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**Employees' perception of a mental health climate: impact on employees' intention to leave and organizational commitment's mediating effect**

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Organizational Consultancy

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September, 2023

Department of Human Resources and Organizational  
Behavior

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## **Abstract**

Literature reveals increasing resignation rates in recent years, and organizational climate is proven to be linked with employee commitment and low turnover rates. Amid the increased recognition of mental health importance, this study seeks answers to the lack of research on organizational climates focused on mental health.

This research aims to analyze how the perception of a mental health climate can influence organizational commitment and employees' intention to leave, and how each dimension (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) can mediate the relationship between the perception of a mental health climate and employees' intention to leave.

For this analysis, a quantitative methodology was used through an online questionnaire which was applied to a sample of 160 participants from different organizations and professional sectors.

The results support a positive relationship between the perception of a mental health climate and affective and normative commitment, between employees' perception of a mental health climate with their intention to leave, as well as the mediating effect of affective and normative commitment in this relationship. As for continuance commitment, the results show that its relationship with the perception of a mental health climate and its mediating effect between this perception and their intention to leave are not significant.

This research is evidence of the practical implications that implementing measures to enhance the employees' perceptions of a mental health climate can improve affective and normative commitment by improving their mental well-being and offering them benefits, resulting in a decrease in their intention to leave the organization.

**Keywords:** human resources management; intention to leave; mental health; organizational climate; organizational commitment; well-being.

**JEL Classification Systems:** I31 (General Welfare, Well-Being), M14 (Corporate Culture; Diversity; Social Responsibility), O15 (Human Resources; Human Development; Income Distribution; Migration).

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## **Resumo**

A literatura revela um aumento nas taxas de demissão nos últimos anos, e o clima organizacional comprova-se ligado com o comprometimento e baixas taxas de turnover. Considerando o maior reconhecimento da saúde mental, este estudo procura responder à falta de investigação sobre climas organizacionais focados em saúde mental.

Esta investigação procura analisar como a percepção de clima de saúde mental pode influenciar o comprometimento organizacional e a intenção de saída, e como cada dimensão (comprometimento afetivo, comprometimento instrumental e comprometimento normativo) podem mediar a relação entre a percepção de um clima de saúde mental e a intenção de saída dos colaboradores.

Para esta análise, foi efetuada uma metodologia quantitativa, aplicando um questionário online a uma amostra de 160 participantes de diferentes organizações e setores profissionais.

Os resultados suportam uma relação positiva entre a percepção de um clima de saúde mental e comprometimento afetivo e normativo, entre esta percepção com a intenção de saída, bem como o efeito mediador do comprometimento afetivo e normativo nesta relação. Quanto ao comprometimento instrumental, os resultados demonstram que a relação com a percepção de um clima de saúde mental e o seu efeito mediador entre esta percepção e a intenção de saída não são significantes.

Este estudo evidencia as implicações práticas que a implementação de medidas que melhorem a percepção dos colaboradores de um clima de saúde mental podem melhorar o comprometimento afetivo e normativo melhorando o seu bem-estar psicológico e oferecendo benefícios, resultando numa diminuição na sua intenção de saída da organização.

**Palavras-chave:** bem-estar; clima organizacional; comprometimento organizacional; intenção de saída; gestão de recursos humanos; saúde mental.

**Códigos de classificação JEL:** I31 (General Welfare, Well-Being), M14 (Corporate Culture; Diversity; Social Responsibility), O15 (Human Resources; Human Development; Income Distribution; Migration).

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## 1. Introduction

Over the years, mental health in the workplace has become an even more significant subject, and organizations and employees are more concerned with the topic. This subject is pertinent to organizations as evidence suggests well-being can have an impact on organizational outcomes, such as performance and productivity (Kowalsky & Loretto, 2017), leading the organizations to recognize the need to develop and implement mental health programs (Kelloway, 2016). According to Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 46 percent of Gen Zs say they are stressed or anxious all or most of the time, while for millennials the percentage is 38%, and although more than half of Gen Zs (53%) and millennials (51%) agree that mental health is more discussed by their organizations, this discussion doesn't reflect on meaningful impact on employees. (Deloitte, 2022). In Portugal, data from 2022 refers that the adults' mental health and well-being has been highly affected, with 61% of adults considered at risk of depression, higher than the EU countries mean, 55% (OECD, 2022). According to the same source, young adults appear to have poorer mental health compared to other age groups. Portugal has 27% of its population with moderate to severe anxiety symptoms and 26% with depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms, with work-life balance, job insecurity and income as important factors for the general population mental health deterioration (Almeida et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

Organizational climate, as a concept referring to individual perceptions on multiple dimensions of the organizational environment, can have a strong impact on individual motivation to achieve work outcomes (Neal et al., 2000). Improving the organizational climate could reduce turnover rate, and consequently improve employee retention, as any negative perception on one of the organizational climate dimensions can trigger employees to leave their jobs (Hong & Kaur, 2008). Bronkhorst et al. (2015) findings also refer that the perception of a "good" organizational climate can positively contribute to the employees' mental health. Considering this multidimensional construct and the increased concern about mental health, it is possible to imagine mental health climate as one organizational climate dimension, which would describe the employee's perception on the value of mental health in the organizational environment.

Employee commitment also should be taken in this equation, considering the negative relation it has with the intention to leave: the more an employee is committed, the less his intention to leave the organization would be. According to *Gallup's State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report* (Gallup, 2022), only 19% of the Portuguese employees feel engaged in their workplace, revealing worrying evidence about organizational commitment in the Portuguese population.

Employees are the most valued asset in organizations, so employee retention is an important issue, as retaining the talented employees, instead of recruiting new ones, allows the organization to

put their efforts on other issues and keep their competitive advantage (Hong & Kaur, 2008). Employee turnover can have a negative effect on organizations, considering not only the human capital costs (replacement, temporary staff, costs of learning) but also the loss of social capital (social networks, shared knowledge) (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Recently, organizations have been dealing with a phenomenon named The Great Resignation. While it is expected a certain rate of voluntary turnover in the companies, since March 2021 there has been an increase in the number of voluntary turnovers in a short period of time, which will most certainly result in long-term loss of organizational performance (Serenko, 2022). The primary drivers behind The Great Resignation seem to stem from (a) lack of acknowledgment and feelings of disrespect, (b) the presence of a toxic work culture, and (c) a struggle to find professional fulfillment due to meaningless tasks (DeSmet et al., 2022; Parker & Horowitz, 2022). Toxic work culture, for instance, appears to be related to a lack of alignment with the employees' values (Formica & Sfodera, 2022), such as mental health especially for Gen Zs and Millennials. According to the Deloitte survey, 40% of Gen Zs and 24% of Millennials plan to leave their jobs within two years, pointing out the top reasons for leaving as the salaries, burnout and how the workplace had negative impact on their mental health (Deloitte, 2022).

In a time of uncertainty for both employees and organizations, it is essential to research practices that could guarantee employees' retention and minimize turnover rates in the companies, retaining talents in the organizations. Considering the increased importance perceived on mental health and the need to retain talent in organizations in a period marked by an increase in the voluntary turnover rate, this research focus on understanding how an organizational climate focused on mental health can have an impact on employee commitment and therefore turnover rate, avoiding the loss of organizational performance that would be a consequence of the loss of human capital. Although there are studies regarding the impact of organizational climate on organizational commitment (Berberoglu, 2018; Ernsting et al., 2013; Guzley, 1986; Noordin et al., 2010), the relationship between organizational commitment and employee retention (Rose & Raja, 2016) and about how organizational climate affects intention to leave (Hong & Kaur, 2008), the literature appears to lack answers on how having a mental health-oriented organizational climate affects employees' commitment and intention to leave.

This study seeks answers to six different questions, starting with how mental health climate can affect employees' commitment, evidencing how mental health can influence the employees' identification and involvement with the organization. Since the analysis concerns employees' intentions of leaving or staying in the organizations, it is important to understand how mental health climate affects their perception on the organization. It is also important to research how employees' commitment would affect their intention to leave the organization. Following, how employee perception of a mental health climate can affect their turnover intention should be addressed to identify how this perception can lead the employees to remain or not in the organization. Adding to

that, we should address how organizational commitment can mediate the relationship between the perception of a mental health climate and intention to leave. Lastly, researching to which extent the adoption of a mental health climate may affect employee commitment and intention to leave, will give us the conclusion of the impact a mental health climate will provide on employee retention.

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## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Organizational climate**

Although the importance of organizational climate has been established, the definition has not been very agreed upon over the years by researchers, having a highly diverse and even contradictory conceptual definition (Guzley, 1986; James & Jones, 1974) and the “organizational” term almost completely ignored by the authors (Schneider et al., 2012). While for some authors it is viewed as a property of the organization, the total environment that is experienced by the employees, influences their behavior, and can be described in terms of the characteristics and attributes of the environment (Tagiuri, 1968; Halpin & Croft, 1963), for others organizational climate is a consequence of the organizational members’ behaviors and is defined as an enduring quality of an organization’s internal environment resultant from the behaviors and policies of the organization members, perceived by them, serves as a basis for interpretation of the situation and is a source of pressure for directing activity (Pritchard & Karasick, 1973).

Organizational climate has also been described as the subjective perception of the organization's employees, regarding the formal system, informal management style, and other environmental issues pertaining to the values, beliefs, and motivations of the organization’s employees (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). Later definitions of organizational climate describe it as an agreement or similarity of individuals perceptions of their work environment which could be aggregated representing an organization-level climate (Schulte et al., 2006), or as the shared perceptions and meaning employees experience from the organizations policies, practices and procedures and the behaviors that are supported and expected (Schneider et al., 2012). The organizational climate can also be regarded as a psychological construct resultant from the interactions of a group of individuals who share a common reference framework. This collective understanding establishes the meaning of working in the company (Cunha et al., 2016). In addition to employee perceptions and values, the concept also incorporates broader factors such as organizational commitment, trust and sense of belonging, as well as staff confidence and loyalty to their employer. (Hamidianpour et al., 2015). In such manner, the climate can be considered as the psychological environment present within a workplace and that is perceived by the employees (Verbeke et al., 1998), which can lead to individual and organizational outcomes such as employee satisfaction, motivation, commitment and performance increase that could aid achieving the organization’s objectives (Ostroff et al., 2012).

According to Goleman (2000), organizational climate results from six drivers of climate which influence work environment: flexibility - related to the degree in which the employees feel free to innovate and take initiative; responsibility – degree in which the employees feel responsible for the organization; standards, which refer to performance standards and requirements set by the employees to guide their work activities; rewards, which relates to how the performance feedback is perceived

and the rewards adequacy to their performance; clarity, which is the degree to which the employees feel the organization values and mission as clear; and commitment, which relates to the level the employees feel committed in a common purpose (Goleman, 2000; Cunha et al., 2016).

Despite organizational climate's early empirical research has been focused on the individuals, there has been an increased recognition of the importance of the unit and organizational level of perception (Albrecht, 2014).

Employees' perception of the organizational climate is a critical determinant that influences their behavior in the workplace and serves as a mediator between the objective features of the work environment and the employees' reactions to those features (Carr et al., 2003). Some negative aspects of the organizational climate also appear to be linked to outcomes such as work stress, higher burnout rates and higher turnover rates (Bjerkan, 2010).

Early research on organizational climate tend to define it as a molar or global construct that captures the motivations from the total situation (Litwin & Stringer, 1968), which underestimates the complexity of climate, as the notion that there exist multiple dimensions within the organizations has been accepted by multiple authors (e.g., Schneider, 2000; Schulte et al., 2006). Considering the different dimensions, Schneider (1975) proposed the conceptualization of climate as a domain-specific construct with a strategic focus on a criterion or outcome rather than a generic, macro-level and generalizable construct (Schneider et al., 2012).

To better understand and integrate core features of organizational focused climates, or "climates for something", it is possible to use the Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) competing values framework, which allow the organization of the different conceptualizations and dimensions of organizational climate or focused organizational climates. This framework, represented in Figure 2.1.1, has four different quadrants, delineated by two axis contrasting dimensions. The vertical axis indicates whether the organization is more focused on flexibility or in control, while the horizontal axis shows if the organizational climate has more internal or external focus. This division creates four quadrants which refer to four orientations, which are human relations climate, open system climate, internal process climate and rational goal climate.



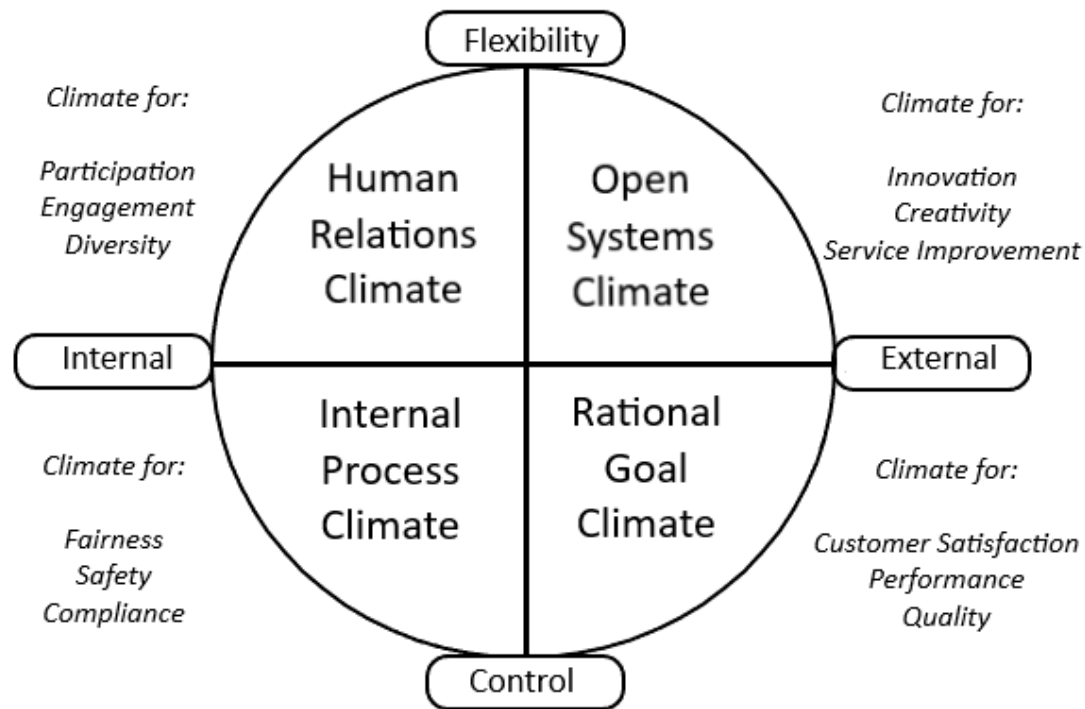


Figure 2.1.1: Competing values framework for focused organizational climates (Albrecht, 2014, adapted from Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983)

A human relations climate, more human relations oriented, will be more flexible and focused on the internal aspects of the organization. One example, as suggested in Figure 2.1.1, is the engagement climate, which is more internally focused, considering the employees engagement, and more flexible in relation to the environment. Open systems climates are more focused on the flexibility related to the environment and more externally focused. Innovation climate is an example of an open system climate, as it focuses on how this climate affects the external environment, such as the markets the organization acts on, and is flexible to allow the innovative process, to create innovative products or services. An internal process climate will have a bigger focus on the internal environment and on control. Safety climate is an internal process climate as its main focus is on the internal environment and intends to control the processes in order to promote safe behaviors and diminish the safety hazards within the organization. As for the rational goal climate, it is more focused on the external environment and on control. An example of a climate with these focuses is the performance climate, which is more focused on the performance and the outputs to the client and on controlling the processes which guarantee that performance.

The organizational climate dimension which this research intends to analyze, a mental health climate, is inserted in the human relations climate quadrant, as this organizational climate has an internal focus, focusing on the environment and people inside the organization, and focus on flexibility in relation with the environment. Also, this organizational climate approach is more usually focused

on the workers community within an organization, their commitment and well-being (Patterson et al., 2005).

Over the years, researchers have studied a large number of distinct strategic climates such as safety climate (e.g., Neal & Griffin, 2004; Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016), service climate (e.g., Liao & Chuang, 2007), justice climate (e.g., Mayer et al., 2007) and health climate (e.g., Ernsting et al., 2013). Considering there may be more focused organizational climates, or “climates for something” the intent of this research is to investigate an organizational climate focused on mental health. To do so, it is important to fully understand what a mentally healthy workplace is, the importance of mental well-being, how to define a mental health climate and what could be the effects on organizational outcomes.

## **2.2. Mental health climate**

To better understand the concept of a mental health climate, it is important to understand what a mentally healthy workplace is. A mentally healthy workplace refers to a work environment where the organization recognizes and takes appropriate actions to mitigate any detrimental effects the organization may have on its employees' mental well-being (Harvey et al., 2014). It can also be described as a place which simultaneously focuses on reducing or mitigating the effects of job stressors and providing the resources needed for the employees (Kelloway & Day, 2005). This workplace is characterized by a strong people-centered culture, that emphasizes open communication, employee involvement, and commitment as key values. According to Quinn and Rohrbaugh's Competing Value Framework (1983), a strong people-centered culture, as the one which characterizes a mentally healthy workplace is a culture mainly focused on flexibility and on the internal environment. By implementing initiatives that promote psychological health, organizations can foster these characteristics that can help buffer poor employee mental health, which can lead to a reduction in work-related stressors and pressure (Grawitch et al., 2006; Kelloway & Day, 2005). To have a mentally healthy workplace, Harvey et al. (2014) refers the influence of a list of factors such as the job design, the group relationships, organizational factors, work-home conflict and individual biopsychological factors on originating mental health and well-being outcomes.

Health climate refers to the shared perceptions of organization's procedures, policies, practices, and behaviors regarding employee health, reflecting the employee's perception of the organizations' efforts and support on their physical and mental health and well-being (Ernsting et al., 2013), including different aspects as health norms and values, health promotion programs and the organizational environment condition (Kaluza et al., 2018). In this dissertation, the strategic focus of the research will be on the mental health dimension, examining how employees' perceptions of the organizational practices support their mental health and well-being.

To fully understand the concept behind a mental health climate, it is necessary to understand the definition of mental health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution” (2004). The relationship between organizational climate and mental health outcomes is already known to be a positive relation, which means the mental health of the employees would be more positive the better the organizational climate is perceived (Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016), but the influence that an organizational climate strategically focused on mental health has on other organizational outcomes, such as retention, remains to be investigated.

Adapting Ernsting et al. (2013) conceptualization of health climate, we can define mental health climate as employees’ shared perceptions of organization’s procedures, policies, practices and behaviors regarding employee mental health and their perceptions of the organizational active support for employee’s psychological well-being.

Another conceptualized dimension of organizational climate that relates to our definition and is relevant for mental well-being is the psychosocial safety climate, or climate for mental health and psychological safety, which refers to an appropriate equilibrium between management’s regard for employees’ mental well-being and their productivity (Dollard & McTernan, 2011; Harvey et al., 2014). The psychosocial safety climate model comprises four interrelated factors: senior management's level of commitment and support for stress prevention, the importance given to mental health and safety by management, the organization's upward and downward communication regarding psychological health and safety, and the degree of participation and involvement by managers and employees in matters concerning psychological health and safety (Hall et al., 2010; Dollard et al., 2011).

To promote the well-being of their employees, organizations can establish a healthy work environment, or a healthy workplace, that involves a collaborative effort between workers and managers to implement a continuous improvement process. This process aims to safeguard and enhance the health, safety, and overall well-being of all employees, while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of the workplace. To achieve this, it is essential to consider the identified needs, which may include addressing health and safety issues in the physical work environment, providing access to personal health resources, addressing health, safety and well-being concerns in the psychosocial work environment, and exploring ways for the organization to participate in community aimed at promoting the health of workers, their families, and other community members. (Burton & WHO, 2010). Jensen and van der Voordt (2020) state employee’s health and well-being is affected by four main workplace characteristics: characteristics of the physical environment, organizational characteristics (such as leadership style, organizational culture and climate, organizational structure), job characteristics (job demands, stress and feelings related to the job, time pressure) and personal characteristics (age,

gender, education, personal mindset on physical and mental wellness). Additionally, there are external elements that can affect their health and well-being, which may not have a direct correlation with their workplaces.

Studies on positive psychology have confirmed employee's satisfaction, engagement and commitment have been linked with their experience of greater psychological wealth and positive mental health (Davenport et al., 2016). The implementation of psychologically healthy programs in organizations has demonstrated an increase in employee job satisfaction, self-esteem and commitment (Kelloway et al., 2017). Further research adds that organizational climate is linked with increased levels of occupational wellness and acts as a protective factor against work-related stressors (Harvey et al., 2014). Creating a positive health climate in the workplace requires promoting healthy lifestyles, by including physical activities in the workplace, offering healthy food to the employees, create a break room for the employees to do their breaks and implement a wellness week, and prioritizing the individual wellness of employees, with initiatives such as offering programs and benefits which support the employee's wellness, like counseling services or referrals to mental health professionals (Arnold, Forbes, 2023), allow flexible work hours and workplaces, ensure work-life balance and allow employees to take a mental health day when they are not feeling well. This investment by the organization would enhance the health climate and demonstrate the value placed on the health of the workers (Mearns et al., 2010).

Zweber's Multi-faceted Organizational Health Climate Assessment (2012) seeks the assessment, through a survey, of employee's perceptions on health climate inside the organizations, evaluating aspects such as management, supervisor and coworkers support regarding their physical and psychological well-being. Considering this research focus will be on the psychological well-being and on mental health climate perceived by the employees, this assessment can be used with the required adaptations.

Recognizing the importance mental health as on the employees' point of view, how an organizational climate focused on mental health appears to be linked to outcomes such as increased employee job satisfaction, self-esteem and commitment (Kelloway et al., 2017) and how commitment is one of the key factors of a mentally healthy workplace (Kelloway & Day, 2005), it is important to research on organizational commitment definition, on its dimensions, on how it can be related to organizational climate and mental health and what could be the outcomes of a strong employee commitment.

### **2.3. Organizational commitment**

Organizational commitment is defined by employee involvement and identification with the organization (Permarupan et al., 2013), a reflection of loyalty to the organization and continuous effort in behalf of the organization and its success and well-being (Northcraft & Neale, 1996).

One primary perspective conceives organizational commitment as an emotional bond experienced by individuals towards the organization, and how this bond reflects their acceptance of the organization's values and viewpoints. This perspective suggests that there are three distinct types of psychological bonds between an individual and their organization: compliance, identification and internalization. Compliance occurs when individuals within an organization exhibit attitudes and behaviors aimed at obtaining certain extrinsic rewards and avoiding punishments. Identification refers to when an individual accepts the influence considering the satisfaction of an affiliation desire with the organization, when the individual respect and adopt the organizations' values and accomplishments as their own and identifies with the organization. As for internalization, it occurs when employees adopt the values and behaviors advocated by the organization because they align with their pre-existing attitudes and behaviors (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Cunha et al., 2016).

Allen and Meyer (1990) define organizational commitment as a psychological state that describes the employee-organization relationship and influences their decisions related to intentions to leave, referring to it as a multidimensional concept composed of three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment has been conceptualized as a psychological, emotional attachment to the organization, identification, and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment is based on the cost that employees associate with departing the organization. As for normative commitment, this commitment is related to a perception of obligation to remain in the organization based on the employees' personal norms and values.

While employees with a strong affective commitment tend to remain in the organization due to their affection to it, employees with continuance commitment remain because they can't afford the costs related to their organization departure and employees with normative commitment remain in the organization because their values and norms lead them to believe they must (Permarupan et al., 2013). Employees who are affectively committed to the organization, and feel a sense of connection to it, are also more likely to put in effort towards their performance, as opposed to those who feel obligated or simply have a need to remain in the organization. To foster the affective commitment with the organization, it is essential that the organization develops the right strategy and adopt the right processes and procedures (Cunha et al., 2016).

Organizational climate appears to be statistically significant in determining employees' organizational commitment, having a significant and positive relation between the two variables: an

increase on organizational climate scores will lead to a growth of employee's organizational commitment (Fink, 1992; McMurray et al., 2004; Berberoglu, 2018).

Organizational commitment has been discovered to have positive influences in many organizational outcomes such as performance, tenure (reduced turnover and absenteeism), employee motivation and organizational goals accomplishment (McMurray et al., 2004). The relationship between the three commitment dimensions and various performance and turnover indicators indicate that the different dimensions of employee commitment are negatively related with employees' desire to leave the organization, meaning the employees are more prone to stay if they feel committed to the organization, especially if they are more affectively committed (Cunha et al., 2016).

Given that only affective commitment can be directly influenced by organizational initiatives, it is crucial to concentrate efforts on understanding this dimension of organizational commitment and its causes. Morrow (2011) studied antecedent factors that impact affective organizational commitment, dividing the antecedents in six broad categories on the most common themes: socialization, organizational changes, human resources practices, interpersonal relations, employee/organizational relations and others. Included in the interpersonal relations category, Morrow (2011) refers organizational climate has limited impact as a causal antecedent for affective commitment, while affective organizational commitment was a strong predictor of organizational climate perception. The perceived organizational support, which includes the value the organization gives to the employee's contributions and the organizations' contribution to their well-being (which could be done by adopting a mental health organizational climate), have demonstrated consistent positive relations with affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Morrow, 2011).

The organizational concern for employees' work climate, the individual consideration on the extent the organization values and care about their well-being, appear to have a mediator effect between high-performance work systems, which refer to a system of HRM practices designed to enhance employee and organizational performance by improving competence, attitudes and motivation of the workforce (Huselid, 1995), and employees' attitudes, including their affective commitment to the organization (Takeuchi et al., 2009).

Psychosocial safety climate, an organizational climate focused on mental health safety, is said to be an organizational condition associated with work mental health and employee engagement, which leads to the belief that an organizational mental health climate can positively influence the workers commitment to the organization (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Ernsting et al. (2013) also stated that health climate positively predicted the employees' affective commitment to the organization, meaning that those who perceived a more positive health climate would be more affectively committed to the organization.

When employees perceive that the organization supports them through its human resources practices, their trust and commitment to the organization are typically stronger (Whitener, 2001). Organizations investment in the health and well-being of their employees often leads to greater attraction and commitment from the employees towards the organization's goals. This suggests that employees view these health investments as valuable resources that warrant their commitment in return, reciprocating the organization's investment in their health (Mearns et al., 2010).

Perceived organizational support tends to lead to employees developing a sense of obligation to act in the organizations best interests and to remain in the company, with the intent of reciprocating the positive work experience the organization offers to the staff (Pannacio & Vanderberghe, 2009). As for continuance commitment, it could be separated in the perceived sacrifice associated with leaving or with the perceived lack of employment opportunities. Perceived organizational support has demonstrated to be positively related with the perceived sacrifice, as it could be seen as a valued advantage offered by the organization that would be lost upon contract termination, but appears to have a negative relation with the perceived lack of employment alternatives, as the perceived organizational support could lead the employees to develop a sense of self-worth and the belief that potential employers may value and be attracted to them. (Pannacio & Vanderberghe, 2009).

According to the previously referred literature, it is possible to formulate the following hypothesis:

H1a: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' affective commitment to the organization.

H1b: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' continuance commitment to the organization.

H1c: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' normative commitment to the organization.

## **2.4. Employee retention**

Employee retention is defined as a systematic effort to create and promote an organizational environment in which the employees desire to remain, by adopting practices and policies that fit their needs (Workforce Planning for Wisconsin State Government, 2015). This technique allows organizations to maintain an effective workforce for the maximum period of time (Bidisha, 2013; Mita, 2014) and is a necessary endeavor to guarantee the growth and stability of the organization (Singh, 2019).

It is impossible to talk about employee retention without referring to the concept of turnover. Turnover is the cessation of employment ties to an organization by the employee and his departure from the organization, which can be voluntary or involuntary (Chai Hong & Kaur, 2008). While voluntary turnover is a process initiated by the employee, with the intent to terminate its relationship

with the employer, involuntary turnover is initiated by the organization (Dess & Shaw, 2001; Singh, 2019). Although turnover is frequently associated with negative organizational consequences, it also has possible positive consequences such as a replacement for employees with a better performance, more innovative, with new ideas which could contribute to a more effective organization. As for negative consequences for the organization, turnover can result in loss of productivity and decrease of performance until new employees learn the business, interruption of key activities, increased costs associated with the new recruitment, selection and training processes required for the new hirings. Turnover can also affect the attitudes and morale of the remaining employees, can involuntarily cause disruption of the teams, and can create problems between new personnel (Chai Hong & Kaur, 2008). With the employee leave of the organization, his skillset, the culture, and values will also be lost and available to the competitors (Sanderson, 2003; Singh, 2019).

Employees' intention to leave the organization pertains to the act of leaving a job voluntarily, which necessitates prior planning and preparation (Özdevecioğlu, 2004). Intention to leave may be associated with internal factors such as job stress, emotional exhaustion, job strain, low salaries, job demand or conflicts, but also with external factors such as unemployment rates or alternative job opportunities (Daly & Dee, 2006; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Intention to leave the organization may also be triggered by negative perceptions of any organizational climate dimensions as an organization promoter of a positive organizational climate can enhance employee's job satisfaction and consequently reduce their will to leave their job (Chai Hong & Kaur, 2008).

Intention to leave the organization appears to be not solely influenced by extrinsic factors such as rewards, but also heavily influenced by more intrinsic psychological factors inherent to the workplace (Putri & Setianan, 2019).

Organizational climate has already been stated to have a relation with employee's intention to leave (Bjerkkan, 2010), through the workers perception of the organization's support through their values, practices, processes and procedures. Regarding the mental well-being, as organizational climate has a positive impact on the employees' mental health when they perceive the organization's support for psychological well-being (Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016), and considering the implementation of healthy programs has demonstrated increased employee job satisfaction, self-esteem and commitment (Kelloway et al., 2017), we can consider the following hypothesis:

H2: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a negative relation on employees' intention to leave the organization.

According to some research regarding the relationship between employee commitment and intention to leave employment, employee commitment demonstrates a negative relation to employee's intention to leave their organization (Yildirim et al., 2015; Putri & Setianan, 2019; Redondo



et al., 2021). Considering this and the previously stated information, we can formulate the following hypothesis considering the relationship between employee commitment and their intention to leave the organization:

H3a: Affective commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.

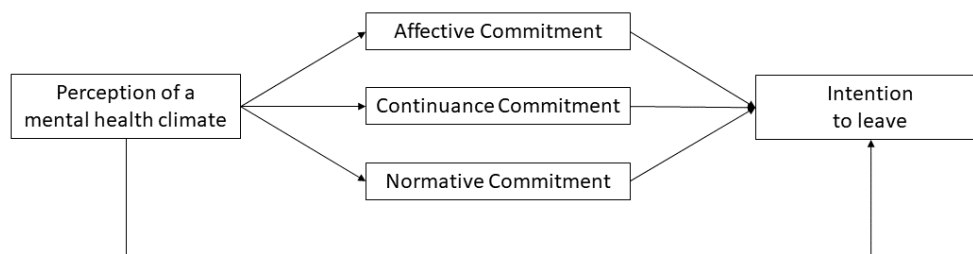
H3b: Continuance commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.

H3c: Normative commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.

## 2.5. Research model

Summing the previous information, we built the research model represented on Figure 2.5.1 based on the hypotheses suggested.

In this model, employees' perception of a mental health climate acts as a predictor variable and their intention to leave as a result variable. Organizational commitment is also considered as a mediator for the previous relationship, considering for this analysis the three organizational commitment dimensions (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment).



*Figure 2.5.1: Research model*

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### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Sample**

The present study had a total of 248 study participations, although after the data review, excluding surveys with questions left unanswered, a total of 160 valid participants were considered.

The sample consisted of approximately two thirds of female inquiries (66.9%), having an age mean of 39 years ( $M = 38.99$ ;  $SD = 11.62$ ), with ages ranging from 21 to 64 years. The sample was mostly composed by Portuguese individuals (98.1%), except for two Italian participants (1.3%) and one Spanish participant (0.6%). Despite the sample being mostly composed of single respondents (41.9%), almost half of the sample was married or in a non-marital cohabitation relationship (49.4%). The sample was mostly constituted of participants who completed higher education studies (63.2%) and who completed secondary education (33.8%).

Regarding the professional sectors of the participants, the majority belonged to commerce and services area (43.8%), followed by public administration (19.4%), police and national defense (11.9%), industry (7.5%), education (7.5%), health services (5.6%) and others (4.4%). Almost half of the participants have been in the same organization for over ten years (47.5%), and nearly three thirds of the participants have been in the same organization for at least 2 years (73.2%).

Considering the psychological health of the participants, the vast majority responded that they have not suffered and do not suffer from any psychological illness (80%).

#### **3.2. Procedure**

To conduct the research regarding the impact of the perception of a mental health climate on organizational commitment and employee intention to leave, a quantitative methodology was applied, through an online survey, to deduct and explain the relationship between the perception of a mental health climate and employee's commitment, between the perception of a mental health climate and employee's intention to leave and the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and employee's intention to leave.

The survey was created using Qualtrics software, which allowed the data transfer to Excel and SPSS software, preventing mistakes resultant from manual data insertion (Becker et al., 2012), and a facilitated sharing of the survey through an access link. The survey was shared via social network platforms, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

The survey participants were assured that their responses were anonymous and confidential. The self-administered questionnaire allowed the inquiries to read and respond to the questions online autonomously, at any time and place intended, and in an objective way, as the Likert scales allowed them to indicate their degree of agreement with each item. The participants were also assured that

the answers provided in the questionnaire would be only used for investigation and academic purposes and had to confirm their consent on the online survey to authorize the information usage for this purpose.

### **3.3. Instrument**

The instrument used for this research included scales previously existent in the literature, related to the concepts in study, such as mental health climate, organizational commitment and employee's intention to leave.

*Individual perception of mental health climate.* To measure the participants perception of mental health climate in their organization we used the practical scale for Multi-faceted Organizational Health Climate Assessment, developed by Zweber (2012) and adapted in this research to focus more on the mental health aspects. This scale measured the perception of mental health climate through ten items, valued in a Likert scale of five points, where 1 corresponds to Totally Disagree and 5 corresponds to Totally Agree. Some items which belong to this scale are "If my mental health were to decline, my co-workers would take steps to support my recovery.", "My organization is committed to employee mental health and well-being." and "My organization encourages me to speak up about issues and priorities regarding employee mental health and well-being". This scale can be considered very reliable, as it presents good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

*Organizational Commitment.* For assessing organizational commitment, the organizational commitment scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used. This scale measures organizational commitment in three different dimensions, which are affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment, each of them composed by eight items, evaluated through a Likert scale of five points, varying between 1, which corresponds to Totally Disagree, and 5, which corresponds to Totally Agree. Some items included in these scales are "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me." (Affective commitment), "Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire." (Continuance commitment) and "If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization" (Normative commitment). Each dimension of organizational commitment studied has a different subscale to research how the different kinds of organizational commitment were affected by the perception of a mental health climate and how they would relate to employee's intention to leave. Affective commitment subscale demonstrated to be a very reliable scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of .85, and Continuance commitment subscale was also considered a reliable scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of .78. Although normative commitment subscale has a lower Cronbach's alpha (.68) compared to the previous ones, we can consider that this subscale has an acceptable internal consistency and could be considered reliable.

*Employee's intention to leave.* Employee's intention to leave was measured in this research using a turnover intention scale (based on Mowday et al., 1984, and Mobley et al., 1978). The scale is composed of five items, evaluated with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree). Some examples of the items are "I will probably look for a new job in the near future." and "I do not intend to quit my job". This scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .878, which demonstrates this scale has a very good internal consistency and is very reliable.

The participants gender and their psychological health (If the participants suffer or suffered any psychological illness) were considered in this research as categorical control variables.

### **3.4. Data analysis strategy**

The data gathered through the questionnaires was analyzed using the statistics software *IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS 28.0). A descriptive analysis was conducted to characterize the sample according to their demographic information (age, gender, nationality, marital status, education, seniority, professional sector and psychological health) and the variables in study (employees' perception of a mental health climate, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment and employees' intention to leave). Afterwards, a reliability analysis was executed to ensure the psychometric quality of the instruments.

Spearman's correlation, a non-parametric test, was employed to assess the association between the control variables and the model variables, to determine the extent of their correlation. This test was conducted as part of the verification process to examine the relationship between the different variables. The Pearson's correlation was also used to assess the correlation between the different model variables. Afterwards, the linear regression analysis was applied to test how the value of the dependent variables varies based on the value of the independent variable. In this research, the independent variable will be the perception of a mental health climate, while the dependent variables will be affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment and employees' intention to leave.

To ensure the simple mediation and test the hypothesis described on *H3a: Affective commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization*, *H3b: Continuance commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization* and *H3c: Normative commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization*, the model 4 of *Process* macro (Hayes, 2017) was used.

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#### 4. Results

After defining the variables which were going to be used, the correlations between them were realized. The Spearman's correlation coefficient (*rho*) was employed to analyze the relationship between the model variables and the control variables. To analyze the relationship between the different model variables, we used the Pearson's correlation coefficient (*r*).

Table 4.1: Means, standard deviations and correlations between study variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>1. Mental Health Climate</b>	3.66	0.89						
<b>2. Affective Commitment</b>	4.42	0.84	.58**					
<b>3. Continuance Commitment</b>	3.81	0.79	.09	.34**				
<b>4. Normative Commitment</b>	3.58	0.65	.32**	.50**	.36**			
<b>5. Employee's Intention to leave</b>	3.65	1.1	-.35**	-.53**	-.50**	-.37**		
<b>6. Gender</b>	-	-	-.10	-.05	.08	.01	.02	
<b>7. Psychological Health</b>	-	-	.12	-.03	-.07	-.00	-.07	-.19*

Notes: N = 160. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

Gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female)

Psychological Health - Have you suffered or do you suffer from any psychological illness? (1 = Yes, 2 = No)

On Table 4.1 are represented the means, standard deviations and correlations between the different variables in study and the control variables. The affective commitment mean is higher compared to the other variables ( $M = 4.42$ ;  $SD = 0.84$ ). Employee's intention to leave also possesses a mean above 3, meaning the participants tend to agree with the items from the scale ( $M = 3.65$ ;  $SD = 1.1$ ).

Observing the Pearson's correlation coefficient between mental health climate perception and affective commitment, we can conclude that there exists a positive and significative correlation

between both ( $r = .58; p < .001$ ). As for employees' perception of a mental health climate relationship with continuance commitment, the values indicate it has a positive, although not significant correlation ( $r = .09; p = ns$ ). Normative commitment demonstrates a positive and significant correlation with the perception of a mental health climate ( $r = .32; p < .001$ ).

Comparing with the control variables, it is possible to observe that the perception of a mental health climate has a negative and non-significant correlation with gender ( $\rho = -.10; p = ns$ ) and a positive, although not significant, correlation with the psychological health of the participants ( $\rho = .12; p = ns$ ).

Employees' intention to leave and their perception of a mental health climate, according to the Pearson's correlation coefficient, are significant and negatively correlated ( $r = -.35; p < .001$ ). The intention to leave also has a significant and negative correlation with affective commitment ( $r = -.53; p < .001$ ), continuance commitment ( $r = -.50; p < .001$ ) and normative commitment ( $r = -.37; p < .001$ ).

Afterwards, to test *H1a*, *H1b* and *H1c*, we conducted separate linear regressions between mental health climate and each of the three different types of commitment (i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment).

**H1a: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' affective commitment to the organization.**

Analyzing the results, it is possible to infer that mental health climate as a significant and positive relation with affective commitment ( $B = .55, t = 8.88, p < .001$ ), which means the better the employees perceive the mental health climate to be, the higher will be their affective commitment, supporting hypothesis *H1a*.

**H1b: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' continuance commitment to the organization.**

Considering the hypothesis stated on *H1b*, the relation between continuance commitment and mental health climate is displayed as positive, although not significant ( $B = .08, t = 1.121, p = .264$ ), which does not support the relation stated on hypothesis *H1b*.

**H1c: Employee perception of a mental health climate has a positive impact on employees' normative commitment to the organization.**

According to the results of the linear regression, it is also possible to observe that the relationship between mental health climate and normative commitment is positive and significant ( $B = .234, t = 4.231, p < .001$ ), supporting hypothesis *H1c*.



**H2: Employees' perception of a mental health climate has a negative relation on employees' intention to leave the organization.**

Comparing the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and employees' intention to leave, the linear regression results indicate that this relation is negative and significant ( $B = -.43$ ,  $t = -4.641$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting the hypothesis described on *H2*.

Analyzing the *Process* macro output represented on the Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, it is possible to support that different types of organizational commitment mediate the relationship between employees' perception of mental health climate and employees' intention to leave. To do so, the process was applied considering each organizational commitment dimension (i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) as a mediator of the relationship between the employees' perception of mental health climate and their intention to leave, resulting in three different mediations.

**H3a: Affective commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.**

According to the results, the relationship between those two variables is mediated by affective commitment, as with a 95 % level of confidence, the values of the lower level confidence interval (LLCI) and of the upper level confidence interval (ULCI) do not include 0 between both values [-.49; -.22], confirming hypothesis *H3a*.

*Table 4.2: Mediating effect of affective commitment variables on the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.*

	B	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Affective Commitment	-.35	.07	-.49	-.22

**H3b: Continuance commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.**

Regarding the mediating effect of continuance commitment between mental health climate and employees' intention to leave, the values between the LLCI and ULCI include 0 [-.17; .05], which indicates continuance commitment does not have a mediator effect in the relationship between mental health climate and employees' intention to leave, rejecting *H3b*.

Table 4.3: Mediating effect of continuance commitment variables on the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.

	B	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Continuance Commitment	-.05	.06	-.17	.05

**H3c: Normative commitment to the organization mediates the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave the organization.**

Finally, normative commitment also has a significant indirect effect, since the values interval between LLCI and ULCI does not include 0 [-.20; -.04], which implies that normative commitment has a mediating effect between mental health climate and employees' intention to leave, confirming H3c.

Table 4.4: Mediating effect of normative commitment variables on the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.

	B	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Normative Commitment	-.12	.04	-.20	-.04

In *post hoc* analysis we aimed to determine which specific dimension of organizational commitment had the greatest impact on employees' intention to. To accomplish this, we conducted a linear multiple regression analysis involving the three dimensions of organizational commitment as independent variables and employee's intention to leave as a dependent variable. The results demonstrated that every dimension of organizational commitment had a negative relationship with employees' intention to leave, with affective commitment having the highest correlation ( $B = -.38$ ,  $t = -5.185$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by continuance commitment ( $B = -.35$ ,  $t = -5.233$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and then, although without a significative relation, normative commitment ( $B = -.06$ ,  $t = -.779$ ,  $p = .44$ ).

Summarizing, we can confirm that both H1a and H1c are supported, which means that employee's perception of a mental health climate has a positive effect on affective organizational commitment and on normative organizational commitment. As for H1b, this hypothesis is not verified, meaning that the perception of a mental health climate does not have a significant relationship with continuance commitment. Considering the linear regression between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave, we can confirm H2, meaning that employee's perception of a mental health climate has a negative relationship with their intention to leave. Analyzing the Macro Process, we can conclude that H3a is supported, meaning the negative relationship between the individual perception of a mental health climate and employee's intention to leave is mediated by affective commitment. Hypothesis H3c is also sustained, indicating that normative commitment

mediates the negative relationship between employee's perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave. As for *H3b*, the results from the Macro Process reveal that the continuance organizational commitment does not have a mediating effect on the negative relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave, rejecting *H3b*, which is also indicated by the multiple regression results. Employees' intention to leave appears to be affected by both affective and continuance commitment, while normative commitment does not have a significant effect on their turnover intention.

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## 5. Discussion

The main goal of this research was to better understand how employees' perception of a mental health climate in their organization could impact organizational commitment and employee's intention to leave their organization. To do so, we analyzed if individual perception of a mental health climate could be a predictor to each of the three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment), how the employees' perception of a mental health climate can affect employees' intention to leave and if each type of organizational commitment had a mediating effect in the relationship between the employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.

During the research, three different hypotheses were formulated, analyzing the positive impact of employees' perception of a mental climate with their organizational affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment, respectively. According to the literature reviewed, employees' experience of psychological wealth, positive mental health and an organizational climate focused on mental health are related to outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and commitment (Davenport et al., 2016; Kelloway et al., 2017), and organizational climate has a statistically significant and positive relationship with organizational commitment (Fink, 1992; McMurray et al., 2004; Berberoglu, 2018), which led our study to hypothesize a positive employee perception of a mental health climate had a positive impact on employees' commitment to the organization, dividing this thought in three hypotheses, each related to one type of organizational commitment.

According to the results obtained, a positive relation between the perception of a mental health climate and affective commitment is supported, meaning the increased perception of a mental health organizational climate can lead the employees to develop increased affective commitment and emotional attachment and identification to the organization. This data supports the literature reviewed, which referred organizational support and health climate as predictors for affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Ernsting et al., 2013; Morrow, 2011), as our study reveals that the perception of a mental health organizational climate has a significant correlation to affective commitment. As for the positive relation between employees' perception of a mental health climate and normative commitment, the results also support hypothesis *H1c* and the literature reviewed, meaning the employees' feel more obliged to act in the organization's best interests to reciprocate the positive work experience, benefits and organizational support on mental health subjects (Mearns et al., 2010; Pannacio & Vanderberghe, 2009). This indicates that an organizational investment on developing mental health initiatives and improving employee's perception of a mental health climate

can keep the employees' committed, even if for a feeling of obligation to retribute the organization support.

Analyzing the results, hypothesis *H1b* was not supported, as although employees' perception of a mental health climate demonstrates a positive relation with their continuance commitment, the relationship is not significant. This implies that the perception of a mental health climate cannot be considered as a relevant predictor variable on continuance commitment.

Regarding the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave, the obtained results support hypothesis *H2* and the literature reviewed, confirming that the employees' perception of a mental health climate would have a negative effect on their intention to leave. More than the belief that organizational climate, as a general concept, influences employees' intention to leave (Bjerkan, 2010; Chai Hong & Kaur, 2008; Bjerkan, 2010), the results prove that the employees' perception of an organizational support regarding mental health status has an impact on their intention to remain or leave their organization.

Although literature referred a positive relation between employees' perception of a positive organizational climate and organizational commitment, as described previously (Fink, 1992; McMurray et al., 2004; Berberoglu, 2018) and a negative relationship between organizational commitment and employees' intention to leave their organization (Yildirim et al., 2015; Putri & Setianan, 2019; Redondo et al., 2021), it appears to be lacking a demonstration on how organizational commitment can mediate the negative relationship between employees' perception of mental health climate and their intention to leave. Considering the *Process* macro output, the results reflect that both affective commitment and normative commitment mediate the negative relationship between mental health climate and employees' intention to leave, while continuance commitment does not have a mediator effect between both variables. The previous hypotheses' results already predicted this information, as both affective and normative commitment were significant and positively related with the perception of a mental health climate, while continuance commitment did not reveal a significant relation to employees' perception of a mental health climate. Despite the research demonstrating that only affective and normative commitment have a mediating effect, it is interesting that the linear regressions between the three dimensions of organizational commitment and employees' intention to leave showed that only affective and continuance commitment had significant relation with employees' intention to leave, while normative commitment did not have a significant relation. This reveals that, while not having a significant direct impact, normative commitment has a significant indirect effect on employees' intention to leave, mediating the negative relationship between mental health climate and employees' intention to leave. Summarizing, we can assume that employees' perception of a mental health climate will positively influence both affective and normative commitment, which will therefore negatively affect employees' intention to leave, retaining them in the

organization. This way, both the affective psychological attachment to the organization and the sense of obligation to remain in the organization, based on the benefits and support given by the organization, appear to mediate this relation, and thus negatively influence employees' intention to leave.

Overall, the hypotheses were mainly according to the expected, confirming the literature reviewed, except for the hypothesis regarding continuance commitment. Literature also had an ambiguous perspective on how organizational support could affect employees' continuance commitment, as it could influence positively in case the employees perceive the support as an advantage that would culminate with their contract termination, or negatively if they develop a sense of self-worth, making them perceive they could have a high number of work opportunities if they leave the organization. The results may be related to a more common development of the employees' self-worth, the idea of availability of other opportunities in the labor market and their belief of possessing skills and of attractiveness to other organizations. Another reason this may occur is because the participants may work in areas that have a high rate of employment, which would lead them to not identify lack of opportunities and to not commit to the organization only due to fear of unemployment. Considering a great percentage of the sample has been working for ten or more years in the same organization (47.5%), investing an extended period and resources in their organization, their commitment to the organization probably escalated with time proportionally to their professional and personal investment. As a result, their continuance commitment is not highly affected by their perceptions of a mental health climate but more on the perception of loss of time and effort given to the organization if they opted to depart. Also, the economic uncertainty and the increase of the cost of living may have a greater impact on continuance commitment, leading the employees to perceive a higher cost of leaving the organization than the effect that employees' perception of a mental health climate has on continuance commitment. With this lack of significant relationship between the two variables, it was expected that continuance commitment would not be a mediator between the employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.

Additionally, although the research was not focused on this analysis and these were only used as control variables, it should be highlighted that according to the results from these surveys, women appear to more commonly suffer or have suffered from any psychological illness. Even though research indicates this, the higher percentage of female participants on this study (66.9%) could help explain this result.

### **5.1. Practical implications**

Overall, we can highlight some practical implications resulting from this research concerning human resources management. Considering this study supported the negative relation between the employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave, with affective and normative commitment as mediators, organizations should consider implementing practices and procedures which would guarantee a mentally healthy workplace and consequently a positive perception of a mental health climate to avoid talent loss and the costs associated with new recruitments. For instance, with phenomenon such as The Great Resignation, which demonstrate an increase of voluntary turnovers in a short period of time, organizations must invest in strategies which could avoid their employees leaving, resulting in a long-term loss of organizational performance (Serenko, 2022). This way, organizations must adopt measures to make the work environment more mentally healthy, which could include: the creation of a break room for the employees to make their breaks; having a mental wellness awareness week with activities and workshops focused on mental health awareness and coping strategies; flexible work hours and workplaces; implementation of mental health days-off; paid apps related to mental health and coping; office psychologists or deals with psychologists; extended training addressed to managers and leaders to learn how to identify and react to mentally ill coworkers. It is important to make the adopted measures more aligned with affective commitment and normative commitment, making the employees more emotionally attached with the organization and, simultaneously, feeling a sense of obligation to retribute the psychological benefits the organization offers, as those are the dimensions of commitment which our research identifies as more effective to mediate the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave, being the more relevant to aid talent retention.

### **5.2. Limitations and Future Research**

In the present research, we found some limitations, which will further be evidenced and could help to understand possible constraints and lead to future research.

Firstly, considering the sample size and the fact the answers were mainly acquired by convenience, we cannot generalize the results and say they fully represent the entire Portuguese population.

Secondly, the fact that the questionnaire was online could have led to an uncontrolled response gathering, and its length could have helped the participations to lose interest mid-survey, due to lack of interest in the theme. This could be an explanation to why eighty-eight participants left questions unanswered, invalidating the usage of their answers in this research.

Finally, some demographic information can have limited the research. For instance, there was a higher percentage of female respondents (66.9%), and the results point to them having a higher



probability to suffer or have suffered from psychological illness, which could be only a study bias. Also, a higher number of employees have been in the company for an extended period, with 47.5% having been in the same organization for over ten years, which could bias the study for the reasons they have found over all those years to commit and remain in the organization. Adding to that, the fact that the vast majority as never suffered any type of mental illness (80%) could also have led them to give less importance to mental health and initiatives related to it, which could also have biased this research.

For future research and considering the lack of research around an organizational climate focused on mental health, we believe this strategic climate should be more deeply researched, including its relation to different organizational outcomes such as employee satisfaction, employee performance, motivation and employee wellness. It could also be interesting to further analyze how the perception of mental health climate and its relationship with intention to leave can be affected by age, as some studies show differences between generations and their differences on how the adoption of mental health initiatives can influence their perception about their organizations (Deloitte, 2022). To complement this study, new research could be developed on how individuals' perception of a mental health climate in an organization could promote human resources attraction and on how organizational initiatives focused on mental health could be used as an employer branding strategy to attract new employees.

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## **6. Conclusion**

This research allowed us to validate that the perception of a mental health climate inside the organizations as a negative and significant relationship with employees' intention to leave. Adding to that, the perception of mental health climate showed a positive relationship with affective and normative commitment, while those organizational commitment dimensions demonstrated to mediate the relationship between employees' perception of a mental health climate and their intention to leave.

Summing up, this empirical study can contribute on the human resources management practices, allowing the organizations to implement and adopt measures that foster a positive mental health climate, which will therefore lead to more committed employees to their organization, minimizing their intention to leave and avoiding talent loss. This research opens a way to future research on how fostering a mental health climate can influence the employees and how it can affect different organizational aspects.

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## 8. Annexes

### Annex A – Online survey

O meu nome é João Alves e frequento o Mestrado em Gestão de Recursos Humanos e Consultadoria Organizacional, do ISCTE. Este questionário surge no âmbito da minha dissertação de mestrado e foca-se na temática do clima de saúde mental nas organizações.

Gostaria deste modo pedir a sua participação neste estudo. Para participar deve apenas cumprir os seguintes requisitos:

- Trabalhar por conta de outrem há, pelo menos, três meses;
- Ter entre os 18 e os 65 anos.

Os dados recolhidos através deste inquérito são somente destinados a investigação, sendo garantida a confidencialidade dos inquiridos. O tempo de resposta estimado para este questionário é de 10 minutos.

Para qualquer esclarecimento adicional, podem contactar-me através do e-mail: [jpfas2@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:jpfas2@iscte-iul.pt)

Agradeço o tempo dispensado na resposta do inquérito.

Com os melhores cumprimentos,  
João Alves

Compreendi o que é esperado, sou maior de 18 anos e aceito participar neste questionário.

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

#### Section 1 – Mental Health Climate

Pense na forma como a sua organização lida com a saúde mental dos trabalhadores. Para cada afirmação, indique o seu grau de concordância, usando a escala apresentada. (1 – Discordo Totalmente; 2- Discordo; 3 – Não concordo nem discordo; 4 – Concordo; 5 – Concordo Totalmente)

De um modo geral, os colaboradores têm frequentemente comportamentos mentalmente pouco saudáveis no meu grupo de trabalho.	1	2	3	4	5
Se a minha saúde mental declinasse, os meus colegas de trabalho tomariam medidas para apoiar a minha recuperação.	1	2	3	4	5
No meu grupo de trabalho, o uso de dias de doença por problemas de saúde mental é apoiado e encorajado.	1	2	3	4	5

O meu supervisor estabelece normas de desempenho que estão em conflito com comportamentos mentalmente saudáveis.	1	2	3	4	5
O meu supervisor encoraja a participação em programas organizacionais que promovem a saúde mental e o bem-estar do colaborador.	1	2	3	4	5
O meu supervisor encoraja comportamentos mentalmente saudáveis no meu grupo de trabalho.	1	2	3	4	5
A minha organização está comprometida com o bem-estar e a saúde mental dos colaboradores.	1	2	3	4	5
A minha organização oferece-me oportunidades e recursos para ser mentalmente saudável.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando a gestão percebe que algum aspeto do trabalho ou do local de trabalho está a ter efeitos negativos no bem-estar ou na saúde mental dos colaboradores, fazem algo para corrigi-lo.	1	2	3	4	5
A minha organização encoraja-me a falar sobre temas e prioridades relacionadas com o bem-estar e saúde mental dos colaboradores.	1	2	3	4	5

## Section 2 – Organizational Commitment

Pense no seu comprometimento com a sua organização. Para cada afirmação, indique o seu grau de concordância, usando a escala apresentada. (1 – Discordo Totalmente; 2- Discordo parcialmente; 3 – Não concordo nem discordo; 4 – Concordo parcialmente; 5 – Concordo Totalmente)

Ficaria bastante feliz por continuar nesta organização até ao fim da minha carreira.	1	2	3	4	5
Gosto de falar sobre a minha organização com pessoas de fora.	1	2	3	4	5
Sinto como se os problemas da organização também fossem meus.	1	2	3	4	5
Sinto que poderia facilmente ficar tão ligado a outra organização como sou à minha.	1	2	3	4	5
Não me sinto como "parte da família" na minha organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Não me sinto "emocionalmente apegado" a esta organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Esta organização tem um grande significado pessoal para mim.	1	2	3	4	5
Não tenho um forte sentimento de pertença com a minha organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Não tenho medo do que poderia acontecer se deixasse o meu emprego sem ter outro em vista.	1	2	3	4	5
Seria muito difícil para mim sair da organização agora, mesmo que quisesse.	1	2	3	4	5
Demasiado na minha vida seria interrompido se decidisse deixar a minha organização agora.	1	2	3	4	5
Não me custaria muito sair agora da minha organização.	1	2	3	4	5

Neste momento, ficar na minha organização é tanto uma questão de necessidade como de desejo.	1	2	3	4	5
Considero que tenho muito poucas opções para considerar sair da organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Uma das poucas consequências sérias de sair da organização seria a escassez de alternativas disponíveis.	1	2	3	4	5
Uma das maiores razões para continuar a trabalhar nesta organização é a saída necessitar de um sacrifício pessoal considerável - outra organização pode não igualar os benefícios que tenho aqui.	1	2	3	4	5
Penso que atualmente as pessoas mudam de organização demasiado frequentemente.	1	2	3	4	5
Não acredito que uma pessoa tenha de ser sempre leal com a sua organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Saltar de organização não me parece nada antiético.	1	2	3	4	5
Uma das maiores razões para continuar na organização é acreditar que a lealdade é importante e por isso tenho um sentimento de obrigação moral para permanecer.	1	2	3	4	5
Se tivesse outra oferta para um trabalho melhor, não sentiria que fosse certo sair da organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Ensinaram-me a acreditar no valor de permanecer numa organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Era melhor quando as pessoas permaneciam numa organização a maior parte da sua carreira.	1	2	3	4	5
Acho que ser um "homem da empresa" ou "mulher da empresa" já não é sensato atualmente.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3 – Intention to Leave

Pense no seu futuro profissional. Para cada afirmação, indique o seu grau de concordância, usando a escala apresentada. (1 – Discordo Totalmente; 2- Discordo parcialmente; 3 – Não concordo nem discordo; 4 – Concordo parcialmente; 5 – Concordo Totalmente)

Provavelmente irei procurar um novo trabalho num futuro próximo.	1	2	3	4	5
Neste momento, estou ativamente à procura de um novo trabalho noutra organização.	1	2	3	4	5
Não tenho intenções de desistir do meu trabalho.	1	2	3	4	5
É improvável que procure de forma ativa uma organização diferente para trabalhar no próximo ano.	1	2	3	4	5
Atualmente não considero desistir do meu trabalho.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Section 4 – Sociodemographic data

1. Qual o seu género?
  - ☐ Masculino
  - ☐ Feminino
  - ☐ Não binário / terceiro género
  - ☐ Prefere não dizer
  
2. Qual a sua idade? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Qual a sua nacionalidade?
  - ☐ Portuguesa
  - ☐ Outra. Qual? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Estado civil?
  - ☐ Solteiro(a)
  - ☐ Casado(a)
  - ☐ Viúvo(a)
  - ☐ Divorciado(a)
  - ☐ União de facto
  
5. Qual a sua escolaridade?
  - ☐ 1º Ciclo
  - ☐ 2º Ciclo
  - ☐ 3º Ciclo
  - ☐ Secundário
  - ☐ Bacharelato
  - ☐ Licenciatura
  - ☐ Pós-Graduação
  - ☐ Mestrado
  - ☐ Doutoramento

6. Há quanto tempo trabalha nesta organização?
- ☐ Menos de 1 ano
  - ☐ 1 a 2 anos
  - ☐ 2 a 5 anos
  - ☐ 5 a 10 anos
  - ☐ Mais de 10 anos
7. Qual o seu setor profissional?
- ☐ Indústria
  - ☐ Ensino
  - ☐ Serviços e Comércio
  - ☐ Saúde
  - ☐ Administração Pública
  - ☐ Forças Policiais ou Defesa Nacional
  - ☐ Outro. Qual? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Já sofreu ou sofre de alguma doença do foro psicológico?
- ☐ Sim
  - ☐ Não

A sua resposta foi guardada.

Muito obrigado pela resposta a este questionário e pelo tempo dispendido!

Desejo-lhe a continuação de um bom dia!

Para questões posteriores, poderá enviar email para [jpfas2@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:jpfas2@iscte-iul.pt)

## Annex B – Demographic data

Table B.1: Gender of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	53	33,1	33,1
Female	66,9	66,9	100
Total	160	100	

Table B.2: Age of respondents.

N	Valid	160
	Missing	0
Mean		38,99
Median		40,5
Mode		23
Std. Deviation		11,621
Variance		135,05
Skewness		-0,012
Kurtosis		-1,235
Minimum		21
Maximum		64
Percentiles	25	27
	50	40,5
	75	48

Table B.3: Nationality of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Portuguese	157	98,1	98,1
Spanish	1	0,6	98,7
Italian	2	1,3	100
Total	160	100	



Table B.4: Marital status of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	67	41,9	41,9
Married	54	33,8	75,6
Widow	2	1,3	76,9
Divorced	12	7,5	84,4
Non-Marital Cohabitation	25	15,6	100
Total	160	100	

Table B.5: Education level of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1º Ciclo	0	0	0
2º Ciclo	1	0,6	0,6
3º Ciclo	4	2,5	3,1
Secundário	54	33,8	36,9
Bacharelato	4	2,5	39,4
Licenciatura	54	33,8	73,1
Pós-Graduação	20	12,5	85,6
Mestrado	23	14,4	100
Doutoramento	0	0	100
Total	160	100	

Table B.6: Seniority of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	28	17,5	17,5
1 to 2 years	15	9,4	26,9
2 to 5 years	23	14,4	41,3
5 to 10 years	18	11,3	52,5
More than 10 years	76	47,5	100
Total	160	100	

Table B.7: Professional sector of respondents – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Industry	12	7,5	7,5
Education	12	7,5	15
Services and Commerce	70	43,8	58,8
Health	9	5,6	64,4
Public Administration	31	19,4	83,8
Police Forces & National Defense	19	11,9	95,6
Other	7	4,4	100
Total	160	100	

Table B.8: “Have you suffered or do you suffer any psychological illness?” – frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	32	20	20
No	128	80	100
Total	160	100	