

UNIVERSITY OF PORTO



FEUP FACULDADE DE ENGENHARIA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

Master's Degree in Innovation and Technological Entrepreneurship

Master's Degree Dissertation

How Culture and Ethic Can Hinder the Growth of Small Businesses and Startups

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July 2024

Abstract

In their quest for growth and market prominence, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face significant challenges related to organizational culture and ethics, which although they are different concepts, they are directly related.

Organizational culture, characterized by collaboration, creativity and commitment, significantly influences a company's ability to innovate and respond to market demands. As highlighted by Helfat and Raubitschek (2000), the synergy between these cultural elements promotes an environment conducive to long-term success. In addition, ethical leadership and integrity are fundamental for SMEs, as emphasized by Wyland et al. (2019), who point out that ethical practices are essential for building a sustainable and respectable business.

The factors that can boost or decline a company's growth are diverse. But companies, especially smaller ones where the focus is on production, don't always bother to understand how culture and ethics can directly affect talent retention, customer care and how to position themselves in the market. (Schein, 2010) points out that organizational culture, which encompasses the values, beliefs and practices shared within a company, plays a key role in fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment. (Helfat & Raubitschek, 2000) stresses that when companies establish a culture that values creativity and commitment, they are better able to respond to market changes and foster innovation.

The question motivating this investigation is to identify and understand the cultural and ethical factors that can affect the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This study was conducted by means of a web-based survey aimed at professionals who work or have worked in companies with the profile in question.

The research was carried out using a cross-sectional, non-experimental methodology, based on the analysis and comparison of data obtained through an online survey. The aim of this study is to create a practical tool to identify risk factors and points of attention related to organizational culture and ethics.

The proposed tool will serve as a valuable resource for business leaders, helping them to implement cultural and ethical practices that promote a healthy and sustainable work environment. By identifying and mitigating potential risks, the tool will help strengthen the ethical foundation of SMEs, promoting their growth and longevity in the market.

As a final result of this work, managers and CEOs will be offered a tool that allows them to identify risk factors, points of attention that the company needs to pay attention to in terms of culture and ethics. This tool is a map that can be used as a guide to boost areas that present the most risk and attention.

Keywords: Ethics, organisational behaviour, culture, innovation, technology, SME.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to God always, and first, as a Christian, I believe that nothing in our lives can happen without effort, purpose, and a lot of determination. I am grateful to my father, Edir, a man of simple origin who always believed in the power of education to change lives, who educated me and my brothers in this way, provided us with a study base, with which, without the financial and moral support, I would not have been able to achieve my goals. Today, I am completing an international master's degree outside my country.

I thank Professor João José Ferreira for the opportunity to study this master's degree. I remember during the interview for the selection of the master's degree, how eager I was and how cordial he was in hating the most confident candidates. A special thanks to my boyfriend, friends and family who always believed in me, even when I didn't think achieving several goals throughout my life was possible.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Manuel Aroso who shared his time and knowledge to make this dissertation meaningful and made the work more enjoyable.

My sincere thanks to everyone for their support and encouragement!

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1 Introduction

1.1 Framing of the topic

The business scenario has been highlighted recently due to the growing appreciation of organizational culture and business ethics, especially in small companies and technology startups. These emerging organizations, which have become increasingly agile and innovative, face unique challenges as they seek to establish themselves and grow in a highly competitive and dynamic environment.

Organizational culture, comprised of values, norms, beliefs, and practices shared within a company, plays a fundamental role in how organizations operate and develop. In startups and small companies, particularly in the technology sector, a strong culture can drive innovation, promote collaboration between multidisciplinary teams, and attract qualified talent (Raubitschek, 2000). However, the lack of a solid organizational culture or a toxic culture can undermine the growth and sustainability of these companies.

In today's business dynamics, the ethical conduct adopted by an organization plays a crucial role in building internal and external trust between employees and business partners. In a context where transparency and responsibility are increasingly valued, small companies and technology startups' ethical decisions can significantly impact their reputation and longevity in the market (Ferrell, Fraedrich & Ferrell, 2018).

Given this context, this thesis proposes to investigate how organizational culture and business ethics influence the growth and development of these companies and identify the most critical factors. The result of this study can help small business owners, managers, and the collaborative body of these companies identify these factors within their companies and thus outline change strategies to generate increasingly positive results.

1.2 Motivations

My name is Aline Miranda Soares, a Brazilian student pursuing a Master's in Innovation and Technological Entrepreneurship (MIET) at the University of Porto (Portugal). This dissertation represents the final part of my master's program, aligning my academic endeavors with my professional experiences.

With over 15 years of experience in technology, I have worked for small companies, startups, and multinationals. Throughout my career, I have observed how organizational culture impacts various aspects of an organization and how ethics is intrinsically linked to culture. This theme resonates deeply with my professional journey, presenting numerous exploratory opportunities.

The motivation to choose this topic stemmed from an insightful conversation with Manuel Aroso. Initially, I aimed to focus on subjects within my expertise, such as agile methodologies, specifically Scrum and Kanban. These methodologies are integral to my work, and I have dedicated time to studying and acquiring certifications in them. However, while researching their applicability, I felt a need to engage in a topic that offers a more hands-on approach and personal engagement.

Manuel Aroso proposed exploring the intersection of ethics and culture, which sparked my interest. Our subsequent conversation further motivated me to delve into this subject. In the corporate world, ethics encompasses the norms and values defined by companies, shaping their codes of conduct and work environment. When combined with organizational culture, these elements provide a rich field for exploring and understanding the shared values, beliefs, and habits within a company.

My goal is to develop a study that highlights the benefits and obstacles to a company's growth, both financially and personally for its professionals, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups. This work aims to uncover how ethics and culture can drive or hinder growth, offering insights that are both academically relevant and practically applicable.

1.3 Problem statement - review

The relationship between organizational culture and ethics remains largely unexplored and shrouded in complexity. In smaller corporate environments, we have limited data to study or understand the multifaceted reasons that hinder the growth of these companies and the development of their employees. Ethics are often imposed, and a company's culture is shaped by the customs and values of its employees. However, when a company defines and disseminates its culture among employees, is it really considering the common good or is it primarily focused on fulfilling the goals of its founder(s) (Hofstede, 1991; Treviño & Nelson, 2017)?

Are employees' values and cultural backgrounds genuinely taken into account? Are these values a reflection of previous professional experiences? If so, is there a concerted effort to include diverse values and motivate inclusion? These questions are critical as they directly affect the collaborative environment and can lead to conflicts of interest, resulting in a lack of ethics or a corporate culture that stifles collaboration and hinders the growth of both the company and its employees.

These are fundamental questions that deserve thorough investigation. Investigating these aspects can reveal underlying problems faced by small businesses, shedding light on the balance between company goals and employee well-being, the integration of diverse values and the overall ethical framework within which these companies operate. As Schein (2010) argues, "organizational culture is created, embedded, evolves and can be changed" (p. 3), highlighting the importance of understanding the underlying assumptions that form an organization's culture and how leaders can effectively influence and shape that culture.

This exploration can ultimately provide valuable insights and practical solutions to foster a harmonious corporate environment conducive to growth.

1.4 Objective

1.4.1 Scope of work

This study investigates the impact of organizational culture and business ethics on the growth of small businesses and startups in the technology sector. Its scope aims to research small companies and startups, preferably in the technology field, identifying successful and unsuccessful cases to understand how organizational culture and business ethics influenced their growth. Real cases will be analyzed to extract lessons learned and relevant insights.

Based on the findings, it will be possible to identify factors that impact small businesses' growth or expansion. The result of this investigation is an invitation directed to leaders, managers, and future micro-entrepreneurs. With this information, these professionals can identify similar factors within their organizational contexts and thus create practical actions to improve the work environment and stimulate sustainable growth.

This scope of work aims to contribute to understanding the role of organizational culture and business ethics in the growth of small businesses and startups in the technology sector, providing practical insights and targeted recommendations for the challenges these organizations face.

1.4.2 Structure of Dissertation

This document is organized into seven chapters, and 2 appendices

- Chapter 1 – Introduction – Includes the contextualization of the subject, the inspiration for carrying out the investigation, the problem under analysis, and the layout of the dissertation.
- Chapter 2 – Literature Review – Describes the literature review methodology, presents the searches and their results, the excluded articles, queries used to perform the searches, the selected articles and seminars and figures from research carried out in Scopus.
- Chapter 3 – Methodology of analysis – Here are laid out the objectives and the methodology adopted in this investigation, as well as the main issues identified and their hypotheses. In this chapter the structure of the online survey and the interviews is also presented.
- Chapter 4 – Results of the analysis – Presentation of the main results obtained from the surveys and presentation of the data in various tables.
- Chapter 5 – Conclusion of the results
- Chapter 6 – Tool created following an analysis of the data which serves as a suggestion for managers to apply in order to identify how the cultural and ethical scene is developing in their companies.
- Chapter 7 – Main conclusion of the dissertation and definition of future works
- References
- Appendix – A: Survey results
B: Complementary interviews

2 Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review Introduction

The literature review proposal for this dissertation will explore the growth perspective of small businesses, including micro companies and startups in the technology sector, analyzing factors such as organizational culture, ethics, and morals in the business environment.

The literature used in this review was sourced from Scopus and ScienceDirect (peer-reviewed research literature databases) and the Web of Science and Google Scholar websites.

2.2 Literature review methodology

The research for the articles for this dissertation began in 2022 when the course "Research Methods for Dissertation" was taken. The following study was conducted during the course, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Scopus Researches 2022. Original from author

ID	Source	Query	Documents	Date
1	Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* and cultur*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Organizational Behavior") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Organizational Behavior"))	107	2022/10/20
2	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* AND cultur* AND "Organizat*" AND ("Behavior" OR "Behaviour"))	1875	2022/10/27
3	Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* and cultur*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (business AND ethics) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (organization AND culture) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (organization AND behaviour) AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY (nursing))	912	2022/11/13
4	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* AND cultur* AND "Organizat*" AND ("Behavior" OR "Behaviour") OR citizenship) AND "decision making"	118	2022/11/13

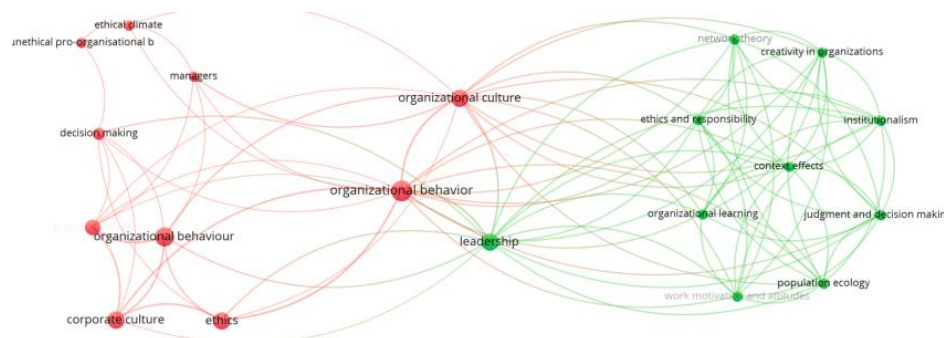


Figure 1 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 1). Original from author.

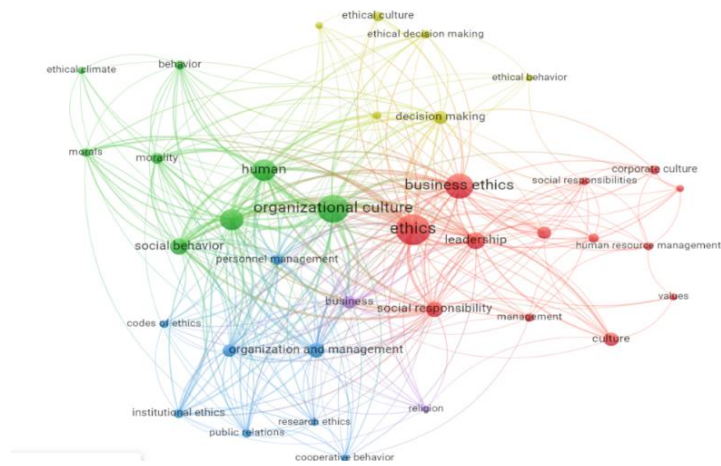


Figure 2 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 2). Original from author.

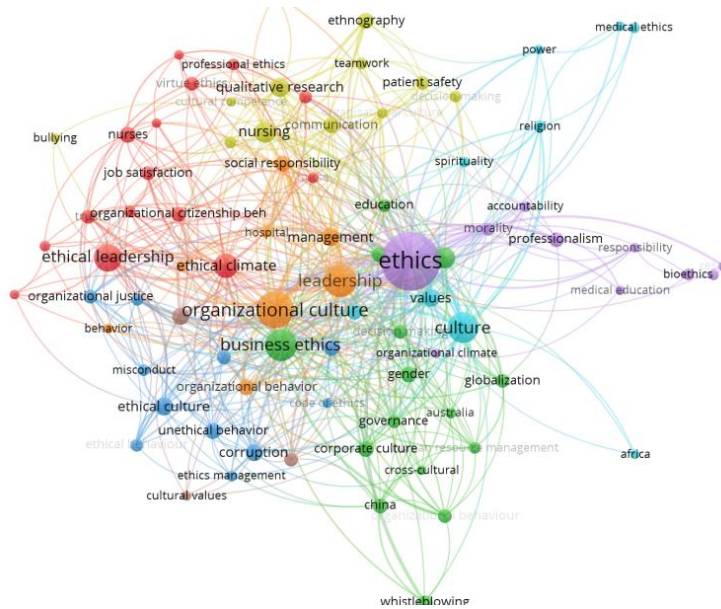


Figure 3 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 3). Original from author.

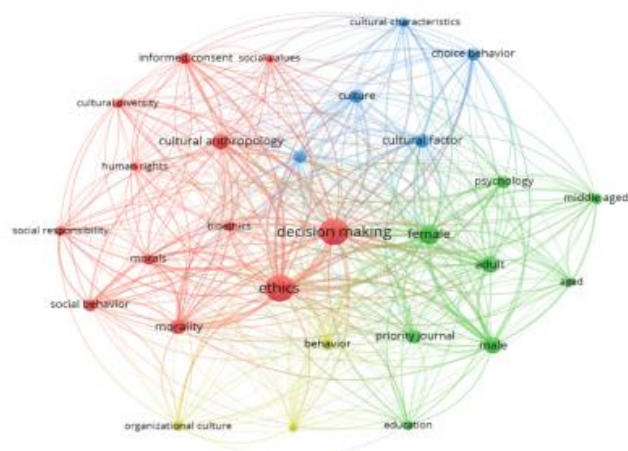


Figure 4 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 4). Original from author.

Due to the time elapsed since the initial research conducted in 2022, it was necessary to update and refine the searches. In this new research, when exporting to the VOS viewer system, all words that did not align with the research objective of this study were removed. The result was a more concise word cloud compared to the previous one. The research excluded articles related to the health field, such as medicine and nursing, due to the many medical articles presented in the searches.

The PRISMA methodology (Liberati et al., 2009) was followed for this new research and update, as seen in Figure 9 PRISMA Diagram. Adapted from Liberati et al. (2009), the repositories of scientific articles, Scopus and Web of Science, were used to find scientific information about the topic. The searches occurred between 2024/03/19 and 2024/03/31 and are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Scopus Researches 2024. Original from author

ID	Source	Query	Documents	Date
5	Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* and cultur*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Organizational Behavior") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Organizational Behavior"))	137	2024/03/19
6	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* AND cultur* AND "Organizat*" AND ("Behavior" OR "Behaviour"))	2.084	2024/03/19
7	Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* AND cultur*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (business AND ethics) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (tecnology AND organization) AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY (medical AND physiological))	892	2024/03/19
8	Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (ethic* and cultur*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (business AND ethics) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (organization AND culture) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (organization AND behaviour) AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY (nursing))	1037	2024/03/31

The literature review proposal for this dissertation will explore the growth perspective of small businesses, including micro companies and startups in the technology sector, analyzing factors such as organizational culture, ethics, and morals in the business environment.

The literature used in this review was sourced from Scopus and ScienceDirect (peer-reviewed research literature databases) and the Web of Science and Google Scholar websites.

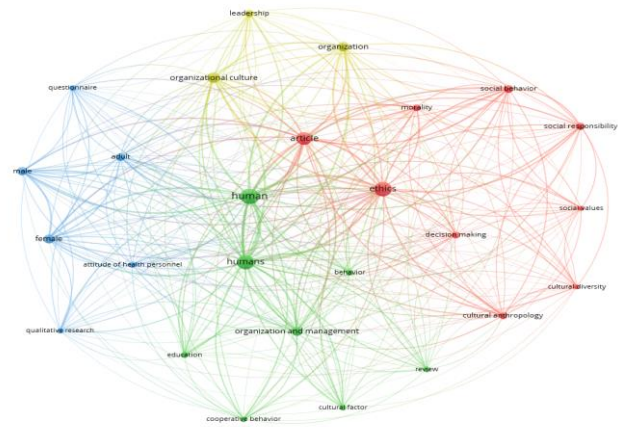


Figure 5 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 5). Original from author.

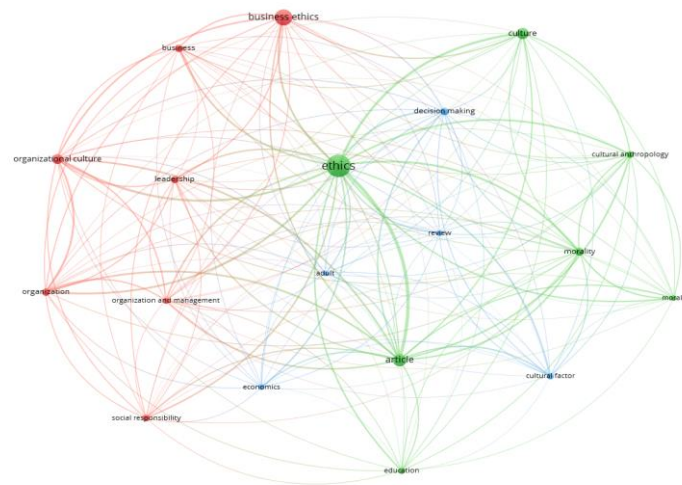


Figure 6 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 6). Original from author.

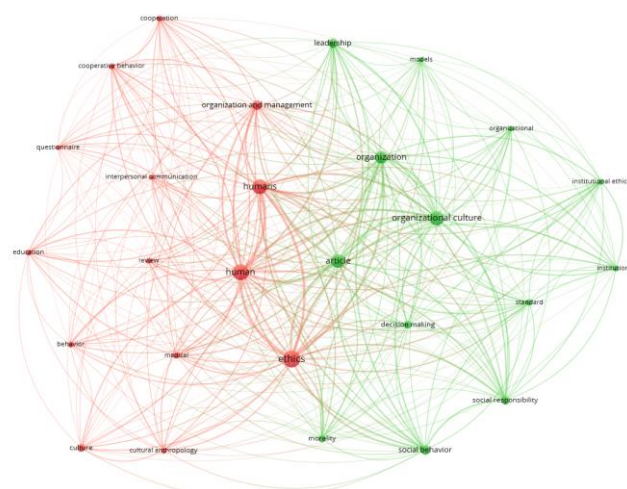


Figure 7 Keyword (VOS viewer ID 7). Original from author.

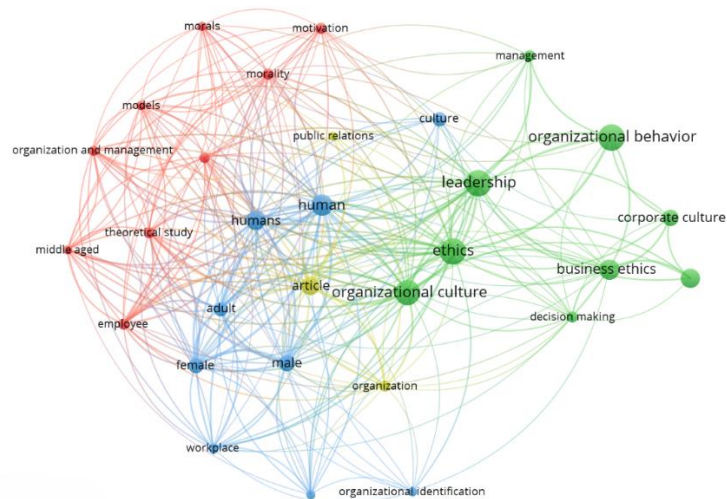


Figure 8 Keyword cloud (VOS viewer ID 8). Original from author.

2.2.1 Prisma

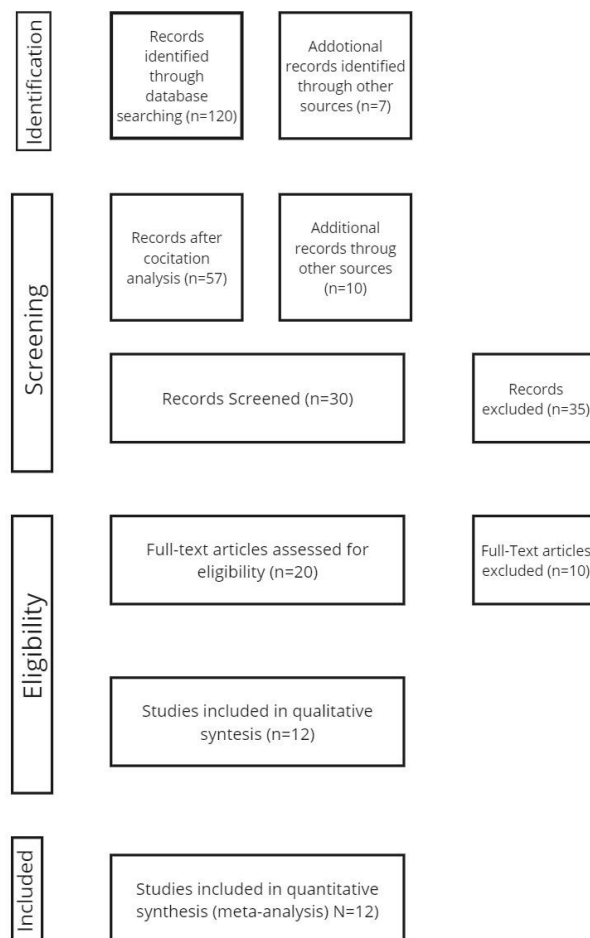


Figure 9 PRISMA Diagram. Adapted from Liberati et al. (2009)

2.2.2 Excluded papers

Many articles addressed culture and ethics in the health area, including articles on nursing, psychology and medicine. Others involved leadership and studies directed at specific countries. These were excluded because they were not relevant.

2.2.3 Selected papers

The articles selected after screening, as shown in the references, align with the proposal of this dissertation.

The works cover several areas of activity, which were necessary to limit them to the technology sector; many articles have timeless concepts that can be applied in different contexts.

Other articles were found during searches carried out on Google Scholar, Web of Science and by articles referenced in some of the articles found in searches carried out on Scopus.

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 Culture

Culture, in general terms, refers to the set of values, beliefs, norms and practices that characterize a group or society. According to Hofstede (1991), culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of a group or category of people from others." This definition highlights that culture is made up of behavioral patterns and thoughts shared within a society. Hofstede also argues that culture influences all aspects of social and organizational life, shaping the way individuals interact and make decisions.

Schein (2010) broadens this discussion by exploring how organizational culture is created, embedded, evolves and can be changed. He argues that an organization's culture is formed through the beliefs and values shared by its members and that leaders play a key role in shaping and transforming this culture. According to Schein, "organizational culture is created, embedded, evolves and can be changed" (p. 3), highlighting the importance of understanding the underlying assumptions that form an organization's culture.

Sinclair (1993) offers various approaches to understanding culture, emphasizing that it can both promote and inhibit ethical behaviour. Sinclair points out that organizational culture plays a crucial role in defining ethical practices and behaviour within a company. According to him, a strong and well-defined culture can foster integrity and responsibility among employees, while a weak or poorly aligned culture can lead to unethical behavior and a toxic work environment.

2.3.2 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is one of the fundamental pillars for understanding the internal workings of a company. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture can be defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions", which includes beliefs, values and norms that guide the behavior of the organization's members. These elements form the company's collective identity, influencing everything from decision-making to daily practices.

Organizational culture is not static; it evolves over time and is shaped by leadership, interactions between organizational members and the company's responses to external challenges (Schein, 2010). It plays a crucial role in fostering a cohesive working environment and defining acceptable standards of behavior within the company.

From a critical perspective, organizational culture can be seen as a mechanism that strengthens internal cohesion and defines the way employees perceive their responsibilities and

goals within the organization (Schein, 2010). It also influences the way the company relates to its customers, partners and external stakeholders, contributing to its reputation and corporate image.

For an organizational culture to be effective, it is essential that the values and norms established are clear, communicated consistently and aligned with the company's strategic objectives (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). A strong culture can boost organizational performance by promoting innovation, collaboration and adaptation to changes in the business environment.

2.3.3 Ethics

Ethics, in its root concept, is nothing more than the theory of just and moral actions. It can also be understood as character orientation, often having a meaning equivalent to that of moral philosophy (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 2015).

In an organizational context, ethics is not only restricted to individual conduct, but the company as a whole proposes and implements ethical behaviours that guide its operations and interactions. These behaviors are based on principles that seek to align the organization's objectives with social and moral expectations, creating a fair and responsible work environment (Treviño & Nelson, 2017).

(Treviño & Nelson, 2017) also point out that the ethical conduct of companies involves actions guided by principles that aim to achieve good without causing harm to others, while adhering to the values established by society and professional groups. Each profession defines its own code of ethics, which can vary in different areas. Business ethics strengthen a company, create coherence between its principles and values, improve its reputation and positively impact its results.

Ferrell and Fraedrich (2015), explore the connection between business ethics and sustainability. They suggest that incorporating ethical principles into business strategies not only improves a company's reputation, but also contributes to its long-term sustainability. Companies that operate ethically tend to have stronger relationships with stakeholders, which is crucial for their survival and growth.

When the concept of ethics is broached, it is natural to associate it with corruption, because whenever ethical standards and unethical conduct are mentioned, it is expected that corrupt behavior will be exemplified. The authors Ashforth and Anand (2003) highlight how corruption becomes normal within organizations, they describe the process by which unethical practices are integrated into organizational routines, justified to mitigate guilt and socialized to new members as acceptable behaviour. This study highlights the importance of an ethical organizational culture to avoid the normalization of corruption.

An ethical company benefits society by maintaining fairness with its suppliers, customers, employees, partners and even the government. Business ethics not only involves adherence to legal standards, but also embodies a commitment to integrity, fairness and social responsibility (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 2015). This ethical conduct is crucial for fostering trust and reliability, which are essential for long-term success and sustainability.

Furthermore, business ethic is an integral part of social and socio-environmental responsibility, emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in broader social and environmental contexts. Companies that prioritize ethical practices contribute to the creation of a just society and a sustainable environment, which in turn supports their own growth and development (Carroll, 1991; Freeman & Velamuri, 2006).

Fernandez and Camacho (2016) identified that a well-established ethical infrastructure is crucial to promote organizational practices aligned with ethical values. They emphasize the

importance of clear policies, ethical leadership and transparent communication as essential elements to create an ethical environment within companies. This study highlights the relevance of an organizational culture that supports ethical behaviour to strengthen the integrity and reputation of SMEs.

The literature on business ethics reveals the complexity and importance of integrating ethical principles into companies' daily operations. Studies show that organizational culture, cultural sensitivity, leadership and sustainability are crucial elements that influence ethical practices. By adopting an ethical approach, companies not only improve their reputation and sustainability, but also create a fairer and more trusting working environment.

2.3.4 SME

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are defined by the European Union as those employing up to 250 people. According to European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, SMEs are categorized into three types: micro-enterprises, which employ fewer than 10 people; small enterprises, which employ fewer than 50 people; and medium-sized enterprises, which employ fewer than 250 people.

These companies are the backbone of the EU economy, representing the majority of the world's economies, driving innovation, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

2.3.5 Literature Review Conclusion

By reviewing the literature, it was possible to understand the main concepts related to organizational culture, business ethics, SMEs and talent retention. It is clear from the research that these elements are fundamental to the success of modern organizations. Organizational culture, which encompasses shared values, norms and practices within a company, not only defines its identity, but also directly influences the ethical behavior of employees. On the other hand, business ethics, which are based on moral and legal principles, not only strengthen a company's reputation, but also underpin solid relationships with stakeholders and long-term sustainability.

For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), implementing an ethical culture is especially crucial, as it helps establish integrity and trust in the market. In addition, talent retention emerges as a significant challenge, where strategies that go beyond financial remuneration are essential to attract and retain qualified professionals. Integrating career development, work-life balance and a positive working environment are key aspects in promoting employee loyalty and commitment.

In short, a solid and ethical organizational culture not only guides the company's internal and external behaviour, but also promotes a healthy and productive working environment. Integrating ethical values into all business practices not only strengthens the company vis-à-vis its competitors, but also contributes to a fairer and more sustainable society.

This study underlines the continued importance of exploring and improving strategies that promote an ethical culture and effective talent retention practices, for the mutual benefit of organizations and the community at large. To this end, this dissertation will develop a tool that allows leaders, managers and Ceo's to identify important points about culture, ethics and talent management, with the aim of providing a mapping that can be used to improve risk points that may prevent the company from developing. The proposed model will be developed on the basis of the results of the survey presented in Chapter 4.

3 Methodology of analysis

3.1 Introduction of methodology

In the Literature Review, it was possible to gain a good understanding of the role of organizational culture and business ethics, but there are still many gaps in knowledge about factors that can be associated with the impact generated in impeding the growth of small companies and startups, especially if the niche is only companies operating in the information technology segment.

In addition, more in-depth research is needed on the specific practices that promote a positive culture and ethos in small businesses, as well as the challenges and barriers faced by these organizations in implementing these practices.

In short, organizational culture and business ethics play key roles in the growth and sustainability of small businesses. Understanding the interaction between these two aspects is essential to inform more responsible and growth-oriented business practices. It is hoped that this literature review will provide a solid basis for future research and inspire practical actions that promote a more ethical and sustainable business environment for small businesses.

In order to target these factors that hinder the growth of these companies and based on ethics and organizational culture, questions were proposed to listen to professionals who live or have lived through experiences that could contribute to this investigation.

The survey consists of multiple-choice questions with some conclusions for the hypotheses, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.2 Research methodology and questions

3.2.1 Research methodology

To present an overview of the research, Design Science was applied in an adaptation of Hevner et al. (2004), as can be seen below in Figure 10Figure 9 PRISMA Diagram. Adapted from Liberati et al.(2009), which approached the research by constructing and evaluating artifacts that would meet the needs of the study.

This study seeks to understand and analyze the relationship between organizational culture and ethics, thus making it possible to identify the factors that promote or hinder the progress of startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

It is crucial to investigate not only the factors that promote the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, but also the obstacles that can arise, especially those linked to corporate culture and ethics. Often, deep-rooted cultural values and ethical issues can become major challenges for the sustainable advancement of these organizations. For example, a corporate culture that prioritizes a rigid hierarchy can limit innovation and agile decision-making, while ethical dilemmas, such as a lack of transparency in business relations, can undermine the trust of customers and partners.

In this way, this study sets out to find the reasons that can directly influence the growth of these companies and also make them more competitive. It is also important to consider and highlight the positive factors that can boost their business, as well as the people who make up their workforce.

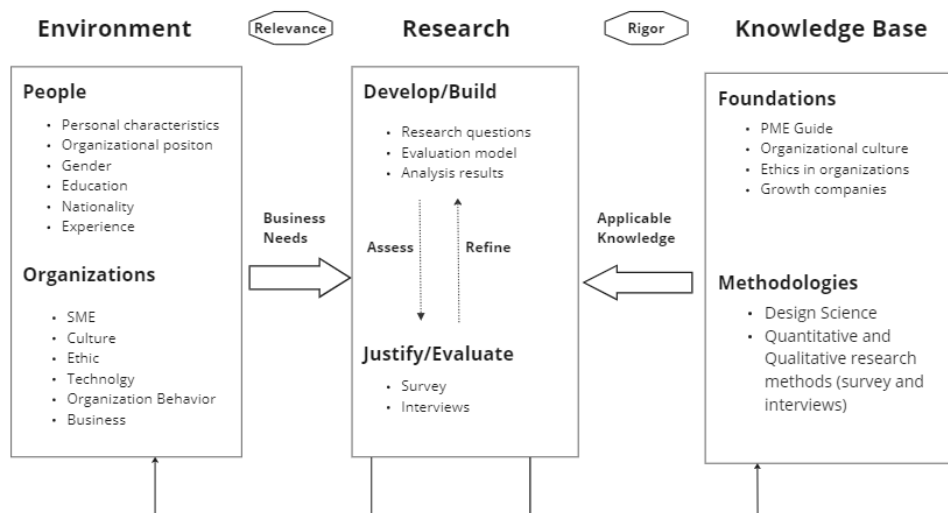


Figure 10. Design Science Approach. Adapted from Hevner, A.R. et al.(2004)

The research was developed using references based on non-experimental, cross-sectional studies, and qualitative, quantitative and evoke research methods, as detailed below:

Non-experimental: survey-oriented, which relied on the opinion and experience of volunteer interviewees, who were able to contribute and give their opinion on the key factors of this dissertation, which are ethics and organizational culture in small and medium-sized environments.

Semi-exploratory: based on a structured questionnaire with multiple-choice answers and some free-response questions. The questionnaire was made available via Google Forms.

Cross-sectional: The study focused on SMEs, start-ups operating in the area of information technology, both European and Brazilian companies, seeking to obtain as much information and opinion as possible on the real factors which, in the view of people working in this field, they believe contribute negatively to the growth of these companies.

Quantitative and qualitative methods: used to observe and interpret the results of the survey and interviews.

3.2.2 Research Question

In the business world, companies are constantly seeking to grow and stand out in the market in which they operate. For the current corporate scenario, it is important to understand and analyze the relationship between organizational culture and ethics, and thus be able to identify the factors that promote or hinder the progress of startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

It is crucial to investigate not only the factors that promote the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, but also to understand what obstacles may arise, especially those linked to corporate culture and ethics. Often, deep-rooted cultural values and ethical issues can become major challenges for the sustainable advancement of these organizations.

In this way, this study sets out to find the reasons that can directly influence the growth of these companies and also make them more competitive. With this, it aims to provide valuable knowledge that can guide more conscious business practices focused on sustainable development, creating an environment with more knowledge to guide decision-making and in turn support the growth of SMEs and startups in the current business scenario.

Based on this context of ethics and organizational culture, other important factors to consider arise, such as communication and talent retention, and the main question: How can ethics and organizational culture influence and impact on the growth of SMEs and startups?

Other secondary questions:

1. Can the values and beliefs shared by members of an organization affect the way they make decisions and relate to each other in the workplace?
2. Does a company with a strong and positive organizational culture encourage the adoption of ethical practices among its employees?
3. What is the relevance of organizational ethics for small and medium-sized companies?
4. Do companies that value ethical practices tend to have more opportunities for growth?
5. How can organizations improve talent retention and promote work-life balance, taking cultural aspects into account?

3.3 On-line Survey

To collect the data, an online survey was made available with the aim of extracting information based on respondents' opinions and experiences about ethics and culture in organizations. Questions were presented with combined suggestions aimed at understanding the vision of these volunteers with regard to the impacts that can hinder the growth of small businesses and startups.

The interviewees were given access to the "Google Form". This survey was also sent by email, shared on a specific survey forum on the Facebook and LinkedIn social networks and also sent directly via WhatsApp to some professionals working in small technology companies. The survey period was from May 17 to 27, 2024.

Participants had access to the platform to answer the questions spontaneously, on their own, without the presence of an interviewer and anonymously. The questions were "multiple choice", closed, check boxes and semantic differential scale. The questionnaire was made available in Portuguese and English.

Before being given to the interviewees, the survey was administered to a few people as a test to ensure that the interviewees were able to understand the questions correctly, as well as to ensure that the answers met the objectives of this study. All comments were taken into account in order to present the most realistic results according to the respondents' opinions.

3.3.1 Description of the survey

The survey was made up of three sections, with up to thirty-one multiple choice questions, as presented in Figure 11.

The survey also included an introductory section on the topics explored to facilitate the understanding of the volunteers who took part in the survey.

Since the focus of the research was on people who work in some segment of the information technology field, and who work or have worked in small or medium-sized companies and start-ups, the questions were directed so that the interviewees answered based on their experiences or personal point of view.

a. Characterization of the interviewee - The first section collected some individual information related to the interviewees. The questions were about gender, age, level of education, job title, country of residence and length of time in the company, either current or

where they have had some experience. None of the information collected was intended to obtain personal information from the respondents.

b. Organizational culture - This section included questions to explore respondents' views on factors and situations dealing with small business growth, people engagement, communication problems and ethics involving cultural values.

c. Organizational ethics - this section aims to understand the impact of ethics on a company's growth, exploring factors such as unethical practices already experienced by respondents, breaches of ethics, and situations where a culture that values ethics can contribute to the company and also retain talent.

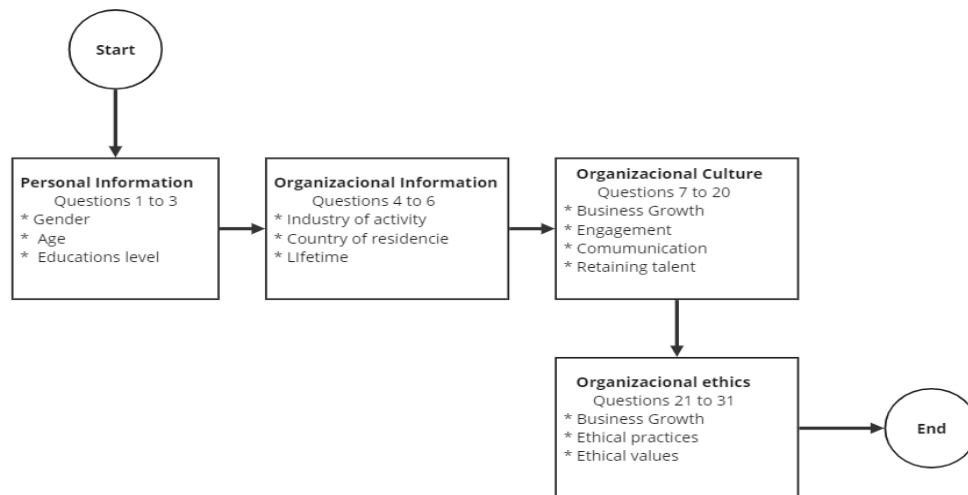


Figure 11 Inquiry flowchart. Source: Original from Author.

3.4 Target audience and respondent sample

The study involved the participation of 37 professionals from countries such as Portugal, Brazil, and some others in the European Union and South America.

The survey was open for less than a month because we needed to analyze the data quickly to develop the dissertation. This helped us to ensure that we captured relevant information efficiently, while maintaining a focus on the quality of the research.

3.5 Complementary interviews

The main objective of the interviews was to understand directly from the public what their current situation is within the companies they work for in relation to strategic points about cultural vision, ethics and people retention. The interviews took place in Portugal and Brazil, all via video calls. The interview method used was based on 10 guided questions, drawn up from a previous script. These answers will be evaluated and can help validate the research.

3.6 Methodology conclusion

The methodology presented was based on the Design Science approach developed by Hevner et al. (2004). As a result, the research question emerged, as well as secondary questions.

To answer the questions, a questionnaire was created with up to 30 questions divided into three sections.

4 Results of the analysis

4.1 Introduction of the results

This chapter presents the results of the online survey, characterizing the sample and demonstrating the analysis of the data according to the research questions. A quantitative approach was used to classify the sample and highlight the data analysis developed in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses established. The full questionnaire and results are available in references.

4.2 Survey target

The survey was conducted via the google forms platform, where the link was shared on social media forums and also sent directly to technology professionals.

The questionnaire was available between May 17, 2024 and May 27, 2024 and the survey was conducted with people currently working and living in Portugal, Brazil and other European Union countries.

4.2.1 Sample obtained

4.2.1.1 Primary informations

The questionnaire begins by collecting basic information from the respondents, such as gender, age group and country of residence. This data will then be used to filter the following questions in the questionnaire. In this way, it is possible to characterize the opinion and experience of each group, whether this is defined by any of the three basic pieces of information mentioned above.

The survey focuses on small businesses in the various technology sectors. Although it is commonly assumed that men predominate in this area, the results show that a large proportion are women (Figure 12). Finally, as expected, the vast majority of respondents are between 22 and 39 years old (Figure 13).

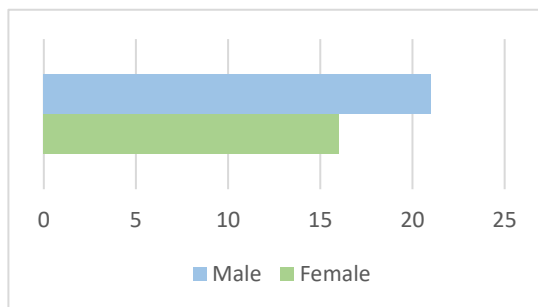


Figure 12 Survey respondent's gender chart

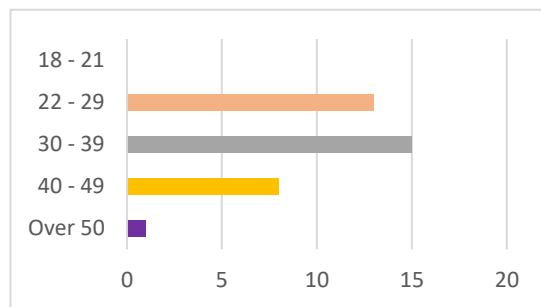


Figure 13 Survey respondent's age chart

When comparing genders by age group in Figure 14, it can be seen that men are almost equally distributed between the 22 and 49 age groups. However, it is notable that women are in the majority in the 22 to 39 age brackets. This effect may be triggered by the fact that women have only recently entered the labor market. It is therefore common for there not to be as many female participants over the age of 40.

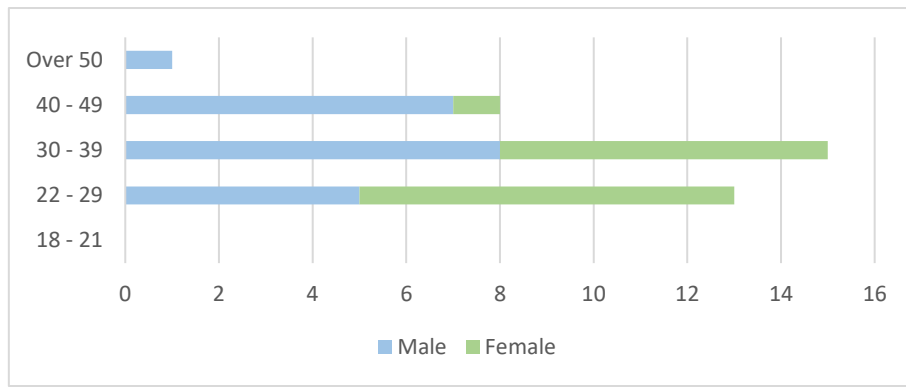


Figure 14 Male and Female age chart

Figure 15 shows the country of residence of each respondent. In order to analyze the location depending on gender, Figure 16 was created. In this figure, the small number of female participants residing in Brazil stands out. This result is not noticeable in Portugal, where approximately half of the respondents are women. To reach a definitive conclusion, a larger sample would be needed, but it can be said that the Portuguese job market is more receptive to women.

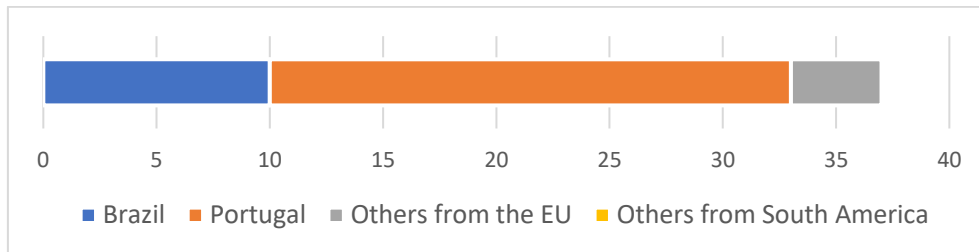


Figure 15 Survey respondent's country of residence chart

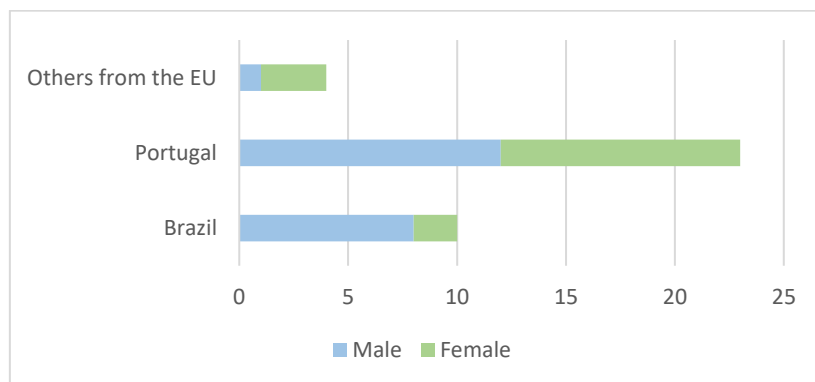


Figure 16 Gender and country of residence

The level of education of each participant is described in Figure 17, where the vast majority focus on "Bachelor's" or a level lower than Master's, which would be MBA or Postgraduate. The gender analysis in Figure 18 shows that men, despite not having a degree in the field, manage to enter this job market. Women, on the other hand, need at least a full degree to become more competitive.

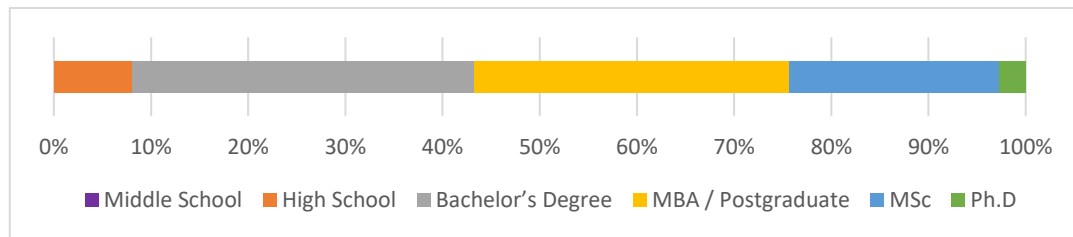


Figure 17 Level of education chart

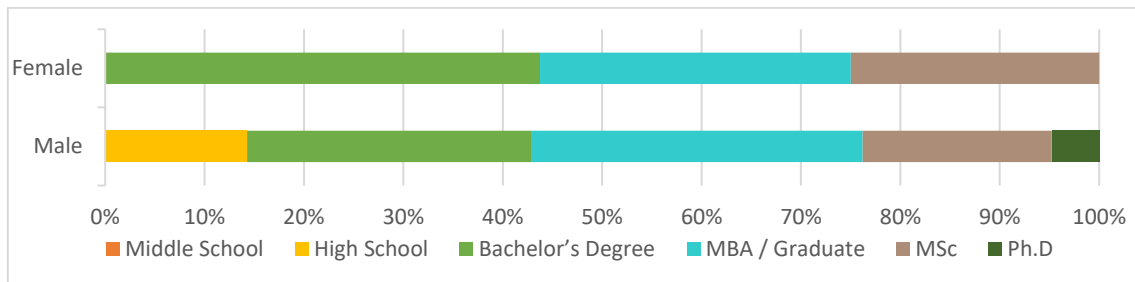


Figure 18 Gender vs. level education

Figure 19 shows that among those living in Portugal, a large proportion have a master's degree, while among those living in Brazil, MBAs or postgraduate degrees prevail. This may be related to the difficulty of accessing master's degrees in Brazil, where the process is more demanding and there is less on offer compared to Portuguese universities. It can also be concluded that the Brazilian job market values professional experience more than academic level.

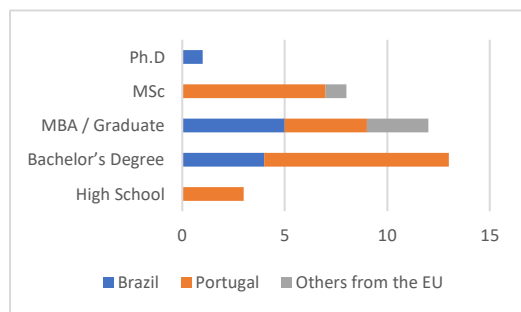


Figure 19 level of education and country of residence

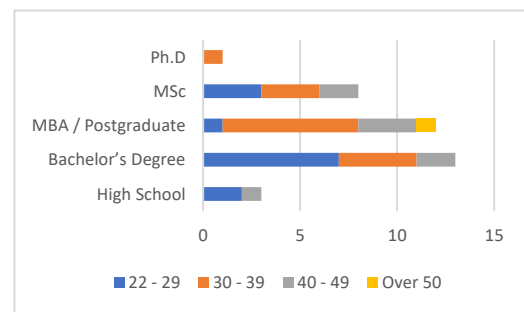


Figure 20 level of education and age

In the analysis shown in Figure 20, the youngest mostly have a Bachelor's degree, and the group between 30 and 39 mostly have an MBA or postgraduate degree. Although the survey had a small number of respondents, based on the breakdown by gender, age and level of education, it is possible to highlight the trends towards female inclusion and qualification among technology professionals. Finally, it can be concluded that the majority of the survey participants are graduate professionals, with a predominance of postgraduates and masters.

4.2.1.2 Comparison by area of activity

The respondents' area of activity is analyzed in this section (Figure 21). In this figure, there is a great diversity of functions within the technology area, and even though there were several options in the questionnaire, it was not possible to cover all possible areas. As a result, approximately a third of the answers were "Other".

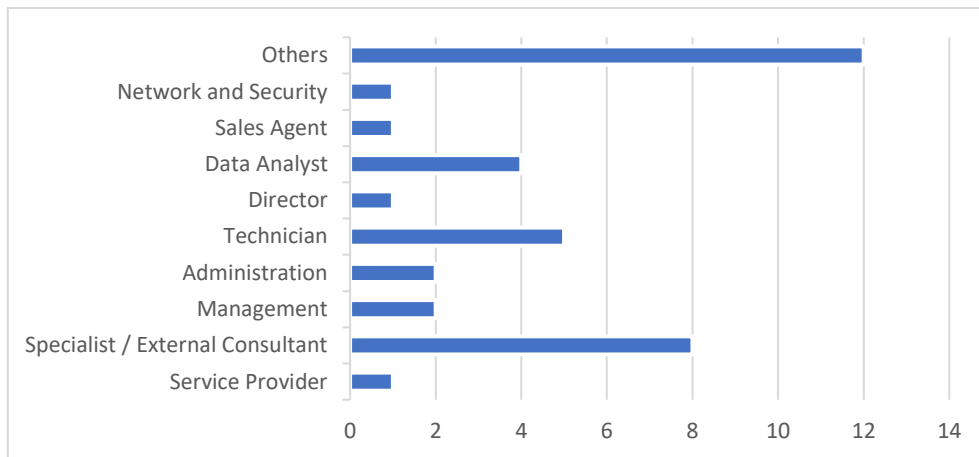


Figure 21 Occupation area

As the technical side is very broad and can be segmented into different types of functions, it is very likely that the vast majority of participants who answered "other" are part of the technical area. However, due to lack of data, it is not possible to say. For subsequent analyses, this answer will be presented, but it will be disregarded in the analysis because it is inconclusive.

In order to make it easier to analyze and understand the data obtained on the respondents' area of activity, the answers were grouped into four categories (Figure 22):

1. Management: management, administration and director;
2. Technical: specialist/external consultant, technical functions, data analyst, security networks, service provider;
3. Sales: sales;
4. Other: Other.

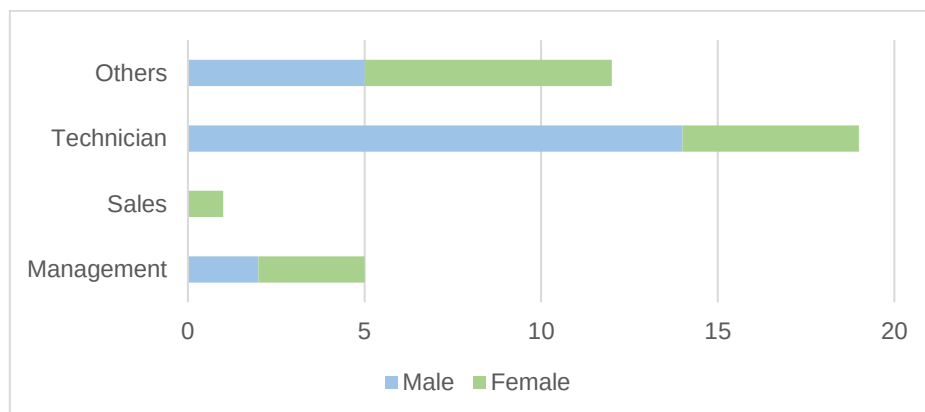


Figure 22 Occupation area and age

Of the managers group, there is a very small proportion of respondents divided proportionally between men and women, with the majority living in Brazil (Figure 23). Technicians are mostly men living in Portugal. Finally, sales has only one participant and it is not possible to draw more in-depth conclusions in this area.

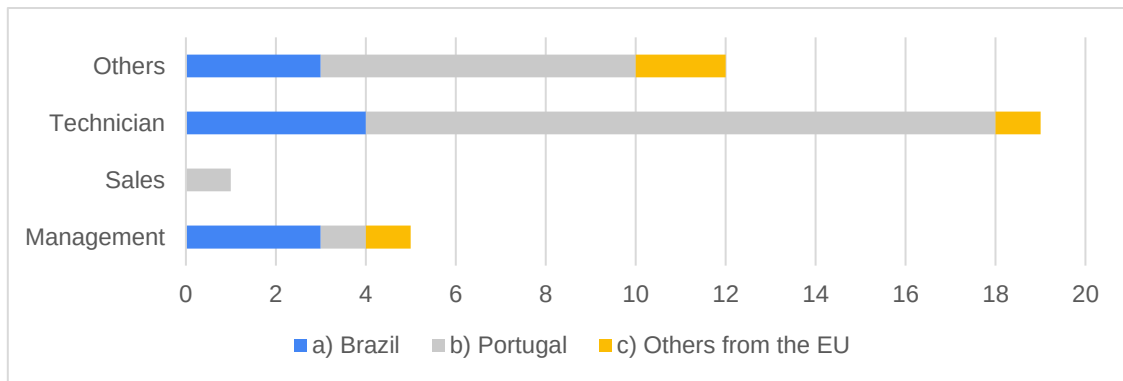


Figure 23 Occupation area and country of residence

4.2.2 Organizational culture

4.2.2.1 Main results on organizational culture

In order to understand the respondents' perspective on the importance of the topic of this work, the following question was asked: "Is the company's culture essential to its growth?". As shown in Figure 24, with the exception of one participant, all the others believe that it is. It can be concluded almost unanimously that all the participants believe that culture has a strong impact on company growth.

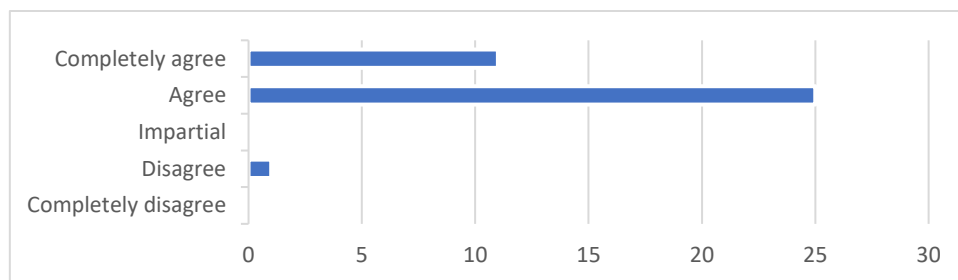


Figure 24 Survey respondent's essential culture

4.2.2.2 Cultural formation within a company

This section analyses the respondents' opinions on the influence of generating an organizational culture. Figure 25 shows that only a small proportion believe that external factors imposed by the client or consultants have an impact on defining the company's culture. The other factors mentioned in the remaining three options are part of the votes of approximately 1 in 2 participants. Finally, it should be noted that this question is multiple choice.

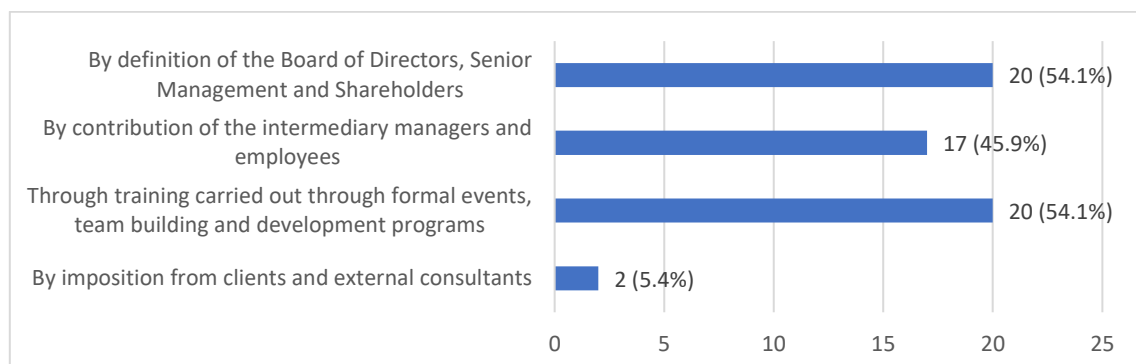


Figure 25 Survey respondent's how a culture is created

Figure 26 compares the respondents' genders. In Figure 27, the answers are divided by age. The votes are fairly balanced and follow the same pattern regardless of age or gender. The biggest difference found in the figures below is with regard to gender, where most of the votes for the influence of generating an organizational culture come from the Board of Directors, Managers, and Shareholders. It is important to note that this question allows for multiple choice.

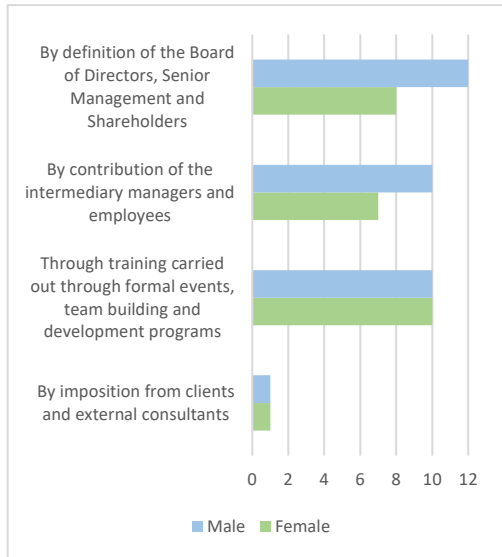


Figure 26 Survey respondent's how a culture is created chart vs gender

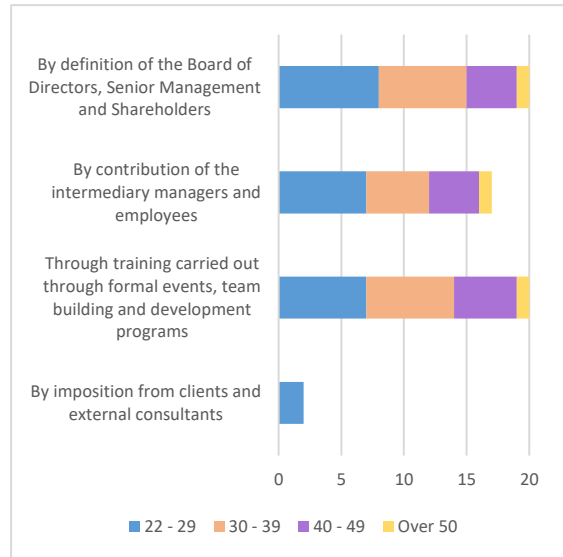


Figure 27 Survey respondent's how a culture is created chart vs age

The figures below (Figure 28 e Figure 29) are separated by gender and age at the same time. This gives a clear picture of the participants' responses. It is clear that men between the ages of 30 and 39 tend to believe that the influence on company culture comes mainly from managers. However, this thinking is different for the 40 to 49 age group, where the majority believe that culture is defined by training and team buildings. For the female gender, it can be seen that the 30 to 39 age group share the same opinion as men aged between 40 and 49.

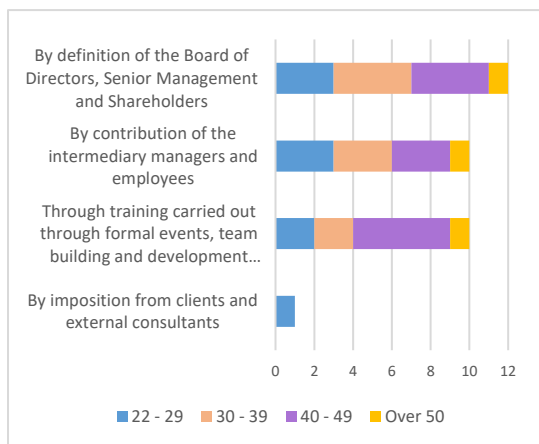


Figure 28 Survey respondent's how a culture is created chart vs men

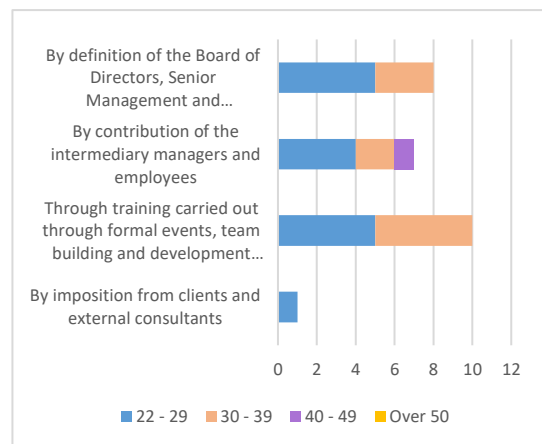


Figure 29 Survey respondent's how a culture is created chart vs women

Based on the results, the importance of strategic decisions and values that are established at the top of the corporate hierarchy is highlighted. In addition, these leaders

influence culture through formal initiatives such as training, corporate events, team building, development programs and training.

This diversity of opinions suggests that organizational culture is a complex result of multiple influences, from strategic decisions to everyday interactions in the workplace. Understanding these perspectives can help companies adopt more integrated and inclusive approaches to building a culture that promotes shared values, employee engagement and organizational sustainability.

4.2.2.3 Influence of organizational culture on company growth

In order to understand the impact of the company's growth on its culture, the question "Can a strong organizational culture promote a company's growth?" was defined (Figure 30). In order to better analyze the data, it is important to understand how long each company has been in existence (Figure 31) and then merge the results (Figure 32).

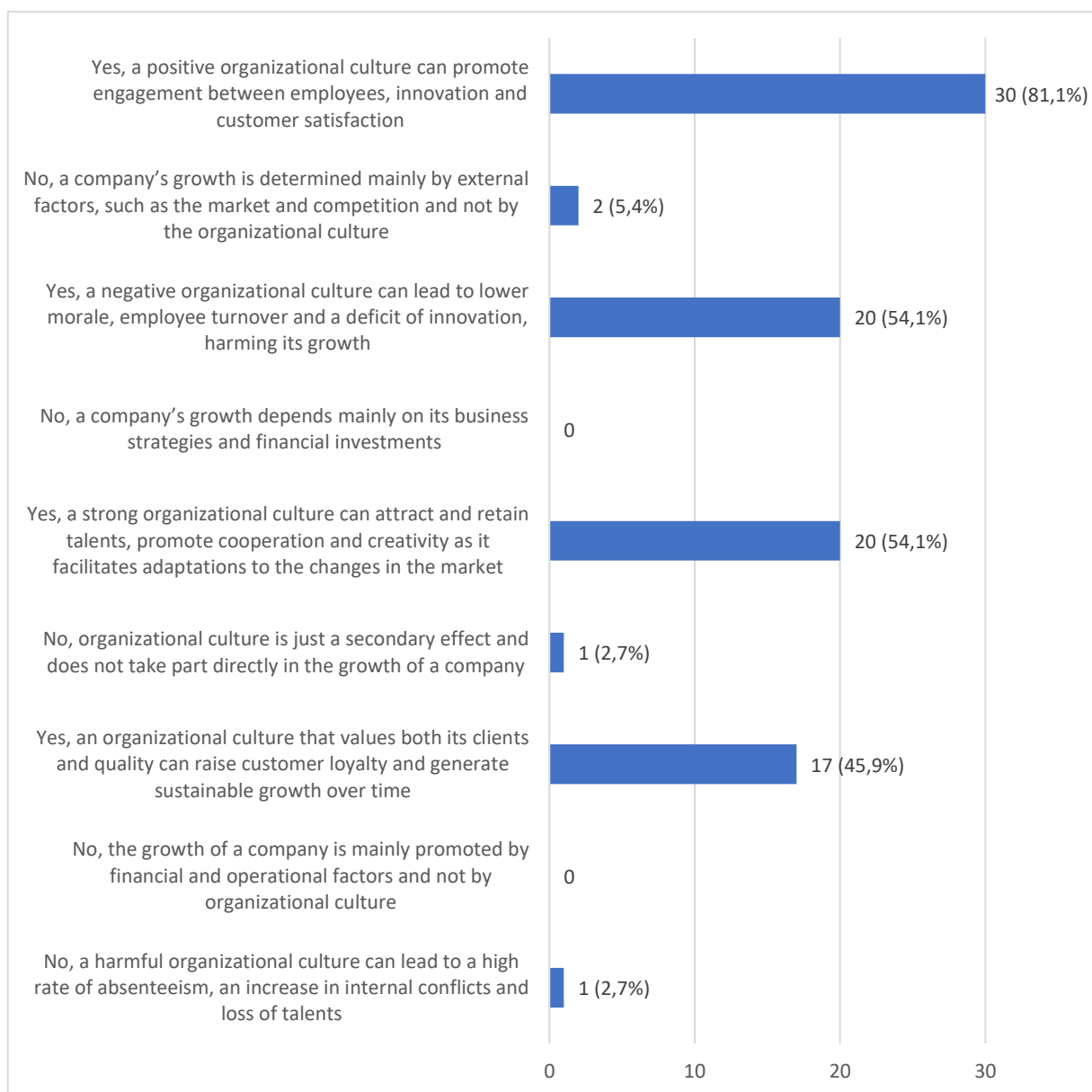


Figure 30 Can a strong organizational culture promote a company's growth?

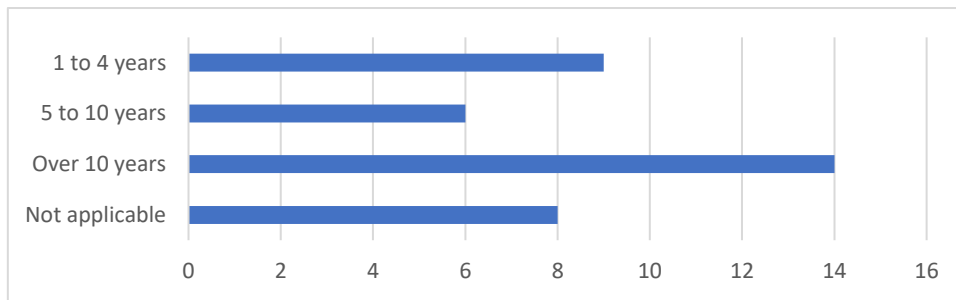


Figure 31 Age of organisations

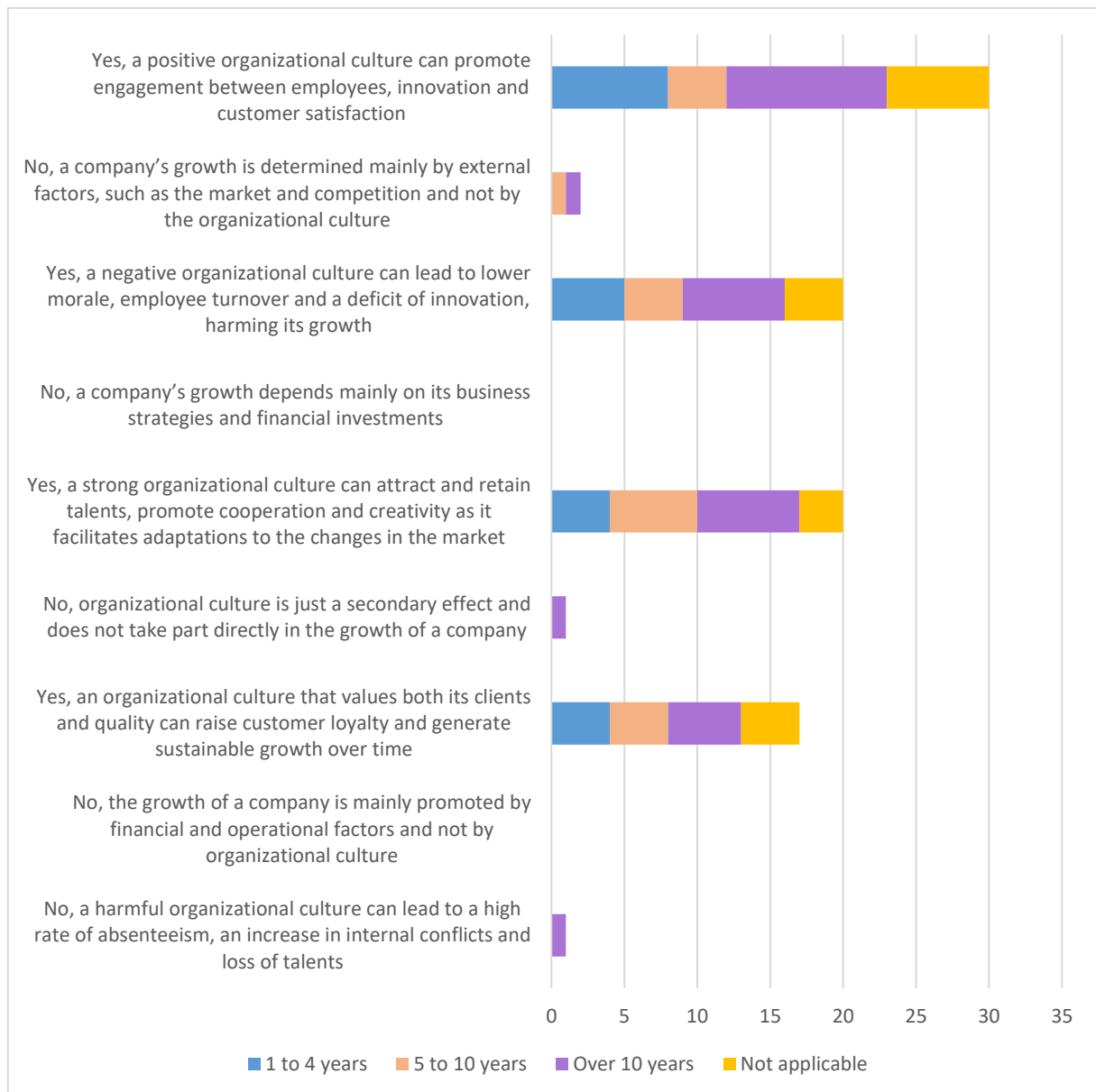


Figure 32 Strong organizational culture vs. organizational age

It is possible to identify that among the respondents who work in companies with less time on the market (between 1 and 4 years), they consider that engagement between people, talent retention and customer satisfaction is promoted by a strong and positive culture. In line

with this reasoning, employees believe that a negative organizational culture contributes directly to turnover and discourages innovation.

Given this scenario, it is important to consider that a culture is considered positive when the company values and encourages the suggestion of ideas, allows room for innovation and keeps the company attentive to market changes. These factors have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and talent retention, sustainably boosting a small company's growth opportunities. On the other hand, environments with a negative organizational culture can have a direct impact on employee productivity and capacity for innovation. Lack of incentive and a demotivating environment result in high employee turnover, which directly affects customer satisfaction and the company's reputation.

Therefore, organizational culture plays a crucial role in the sustainable growth of small businesses, influencing both the internal dynamics and the external perception of the company.

4.2.2.4 Comparison between men and women on communication within companies

By comparing some questions on the points of view of men and women, it was possible to identify that women believe that companies that value open, transparent and non-bureaucratic communication stimulate employee engagement and trust, resulting in greater motivation in the workplace.

Men, on the other hand, are less likely to consider this a relevant factor than women. As a result, it can be interpreted that men take a more conservative view, as can be seen in Figure 33. A portion of male respondents do not say that open communication can be effective, as it depends on how communication is implemented in the company.

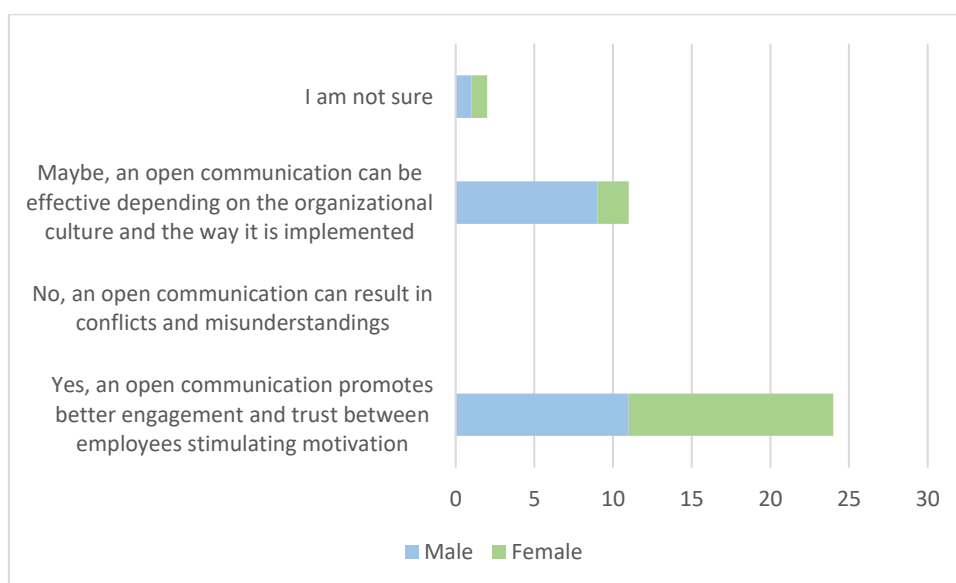


Figure 33 Importance of open communication vs. gender

These differences of opinion indicate that while women tend to value transparency and openness in communication more as factors of motivation and engagement, men are more cautious, highlighting not only the importance, but also how communication is implemented within a company.

4.2.3 Influence of Senior Management and Training on the Organizational Culture of Small Companies and Startups

When exploring how a strong organizational culture can help a small business overcome challenges and set growth targets (Figure 34 e Figure 35), it can be seen that men believe that a

strong organizational culture has a greater impact on the work environment, making it more collaborative and positive. In addition, men also believe that culture influences the pursuit of excellence in their products and services. Similarly, women tend to have the same opinion as men.

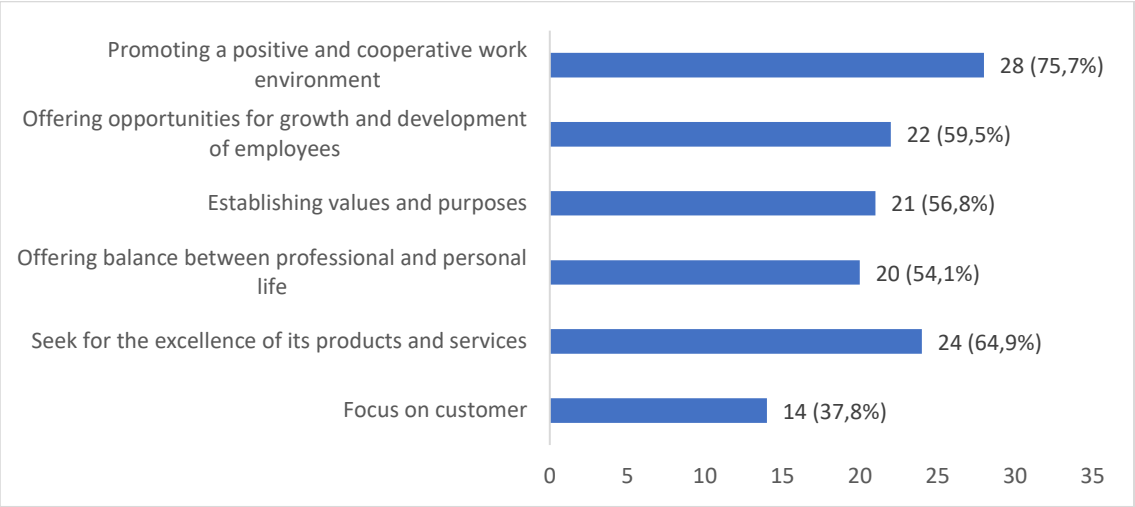


Figure 34 How can a strong organizational culture help a small size company overcome challenges and achieve its growth goals?

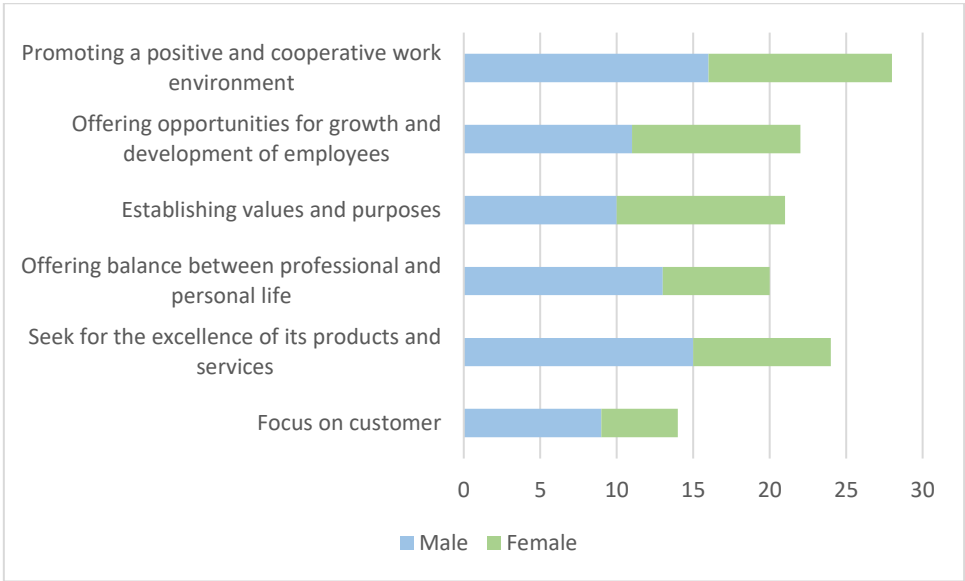


Figure 35 Strong organizational culture vs. gender

Regarding the impact of a strong organizational culture, it can be seen that opinion differs according to the respondent's area of activity (Figure 36). To simplify the analysis, Figure 37 shows the data in percentages and excludes the respondents who selected "Other". In the latter figure, it can be seen that sales people account for the largest share of votes in the option where a strong organizational culture has the greatest impact by promoting greater customer focus. Managers believe that the major impact is on promoting a positive and cooperative work environment. Technicians agree with Managers selection, but they present a higher level of votes on the option" Offering balance between professional and personal life".



Figure 36 Strong organizational culture vs. occupation chart

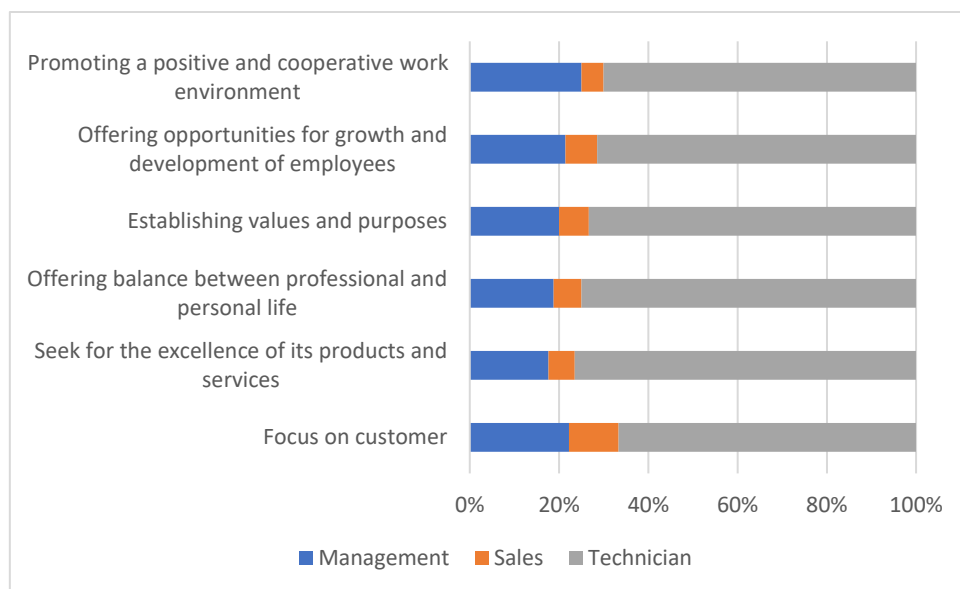


Figure 37 Strong organizational culture vs. occupation (except "others")

4.2.4 Engagement and communication

When addressing employee engagement and valued factors, respondents highlight critical issues that directly influence the work environment and organizational performance in Figure 38.



Figure 38 Organizational factors that impact employee engagement

In the figure below (Figure 39) you can see the opinion separated by gender. It can be seen that for men, aggressive communication, high levels of stress caused by work overload and a lack of clarity in communication are the main critical factors which, in their opinion, have a direct impact on people's engagement. While women consider a lack of recognition to be demotivating, followed by aggressive communication and a lack of clear communication. Therefore, in order to promote a more productive and sustainable work environment, it is essential that companies recognize and address these critical factors. Cultivating an organizational culture that values recognition, open communication, mutual respect and a balance between employees' personal and professional lives is fundamental.



Figure 39 Organizational behaviors impact employees' engagement vs. gender

Figure 40 shows the respondents' opinion on the communication model and its relevance to supporting the growth of a small and medium-sized enterprise.

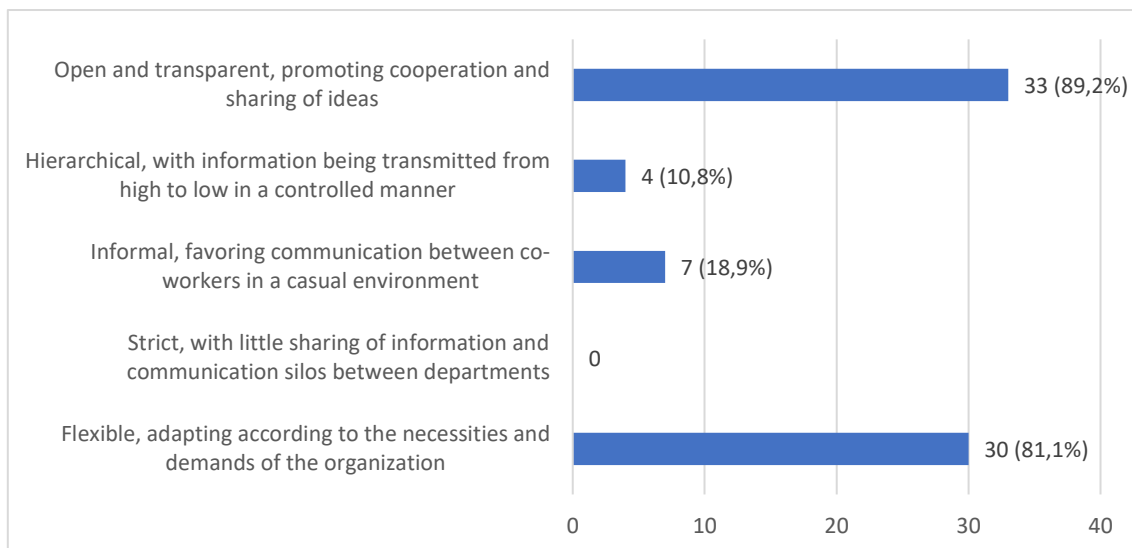


Figure 40 Communication models that contribute to promoting the growth of a company

Still considering communication models and their relevance to company growth, a comparison was made by country of residence Figure 41, so it is possible to see whether cultural interference can impact on the respondents' opinion, which was made based on their experiences. The results show that Portugal prefers the transparent communication model, which promotes the sharing of new ideas and is also flexible, adapted to the demands of the organization. The graph below also shows that residents of Brazil share the same opinion, as do residents of other European countries. It can therefore be concluded that clear and flexible communication is a fundamental prerequisite for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge between members, thus adding another factor that contributes to the growth opportunities of small and medium-sized enterprises.

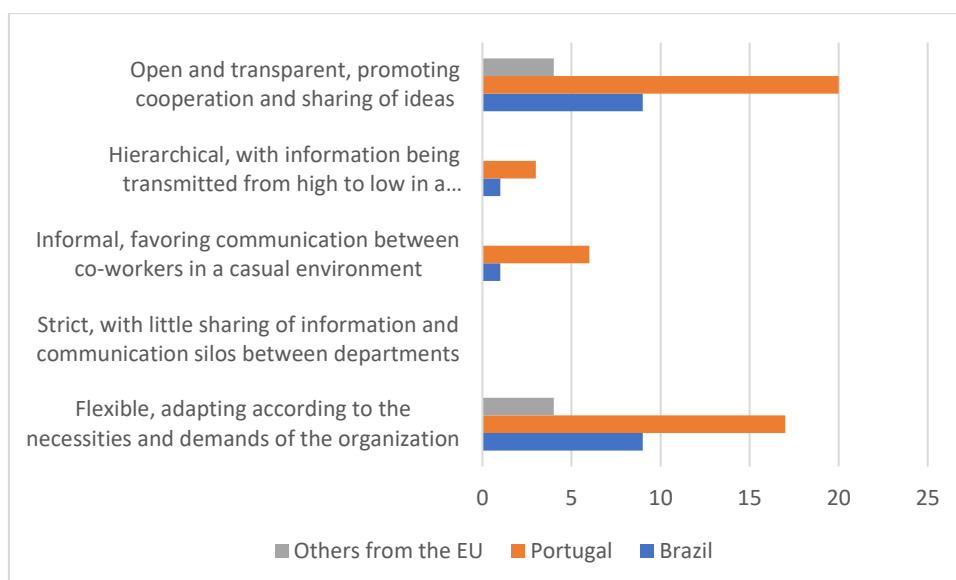


Figure 41 Model of communication vs. country of residence

4.2.5 Talent retention

When discussing talent retention and its relationship with open, transparent and non-bureaucratic communication, the majority of respondents believe that open communication creates engagement and trust between the people involved, stimulating motivation and

providing a healthy environment for sharing new ideas (Figure 42). However, approximately a third of respondents expressed some reservations about this relationship. They argue that even in an environment with open communication, the retention of these talents will depend significantly on the company's culture and how effectively this culture is implemented.

Figure 42 shows that employees of companies between 5 and 10 years old are more likely to think that the effectiveness of open communication depends on the organizational culture. On the other hand, employees of companies that have been in business for more than 10 years are more open to open communication without any reservations.

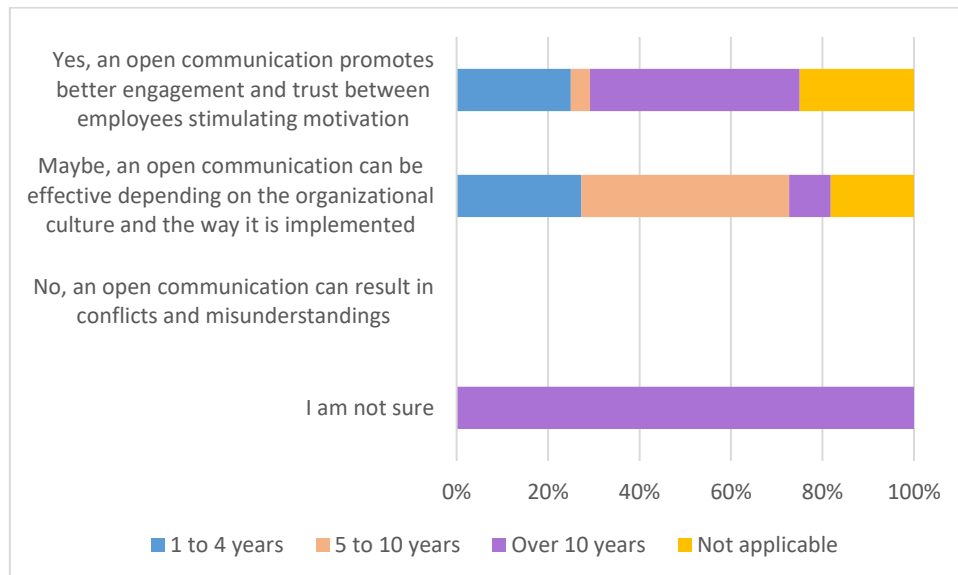


Figure 42 Communication influence vs. age of organisation

This diversity of opinions highlights the complexity involved in managing talent and creating a work environment conducive to the development and retention of qualified professionals. It is crucial that companies not only adopt open communication, but also cultivate an organizational culture that supports and values employee participation, promoting an inclusive and collaborative environment.

4.2.6 Organizational Culture vs Innovation

When the participants in this survey were asked how a culture that encourages an environment of innovation and values the promotion of ideas can influence the company's growth, they highlighted several significant ways. Firstly, encouraging creativity and collaboration among employees is seen as essential for generating innovative solutions and tackling corporate challenges (Figure 43). This opinion is evenly distributed between men and women.

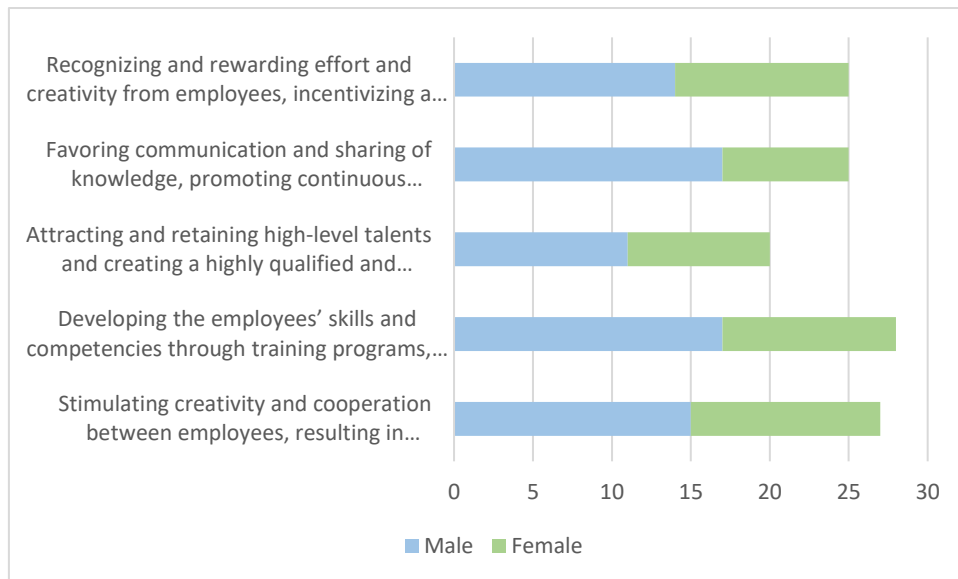


Figure 43 Relationship of organizational culture with professional growth opportunities related to the growth of a company

In addition, the majority of participants believe that companies should invest in developing the skills and competencies of their employees through training. This not only boosts the quality of the work provided, but also facilitates communication, promotes knowledge sharing and stimulates continuous improvements in the company's processes and products.

These practices not only strengthen the organizational culture focused on innovation, but are also fundamental to sustaining growth and competitiveness in today's market. By creating an environment where creativity is valued and learning opportunities are constantly offered, companies can not only solve problems efficiently, but also position themselves as leaders in their sectors.

4.2.6.1 Comparisons of opinions of men and women on innovation

An overview of the answers to the question "Which cultural characteristics can promote a company's growth?" is shown in Figure 44. The genre analysis is presented in Figure 45. When comparing the personal opinions of men and women on the culture of innovation, it can be seen that there is a consensus where the vast majority of both genders believe that innovation, quality and continuous learning are essential for the company's growth. The divergence in opinion between the genders is clear when it comes to the "Culture of high performance and competitiveness" option, where a small percentage of women believe that this topic promotes company growth.

These perspectives highlight that both men and women recognize the importance of the work environment in promoting organizational innovation. While women seem to give greater weight to collaboration and respect as drivers, men value mindset and the freedom to express ideas more as a strategy to boost efficiency at work.

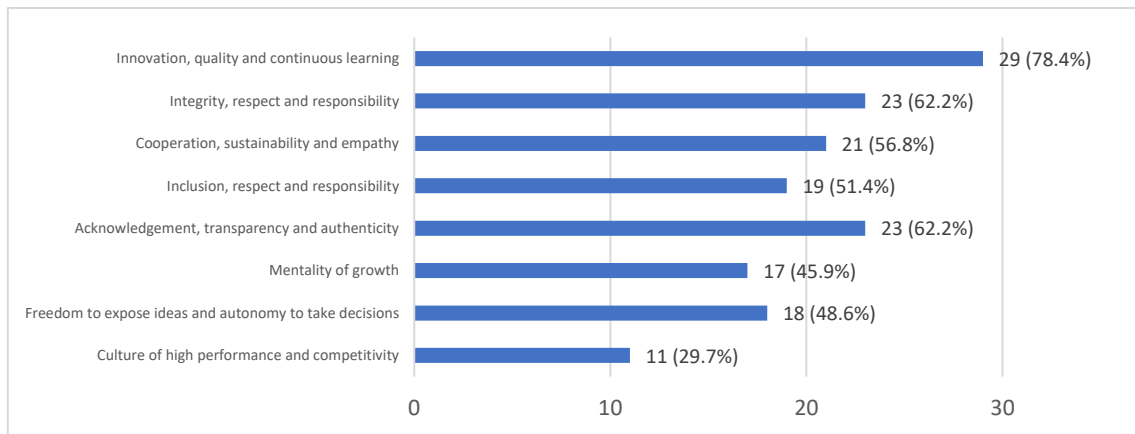


Figure 44 Cultural characteristics

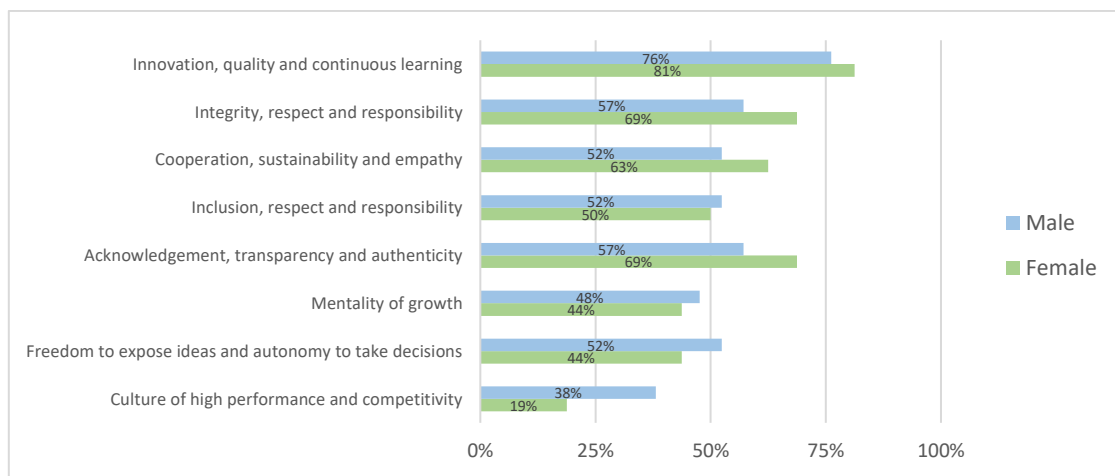


Figure 45 Gender vs. innovation

4.2.7 Cultural obstacles that prevent a company from growing

When asked which obstacles can impede business growth (Figure 46), approximately three quarters of the participants believe that resistance to change can limit a company's growth opportunities. In addition, inefficient communication and a lack of employee training were also cited as significant obstacles. These points highlight the importance of an organizational culture that promotes adaptation to change, clear and effective communication, as well as continuous investment in developing employees' skills in order to sustain the company's growth and competitiveness.

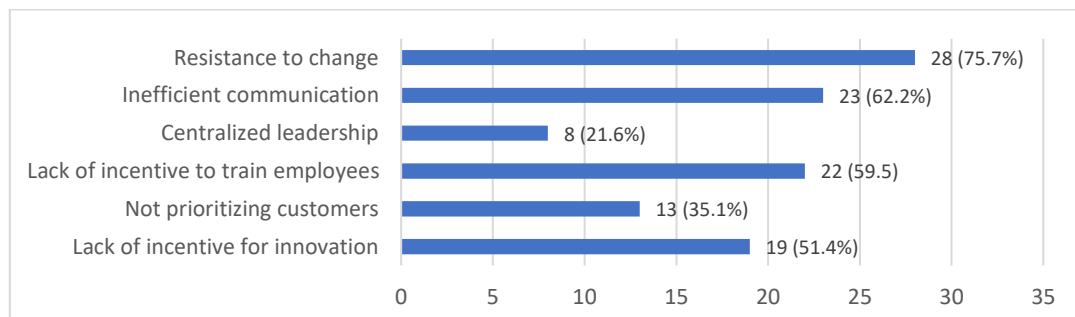


Figure 46 Cultural obstacles

4.3 Ethics

4.3.1 Ethical characteristics

The questions on ethics aim to understand how ethics directly influence a company's growth. The section of the questionnaire dealing with ethics began with a leveling question to understand whether the topic has any direct influence on the growth of small businesses. Respondents were asked to define on a scale of 1 to 5 how much they think ethics directly impacts on a company's growth, where 5 means "Yes, it is directly related" and 1 is "No, it has no relationship" (Figure 47).

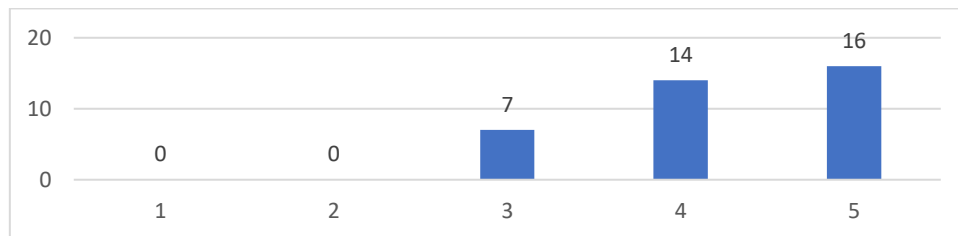


Figure 47 Scale of 1 to 5 how do business ethics directly impact a company's growth? (1 is "No, it has no relationship" and 5 is "Yes, it is directly related")

The majority of respondents believe that business ethics is directly linked to company growth, with 43% giving it a score of 5, indicating a very significant impact, and 37% giving it a score of 4, suggesting that the impact is relatively high. These results show that the majority of participants recognize the importance of ethics in the business context and its crucial influence on the growth and success of small businesses.

When comparing the responses of the participants in the different age groups, we see that the youngest (between 22 and 29 years old) are the majority of the votes for grade 3. As shown in Figure 48. This shows that over the course of their careers, employees tend to believe more and more in the relationship between business ethics and the company's growth rate. Contrary to the conclusion above, adults over 50 tend to vote for the option. This shows that the relationship between ethics and company growth is complex and requires more attention.

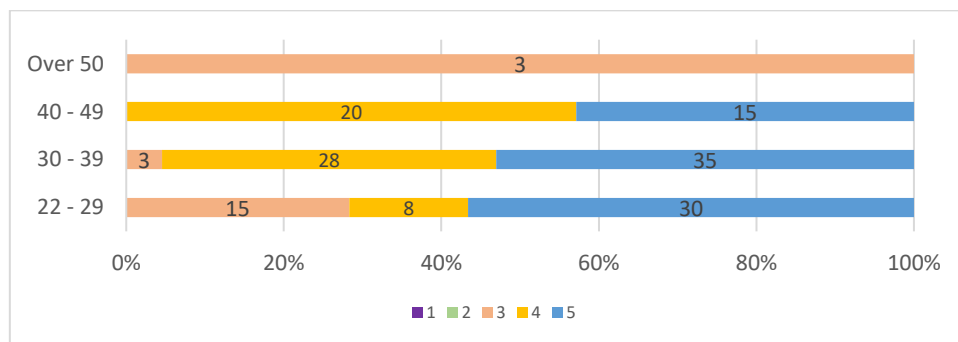


Figure 48 Scale of how do business ethics directly impact a company's growth vs. age of responses

The next question in the questionnaire in the field of ethics deals with its characteristics that influence the company's growth. In this question, the respondent could select multiple options and the answers are shown in Figure 49. According to the respondents, the three most important characteristics are, respectively:

1. Integrity: Acting with honesty and transparency in all commercial interactions.
2. Trust: Building and maintaining trust with clients, employees and business partners through consistent and trustworthy actions.

3. Responsibility: Taking responsibility for a company's actions and both social and environmental impacts of its operations.

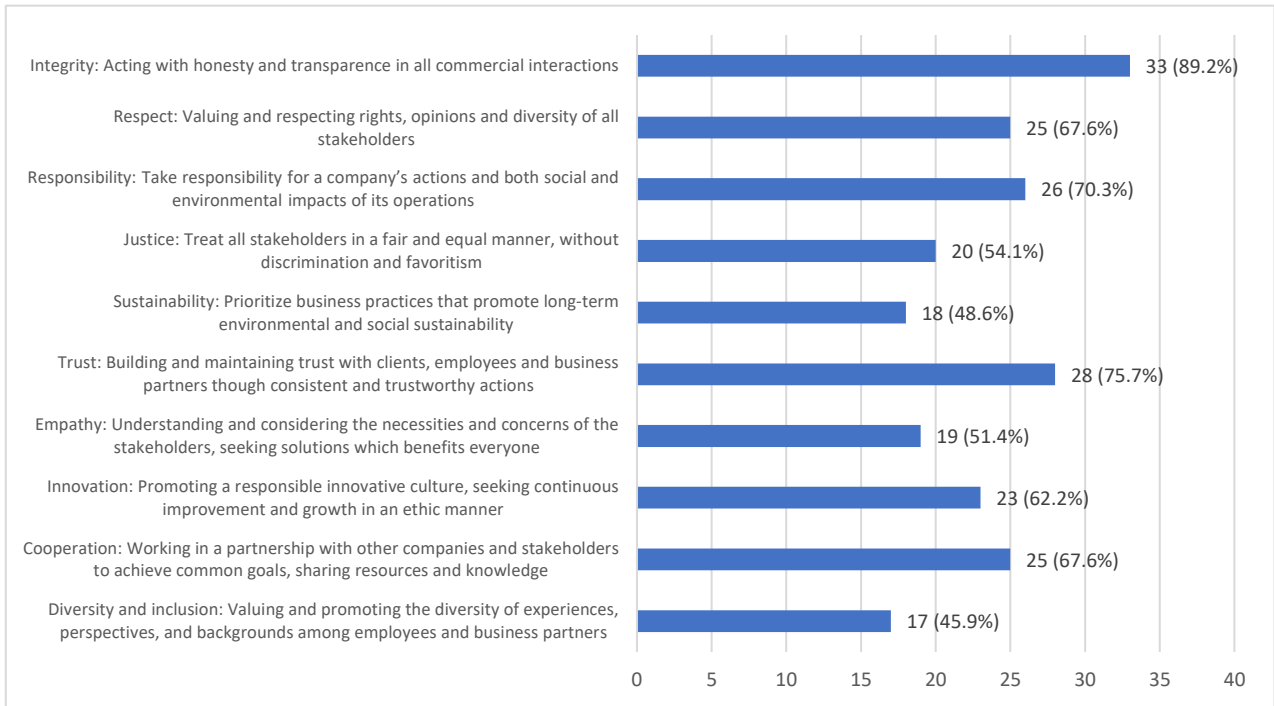


Figure 49 Which ethical characteristics can favor a company's growth?

These characteristics were considered essential by the participants to foster an ethical business environment, which not only sustains the company's growth, but also strengthens its reputation and relations with all stakeholders.

4.3.2 Unethical practices

A company's ethics are analyzed on the basis of its routine. As such, the question below (Figure 50) portrays the impact of unethical attitudes on the company's growth. Of the participants, approximately 87% believe that unethical practices can damage the company's reputation and alienate clients and investors, thereby causing significant damage and hampering the company's growth. This, in turn, can affect other sectors, preventing the company from being able to afford to invest, hire new talent and improve its operations, creating a negative cycle that hinders sustainable growth.

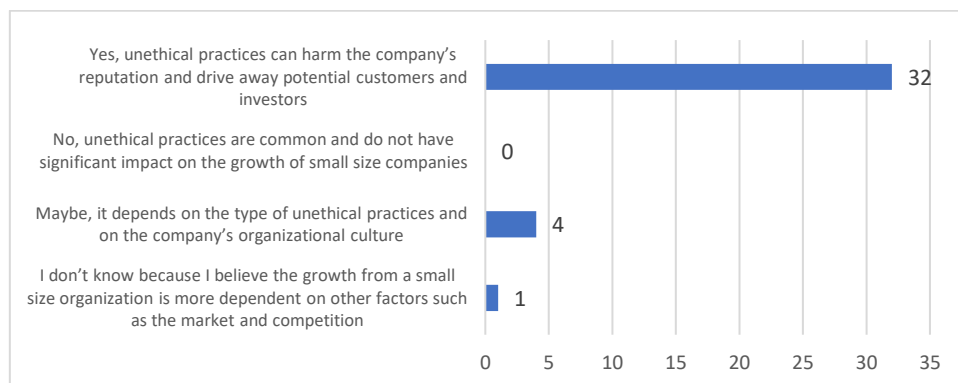


Figure 50 Impact of unethical behavior

Of the respondents over the age of 30, all of the Brazilian residents believe that they have experienced unethical practices during their professional experience (Figure 51). On the other hand, approximately 40% of Portuguese residents in the same age group believe that they have never experienced a situation that required an unethical practice. A possible conclusion from this analysis is that the cultural aspects of a nation can have a reflection on the ethical concepts of its people. Thus, the practice of small unethical acts is not necessarily considered wrong because the person themselves does not recognize it as such. This is also due to the normality of the practice within the organization.

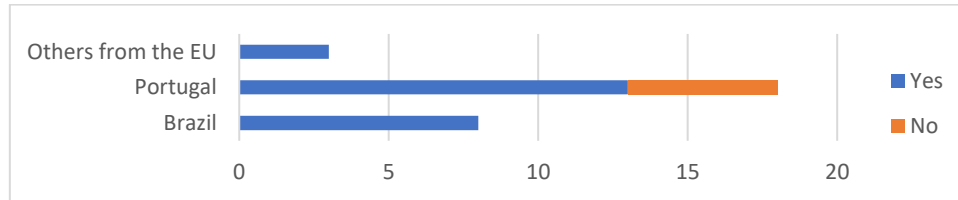


Figure 51 Witnessed unethical practices vs. age of participants

Regarding their work routine, respondents were asked whether or not they had experienced any unethical practices from third parties (Figure 52) or from themselves for their own benefit or that of the company (Figure 53).

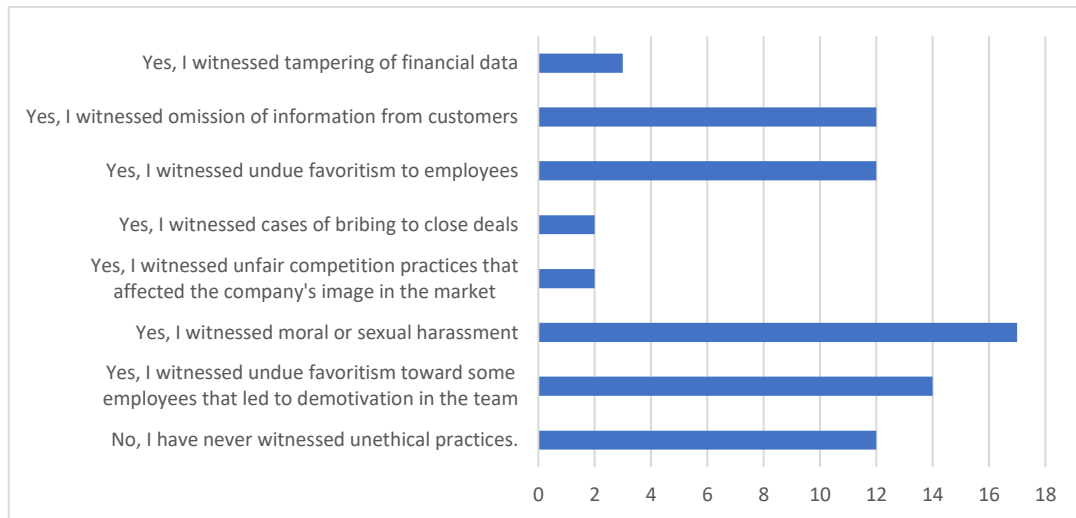


Figure 52 Witnessed or practiced unethical practices

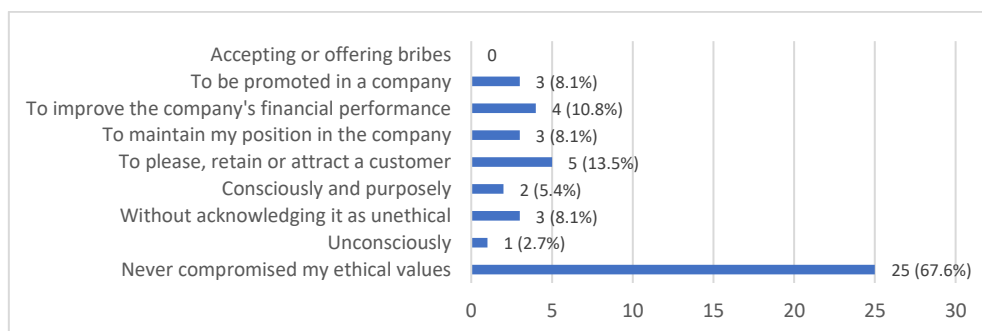


Figure 53 Situations where participants have compromised their ethical values to achieve business goals or objectives

This data underlines the complexity of the business environment, where even individuals who recognize the importance of ethics and value positive cultural characteristics can, in certain circumstances, engage in unethical behaviour. This highlights the need to

strengthen the ethical culture in companies, promoting not only an understanding of ethical values, but also support and guidance mechanisms so that employees can act in accordance with these values, even in challenging situations.

Figure 54 shows in which situations respondents have already compromised their ethical values. In order to achieve some business goal, we can see that approximately 68% say they have never been involved in unethical schemes, but 13.5% have already committed some action outside the ethical context in order to please or even win over a client, 11% assume they have done so in order to improve the company's financial performance and less than 10% have committed a violation in order to receive a promotion within the company. Finally, another 10% did not recognize the action as an unethical practice.

When looking to identify behavior by gender (Figure 54), it can be seen that men are the majority of votes in the "Never compromised my ethical values" option. Although women are in the minority in terms of the total number of respondents, they are in the majority when it comes to having their ethical values already compromised for their own benefit.

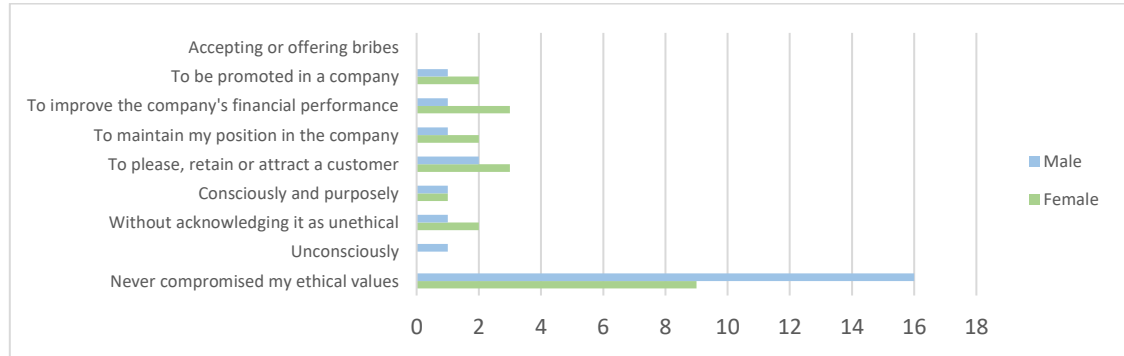


Figure 54 Gender separation of participants who compromised their ethical values to achieve business goals or objectives

Also in this context, the main reason why ethics are violated in the corporate environment was addressed (Figure 55). The results indicate that more than half of the respondents believe that these practices take place so that the company can achieve its objectives quickly and effectively. In addition, 16 people believe that unethical practices are motivated by the lack of adequate punishment when these acts occur. The perception that "crime pays" and the pressure for the company to reach unrealistic targets were also mentioned by the same number of participants as factors encouraging unethical practices.

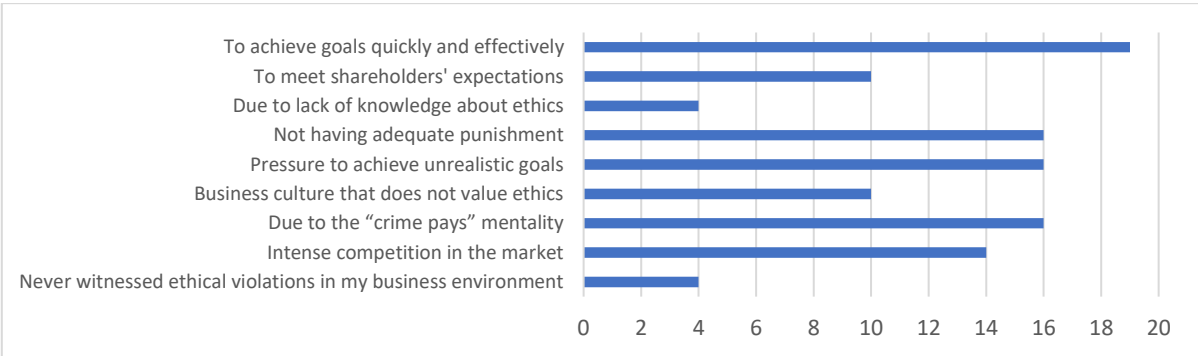


Figure 55 The main reason ethics are violated in the business environment

This data suggests that breaches of ethics in the corporate environment are often driven by a combination of external and internal pressures. The need to achieve quick results, the absence of adequate consequences for unethical actions and the pressure to meet unrealistic targets create an environment conducive to such practices.

4.3.3 Ethics and talent retention

When it comes to talent retention, various factors can influence whether an employee or consultant stays with a company. Retention is not always directly related to finances. Figure 56 addresses this issue. This figure shows that almost all of the respondents believe that unethical practices cause employees to become demotivated, resulting in high turnover and the loss of qualified professionals.



Figure 56 Factors that influence talent retention

In addition, a lack of ethics is associated with a loss of trust, engagement and employee productivity. Another important point is that when a company adopts unethical practices, it creates a toxic environment, causing employees to seek new opportunities in places where they feel more valued and respected. As a result, the company loses specialized talent, which reduces its productive capacity and the quality of its deliveries to customers. These factors underline the importance of maintaining an ethical and transparent working environment, which not only motivates employees, but also contributes to talent retention, which is essential for the company's growth and sustainable success.

4.3.4 Lack of ethics vs. reputation

As discussed earlier, ethics covers a number of aspects in the corporate context, with a company's reputation being one of the main issues. When examining the factors that can influence a company's reputation due to a lack of ethical commitment and consequently impact its growth, 32 of the 37 participants agree that corporate reputation has a direct effect on the trust of clients and investors, resulting in a financial impact that hinders its development (Figure 57).



Figure 57 Absence of ethics influences a company's reputation

This insight underlines the critical importance of business ethics not only as a set of internal values, but also as an essential component for building and maintaining external trust. A reputation compromised by unethical practices can undermine a company's credibility in the market, alienate potential investors and clients, and eventually limit its opportunities for growth and expansion. Therefore, mitigating ethical risks and cultivating an organizational culture based

on integrity and responsibility are fundamental not only to sustaining the company's reputation, but also to ensuring its long-term economic viability.

4.3.5 Culture vs. Ethics

How can a small company with an ethical culture stand out in the market? The answer to this question was practically unanimous among the participants, who highlighted some crucial factors, as shown in Figure 58. Firstly, the company can strengthen its position through the trust customers have in the brand, built up by the quality of its products and services. In addition, the company can attract qualified talent who share the same ethical values, promoting a collaborative and engaged working environment. Another important strategy is to create a competitive advantage based on integrity and social responsibility, demonstrating a genuine commitment to sustainable business practices that respect society. These elements not only strengthen the company's reputation, but also position it positively in the market, attracting loyal customers and long-lasting business opportunities.

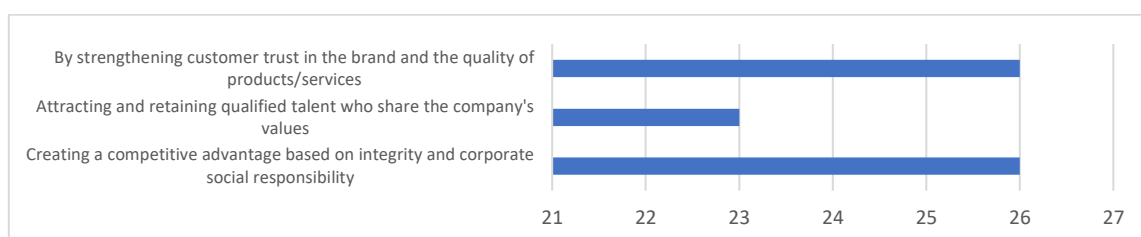


Figure 58 How can a small company with an ethical culture stand out in the market?

Considering a company that strongly values ethical principles, we asked how a small business can adopt measures to promote an ethical culture and ensure that the results contribute positively to its growth. Respondents highlighted some essential measures: 78% indicated that companies should encourage open and transparent communication. In addition, 59% of respondents voted that another important measure is to establish a clear code of conduct and ensure that employees strictly follow it. It was also mentioned by 57% of respondents that implementing recognition and reward policies to promote ethical behaviour is crucial to cultivating a solid and ethical organizational culture. These results are presented in Figure 59.



Figure 59 Steps a Small Business Can Take to Promote an Ethical Culture

In conclusion, pressure to conform to prevailing practices, even if unethical, can induce employees to act against their own beliefs, especially when company culture implicitly or explicitly encourages such behaviors.

5 Conclusion of the Results

5.1 Matters of research

From the literature review, it is understood that for a small business to become more competitive and consequently have more opportunities to achieve growth, it is essential to consider the cultural factors that shape the behavior of employees and leaders. As mentioned in the literature review Schein (2010), organizational culture can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that includes beliefs, values and norms that guide the behaviour of the organization's members. This affirms the importance of identifying the characteristics and cultural factors that are followed within the company. In addition to this understanding, it is necessary to identify what is being practiced internally. As can be seen from the survey, it is crucial to differentiate between the positive and negative points and to make changes that provide a healthy environment.

Companies that value and encourage collaboration between teams, value innovation and promote a positive working environment with open, fluid and uncritical communication tend to reduce employee turnover. This makes it natural to gain the trust and commitment of these people, giving them the freedom to speak, listen and put their ideas into practice. Another point valued by respondents is customer focus. A company that values its customers and employees increases its chances of the perceived value of its business and this is undoubtedly one of the opportunities the company can have for growth.

Regarding ethics, and also cited by (Treviño & Nelson, 2017) in the literature review, is that ethics is not an individual conduct, it involves the entire company shaping ethical behaviors that direct work and interactions. According to the responses obtained in the survey, it can be seen that people consider ethics to be a highly relevant factor when considering the growth of a company. Respondents also consider integrity, respect, trust and responsibility to be characteristics directly linked to company growth. This is an interpretation that can be considered basic principles to apply in a corporate or even personal environment, since there is no dependence on rules, but rather values that we all carry with us, but which still need to be reinforced depending on the nature of the work and culture.

It was clearly seen that unethical practices can hinder a company's growth, and the consequences of these practices can cause significant damage, such as: increased employee turnover, because they don't identify with these practices and feel dissatisfied, loss of customer confidence and damage to the company's reputation in the market, causing customers to lose confidence and devalue the brand and the company.

The tool proposed in the next chapter will help companies map out their current scenario, identify critical points and points that deserve attention and improvement. It can be a guide for companies wishing to boost their growth with direction.

In many companies, ethics is still a subject that is rarely addressed. It is a fact that most, if not all, companies say they adopt ethical behavior, have respect for their employees and are committed to their customers - these were some of the points raised in the survey.

The investigation revealed that in different contexts some people admitted that they had already compromised their values, whether it was to increase the company's turnover, receive a promotion or please a customer. A very intriguing situation is that in some cases people were unaware of their own actions, i.e., they unconsciously practiced something that is considered unethical, simply due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the person who committed the act, or a lack of clarification on the part of the company, which can be associated with negligence on the part of the company.

Various actions can be taken to prevent unethical acts, such as: encouraging open communication, implementing policies to recognize unethical actions, establishing a code of conduct and also leading by example. This is one of the initiatives that attracts committed and motivated talent, as an ethical, active and accessible leader tends to attract people with similar profiles.

5.2 Profile of the interviewees

Analyzing the cultural profiles of the interviewees made it possible to identify the differences between the countries, genders and generations of the interviewees. In order to better understand the data answered, combinations of data were made between the tables, so it was possible to differentiate different opinions and experiences between men and women, age range, place where they live and also level of education, by merging this information some questions had different conclusions due to the separation of profiles.

6 SME management support tool

A proposal of a preliminary tool to support the SME management on evaluation of the risks of cultural and ethical risk results do the following items:

- The gap detected in the Literature Review;
- The most relevant results of the survey;
- The limited human resources available in companies;
- The well-known lack of information on these issues.

The use of the tool results in the determination of the degree of risk and also allows for some recommendations (clues) to mitigate this risk. The degree of risk is a combination of 4 following indicators:

- Global – strategy
- Culture
- Ethics
- Communication and innovation

Each of the indicators below results of a ponderation of the impact and relevance of the most items on each field.

- Generic issues
 - Age gap oldest vs youngest (number of years)
 - Age of company (years)
 - Average experience of managers (years)
 - Number of workers
 - Number of nationality of employees
 - Number of teams
 - Number of level of management
 - Number of different professional groups
 - Number of different countries
- Strategy
 - Values definition
 - Mission definition
 - Vision definition
 - Business definition
 - Strategy definition
 - Formal organogram
- Culture
 - Organization's cultural values
 - Training on culture and its impacts
 - Working group on culture and its impacts
 - Events on culture
 - External Cultural consultant
- Ethics
 - Code of ethics
 - Code of conduct
 - Corruption risk assessment matrix
 - Transparency policy

- Whistleblowing channels
- Workshops on ethical issues
- Training on ethics and its impacts
- Consultant on ethics
- Communication and Innovation
 - Open communication inside teams
 - Open communication vertical relations
 - Open communication inside teams
 - Open communication with stakeholders
 - Innovation proposal admissible
 - Knowledge sharing
 - Innovation sharing

6.1 Developed tool

6.1.1 Global data of the company

The information presented in the first row of the Table 3 refers to the company's global data. The evaluation tool analyses the data filled by the user. For each range of values inputted in each question (category), there is a risk level associated. For example, for a company with 11 years old or more, the risk level is 1. Risk level ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. Finally, the global risk is the average of each category's risk.

Table 3 calculation values for company data

Risk level	Age gap oldest vs youngest (number of years)	Age of company (years)	Average experience of managers (years)	Number of workers	Number of nationality of employees	Number of teams	Number of levels of management	Number of different professional groups	Number of different countries
1	0 - 5	11 +	11 +	0 - 5	1	1	1	1	1
2	6 - 10	8 - 10	8 - 10	6 - 9	2	2 - 3	2	2	2
3	11 - 15	5 - 7	5 - 7	10 - 50	3 - 4	4 - 6	3	3	3
4	15 - 25	3 - 4	3 - 4	51 - 100	5 - 6	6 - 10	4	4	4
5	25 +	0 - 2	0 - 2	101 +	7 +	11 +	5 +	5 +	5

As presented in the table above, the base data for this calculation analyses the age gap of employees, indicating that the greater this difference, the greater the risk. Just like the age of the company, the longer it has been in the market, the lower the risk; the more experienced the managers are, the more experienced they are and the risk is also reduced. The number of existing teams, higher hierarchical levels, diversity of specialists, and countries of operation contribute to a higher risk.

Some characteristics involve understanding whether the age gap between employees might increase the chance of having conflicts due to different generations working in the same environment. Older employees tend to be more resistant to change, making it difficult to create a unified organizational culture. Companies that have been present for a longer time in the market tend to have a more traditional and stable culture, with experience that reduces issues.

Experienced managers can act as mentors, developing skills in less experienced employees. Fewer employees facilitate management and maintenance of a cohesive culture. The diversity of nationalities increases the risk of cultural conflicts and communication failures. Structures such as the number of teams and levels of management indicate that organizational complexity can influence the effectiveness of communication and cultural cohesion.

The risk level will define how sensitive these variations are, when compared to a company's ethical and cultural factors. Identifying these factors and addressing the risks that could cause problems and hinder the growth of these companies is crucial.

6.1.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire below is addressed to the companies' manager and it is composed by strategic, ethical, cultural, and communication and innovation questions with multiple-choice answers. The results of these questions will be calculated based on predefined values, estimating the level of risk for the company from an ethical and cultural perspective.

The questions that shall be answered by the user are:

From company's strategy	Options to choose
Values definition	1- Implemented and controlled
Mission definition	2- Published and not implemented
Vision definition	3- Elaborated but not published
Business definition	4- In process
Strategy definition	5- Does not exist
Formal organogram	Options for each question of:
Formal training program	- From company's strategy
Work life balance	- Cultural issues
	- Ethical issues
Cultural issues	Options to choose
Organization's cultural values	1- Fully
Training on culture and its impacts	2- Mostly
Working group on culture and its impacts	3- Sometimes
Events on culture	4- Rarely
Cultural consultant	5- Never
Ethical Issues	Options for each question of:
Code of ethics	- Communication and innovation
Code of conduct	
Corruption risk assessment matrix	
Transparency policy	
Whistleblowing channels	
Workshops on ethical issues	
Training on ethics and its impacts	
Consultant on ethics	
Communication and innovation	
Open communication inside teams	
Open communication vertical relations	
Open communication inside teams	
Open communication with stakeholders	
Innovation proposal admissible	
Knowledge sharing	
Innovation sharing	

6.1.3 Data validation

The reference values used to calculate the risk are fixed, summing up to 1.00 per question, and are divided between ethics and culture. The coefficient values of the risk factor between cultural and ethic risk of the 4 main group of indicators are presented below.

From company's strategy	Culture	Ethic
	3.70	3.30
Values definition	0.25	0.75
Mission definition	0.60	0.40
Vision definition	0.50	0.50
Business definition	0.50	0.50
Strategy definition	0.50	0.50
Formal organogram	0.75	0.25
Formal training program	0.60	0.40
Cultural issues	Culture	Ethic
	2.90	2.10
Organization's cultural values	0.90	0.10
Training on culture and its impacts	0.50	0.50
Working group on culture and its impacts	0.50	0.50
Events on culture	0.50	0.50
External Cultural consultant	0.50	0.50
Ethical Issues	Culture	Ethic
	2.25	5.75
Code of ethics	0.20	0.80
Code of conduct	0.30	0.70
Corruption risk assessment matrix	0.25	0.75
Transparency policy	0.50	0.50
Whistleblowing channels	0.50	0.50
Workshops on ethical issues	0.20	0.80
Training on ethics and its impacts	0.20	0.80
Consultant on ethics	0.10	0.90
Communication and innovation	Culture	Ethic
	4.80	2.20
Open communication inside teams	0.60	0.40
Open communication vertical relations	0.60	0.40
Open communication inside teams	0.60	0.40
Open communication with stakeholders	0.60	0.40
Innovation proposal admissible	0.80	0.20
Knowledge sharing	0.80	0.20
Innovation sharing	0.80	0.20

The risk for the 4 group of indicators, have a range from 1 to 5 according to the answer indicators (Table 4).

Table 4 Risk level of each answer

Risk	Answer	Answer
1	Implemented and controlled	Fully
2	Published and not implemented	Fostly
3	Elaborated but not published	Not always
4	In process	Sometimes
5	Does not exist	Sever

The global risk is obtained by the applications of the factor of impact to the risks according to the answer. The final values can reach the maximum values presented in the Table 5.

Table 5 Maximum possible values

Maximum possible values			
	Risk	Cultural	Ethic
Generic issues	5.00	---	---
From company's strategy	5.00	18.50	16.50
Cultural issues	5.00	14.50	10.50
Ethical issues	5.00	11.25	28.75
Communication and innovation	5.00	24.00	11.00
Global value	---	68.25	66.75

The final grade of risk is obtained by the relation between the result of the application of the tool and the maximum value possible:

The generic questions help to reinforce or make more flexible the degree of risk obtained in the different components, according to the value of this index. Thus, if this value is 1 or 2, the risk can be made more flexible, but if it is 4 or 5, it must be more fortified.

The other values, when compared with the maximum value possible, if they are:

- Less than 25 % of the maximum possible, it points out a simple analysis
- Between 25% and 50 % of the maximum possible, it points out a detailed analysis
- Between 50% and 75 % of the maximum possible, it points out a careful analysis
- More than 75 % of the maximum possible, it points out a deep analysis

These values should be affected by "the generic issues" risk by a reinforce or a relaxation of the degree of analysis obtained in the different components, according to the value of this index. Thus, if this value is 1 or 2, the risk can be made more flexible, but if it is 4 or 5, it must be more fortified.

6.1.4 Case study

The example below was applied to the company whose manager was one of the interviewees in this research R2 Telecom. The information is real and allows to see in more detail the application of the tool in a real corporate environment.

Table 6 Global data Information from R2 telecom Company

R2 Telecom (Brazil)	
Age gap oldest vs youngest (number of years)	32
Age of company (years)	29
Average experience of managers (years)	20
Number of workers	25
Number of nationality of employees	1
Number of teams	4
Number of level of management	3
Number of different professional groups	4
Number of different countries operates	0

Table 7 Final results of the company R2 Telecom

Final Results					
	Risk	Cultural	Ethic	Cultural	Ethic
Generic issues	2.44	---	---	---	---
From company's strategy	1.86	7.15	5.85	39%	35%
Cultural issues	2.80	7.40	10.50	51%	63%
Ethical issues	2.25	4.55	28.75	40%	47%
Communication and innovation	1.43	6.80	11.00	28%	29%
Global value	---	25.90	66.75	38%	44%

6.1.4.1 Interpretation of results:

Generic issues Risk = 2.44

In an average where the maximum value is 5, this number indicates that this company presents figures and characteristics of a company that has more controlled management, market experience, more experienced managers, and a reduced workforce.

This comparison shows us that the variation of these data directly affects risks and can present different situations that require care and attention. The variation and sensitivity of this information affect productivity, the need for training, the need for an effective communication plan, and several other factors that may be the subject of future studies.

Company strategy = 1.86

Each of the answers that make up a multiple-choice selection has a weight equal to its number in the selection order:

- When selecting the answers, the value automatically fills the column that calculates the risk, as can be seen in the example in the red column.
- The final result that indicates the risk is the average of all the answers to the questions. Therefore, a total of $14/2 = 7$.
- Culture and ethics: Multiply the value indicated in the answer; in this case, 1; this number is multiplied by the same fixed value previously defined for this question.

The risk is multiplied by the corresponding fixed value of the row:

- Culture $1 \times 0.25 = 0.25$ and ethics, $1 \times 0.75 = 0.75$. Therefore, they are multiplied by all the values in the tables, and at the end, when adding the rows, find the final value for culture and ethics. These examples are the columns blue.
- The columns in green represented the fixed values used to perform the results.

Table 8 Calculation of the company's strategy

Culture	Ethic	Risk	Culture	Ethic
3,70	3,30	2	7,90	6,10
0,25	0,75	1	0,25	0,75
0,60	0,40	1	0,60	0,40
0,50	0,50	1	0,50	0,50
0,50	0,50	3	1,50	1,50
0,50	0,50	2	1,00	1,00
0,75	0,25	3	2,25	0,75
0,60	0,40	3	1,80	1,20

The same logic applies to the calculation of the other areas, namely: cultural issues, ethical issues, communication, and innovation. The fixed values used for the calculations are described in section 6.1.3.

6.1.5 Degree of risk identified

Up to 2 - Controlled Risk

- Compliance and Ethics Policies: Regular training ensures compliance and minimizes penalties.
- Promotion of Inclusive Culture: An inclusive environment that attracts diverse talents and increases employee satisfaction.
- Transparent Governance: Effective structures that generate trust and responsibility in operations.

From 2.1 to 4.0 - Medium Risk

- Lack of Effective Communication: Deficiencies in internal communication, cause demotivation and resistance to change.
- Conflicts of Interest: Decisions are influenced by personal interests, compromising the company's integrity.
- Values Misalignment: Daily practices that do not reflect the company's values, reducing engagement.

Above 4.1 - High risk

- Corruption and Fraud: Culture of bribery and financial manipulation, resulting in reputational and legal damage.
- Toxic Work Environment: Harassment and non-aggressive discrimination, cause high turnover and low morale.
- Lack of Transparency: Hiding critical information leads to stakeholders losing trust.

The recommendations made are for volunteers who will test this tool to use as a parameter to check the degree of risk of their company. However, this data is not yet conclusive and does not generate checklists of points of attention resulting from their responses. Therefore, the importance of testing and monitoring future volunteers who will test this tool is reinforced so that it is possible to adjust a point to identify the deficiencies of each area and allow managers to have a clearer vision of their companies with regard to ethics and organizational culture.

6.2 Recommendation for managers

Following the areas that the tool has to map the company's situation; a suggestion will be made available for management to use as good practices to be followed. To create a strong organizational culture, managers/leaders must clearly define and communicate the company's values, offering continuous training and promoting cultural awareness. Encourage collaboration and inclusion, organize cultural events and social responsibility initiatives, and seek to frequently measure impacts through feedback meetings.

The influence of external consultants can provide perspectives for continuous improvement, ensuring an adaptable and solid culture. The company must clearly define its objectives, mission, vision and values, and promote training, workshops to ensure that employees can understand and be aligned with the strategic objectives of the company. These strategies must be recorded and promoted consistently through formal and informal initiatives, such as training, corporate events and team building activities, in order to gain the engagement of all specific parties. Furthermore, it is essential to invest in communication systems clear and efficient to ensure that all employees are aligned with the company's objectives and strategies and have the opportunity to give their opinion and collaborate with ideas and opinions.

It is important to define and ensure understanding of the adoption of a code of ethics and conduct so that employees and customers recognize care and respect for both people and which situations may be specific to the company. Create training programs in business ethics and its impacts on the professional lives of employees and the company. This helps ensure that all employees understand the importance of ethics and learn how to apply them in their daily work.

Provide reporting channels where employees can report unethical practices without fear of retaliation. Form an ethics committee responsible for evaluate and address reports of unethical behavior, ensuring that policies are followed and that corrective actions are taken when necessary.

Create open and accessible communication channels, promote regular feedback meetings and ensure that information flows clearly and honestly between all levels of the organization. These initiatives encourage collaboration, innovation, allow people to become closer and increase teamwork engagement.

In conclusion, creating a strong organizational culture requires clearly defining the mission, vision, and values, and promoting training and workshops to align employees. Encouraging collaboration, inclusion, cultural events, and social responsibility, along with frequently measuring impacts through feedback, is essential. External consultants can offer continuous improvements. Efficient communication systems, a code of ethics, business ethics training programs, and confidential reporting channels ensure an ethical environment. Regular feedback meetings and clear communication strengthen collaboration and engagement, consolidating a solid organizational culture.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study, the main focus of which was to work on the importance of culture and ethics for the growth of a small-medium enterprise. It was very important to analyze the scenario, which involved people from different cultural backgrounds, educational backgrounds and ages,

The difficulties encountered during the course of the work will also be presented, followed by the future work that will be carried out in relation to this topic and, finally, the final conclusion.

7.2 Limitations

Some difficulties were encountered throughout the study, research and compilation of information. Limitations in terms of literary material: although the topics proposed, namely: organizational culture, ethics, small and medium-sized enterprises are very popular topics, it was difficult to find literature with study models in the areas of technology, there are some books that speak very well of these concepts, but putting all these factors together makes it a little more complex to use similar models to deepen the studies.

Time constraints: Personally, the relationship between study and work requires a lot of dedication and discipline. When achieved, this combination is satisfying. The time dedicated to this dissertation was unfortunately partial, which made it impossible to send the tool proposed here to a group of people to test, and because of this lack of tests it was not possible to validate and adjust the tool.

The online survey was made available late and, due to meeting deadlines, the time it was available for completion was shorter than expected. Even so, the 37 volunteers who contributed to the survey enabled me to achieve the results for this dissertation. Although, with more time to collect the data, I could have reached a larger number of respondents in other countries, whose cultural environment is different. This would have allowed me to obtain more opinions and also to understand the profile of these professionals

The same goes for the interviews, as the research was aimed at people who actually work in the technology field and small and medium-sized enterprises, it was not easy to reconcile the time and availability of professionals, since the interviews are a conversation and these people need to be absent from their daily activities.

Due to time constraints, it is also not possible to test the tool in actual companies, collect information, conduct interviews with the data found, understand more deeply the managers' perspectives, and obtain more details on how ethical and cultural factors may vary depending on each manager's point of view. There may also be variations due to the nature of the business. The tool needs to go through configurations, and its applicability is essential to gather all the necessary information to make the required adjustments and make it available for use. The goal, even after completing this work, is to apply and refine the use of this proposed tool so that it can eventually become commercially viable. In addition to making it commercial, the objective is to make it available for other students or professionals who can contribute to and deepen their research and modifications.

7.3 Future work

Even with the difficulties encountered, much has been achieved in this research, but there is still a lot to be done with the themes explored.

Small and medium-sized companies will always exist, and it is believed that most experience similar problems when they seek to grow or expand their businesses, but cultural and ethical factors, and even the culture of their parents and family environment, shape the people who are part of these companies. Although personal culture, way of life and religion were not explored in this study, it is believed that these factors can play a role in shaping a company's culture. When it comes to ethics, there is a lot to consider. If we look at the culture of countries or small communities, for example, a lot can be understood and compared. Depending on the situation, the concept of ethics can be interpreted from different points of view, due to the influences of a person's origin, a community or a nation. The combination of these factors, ethics and culture, is a topic that can be explored in various combinations.

The tool presented in this dissertation will be applied to a minimum of 15 companies. Following this, interviews will be conducted with the participants based on the questions provided. This approach will allow for a better understanding of which characteristics should be altered or added to the areas of questioning. If necessary, additional questions or new areas will be included based on the results obtained during the process. Adjustments will be made, and the tool will be made available for use by interested companies. Additionally, a checklist of recommendations and actions to be taken according to the final results will be created as needed.

7.4 Final Conclusion

There is no denying the importance that culture and ethics represent not only for business, but for day-to-day relationships and career progression. When deciding on these topics to study for this dissertation, much was found during the research, and when formulating the inquiry, it became clear that it was not possible to explore culture and ethics without considering relevant behaviors that are part of a company's culture.

More than just being ethical, or defending values rooted in the family environment, people need to understand what is actually considered ethical in the corporate environment in which they operate. In some situations, these people are not aware of the actions that could lead them to commit an unethical act. So, the question remains, how does the company deal with this? How can these people aim to grow professionally and help the company achieve greater goals if they don't see themselves as committed to their own values?

How does a company manage to create a positive cultural environment that encourages the exchange of knowledge, values innovation, offers solutions, motivates and values people and takes care of its customers and employees fairly, without overloading them with work and promoting a balance with their personal lives? This is a major challenge. These and other issues were identified in the survey and interview.

This study has shown me culture and ethics in a different light, as there are many difficulties involved in this issue, which goes beyond spreading mission, vision and values. People are committed when they feel valued. The financial side is undoubtedly one of the most important, but it is not alone. There are now many companies that are betting on technology to offer quality of life to their employees, as well as flexibility and a balance between personal and professional life.

Studies have shown that working in a toxic environment, with a lot of pressure and overload, increases turnover and dissatisfaction, directly affecting the company's growth opportunities, as there will be a lack of committed and motivated employees.

Small and medium-sized companies, on the other hand, don't have very strict rules or standards, and in many cases the lack of financial resources prevents the company from offering

formal training and benefits that increase employees' knowledge, allowing them to become safer and more productive. It is hoped that all the content explored here will offer future benefits for small businesses, and that it can also complement other studies and the evolution of the proposed tool.

When I chose to carry out this research, I was thinking about how to support small and medium-sized businesses and also because I believe in the importance that small businesses have in the economy of any country, as well as in the lives of many professionals at the start of their careers, as many begin their careers in small businesses or running their own business.

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- Solomon, Ética Empresarial: https://asmayr.pro.br/arq/eti_empresarial_solomon.pdf
- EBSCOhost Article Viewer:
<https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=58db5f02-8e1a-4e96-a25f-23d2270403c4%40redis>

Table of Literature Review

	Authors	Concept Covered
1	Ashforth, B. E., & Anand, V. (2003). The normalization of corruption in organizations. <i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i> , 25, 1-52.	This article deals with how corruption normalizes within the organization, the author defines what a corrupt act is and also the use of authority for personal gain. Collective corruption is also examined, as to how these acts become normalized. The case also brings many examples involving large companies
2	Ferrell, O. C., & Fraedrich, J. (2015). <i>Business ethics: Ethical decision making & cases</i> . Cengage Learning.	Ferrell and Fraedrich (2015) explore the importance of ethics in business, presenting theoretical and practical models for ethical decisions. The book highlights how clear policies, ethical leadership and a solid organizational culture promote business integrity and sustainability
3	Jones, T. M. (1991). Ethical decision making by individuals in organizations: An issue-contingent model. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> , 16(2), 366-395.	The article deals with moral issues that vary according to their intensity when it comes to ethical decision-making and how behaviour can significantly contribute to understanding moral processes. The report focuses on three central definitions. First, a moral issue concerns actions freely performed and how those actions might harm or benefit others. Moral and ethical terms change depending on whom and the context applied. And finally, how an ethical decision defines how legal decision-making is morally and accepted by a community
4	Luis Fernandez, J., & Camacho, J. (2016). Effective elements to establish an ethical infrastructure: An exploratory study of SMEs in the Madrid region. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> .	In addition to reviewing some literature, this article shows targeted research on the ethical infrastructure in small and medium-sized companies and how leadership is applied and its relationship with the company's culture and climate.
5	Schein, E. H. (2010). <i>Organizational culture and leadership</i> . Jossey-Bass.	The book addresses how organizational culture is created, maintained and modified in organizations. Schein explores the role of leaders in defining the values, behaviors and norms that shape the work environment and influence organizational performance.
6	Sinclair, A. (1993). Approaches to organizational culture and ethics. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> , 12, 63-73.	The article presents a literature review of organizational culture and ethics. It addresses essential points about how culture is created and disseminated and how people feel involved and adapts, in the field of ethics it warns about behaviours, and economics, it also talks about strategies that companies or communities use both to manipulate and to involve people.
7	Spencer-Oatey, H. (2021). What is culture? A compilation of quotations for the intercultural field. <i>GPC Core Concept Compilations</i> .	This paper reviews and synthesizes existing theories of culture, particularly focusing on Hofstede's theories of group values and behaviors. It includes concrete examples of cultural differences among social groups and examines the concept of subcultures within national cultures.

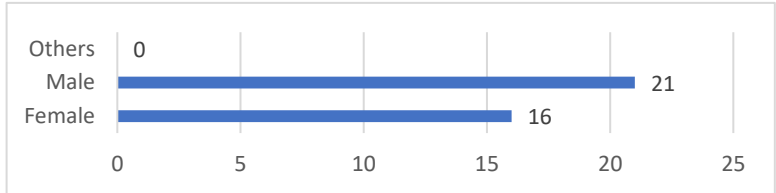
8	Treviño, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2017). <i>Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right</i> . John Wiley & Sons.	This book provides practical guidance on business ethics, covering topics such as ethical decision-making, leadership and organizational policies to promote ethical behaviour in companies This is a review of the literature on behavioural ethics making a reference to individual behaviour and how it is judged according to moral norms of behaviour and how they are accepted
9	Treviño, L. K., Weaver, G. R., & Reynolds, S. J. (2006). Behavioral ethics in organizations: A review. <i>Journal of Management</i> , 32(6), 951-990.	This is a review of the literature on behavioural ethics making a reference to individual behaviour and how it is judged according to moral norms of behaviour and how they are accepted

Appendix A – Online Survey Results

1st Section: Demographic data

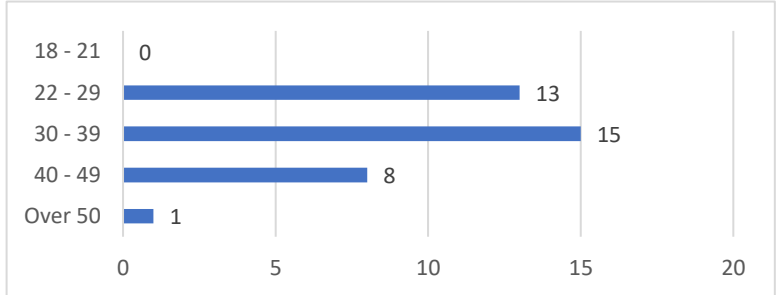
Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Other



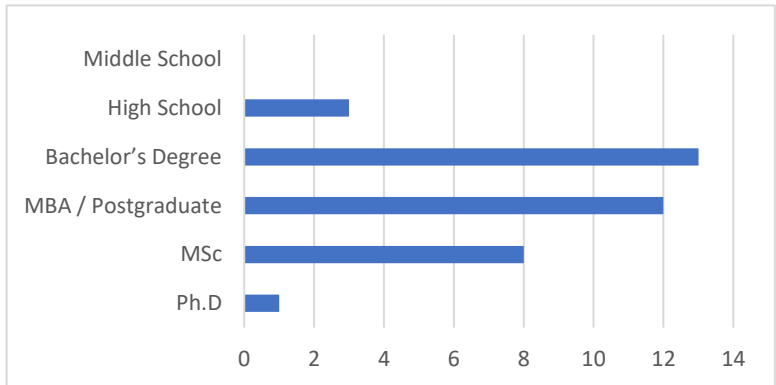
Age (Years old)

- a) 18 - 21
- b) 22 -29
- c) 30 -39
- d) 40 - 49
- e) Over 50



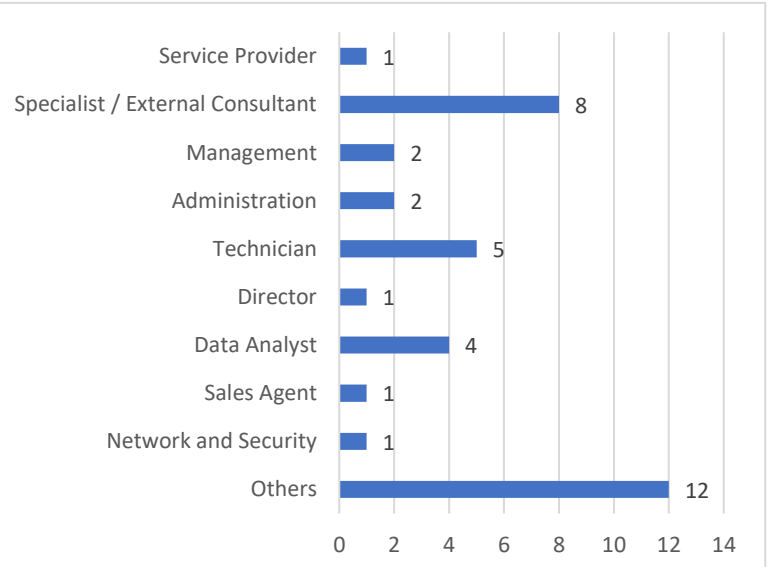
Academic Qualifications

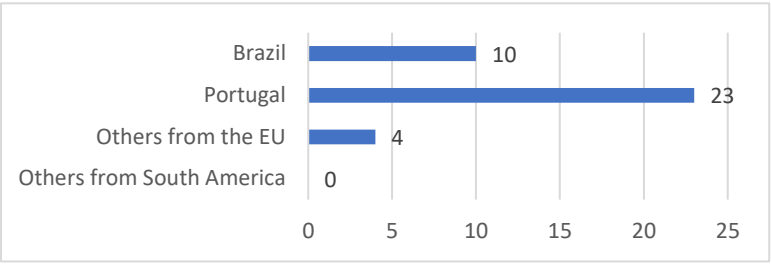
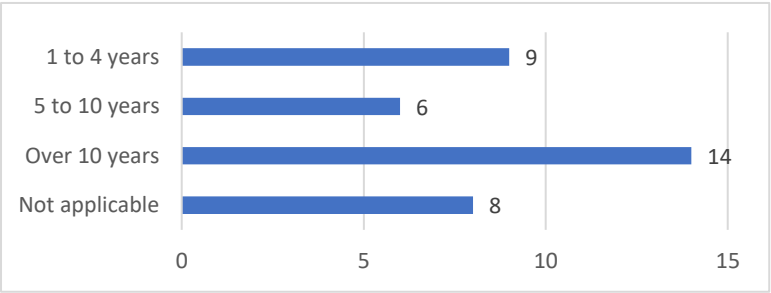
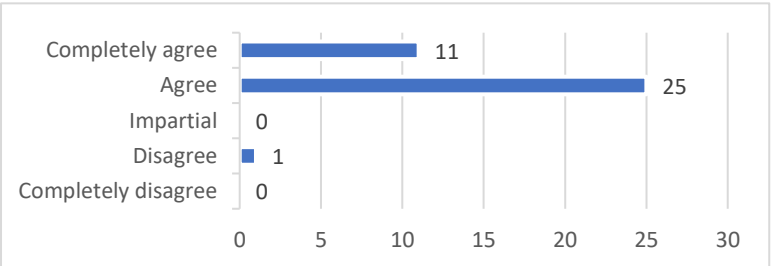
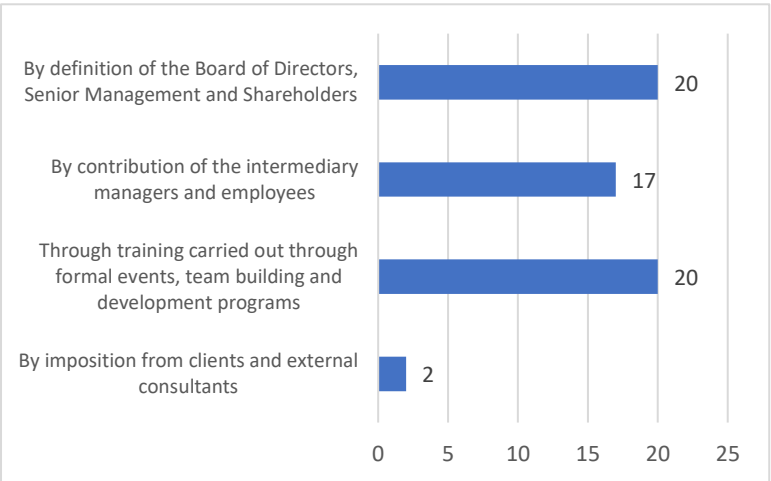
- a) Elementary
- b) High School
- c) Bachelor's Degree
- d) MBA / Graduate
- e) MSc
- f) Ph.D



Field of Activity

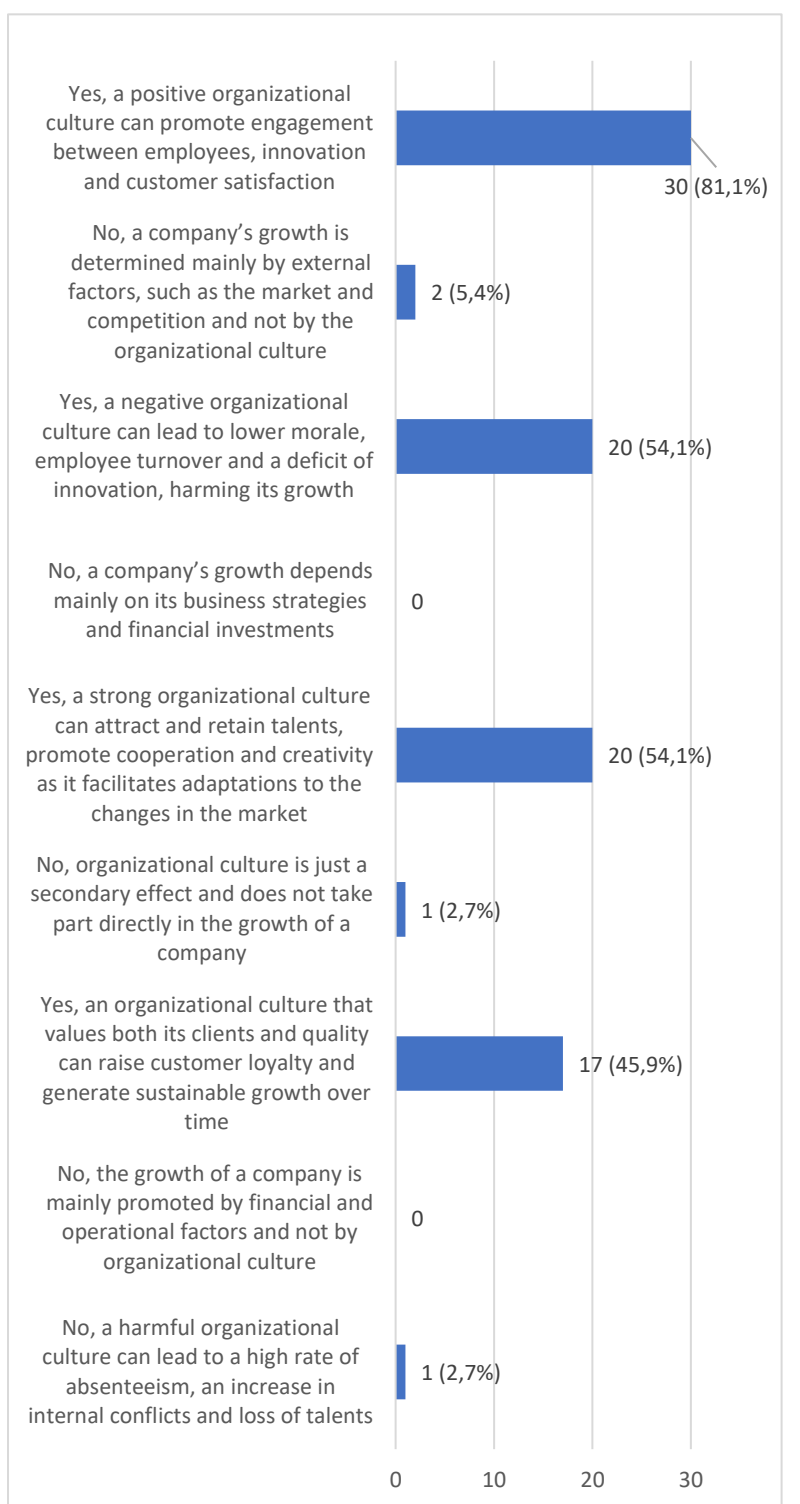
- a) Service Provider
- b) Specialist / External Consultant
- c) Management
- d) Administration
- e) Technician
- f) Director
- g) Data Analyst
- h) Sales Agent
- i) Network and Security
- j) Others



Country of Residence a) Brazil b) Portugal c) Others from the EU d) Others from South America	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Country of Residence</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Brazil</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Portugal</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others from the EU</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others from South America</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Country of Residence	Count	Brazil	10	Portugal	23	Others from the EU	4	Others from South America	0		
Country of Residence	Count												
Brazil	10												
Portugal	23												
Others from the EU	4												
Others from South America	0												
How long has your current company been in business? a) 1 to 4 years b) 5 to 10 years c) Over 10 years d) Not applicable	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Duration</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 to 4 years</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 to 10 years</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Over 10 years</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not applicable</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Duration	Count	1 to 4 years	9	5 to 10 years	6	Over 10 years	14	Not applicable	8		
Duration	Count												
1 to 4 years	9												
5 to 10 years	6												
Over 10 years	14												
Not applicable	8												
2nd Section: Questions about organizational culture “Organizational culture is how a company acts and behave. It is the group of values, norms and traditions that guide the actions and decisions from its employees. It shapes the way people work together and the company’s reputation”. * When answering the questions consider your professional experience or personal opinion.													
Is the company’s culture essential to its growth? a) Completely disagree b) Partially disagree c) Neutral d) Partially agree e) Completely agree	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Completely agree</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Impartial</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Completely disagree</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Count	Completely agree	11	Agree	25	Impartial	0	Disagree	1	Completely disagree	0
Response	Count												
Completely agree	11												
Agree	25												
Impartial	0												
Disagree	1												
Completely disagree	0												
How can a culture be created in a small size company or startup? a) By definition of the Board of Directors, Senior Management and Shareholders b) By contribution of the intermediary managers and employees c) Through training carried out through formal events, team building and development programs d) By imposition from clients and external consultants	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Method</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>By definition of the Board of Directors, Senior Management and Shareholders</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>By contribution of the intermediary managers and employees</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Through training carried out through formal events, team building and development programs</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>By imposition from clients and external consultants</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Method	Count	By definition of the Board of Directors, Senior Management and Shareholders	20	By contribution of the intermediary managers and employees	17	Through training carried out through formal events, team building and development programs	20	By imposition from clients and external consultants	2		
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By definition of the Board of Directors, Senior Management and Shareholders	20												
By contribution of the intermediary managers and employees	17												
Through training carried out through formal events, team building and development programs	20												
By imposition from clients and external consultants	2												

Can a strong organizational culture promote a company's growth?

- a) Yes, a positive organizational culture can promote engagement between employees, innovation and customer satisfaction.
- b) No, a company's growth is determined mainly by external factors, such as the market and competition and not by the organizational culture.
- c) Yes, a negative organizational culture can lead to lower morale, employee turnover and a deficit of innovation, harming its growth.
- d) No, a company's growth depends mainly on its business strategies and financial investments.
- e) Yes, a strong organizational culture can attract and retain talents, promote cooperation and creativity as it facilitates adaptations to the changes in the market.
- f) No, organizational culture is just a secondary effect and does not take part directly in the growth of a company.
- g) Yes, an organizational culture that values both its clients and quality can raise customer loyalty and generate sustainable growth over time.
- h) No, the growth of a company is mainly promoted by financial and operational factors and not by organizational culture.
- i) No, a harmful organizational culture can lead to a high rate of absenteeism, an increase in internal conflicts and loss of talents.



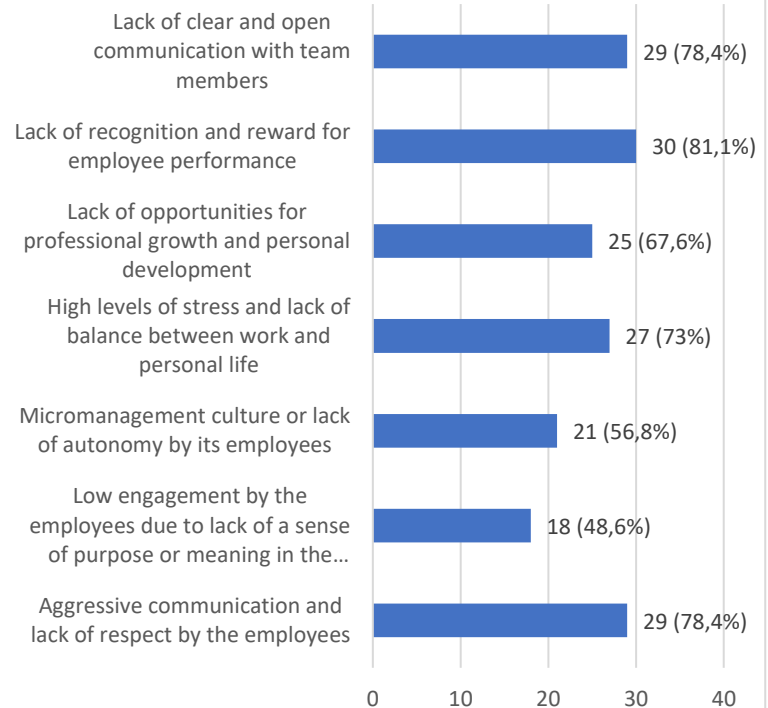
Which organizational factors can negatively impact the growth of a company when its focus is on the customer?

- a) Demotivating organizational culture and resistance to adaptations
- b) Gaps in leadership and strategic vision
- c) Excessive bureaucracy and slow processes
- d) Lack of focus on the customer and necessities from the market
- e) Failure to adapt to market changes and trends



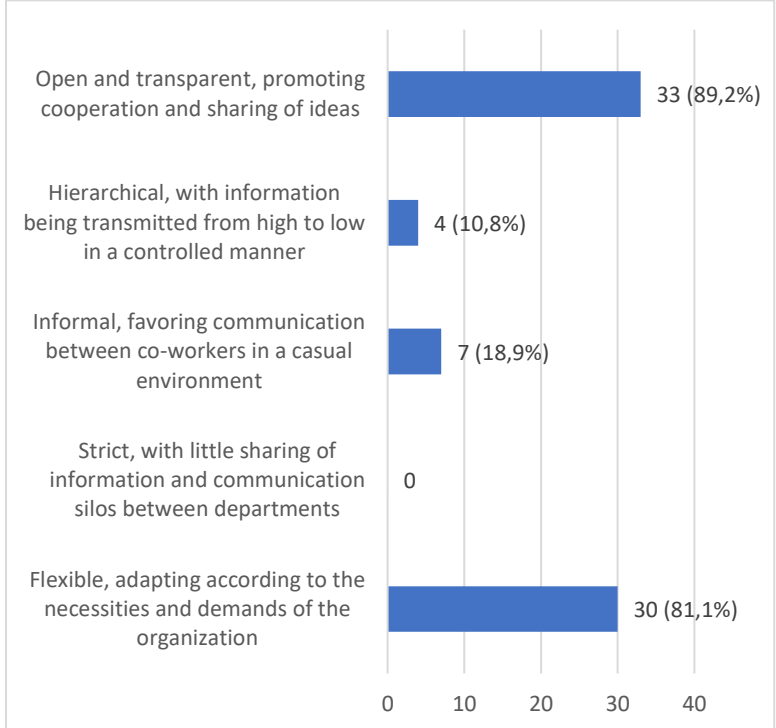
Which organizational factors impact directly on the employees' engagement and harm the growth of a company?

- a) Lack of clear and open communication with team members
- b) Lack of recognition and reward for employee performance
- c) Lack of opportunities for professional growth and personal development
- d) High levels of stress and lack of balance between work and personal life
- e) Micromanagement culture or lack of autonomy by its employees
- f) Low engagement by the employees due to lack of a sense of purpose or meaning in the work environment
- g) Aggressive communication and lack of respect by the employees



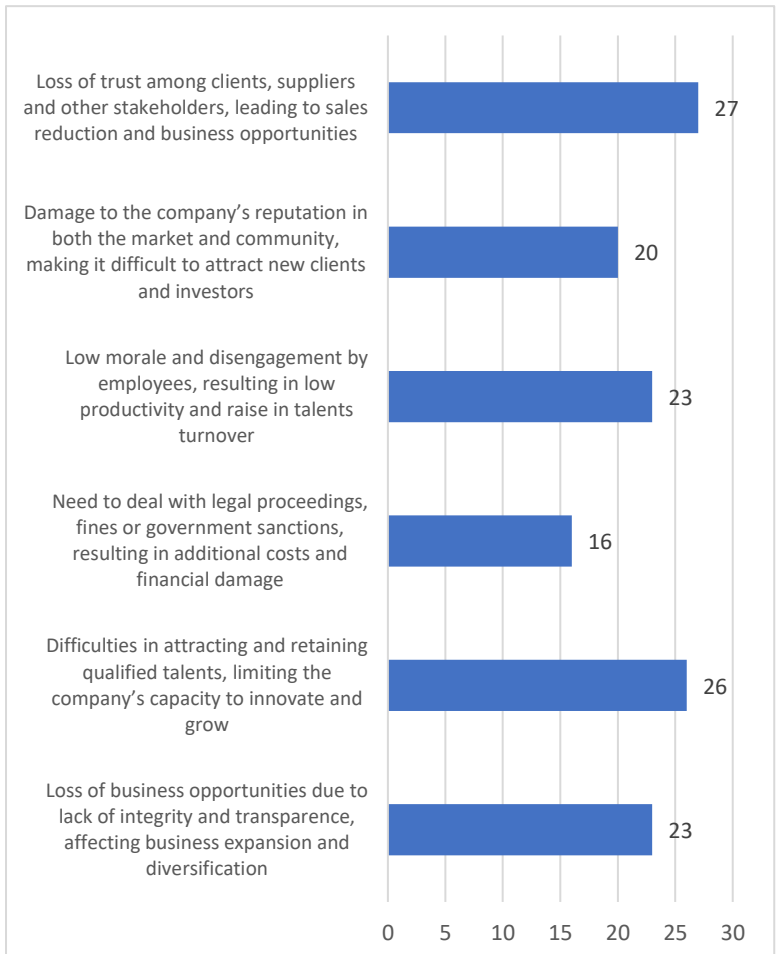
Which model of communication can contribute to promote a company's growth?

- a) Open and transparent, promoting cooperation and sharing of ideas
- b) Hierarchical, with information being transmitted from high to low in a controlled manner
- c) Informal, favoring communication between co-workers in a casual environment
- d) Strict, with little sharing of information and communication silos between departments
- e) Flexible, adapting according to the necessities and demands of the organization



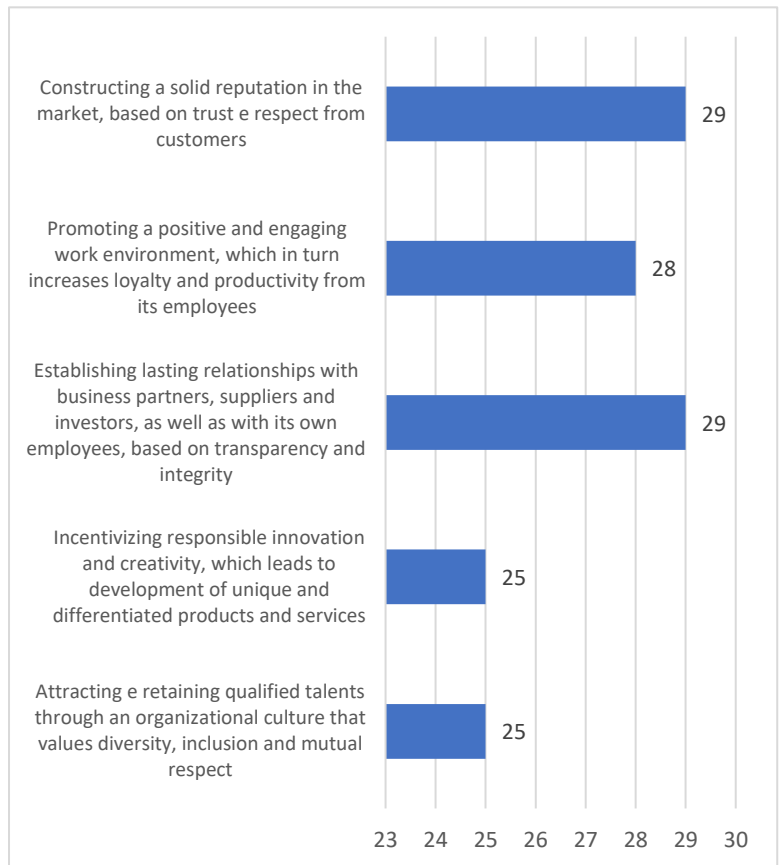
What are the consequences for a company when its organizational culture does not value ethics?

- a) Loss of trust among clients, suppliers and other stakeholders, leading to sales reduction and business opportunities
- b) Damage to the company's reputation in both the market and community, making it difficult to attract new clients and investors
- c) Low morale and disengagement by employees, resulting in low productivity and raise in talents turnover
- d) Need to deal with legal proceedings, fines or government sanctions, resulting in additional costs and financial damage
- e) Difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified talents, limiting the company's capacity to innovate and grow
- f) Loss of business opportunities due to lack of integrity and transparency, affecting business expansion and diversification



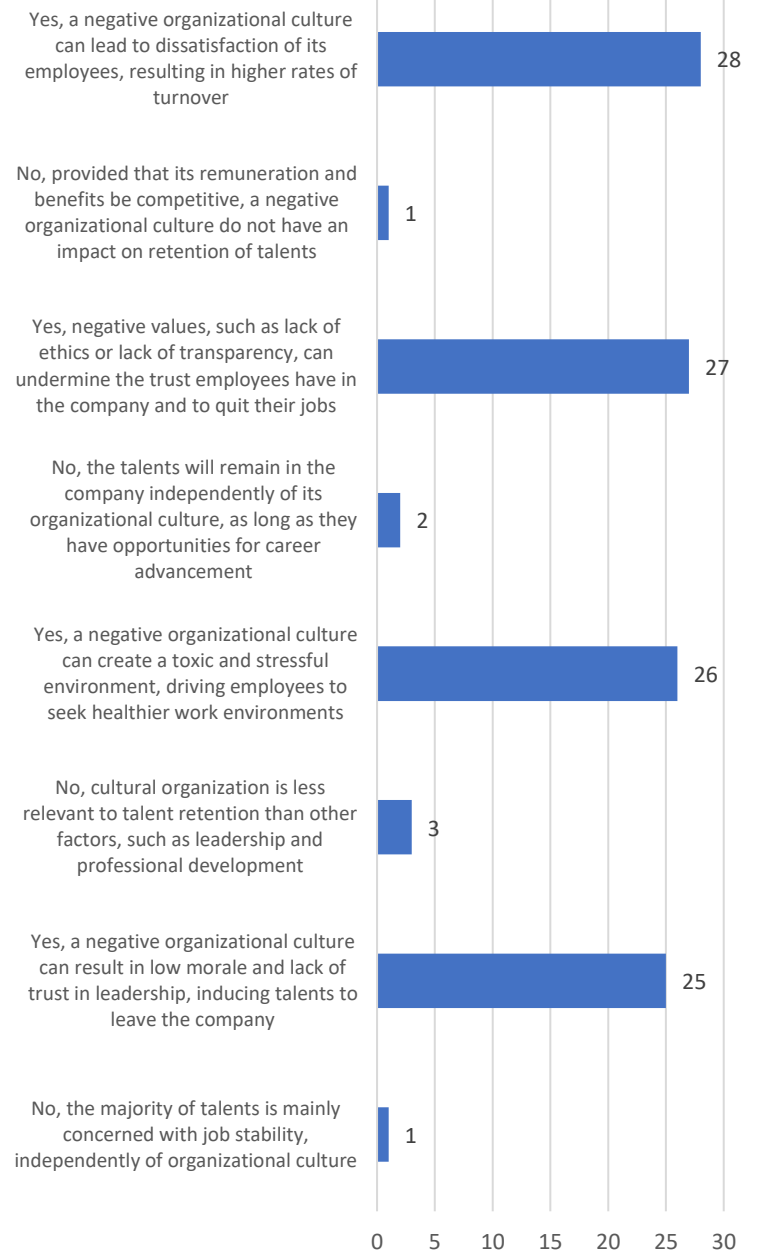
How can a company boost its growth by praising ethics?

- a) Constructing a solid reputation in the market, based on trust e respect from customers
- b) Promoting a positive and engaging work environment, which in turn increases loyalty and productivity from its employees
- c) Establishing lasting relationships with business partners, suppliers and investors, as well as with its own employees, based on transparency and integrity
- d) Incentivizing responsible innovation and creativity, which leads to development of unique and differentiated products and services
- e) Attracting e retaining qualified talents through an organizational culture that values diversity, inclusion and mutual respect



Can a company's negative organizational culture affect its talent retention?

- a) Yes, a negative organizational culture can lead to dissatisfaction of its employees, resulting in higher rates of turnover
- b) No, provided that its remuneration and benefits be competitive, a negative organizational culture do not have an impact on retention of talents
- c) Yes, negative values, such as lack of ethics or lack of transparency, can undermine the trust employees have in the company and to quit their jobs
- d) No, the talents will remain in the company independently of its organizational culture, as long as they have opportunities for career advancement
- e) Yes, a negative organizational culture can create a toxic and stressful environment, driving employees to seek healthier work environments
- f) No, cultural organization is less relevant to talent retention than other factors, such as leadership and professional development
- g) Yes, a negative organizational culture can result in low morale and lack of trust in leadership, inducing talents to leave the company
- h) No, the majority of talents is mainly concerned with job stability, independently of organizational culture



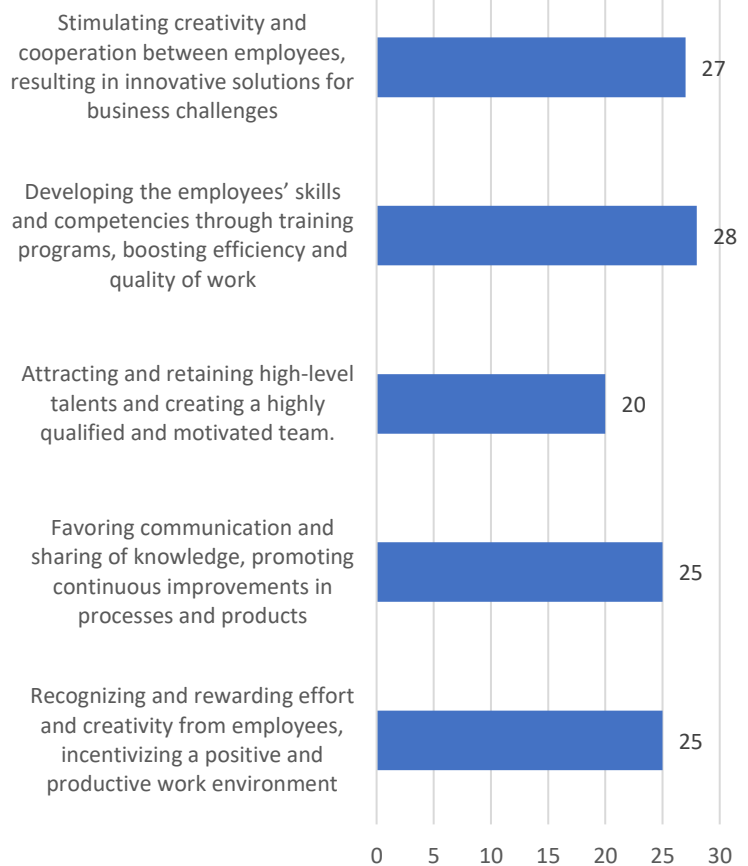
Can an open, transparent and non-bureaucratic communication influence positively on the motivation, performance and retention of talents in an organization?

- a) Yes, an open communication promotes better engagement and trust between employees stimulating motivation
- b) No, an open communication can result in conflicts and misunderstandings
- c) Maybe, an open communication can be effective depending on the organizational culture and the way it is implemented
- d) I am not sure



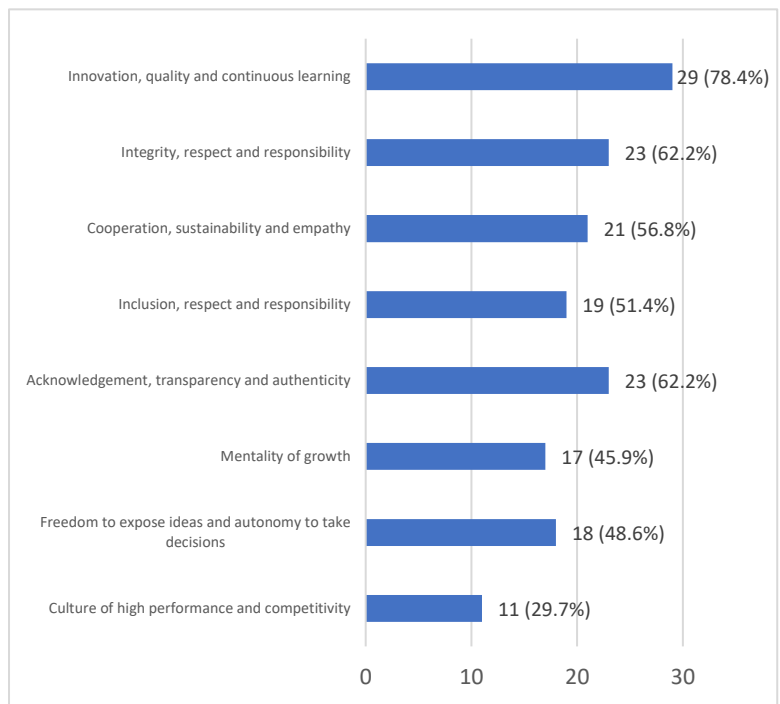
In which ways an organizational culture that encourages innovation, offers opportunities of professional growth and values stimulation of ideas, can directly influence the growth of a company?

- a) Stimulating creativity and cooperation between employees, resulting in innovative solutions for business challenges
- b) Developing the employees' skills and competencies through training programs, boosting efficiency and quality of work
- c) Attracting and retaining high-level talents and creating a highly qualified and motivated team.
- d) Favoring communication and sharing of knowledge, promoting continuous improvements in processes and products
- e) Recognizing and rewarding effort and creativity from employees, incentivizing a positive and productive work environment



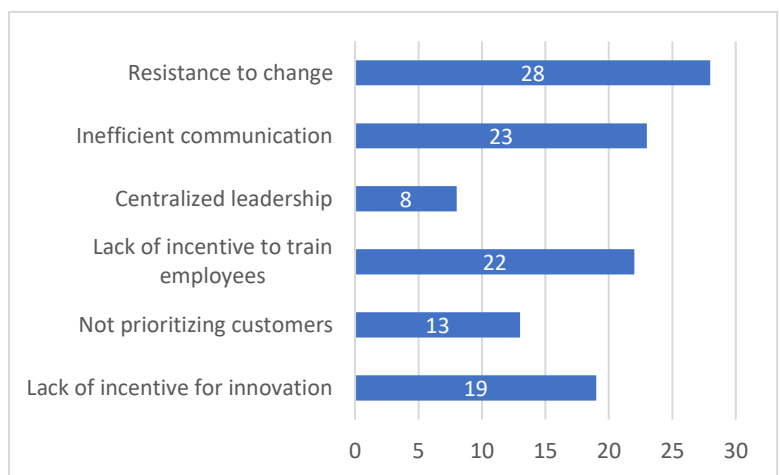
Which cultural characteristics can promote a company's growth?

- a) Innovation, quality and continuous learning
- b) Integrity, respect and responsibility
- c) Cooperation, sustainability and empathy
- d) Inclusion, respect and responsibility
- e) Acknowledgement, transparency and authenticity
- f) Mentality of growth
- g) Freedom to expose ideas and autonomy to take decisions
- h) Culture of high performance and competitiveness



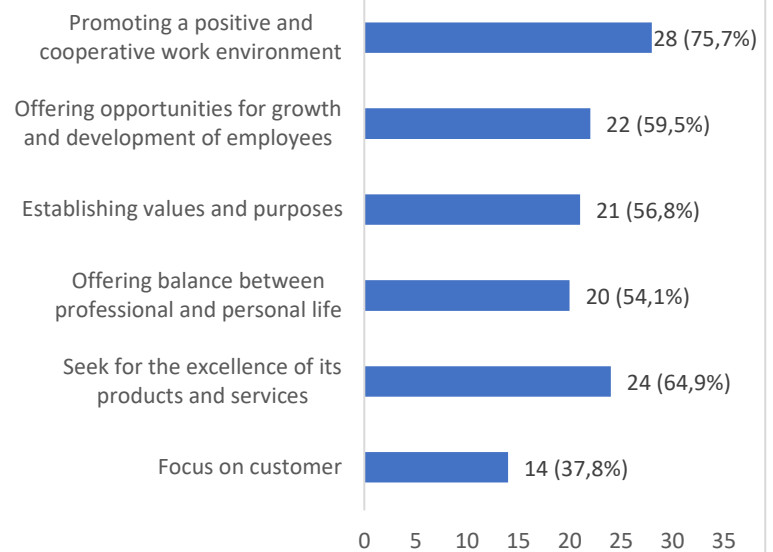
What is the biggest cultural obstacle that can prevent a company from growing?

- a) Resistance to change
- b) Inefficient communication
- c) Centralized leadership
- d) Lack of incentive to train employees
- e) Not prioritizing customers
- f) Lack of incentive for innovation



How can a strong organizational culture help a small size company overcome challenges and achieve its growth goals?

- a) Promoting a positive and cooperative work environment
- b) Offering opportunities for growth and development of employees
- c) Establishing values and purposes
- d) Offering balance between professional and personal life
- e) Seek for the excellence of its products and services
- f) Focus on customer

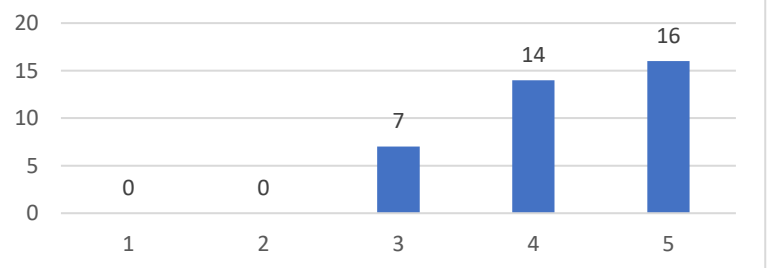


3rd Section: Organizational Ethics

Organizational ethics is about the moral rules that a company complies. It includes fair, honest and responsible behavior from employees and leaders. An ethical organization values transparency and treats all people with respect. Ethics is important to maintain a good reputation and healthy relations inside and outside a company.

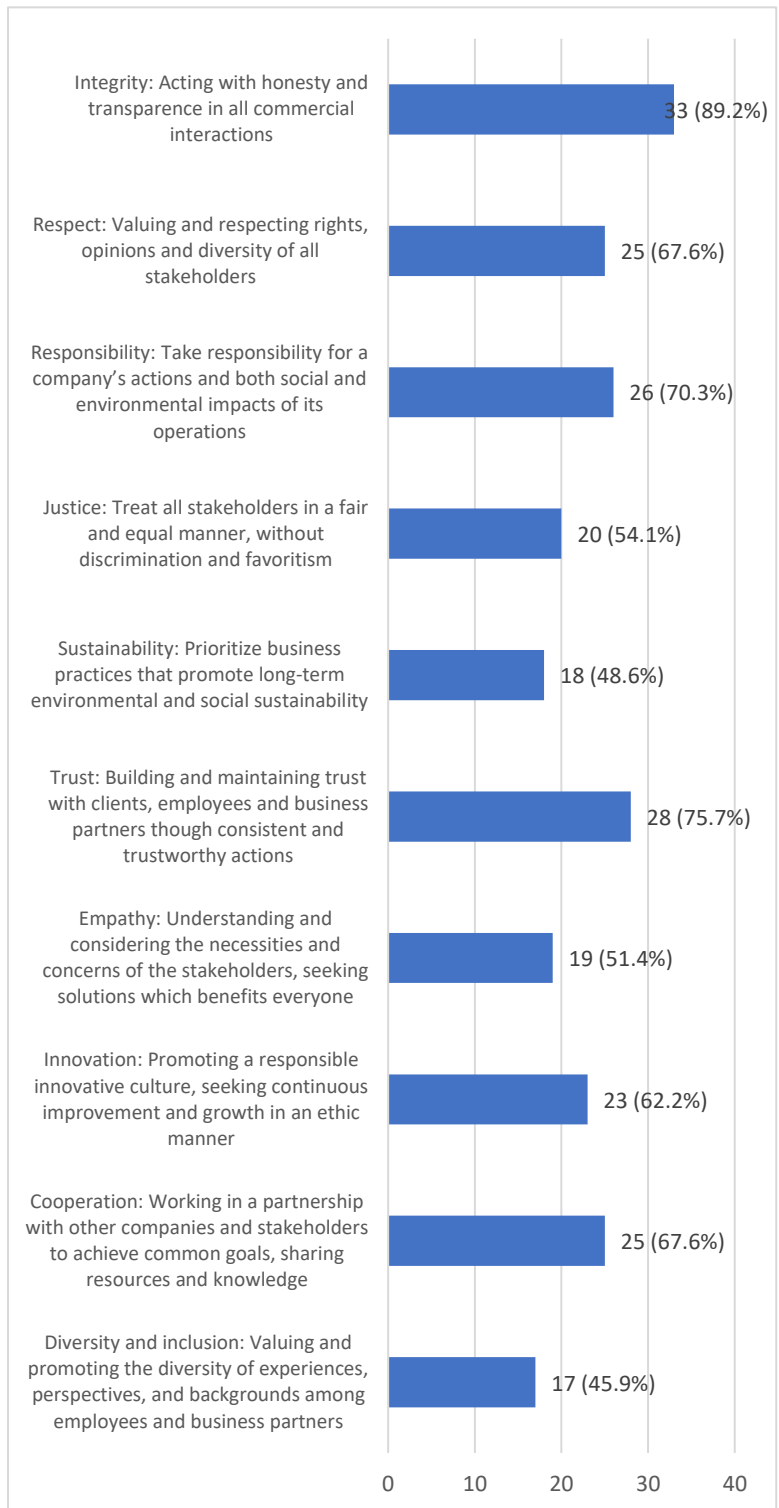
* When answering the questions consider your professional experience or personal opinion.

In a scale of 1 to 5 how do business ethics directly impact a company's growth? (1 is "No, it has no relationship" and 5 is "Yes, it is directly related")



Which ethical characteristics can favor a company's growth?

- a) Integrity: Acting with honesty and transparency in all commercial interactions
- b) Respect: Valuing and respecting rights, opinions and diversity of all stakeholders
- c) Responsibility: Take responsibility for a company's actions and both social and environmental impacts of its operations
- d) Justice: Treat all stakeholders in a fair and equal manner, without discrimination and favoritism
- e) Sustainability: Prioritize business practices that promote long-term environmental and social sustainability
- f) Trust: Building and maintaining trust with clients, employees and business partners through consistent and trustworthy actions
- g) Empathy: Understanding and considering the necessities and concerns of the stakeholders, seeking solutions which benefits everyone
- h) Innovation: Promoting a responsible innovative culture, seeking continuous improvement and growth in an ethical manner
- i) Cooperation: Working in a partnership with other companies and stakeholders to achieve common goals, sharing resources and knowledge



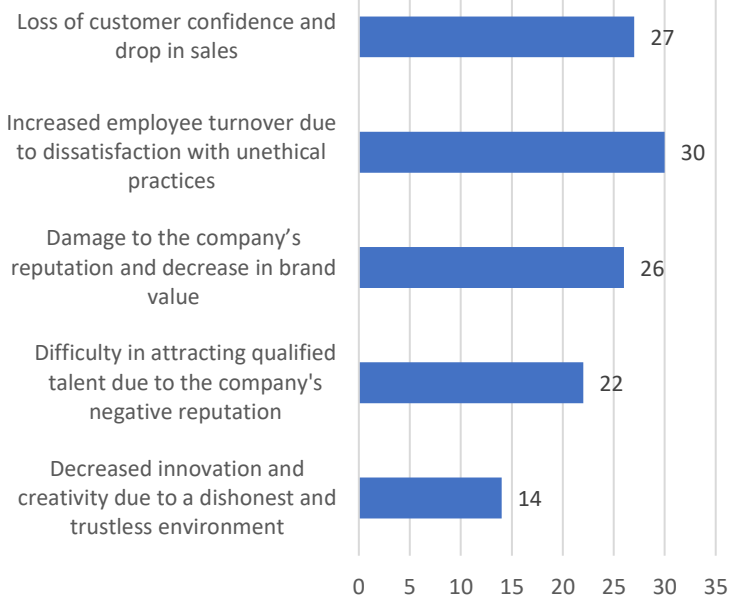
Can unethical practices within a small size company prevent its growth?

- a) Yes, unethical practices can harm the company's reputation and drive away potential customers and investors
- b) No, unethical practices are common and do not have significant impact on the growth of small size companies
- c) Maybe, it depends on the type of unethical practices and on the company's organizational culture
- d) I don't know because I believe the growth from a small size organization is more dependent on other factors such as the market and competition



What are the consequences for a company's growth in an environment where the organizational culture does not value ethics?

- a) Loss of customer confidence and drop in sales
- b) Increased employee turnover due to dissatisfaction with unethical practices
- c) Damage to the company's reputation and decrease in brand value
- d) Difficulty in attracting qualified talent due to the company's negative reputation
- e) Decreased innovation and creativity due to a dishonest and trustless environment



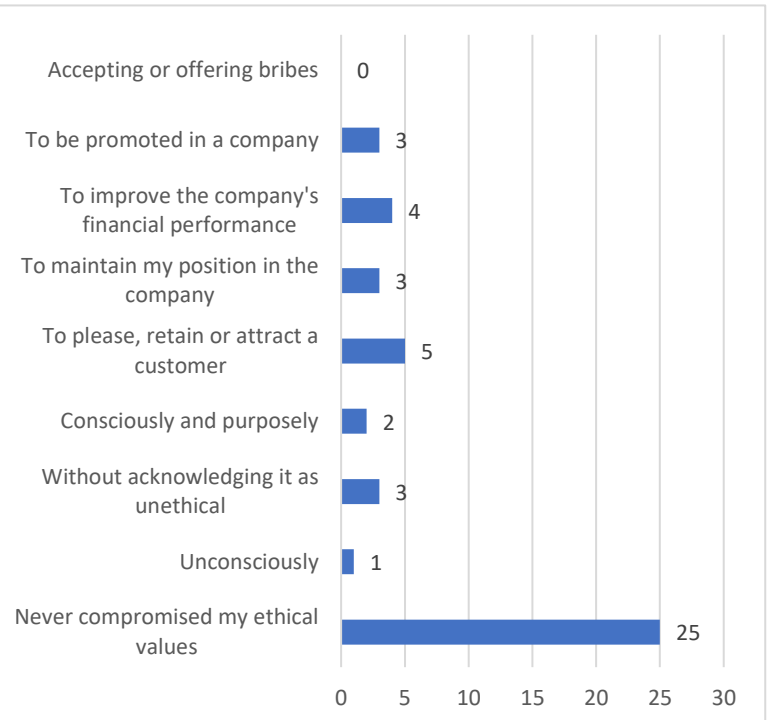
How can unethical attitudes impact talent retention and harm s company's growth?

- a) By demotivating employees, leading to turnover and loss of talent, potentially resulting in an unqualified and inefficient team, harming the company's growth
- b) Creating a toxic work environment, leading talented employees to seek opportunities in other companies, leaving the company with a less qualified and less productive team, which can harm its growth
- c) Reducing employee turnover due to satisfaction with the company
- d) Lack of ethics can undermine employees' confidence in leadership and organizational culture, leading to demotivation and lack of engagement, which can result in a dissatisfied and unproductive team, harming the company's growth



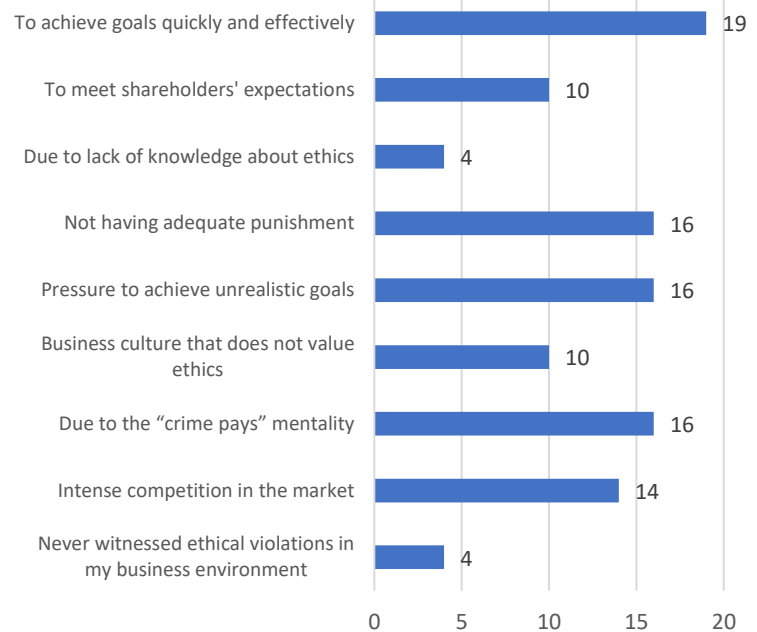
In which of the following situations have you compromised your ethical values to achieve business goals or objectives?

- a) Accepting or offering bribes
- b) To be promoted in a company
- c) To improve the company's financial performance
- d) To maintain my position in the company
- e) To please, retain or attract a customer
- f) Consciously and purposely
- g) Without acknowledging it as unethical
- h) Unconsciously
- i) Never compromised my ethical values



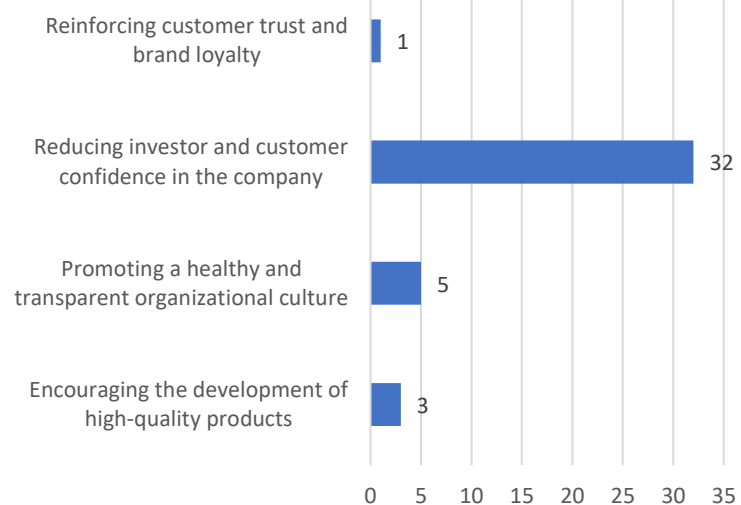
What is the main reason ethics are violated in the business environment?

- a) To achieve goals quickly and effectively
- b) To meet shareholders' expectations
- c) Due to lack of knowledge about ethics
- d) Not having adequate punishment
- e) Pressure to achieve unrealistic goals
- f) Business culture that does not value ethics
- g) Due to the "crime pays" mentality
- h) Intense competition in the market
- i) Never witnessed ethical violations in my business environment



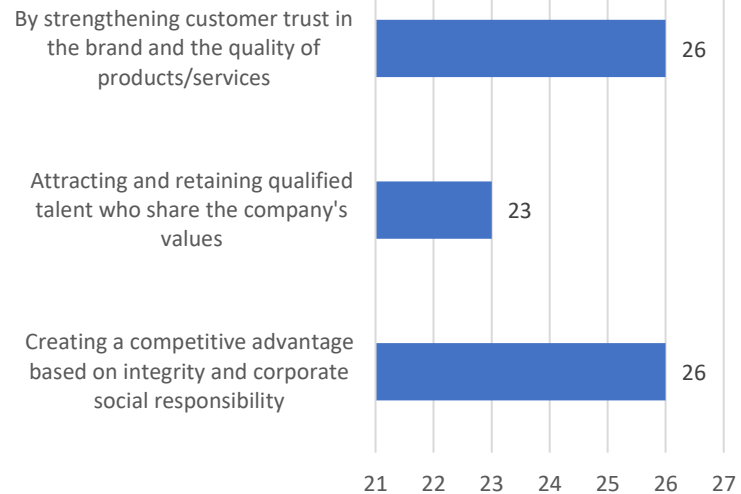
How can the absence of ethics influence a company's reputation, and in turn, its growth?

- a) Reinforcing customer trust and brand loyalty
- b) Reducing investor and customer confidence in the company
- c) Promoting a healthy and transparent organizational culture
- d) Encouraging the development of high-quality products



In your opinion, how can a culture that values ethics help a small company stand out in the market?

- a) By strengthening customer trust in the brand and the quality of products/services
- b) Attracting and retaining qualified talent who share the company's values
- c) Creating a competitive advantage based on integrity and corporate social responsibility



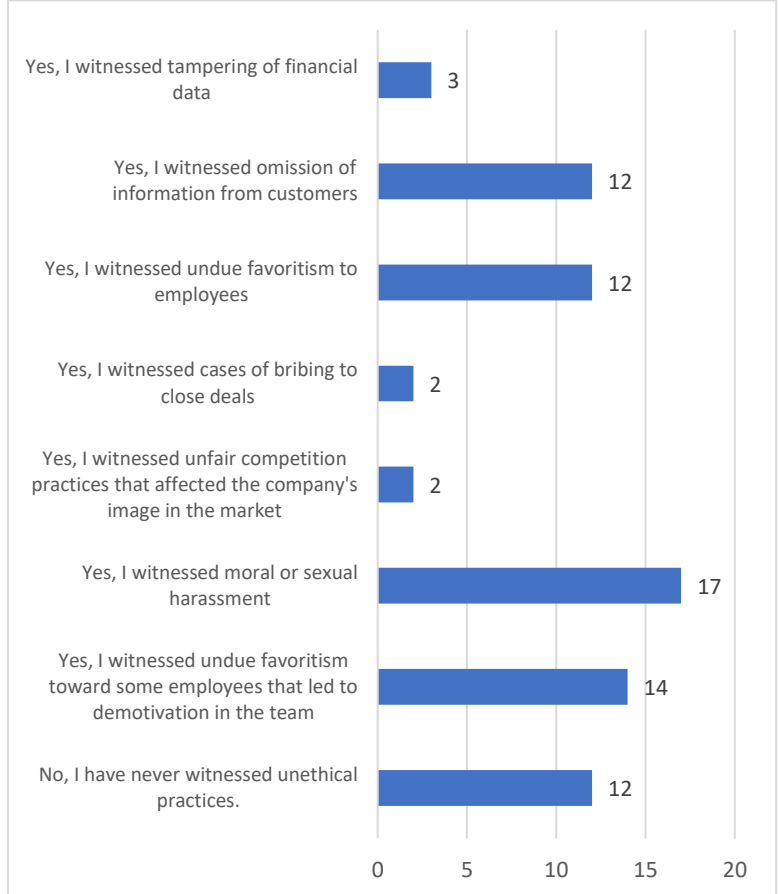
What steps can a small business take to promote an ethical culture and ensure it contributes positively to its growth?

- a) Establishing a code of conduct and ensuring that its compliance
- b) Offering regular training about ethics
- c) Incentivizing open and transparent communication
- d) Implementing politics of acknowledgement and reward to promote ethical behaviours
- e) Nominate an ethics committee
- f) Carry out regular audits
- g) Promoting leadership by example
- h) Creating Confidential Reporting Channels



Have you ever witnessed or experienced unethical practices at a company?

- a) Yes, I witnessed tampering of financial data
- b) Yes, I witnessed omission of information from customers
- c) Yes, I witnessed undue favoritism to employees
- d) Yes, I witnessed cases of bribing to close deals
- e) Yes, I witnessed unfair competition practices that affected the company's image in the market
- f) Yes, I witnessed moral or sexual harassment
- g) Yes, I witnessed undue favoritism toward some employees that led to demotivation in the team
- h) No, I have never witnessed unethical practices.



Anexo B – Additional interview

#Name and position of interviewee	
Felipe Marques da Silva - Developer	Carlos Roberto Davena Arcoverde Filho - Managing Director
#Information about the company	
Betrads Brazil Betrads is an innovative technology company that specializes in advanced digital advertising solutions, using artificial intelligence and big data to optimize campaigns and maximize clients' return on investment.	R2 Telecom - Brazil We are a telecommunications company. R2 Telecom is a family business and was founded in 1995, but we started to give more importance to organizational culture in 2020.
1. In your opinion, how would you describe your company's organizational culture?	
Betrads' organizational culture is highly collaborative and focused on innovation. We value transparency, accountability, teamwork and the constant pursuit of excellence. The company encourages an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute their unique ideas and skills.	Today the company's culture is more widespread and respected, an important factor in the growth of our business.
2. What are the main values and beliefs that guide employee behavior?	
Respect.	1- Living the truth 2- Innovation and Technology 3- Delivering what we sell 4- Transparency in relationships 5- Cost with discipline
3. Have you ever witnessed a "conflict" between employees or leaders arising from "cultural issues"?	
Yes, conflicts do occasionally arise due to cultural differences, especially in a diverse team. However, Betrads has well-defined conflict mediation policies that help resolve these situations in a constructive and respectful manner.	Yes, between employees and leaders, especially at times of resistance to cultural change.
4. What are the main challenges faced by the company with regard to organizational culture?	
Poor communication, employees don't know about the company's priorities and goals, people don't work with purpose, there is no career management, personal cultural conflicts. No room for continuous improvement or promotion of ideas.	The main challenges faced by our company in relation to organizational culture were varied and complex, due to the dynamic and technological nature of the telecommunications sector. Below are some that the interviewee considers important. - Innovation and technological adaptation - Keeping up to date with rapid technological changes in the sector.

	- Retaining and attracting talented employees - - Attracting and retaining qualified employees with great behavior. - Effective communication - Ensuring clear and efficient communication between employees and departments. - Change management - Managing internal resistance to change, especially with new processes. - Motivating and engaging employees - Keeping employees motivated in their jobs.
5. In your experience, does organizational culture influence employee performance and productivity?	
One of the main challenges is maintaining cultural cohesion as the company grows and expands globally. Differences in time zones, working practices and cultural expectations can create barriers that the company continually works to overcome.	Yes, I believe it has a direct influence on employee performance and productivity, as well as on the company. Culture defines the values, beliefs, behaviors and practices that guide the actions and attitudes of its employees.
6. Does the company use any tools or methods to reduce cultural challenges?	
Yes, Bettrads uses various tools and methods, including intercultural training programs, integration workshops and internal communication platforms that facilitate collaboration between teams from different regions and cultures.	We don't use tools, but we do have some methods in which we have managed to reduce our cultural challenges. I can say that living the truth is our core value, which underpins all our values. Through open and transparent communication approaches, with feedback and examples from leaders.
7. What measures does the company adopt to address and reduce staff turnover?	
Bettrads adopts several measures to reduce staff turnover, including professional development programs, regular performance appraisals, recognition and rewards, and a culture of continuous feedback.	I always say that the selection process is directly linked to reducing employee turnover. At this stage, verifying that the candidate has some connection and harmony with the company culture is more important than their competence or training for the position. In addition to the selection process, we try to promote a balance between employees' personal and professional lives, as well as well-being at work. Finally, we have some benefits packages such as competitive salaries, health plans, satisfactory food vouchers and transportation
8. What are the main ethical principles that guide the behavior of employees in your organization?	
The main ethical principles include integrity, honesty, mutual respect, responsibility and commitment to quality and transparency in all business activities.	The main principle, as I said before, is to live the truth. This principle is reflected both among employees and in our customers. We sell what our customers really need, because we believe that our service will make a difference to their lives. We don't lie to our clients and we deliver what we sell.

9. What are the consequences for unethical behavior or violations of the code of ethics?	
Unethical behavior or violations of the code of ethics are treated seriously and can result in disciplinary measures, ranging from warnings to termination of employment, depending on the seriousness of the infraction.	If an employee behaves unethically or violates our code of ethics, we first explain the impact of their attitude, both inside and outside the company, and tell them what we don't accept about their behavior. In the second stage, the repercussions can range from a formal warning, suspension to dismissal.
10. How are ethics incorporated into your company's policies and practices?	
Ethics is incorporated into Bettrads' policies and practices through a clear and comprehensive code of ethics, regular training on ethics and compliance, and an anonymous reporting channel for reporting violations.	Daily, through reinforcement of the organization's values.
#Name of interviewee	
Katiana Sousa – Software test analyst	Rodrigo Matos – Product Manager
#Information about the company	
Brazilian software development company. Not authorized to provide company name.	Webera: We are a US-based startup that provides DevOps consulting services.
1. In your opinion, how would you describe your company's organizational culture?	
Weak and disjointed. There is no clear identity that unifies all employees, which results in a lack of cohesion and direction.	Webera is a company that values innovation, collaboration and continuous growth. Our culture is defined by a set of values and practices that promote a positive, inclusive and dynamic working environment.
2. What are the main values and beliefs that guide employee behavior?	
Respect for others. Team spirit. Sharing and contributing with colleagues and family first.	Our values are: "The best way to predict your future is to create it." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Autonomy with Responsibility Sharing with Purpose! A Team If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others! Time is much more than money Learn to Respond, not React Embrace Lifelong Learning. Do something!

3. Have you ever witnessed a "conflict" between employees or leaders stemming from "cultural issues"?	
Sometimes these conflicts are resolved through mediation and temporary adjustments, but there are no clear guidelines for behavior and conflict resolution.	Certainly, this is mainly due to the fact that employees have a lot of autonomy to make decisions, for example, regarding the start and end times of working hours. We understand that everyone should have "autonomy with responsibility", but those people who don't align themselves with this value end up generating conflicts.
4. What are the main challenges facing the company in terms of organizational culture?	
Poor communication, employees don't know about the company's priorities and goals, people don't work with purpose, there is no career management, personal cultural conflicts. No room for continuous improvement or promotion of ideas.	Because we are a 100% remote company, the process of fostering organizational culture is challenging, especially when we are talking about people who have never worked remotely or are not suited to this model.
5. In your experience, does organizational culture influence employee performance and productivity?	
A lack of values and objectives leads to demotivation, miscommunication induces employees not to take initiatives that can improve group work, and they often work without caring about the impact of not asking, or it just creates a disorganized work environment.	No doubt about it.
6. Does the company use any tools or methods to reduce cultural challenges?	
No. Some talks are given, but very occasionally.	No. We use the Scrum framework, which helps the control and management process a lot. However, not specifically with regard to culture.
7. What measures does the company adopt to address and reduce staff turnover?	
Salaries that are competitive with the market and in some situations offer scholarships.	Attractive remuneration, follow-up with a psychologist, monthly 1:1s with managers.
8. What are the main ethical principles that guide employee behavior in your organization?	
Respect and honesty among all employees and individual responsibility for the commitments made.	I believe this question can also be answered with the company's values.
9. What are the consequences for unethical behavior or violations of the code of ethics?	
Formal warnings, temporary suspensions, dismissal for cause in serious cases.	Each case is analysed, so it can vary. As a last resort, immediate dismissal.
10. How are ethics incorporated into your company's policies and practices?	

There is a code of conduct, but it is only presented in the onboarding.	Daily reinforcement of the organization's values.
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