

# The organizational culture in the aging process of educational work

## *A cultura organizacional no processo de envelhecer do trabalho docente*

Flávia Obara Kai  
Mariane Lemos Lourenço  
Camilla Fernandes

### ABSTRACT


Population aging is one of the most significant phenomena in the 21st century and this phenomenon has important far-reaching impacts on society and organizations. Organizations and society face challenges with the increase and permanence of individuals at work and these reflexes can be perceived by the organizational culture. Organizational culture and its elements are also present in the academic environment, composed of multiple social interactions. This study aims to identify and analyze the meanings that elements of organizational culture have for higher education professors in the process of aging at public and private educational institutions. For this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with professors from a public and a private institution and the data were analyzed using the comparative case study strategy. The results show that the elements of organizational culture such as values, norms, rules, communication, rites, rituals, ceremonies and beliefs are different in public and private HEIs and the elements heroes, myths, stories, sagas and taboos demonstrate similarities in the institutions. In addition, the elements indicate particularities and the unpreparedness of the HEIs facing the phenomenon of aging in educational work.


**Keywords:** Organizational culture. Educational work. Aging at work.


### RESUMO

O envelhecimento populacional é um dos fenômenos mais significativos no século XXI e tal fenômeno traz consigo importantes impactos de longo alcance à sociedade e às organizações. As organizações e a sociedade enfrentam desafios com o aumento e permanência dos indivíduos no trabalho e esses reflexos podem ser percebidos na cultura organizacional. A cultura organizacional e seus elementos também estão presentes no ambiente acadêmico, composto por múltiplas interações sociais. Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar e analisar os significados que os elementos da cultura orga-

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Flávia Obara Kai   
flavia.obarakai@gmail.com  
M.Sc. in Business Administration -  
Universidade Federal do Paraná  
*Mestre em Administração - Universidade  
Federal do Paraná*  
Universidade Federal do Paraná -  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em  
Administração  
Curitiba/PR - Brazil

Mariane Lemos Lourenço   
marianellourenco@ufpr.br  
Ph.D in Psychology - Universidade de  
São Paulo  
*Doutora em Psicologia - Universidade de  
São Paulo*  
Universidade Federal do Paraná -  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em  
Administração  
Curitiba/PR - Brazil

Camilla Fernandes   
camillafer05@gmail.com  
Ph.D student in Business Administration -  
Universidade Federal do Paraná  
*Doutoranda em Administração -  
Universidade Federal do Paraná*  
Universidade Federal do Paraná -  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em  
Administração  
Curitiba/PR - Brazil

**RESUMO**

nizacional têm para os docentes do ensino superior no processo de envelhecer enquanto professores de IES públicas e privadas. Para isso, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com docentes de uma instituição pública e uma privada e os dados foram analisados pela estratégia de estudo de casos comparativos. Os resultados apontam que os elementos da cultura organizacional como valores, normas, regras, comunicação, ritos, rituais, cerimônias e crenças se diferenciam entre a IES pública, e a IES privada, e, os elementos heróis e mitos; estórias, sagas e tabus demonstram similaridades nas instituições. Além disso, os elementos indicam particularidades e o despreparo das IES pesquisadas diante do fenômeno do envelhecimento no trabalho docente.

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura organizacional. Trabalho docente. Envelhecimento no trabalho.

## Introduction

According to the United Nations (UN, 2020), the world is going through a unique and irreversible demographic transition that will result in more elderly populations worldwide. The global number of elderly people is projected to increase from 962 million in 2017 to 1.4 billion in 2030 and 2.1 billion in 2050. The aging process is unique and occurs in a different way for each subject, however, it ends up influencing the organizational dynamics mainly with regard to providing adequate conditions for carrying out activities and other challenges that arise in this phase (SILVA; HELAL, 2019).

Therefore, in this sense, it is possible to understand the influence that organizational culture has within this context because, as highlighted by Paz et al. (2020), culture can exercise mediation power regarding organizational quality of life as well as organizational well-being. With this, culture shapes the subjectivity of individuals in organizations, creating a new personality through norms and habits that culminate in beliefs and values of a new personification of the individuals (CHAN; CLEGG, 2002). This dynamism of organizational culture can then be revealed by its elements, such as values, norms and rules, communication, rites, rituals and ceremonies, stories and sagas, heroes and myths, beliefs and taboos (FREITAS, 2007a; TRICE; BEYER, 1993; SHRIVASTAVA, 1985), which in addition to guiding the behavior of members, act as part of consensus and communication of individuals (SCHADECK et al., 2016).

It is interesting to mention that the particularities of culture are present in the academic environment due to the fact that it is characterized by multiple social interactions amongst people from different regions and countries, so that the organizational culture allows the understanding of the organizational phenomenon (BAEK; CHANG; KIM, 2019). In the academy, the organizational culture encompasses a collective understanding that unites and strengthens the association between students, professors, employees and administrators in their identity (WOLFE; DILWORTH, 2015).

In the present study, culture is understood as a metaphor of organizations (SMIRCICH, 1983), that is, culture is seen as something that the organization is in a continuous and dynamic process of construction and reconstruction of reality through social interaction (SMIRCICH, 1983; CHATMAN; O'REILLY, 2016). In view of this, the objective of this paper is to identify and analyze the meanings that the elements of organizational culture have for higher education professors in the process of aging at public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). To achieve this, a comparative case study was carried out between a public HEI (Gama Institution) and a private HEI (Alfa Institution) based on the analysis of HEIs documents, semi-structured interviews of professors and the theoretical approaches of organizational culture, aging and educational work.

The present paper is structured in five sections: the introduction, followed by the characteristics of organizational culture and its elements as well as its interconnection with the academic work and aging. In the sequence, are presented the methodological procedures, the results and analysis of the data and, finally, the final considerations of the study.

## Organizational Culture, its Relations with Educational Work and Aging

Studies about organizational culture are based on the foundations of Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology and Political Science (BARRETO et al., 2013). Due to its multiple conceptual approaches, the theoretical body of organizational culture does not have a consensus yet, and, it is difficult for academics and practitioners of

the field to fully understand it. This weakness often occurs due to inadequate appropriations of concepts as well as to the fact that researchers attempt to reduce the meaning of culture to something that is partially produced in organizations (FREITAS, 1999). Hence, for Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) organizational culture, although widely explored, has been based on different definitions, underpinning several theories.

There are different ways to describe culture and talking about culture implies referencing a process of constructing reality that allows individuals to see and understand particular events, situations, objects and actions in a different way. People who are part of organizations interpret the world according to the values, norms and symbols of the organizations of which they are part, structuring a symbolic system that integrates its members (MORGAN, 2007). In this way, the organizational culture is responsible for guiding the way in which individuals and groups within an organization interact with each other as well as with the external environment (SERRAT, 2017).

According to Schein (1984), organizational culture is understood as a continuous interaction between basic assumptions, values and artifacts, covering a set of social norms and defining rules for social interactions between people. The author's view highlights the issue of pattern, in other words, culture implies in standardization, demonstrating that culture is analyzed as something variable (SMIRCICH, 1983). Culture, in this sense, can be seen as oriented towards stability and control for Chandler, Heidrich and Kasa (2017), however, the subcultures and countercultures present in organizations can bring questions about the dominant culture (MARTIN; FROST, 2001).

Freitas (2012) indicates that there are traces of national culture that can be found in organizations, influencing the organizational culture. According to the author, in Brazil, these traits would be: hierarchy, personalism, trickery, sensualism and the adventurer. In view of these characteristics, it is possible to affirm that national culture is one of the factors in the formation of organizational culture, and each organization marks a unique organizational culture, supported by its various elements (FREITAS, 2012). However, it should be noted that organizational culture is responsible for helping the functioning of an organization, but can also generate negative interferences, as shown in the study by Naranjo-Valencia et al. (2016).

The particularities of culture are also present in the academic context, a place characterized by multiple social interactions between people from different regions

and countries. In high education institutions, the organizational culture encompasses a collective understanding that unites and strengthens the association between its members, reflecting in their identity (WOLFE; DILWORTH, 2015). The academic environment, with this, has its own culture, with complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of stories, customs, sanctions and moral codes. Therefore, culture in academic environments is a complex network of stories, traditions and rituals built over time as professors, students and managers work together to deal with crises and conquests (DEAL; PETERSON, 2016).

Thus, educational work, according to Bastos (2007), composes a heterogeneous mosaic in which the professor develops the roles of professor and researcher at the same time facing difficulties such as competition, overvaluation of productivity, overwork and professional stress - the “bones of the trade”; and also joys - respected ideas, pleasure in learning and intellectual autonomy - the “enjoyment of the trade” (FREITAS, 2007b). The teaching profession, in this sense, is subject to countless pressures, with evaluations of research results, social impact and teaching quality become standardized and naturalized (CLARKE; KNIGHTS, 2015).

It is important to understand that the organizational culture in a public organization differs from that of a private organization, after all, they have different actors, stories and events, with their own characteristics and functions (FERREIRA et al., 2012). Teixeira da Silva and Lourenço (2018) state that in private higher education, the action of disciplinary power over the elements of organizational culture manifests itself through mechanisms of surveillance, examination and punishment, acting on the beliefs of professors in relation to how teaching it should be in terms of norms, rules and values. Another aspect that involves private higher education are the charges for productivity and submission to the rules of the HEIs, following the logic of maximum profit extraction of a private organization and an obedience of the professor in face of a context that shows the student as a client (FREITAS, 2007c).

As for public higher education institutions, the academic staff performs activities beyond research, having to perform functions such as service provision, teaching and management. Because teaching, research, extension and management require profiles of specific skills, it is not possible that they are all found in a single professor, generating tensions of challenge and suffering (BASTOS, 2007). Therefore, feelings of loss of pleasure at work and satisfaction with what it is accomplished

coexist, demonstrating the complexity of the current way of systematizing teaching work in times of precariousness and flexibility of the work in public higher education institutions (SANTOS; MALANCHEN, 2015).

In addition to an organization's own culture, it is also worth emphasizing the relevance of discussing the interference of aging within this whole context in view of the increase and permanence in the world of work by people considered elderly, a fact that challenges organizations and causes several changes in all sectors of society. It is important to note that being old in contemporary society is linked to being outside the social parameters established because, often, the wisdom and life experience are devalued (FRANÇA et al., 2013; AMORIM; TRELHA, 2017; SILVA; HELAL, 2019). The culture of an organization in this sense, can be a significant mediating power for the quality of organizational life as highlighted in the study by Paz et al. (2020).

Organizational culture, in this manner, can be characterized by its multiple dimensions, such as content, that is, the prevailing beliefs and behavioural norms and intensity, demonstrated by the degree to which members of the organization are willing to sanction nonconformity behaviours and reward those that are normatively compatible (CHATMAN; O'REILLY, 2016). It should be noted that the elements of an organizational culture directly influence the organizational climate especially in periods of change (ILJINS; SKVARCIANY; GAILE-SARKANE, 2015) such as aging at work.

Accordingly, the elements to be analysed in this work are outlined below.

## VALUES

The values espoused by organizations are often desired, and do not necessarily represent the experiences lived by employees (CORRITORE; GOLDBERG; SRIVASTAVA, 2019). Values guide behavior in daily life and it is relevant to the organization's success (FREITAS, 2007a). It is important to note that organizational values can communicate messages and behaviors that are considered convenient, naturalizing the content and quickly passing the message on to other members of the organization (MENDES; TAMAYO, 2001).

Therefore, organizational values indicate the following attributes: result from a collective construction; represent something relevant and feasible for a group and have an integrating and guiding character (FREITAS, 2007a).

## **BELIEFS**

Beliefs are considered as truths accepted or conceived from the analysis of the facts and by living in a group (CROZATTI, 1998), characterizing the assumptions that delimit the truths of the organization (MACHADO et al., 2013). Thus, according to Ellina, Allan and Johansson (2017), the organizational culture emerges through the aggregation of the beliefs of each member of the organization. Beliefs, in this sense, express what is naturally considered to be true in the organization. The idea of success ends up being linked to a worldview to be considered correct, making the assumptions a stabilizing element of the organizational culture, by reducing anxieties and anxieties in the face of uncertainty (FREITAS, 2007a).

## **RITES, RITUALS AND CEREMONIES**

Rites, rituals and ceremonies are represented by activities organized with the objective of practical consequences for members of the organization, such as, for example, meetings, training and parties (MODAFF, 2016). Rites are everyday operations performed with the intention that the activities are carried out successfully (CORRITORE; GOLDBERG; SRIVASTAVA, 2019), the ritual, on the other hand, confirms and reproduces social patterns. Briody et al. (2018) state that the ritual is a transformation process filled with standardized and recurring behaviors to achieve a specific goal. According to Pettigrew (1979), rituals, when related to culture, signify the message that culture contains. That is, for there to be a concrete manifestation of organizational culture, rituals and rites fulfil functions because they inform the way people should behave, indicate acceptable standards of attitudes and exemplify the basic values of the organization, so that they are easily remembered (FREITAS, 2007a).

Finally, the ceremonies reveal the organizational culture and reaffirm the collective identity of the members of the organization, being an observable manifestation of the main characteristics of the organizational culture (MODAFF, 2016).

## **STORIES, HEROES, SAGAS AND MYTHS**

The stories are narratives based on real events, often mixed with fiction, that inform and emphasize desired behaviors, in addition to indicating the limits of tolerance to the transgression of norms, coordinating actions towards a common goal

(FREITAS, 2007). In addition, the stories are complex and offer multiple contributions to organizations, from the transfer of valuable lessons learned and best practices to the sources of innovation (COLLON-AGUIRRE, 2015).

The organization's sagas are evocative narratives about heroic exploits carried out in the face of adversity. They are ideological parables that express, enhance and encode beliefs. In addition, sagas help to perpetuate ideologies by anchoring the present in the past and giving meaning to the future (TRICE; BEYER, 1993) having a narrative of events, followed by sacred qualities, which address the organization's origins and transformations, explaining and legitimizing social practices (PETTIGREW, 1979).

If values are the lifeblood of culture, then heroes embody those values and epitomize the strength of the organization. Heroes create role models for employees to follow, being the big motivator, the person everyone will count on when things get tough. They are symbolic figures whose actions are unusual, but not too distant. They show - often dramatically - that the ideal of success is within human capacity and embody a way of thinking and acting by showing individuals how to behave (DEAL; KENNEDY, 1982; MACHADO et al., 2013).

For this study, the myth is at the same time, a dramatic chain of events imagined and a logical scheme, created to explain issues and clarify phenomena whose meaning is diffuse and multiple. The myth, then, is explained in association with the structure and thinking of the social group that produced it and has a critical role in maintaining and establishing what is considered legitimate or unacceptable in organizational culture (PETTIGREW, 1979). According to Blanco-Gracia (2018) myths are a meta language that form culture and can be a way for individuals and the community to build a sense of reality.

## TABOOS

Taboos are elements that guide organizational behavior (FREITAS, 2007a), however, they are silenced to the maximum and, generally, denied existence. In addition, they seem to emerge from historical coincidences that have brought feared events and prohibited behaviors in association with each other (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

Expectations of organizational or social roles outline what people are expected to think, feel and do. When those expectations are broken, and cause reactions



of strong disapproval, a taboo has been broken. Thus, taboos, in a sense, are a kind of norm, ritual and/or role expectation that specify thoughts, feelings and actions that are prohibited (MARTIN, 1995). Therefore, taboos delimit what is understood as “prohibited areas” or what one tries to avoid, not being expressed in words or in attitudes, is what is implied (MACHADO et al., 2013).

## **NORMS AND RULES**

Norms can be understood as the behavior expected, accepted and sanctioned by a group and through which its members are rewarded or punished (FREITAS, 2012). Norms can be established formally, as written rules, or, informally, as social control (CHATMAN; O'REILLY, 2016). In this sense, norms emphasize how members should behave and base or reflect organizational beliefs and values, expressing which behaviors are expected by others and which ways are culturally acceptable to obtain results (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

Thus, the norms and rules concern the standard procedures and must be complied with by all members, including their author(s). They can be implicit or tacit, in addition to being impersonal, that is, they must be practiced by everyone, without exception (FREITAS, 2007a). It is important to note that the norm can be considered the behavior validated by the participants, whether formally explicit or not, being passed on by other cultural elements (FREITAS, 2007a). The rules and norms describe acceptable behaviors in circumstances where there are no explicit guides to behavior (SHRIVASTAVA, 1985).

## **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is characterized as a relational process between individuals, departments, units and organizations (KUNSCH, 2003) and, therefore, involves the exchange of ideas, opinions and emotions, being a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another (MARCHIORI, 2008).

Communication can take place through formal and informal processes. From a formal perspective, the messages and channels designated within the organization are defined, facilitating direct contact, providing information, in addition to allowing the replication of those present. Informal communication, on the other hand, is linked to affective aspects and focused on psychosociological processes, encompassing

individual skills, interpersonal and group relationship patterns, feelings and norms of the group, value orientations and emotional needs and desires, occurring every time in which people come together and interact (MARCHIORI, 2008). In this way, organizational communication is “a tool for the generation of new ideas, transmission of knowledge and training” (CALLEFI; CRUBELLATE, 2020, p. 271).

It is noteworthy that the communication process in organizations, due to its complexity, is also permeated by barriers, such as: (1) administrative barriers, resulting from the ways in which organizations act and process information; (2) the excess of information presented in different ways, both in oral and/or written verbal communication, sometimes causing saturation and deviations in the understanding and interpretation of statements; (3) incomplete and partial communications that are found in information that is fragmented, distorted or subject to doubt (KUNSCH, 2003, p. 75-77). Such barriers allow the credibility of the source, semantic problems and information overload to be questioned (GODÓI; RIBEIRO, 2009).

## Methodological Procedures

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the meanings that the elements of organizational culture have for higher education professors in the aging process of public and private HEIs. For this, the present research uses the qualitative approach, as there is an interest in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they build their worlds and the meaning they attribute to their experiences (MERRIAM, 2009). In addition, the comparative case study strategy was adopted, since the social phenomenon was analyzed in depth without being limited to a single case (STRAUSS; CORBIN, 2008). Thus, the cases could be analyzed in depth so that differences and similarities between them could be established.

For data collection, 13 semi-structured interviews were carried out with undergraduate professors in a public Higher Education Institution (Gama Institution) and a private one (Alpha Institution). Professors were chosen because they are fundamental members of the researched institutions, since, as they remain in them, end up being the main subjects sensitized by the organizational culture (SARMENTO, 1994).

The professors - men and women - had at least three years of experience at the institution and 50 years of age or more. The minimum experience of three years at the institution aims to establish the research in a temporal perspective in relation to the knowledge of the organizational culture, so that the perception and interpretation of the subjects has a minimally defined period of consolidation and reflection. This criterion, according to Imbernón (2004), indicates that teachers need to have more than three years of experience to overcome the phase of professional socialization, in which the initial identification of the profession occurs.

The 50 years of age or older is justified because it is starting from that age, according to Cau-Bareille (2014), that the demands both in the aging process and in the context of work are accentuated. In addition, Fontoura and Piccinini (2012) state that this is the moment when the aging process begins socially and, at this age, professionals will still face many years of work, especially due to government reforms related to retirement. To guarantee the confidentiality of teachers' identification, they were called Respondent 1 (R1), Respondent 2 (R2) and so on.

In addition to the interviews, HEI documents were also analyzed. Only the internal documents made available for visibility to the external public of the participating HEIs, contained in the institutions' websites and social networks, were considered, as well as information from the Higher Education Census and Brazil's Ministry of Education's virtual pages, referring to the origins and normative aspects of these institutions. Such documents were useful because it was found in them how each organization transmitted its culture in relation to aging, enabling the comparison of the disclosed or idealized organizational culture with the real one.

The data obtained in this study were treated by transcribing the interviews and analyzing public documents. After transcribing the interviews, they were all coded by the ATLAS.ti software.version 8. The code, according to Saldaña (2013), is a construct created by the researcher that symbolizes and assigns meaning to units of data that are salient, essential or of value, to allow further analysis, such as the detection of patterns and categories. After codification, the material obtained was examined throughout content analysis and classified into categories, suggesting that each element has something in common with others allowing its grouping due to the existing common part (BARDIN, 2011). Thus, the categories of analysis were the elements of the organizational culture, which were, the values, beliefs, rites,

rituals and ceremonies, stories, sagas, heroes and myths, taboos, norms and rules and communication.

From the analysis of HEI documents, interviews and theoretical support it was possible to triangulate the data in order to overcome research gaps and obtain reliable conclusions about the investigated phenomenon (ABDALLA et al., 2018).

Table 1 summarizes the main definition and authors of each element of the organizational culture analyzed in this work.

**Table 1** Synthesis of Organizational Culture Elements

Organization Culture Elements	Main definition	Authors
Values	Guide to everyday behavior and relevant to the organization’s success, providing a sense of common direction for all employees and behavioral guidelines.	Freitas (2007a)
Beliefs	Beliefs are what people believe to be true in the face of reality. They are understandings that represent the truths of the organization.	Crozatt (1998) Machado et al. (2013)
Rites, rituals and ceremonies	<p>Rites are everyday operations performed with the aim that the activities are carried out successfully.</p> <p>The ritual confirms and reproduces social patterns, being collective activities, technically superficial to achieve desired ends.</p> <p>The ceremonies are represented by formal or informal meetings of a group, functioning as means to reaffirm values, beliefs and customs.</p>	<p>Corritore; Goldberg; Srivastava (2019)</p> <p>Briody et al. (2018)</p> <p>Modaff (2016)</p>

Stories and myths	The stories symbolize values and guidelines, unifying the participants of the organization as they reproduce learning through the experience of others, allowing better association and memories of how to act in certain situations.	Freitas (2007a)
	The myth is, at the same time, a dramatic chain of imagined events and a logical scheme, created to explain issues and clarify phenomena, whose meaning is diffuse and multiple.	Blanco-Garcia (2018)
Sagas e heróis	The organization's sagas are used to denote the living history (or narrated) of the company, that is, continuously repeated stories or phenomena.	Trice; Beyer (1993)
	Heroes help to reinforce and maintain the culture, defining behavior patterns and providing performance models. They provide living proof of the importance and viability of morality embedded in organizational stories.	Deal; Kennedy (1982)
		Machado et al. (2013)
Taboos	Taboos are informally created demarcations of prohibited areas for the purpose of indicating acceptable behavior and to protect the company from contestation deemed undesirable. They emphasize the non-permissible and highlight the disciplinary aspect.	Freitas (2007a)
		Machado et al. (2013)
Norms and rules	Norms and rules concern standard procedures and must be followed by all members. They can be established formally as written rules or informally as social control.	Freitas (2007a)
		Chatman; O'Reilly (2016)

Communication	Communication involves the exchange of ideas, opinions and emotions, being a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is characterized as a bridge of meanings that produces mutual trust and understanding, since understanding leads to an acceptance or not of the message and an action for those who receive the message.	Marchiori (2008)  Callefi; Crubellate (2020)
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**Source:** The authors (2020).

After presenting the methodological procedures that have guided this study, the main results are presented below, as well as their analysis.

## Results and Analysis

Organizations, like other social collectives, tend to produce and preserve shared responses and experiences. People who belong to a certain organizational culture share their basic properties to some degree, maintaining certain ideologies and using elements to communicate and reinforce the organizational culture (TRICE; BEYER, 1993). In this way, the elements of organizational culture - values, norms and rules, communication, rites, rituals and ceremonies, stories and sagas, heroes and myths, beliefs and taboos - represent particularities of the researched HEIs, with regard to the aging process.

In this section, the analysis of the meanings that the elements of organizational culture have for higher education professors in the process of aging as teachers of public and private HEIs will be presented.

### VALUES

Values are responsible for communicating messages that are considered convenient within an organization (MENDES; TAMAYO, 2001). When researching the values of organizations, it was found on the Alfa institution's website the dis-

semination of values such as love of work, spirituality, presence, interculturality, simplicity, family spirit and solidarity, these being conveyed as something desirable for the institution, demonstrating the organization's attitude towards society. These values are known by the respondents and, even though they are not specific to the aging process, they end up influencing the behavior towards older teachers, as can be seen in the table below:

**Table 2** Values Perceived by the Alfa Institution Interviewers

### Alfa – Private Institution

R9: Although the institution does not have specific values for aging, they all fit together. Christian values stand out in the institution, which carefully set standards of behavior, based on ethics, honesty and autonomy.

R8: Respect for others is highlighted. There is a requirement for transparency in managers' decisions, for example, in dismissal processes.

R1: Internal policy that praises solidarity.

R10: As a religious institution, it values ethics, honesty, respect for others, kindness and humility.

R11: Highlight on the institution's respect.

R3: Implicit value: the concept that an older teacher produces less.

R13: Institution, being private, sometimes leaves the values aside due to the financial cost of older teachers.

R6: Conflict between Christian values and corporate values.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

It is noticed that for teachers, there are positive values regarding aging, these being guides for daily behavior (FREITAS, 2012). Solidarity, for example, is a value communicated by the Alfa university on its website and is also present in the speech of the professors interviewed, demonstrating that this is a value that is in the identity of the institution symbolizing a shared notion of acting or a certain opinion in the face of a phenomenon (KILDUFF; LEE, 2020).

However, negative values of the institution are also mentioned, such as those related to stereotypes of aging, such as the differentiation of academic production of a younger teacher compared to older teachers, according to the statement of respondent R3: *"I don't think it's clear yet, understand? For me, the greater value of the Alpha institution is being: an old Ph.D does not produce the same thing as a young Ph.D. It's a fact, I think it's almost a fact. In quantity [production] is lower, maybe in quality I don't know anymore"*. Nevertheless, in addition to being a negative stereotype, this conception can be seen as an implicit value, that is, a value not said by the Alfa university. This fact can be seen in the report of Professor R3 who realizes that the values practiced by the private HEI can be compared with what the HEI disseminates.

As expressed in the speech of some participants, even though the institution has positive values, it is necessary to make it clear that, as it is a private institution, in addition to the ethical and moral values related to age, the institution also aims at profit, sometimes leaving values aside due to the financial cost of older teachers. In this sense, even if the university disseminates values such as love of work, spirituality, presence, interculturality, simplicity, family spirit and solidarity, it is necessary to be aware that it is a private institution, being the profit that keeps the institution, causing a contrast in what is disclosed with what is accomplished.

At the Gama institution, the values are disclosed on the institution's website and, as it is a public higher education institution, the values are broad, seeking to reach society, aiming at public improvements. In addition, there is respect for the treasury and commitment to equity in the treatment of the university sectors and efforts to continuously improve education.

Even disclosing their values on electronic pages, some teachers were not clear what the values of the institution Gama are. It is important to point out that in order to make messages and behaviors pass quickly (MENDES; TAMAYO, 2001), it is essential that the values are known by all its members and by the external community, which, according to teachers R2 and R12, do not occurs in public HEI. Table 3 indicates values perceived by professors at the public HEI:



**Table 3** Values Perceived by Interviewers at Gama Institution

**Gama - Public Institution**

R2 and R12: Difficulty in visualizing the institution's values.

R7: Lack of appreciation for the teacher, especially the graduate teachers, recently retired or about to retire.

R5: The regiment can be, in a way, the basis of values taking into account rights and duties. Respect as part of the general culture, although Brazil has lost some respect with the elderly.

R8: Concern of the university with the elderly as seen in the open university of maturity and in the performance of elderly teachers, especially in medicine field.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

In addition to the lack of knowledge of institutional values, especially linked to the aging process, respondent R7 highlighted the lack of appreciation of the professor *"We teach in graduate school for the love of art and there is no appreciation in relation to this"*. According to the public institution Gama's website, there is the value of the *"culture of planning and continuous evaluation of university's life"*. However, as mentioned by teacher R7, the public HEI could, in fact, practice this value with regard to aging in the academic work, since there is no concrete planning for teachers who are in this process and about to retire.

According to Freitas (2007a), traces of national culture can be found in organizations, influencing the organizational culture. As it is a collective space that welcomes different audiences, HEI Gama does not have, among its values, as reported by professor R5, specific aspects related to aging. However, respect for older people is an existing value in Brazilian culture (TORRES et al., 2015) and it also ends up being a value in the higher education institution.

**BELIEFS**

The beliefs, according to Freitas (2007a) express something naturally considered to be true in the organization, that is, what people believe to be true in a context. In this sense, there are negative and positive beliefs associated with the aging process, as can be demonstrated in Tables 4 and 5:

**Table 4** Beliefs Highlighted by Teachers from Private HEI

Alfa - Private Institution
R3 and R6: Belief in the lack of recognition and loss of their jobs as age advances.
R1: Belief related to the cost of the older teacher.
R13: Belief in dismissal due to the lack of updating by older teachers, in terms of technology and teaching methods.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

**Table 5** Beliefs Highlighted by Teachers from Public HEI

Gama - Public Institution
R12: Belief in distance from the possibility of retirement.
R7: Belief of being "discarded" by the institution on retirement.
R2: Belief in the difficulties related to the behavior of the elderly.
R4: Belief that the "old" teacher is not productive and able to teach good classes.
R5: Belief that aging brings experience and knowledge.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

Among the negative beliefs, there is at the public higher education institution Gama, as reported by interviewee R12, the belief in distance possibility of retiring, due to the country's political scenario, with regard to pension reforms. Another negative belief that stands out is that the university, both public and private, does not value the professor at the time of retirement or the teacher over 65 years of age, either due to the implementation of policies that prevent teachers from working at from a certain age, or the lack of recognition of their contributions to the educational institution.

There is also the belief that as age advances, teachers will lose their jobs, either by implementing the new removal policy of the private HEI Alfa, or by not updating in using new technologies and methodologies. The fear of being disconnected from the private institution, especially among teachers in the aging process, allows beliefs related to dismissal to emerge, making beliefs something that people believe to be true in the face of a reality, impacting on organizational culture (ELLINAS; ALLAN; JOHANSSON, 2017).

In addition, another negative belief is that, with age, older teachers are more difficult to deal with irreducible behaviors, as interviewee R2 reports. Another example of negative beliefs is the belief that teachers who are in the aging process decrease their productivity. However, as reported by the interviewees themselves, age does not interfere with intellectual productivity, corroborating the studies by Austen et al. (2016), in which the researchers conclude that the work capacity may remain high after 50 years of age. In addition, for teachers, working at an advanced age allows them to remain productive, providing them with physical well-being (NASCIMENTO et al., 2016).

The only positive belief was commented by interviewee R5, from the public institution Gama, that there is a belief that the aging of the teacher brings the experience and knowledge of the processes and “how-to” in the institution.

(...) there is always a belief that there is a value in aging because it is accompanied by experience and this I have seen people saying: “ah, we need to consult so-and-so because he knows a lot about it here, he knows everything in his head”. So I think this represents a little bit this belief, that old age comes with this experience, it has this value, let's say so, because it knows the history of the institution and can explain some things. But it's not exclusive here, it has that in other universities. I've also seen people saying: “look, it's a great consultation because it will be able to explain you a little better about this”, I think that this belief exists within the university, the value of experience, of accumulated knowledge (R5).

It is important to emphasize that these are not necessarily the beliefs of the interviewees, but rather of what they perceive that others, within the institution, as well as themselves, believe. However, because beliefs result from people who give meaning to stimuli and are influenced by social interaction (TRICE; BEYER, 1993), when deeply ingrained, beliefs can become dogmas that are difficult to overcome (CORRITORE; GOLDBERG; SRIVASTAVA, 2019), a fact that emphasizes that the institutions must be attentive to the mentioned beliefs because they are responsible for the consolidation and emergence of other elements of the organizational culture.

## **rites, rituals and ceremonies**

Rites, rituals and ceremonies have practical consequences and are often designed as a means of moving the organization's participants to a state that serves to reinforce the social order, communicate organizational values and improve the

group in solidarity (MODAFF, 2016). Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate, according to the interviewed professors, the rites, rituals and ceremonies performed in the private and public HEI regarding the aging process:

**Table 6** Rites, Rituals and Ceremonies - Private HEI

**Alfa - Private Institution**

R9, R11, R13 and R3: Homage ceremony for length of service with 25 years of service and then every five years.

R9: Homage to older teachers through a video, where the individual participates in the institution's history.

R1: It highlights the recognition of the institution towards its family.

R9: Identifies recognition as more important than financial return.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

**Table 7** Rituals, Rituals and Ceremonies – Public HEI

**Gama - Public Institution**

R8, R12 and R17: Rites, rituals and ceremonies are performed by departments and not actions in general at the university.

R5: Considers rites irrelevant due to the stability of the profession.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

It is noticed that in the Alfa teaching institution there are individual rites of homage to the length of service completed by teachers, and these rites enhance social identities by recognizing the achievements of individuals and motivate others to demonstrate similar efforts, thus exemplifying basic values organization, so that they are easily remembered (FREITAS, 2007a). It is noteworthy that the ceremonies are rites connected to each other to highlight the special meaning of an occasion and represent thoughts and emotions that are not always able to be verbalized without the ritualistic support providing conditions for their expression (MODAFF, 2016).

Interviewee R9 reported a tribute that the institution offered to older teachers, through videos with reports of these professors on the institution's website. In this case, the individual participates in the “honorable history” of the organization and the other members have the opportunity to meet an older generation that helps the institution to celebrate heroes, myths and symbols (DEAL; KENNEDY, 1982).

As reported by interviewee R1, the recognition of the Alpha institution before his family was remarkable and such recognition, according to interviewee R9, is more important than financial benefits.

At the public institution Gama, the rites, rituals and ceremonies, according to participants R8, R12 and R17, are performed by the department and not as a general action of the university. In addition to the department's ritual, as there is no ceremony to support the aging process, teachers do not feel valued by the university, due to the lack of recognition. When it exists, the institution publishes on its portal the news of the tribute or award, but does not perform this type of rite. The other participants were not aware of rites, rituals or ceremonies that involved the aging process and, according to the interviewee R5, this type of rite in the public area is considered irrelevant, since there is stability in the profession and, in his opinion, this kind of homage was not needed. However, the testimonies of the professors of the public HEI, show that they do not perceive the valorization of the senior teachers, indicated by the lack of recognition of these teachers.

Thus, the ceremonies, according to Shrivastava (1985), can symbolically transmit organizational values and priorities to their members, being a way to reaffirm such values, beliefs and customs (CROZATTI, 1998). The public institution Gama, therefore, does not offer any type of celebration for older teachers, failing to strengthen its institutional values.

## **STORIES, SAGAS, HEROES AND MYTHS**

During the interviews with professors at the Alfa and Gama institutions, many commented on people who are considered “heroes” due to their age, providing a model of behavior or symbolizing the institution and influencing other teachers, as can be seen in Tables 8 and 9:

**Table 8** Stories, Sagas, Heroes and Myths - Private HEI

**Alfa - Private Institution**

R1 and R6: Example of teachers who face physical difficulties (One retired with 80 years old in medical school and the other has 40 years of profession at university and teaches twice a week).

R6 and R13: Example of respected teachers for representing models of wisdom, known as superheroes.

R10 and R11: Example of teachers considered to be role models, being ethical and representing other teachers.

R11 and R6: Stories of dismissal of teachers in an unhealthy way.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

**Table 9** Stories, Sagas, Heroes and Myths - Public HEI

**Gama - Public Institution**

R8 and R12: Example of a teacher with a physical disposition even in old age and a teacher with limited mobility.

R2, R7 and R12: Examples of teachers who contributed to the development of sectors, creation of study centers and engaged in welcoming and developing students.

R4: Example of who you consider to be your best teacher, and, the story of the rise of a teacher as a model to continue working.

R12 and R4: Stories about the death of colleagues due to old age.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

Thus, in the researched HEIs, it was observed that among the heroes reported, the following stand out: (1) professionals who remained active even with advanced age and physical difficulties; (2) teachers who contributed academically to the sector; (3) heroes for intellectual knowledge; (4) heroes for being a role model.

Thus, heroes represent figures that indicate paths to be followed (MACHADO et al., 2013). Persistence at work, even with old age and physical difficulties,

demonstrates the overcoming of these heroes in institutions. In addition, some teachers have been cited as heroes for their great academic and intellectual contribution over the years. Finally, the names of some teachers were mentioned as heroes because they are inspiring people and a model to be followed.

Faced with these reports, heroes and myths reinforce and maintain culture, defining behavior patterns and providing performance models, in addition to providing real proof of the importance and viability of morals embedded in organizational stories. Understanding myths within an organization contributes, according to Blanco-Gracia (2018), to a better understanding of unconscious impulses and their symbolic construction, allowing, according to the author, a critical engagement with the reasons that promote the emergence of these mythical figures.

Therefore, in addition to the outstanding heroes, some stories were told related to the aging process. From the stories related to the dismissal of teachers, especially regarding the theme of aging, according to the reports of respondents R11 and R6, it was possible to affirm that the stories can reinforce and emphasize desired behaviors, in addition to mapping the limits of tolerance to transgressions and the degree of freedom to innovate (COLON-AGUIRRE, 2015).

Because they are socialization devices, stories release tensions and express shared feelings about certain issues (TRICE; BEYER, 1993). In this sense, respondents R12 and R4 commented that stories about the death of colleagues due to age are common, sharing feelings of loss and sadness.

Stories can also symbolize values and orientations, unifying the organization's participants as they reproduce learning through the experience of the other, allowing for better association and memories of how to act in certain situations (FREITAS, 2007a). In this case, participant R4 commented on a colleague as a model in the aging process to remain active in the profession.

There was a professor who taught here and stayed longer, as a senior. He retired because he had other opportunities, he is now a visiting teacher in another institution for some time and is doing very well! He has his salary here and his salary there. He was my graduation classmate and is active, producing, publishing and tutoring (R4).

From the professor's reports, it is possible to state that the stories, therefore, do not transmit merely information or guide behavior; they are symbolic realities that

extend real-life metaphors causing members to develop a sense of kinship with the past and share common experiences (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

## TABOOS

Taboos delimit “forbidden areas”, that is, something that one tries to avoid (MACHADO et al., 2013), being silenced to the maximum and often denied (FREITAS, 2007a). Participants from public and private HEIs commented on, sometimes with some resistance, the main taboos of professors in the aging process, as shown below in Table 10 and Table 11.

**Table 10** Private HEI Taboos

Alfa - Private Institution
R3: Attempt by older teachers to act as if they were producing the same as younger teachers.
R9: Difficulty in physical mobility and risk of losing a job for younger people.
R11: Differentiation in the treatment of undergraduate and graduate teachers.
R1: Relationship with younger people.
R8: Elderly teachers hide their difficulties in order not to show weaknesses.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

**Table 11** Public HEI Taboos

Gama - Public Institution
R2: Lack of knowledge in new pedagogical techniques and difficulties in using new technologies.
R5: Risk of losing lucidity.
R4 and R5: Pressure from colleagues to retire as soon as possible.
R7: Immediate retirement without a transition.
R8: Caring for sick parents.

**Source:** The authors (2020).



Taboos related to age and work were the most present, confirming the literature, since the expectations of organizational roles become taboos when they specify thoughts, feelings and actions that are prohibited (MARTIN, 1995).

The lack of knowledge about new teaching methods and the difficulty in the use of new technologies by teachers was considered a taboo linked to the aging process in the institutions. This is related to the fact that some older teachers do not use modern tools or differentiated teaching methods that can cause prejudice because of the age (FRANÇA et al., 2013; AMORIM; TRELHA, 2017; SILVA; HELAL, 2019).

In addition, another taboo mentioned, in the view of interviewee R3, was the attempt by older teachers to act and produce like the younger ones. This taboo is connected to negative stereotypes related to the age of teachers and their productivity. The risk of losing lucidity and physical mobility in the educational work was also identified as a taboo related to the aging process. The loss of mobility or lucidity during the aging process is significantly associated with work capacity, that is, the better the functional capacity, the better the work capacity index (AMORIM; TRELHA, 2017).

Another taboo mentioned was the possible loss of employment for younger teachers. Aging at work is often seen for its “negative” consequences, such as the costs generated by keeping someone more experienced in a position (FRANÇA et al., 2013). Such workers bring experience, wisdom and knowledge by applying them to work, and are also valuable mentors for younger and less experienced workers (SILVA; HELAL, 2019).

The interviewed teachers reported the taboo that exists in the rush for older professors to retire soon. According to them, due to old age, some co-workers put a veiled pressure to retire as soon as possible, however, retirement is a multidetermined phenomenon and has several variables or predictors that act in the decision to retire or not. Flexibility and autonomy are two key predictors of the desire to continue working (FRANÇA et al., 2013). In addition, individuals often do not want to retire because there is a negative idea about retirement, which is connected to negative ideas of uselessness, loss of social bonds, and even proximity to death (SILVA; HELAL, 2017).

Another highlighted taboo was the lack of concern by the university with the professor at the time of retirement. In this case, the dismissal of the teacher when

he retires is not accompanied by a transition so that he is prepared for that moment, as reported by interviewee R7. In addition, the separation that the private higher education institution Alfa makes between undergraduate and graduate professors was also mentioned as a taboo, as there are differences in treatment and lack of dialogue amongst teachers, since most graduate professors are older, this is an age-related taboo.

Age taboos related to the personal side were also reported. The affective relationship with younger people was a taboo commented on, relating it with the prejudice that individuals with distant ages when they relate, generate comments in the organization. Gossip consists of informal conversations between friends and associates about other people they know and about recent related events. Although this conversation often provokes laughter and humor, it has a serious side, because it often refers to alleged deficiencies, scandalous behaviors and other negative aspects of the behaviors and lives of others. As a result, the judgments it incorporates reinforce cultural values (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

Another taboo that emerged in the interviews was the teachers' concern and care for sick parents. Due to the fact that the respondents are over 50 years old, some go through these difficulties, and this fact is considered taboo because it is something not mentioned (MACHADO et al., 2013) and that impacts the personal and professional side of teachers, according to the interviewed R8.

In Brazil, according to the Labor Code, article 252, the license to care for sick family members says that the worker can be absent up to 15 days annually due to issues related to illnesses or accidents with the spouse, relatives in the straight line or according to collateral line degree. In the public service, Law 8112/91, article 83, says that the server may be granted leave due to illness of the spouse or partner, the parents, the children, the stepfather or stepmother and stepchildren, or dependents who live at his/her expenses and is part of their functional settlement, upon proof by official medical expertise for up to one year, and the remuneration is maintained for the first sixty days.

However, there is no specific license in Brazil for the care of elderly parents, as in maternity and paternity leave. With the population scenario changing, with people living longer and, working more, this type of leave is a point that must be discussed in the development of public policies that relate to population aging.

Finally, there is a taboo for older teachers to hide their physical and psychological weaknesses from their peers, not commenting on the difficulties in order not to be fragile. Thus, teachers try not to talk about taboos as the limitations that arise with their own aging, because by doing what culture prescribes and not doing what culture forbids, people hope to avoid what they fear most (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

The teaching profession is subject to numerous pressures due to its differentiated dynamics (DEAL; PETERSON, 2016), and culture can be one of the factors that enable a better quality of life in the work environment (PAZ et al., 2020), however, teachers reported facing problems such as competition, overvaluation of productivity, overwork and professional stress, also known as “bones of the trade” (FREITAS, 2007b). In this scenario, as mentioned by participant R6, antidepressants are used and the dialogue on the subject is not open.

Thus, in higher education institutions Alfa and Gama, the main taboos related to aging in teaching work were: not knowing how to deal with new technologies; older teachers who do not produce like the younger ones and try to act as if they were young; the rush for older professors to retire soon; the risk of losing lucidity; the non-concern of the university; fear of losing a job to younger teachers and segregation between undergraduate and graduate teachers.

The age taboos related to the teachers' personal side involve issues such as: the affective relationship with younger people; the concern for parents who become ill and the silence of physical and psychological weaknesses. Such facts emphasize that the organizational culture does not always bring positive aspects and this can influence its functioning (NARANJO-VALENCIA; JIMÉNEZ-JIMÉNEZ; SANZ-VALLE, 2016).

## **NORMS E RULES**

According to Freitas (2007a), the norm is the behavior validated by the participants, being passed on by the other elements of the organizational culture. In this sense, when asked about their knowledge about the norms and rules in force in their institutions, some points were highlighted by the interviewees, as shown in Table 12:

**Table 12** Norms and Rules Highlighted by Teachers

**Alfa - Private Institution**

R6, R11 and R10: Possibility of compulsory retirement at age 65 or 70.

R11: Approves the implementation of rules that regulate the length of service provided.

R9: Standard that reflects an economic issue.

R13: Knowledge of the rule that deals with the shared social security contribution up to 65 years old.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

At the private higher education institution, the teachers interviewed reported on a new standard that was being implemented at the university. According to reports, the institution plans, as a rule for teachers, compulsory retirement from 65 years. In this case, no teacher over 65 years of age could continue in the classroom and, because the norms and rules are procedures that must be complied with and practiced by all (FREITAS, 2007a), even though there are differences between teachers of the graduate and undergraduate courses, the rules at the private Alpha institution that are related to aging at work should be enforced without exception.

In this case, the rule has not yet been officially established, as it is being debated among university members to understand whether or not it is accepted and how to implement it. However, as it is still not very clear, some teachers have doubts about this new rule, especially if the maximum age will be 70 or 65 years old. In addition, the fact that a possible implementation of the new standard indicates that the institution, in its culture, seeks a renewal of teachers, especially due to the costs that an older teacher and, consequently, more titles and time at the university generate for the university.

The financial issue is a constantly reported standard. Participant R13, for example, comments on the standard of the private institution Alfa with regard to the shared contribution to the payment of private pension. Until the age of 65, the university participates with half the amount of this contribution for retirement. Therefore, in that institution, financial rules were the ones that stood out the most when

it came to aspects related to aging, expressing what behaviors are expected by others, being culturally acceptable ways of obtaining results (TRICE; BEYER, 1993).

At the Gama institution, the following points were addressed:

### Table 13 Perceptions About Gama Public Teaching Rules

#### Gama - Public Institution

R2 and R4: Ignorance of rules or norms related to aging, as they do not seek this information.

R5, R7, R8 and R12: Knowledge of the rules of compulsory retirement at 75, inherent to the public service, mandatory health exams and parking for the elderly.

R8: Senior Professor with post-retirement performance, volunteer with or without remuneration.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

As explained, for professors R2 and R4 there are no rules or norms related to aging at work. For them, the rules are superficially known or unknown, because they do not seek information and because they do not feel they are in the aging process.

The rules at the public university, according to the other interviewed professors, are known to be legal norms, aimed at the federal public servant (article 40 of the 1988 Federal Constitution), as well as the changes in the rules of voluntary retirement (EC 41 / 2003 and EC 47/2005) and compulsory (Complementary Law 152/2015). Other rules related to aging, such as periodic health examinations and the use of the space for the elderly in the university parking lot are also present in the interviewees' statements.

It is worth mentioning that there was a tone of joke when teachers talked about compulsory retirement, calling it "expulsive". Humor, because it involves sets of meanings, is inevitably an expression of culture and closely linked to its values and norms (TRICE; BEYER, 1993). Thus, the teacher's understanding that the university will "expel them" when they turn 75 demonstrates an aspect of the culture present at the institution Gama, that the teachers, after an advanced age, should not continue at work, either due to the university's legal norms or its own values.

According to Trice and Beyer (1993), moments of play and jokes are more likely to arise in situations where there are internal conflicts in which people must, in some way, manage the provocations that happened helping to reduce tensions by allowing resentments to be expressed in a less hostile or aggressive way than a more direct way, making the almost intolerable seems more tolerable.

The speech of interviewee R8, when commenting on the senior professor, whose performance is still present even after retirement in graduate school, emphasizes that, in this case, the professor remains active and can be a volunteer with or without remuneration, through a term of office commitment. According to the institution's website, the Senior Teacher Program is aimed at retired teachers with recognized leadership in their field, high scientific, artistic, philosophical and/or technological, capacity to train high level human resources, capacity to attract resources and /or international projection of research programs.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication allows the interpretation of new experiences, since it is through it that culture is continuously built and reinforced (CROZATTI, 1998). It is worth mentioning that communication can be considered one of the elements that allows verifying what was exposed by Serrat (2017) in which the author elucidates aspects related to the interaction itself present within an organizational environment. The disclosure of policies regarding aging, both in the Alfa and Gama institutions, is still fragile, as the interviewees were unaware of information regarding the subject, according to the following reports:

**Table 14 Private HEI Communication**

Alfa - Private Institution
R6 and R9: Fragile communication regarding the disclosure of policies that relate to aging.
R9: Possibility of non-disclosure to avoid segmentation.
R10: Actions as a concern in general, not aimed specifically at teachers.
R11: Dissemination via website and e-mail, reaching all teachers.
R3: Lectures, meetings and voting on new retirement policies.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

**Table 15** Public HEI Communication

**Gama - Public Institution**

R4, R7 and R12: Fragile communication regarding the disclosure of policies that relate to aging

R2 and R8: Use of e-mail and websites in the dissemination, without direction.

**Source:** The authors (2020).

The lack of disclosure of policies about aging in institutions ends up harming the teacher-institution relationship, since, for there to be better communication about policies aimed at aging, institutions must establish a relationship based on truth, open to dialogue, generating confidence in the members of the organization. As reported by respondent R9, the private institution Alfa does not disclose policies aimed at the aging process so as not to negatively stigmatize teachers, demonstrating the interviewee's negative views on aging. In this sense, according to research by Silva and Helal (2019), the aging process is associated with negative experiences in which chronic diseases and dependence to perform activities are a remarkable event in the perception of old age (FRANÇA et al., 2013).

Although the two institutions publicize on the website actions aimed at the elderly, both internally and externally, such as workshops, language courses, pilates, water aerobics, among others, the specific actions of institutions aimed at teachers who are going through the aging process, such as preparation for retirement or psychological support, for example, are still timid, with only lectures on the topic and little publicized. Probably the teachers, because they do not feel that they are in the aging process due to distance from retirement, do not seek such information or do not pay attention to it. However, organizational communication is essential for this preparation, being important for the generation of new ideas, transmission of knowledge and corporate education (CALLEFI; CRUBELLATE, 2020).

When the information is passed on to teachers, the Alfa and Gama institutions mainly use electronic means such as sending e-mails, disseminating them through internal portals and through public notices, highlighting the formal and written communication of these institutions.

The wide access to the Internet facilitates the reach of messages to all teachers, from different campuses, and who work in different shifts. However, it is noteworthy that the use of electronic means often causes an exaggeration in the amount of information that is passed on, since the non-segmentation of the public that will receive such information generates a large number of data that may go unnoticed, not reaching the intended audience. This fact can be considered a barrier in organizational communication, since the excess of information, both in oral and/or written verbal communication, causes saturation and deviations in the understanding and interpretation of utterances and also makes it possible to question the credibility of the source (GODÓI; RIBEIRO, 2009).

In addition, at the Alfa institution, due to the new retirement policies being planned, there was widespread disclosure of the matter through lectures, meetings and assemblies for subsequent voting in favor or against these new measures.

The communication processes cause the organizational culture to be ratified (CROZATTI, 1998) and, in the case of the private HEI, the wide dissemination of the topic related to possible changes in the permanence or removal of teachers of advanced age indicates that the institution was interested in participation of teachers to debate this issue. However, it is noteworthy that this wide communication occurred due to a specific event, and the disclosure, in general, about the aging process in teaching work is still incipient in the researched HEIs.

Thus, it is clear that the disclosure of policies related to the aging process in both the Alfa and Gama institutions must be expanded and focused, as those who are going through this process do not know or do not pay attention to this information due to the large volume news received on other matters.

## Final Considerations

Population aging is one of the most significant phenomena in the 21st century and this phenomenon has important far-reaching impacts in several domains of society, including organizations (SILVA; HELAL, 2019). Thus, the aim of this study was to identify and analyze the meanings that elements of organizational culture have for higher education professors in the aging process at public and private HEIs, as, as



highlighted in the study by Paz et al. (2020) culture can exercise mediation power in terms of organizational quality of life as well as organizational well-being. The dynamism of the organizational culture highlighted by its elements allows the researcher to understand the behavior of the members of an organization as well as aspects aimed at consensus within it and the individuals' own communication (SHRIVASTAVA, 1985; TRICE; BEYER, 1993; FREITAS, 2007a; SCHADECK et al., 2016).

Thus, it was possible to understand how aging in the educational work brings with it aspects of the organizational culture of the investigated institutions, which were analyzed using the following elements of organizational culture: values, norms and rules, communication, rites, rituals and ceremonies, stories and sagas, heroes and myths, beliefs and taboos. Through the elements of the organizational culture it was possible to understand the particularities about aging in the teaching work in the researched HEIs, since these elements express the specificities of the organizations culture (FREITAS, 2007a).

Among the elements that differentiated between the public and private HEIs are the values, norms and rules, communication, rites, rituals and ceremonies, and beliefs. This demonstrates the uniqueness of these elements in the reality of each organization. On the other hand, the heroic elements and myths; stories and sagas and taboos were similar elements in both institutions since they concerned aging in a broad sense, without distinction by institution.

Especially in the academic environment, the aging in the educational work has repercussions in facilities and difficulties that can be aggravated or softened before the organizational culture of the institutions of higher education. The elements of organizational culture reflect with this the appreciation or indifference with professors in the aging process and indicates, in this research, a lack of preparation of the two HEIs in providing teachers with a process that is planned and developed for this phase of life.

In view of the recent discussions about the pension reforms facing Brazil, the theme of aging at work gains even more relevance both in the daily lives of organizations and in academic research. However, unfortunately, the aging phenomenon still does not have the deserved prominence in both spheres, being essential debates and planned actions aimed at workers in old age, as well as young people who will face more years of work in the profession.

Among the limitations of this study, the low return of professors to participate in the study and some institutions that, initially, could be part of this research, but did not provide data on the docents, such as contact or date of birth, are highlighted. Addressing them personally, then, was the solution to get the interviews and, at the same time, a limitation in quantity of them. It is believed that a greater number of institutions and interviewees would enrich the results and discussion of this work.

As a practical contribution, it is expected that this research draws attention to the influence that the elements of an institution's organizational culture have on workers. It is also expected that, in practical terms, this study draws the attention of people managers, especially in Higher Education Institutions, to this new reality of the workforce.

Theoretically, the research provided the expansion of knowledge about the elements of organizational culture in HEIs that concern the aging process, highlighting them in face of the aging process in teaching work. The research also contributed academically by relating these two themes - aging and organizational culture - since literature is scarce in studies that analyze this union, especially in HEIs.

It is noteworthy that the results of this study also collaborate so that younger teachers are prepared for this phenomenon and understand the difficulties and facilities they may experience when they are in this process.

In this context, as suggestions for future research, we propose the development of this study with other HEIs staffs, as administrative technicians in the aging process, in order to verify if the elements of the organizational culture for this public indicate the same findings of this research. Another suggestion would be to deepen the theme of organizational culture and aging only with women from HEIs, since the world population goes through the feminization of aging, and the emotions of these women who go through this process can be observed.

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