

Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

The cultural roots of the Great Resignation: Testing the moderator effect of Industry

Maria Ogando dos Santos Bensaude

MSc in Social and Organizational Psychology

Advisor:

Doutor Nelson Campos Ramalho, Associate Prof., ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

May, 2023



CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

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To Professor Doutor Nelson Campos Ramalho

My supervisor, I would like to thank the most for his ideas, enthusiasm, guidance, knowledge, expertise, and commitment to make sure I accomplished this last academic challenge in time for my next professional and personal step.

To my family, my friends and Caco

The pillars in my life, the ones who guide me and give me all the support I need.

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Resumo

A Grande Demissão tem merecido a atenção dos académicos, com explicações emergentes ancoradas na cultura organizacional tóxica. Esta interpretação não tem em conta os efeitos a nível do sector, em que a rotatividade média do mesmo pode modular esse efeito cultural. É razoável esperar que um mercado de trabalho externo turbulento que promova uma rotatividade média elevada no sector amplifique as relações positivas entre alguns valores culturais e a retenção (tal como referido na primeira hipótese e respectivas sub-hipóteses) e, inversamente, atenuar alguns efeitos negativos estabelecidos num número equivalente de sub-hipóteses que especificam efeitos de interação. Com uma amostra de 516 empresas americanas, reunidas no website Culture500, recolhemos pontuações para nove valores culturais organizacionais e, simultaneamente, informação do Comparably relativa à taxa de retenção. Os resultados revelam que apenas quatro dos nove valores culturais aumentam significativamente a retenção dos trabalhadores (Diversidade, Inovação, Integridade e Respeito) e apenas um diminui significativamente a retenção dos trabalhadores (Orientação para o cliente). Os outros dois valores que se esperava que facilitassem a rotação dos trabalhadores não foram eficazes (Execução e Desempenho). Apenas um valor cultural, a Integridade, para além de promover a retenção de colaboradores, consegue manter este efeito quando os sectores têm uma rotatividade média elevada. Assim, a maioria dos outros valores não foram sensíveis à situação do sector. Finalmente, um valor cultural que teve um resultado inesperado na nossa amostra foi a Colaboração, que mostrou ter um efeito negativo na retenção de colaboradores, e um efeito de interação inverso em relação ao que era esperado.

Palavras-chave: A Grande Demissão, Cultura organizacional, Sector, Retenção / Saída colaborador

Códigos de Classificação da APA:

3365 Promoção e manutenção da saúde e bem-estar

Abstract

The Great Resignation has deserved the attention of scholars with emerging explanations anchoring on toxic organizational culture. This interpretation is not considering the industry level effects where the industry average turnover may modulate such cultural effect. It is reasonable to expect that a turbulent external job market that fosters high average turnover in the industry should amplify the positive relations between some cultural values and retention (as stated in the first hypothesis and respective sub-hypotheses) and, conversely, it should mitigate some negative effects established in equivalent number of sub-hypotheses specifying interaction effects. With a sample of 516 US companies gathered from the Culture500 website, we collected scores for nine organizational cultural values, and simultaneously data from Comparably regarding the retention rate. Findings show only four out of nine cultural values will significantly increase employee retention (Diversity, Innovation, Integrity, and Respect), and only one showed to significantly decreased employee retention (Customer-orientation). The other two values expected to facilitate employee turnover were not effective (Execution and Performance). There was only one cultural value, Integrity, that besides fostering employee retention, can maintain this effect when industries have high average turnover. Thus, the most of the other values were not sensitive to industry situation. Finally, one cultural value that had an unexpected outcome in our sample was Collaboration, showing a negative effect in employee retention, and an inverse interaction effect compared to what was expected.

Keywords: The Great Resignation, Organizational Culture, Industry, Employee Retention/Employee Turnover.

APA Classification Codes:

3365 Promotion & Maintenance of Health & Wellness

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Introduction

The Great Resignation started in 2021 when employees received green light to go back to their offices and many opted out. Alongside with the topic of The Great Resignation comes the term Quiet Quitting, which also refers to disengaged employees, i.e to those employees that consciously or unconsciously opt to reduce their effort in work settings. There is no doubt that these two phenomena always were an issue in organizations, but the academic community itself seems to share the opinion that there was definitely something that accelerated them (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

The Great Resignation and its underlying motivational reasons have been under the spotlight in the last year as a surge in voluntary employee turnover plagued the companies in the aftermath of covid19 crisis. It was observed mostly in the 35 to 45 years-old employees in the USA (Cook, 2021). This topic is important in work settings not only because of the negative consequences it brings to organizational governance but mostly because it indicates trouble in achieving the purpose of promoting decent work (one of the SDGs for the 2030 UN agenda, namely SDG8).

Among its causes, organizational culture, named as toxic culture, has been targeted as one of the leading drivers of The Great Resignation (e.g. Sull et al., 2022b). According to these authors toxic culture is present when organizations fail in promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity, and makes employees think there is unethical behavior occurring, and feel disrespected. And conversely, what would be expected and valorized would've been an organizational culture based on integrity, ethical behaviors, collaboration, adaptability, innovation, and so on (Graham et al., 2022). And what has come to the attention of some professionals and investigators, and one of the drivers of this topic, is that several companies seem not to show evidence that their firm "walk the talk" (e.g., Sull et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2022). This means it is coming to attention that organizations are having difficulties in being congruent with the values they promote and with what they actually lived up to, and employees are the ones who resent the most that incongruency. In a note of curiosity, the article "When it comes to culture, does your company walk the talk?", written by Donald and Charles Sull, and Stefano Turconi, was one starting point when digging into the thesis topic.

However, this is seemingly a too simple answer as culture differs across industries and what may be a great culture in a given industry is possibly a toxic culture in another one. Although there is plenty research linking organizational culture to many managerial outcomes among which employee retention

(e.g. Andersson et al., 2021; Sheridan, 1992) the contingency perspective has long been adopted in organizational culture studies (e.g. Kusumawati, 2020) and testing its application in the explanation of the Great Resignation based on culture is a relevant research gap worth exploring.

Literature review

Literature review starts by introducing the Great Resignation from a psychological and psychosocial viewpoint, it then shows the motivational grounds upon which employee behaviors can be explained, namely through the lenses of self-determination theory (SDT), and focus on employee retention and turnover. Within this scope literature reviews employee turnover models and highlights the turnover contagion effects. Another section focused on organizational culture relation with the Great Resignation exploring culture as an employee mobility driver, highlighting the culture 500 project and its focus on toxic cultures and the specific role each of its 9 cultural dimensions play in explaining employee retention, and crossing those with SDT motivational grounds to uncover the motivational theory underlying the hypotheses. Literature review ends by introducing industry as a boundary condition that interacts in the culture-retention effects to produce a moderated model where organizational culture is the independent variable, employee retention the dependent and industry turnover rate the moderator, taking organizations as the unit of analysis.

1. The Great Resignation as a psychosocial event

In the year of 2020 the world faced a pandemic situation with Covid19, and during this time people had to endure the only solution set by authorities: isolation. Although Covid19 did not hit equally all world regions, millions of workers had to stay home most of the year, working remotely (those whose jobs allowed such approach as well as those who did not lose their jobs). Home working brought many changes in people's daily routines and challenges. Among these changes, a decrease in physical activity has been widely reported with negative psychological consequences (e.g. stress, anxiety and depression, Chtourou et al., 2020) especially in those that used to have higher physical activity level as compared to sedentary (León-Zarceño et al., 2021). Also, previous research focused on individuals who had been in quarantine reported that these people had more psychological symptoms, as distress disorder (Brooks et al., 2020), emotional disturbance (Yoon et al., 2016), stress (DiGiovanni et al., 2004), low mood, irritability, insomnia

(Lee et al., 2005), post-traumatic stress symptoms (Reynolds et al., 2008) and emotional exhaustion (Mauder et al., 2003).

Besides the current psychological health themes that have exponentiated with the Covid19 pandemic, it is also interesting to note 2020 was featured by what has been known as the “Great pause” (Bierema, 2020) which is the period characterized by the disruption of normal life due to COVID. During this “pause” everyone had the time to stop, to self-reflect on the meaning and sustainability of pre-Covid19 business-as-usual (or life-as-usual) and shift towards a different status or practice. Also, Linzer et al. (2022) described this necessity of sudden change on how to start leaving in a different way, “pandemic epiphanies”. Kurt Lewin’s (1951) field theory can suitably depict the process and psychological structure underlying this reflexive moment.

1.1 Psychological basis of the Great Resignation

Field theory proposes that every individual has in their life space a determined level of room to accommodate life domains, e.g. work, leisure, friends, family, with decisions made due not only to the individuals’ profile but also their context (Burnes & Cooke, 2013). Thus, the behavior is a function of the interaction between the individual and their cultural context which means life spaces can change across time due to this interaction (Lewin, 1943). As a consequence, it is hardly the case that a given behavior endures if the context changes abruptly as occurred with the Covid19 crisis. At this light Covid19, as a context disruption that brought an existential reflection, triggered the “Great resignation” (Vogelaar & Dasgupta, 2022). Alongside, no behavior occurs without a social context and therefore, judging on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) the likelihood with which a given visible behavior such as quitting increases as more coworkers do it because it signals social information that automatically triggers judgement on the suitability of such behavior.

A relevant construct to understand the process and outcomes lies in a psychological construct that characterized some workers’ decisions: “career adaptability”. This construct refers to a psychological resource that allows an employee to cope with the “vocational development tasks”, “occupational transitions” and “personal traumas” through specific behaviors, attitudes and competencies (Savickas, 2005; Tolentino et al., 2013). The career adaptability may be observed as well as developed when career events or changes happen (Ocampo et al., 2020). This construct can help explaining employees’ growth

within the same organization (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) or, conversely, can help explaining employee turnover (Ito & Brothridge, 2005; Yu & Zheng, 2013). In a study mainly focused on hospitality management employees, Lee et al. (2021) developed the thought that during the pandemic, career adaptability was a helpful tool used in helping employees handling changes, but also that one of its outcomes was an increase in their turnover intentions. These authors studied some indirect relations between career adaptability, proactive personality and turnover intentions, in a way that individuals with a more proactive personality are more able to cope with challenges. And in this case, one way some had coped with the imposed changes went through an escape strategy which led to a stronger intention of leaving the organizations, or actually exiting, so they could adapt to the circumstances (Lee et al., 2021).

The self-reflection enabled by the Great Pause brought to consciousness a sense of being working in an activity that was *per se* harming some other life goals (e.g. creating unbalances in life domains as conceived by Lewin, 1943) and reaching the conclusion that one was not receiving sufficient support from work peers and/or the organization, which are two strong reasons to choose another career or simply to choose to voluntarily leave the current organization. This would rebalance life fields and possibly relaunch the development of their career towards satisfying their psychological needs. Therefore, during this prolonged time, people got more time to reflect about their profession, life prospective and conditions, and especially how they would “grab” life again, once the pandemic would be over (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

Although such feelings and cognitions brought by the Great Pause could have been experienced by the worldwide workforce, it would be especially relevant for those employees with adaptability desires and aspirations. These individuals, acting individually but also witnessing similar movements in their personal network, which could explain better the Great Resignation.

According to Professor Anthony Klotz, The Great Resignation started in 2021, in Spring, when companies and businesses called back to work their employees and a lot of them didn't (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). At the end of 2021 almost 50 million Americans quit their jobs (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). Alongside with the “Great Resignation”, the term “Quiet Quitting” was brought by an economist in 2009, and it implies a poor commitment to carry out the job tasks and not investing much in work activities. These uncommitted workers, also known as “quiet quitters,” are disengaged and do not want to do anything besides their minimal duty, and according to Formica and Sfodera (2022), 50% or more of the American workforce are “quiet quitters”. This concept became, therefore, more popular after the “Great

Resignation”, more precisely in 2022. And based on a longitudinal study by Gallup, this phase we are going through has the lowest level of engagement considering the last decade (Harter 2022).

The researchers and scholars are in consensus that The Great Resignation and the phenomena of Quiet Quitting have a correlation with the pandemic, but there are no affirmations that these two are due to Coronavirus restrictions. The idea tacitly accepted in the ongoing discussion is that the pandemic may have accelerate something that was already getting ready to happen. In conclusion, Covid19 was less of a cause and more of a catalyzer or a “wake up call” for some individuals (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). So, what is at the origin of this massive voluntary employee turnover? What are the motivations behind these worker’s decisions?

There are, currently, two comprehensive studies focused on the factors in industries and organizations that were causing employee dissatisfaction and voluntary turnover within the Great Resignation. Formica and Sfodera (2022) and Sull et al. (2022). Integrating these studies suggest that there were already issues concerning workers, for example low wages and lack of compensation, but the main underlying structural causes seemed to be: job insecurity and reorganization; feeling disrespected and not having their performance recognized; toxic culture; meaningless work and lack fulfillment, while others seemed to be more contingent to the organizational management of Covid19 crisis, namely “poor response to Covid-19”. The two studies share the idea that “Toxic corporate culture” and “Failure to recognize employee performance” are key factors of the Great Resignation. And according to Sull et al. (2022) an organizational toxic culture may predict 10 times more turnover than compensation and it can be the strongest reason of employee turnover within each respective industry (i.e. the industry-adjusted attrition).

But going back to the also interesting conclusions of Formica and Sfodera (2022), they affirm it seems evident that employee dissatisfaction comes from the lack of response and concern to the consider three fundamental dimensions for every human: needs, values, and purpose. Both the rational (goals driven, efficiency and productivity focus) and normative (purpose) discourses of management alternate across years suggesting each focus is insufficient because employees need them all (Weinstein & Hirsch, 2023).

Also, when the organizations incorporate values in their culture that aim to actively change the world for better and caring about values that employees consider important, workers feel more commitment and have a bigger sense of belonging. It will also increase the meaning and purpose of their

work, and therefore a professional fulfillment (DiPietro et al., 2020). The best approach to understand organizational behavior such as the Great Resignation is to depart from a motivational theory such as the self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2017).

1.2 Motivational grounds of the Great Resignation

Delving into what could be the motivations behind the dissatisfaction of employees and their previous suboptimal work, there is plenty literature that proposes motivational theories. The most comprehensive and updated theoretical proposal is, in our view, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 1980).

SDT englobes self-motivation, personality development, and mental wellbeing and it focuses on the behaviors put into action and the cultural and social factors that promote it (Deci et al., 2017). It is a theory that explains the process in which a person is motivated for initiating new health-related behaviors and then maintain them (Ryan et al., 2008). It assumes that if the main basic needs for humans - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - are satisfied and maximized, the regulation of healthy behaviors can be more internalized and maintained (Williams et al., 1998). This development underlies intrinsic motivation, and may not occur under all conditions, only when receiving specific support from social environment (Ryan, 2009). So, when these needs are satisfied within a supportive social environment, people have more self-motivation and well-being (Ryan, 2009).

Therefore, SDT concentrates on the motivational processes a human being goes through to explain behavior but specially to adopt and retain new health behaviors. The named processes of internalization and integration must occur alongside with environments that grant the individual a sense of autonomy and competence as well as relatedness, in order to enhance the health outcomes and adherence (Ryan et al., 2008).

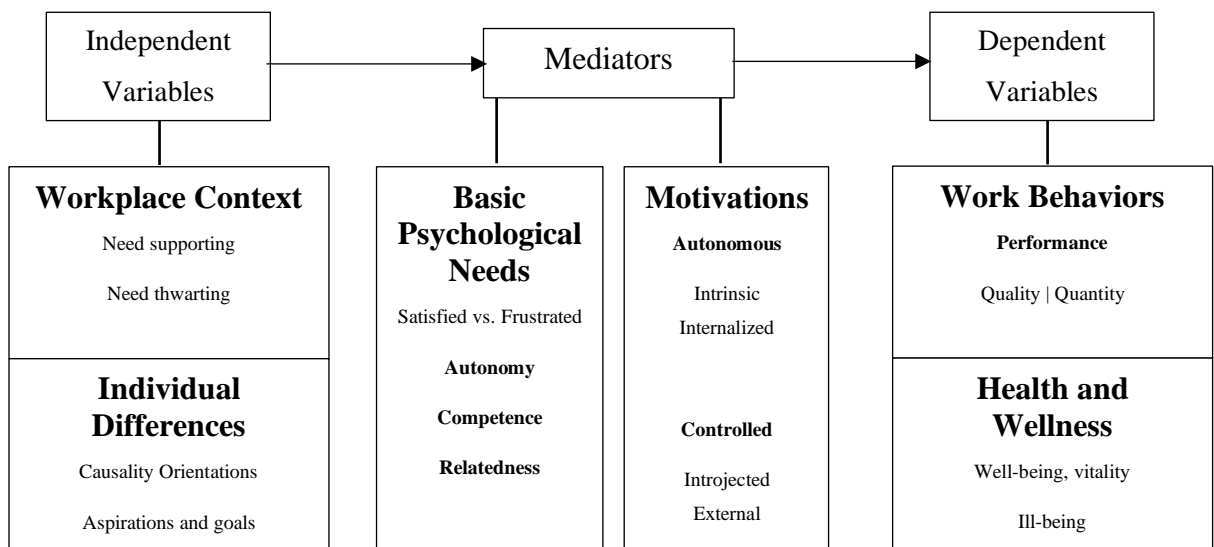
In SDT, **autonomy** is linked to autonomous motivation, which implies the identification and integration of the regulation of a behavior or health change. People engage in autonomous activities and integrate the regulation in need with volition and sense of choice, therefore intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Besides the sense of having autonomy, to internalize the behavior change, it is necessary that one has a sense of **competence** and confidence. It is generally a sense of being effective, of growing and developing and achievement. Competence is supported when one is given tools, relevant feedback, autonomy itself, and then the overcoming challenges, learning and apply competencies emerges (Ryan et

al., 2008). At last, **relatedness**, refers to a more relational level, which is considered to be fundamental in order for someone to change. We feel this relatedness, connection because of the people that compose a workplace, since they are the carriers of the organization values and principles, therefore is important to feel respected and understood to have the trust that will let internalization occur (Ryan et al., 2008). When someone has a job where he or she can feel the ownership, have the purpose, clear feedback and support, and finally the autonomy to do the job, they can be more autonomously motivated and have a higher quality performance (Deci et al., 2017). Also, some studies highlighted the satisfaction of the autonomy because they stated when organizations support autonomy, they tend to be supportive of the other basic needs, and furthermore, when an employee sense he is autonomous, this is the sufficient to look to cover the other needs, like feel the commitment towards the organization and that he is effective and capable (Deci et al., 2017).

SDT is a theory that takes into account social settings individuals integrate, when doing their job, and how this factor can support the basic psychological needs fostering autonomous motivation, well-being, satisfaction and increased performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The authors, Deci et al. (2017) reviewed the core factors in SDT and built a **model** (Figure 1.1) which contains two independent variables: one regarding the workplace context and one regarding individual differences. The social context can be the support or inversely the inhibition of the employee basic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The individual differences as a variable refers to the general causality orientations, also known as motivational vocational orientations, which are: autonomy orientation, controlled orientation, and impersonal orientation (Deci et al., 2017). The second individual differences concerning aspirations and goals, can be either intrinsic or extrinsic and will dictate some of the individual motivations (e.g., Kasser & Ryan 1996). The mediators in the model are distinguished in two (basic psychological needs and motivations), and according to Deci et al., when studying the relation between the independent variables and the outcomes, such as the well-being and the work performance variables, many researchers used them in different “positions”, as mediators like in the model, as independent variables also, and some studied both, while others focused just in one of these (e.g., Richer et al., 2002) (Deci et al., 2017). This theoretical model can have an extended explanation, but we are focusing on the consequences of the satisfaction, or inversely, the frustration of employees’ basic psychological needs. An amount of studies concluded once competence, relatedness and autonomy are satisfied, it will prevent worker’s exhaustion (Van den Broeck et al., 2008) and furthermore, it increases the sense of enjoyment, fulfillment, and sense of autonomy motivation, decreasing on the other hand the need for having external and controlled

motivations (Andreassen et al., 2010). Therefore, the authors Deci et al. (2017), reviewed from several studies and research that the basic psychological needs can be a truthful predictor of work behaviors, performance and well-being outcomes, once they are satisfied, take into account and supported.

Figure 1.1 – SDT Model



Source: Deci et al. (2017, p.23)

Within the scope of work organizations, SDT has been widely applied (Gagné & Deci, 2014). Among the behaviors employees display that have been explained from an SDT viewpoint, employee turnover (or its mirror behavior “employee retention”) is central to organizations and HRM.

2. Employee retention and turnover

Voluntary employee turnover has always been a relevant topic for organizations and researchers in organizational psychology (e.g., March & Simon, 1958; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Harman et al., 2007), since it is a disruptive behavior that expresses dissatisfaction and thus potentially creates organizational dysfunctions. It is without doubt one of the most studied topics in organizational sciences (Holtom et al., 2008), and it has gained new impetus recently with the emergence of the Great Resignation. As explained,

this world event has been reported as an outcome of the coronavirus crisis (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Serenko, 2022) and its significance for the reflection on how people were managed, and also for how people should be managed is paramount.

2.1. Employee turnover models

The literature on voluntary employee turnover is dense and it is constantly changing and evolving along the years with innumerable authors proposing and reviewing theories on employee turnover along the last century thus, without surprise, being an extensively researched topic (Hom et al., 2017).

The first formal theory on employee turnover was set by March and Simon (1958) (Hom et al., 2017) which underline that the desire of leaving can be a consequence of job dissatisfaction and perceived ease of leaving (perceived or actual job alternatives). They affirmed employees who are happy with their jobs or do not have other job options or perceived alternatives are more likely to stay. Another important author in “voluntary turnover” theory is Mobley (1977), who based some papers in March and Simon’ work, and developed a sequential model which associates “dissatisfaction” with “turnover”, in a very straightforward way. The model and further reviews clarified some of the reasons why people quit their jobs (Mobley et al., 1979). Ensuing theory was in line with this proposal until Lee and Mitchell (1994), challenged past theories with their “Unfolding model”. This model received support by a considerable amount of other researcher’s studies (e.g., Holtom et al., 2008; Hom, 2011) and it focuses on the construct of “shock”. The model proposes four different turnover paths that are conducive to voluntary exiting: activating preexisting plans; violation of employees’ values or goals; spontaneous job offers; and affect-initiated path. These trigger the consideration of job alternatives search and ultimately, leads to actual quitting (Hom et al., 2017). The “unfolding model” has been further integrated with “job embeddedness theory” by Mitchell and Lee (2001) to incorporate buffering effects that job embeddedness has when “shock-driven paths” occur. Job embeddedness relates to the web of connections one has with colleagues and teams at work or with the community together with one’s perceived fit between one’s job and the community values and activities, as well as the personal costs from exiting the job, the organization or the community (Mitchel et al., 2001). Job embeddedness approach to employee turnover gained much recognition and influence within scholars, with some variations emerging afterwards (Jiang et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2014). Most recently, Porter et al. (2019) explored the associations between on-the-job

embeddedness and off-the-job embeddedness to generally find both play a role in preventing turnover intentions as well as actual turnover although such findings vary with the sample composition.

According to Felps (2009) theories on “employee turnover” can depart from a psychological approach that explores micro-level factors (i.e. individual characteristics, as job satisfaction and organizational commitment) as well as from an organizational and economic approach that explores the macro-level factors (i.e. environment, industries, unemployment rates per industry and labor markets). Within this scope it is long assumed that turnover can be affected by social and institutional changes across industries (Haveman, 1995) but according to Lee et al. (2017) some authors did not consider the shape and impact of social context when accounting for employee turnover.

2.2. Employee turnover contagion

By integrating micro and macro views, the theory of turnover contagion emerged (Felps et al., 2009; Krackhardt & Porter, 1986). This theory explores the idea that the decision of leaving might be contagious between workers, coexisting with some factors that can hamper their commitment. By perceiving a better balance or purpose elsewhere (outside the current organization) due to the “social cues” that other employees signal with their departure, groups of coworkers may pursue actively a job search which leads to a mass exodus (Lee et al., 2017) of which the Great Resignation is an example.

Although the turnover contagion models entail a substantial degree of complexity (Porter & Rigby, 2021) this contagion effect is hardly surprising because it is well settled in social psychology that social comparison is a wide phenomenon that is automatically triggered as a signaling information for the self (Festinger, 1954) especially in circumstances that are ambiguous and risky (Tesser et al., 1983) where this tendency to socially compare ourselves is more prompt to occur. Circumstances with high level of uncertainty and risk can lead to job transitions because people will find the need to look to others, once this helps to answer themselves the question “should I consider leave?” and then evaluate whether to seek alternative jobs. And once several coworkers are seeking other jobs in an involving ambiguous context, talking about it and witnessing several leaving behaviors, starts the contagion process, as the perceived viability to leave increases (Kulik & Ambrose, 1992). Conversely, when few coworkers seek for alternative jobs, an employee alone may be less inclined to quit and begin the turnover process as they have no social validation clues. This effect has a close relationship with the job embeddedness theory as,

per definition, it relates with a web of social influences (on-the-job and off-the-job) stemming from connections (Porter et al., 2019).

Alongside these micro and macro level factors, one has to integrate the organizational level factors. These comprehend well researched constructs within the turnover topic (e.g. ethical climate (Stewart et al., 2011; Saleh et al., 2022); organizational justice (Kumar, 2014; Kang & Sung, 2019); work related stress, Kurniawaty et al., 2019) among which organizational culture may be one of the most fundamental.

Porter and Rigby (2021) highlighted literature of “turnover culture” that departs from the premise that individuals tend to look at repeated behaviors as being socially validated, and thus, tend to create a culture that fix those behaviors. Hence, a turnover culture emerges as patterns of shared cognitions within organizations (or any subunit) that influence decisions regarding staying or leaving the organization (Abelson, 1993). As in most, if not all, organizational phenomena, culture is a key dimension.

3. Organizational culture and the Great Resignation

In exploring the cultural foundations of the great resignation, it is necessary firstly to review literature on the culture-employee retention link and highlight recent integrative efforts represented by the Culture500 project.

3.1. Organizational culture and employee retention

In a day-to-day language, organizational culture could be characterized as “how we do things around here” (Schein, 1999), and usually is “caught” and “taught”. It is an important operating force, often of an unconscious nature, that must be understood so that the organization mission, strategy and goals are carried out. And it must be an adaptive dynamic, that is continually evolving as the environments and groups change over time, but at the same time keeping its essence (Schein, 1999). Formally, organizational culture is defined as the basic assumptions that lead to the “correct” way of dealing with the environment (Schein, 1986), or “the shared meanings, values, beliefs, norms, and it brings a predictable social intercourse on how to categorize, think and perceive information happening around us and helps avoiding anxiety and new situations” (Schein, 2012).

The culture of an organization is an essential piece of its existence and identity. In a recent report 91% managers belief culture is an important value driver for organizations (Graham et al., 2022).

Corporate culture includes a set of values and norms shared inside a company that will guide actions and decisions of employees throughout the organization (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996). The role of culture in business, and its subcultures, once they are established, is hard to change and it originates from the beliefs and history of the organization’s founders and the way they have built their business (Hofstede, 1980).

Organizational culture has many outcomes, and a considerable amount of literature and studies have shown the existing relation between the culture in an organization, job satisfaction and employee intentions of staying/leaving (Wright, 2021).

Sheridan (1992) conducted a study on the effect of organizational culture on employee retention backed by previous theoretical suggestions (e.g. Kerr & Slocum, 1987; Kopelman et al., 1990) which also argued that the ability of organizations to retain employees may be related to organizational culture values, and that these influence the employee job movement decisions through human resource practices

such as promotions, career development, and reward systems. Conducted on a large sample of graduates in six organizations across six years, findings showed that organizational culture values influence employee retention, and that differences in retention rates in weak and strong performers vary according to the culture thus suggesting its moderation effect. So, either as a direct predictor or a moderator, culture seems to be relevant in explaining employee voluntary turnover.

There is also literature that highlights the role of organizational climate, as a shared emergent state, instead of culture as a factor of employee turnover (Ehrhart et al., 2014) but, because organizational climate is theoretically a product of organizational culture values (Denison, 1996), one assertion (that climate is a factor) does not preclude the other (that culture is a factor).

One aspect that emerged in literature relating organizational culture and employee retention is not so much focused on the specific cultural values but rather on the congruence between organizational culture and individual values. Value incongruence is taken as a liability as it creates a dissonance that favors the individual distancing from the organization. Depending on the intensity and strength people feel about their values (ethical, economic, or emotional), value incongruence with those of the organization can cause turnover intentions (Bao et al., 2013). Thus, evaluating values incongruencies can be important for management so to prevent and mitigate the negative effects and endeavor to improve the fit (Wright, 2021). It has been proven that organizations who are willing to systematically re-evaluate their cultural values so that they can turn values incongruencies to congruencies, have higher productivity, employee job satisfaction and employee retention (Yao & Wang, 2008).

3.2. The Culture500 project

A recent breakthrough in this regard has been published by Sull, Turconi and Sull (2020) with the article “When it comes to Culture, does your company walk the talk?”. It was meant to raise the question of how aligned were the behaviors employees inside an organization with the company cultural aspirations. The motivation for this project stems from a gap between the values that are stated publicly and the cultural reality on most companies. This means that in the eyes of employees, a lot of companies don’t live up to the values they offer and say they develop.

Another paper authored by Sull et al. (2022b), “Toxic Culture is Driving The Great Resignation”, showed findings from a large collection and data analysis from employee reviews and online profiles

published between April to September in 2021 (34 million profiles to be exact) on the platform Revelio Labs, and estimated the “company-level attrition rates” for the Culture 500. This database contains data of the larger American private-sector companies that detained the majority of the U.S. workforce. They found high level of attrition rate variations across companies and that a partial explanation of the wide amplitude was the industry, collecting data of 38 industries to present the “Industry average attrition rate in The Great Resignation”, also distinguishing industries with white-collar and blue-collar workers (Sull et al., 2022b). A more recent paper reports how toxic culture was more predictive of attrition than compensation (in the first six months of the Resignation) and that 20% of workers have left a job because of its culture (Sull et al., 2022a). This gives the project a central place in extant research on the cultural grounds of the Great Resignation.

To fully understand these results, it is necessary to detail the specific cultural values dimensions the researchers have worked with. Culture 500 project ranks companies on nine cultural dimensions. These dimensions were inferred from *MIT SMR/Glassdoor Culture 500* which was created from an analysis of 1.2 million reviews from employees in Glassdoor. This platform is an online space where employees’ may rate their companies, by a scale and in a free text form, describing their company’s culture anonymously and offer management and cultural advice. With the *MIT SMR/Glassdoor Culture 500*, the founders analyzed the reviews from the text data, with a tool of “natural language processing” (NLP), categorizing the free text, respectively, into 90 cultural topics. When defining the cultural values and norms that would guide the authors in the categorization process, they followed Charles O’Reilly and Jennifer Chatman definitions to turn into concrete behaviors, abstracts concepts employees reviewed (e.g., “integrity” was widely mentioned and considered). Thus, with their algorithm, plus the online and public reviews from Glassdoor, it was created what they called an interactive “online tool”, where organizational culture across several American large companies can be compared and benchmarked. Because there were a considerable number of values and norms companies valued and mentioned, they had to narrow down all the values organizations cited the most, to only nine cultural values. It was from the Culture 500 online tool we extract the data for each company regarding how frequently and positively each company rate each of the big nine cultural values. All the information cited here pertaining to the culture500 website is available in <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/culture500>.

The nine key cultural values from the Culture 500 are: agility, collaboration, customer orientation, diversity, innovation, integrity, performance, and respect. Because these are the culture values that will be used as potential predictors in our model, it is important to briefly define each value, to understand

the outcome each can have, knowing it can be positive or negative upon employee turnover. All these definitions were extracted from Culture500 website. “Agility” refers to workers quick and effective response to changes in the marketplace and ability to take the best out of every opportunity which is in line with being flexible. The orientation for “Collaboration” refers to employees’ team orientation and see the strength of working well together throughout the organization. “Customer” orientation refers to the drive and focus on the customer and their needs. “Diversity” refers to the workplace as an inclusive and diverse environment where differences are accepted and valued. “Execution” refers to companies who are operationally excellent, take ownership of projects and act with discipline and workers are empowered to do so with the resources they need to act. The value of “Innovation” is present in the novelty of services, processes, products, and technologies in order to lead to change. “Integrity” refers to workers and all the company act honestly, with ethics. “Performance” refers to companies valuing providing different rewards accordingly to the results achieved, it is also known as meritocratic (results-driven) culture. And finally, the value of “Respect” refers to individuals treating each other in work relations and environment with dignity being considerate.

The following sections detail each cultural dimension and the rationale sustaining its alleged effect upon employee retention.

3.2.1. Agility

Organizational agility entails a dynamic adaptation to the forces of the external environment in a cost-effective way without compromising the product/service quality (Ganguly et al., 2009) which also comprehends the capacity of an organization to identify these unexpected environmental changes and swiftly reconfigure its resources to gain a competitive edge along the process (Zitkiene & Deksnys, 2018). Thus, the concept of agility is a complex one, with a number of subjacent aspects, as speed, responsiveness, flexibility, and alertness (Golgeci et al., 2020). These, when used properly and together, set all the advantages of having an agile organization, however, when not used properly or not in a joint fashion, the outcomes may differ extremely in a VUCA (Volatile-Uncertain-Complex-Ambiguous) environment (Baran & Woznyj, 2020). For example, alertness without responsiveness will not be effective in executing the required changes.

In a nuanced extension of the concept, Golgeci et al. (2020) highlight the complementary nature of agility and resilience for which they propose a single novel concept: “resilience-agility”. Based on Martin

(2012), resilience is reactive in nature, focusing on recovering, while agility is proactive and implies anticipation. The former is inward looking while the latter is outward looking, meaning the two concepts differ substantially but gain optimality by being put together. Hence agility alone leads to short term organizational successes, but when complemented with resilience it brings organization longevity to continuously face demanding and fundamental market changes.

Agility-Resilience is also an expression of the effort organizations do to balance its concerns about customization and competition (Sherehiy et al., 2007; Christopher, 2000), when positioning themselves in the external environment, while considering the inner processes, coping capabilities, and endurance, that resilience may foster. Finally, resilient agility enables businesses to respond to their customer's needs and market systematic changes (agility) and face massive disruptions (resilience), developing a sustainable long-term strategy and organizational culture by having this capability of "pulling out" either the "agility mode" or the "resilient mode".

Overall, literature offers extensive advocacy on the advantages of organizational agility as well as strategies organizations can deploy to maximize their agility (Zhang & Sharifi, 2007). However, no strategy can be deployed without the existence of suitable organizational enablers such as agile leadership (Eilers, et al., 2022) among others but, most important, without an organizational culture that sustains and fosters agility (Harraf et al., 2015).

Agility is closely related to organizational culture as the competing values framework (CVF, Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Quinn, 1988) highlight when structuring their model around two axes where one of the bipolar axes represents "flexibility" vs. "control". Independently of the organizational focus being placed inwards or outwards, the cultural quadrants that represent "Clan culture" and "Innovation culture" share the flexibility as an axiological priority. Thus, it is quite expectable that research has plotted organizational agility against the background of the CVF. A recent empirical study conducted by Felipe et al. (2017) proposed direct associations between culture typology (clan, hierarchical, adhocracy, and market) and agility, while previewing a moderating effect of the industry's technology intensity. It is surprising the study report a positive association between hierarchical culture and agility as it goes counter to the theory and mechanics underlying the CVF but the authors opted to treat culture as a formative construct, and there are some issues pertaining the items loadings which may raise doubt about the replication of findings if culture would be treated as a reflexive construct and, eventually, the harmful items would be removed.

Furthermore, according to Sull and Sull (2020) companies during Covid-19 that were getting the best out of the crisis were the ones who excelled in communication, employee welfare and exhibited agility in response to the circumstances. That being said it is interesting to think, in the eyes of what we are discussing, that during the external environment change called “The Great Resignation” the cultural value “agility” is positively associated with employee retention because the companies that were agile were the ones who cope with this turbulent event, thus being able to retaining their employees (both because they were not forced to downsize and because by showing effectiveness in dealing with the crisis, employees would not feel the urge of moving out voluntarily). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1a: Organizational cultural value “agility” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.2.2. Collaboration

The cultural value of **collaboration** is one of the core dimensions in the Competing Values Model, and it refers to the Clan culture (Cameron et. al., 2022). Collaboration implies a full and true engagement between co-workers and it is one of the allies of innovation and knowledge sharing (Yang et al. 2018). When incorporated truthfully it can help retaining employees and fostering a diverse workplace (Kelly & Schaefer, 2014).

Although it is considered to be a positive cultural value, it does have its challenges. For example, leaders sometimes see collaboration more as a productive skill in selected teams and projects and not so much as an organization-wide cultural identity. And when turbulence dominates work and businesses environment, collaboration can be difficult to maintain or achieve. If an organization wants to be characterized as a collaborative one there are some behaviors that come associated with it that can be developed and learned (Yang, 2007).

It is important to see collaboration as a process and to identify a truly collaborative environment, where everyone has a voice to contribute and collectively explore ideas and solutions, in the opposite of being just a one-person vision (Kelly & Schaefer, 2014). The authors state that whenever a genuine collaborative organizational culture value is present, employees will be more engaged, motivated, and productive. Thus, collaboration is embedded in norms concerning interpersonal relationships alongside with teamwork orientation, and it has quite expectably been found to decrease employee turnover intention (Park & Kim, 2009). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1b: Organizational cultural value “collaboration” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.2.3. Customer Orientation

Customer orientation has consistently emerged in literature as a desirable cultural value as it relates with a strategy of continuous improvement, a high knowledge of customer needs, and consequently the proper services and products to anticipate market demands. Thus, a strong customer orientated organization is known for having the capabilities of sensing trends and events in their customer target group, what some authors denominate as “customer sensing”, and known for consequently have a “customer responsiveness” to the given information (Ziggers & Henseler, 2016).

However, customers are not always easy interlocutors for those who directly relate with them. Emotional labor became a strongly researched topic precisely due to the pressure to comply with customer demands even when they are unreasonable (Park & Hur, 2023). However, emotional labor due to customer demands might not always be detrimental. While surface acting (i.e., disguising without truly feeling what one is showing) is consistently negative but deep acting (i.e., changing one’s own perceptions and rationale to align with the required behavior) as reported in many research (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Taken as a personality trait, customer orientation is seen as a psychological resource that gives employees the capacity to better deal with customer demands, thus requiring less surface acting and more ability to enact deep acting, which protects employees from negative outcomes. One empirical study found precisely this relation as well as a negative effect of customer orientation (as a personality trait) on turnover intention (Wu et al., 2017).

However, many studies have focused on customer orientation not as a personality trait (i.e. something intrinsic to the individual) but rather as a value organizations hold and that pass to employees (i.e. something that can be merely extrinsic to the individual).

Alongside with customer orientation, organizations can also foster employee orientation, i.e., the belief that employees are business partners that help achieving organizational success (Plakoyiannaki et al., 2008). Both as important stakeholders as acknowledged in Total Quality Management that names employees’ as internal customers (Dean & Bowen, 1994). Curiously, an empirical study contrasting both orientations in predicting turnover intention, reported positive correlations among themselves but in a

hierarchical linear model customer orientation was found to increase employee turnover intention while employee orientation decreased it, and they interact in such a way that employee orientation mitigates the negative effects of customer orientation (Park et al., 2018).

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1c: Organizational cultural value “customer” is negatively associated with employee retention.

3.2.4. Diversity

Diversity as a value refers to accepting and endorsing compositional differences among people working in the same group (Roberson, 2017) and it seems an unavoidable topic due to the increasing workforce diversity stemming from migration, ageing population, and internationalization (Boehm et al., 2014).

According to Shen et al. (2009), a workforce characterized by diversity brings important benefits to a business. A recurrent finding concerns creativity and innovation. The Australian Centre for International Business (ACIB, 2000) developed research indicating that the value of diversity has strong probabilities of improving the quality of management’s decisions because it allows more innovative ideas and solutions. Also, others state that organizations with a “value in diversity” have more quality solutions in “brainstorming” alongside with genuine cooperative behaviors which will increase profitability and efficiency (McLeod et al., 1996). If it is properly “used” it will also help to be successive in the constant changes of marketplaces.

However, the positive effects originating from diversity seem not to be universal. In an effort to integrate divergent findings regarding objective observable diversity (e.g. ethnicity, gender) effects as compared with subjective inferable diversity (e.g. personality, personal values), Webber and Donahue (2001) found no such differences but findings suggest the need to consider moderators. There is also literature that finds specific effects for specific types of diversity. For example, Li et al. (2022) found that workplace age and regional diversity increased the positive effect of diversity climate on knowledge management but that this interaction was not found for gender diversity. Still, these and similar empirical studies are focused on the effect of specific diversity dimensions which may offer just a partial view on what an organizational diversity culture would enact.

Irrespective of the complexity of models, diversity itself is valuable as an expression of the ethical principle of equality, bringing social justice and community development (Ozbilgin et al., 2013) which

means that the lack of a diversity culture may be sanctioned by both the public opinion, consumer associations and the public at large, and governmental authorities aimed to enforce social justice. Although the business case for diversity management has been built mostly upon the utility it entails to organizations, there is an intrinsic value that can per se justify such culture.

Regardless of the fundamental motives (ethical principal or utilitarian) the diversity value has become more and more appreciated within the organizations because it allows people to have more freedom to be themselves and fostering different ways of viewing the world, situations, solutions to challenges and much more. This way diversity nowadays as become a competitive advantage (Shen et al., 2009) in the liberal democracies. In order to live up diversity culture, an organization must deploy strategies and Human Resources practices that develop an inclusive environment, tools of learning and knowledge creation, flexibility and comprehension (Bermeo et al., 2023) especially with the advent of remote work settings (Byrd, 2022). Finally, one of the main goals of including diversity in HR management is to grow talent attraction and employee retention, plus the cognitive flexibility and immense creativity that can come with it (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1d: Organizational cultural value “diversity” is positively associated with employee retention

3.2.5. Execution

Execution culture is expressed as valuing acting towards goal achievement, with a focus on efficiency and productivity. This dimension is more closely related to what Park and Kim (2009) name as the rational dimension of culture. For these authors, rational culture places the emphasis upon results and effectiveness fostering a competitive and hard leadership that demands subordinates to achieve.

Designing an efficient workplace is not only instrumental to those who profit from it but it is also a matter of ethics, since efficiency brings less wasted time, less resource waste, and enables freeing more resources to do other important things such as training and development, strategic thinking, or simply to rest (van Staveren, 2007). Likewise, valuing efficiency has a positive consequence in sustainability as less resources are needed to achieve the same production objective as economy efficiency can be taken as “economic efficiency expresses the generation of welfare, based on an optimal use of natural resources and other production factors” (Hein, 2010, p.2). Still, as in many cases in organizational behavior, the relation between a given work behavior and its consequence e.g., as regards productivity or performance, is not linear. It is often curvilinear in the sense that there is an optimum level below which performance

is lacking, and above which performance decreases also. This has been known as the Too-Much-of-a-Good-Thing (TMGT, Pierce & Aguinis, 2013) and is expressed graphically as an inverted U-shape curve. Still, the lack of self-regulatory mechanisms based upon the principle of “sufficiency” makes the market to continuously pressure organizations (and employees) to achieve more and more without a reasonable ceiling (Haynes et al., 2015). The liability of having set a managerial system that pushes employees to their limit lies in requiring employees’ extra-resources in case a crisis erupts. This will make them go beyond the breaking point and produces staff burnout. Sheather and Slattery (2021) explore the well-known case of the NHS staff shortage and attributed it to burnout caused in the pandemic phase, due to the already high workload and inability to rest.

Linked to this topic, is the idea that work-life balance is a key factor that explains why too much execution culture can lead to resignation intentions among employees. Efficiency does not necessary means longer working days but the increasing level of demand and the mounting difficulty in producing at a worldwide competitive level puts pressure to blur the frontier between work and non-work (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015) especially as the remote work established itself after the pandemics (Wang et al., 2021). Work-life balance is seen as a critical issue to which HR managers should be paying attention to and should be deploying programs with more flexible work schedules, time off and remote work (Tyler, 2021).

Although being part of a competitive team may provide a sense of working in a collective that is winning and, thus, increasing its market position, it may be detrimental for organizational cohesion and teamwork (as suggested by the Competing Values Framework that places market culture in diagonal opposition to clan culture, Quinn, 1988). It is therefore unsurprising that execution culture does take its toll on the ability to retain people due to mounting pressure as found by Park and Kim (2009), being a driver of turnover intention (albeit paradoxically correlating positively with job satisfaction). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1e: Organizational cultural value “execution” is negatively associated with employee retention.

3.2.6. Innovation

When talking about **innovation** and business outcomes, such as retention as an intermediate HRM outcome, many studies support a positive relation between the two, and when dealing with massive challenging environments, innovation can be a fundamental capability to increase future success (Saunila & Ukko, 2012).

De Leed and Looise (2005) define innovation as a radical and thoughtful transformation in existing products and processes to gain competitive advantage. Other authors referred to innovation linking it to external and internal knowledge acquired and shared among the employees (Büschgens et al., 2013; Papa et al., 2020), since this is the way one can learn and spread innovation inside an organization, to continuously update processes and products.

In addition to consider the linkage between innovation and knowledge accumulation Büschgens et al. (2013) underline organizational learning can only occur when traits of flexibility, risk and uncertainty tolerance, adaptability and autonomy characterize the organizational culture. They considered these fundamental features as part of the quadrant from the Competing Values Framework, the “developmental culture”, where resource acquisition and growth are the main organizational goals, and they hypothesized the innovation focus was positively associated with a developmental culture. Papa et al. (2020) pointed out the importance of having a strategic HR management since people are a key resource of innovation which can bring some tension inside firms once it can be related with many forms of creativity and disruptive processes. The paper found knowledge acquisition with high use of with HRM practices and retention of employees, has a strong positive effect on innovation. Thus, they concluded employee retention is an important variable since it strengthens the impact of knowledge acquisition on innovation performance.

Conversely, Sull et al. (2022b) were surprised to find that high levels of innovation was one of the predictors of employee attrition during the Great Resignation and that employees were more likely to exit from innovative companies. So, paradoxically, workers that were more positive about innovation work were precisely those that had the higher chance of quitting. Nvidia, Tesla, and SpaceX companies are a showcase of such phenomenon as they are three standard deviations above industry means. It is a bit surprising to think about innovation as fostering employee turnover when there is evidence of the opposite (Bass et al., 2018; Kaliannan et al., 2022; Salvador et al., 2022) but authors to acknowledge that they have focused on a small sample which implies such findings should be taken carefully. Considering

the overall positive effects ascribed to innovation in providing employees growth needs and promoting a challenging job experience, we hypothesize that:

H1f: Organizational cultural value “innovation” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.2.7. Integrity

Integrity is a value linked to ethical behavior, to which employees confer a big importance since it was unethical values that feature a toxifying culture (Sull et al., 2022b). More authors describe integrity as acting committed to a set of values and principles morally justified (Becker, 1998), others focused on behavioral integrity defining it as a “pattern of alignment between an actor’s words and deeds” (Simons, 2002, pp. 3).

Sull and Sull (2020) discovered two values employees marked very positively concerning how their companies behaved during Covid-19. It was communication and integrity. Integrity was one cultural value employees discussed more positively in Culture 500 between march and august of 2020 than they did before those months. In this study the authors characterized integrity concerning “ethical behavior”, “regulatory compliance”, “fairness of leaders” and “leader’s embodiment of corporate values”. And along with the value of integrity, they found out communication and transparency were central values to employees in that crisis time.

Leaders play an important role in fostering integrity. Ethical leadership is an expression of such integrity whereas leaders embody ethics in communication and decision-making (Eubanks et al., 2012). Ethical leadership fosters an ethical climate that is conducive to affective commitment which retains employees (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2014). Conversely, an unethical leader takes a relatively short time (i.e. about 2 and a half years) to morally disengage subordinates due to fostering an instrumental ethical climate (Almeida et al., 2021).

Other studies converge on the positive relation between behavioral integrity and behavioral outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, lower absenteeism, and employee retention (Davis & Rothstein, 2006). This meta-analysis found that leaders and managers who had a stronger behavioral integrity, could count with more satisfied employees, regarding their jobs and their

leaders, and therefore had a stronger sense of commitment towards the organization. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1g: Organizational cultural value “integrity” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.2.8. Performance

According to the definition of the Big Nine Values, **performance** refers to meritocratic organizational cultures, i.e., its drive is in results and achievements. Theoretically a meritocratic system advocates everyone has equal opportunities to obtain merit and gain rewards from their efforts, regardless of their personal characteristics as gender, race, and other non-merit characteristics. However, from a more practical vision, this is not always observed as some findings came to conclude. For example, Castilla and Benard (2010) explained the paradox of meritocracy when they showed some difficulties, and as they called it, “unrecognized risks” in rewarding efforts and merit in organizations.

Sull et al. (2022b) pointed out “failure to recognize performance” as one of factors underlying toxic culture. They explained some of the dissatisfaction of employees was also justified with companies that wanted to recognize and reward best performers but failed when distinguishing worthy performers from average performers. The first idea that comes to mind is that organizations that recognize due to employee performance are naturally more able to retain employees. However, from the SDT viewpoint (Deci et al., 2017) such performance recognition is often done based on extrinsic rewards thus highlighting the extrinsic motivation in detriment of intrinsic motivation. It seems inconsequential to do so because the goal is to get employees to feel motivated, however, taking back the reflection made upon the rational versus normative management (Weinstein & Hirsch, 2023), an exclusive or predominant emphasis on rational discourse and practices (such as extrinsic rewarding) can be detrimental to the overall long run. As we are dealing with cultural values and these tend to endure in time, we assume performance values (as conceived in the Culture 500) can be negatively associated with employee retention. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1h: Organizational cultural value “performance” is negatively associated with employee retention.

3.2.9. Respect

Taken the cultural value of **respect** as referring to “the perceived worth accorded to one person by one or more others” (Spears et al., 2006, pp. 179), it is quite natural that employees prize respect.

Grover (2013) differentiates two types of respect: 1) the appraisal respect (individual characteristics) that one gives to the work performance of others and, 2) the recognition respect (based on our human rights), the quality of the treatment between people. This author studied, more precisely, the different influences of these two different forms of respect in self-esteem and consequently the professional behavioral outcomes, i.e., commitment. Appraisal respect influences explicit self-esteem, and recognition respect provides an implicit self-esteem. Appraisal respect will contribute to stronger work engagement while recognition respect will allow people to connect and relate. By connecting and relating, employees develop a sense of belonging and thus commitment increases. When both types of respect are present one witnesses a sharp increase in self-esteem as well as in other positive individual outcomes, such as the amount of investment people dedicate in the organization. Conversely, when both types of respect are lacking, the reverse behavior is observed thus favoring employee turnover. Alternatively, Rogers and Ashforth (2017) propose also two types of respect: the generalized respect “we” all sense in the organization, and the particularized respect the organization has for “me”. The generalized respect may play a stronger role in retaining employees as it should reflect a shared behavior or attitude that can easily be ascribed to shared values and thus, to corporate culture.

According to Van Quaquebeke et al. (2009) respect as a cultural value has a strong influence and prevails over other elements such as the income and career development. They additionally found actual perceived respect and expectations are commonly unmet.

For Sull et al. (2022a) respect is one of the factors that matter the most to employees. Moreover, among the five attributes toxic cultures have, respect is paramount. A toxic culture is then one where employees feel there are many instances of disrespect, non-inclusivity, unethical behavior, cutthroat climate, and abusive interactions or decisions. Among these all, disrespect (felt as lack of consideration of dignity) was more negative in employee overall rating about the organizational culture. This is consistent with a long treading research line on how disrespect and infra-humanization is produced socially as represented in Stanford Prison classic studies (Zimbardo et al., 1999). Thus, toxicity at work is expressed as a deep disrespect for other and a dehumanization of individuals who are harmed by corporate decisions (Gilbert et al., 2012)

H1i: Organizational cultural value “respect” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.3. Motivational bases of toxic culture

Although literature has pointed out the valences of associations between the Culture500 nine dimensions and employee retention, there is a fundamental analysis that we think is still missing in literature based on Culture500, to further consolidate the findings. This analysis entails SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2017) and we trust toxicity occurs because the lack of a certain cultural value (e.g. collaboration) is preventing the satisfaction of a primary need (e.g. relatedness) and it is the lack of such satisfaction that will cumulate and trigger all the negative employee outcomes. To shorten and make this analysis clearer, we designed a table (Table 3.1) that crosses SDT primary needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) with each cultural value (here described as being lacking).

Table 3.1 - Crossing SDT with the nine cultural dimensions

Toxic culture dimension	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness
Agility (lack of / too much)		Wasted time on red tape/ rushing through task	
Collaboration (lack of)			Sense of lack of support, not belonging to a team
Customer (lack of / too much)			Sense of not being useful to others/ or sense of being under empowered
Diversity (lack of)			Sense of not belonging, lack of identification with the group
Execution (lack of / too much)		Sense of not being efficient in operations, of not having the required resources to do the job	
Innovation (lack of)		Lack of a sense of being challenged and/or a sense of growth	
Integrity (lack of)			Sense of lack of trust in the organization and/or people within
Performance (lack of/too much)	Lack of proper recognition of merit	Lack of proper compensation	
Respect (lack of)			Sense of not being respected or appreciated

So, literature has established the basis to attribute to organizational culture the status of an important dimension in fostering employees' decision to leave organizations, and likewise, also the role of retaining employees due to cultural values (Wright, 2021). One cannot generally state that culture favors employee retention or its reverse because this very much depends on which cultural values one is referring to.

Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Organizational cultural values are associated with employee retention.

H1a: Organizational cultural value “agility” is positively associated with employee retention.

H1b: Organizational cultural value “collaboration” is positively associated with employee retention.

H1c: Organizational cultural value “customer” is negatively associated with employee retention.

H1d: Organizational cultural value “diversity” is positively associated with employee retention.

H1e: Organizational cultural value “execution” is negatively associated with employee retention.

H1f: Organizational cultural value “innovation” is positively associated with employee retention.

H1g: Organizational cultural value “integrity” is positively associated with employee retention.

H1h: Organizational cultural value “performance” is negatively associated with employee retention.

H1i: Organizational cultural value “respect” is positively associated with employee retention.

3.4. Industry as a super structural factor

Culture, as observed in its most popular conception and definition, refers to the basic assumptions and shared values, norms and meanings that allow an organization to deal with the environment (Schein, 2012). This definition entails the idea that best practices tend to emerge as organizations learn how to effectively deal with challenges or problems.

Because no organization is impermeable to its environment (Scott & Davis, 2015), it is reasonable to assume some (if not most) of such problems originate from the environment. In line with this, Gordon (1991) developed the argument that organizational culture is influenced by the industry characteristics the company is operating in. This means there are certain cultural values shared within the same industry that allow the business to survive and prosper. Although culture is singular to each company, industry helps defining the parameters of the organizational culture, so there are certain characteristics within organizations of the same industries, and different ones in different industries in a nested structure. Gordon (1991) called it the “Industry-driven cultural elements” that comprehend three types: competitive environment, societal expectations, and customer requirements. This was already inferable from Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) study on how differentiation and integration forces model the centrality of

organizational functions (e.g. marketing, research, production) due to environmental pressure. This was also recognized by Martin (1992) when highlighting the existence of three perspectives on culture: monolithic (there is a single common culture), fragmented (each subunit has its own culture), and integrated (there are subcultures but also a common core which is the culture). The functional differences between departments would explain why the exact same cultural values would not fit all. So, it is reasonable to expect the same applies to the industry.

In line with this idea, Graham et al. (2022) compared cultural values (i.e. adaptability, collaboration, community, customer-orientation, detail-orientation, integrity, and results-orientation) and norms (i.e. goals-values alignment, behavior consistency and predictability, employee inter-coordination, Long-term decision-making, participative safety, organic-based innovation, interpersonal trust, work diligence, whistleblowing) across six industries (i.e. finance, health, manufacture, retail, services, and technology) to find differences in all cultural values and norms across these industries.

One important influence from industry is the mobility norm that creates a shared attitude in employee. In certain industries employees that wish to keep their employability high believe they should change job or employer, among which the best-known cases are IT and Hospitality industry (Iverson & Deery, 1997; Pallathadka et al., 2022; Yeo et al., 2022). Although the existence of a mobility norm does not necessarily lead to individuals' aligned behavior (Mainhagu et al., 2018) it is necessarily connected to a culture of mobility, which has also been known in literature as a "turnover culture". Industry turnover culture thus, cannot be overlooked when researching organizational turnover. Employee turnover cannot be blind to the external context in the sense that the industry's average turnover signal employees both job opportunities and about what is normal and abnormal dynamics in the job mobility, because it establishes a norm.

From another perspective, culture has some dimensions that need to be understood to better explain employee turnover. Two of those dimensions pertain to culture clarity (how much culture is emphasized and communicated by organizations) and cultural consistency (how much does espoused values reflect practiced values, i.e., daily practices or norms). Graham et al. (2022) found that when cultural values (general guiding principles) differ from cultural norms (daily practices), employee turnover increases. Likewise, they found that organizations with lower turnover rates were those that more strongly reported cultural values and norms. This means that culture is a driver of employee turnover and

organizations that want to retain employees should strive both to keep culture clear and consistent (norms should match values).

As concluded by Gordon (1991) changing organizational cultures is intrinsically difficult due to its inertial nature but it can be made even more difficult due to limitations the industry demands. Likewise, improving employee retention through avoiding toxic organizational cultures (Sull et al., 2022b) must be conditioned by mobility norms in the industry which can be translated into the industry average turnover rate. The culture500 study does have this idea embedded when adjusting organizational turnover to the average industry turnover. And because literature does not provide studies with the exact directions one could observe in this singular type of interaction, the hypotheses will only mention the interaction itself, leaving in the open what type of directions will occur. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Industry average turnover interacts with the direct effect of organizational culture values on employee retention.

For rigors' sake we show each of the sub-hypotheses implied by the existence of 9 cultural dimensions. In detail:

H2a: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "agility" in explaining employee retention.

H2b: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "collaboration" in explaining employee retention.

H2c: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "customer" in explaining employee retention.

H2d: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "diversity" in explaining employee retention.

H2e: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "execution" in explaining employee retention.

H2f: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "innovation" in explaining employee retention.

H2g: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "integrity" in explaining employee retention.

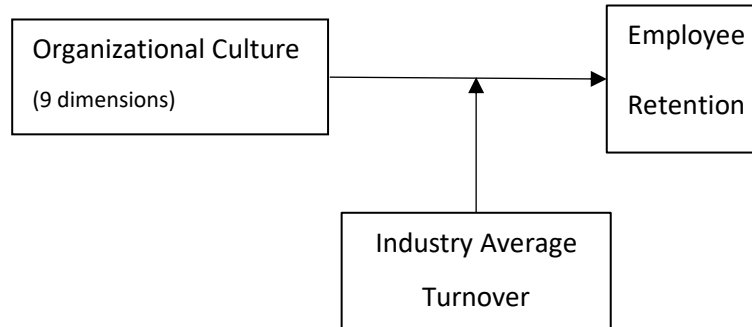
H2h: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "performance" in explaining employee retention.

H2i: IAT interacts with organizational cultural value "respect" in explaining employee retention.

Conceptual model

By putting together all the hypotheses we developed the following conceptual model:

Figure 3.1 – Conceptual model



4. Method

4.1. Methodological approach

To achieve the research goals, a quantitative approach has been adopted. Due to the availability of data that is publicly available, auditable, and reflecting closer-to-reality figures or shared perceptions, we have opted to use secondary data to measure the variables in our conceptual model instead of primary data.

4.2. Procedure and sample

The target organizations were large companies, already well established in the market which can provide a basis to find systematized formal HRM processes as well as publicly available data on its employee turnover and eventually on its organizational culture.

As this data is publicly available, we have resourced to culture500 website (<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/culture500/>) which is an initiative from MIT Sloan School of Business that shows the frequency and the sentiment scores for each of the 9 cultural dimensions, which we registered in a excel file. The retention rate was collected in comparably website (<https://www.comparably.com/>) which provides a rating score (0 to 100) as well as a ranking order (A to F) according to the score range. As in some cases companies were not included in both databases, we have retained only those with full data.

We have also collected industry NAICS from the official website (<https://www.naics.com/search/>) to objectively identify the industry of each company as it is the standard official code used by statistics agencies in the USA (<https://www.census.gov/naics/>). Finally, we have collected data as well as the average industry turnover rate for 2020 from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics online search tool (<https://data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/jt>) for all of the industries previously identified. This process led to the full characterization of 516 US companies.

4.3. Data analysis strategy

The data analysis started with the descriptive statistics as well as the bivariate, which were conducted with Pearson correlations. The hypotheses testing was performed with PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) which is

fundamentally a path analysis, capable of testing mediations, moderations, and mediated moderations and performs a bootstrapping procedure which we set to extract 5000 repetitions, with a confidence interval of 95%. With this procedure, a given relation is considered statistically significant ($p < .05$) when the lower bound and the upper bound of the confidence interval does not include the value zero.

4.4. Measures

Organizational culture was measured with data from Culture500, a database produced by MIT that depicts organizational culture based on nine dimensions (Sull et al., 2020). The nine dimensions are: Agility, Collaboration, Customer, Diversity, Execution, Innovation, Integrity, Performance, Respect. For each dimension, Culture500 shows two figures that express the relative position of each company as regards the structuring axes: frequency, and sentiment. Frequency refers to how often employees refer to a specific value in glassdoor website (www.glassdoor.com) while sentiment refers to how positively employees discuss issues pertaining to each value (Sull et al., 2019). These figures represent standardized values for all the raw scores of the nine dimensions. Thus, they are suitable for comparison purposes. Because culture itself is a product of these values in both axes and because both can range from negative to positive, we cannot directly multiply them as the index would range from zero to a given maximum, but cases falling in the first and third quadrant would have equivalent values (as multiplying double negatives will lead to a positive score). Thus, we have transformed the scores by summing the least score found in all nine dimensions. This way, for frequency rescaled scores, we have added the module of the minimum score in the nine dimensions for “frequency” with an extra unit (i.e. $2.1+1.0$), and the same applied to “sentiment” scores (which differing minimum values; i.e. $2.2+1.0$). This scale transformation guarantees no double negative products, and therefore, all resulting scores are biunivocal.

Employee retention was measured with the formally reported employee turnover annual rate by companies in their annual reports which are reported on widely used HR websites such as Comparably. This website publicly discloses findings from companies’ statements and is closely linked to Glassdoor which has received credit enough to have already been used in peer reviewed papers published in highly ranked journals (e.g. Canning et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). This source shows the employee retention score, an index that ranges from 0 to 100. It also provides information on Glassdoor survey on turnover intention across the many employees directly surveyed in most of extant companies in the USA.

Industry was measured with NAICS which is the official US code for economic industries and can be matched with other codes e.g. in Europe (NACE) or the international SIC code. As the sample is homogeneous regarding organizational size (all large companies), unemployment rate (all in the US) there is no need to control for these factors.

Average industry employee turnover rate was measured with data published for 2020 from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/jt>) for all of the industries to which the 516 US companies belong.

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5. Results

As stated, results are firstly reported for descriptive (Tables 5.1) and bivariate statistics (Table 5.2) and then reported for hypotheses testing. For parsimony's sake, and due to the large number of sub-hypotheses, we report findings regarding hypotheses testing in an aggregated fashion in a single table (Table 5.3).

5.1. Descriptive and bivariate statistics

As Table 5.1 shows, the highest frequently cited cultural value is "Execution" which is followed by "Agility" and "Collaboration" while the least frequently cited are "innovation", "Performance", "Diversity", and "Respect". The most positively connoted is "Collaboration" followed by "Innovation", and "Customer" and the most negatively connoted is "Agility", "Integrity", "Respect", and "Performance". It is important to bear in mind that "sentiment" refers to the valence of the extracted statements by employees regarding their own company, and thus, we can infer that the most frequently cited indicate the centrality of values for employees' life while the positive figures for sentiment show pleasant or positively evaluated practices that characterize one's own company and negative figures show matters of complaint or negative rating left in Glassdoor by employees.

Table 5.1 – Descriptive statistics for values' frequency and sentiment

Cultural dimension	Frequency				Sentiment			
	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
Agility	-1.0	2.5	.895	.990	-2.2	0.5	-.966	.414
Collaboration	-.9	2.3	.617	.534	-.9	2.7	1.466	.506
Customer	-1.9	2.4	-.218	.981	-1.6	2.4	.691	.719
Diversity	-1.7	1.8	-.594	.410	-1.7	2.2	.272	.728
Execution	-1.4	2.6	1.406	.580	-1.3	1.2	-.599	.365
Innovation	-2.1	1.9	-.703	.770	-1.3	2.5	.936	.798
Integrity	-1.1	2.2	-.199	.573	-1.7	1.9	-.664	.545
Performance	-1.4	1.4	-.648	.459	-1.5	1.6	-.550	.481
Respect	-1.7	1.7	-.571	.548	-1.6	2.3	-.608	.517

N=516

By crossing frequency with sentiment, we can find four quadrants (Graph 5.1). The first quadrant, in our view, depicts a pattern of assessing positively a highly central cultural value. This quadrant is important because it shows where companies are creating the right values for employees. In this quadrant a single value is found: “Collaboration”. The second quadrant (read in counter-clock direction) also depicts positively connoted values but which are less central, judging by their relatively lower cites in employees’ comments. These are also important and positively valued but to a lesser extent of those in the first quadrant and there are three values here: “Innovation”, “Customer”, and “Diversity”. The third quadrant enters the negative zone, where employees highlight cultural values that are either perceived as negative or (as we believe) are not lived up by companies, thus being a subject of negative wording. Such is the case for “Performance”, “Respect” and “Integrity”. Lastly, the most critical quadrant, the fourth, includes values that are central in the employees’ experience but are negatively connoted, thus suggesting problems related to these values. They are “Agility” and “Execution” which could be read as “Lengthy response times and barriers to cease market opportunities” and “Lack of resources and attitude to achieve goals”.

Graph 5.1 – Crossing Values Frequency * Sentiment



Table 5.2 – Descriptive and Bivariate statistics for cultural values scores

	Min-Max	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Agility	-10.78; 1.80	-4.12	2.37	-									
2. Collaboration	-2.70; 13.50	5.47	2.13	.279**	-								
3. Customer	-3.76; 10.07	2.14	2.30	.297**	.047	-							
4. Diversity	-4.08; 8.33	.74	1.93	-.413**	-.218**	-.369**	-						
5. Execution	-6.24; 4.56	-2.67	1.69	-.022	-.035	-.213**	-.157**	-					
6. Innovation	-2.64; 12.00	2.39	2.22	-.103*	-.471**	-.399**	-.025	.145**	-				
7. Integrity	-6.89; 5.61	-1.96	1.67	-.542**	-.065	-.085	.119**	-.151**	-.094*	-			
8. Performance	-5.88; 6.40	-1.37	1.30	.320**	.154**	.086	-.195**	-.179**	-.209**	-.334**	-		
9. Respect	-4.81; 3.91	-1.61	1.38	-.567**	-.073	-.269**	.105*	-.034	.045	.342**	-.363**	-	
10. Retention_Rate	40; 90	68.44	8.02	-.328**	-.088	-.269**	.115*	.063	.167**	.161**	-.080	.336**	-
11. IAT2020	.25 - 1.30	.55	.26	.361**	.193**	.270**	-.186**	-.083	-.144**	-.153**	.148**	-.259**	-.138**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Matching the interpretations concerning the quadrants, Table 5.2 shows that “collaboration” stands out as the most salient and positively connoted value, followed at a distance by “innovation” and “Customer”. Conversely, “Agility” (or better put, the lack of) is the most salient negatively connoted value followed by “Execution” and “Integrity”. This indicates that among the surveyed companies, the most commonly reported cultural value is “collaboration” which is described as being a lived-up value while the second most frequently mentioned value is “Agility” although statements referring to this value tend to express negative opinions, i.e. criticism concerning this value. This may be a critique to companies lack of ability to quickly respond to market changes and providing employees resources to take the best out of opportunities.

Judging by the standard deviations and the amplitude of the within-value variations (minimum and maximum) companies differ largely in some cultural values while in others one should expect to witness similar profiles across the market. Thus, one can find at least one company with a -2.7 value for collaboration as well as at least one company with a +13.5 and similar amplitudes are found for agility and innovation. Albeit these values are the ones that show the highest contrasts involving extreme figures, many other cultural values also show wide range of variation (e.g. integrity from -6.89 to +5.61) and overall one can state that the market entails companies that show large and contrasting variations as regards the whole nine cultural dimensions.

The bivariate statistics curiously show that the strongest correlations have a negative valence meaning that the highest associations are found as opposite values or, alternatively, as values that should be together but are often reported as diverging. Such is the case between “Agility” and both “Respect” ($r=-.567, p<.01$) and “Integrity” ($r=-.542, p<.01$) but also with “Diversity” ($r=-.413, p<.01$). Another cluster of positively associated cultural values is seemingly observed between “Agility”, “Performance”, “Collaboration” and “Customer” which is logical in the sense that market responsiveness is motivated by performance, achievable through customer orientation which has team collaboration as a requisite. The “Innovation” value shows interesting pattern of associations as it is negatively correlated with “Collaboration” ($r=-.471, p<.01$) and “Customer” ($r=-.399, p<.01$) and show no case of positive correlation with any of the remaining cultural values. Execution does not show any outstanding correlation but it does have significant negative correlations of modest magnitude with “Customer” ($r=-.213, p<.01$), “Performance” ($r=-.179, p<.01$), “Diversity” ($r=-.157, p<.01$), and “Integrity” ($r=-.151, p<.01$) and a positive correlation with “Innovation” ($r=.145, p<.01$).

Bivariate statistics entailing our dependent variable (Retention rate) suggest its promoters may be “Respect” ($r=.336, p<.01$), “Innovation” ($r=.167, p<.01$), “Integrity” ($r=.161, p<.01$), and “Diversity” while its detractors are “Agility” ($r=-.328, p<.01$) and “Customer” ($r=-.269, p<.01$).

Although treated as a macro context variable, the industry average turnover is logically linked to some cultural values, because culture is also an expression of the learned process of adaptation and problem solving entailed in the integration-diversification dyad (Schein, 1986). These problems and adaptation challenges vary according to the industry and, thus, it is quite expectable to find patterns of association between industry average employee turnover and cultural values. In this thesis, the nature of the variable itself, lends it a moderator role, but the association patterns are also informative and hence we will report them here. “Agility” is the cultural value that shows the strongest correlation with industry turnover ($r=.361, p<.01$), followed by “customer orientation” ($r=.270, p<.01$) and “collaboration” ($r=.190, p<.01$) while “respect”, “integrity” and “diversity” show the opposite, a strongest presence in industries that have lower average turnover rate.

5.2 Hypotheses testing

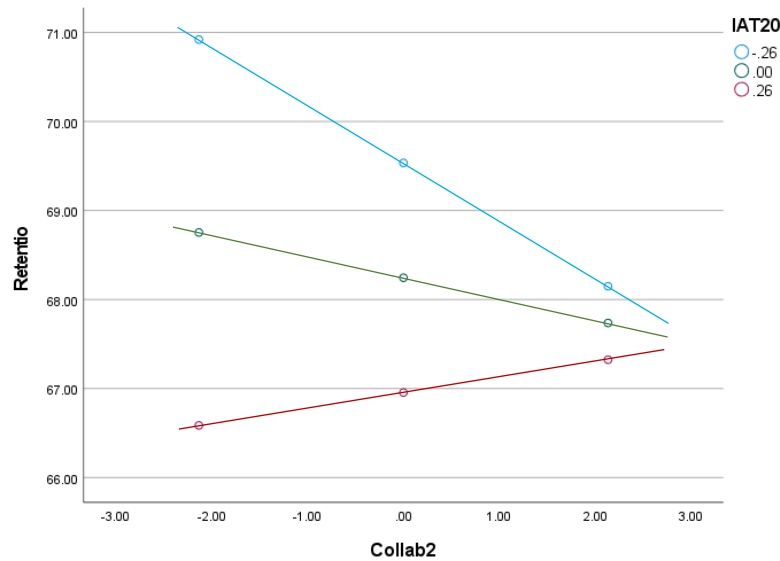
As depicted in the conceptual model, there are two main hypotheses (one pertaining to the direct effect between cultural values and retention rate) and the other pertaining to its interaction with the industry average turnover rate. These two hypotheses were each divided in nine sub-hypotheses to tackle each cultural value. Table 5.3 summarizes the findings for each value (treated as a predictor) showing the statistics for the direct effect as well as the interaction effect. *P* values are concomitantly showed with the bootstrapped confidence intervals for 95%.

As regards hypothesis 1 and its sub-hypotheses, findings show **agility-oriented** cultural value is negatively associated with employee retention ($B= -1.11, CI95 [-1.43; -0.79]$) thus not supporting H1a, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B= -1.20, CI95 [-2.47; 0.05]$) which does not support H2a.

Collaboration-oriented cultural values are not associated with employee retention ($B= 0.23, CI95 [-0.59; 0.11]$) thus not supporting H1b, but there is an interaction effect with IAT ($B= 1.55, CI95 [0.26 ; 2.84]$) which may be supportive of H2b. By scrutinizing the exact interaction relations (Graph 5.2) one can state that at lower levels of collaboration, the highest retention rate is observable in the industries with lower level of turnover, while a contrasting lowest retention occurs in industries with high turnover. This

supports the formulation of the sub-hypothesis, but the specific effect is surprising as at a lower IAT the relation is counterintuitive.

Graph 5.2 – interaction collaboration * Industry Average Turnover



As a complementary analysis, we considered the possibility that the relation is wrongfully assumed to be linear. Due to the possible occurrence of optimal turnover rate effect (instead of the advocacy of a maximal turnover rate effect) we tested for non-linear association, namely for the quadratic term. By computing the quadratic term and including it in the Process analysis together with the linear term as a covariate, we found similar results of those reported in the linear test. Thus, we reason the specific type of relation between these variables is not biasing the findings.

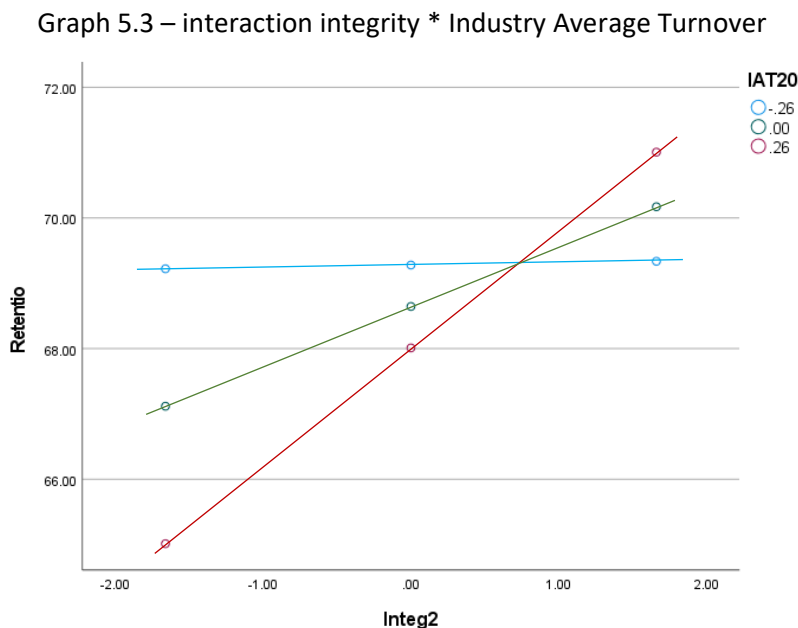
Customer-oriented cultural values are negatively associated with employee retention ($B = -0.84$, $CI95 [-1.16; -0.51]$) thus supporting H1c, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B = -0.46$, $CI95 [-1.65; 0.73]$) thus not supporting H2c.

Diversity-oriented cultural values are positively associated with employee retention ($B = 0.39$, $CI95 [0.00; 0.79]$) thus supporting H1d, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B = 1.13$, $CI95 [-0.30; 2.58]$) thus not supporting H2d.

Execution-oriented cultural values are not associated with employee retention ($B = 0.19$, $CI95 [-0.24; 0.64]$) thus not supporting H1e, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B = -1.40$, $CI95 [-3.35; 0.54]$) thus not supporting H2e.

Innovation-oriented cultural values are positively associated with employee retention ($B=0.53$, CI95 [0.19; 0.87]) thus supporting H1f, but there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B= -0.12$, CI95 [-1.53; 1.27]) thus not supporting H2f.

Integrity-oriented cultural values are positively associated with employee retention ($B=0.91$, CI95 [0.45; 1.38]) thus supporting H1g, and there is an interaction effect for IAT ($B= 3.34$, CI95 [1.16; 5.53]) which may support H2g depending on the specific relations found. Graph 5.3 depicts the interaction effect which shows that when industry average turnover is low (more stable industries) the rate of employee retention does not vary with the presence of integrity as a cultural value in organizations. However, in those industries characterized by high employee turnover rate, the highest retention rate is found on companies that have high integrity. This suggests integrity is an important value when considering the IAT, which renders support to sub-hypothesis H2g.



Performance-oriented cultural values are not associated with employee retention ($B=-0.36$, CI95 [-0.94; 0.22]) thus not supporting H1h, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B=-1.00$, CI95 [-3.22; 1.21]) thus not supporting H2h.

Respect-oriented cultural values positively are associated with employee retention ($B= 1.90$, CI95 [1.37; 2.43]) thus supporting H1i, and there is no interaction effect for IAT ($B=1.92$, CI95 [-0.20; 4.04]) thus not supporting H2i.

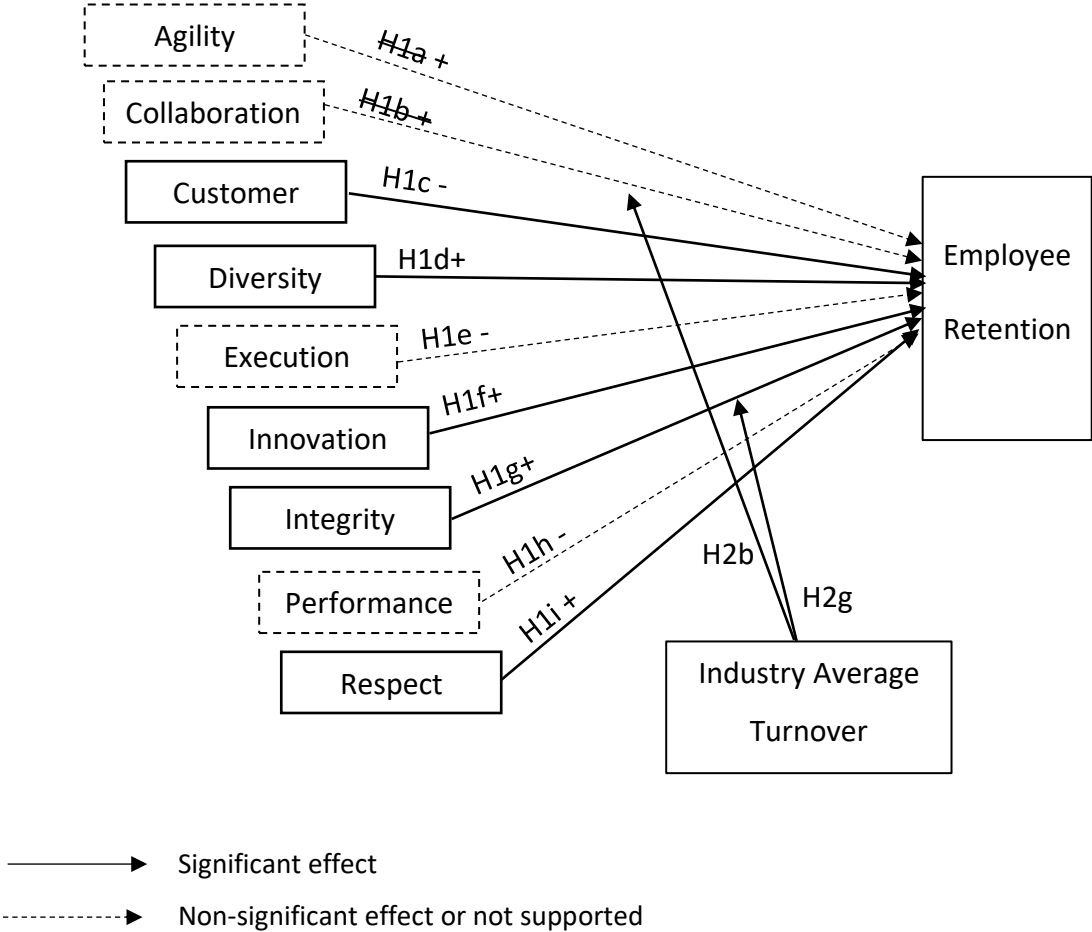
Table 5.3 - Process results for Retention Rating as dependent variable

Predictor	Coefficient	se	t	p-value	CI95 [LB; UB]	Hypothesis
Agility						
Constant	68.70***	0.38	177.89	<0.001	[67.94 ; 69.46]	
Agility	-1.11***	0.16	-6.81	<0.001	[-1.43 ; -0.79]	H1a n.s.
IAT	0.69	1.62	0.42	0.66	[-2.49 ; 3.88]	
Agility*IAT	-1.20	0.64	-1.87	0.06	[-2.47 ; 0.05]	H2a n.s.
Collaboration						
Constant	68.24***	0.38	178.60	<0.001	[67.49 ; 68.99]	
Collaboration	-0.23	0.17	-1.32	0.18	[-0.59 ; 0.11]	H1b n.s.
IAT	-4.87**	1.52	-3.20	<0.01	[-7.86 ; -1.89]	
Collab*IAT	1.55*	0.65	2.36	0.051	[0.26 ; 2.84]	H2b sup.
Customer						
Constant	68.51***	0.37	180.85	<0.001	[67.76 ; 69.25]	
Customer	-0.84***	0.16	-5.12	<0.001	[-1.16 ; -0.51]	H1c sup.
IAT	-1.67	1.55	-1.07	0.28	[-4.73 ; 1.39]	
Custom*IAT	-0.46	0.60	-0.76	0.44	[-1.65 ; 0.73]	H2c n.s.
Diversity						
Constant	68.55***	0.38	179.36	<0.001	[67.80 ; 69.30]	
Diversity	0.39*	0.19	1.99	<0.05	[0.00 ; 0.79]	H1d sup.
IAT	-3.22*	1.46	-2.19	<0.05	[-6.11 ; -0.33]	
Diversity*IAT	1.13	0.73	1.54	0.12	[-0.30 ; 2.58]	H2d n.s.
Execution						
Constant	68.37***	0.37	180.86	<0.001	[67.62 ; 69.11]	
Execution	0.19	0.22	0.88	0.37	[-0.24 ; 0.64]	H1e n.s.
IAT	-4.91**	1.55	-3.15	<0.01	[-7.98 ; -1.85]	
Execution*IAT	-1.40	0.99	-1.41	0.15	[-3.35 ; 0.54]	H2e n.s.
Innovation						
Constant	68.42***	0.37	180.15	<0.001	[67.68 ; 69.16]	
Innovation	0.53**	0.17	3.13	<0.01	[0.19 ; 0.87]	H1f sup.
IAT	-3.62	1.57	-2.30	0.02	[-6.70 ; -0.53]	
Innovat*IAT	-0.12	0.71	-0.17	0.85	[-1.53 ; 1.27]	H2f n.s.
Integrity						
Constant	68.64***	0.37	182.80	<0.001	[67.90 ; 69.38]	
Integrity	0.91***	0.23	3.88	<0.001	[0.45 ; 1.38]	H1g sup.
IAT	-2.39	1.46	-1.63	0.10	[-5.27 ; 0.47]	
Integrity*IAT	3.34**	1.11	3.01	<0.01	[1.16 ; 5.53]	H2g sup.
Conditional effects						
Low ind. turn.	0.03	0.31	0.10	0.91	[-0.58 ; 0.65]	
Aver. ind. turn.	0.91***	0.23	3.88	<0.001	[0.45 ; 1.38]	
High ind. turn.	1.80***	0.43	4.18	<0.001	[0.95 ; 2.65]	
Performance						
Constant	68.49***	0.38	179.70	<0.001	[67.74 ; 69.24]	
Performance	-0.36	0.29	-1.20	0.22	[-0.94 ; 0.22]	H1h n.s.
IAT	-3.43*	1.52	-2.24	<0.05	[-6.44 ; -0.43]	
Perform*IAT	-1.00	1.12	-0.88	0.37	[-3.22 ; 1.21]	H2h n.s.
Respect						
Constant	68.61***	0.37	185.38	<0.001	[67.88 ; 69.34]	
Respect	1.90***	0.27	7.04	<0.001	[1.37 ; 2.43]	H1i sup.
IAT	-0.92	1.45	-0.63	0.52	[-3.79 ; 1.93]	
Respect*IAT	1.92	1.08	1.77	0.07	[-0.20 ; 4.04]	H2i n.s.

Note: sup. = supported; n.s. = not supported.

Due to the many sub-hypotheses and the coexistence of both direct and interaction effects reported, we redesigned the conceptual model so to depict the exact relations found.

Figure 5.1 - Conceptual model – Findings



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6. Discussion and conclusion

The Great Resignation is not only a disruptive expression of something that runs deep in the working world as it is also a research topic that attracted the attention of scholars, eager to understand it and uncover its fundamental drivers. Among the causes proposed, organizational culture, namely toxic work culture emerged as a plausible cause (Sull et al., 2022). Albeit intuitive this explanation might be deceitfully simple as it overlooks the industry effects on culture, because organizational culture - by definition - must reflect the industry's features. It is therefore reasonable to uphold a contingency view on organizational culture (Kusumawati, 2020) effects upon employee behavior such as employee retention (Andersson et al., 2021). Sull et al. (2022b) acknowledge industry idiosyncrasies as the turnover rate varies but it is unclear how much the exact values that make a culture toxic are taken as universal. Judging from extant literature, the doubt persists whether there is a universal toxic culture or, as we trust, "toxic" has different meanings according to each industry. To explore this, the conceptual model takes the nine cultural dimensions as direct predictors of employee retention with a possible interaction effect with each industry's average turnover. Thus, the conceptual model comprehends one first hypothesis that splits into nine nested sub-hypotheses and an equal number of sub-hypotheses to depict each interaction effect.

As regards the bivariate patterns of association found for the variables under study it is worth noticing that although Agility is without doubt a central cultural value that guarantees the adaptation of companies to its market changes (Zitkiene & Deksnys, 2018), the three most ethical-related values (Integrity, Respect, and Diversity) are all negatively associated with agility. This can be interpreted as a suggestion that companies' strategy to remain responsive to market changes may be anchored in bypassing some fundamental ethical concerns which could explain why the increasing market volatility has been co-occurring in the aftermath of corporate ethical scandals (Jory et al., 2015). Likewise, the pattern of associations found between retention rate and cultural values as well as between the 9 cultural values among themselves seems to match Quinn's (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) competing values axes that clearly state organizations must conceive culture as a product of options made between opposing poles. Thus, organizations may direct themselves towards valuing the external market (as against valuing their internal context) and likewise they may opt to put more importance in valuing control versus flexibility.

To offer a clearer discussion on the results of the nine sub-hypotheses we will focus one by one. First, is the **agility-oriented** cultural value, which we anticipate it would have had a positive effect upon employee retention. Against our expectation, the results showed that when agility was higher, employee

retention was lower, and as we gather in literature review, the organizational value of agility, in order to be successful has to have a few subjacent factors that will foster the positive side of agility, i.e., resilience, flexibility, speed, responsiveness, and alertness. Scholars alert the organizational community for the risks of cultivating an agile organizational culture lacking the other fundamental aspects (Golgeci et al., 2020), and the negative outcomes are indeed a possibility. This means that agility can either operate as a leverage as well as a liability but in the context of Covid19, uncertainty and the pressure to cope with market changes may have given agility a status of psychological pressure which will always take a toll on employee wellbeing (Yu et al., 2021). This might be the reason that explains why agility has a negative effect on retaining employees in the aftermath of the crisis. This negative effect is apparently even more important as industry average turnover plays no role in moderating this effect (H2a not supported). Hence, against our expectation and Sull et al. (2022b) findings, agility must be taken as a toxic value within the larger scope of the Great Resignation.

Secondly, concerning the H1b with the organizational cultural value of **collaboration** results go against our stipulation that collaboration has a positive effect in employee retention, and this outcome opens a wide range of possibilities that could be behind it. Focusing on literature, developing the value of collaboration in the organizational culture is in no way a negative value, but it can be a challenging process, that implies knowing deeply the dynamics of workers and teams, and to know how to create a truthfully collaborative environment (Kelly & Schaefer, 2014). As we state in the literature review, it has been proven that when one external factor, such as a turbulent event, seems to dominate the market, maintaining or achieving collaboration may fail deeply (Yang, 2007). Many workers complained for not having enough organizational support during the pandemic, assistance programs that benefited the socialization and network, which had an impact in developing collaboration (Tessema et al., 2022). To develop a cultural collaborative value, it is important to constantly have some aspects present, and all of them depend on one main aspect: interpersonal relationships (Cheruvilil et al., 2014; Woodland & Hutton, 2012). If during the pandemic such social contact decreased, it is rational to see an outcome similar to the one we found, where collaboration was not a strong predictor in retaining employees. However, this explanation is not supported at all by the interaction effect found. Quite the opposite. The interaction effect is observed but in a reversed manner, where collaboration as a value seems to be a liability in low-turnover industries (while in the high turnover industries collaboration ceases to have any association with employee turnover). We think that this finding can be due to the distribution of the variable, namely, to its unusual high mean (5.47) compared to the other cultural values (ranging from -

4.12 to 2.39) which may suggest social desirability effects. Thus, this can be more an expression of the data structure rather than the true empirical association.

Thirdly, findings pertaining to the **customer-oriented** culture are in line with the literature reviewed and our hypotheses. This value will not be factor to retain employees and it does not alter neither in low or high turnover rates per industry. So, although it is an aspect that organizations want to incorporate in their mission and values, it does not represent positive results per se considering the well-being of employers since it may also foster negative emotional labor and pressure (Park & Hur, 2023). For the hypothesis H2c, results ended up not being supportive in considering IAT would moderate customer-oriented cultural value on employee retention, thus suggesting this value's consequences are not sensitive to the job market dynamics.

Fourthly, for the cultural value **diversity** findings supported the hypothesis H1d thus suggesting this cultural value has a potential for retaining employees. It is a value related to managing well challenging situations and changes, and the strategic rationale behind developing a diversity cultural value in HR practices is already to grow employee retention and attracting talent. This shows that the mindset is already focused on maintaining employees satisfied, respected, and comprehended, to ultimately retain them (Shen et al., 2009). Regarding H2d, it was not supported, this way diversity, no matter the rate of turnover in the industry, higher or lower, the organizational cultural value will still significantly retain employees (Rodprayoon & Maj, 2021).

Fifthly, **execution**-oriented cultural values did not have a significant effect either on retaining employees or increasing employee turnover. So, what was hypothesized in the beginning, of execution values having a negative effect on employee retention, is not supported empirically. Therefore, and although this is an important and common value to aspire to and to pay attention since it brings many adjacent aspects, i.e., resources, work-life balance, etc., for our sample it was not taken as a crucial value to decide whether to remain or exit a company. Execution cultures also showed not to differ in either a high-level industry turnover rate or in low industry turnover rate thus suggesting it is immune to this kind of job market dynamics.

In sixth place, the cultural value of **innovation** was successfully related with employee retention, thus the raise of innovation was beneficial in retaining employees, as we gather in our literature review, and therefore as we hypothesized. According with the literature, such was the expected since innovation is in roll with other set of positive values like flexibility, transition of knowledge, adaptability, autonomy,

creativity, tendency to be disruptive, among others (Büschgens et al., 2013). In contrast, once again there was no interaction effect with the average turnover in industry, which means, despite the industry case of having the surrounding of a high or low turnover average, innovation seems to have the potential of always be an advantage.

In seventh, we report the interesting cultural value of **integrity**. Integrity is the value that supports our thesis the strongest, not only because is the only one where both hypotheses are supported but also because it is a value inside the “ethical values” which is considered to be the key predictors of a healthy culture, and consequently higher retention (Sull et al., 2022a). As reviewed in literature, employees give a large meaning to the ethical values. According to our findings, integrity seems to be the most affected value by the moderator when trying to retain employees through organizational culture. It will be effective in retaining employees especially when industries are unstable. If the value of integrity is preserved, there is a strong possibility the organization increases its retention rate, or at least, that it does not foster employee attrition (Guiso et al., 2015). This finding suggests integrity as a central cultural value in designing strategies to retain employees.

Eighthly, **performance**-oriented cultural value results did not have any effect upon employee retention, thus not supporting hypothesis H1h. By focusing on the literature described before, this could mean the process of recognizing and rewarding employee’s performance can be challenging and apparently can be counterproductive if it fails to comply with certain requirements. Meritocracy (as entailed in this cultural dimension) is arguably not universally accepted in working settings. However, offering everyone a fair opportunity to perform at their best is not granted in organizations. Firstly, not all can have simultaneously the opportunity to try new projects that develop the same skills or signal upwards readiness for a promotion. Likewise, performance as a construct comprehends different emphases such as task performance or contextual performance (citizenship behaviors) not always taken into consideration when conducting a performance appraisal. So, the lack of context that helps understanding variations regarding each respondents’ sense of equal opportunities and comprehensiveness of the performance criteria blurs out ability to exactly detecting the performance value effect on employee turnover after controlling for these variables. This same reasoning applies in interpreting the lack of interaction effect as stated in H2h.

In ninth, at last, the cultural value of **respect** is also instrumental in retaining employees, which is in line with the other ethical-based values (integrity, diversity). In the same vein, this effect is stable

independently of the average industry turnover, which suggests its robustness. This is no surprise at all because respect has been reported as the most important value leaders should keep to positively impact followers (Porath, 2014; Rudolph et al., 2021) as employees return it to the organization under the form of loyalty, and thus, intention to remain.

Overall, findings offer a mixed answer. There is only one organizational cultural value that apart from increasing employee retention, is also fundamental when the industry turnover rate is higher. This allows us to state integrity as a cultural value is not always or equally important to explain employee retention during the Great Resignation. In addition, the organizational cultural values that foster employee retention independently of the industry's average turnover are diversity, innovation, integrity (already mentioned), and respect.

Among those cultural values that were expected to foster employee turnover, "customer orientation" was empirically corroborated but execution and performance orientation were not. Another surprising finding pertained to one cultural value that is seemingly negative as regards employee retention when the industry's average turnover is low: collaboration. This is a counterintuitive finding that is persistent even when one tests a nonlinear relationship and, as we already mentioned, it might be due to social desirability (as suggested by the mean).

Limitations

Although Culture500 as an initiative and data source is a novel and remarkable data source that builds upon a promising methodology to collect and process digital data, it leaves out important information pertaining to organizational culture. As Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) stated, organizational culture is mostly approachable via norms and such norms comprehend three dimensions: 1) content (what is considered important), 2) consensus (how strongly are norms shared, and 3) intensity (how much people are willing to sanction others that e.g. break the norm). Culture500 provides no information about consensus and this dimension is critical because, as the organizational culture concept itself highlights, it refers to a "shared" phenomenon. Without understanding how shared it is, one cannot truly refer to culture but rather individual perceptions of culture.

Another global characteristic considered to be a limitation in this topic is that the Culture500 study and most of the literature that researches the Great Resignation depart from a negative view of voluntary turnover as being always detrimental to organizations due to the costs it entails. However, within the turnover literature there are also alternative views that do not share this negative connotation. Carbery

et al. (2003) discuss this view by integrating Bowey (1976) proposal that mobility drives skill acquisition because job changes increase the need to adapt and learn new skills. More recently, Simón et al. (2022) analyze the differential impacts of the motive of turnover (discharge versus voluntary quitting) contrasting also the level of the position (managers versus staff). They found a positive effect on performance when turnover originated from discharges (in both staff or managers), but a curvilinear effect (inverted-U shape) of voluntary quitting in staff only. This voluntary quitting effect is interesting in the sense that it indicates that voluntary quitting can be beneficial as long as it is kept in moderate frequency. Unfortunately, the turnover statistics do not differentiate between voluntary and discharge cases.

Another important limitation concerns the lack of control variables but, given the fact that the sample is quite large entailing thousands of individuals nested in the organizational-level statistics, it is most likely that the homogeneous nature of sample (age, gender) is assured as well as the local (state level) unemployment rate, which precludes the need to control for these variables. Still, it would be better if such data was available to guarantee it control without the need to state further assumptions previous to the analysis.

Future research may build upon these limitations by bringing (whenever possible) new data pertaining to gender, age, tenure or any other individual-level variable that should be taken into account. In the same vein, future studies may benefit from considering plausible generational effects as literature suggests work drivers shifting between age cohorts (e.g. millennials substantially different from X generation employees; Garg & Mahipalan, 2023). Also, because social desirability may play a role in this sort of report (as possibly affecting our findings on collaboration value) it would be interesting to also control for this effect, should it indeed occur. As a fine tuning of the present study, future research may endeavor to have the exact turnover rates per industry instead of a dichotomous low vs. high rate, as it will offer a more sensitive and closer-to-reality depiction of its true effect. Another promising development in research may lie in crossing findings from the 9 cultural dimensions entailed in Culture500 with those that have establish themselves in organizational culture literature in the past four decades.

All in all, the topic of toxic culture in relation to individuals' wellbeing, and work outcomes is an interesting and promising field of research, and by adding boundary conditions (such as industry specific effects) or any other, one can gauge the precise wrongdoing a toxic culture can have in triggering massive HR risks such as those observed in the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting. These phenomena may not be taken lightly as they occur at worldwide level and can enact dynamics that may not still be fully

acknowledged. Conversely, it may offer new insights on how to design organizational values to leverage employee's well-being and positive work outcomes also at this massive worldwide scale.

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