, p-valor=0,3447)		Breuch-Pagan-Godfrey Test (1,1256, p-valor=0,3449)			

Source: Field Research by authors (2019).

The assumptions of multiple linear regression (MLR) were investigated and met its requirements. The F Test (1% significant) showed that at least one of the independent variables (IV) was able to influence the dependent variable (DV). Residuals showed normal and independent distribution according to the Jaque-Bera test (p-value=0.3447). There was a lack of multicollinearity, attested by the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic and unit values (1.00) for all independent variables (IV), an aspect expected a priori, since the scores rotated with Varimax are naturally orthogonal, and the absence of heteroscedasticity was found by the *Breuch-Pagan-Godfrey* test (p-value=0.3449).

The model estimation, with 20% adjusted r-squared, showed adequate explanatory power for social research and that removal requests can, in part, be explained due to moral and sexual harassment. It is found that the average of the dependent variable at 5.09 ( $\pm 3.12$ ), close to the scale center (5.50), indicates an intermediate intensity of harassment due to department removal requests. As for the independent variables (IV), the 1% positive and

significant coefficients show that the model is coherent and that the independent variables influence the desire for removal. Thus, it is found that Induce to error (F1), Disqualify (F2), Isolate and refuse communication (F3), and practicing some form of violence such as Verbal, physical, or sexual (F4) are elements that lead to removal requests.

For Mattos *et al.* (2010), the act of marginalizing workers, moving them away from their usual activities, aims to gradually reduce their satisfaction at work, forcing them to leave the environment or even ask for removal. In this sense, the organization that does not fight harassing behavior compromises the work team due to the loss of intellectual capital, since the worker who leaves the organization takes the acquired knowledge and experience with himself, in addition to fostering increasingly aggressive actions, creating a work environment of fear and strain.

In public service, the harasser is often more aggressive due to the impossibility or greater difficulty in dismissing the victim. Thus, the civil servant commonly asks for removal and, even when he is attended, he takes the risk of having his reputation compromised in the organization (HIRIGOYEN, 2006; MATTOS *et al.*, 2010). In accordance with Einarsen, Nielsen, and Glasø (2017), harassment in the workplace causes an unsustainable environment for the victim, who sees no other solution besides leaving.

## **5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This research had made it possible to characterize the forms of moral harassment in four factors, or latent variables, which explained most of the data variance and were identified as "Induce to error" (Main factor), "Disqualify", "Isolate and refuse communication" and "Verbal, physical, and sexual violence". This factors' composition shows the spiral process that characterizes harassment and that usually starts in a veiled way, leading the victim to error, thus enabling him to be disqualified in the face of other co-workers and professionals from the highest levels of the organizational hierarchy. Weakened and alone, he becomes more and more isolated from others, due to being considered incompetent and harmful to the group. On the other hand, interruption in communication excludes any possibility of getting along with the aggressor, which could stop the attacks and restore a more balanced work environment. In this moment, alone and fragile, he becomes an easy prey to the harasser. In the final phase, the aggressor is no longer concerned about hiding his intentions and goes into open actions, such as verbal aggression, physical violence, and sexual harassment.

Results showed that all factors identified in this study had been able to influence removal requests, confirming the co-related relationship. Results showed that harassment influenced 20.71% of internal removal, which occurred by harassed servers' requests. This aspect confirms the positive association between psychological harassment and the need to leave the department or section and, therefore, escape from the aggressor, which reinforces the needs for actions to fight violence at workplace as a strategy to provide a work environment healthier, more constructive, and more productive. Among the limitations of this study, it is noteworthy that it has not included the servers who asked for dismissal or transference to other institutions, nor other campus beyond the university headquarters, which can present suggestions for future research, as well as new opportunities for qualitative investigations to study the phenomenon in greater depth.

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