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Would you go the extra mile? The mediating effect of Work Engagement in the relation between Employer Branding Experience and Citizenship Behavior: A generational approach

Maria Rita Azevedo Mendes Horák

Master in Social and Organizational Psychology

Advisor:

Doctor Nelson Campos Ramalho, Associate Professor, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

July, 2023

Department of Psychology

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation marks the end of an important step of my academic pathway, representing an asset in my future career. And, as with many other important life achievements, the people that surround us have an important role in our success.

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor Professor Nelson Ramalho for the constant support and guidance to effectively compose each component of this dissertation.

To my family and friends, for the caring attention and support in the whole process, making sure I would focus and encouraging me to give my best.

Resumo

Num mundo em que as gerações emergem ao longo de diferentes períodos de tempo e zeitegeists históricos, é razoável esperar que o comportamento humano se altere espelhando essas circunstâncias devido à dependência do contexto de todos os aspetos comportamentais que não têm uma natureza disposicional. Ainda assim, as organizações desenvolvem políticas que muitas vezes assumem uma posição universal e podem perder eficácia por não refletirem estas mudanças geracionais. Paralelamente, hoje as organizações esforçam-se por atrair talentos para obterem resultados positivos também com base em comportamentos críticos, como os de cidadania organizacional (CCO). A experiência de Employer Branding (EBE) deve assim ajustar-se às diferenças geracionais de modo a maximizar OCB.

Este estudo parte de uma amostra de 378 indivíduos para testar um modelo de mediação moderada, em que se esperam efeitos indiretos entre a EBE e o envolvimento no trabalho, mas de forma divergente, de acordo com a coorte (Geração X vs. Geração Y). Os resultados mostraram que o efeito direto da EBE é mais forte nos Y e o indireto é mais forte nos X. Também se verificou que o CCO de ajuda é explicado no modelo, enquanto o desportivismo não. Este facto sugere que os processos que operam na promoção dos CCO com base na EBE variam consoante as gerações e também que nem todos os tipos de CCO são igualmente sensíveis à EBE ou ao envolvimento no trabalho.

Palavras-chave: comportamentos de cidadania organizacional, employer branding, envolvimento no trabalho, coortes geracionais.

Códigos de classificação APA: 3600 Organizational Psychology and Human Resources; 3660 Organizational Behavior

Abstract

In a world where generations emerge along different time sets and historical zeitgeist, it is quite reasonable to expect human behavior to change by mirroring those circumstances due to the context-dependency of all behavioral aspects that do not have a dispositional nature. Still, organizations develop policies that often take a universal stand and may lose effectiveness by not reflecting these generational changes. Alongside, organizations strive to attract talented employees to attain positive outcomes also based on critical behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Employer branding experience (EBE) should thus adjust to generational differences so to maximize OCB.

This study departs from a sample of 378 individuals to test a mediated moderation model where indirect effects are expected between EBE and OCB via work engagement but divergently, according to cohort (Gen X vs. Gen Y). Results showed that the direct effect of EBE is stronger in Yers and the indirect is stronger in Xers. It also showed OCB helping behavior is predicted while sportsmanship is not. This suggests that processes operating in leveraging OCB based on EBE vary across generations and that not all OCBs are equally sensitive to EBE or work engagement.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, employer branding experience, work engagement, generational cohort.

APA's classification codes: 3600 Organizational Psychology and Human Resources;
3660 Organizational Behavior

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Introduction

Nowadays, organizations are evolving in line with employee's orientations towards work. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate how different constructs present in organizational settings influence a business's overall performance.

According to Katz (1964), for an organization to be effective it depends on three types of behaviors such as: employee attraction and retention; execution of tasks and assignments, according to a certain quantity and quality of performance; and acting beyond role specifications and demands, in such a spontaneous and innovative way that meets organization's goals. The author also underlines that the individual's creative suggestions and need to cooperate and protect one's organization are essential to its sustainable development and effectiveness.

This same positive effect ascribed to this option of going above and beyond the formal duties established in a contract has long been documented in literature (Harvey et al., 2018). All organizations strive to have employees' willingly contributing and acting accordingly and expressing in such voluntary behaviors their sense loyalty to their employer.

These behaviors of going beyond the job description are defined as Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) and they are the focus of the present study. Although this construct was incipiently mentioned in literature in the 1960s (Ocampo et al., 2018) it was formally defined by Organ (1988) as an "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (p. 4). The importance of OCBs relies on the fact that they enhance an organization's efficiency, incite a collaborative environment, reduce turnover, raise profit, and increase job satisfaction (Koys, 2001).

Because the world keeps evolving, especially economy-wise, the work setting naturally follows its new features which consequently might entice OCBs to have updated natures and antecedents (Dekas et al., 2013). As Harvey et al. (2018) proposed, 21st-century trends are reshaping the types of OCBs that emerge in organizations, including employer branding. In this framework, the authors emphasize that employer branding, as the image associated with attributes and qualities that represent an employer, reflects a brand and the initiatives and practices of Human Resources Management. This concept weighs on significant employee experience and influences an employee's thoughts, opinions, and attitudes toward the organization. The development of employer branding should be internal, retaining and nourishing current employees, and external, attracting new talent and building a positive reputation.

The present work takes on the internal perspective of the relationship between employer branding experience and OCB. Given the appropriate work conditions and values that align with their needs, employees tend to be more engaged in their jobs in such a way that they are willing to display extra-role behaviors (Gupta et al., 2021). This premise sustains the main goal of this dissertation in answering the question of whether a positive employer branding experience (EBE) influences the appearance of OCB mediated by higher levels of work engagement.

When employees feel their needs are supported, they go for the extra mile. Further, literature has been offering a more profound explanation by using the Self Determination Theory (SDT, Ryan & Deci, 2000), Social Exchange Theory (SET, Blau, 1964), and Job-Demands Resources Model (JD-R, Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), fundamentals this mediation. Using employer branding experience as a predictor of OCB, is pertinent in the sense that this construct has been considered in the literature as of great influence on organizations but has not been much associated with employee behavior (Bhasin et al., 2019).

It is worth noticing that ever since psychosociology emerged, the individual behavior has been acknowledged as a product of the individual embedded in a social context as expressed in Lewin's famous equation that states $B_{(behavior)} = f_{unction}(P_{(erson)}, E_{(nvironment)})$. This suggests that sound psychological research should not overview the context where the individual behavior occurs. A generational cohort is an example of such context that should be considered as each generational group experiences the same historical events, which results in shared perspectives and behaviors associated with those (Schuman & Scott, 1989).

In the workplace, these common experiences and ideals influence how employees perceive authority and employers, what they seek from work, and how they satisfy their needs (Gursoy et al., 2008). Lu and Gursoy (2013) found generational differences in interactions between dimensions such as emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Several authors have investigated these generational differences in various work-related variables (Lub et al., 2011; Cucina et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2021; Chou et al., 2021). From these studies, organizations can retrieve strategies to improve how they recruit, select, instruct, value, recognize, and interact with their employees (Jones et al., 2018).

In line with this rationale, that brings generational cohorts into the equation, this study is designed to test the moderating effects of generational cohorts in mediation previously mentioned, in the Portuguese working context. This objective is also an answer to a call for research placed by Gupta et al. (2021), where the authors suggest future studies

should consider the generational perspective when investigating the relationship between EBE and OCB.

For this purpose, the dissertation starts by reviewing literature on organizational citizenship behaviors highlighting its antecedents and consequences. In line with the antecedents, literature proceeds by exploring employer branding literature as a plausible predictor of OCB. In further refining theoretical links between employer branding and OCB, literature on work engagement is brought in to raise its hinge role between these constructs. At this stage literature offers ground for the mediation model proposed. In exploring generational cohort role, we reviewed akin literature treating cohorts as contextual variables that have the potential to modulate established explanatory models. The dissertation continues by showing the conceptual model as well as the methods deployed to empirically test such model. From such tests the findings are shown and discussed at the light of theory. Finally, conclusions and a reflection on the limitations and future research is offered.

1. Literature Review

Literature will be reviewed by focusing on organizational citizenship behavior and its antecedents and consequences so to highlight, how employer branding experience can foster such behaviors, and how work engagement can be bridging these constructs.

After reviewing the conceptual nature and theoretical ties connecting these variables, literature evolves into generation cohorts explaining their nature and differentiation. As hypotheses are stated along literature review, at the end the resulting conceptual model is shown bringing together all hypotheses (Figure 1.1).

1.1. The Organizational Citizenship Behavior, antecedents, and consequents

When employees act beyond their job requirements without apparent gain – usually by helping a co-worker in a specific task, suggesting business innovation, working overtime and/or offering guidance to a newcomer – they are displaying Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). This term has been a long-time target of conceptualization and mostly defined as individual behaviors that are voluntary and do not fall in the organization's formal reward system, promoting and supporting its cooperation scheme, productivity, and efficiency (Organ, 2018).

To understand under which conditions OCBs manifest itself, it is important to identify its antecedents. There is an extensive amount of research attempting to offer different perspectives on what induces employees to exhibit extra-role behaviors. The earliest framework by Organ (1988) suggests a five-factor model, which was later updated with two additional dimensions (Organ, 1990). The model includes a) altruism (it refers to the eagerness in assisting in any way a coworker in his job, by freeing the workload for example), b) courtesy (it refers to the priority of relating to others in a kind and collaborative way), c) conscientiousness (it refers to when an individual pays special attention while performing work tasks, such as taking certain norms into account), d) civic virtue (it refers to a coworker's sense of responsibility for the organization's success and progress), e) sportsmanship (it refers to an employee having a positive and loyal attitude towards the organization, diminishing negative events that might occur), f) peacekeeping (it refers to employees that help create a positive environment and resolve possible conflicts), and g) cheerleading (it refers to a coworker motivating another coworker that isn't satisfied with his/her performance or development).

Aggregating similar factors such as altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading composes the helping behavior dimension, where all represent the act of helping a work colleague to solve or avoid problems (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). Using these frameworks to measure OCB, Podsakoff et al. (1997) proposed a

comprehensive scale with helping behavior, sportsmanship, and civic virtue as its representative dimensions.

Another classification differentiates the target of extra-role behaviors, also known as the direction of its action. William and Anderson (1991) further divided OCB into two categories: OCB-I which refers to OCB directed towards individuals (e.g., sharing information with other employees; paying attention to others' problems); and OCB-O which refers to OCB directed towards the organization (e.g., suggesting innovative business strategies; complying to informal rules). In the OCB-I category constructs such as altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading can be included, and sportsmanship, civic virtue, and conscientiousness in the OCB-O category (Podsakoff et al., 2014).

To review and summarize the literature on this behavior, since it was first introduced, Podsakoff et al. (2000) specifically point to four common characteristics domains that predict OCB: individual, task, organization, and leadership.

To account for the evolution on the workplace, Dekas et al. (2013) empirically investigated the traditional dimensions and explored new ones among a sample of Google employees, updating the framework and measurement of OCB. The authors found and reinforced significant predictors such as: employee sustainability; social participation; civic virtue; voice; helping behavior; knowledge-sharing; individual initiative; and administrative behavior.

More recently, Ingrams (2018) found additional empirical support for other OCB antecedents namely goal clarity, job satisfaction and leader-member exchange (a three-part theory with leaders, followers, and the relationship between them). These were found to exert a positive effect upon the levels of extra-role behavior. In the same vein, Wörtler et al. (2019) departed from self-determination theory to test the effects that satisfying work-related basic psychological needs has upon OCB. According to this theory maintaining a healthy psychological functioning and motivation requires individuals' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) to be met. Their findings suggest that feeling autonomous, competent, and related to co-workers raises the likelihood of employees to engaging in their work. In turn, OCB is positively associated with their level of work engagement.

When investigating the outcomes of OCB, researchers have focused on individual and organizational levels also. Podsakoff's et al. (2009) meta-analysis found that, when displaying OCB, individuals tend to: (1) show high employee performance, (2) receive more rewards, (3) display lower turnover intentions, (4) display lower turnover rate; and (5) show low absenteeism. Also at the organizational level, the authors concluded that

exhibiting OCB resulted in: (1) more diverse organizational effectiveness measures (such as productivity, profitability, and efficiency); (2) higher customer satisfaction; (3) costs reduction; and (4) lower group turnover.

Klotz et al. (2017) also reported employee performance appraisal as a positive outcome of OCB. Additionally, workplace status and citizenship fatigue were positively associated with OCB. Wang et al. (2021) conducted a study with hotel employees to investigate the impacts of two categories (OCB-I and OCB-O) to find that more OCB-Is and OCB-Os lead to more positive emotions. Besides this, OCB-O contributed positively to the quality of working life and negatively (unlike other studies suggestions) to role overload.

The importance of OCB conceptualization is reflected on the extensive time and energy the researchers have given to understand it. Their motivations rely on the original definition, stating OCB is a driver of organizational effectiveness. As reflected above, OCB is connected to numerous and diverse constructs, which supports the current tendency of investigating the interactions of OCB and other organizational behavior variables, in the expectation of finding new conceptions and contribute to the workplace setting evolution.

1.2. Employer Branding Experience and OCB

To attract and retain individuals, an organization should convey an identity that translates positive experiences in such a way that job applicants and employees consider it the best workplace to be part of (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017; Saini & Jawahar, 2021). This is especially true in a globalized and competitive world, where talent attraction process is reversed, because the array of options is so vast that individuals are now the ones choosing their organizations. This pushes employers to give priority to how their brand is positioned and how the brand related to employee-directed initiatives stand out (Botella-Carrubi et al., 2021).

This situation brought to the center stage the concept of employer branding (EB). Imported from Marketing to Human Resources Management and Organizational Psychology, the concept EB has been introduced as the combination of psychological, functional, and economic benefits the employer provides and is associated to (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Employer branding has been theorized as a deliberate and long-term plan to account for the consciousness and perspective regarding the appeal, inside and beyond a business (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). From a managerial perspective, EB is a tool used by organizations to attract, retain, and motivate their employees (Tanwar &

Prasad, 2016). Without anticipating current employees' motivations an employer cannot aspire to retaining them in the organization through EB (Ahmed et al., 2022).

EB has been thought of as a multidimensional construct. Various empirical studies have sought out to identify its main underlining concepts (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon et al., 2005). Tanwar and Prasad's (2017) proposed EB entails five dimensions namely Compensation and Benefits, Training and Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, Work-life Balance, and Work Environment. The authors' goal was to create an instrument to measure EB and its effect on internal employees, based in previous theoretical work. Overall, their findings point to the five dimensions as significant determinants of how employees perceive their employers' EB, with healthy work environment being the most important, and compensation and benefits the least important. Focused on current employees' EBE, the present study resorts to Tanwar and Prasad's (2017) five-dimension model.

Additionally, it is important to note that the literature clearly states that employer branding experience (EBE) should be investigated with two different targets in mind: current and prospective employees. However, many studies have relied on students with limited professional experience to explore these dimensions, leading to weak results accuracy (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

When our needs are met, we have a propensity to act beyond job demands. Based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), when employers satisfy needs and provide favorable conditions, in return their employees act to contribute for the organization's effectiveness, with behaviors such as OCB (Gupta et al., 2021).

Some studies, based in signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2010), propose that providing HR practices and work conditions can represent a signal of appreciation and support perceived by the employees from the organization, enticing individuals to act accordingly and contributively to the organization's success, as OCB (Kaur et al., 2020; Lambert, 2000; Liu et al., 2022).

To verify the strength of the HRM system and its impact on employees' behaviors, de la Rosa-Navarro et al. (2019) found that distinctiveness, consistency, and reputation of the organization (three distinguishing EB organizational features) are positively associated with OCB. Additionally, Mostafa et al. (2021) found in a sample of university staff members that showed when individuals perceived EB practices by their university, they exhibited more OCB.

Further, Gupta et al. (2021) list evidence found on the overlap of EBE dimensions with OCB stronger occurrence, such as regular training, healthy work-life balance, and organization's engagement in corporate social responsibility.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: There is a direct positive effect of EBE on OCB.

Considering the three OCB components, further are detailed the hypotheses as follows:

H1a: Employer branding experience is positively related to Helping behavior.

H1b: Employer branding experience is positively related to Civic Virtue.

H1c: Employer branding experience is positively related to Sportsmanship.

1.3. The role of Work Engagement

Despite of the inconsistency between many studies regarding the conceptualization of Work Engagement, there is an evident consensus on the affirmation that when engaged employees positively contribute to the organization performance (Christian et al., 2011; Corbeanu & Iliescu, 2023; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

The term “work engagement,” as proposed by Kahn (1990), follows the concept of personal engagement as employees involve themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally to their work role performance.

The engagement is energized through positive emotional experiences, allowing individuals to be connected to their work and behave in such a way that benefits the organization. Besides this, the author highlights that individuals' engagement and disengagement depends on three psychological conditions: (1) meaningfulness (sense of worth and reward posterior to investment and effort in work performance); (2) safety (sense of trust and security when self-expressing); and (3) availability (sense of having physical, emotional, and psychological resources to fully engage in their work performance).

In another perspective, alongside other researchers, Maslach et al. (2001) support the conceptualization of work engagement with the premise that it is the opposite of the concept of burnout. According to the authors, work engagement is characterized by higher levels of energy, involvement, and efficacy, and this is the contrary of the presence of burnout represented by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. However, the term is considered an independent concept to be measured. To support this, Schaufeli et al. (2002) introduce work engagement as a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (p.74). Vigor is referred as presenting high levels of energy and mental strength in one's work, exerting effort and persistence besides all the setbacks. Dedication represents the deep involvement in work tasks along with the sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and

challenge. Lastly, absorption is characterized by being deeply focused and immersed in work performance, in such a way that time passes by quickly and it is hard to disengage. Based on the three-dimensional model, the same authors created the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Later, the original scale is adapted to a shorter version, being this a widely used and accepted measure of work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

To contribute for the operationalization of work engagement and reduce the gap between academics and practitioners, Macey and Schneider (2008) sustain that work engagement measures should rely on emotional attributes and work conditions. Also, the authors define job characteristics (work features that influence the employee willingness to invest energy in tasks), leadership (leaders that present clear expectations, justice and recognition to their workers positively affect their commitment to the job), and personality traits (individual assets such as consciousness, proactive behavior and positive affect tend to incite more employee-task interaction) as antecedents of work engagement, with indirect influence on performance.

Most research on work engagement antecedents and outcomes has been supported on the fact that employee's engagement depends on the resources available in their work context. This premise relies on the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R, Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This model includes three propositions: (1) jobs are characterized for their demands and resources, which allows the model to be applicable in all types of work settings; (2) both job demands and resources are determinants of two independent processes, being demands predictors of reduced health and energy, and resources the predictors of motivation and work engagement; (3) job demands and resources interact differently in predicting occupational well-being, one interaction corresponds to the job resources diminishing the influence of job demands on the strain process, and the second interaction is the job demands intensifying the effect of job resources on the motivation process (Bakker et al., 2014).

In line with the JD-R Model, Albrecht et al. (2018) found a positive association between six organizational resources (such as HR practices, senior leadership, clarity of organizational goals, organizational adaptivity, strategic alignment and organizational autonomy) and work engagement. Their findings suggest that to increase engagement organizations need to make sure: HR update employees about ongoing problems and performance developments; employees strongly perceive the alignment between their activities and the company's strategy; the future of the business is communicated; employees are involved in decision-making and organizational change. Also, Radic et

al. (2020) confirmed the propositions of the JD-R model in cruise ship employees' work engagement.

As Gupta et al. (2021) evidenced, when employees present positive employer branding experiences, they tend to be more engaged in work tasks. Suggesting that when given resources related to EB dimensions, employees display higher levels of motivation towards the job. Yousf and Khurshid (2021) showed in their findings that employer branding (with the dimensions: interest value, social value, application value, economic value and development value) is determinant in predicting employee's engagement. Previously, Davies et al. (2018) found that employees will respond more favourably in terms of their satisfaction and engagement to enhancements in how caring and/or competent the employer brand is perceived. Also, Piyachat et al. (2014) found a positive association between employer branding and employee engagement. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2: There is a direct positive effect of employer branding experience on work engagement.

As an outcome of work engagement, empirical research evidenced that extra-role behaviours are more likely to be displayed by highly engaged employees. Enhancing that it may be because motivated employees are more available to liberate resources to perform their tasks and achieve goals efficiently, which in turn allows them to engage in activities outside of their job description's scope (Christian et al., 2011). Shantz et al. (2013) also found a positive correlation between work engagement and OCB. Recently, Chen et al. (2020) supported this positive relationship, where they confirmed that more work engagement leads to more OCBs displayed by employees. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H3: There is a direct positive effect of work engagement on OCB.

Considering the three OCB components, we further detail the hypotheses as follows:

H3a: Work engagement is positively related to Helping behavior.

H3b: Work engagement is positively related to Civic Virtue.

H3c: Work engagement is positively related to Sportsmanship.

According to Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, individuals exhibit a specific behavior depending on the affect associated with it and the probability of a desired

outcome to occur (Chou & Pearson, 2012). This framework might suggest that if organizations provide and relate positively to their employees enough so they feel motivated, they will act in its benefit and best performance (Michael et al., 2016)

Many empirical studies have investigated the mediating effect of work engagement in interactions between work-related orientations/behaviours, influencing either fully or partially these relationships. Garg and Singh (2019) found that work engagement fully mediates the influence of subjective well-being in work performance and mental health problems, along with partially mediating the relationship of subjective well-being with work withdrawal behaviours and physical health problems. Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) evidenced a fully mediating effect of work engagement in the relationship between job resources and proactive behaviors, implying that when given the right resources employees tend to be more engaged in their tasks and exhibit proactive behaviors (or extra-role behaviors). In their findings, Gupta et al. (2021) confirmed a partial mediation of employee engagement in the relationship between employer branding experience and organizational citizenship behavior, enhancing that when employees perceive a positive EBE, are engaged in their jobs and exhibit more citizenship behaviors.

As previously mentioned, in the literature Work Engagement has been positively associated with both Employer Branding and Organizational Citizenship Behavior and is referred by its intermediating role when relating both constructs. Following this premise, it is hypothesized:

H4: There is an indirect positive effect of EBE on OCB via work engagement.

Considering the three OCB components it is further propose:

H4a: There is an indirect positive effect of EBE on Helping behavior via work engagement.

H4b: There is an indirect positive effect of EBE on Civic Virtue via work engagement.

H4c: There is an indirect positive effect of EBE on Sportsmanship via work engagement.

1.4. Generation cohorts as a contextual variable

From a sociologic point of view, generations are equivalent to timelines that correspond to a group of individuals that have shared historical and sociocultural events, consequently giving them similar development experiences and features or attributes (Mannheim, 1952; cited in Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Also, these events may shape these individuals' behaviors, morals, and perspectives (Mannheim, 1993; cited in Reis & Braga,

2016). From another perspective, Ryder (1965, cited in Jung et al., 2021) proposes the cohort theory emphasizing that generations are associated with an observable and objective birth date range, and each includes individuals that have attitudinal and behavioral commonalities.

Many authors have investigated differences between generations in the workplace, in terms of work-related attitudes, values, and orientations (Park & Gursoy, 2012). Work behaviors such as changing jobs, complying to rules and policies, and the willingness to work overtime can develop differently between generations (Becton et al., 2014). This is of great importance because these differences can cause conflicts or constraints and lead organizations to rethink their management initiatives and HR practices such as recruitment, compensation, assessment, and development (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Currently, the generations interacting in the organizational setting are the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials (or Gen Y). There is no consensus regarding the definition of the cohorts, but according to Smola and Sutton (2002), Baby Boomers may be born between 1940/1946 and 1960/1964, Gen Xers from 1960/1964 to 1975/1979, and Gen Y between 1979 and 1994/2000 (Moore et al., 2014; Lu & Gursoy, 2016).

Baby Boomers are characterized by their demographic growth and optimistic and positive mindset, following World War II and other significant social and political revolutions of that period (Kupperschmidt, 2000 cited in Smola & Sutton, 2002; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). In the workplace, some authors emphasize that these individuals may value loyalty, teamwork, respect towards authority, and work dedication and commitment (Shragray & Tziner, 2011). They also use rewards and status to measure success and seek learning and development opportunities (Cennamo & Garner, 2008).

Gen Xers surge in an era of economic and financial downgrade, insecurity, unemployment, and higher divorce rates (Lyons et al., 2007). They are the result of the previous workaholic generation, making them individualistic, practical problem solvers, and with less supervised childhoods. An important work value for this generation was to assure work-life balance (Eisner, 2005). Because security and support were not guaranteed, their commitment to an organization would frequently be compromised in the chance of a better work opportunity (career growth or higher pay and benefits) (Loomis, 2000). Besides this, these individuals are entrepreneurs, ready for change, results-focused, and feedback seekers (Allen, 2004).

Generation Y is the generation of the revolution of technology development, facilitated digital communication and connectivity, and globalization of society and the marketplace (Eisner, 2005; Heyns & Kerr, 2018). Consequently, this cohort is characterized by its diversity and change readiness (Becton et al., 2014). They are

confident, self-centered, innovative, independent, and eager for achievement (Glass, 2007; Lyons et al., 2007). As employees, they are collaborative and appreciate belonging to work groups. They value recognition, development and learning opportunities as turnover determinants (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

As for the most recent generation, which is now starting to enter the workplace, Gen Z comprises individuals born between the mid-1990s and mid-2010s (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). This generation is immersed in technology and social networks, not having much contact with a world without so much digital connectivity. They are the group of individuals with more easy access to information and its consumption. Besides this, they are very much diverse, because of the facilitated exposure to other cultures, seek economic stability and career development, and tend to be more entrepreneurs than the previous generation (Lanier, 2017). Because of the excessive information accessible to Gen Z, this cohort is more selective and pragmatic, especially toward an organization's reputation and brand. They value an employer that is respectful, ethical, communicative, a good decision-maker, and that rewards and compensates fairly its employees (Magano et al., 2020).

When narrowing these differences to the Portuguese generations, a study made by EY (2020) identified the main aspects that define and motivate each generation. Baby Boomers esteem autonomy, work recognition, a positive work environment, collaboration, new challenges, formalities, and job stability. Gen X values professional recognition, positive work environment, work-life balance and compensation and benefits packages. Millennials appreciate work-life balance, professional recognition, training and development, compensation and benefits, and career progression opportunities. Finally, with fewer participants, Gen Z values career progression, training and development, autonomy, a positive work environment, professional challenges and stimulants, and compensation and benefits.

These specific work-related generational differences have been targeted by many investigations (Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021). When comparing generations in terms of their employer branding experience, Reis and Braga (2016) found that Baby Boomers give importance to an innovative, challenging, and healthy work environment; Gen Xers value development, compensation and benefits, and interpersonal relationships; and Gen Y prioritizes the compensation packages and a healthy work environment. The need for continuous learning and engagement in career progression and skills development seems to be more visible in younger employees than older ones (Mencl & Lester, 2014).

In the literature Generation X and Y are frequently used to reference the current groups of individuals in the workplace, in virtue of age. For this reason, the present

dissertation will focus on the effects these two cohorts might have on the variables of the conceptual model. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H5: Generations interact with the positive direct effect of EBE on OCB in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H5a: Generations interact with the positive direct effect of EBE on Helping behavior in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H5b: Generations interact with the positive direct effect of EBE on Civic Virtue in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H5c: Generations interact with the positive direct effect of EBE on Sportsmanship in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

Furthermore, the exact relevance of employer branding experience to produce work engagement (H2) may be modulated by generational cohort and therefore we hypothesize that:

H5d: Generations interact with the positive direct effect of EBE on Work engagement such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

Considering the mediation proposed in H4, all hypotheses are integrated stating that:

H6: Generations interact with the positive indirect effect of EBE on OCB via Work engagement in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H6a: Generations interact with the positive indirect effect of EBE on Helping behavior via Work engagement in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H6b: Generations interact with the positive indirect effect of EBE on Civic Virtue via Work engagement in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases it.

H6c: Generations interact with the positive indirect effect of EBE on Sportsmanship via Work engagement in such a way that Generation Y increases the effect, while Generation X decreases

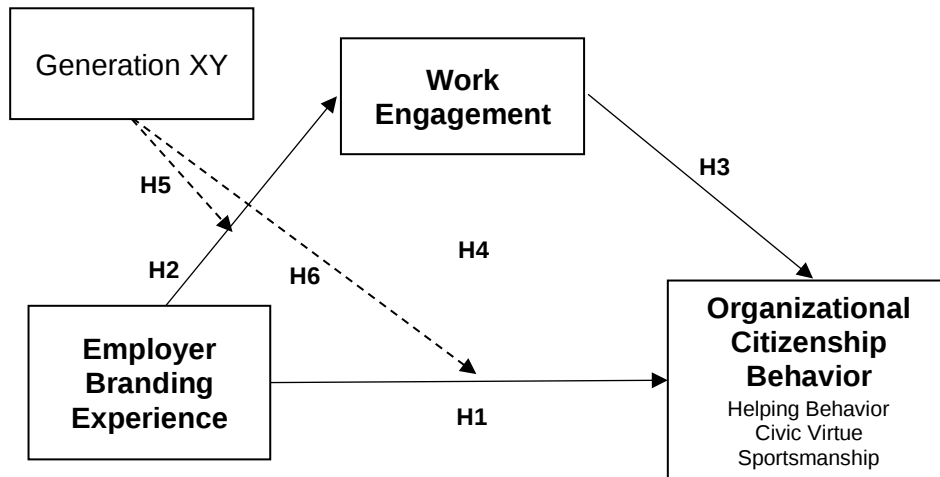


Figure 1.1 – Conceptual model

2. Method

The empirical study is developed under a quantitative approach with a hypothetic-deductive nature (Clark et al., 2021). This is suitable as the topics under research have been largely studied and extant theory is available to infer such hypotheses. Likewise, there are internationally used measures that can offer high psychometric quality for such sort of testing.

2.1. Procedure

To gather data, an online survey was submitted to currently employed individuals, where they were questioned about their experiences in the workplace. The questionnaire included items from three scales to measure the study's main constructs: Employer Branding Experience; Work Engagement; and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Additionally, demographic variables were included (gender, year of birth, education, organization tenure) were collected.

The survey started with the informed consent, which the participant had to agree to proceed. The informed consent included information about the study's purpose, safeguards on voluntary and anonymous participation, explicit note on freely decision to quit without consequences at any time, expected time to complete filling in the questionnaire, along with contact details for further explanations or feedback. The informed consent followed APA's ethical principles and code of conduct (American Psychologist Association, 2017).

2.2. Sample

Sampling follows a non-probabilistic convenience process. Although this may compromise the generalizability of findings, in the case of this research it may not hamper its quality because the sample is intended to cover individuals across generations and there is no specific requirement than being over 18 years-old and actively working. Thus, participants were eligible only if they were aged 18 or more, and actively under a paid work contract or as freelancers.

The questionnaire was made available in Qualtrics software via an anonymous link and a QR Code (to facilitate the direct use of smartphone as an outlet to answer) together with an invitation message and an informed consent.

The deployment of invitations was made through the personal network of contacts with a request to snowballing. To avoid narrowing of the sample, first invitations were sent to contacts with a contrasting profile to increase the diversity of the sample as

regards age, gender, education, geographic region, industry, and position within the work setting.

The sample comprises a total of 378 participants, mostly female (60.1%) and falling in the Generation Y (56.9%), with corresponding birth years ranging from 1981 to 2000. The sample is averagely educated with the largest segment holding high school (36.2%) followed by a Bachelor degree (31.2%). On average the participants work at the same organization for about 11 years ($SD=10.4$) indicating strong variations within the sample with a skewed distribution towards more recent employees. Participants are mainly working for organizations with more than 500 employees, do not perform a supervisory role, and hold a permanent contract of employment.

2.3. Data analysis strategy

Although only internationally published measures will be used in this research, the lack of Portuguese validated versions in some cases advises evaluating their psychometric properties with the sample collected. This analysis focus on validity and reliability.

Construct validity will be assessed with a principal components analysis and eventually (depending on sample size) with confirmatory factor analysis. Principal components analysis has quality indicators ($KMO>0.500$; Bartlett's chi-square with p-value below 0.01) and there are some requirements as to the quality of the factor solution extracted. We will adopt Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1) and apply a Varimax rotation to generate a solution that should account for at least 60% of total variance (Goretzko et al., 2021). This analysis is available as a standard functionality in SPSS. As a preferable alternative, a confirmatory factor analysis can be conducted (Hair et al., 2019). This data analysis technique allows to compare the theoretical model with the data patterns. The closest the data matches the theoretical model, the more valid it is. This closeness is named as "model fit" and there are currently many fit indices available. We follow Hair et al. (2019) recommendations as regards adopting the fit indices (Chi-square, normed chi-square, Comparative Fit Index, Tucker-Lewis Index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) and respective thresholds.

Convergent validity will be assessed with the Average Variance Extracted (AVE, Fornell & Larcker, 1981) which should be of 0.500 at least. In measures that theoretically are expected to have more than a single latent construct (e.g., work engagement comprehends "vigor", "absorption" and "dedication"), discriminant validity will also be assessed with HTMT (Henseler et al., 2015).

Additionally, measures are expected to be reliable, i.e., internally consistent (or consistent across multiple time data collections). Reliability is measured with Joreskog Composite Reliability that has the same cutoffs of Cronbach alpha (at least 0.70 value to be considered acceptable).

If measures are deemed as valid and reliable, they can be used to test the hypotheses. As the conceptual model represents a moderated mediation, we will use path analysis available in Smart-PLS software. Compared with PROCESS macro from Hayes (2018), this software offers more flexibility as regards models and algorithms variations, although it is in all other aspects equivalent as a path analysis-based algorithm that can compute direct, indirect and interaction effects both as regards direct effects as well as regarding indirect effects. The software can compute indices to test whether an indirect effect is subject to modulations due to the moderator, i.e., process that truly test moderated mediation effects. As a recommendation we will set bootstrapping for 5000 repetitions with a confidence interval of 95% to test the meaningfulness of coefficients.

2.4. Measures

We have endeavored to choose the most valid and reliable measures published in peer reviewed journals, also considering their impact indices. Among the existing scales there are few that have truly been validated with a Portuguese sample (e.g., Work Engagement is validated) and some have been used in previously research conducted with a Portuguese sample but have not been validated especially because samples are specific (e.g., nurses) or not representative at all (e.g., students). In such cases we have translated and back translated, following Brislin (1970) recommendations and always pre-tested the measures to ascertain no ambiguity or interpretation bias plagued items.

2.4.1. *Employer Branding Experience*

Employer Branding Experience (EBE) was measured with Tanwar and Prasad's (2017) 23 item- scale, displayed in a 5-point Likert scale with responses going from "totally agree" to "totally disagree". The items are grouped to measure five EBE dimensions: Work Environment (6 items, e.g. "my organization offers a relatively stress-free work environment"); Training and Development (6 items, e.g. "my organization organizes workshops and conferences on a regular basis"); Work-life balance (3 items, e.g. "my organization provides flexible-working hours"); Corporate Social Responsibility (4 items, e.g. "there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work."); and Compensation (4 items, e.g. "my organization provides good health benefits/plans").

The Confirmatory factor analysis of the original solution showed poor fit indices ($X^2(220) = 629.695$, $p < .001$, Normed $X^2 = 2.862$, CFI=.858, TLI=.837, RMSEA=.090 90% CI [.082;.098] PClose=.000, SRMR=.0744). Lagrange multipliers and excluding all items with lambdas below .50 led to a four-factor solution (dropping all items from Corporate Social responsibility) comprehending 12 items with valid fit indices ($X^2(50) = 124.824$, $p < .001$, Normed $X^2 = 2.496$, CFI=.969, TLI=.959, RMSEA=.060 90% CI [.047;.074] PClose=.098, SRMR=.0378). This solution has good reliability ($CR_{WorkEnviron}=.88$; $CR_{Training\&Develop}=.81$; $CR_{WLB}=.77$; $CR_{Compensation}=.73$) as well as convergent validity ($AVE_{WorkEnviron}=.596$; $AVE_{Training\&Develop}=.588$; $AVE_{WLB}=.627$; $AVE_{Compensation}=.576$) and the latent constructs have good discriminant validity (highest HTMT =.884, judged liberally). Figure 2.1 shows the graphic representation of the solution found.

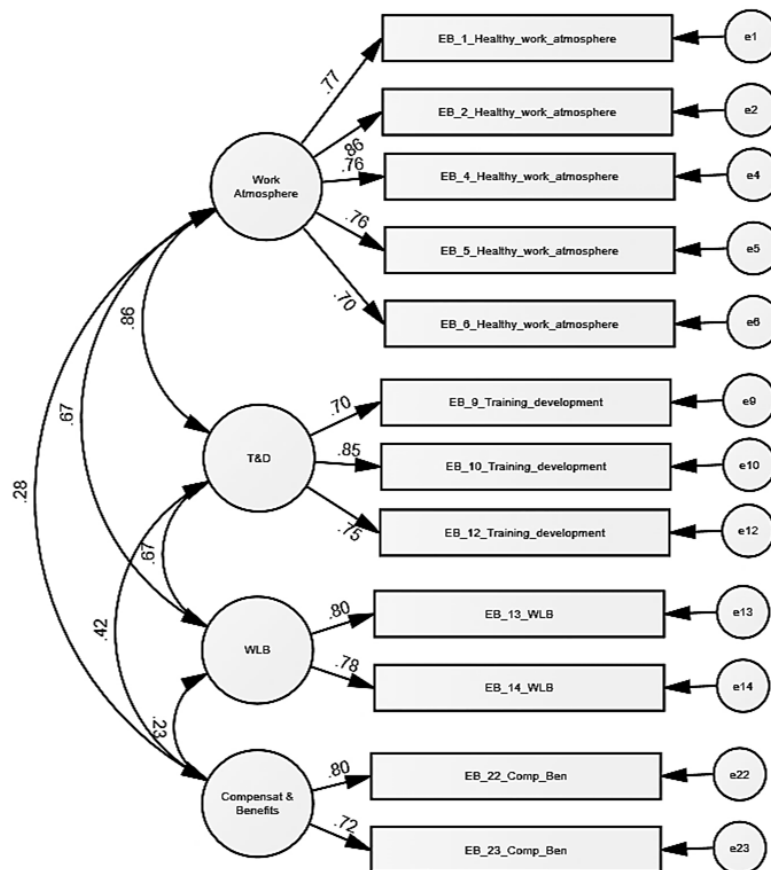


Figure 1.1 – CFA for Employer Branding

2.4.2. Work Engagement

Work engagement was measured with Sinval et al. (2018) Portuguese adaptation of the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) (Schaufeli et al., 2006), a shorten

version of the original scale, containing nine items with responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never/almost never” to “always/almost always”. For this construct, three dimensions were considered: Vigor (“At my work, I feel bursting with energy”), Dedication (“My job inspires me”), and Absorption (“I get carried away when I am working”). The confirmatory factor analysis showed poor fit indices for the original solution ($\chi^2(24) = 135.584$, $p < .001$, Normed $\chi^2 = 5.649$, CFI=.961, TLI=.942, RMSEA=.106 90% CI [.089;.124] PClose=.000, SRMR=.0365) with Lagrange Multipliers indicating covariances between some error terms. A principal component analysis suggested a single common factor (KMO=.931, Bartlett’s $\chi^2(36) = 2897.485$; accounting for 66.5% variance). A single first order factor was tested with a CFA to find some misfit, which, after using Lagrange Multipliers and introducing some covariance between errors showed good fit indices ($\chi^2(23) = 44.579$, $p < .001$, Normed $\chi^2 = 1.938$, CFI=.993, TLI=.988, RMSEA=.048 90% CI [.026;.068] PClose=.543, SRMR=.0203). This solution has good reliability (CR=.934) as well as convergent validity (AVE=.614). Figure 2.2 shows the graphic representation of the solution found.

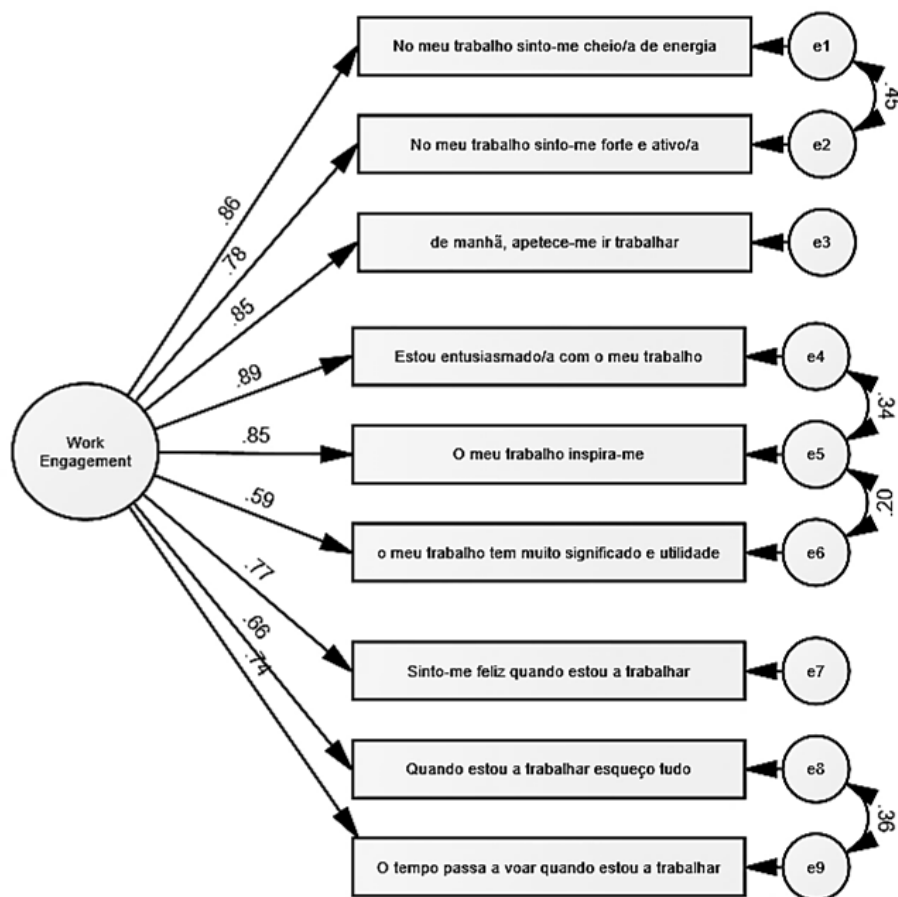


Figure 2.2 – CFA of Work Engagement

2.4.3. Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational Citizenship Behavior was measured with a 13-item scale from Podsakoff et al. (1997) that comprises three dimensions: Helping behavior (7 items, e.g. “Help each other out if someone falls behind in his/her work.”), Civic virtue (3 items, e.g. “Provide constructive suggestions about how the crew can improve its effectiveness.”), and sportsmanship (3 items, e.g. “Consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters” - reversed). The confirmatory factor analysis showed good fit indices for the original solution ($X^2(62) = 169.257$, $p < .001$, Normed $X^2 = 2.730$, CFI = .962, TLI = .952, RMSEA = .065 90% CI [.053; .076] PClose = .019, SRMR = .0365). All latent constructs have good reliability ($CR_{\text{helpingbehav}} = .912$; $CR_{\text{civic_virtue}} = .841$; $CR_{\text{sportsmanship}} = .726$) and two of the latent constructs have also good convergent validity ($AVE_{\text{helpingbehav}} = .596$; $AVE_{\text{sportsmanship}} = .640$) but Civic virtue has too low convergent validity to be considered in further analyses ($AVE_{\text{civic_virtue}} = .471$). The HTMT analysis indicates no issues pertaining to discriminant validity (the highest HTMT value found is .833 between helping behavior and civic virtue). The full solution is depicted in figure 2.3.

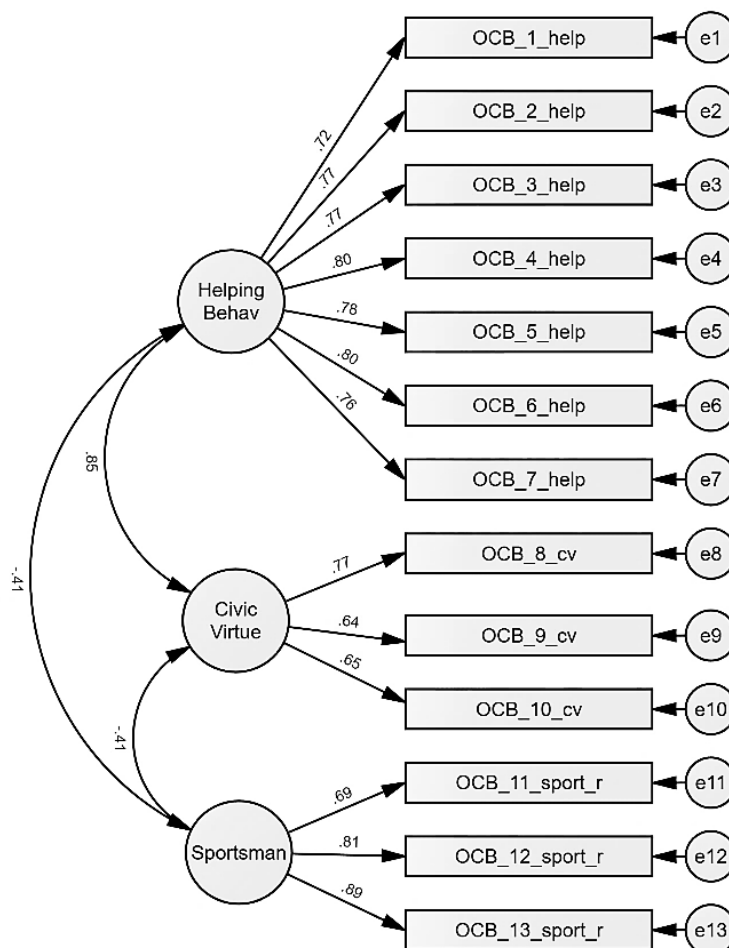


Figure 2.3 – CFA for Organizational Citizenship Behavior

2.4.4. Generation cohorts

Generation studies frequently adopt years of birth and fit them in a certain generation cohort. However, because generation is defined by specific historical and social events, these studies tend to generalize and misrepresent the country in question. Following a study (Faria, 2014) that aimed to verify these cohorts in the Portuguese population, we will use the author's age cut-offs to measure this variable. Baby boomers go from 1946 to 1964, Gen X from 1965-1980, Gen Y/Millennials from 1981 to 2000 and Gen Z from 2001 to the current date.

2.4.5. Control variables

Some sociodemographic variables were measured for descriptive and control purposes. Namely: Gender (1=male, 2=female, 3=other, 4=prefer not to disclose), Year of birth, Education (1= 1st cycle (4 years schooling), 2= 2nd cycle (6 years schooling), 3= 3rd cycle (9 years schooling), 4= High School (12 years schooling), 5= Bachelors, 6= Master, 7= PhD), and Organizational Tenure (expressed in years).

3. Results

This section starts with the descriptive and bivariate statistics to proceed to test the hypotheses.

3.1. Descriptive and bivariate statistics

The descriptive and bivariate statistics (Table 1) indicate moderate reports on most of the variables under study. Employer branding experience is averagely reported close to the scale midpoint ($M=3.106$, $SD=.787$ 95% CI [.027; .186]). Still, it is significantly above that position ($t(377)=2.639$, $p=.009$). Work engagement is also reported slightly above the scale midpoint ($M=3.283$, $SD=.889$, $t(377)=6.191$, $p<.001$ 95% CI [.193; .373]). Participants perceive moderate to high levels of organizational citizenship behaviors in all three components (ranging from 3.586 to 3.822).

The sociodemographic variables show a pattern of association with some variables in the conceptual model. Namely, education has several positive associations with these variables - all except Sportsmanship ($r=.076$, $p>.05$) - and the same, but in reverse valence, is observed as regards education. The more educated the participant the higher the likelihood they will report higher values of employer branding, work engagement, or citizenship behaviors (helping behavior and civic virtue). It is worth noting that employer branding is associated with all the sociodemographic variables especially with organizational tenure ($r=-.325$, $p<.01$) and education ($r=.291$, $p<.01$).

The positive and moderately strong correlation found between employer branding experience and work engagement ($r=.606$, $p<.01$) together with the positive association between these and the three components of citizenship behavior, encourage the conceptual model.

Table 3.1 – Descriptive and Bivariate Statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	-	-	1								
2. Age	40	10.77	.192	1							
3. GenXY	-	-	.168*	-.869**	1						
4. Education	4.54	1.07	.106	-.214**	.135**	1					
5. Org.Tenure	11.20	10.45	.160	.717**	-.626**	-.295**	1				
6. EBE	3.10	.78	.200*	-.244**	.168**	.291**	-.325**	1			
7. WEngagement	3.28	.88	.124	.009	-.044	.270**	-.169**	.606**	1		
8. OCB_HBeh	3.85	.70	.140	-.080	.062	.157**	-.156**	.488**	.512**	1	
9. OCB_Sportsm	3.58	.90	.100	.022	-.053	.076	.064	.217**	.188**	.344**	1
10. OCB_CivicVirt	3.82	.67	.199	-.085	.059	.194**	-.125*	.450**	.461**	.688**	.333**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; For binary data Phi Coefficient and non-ordinal crossings Cramer's V and Eta values are reported.

3.2. Hypotheses testing

The conceptual model entails direct, indirect, and conditional effects which Table 3.2 reports.

As regards to direct effects, the conceptual model proposes employer branding has a positive direct effect both on OCB (H1) and on Work Engagement (H2) while Work engagement has a positive direct effect on OCB (H3).

Findings showed that employer branding does have a significant positive direct effect on OCB helping behavior ($\beta = .249$, CI 95% [.124; .369], H1a) but not on OCB sportsmanship (H1c). It has also a significant positive effect on work engagement ($\beta = .749$, $p < .001$, CI 95% [.633; .862], H2) which has a positive direct effect on OCB helping behavior ($\beta = .279$, CI 95% [.200; .362]) but not on OCB sportsmanship (H3c). This supports H1a, H2, and H3a but rejects H1c and H3c. Thus, the overall direct effects towards OCB helping behavior are supported while those hypothesized towards OCB sportsmanship are not.

Findings concerning the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between Employer Branding and OCB (H4), evidenced that there is a positive indirect effect of employer branding on OCB helping behavior via Work engagement ($\beta = .209$, CI 95% [.144; .281]), supporting H4a. However, the same indirect effect does not occur with OCB sportsmanship, rejecting H4c.

As for the conditional effects, generations showed a statistically significant interaction both with the positive direct and with the indirect effect of employer branding on organizational citizenship behavior (H5 and H6). This interaction is visible with the positive direct effect of employer branding on OCB sportsmanship ($\beta = .225$, [.010; .448], H5c) in such a way that Generation X decreases the effect, while generation Y increases it, supporting H5c (Figure 3.1).

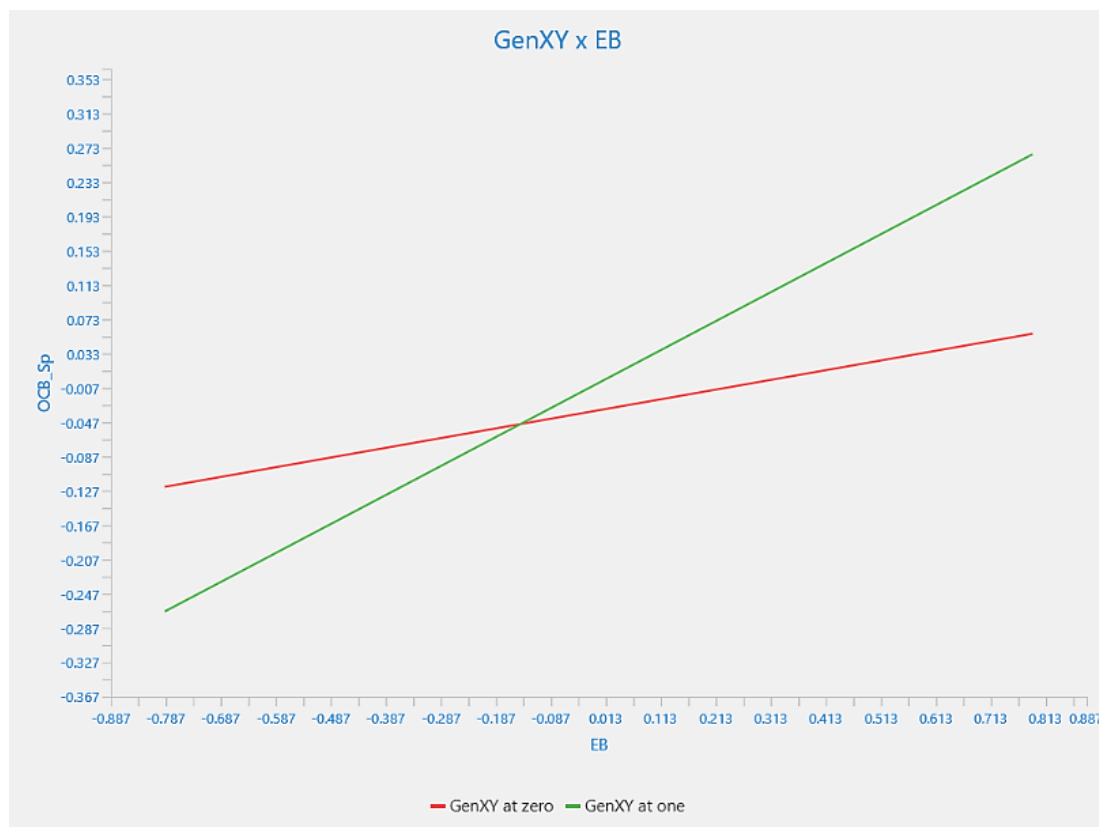


Figure 3.1 – Interaction between Generation and EBE explaining OCB sportsmanship.

However, such was not observed in explaining OCB helping behavior ($B = -.002$, $SE = 0.025$, $p = .490$ CI 95 [-.160; .159]), thus giving no support to an interaction effect, which rejects H5a.

As regards conditional indirect effects, generations do interact with the indirect effect of employer branding on OCB helping behavior via WE, but this interaction has a

negative valence ($\beta = -.045$, $[-.089; -.003]$) which goes counter to the hypothesized, thus rejecting H6a. No interaction was found between generations and the negative indirect effect of employer branding on OCB sportsmanship, which rejects H6c.

The hypothesized interaction between generations and the positive direct effect of employer branding on work engagement, stated Generation Y would leverage up this effect. However, although an interaction is observed ($\beta = -.161$, $p = .044$, 95% CI $[-.316; -.009]$), contrary to expectation, Generation X has a stronger effect than Generation Y. This is a faint effect as depicted in Figure 3.2, but it is still a significant one, which rejects H5d.

The proposed statistical model explains a total of 35.5% of the variance of Organizational Citizenship behavior ($R^2_{\text{helping behavior}} = 30.6\%$; $R^2_{\text{Sportsmanship}} = 4.9\%$) reported by the participants and no variance inflation issues were found (highest VIF between predictors is 3.365).

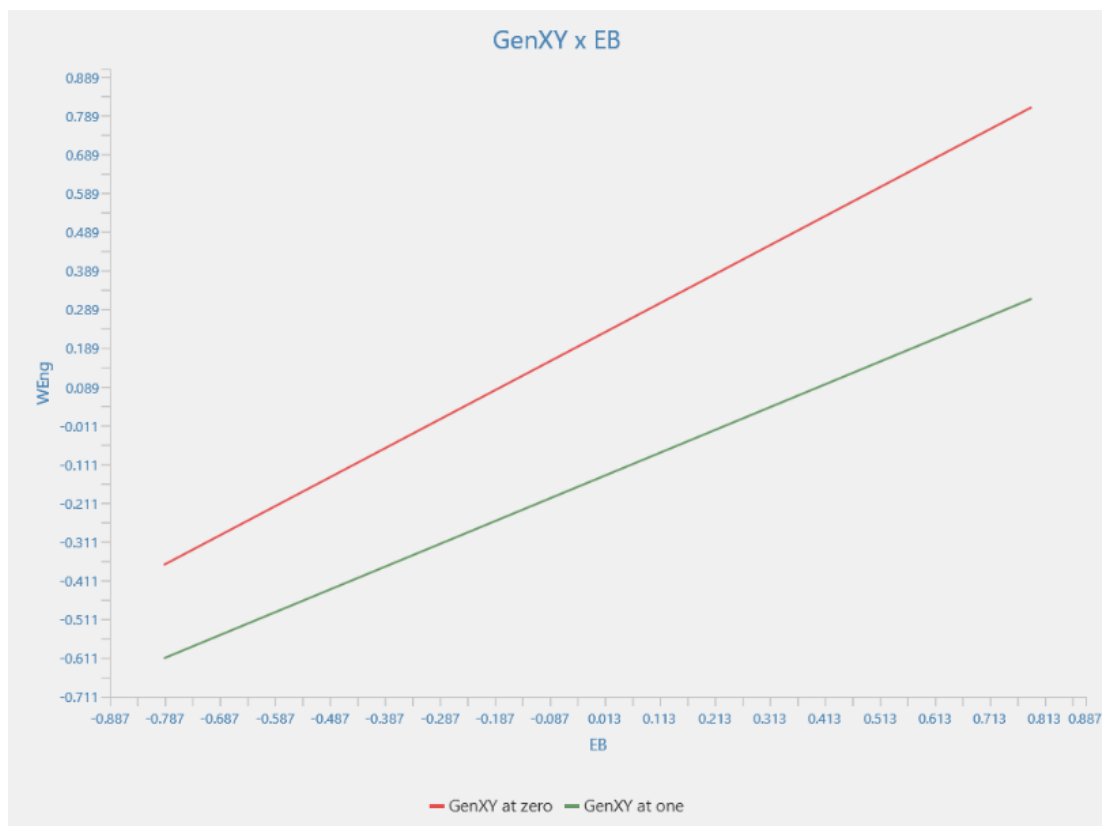


Figure 3.2 – Interaction between Generation and EBE explaining Work Engagement

The overall model coefficients and p-values are depicted in Figure 3.3.

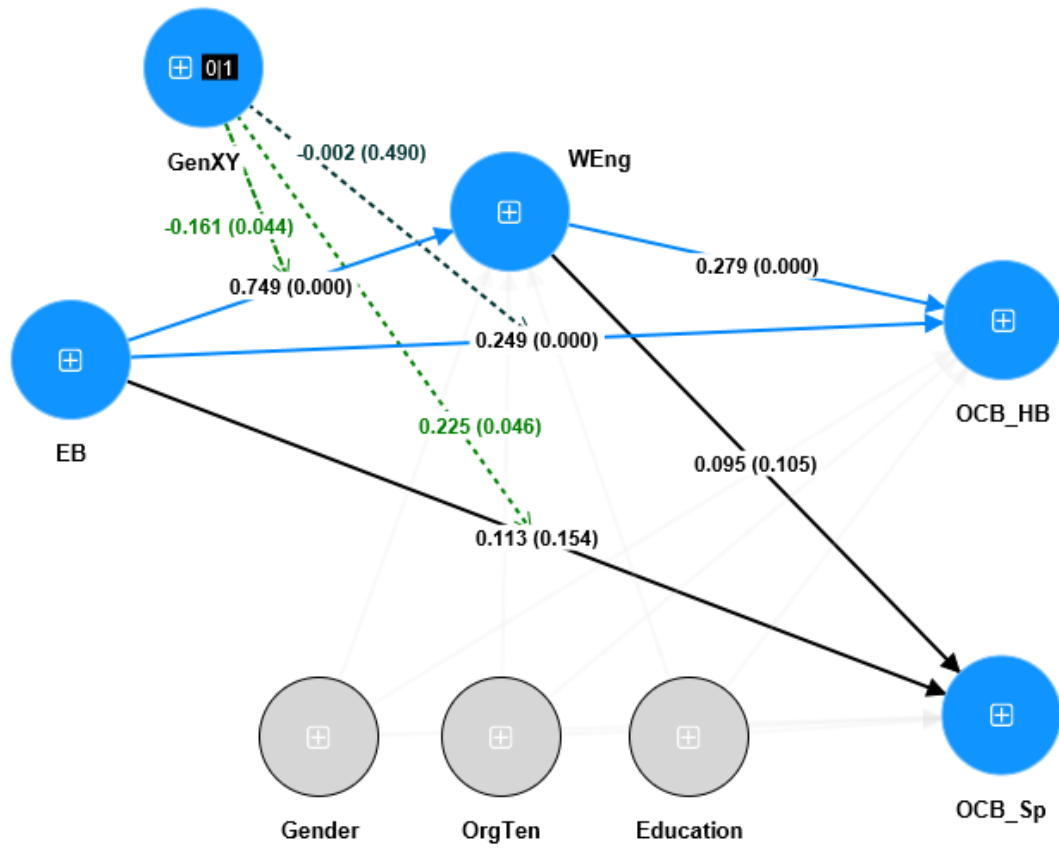


Figure 3.3 – Conceptual model test

Table 3.2 – Direct, Indirect, and Conditional effects

	Work Engagement					OCB Helping Behavior					OCB Sportsmanship					
	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>CI 95% LB UB</i>		β	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>CI 95% LB UB</i>		β	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>CI 95% LB UB</i>		
Direct effects																
Gender	.04	.819	.206	[-.041; .121]		-.016	.362	.359	[-.091; .057]		-.103*	1.712	.043	[-.203; -.004]		
Education	.097**	2.603	.005	[.039; .159]		-.014	.465	.321	[-.064; .035]		.021	.453	.325	[-.053; .096]		
Org.Tenure	-.006	1.301	.097	[-.014; .001]		.001	.266	.395	[-.005; .007]		.014**	2.549	.005	[.005; .023]		
GenXY	-.368**	3.932	.000	[-.524; -.214]		.061	.771	.220	[-.071; .190]		.032	0.254	.400	[-.177; .231]		
Emp.Branding	.749**	10.684	.000	[.633; .862]	H2	.249**	3.318	.000	[.124; .369]	H1a	.113	1.021	.154	[-.073; .290]	H1c	
WorkEng.						.279**	5.691	.000	[.200; .362]	H3a	.095	1.255	.105	[-.025; .221]	H3c	
Indirect effects																
Emp.Branding.						.209**	5.067	.000	[.144; .281]	H4a	.071	1.245	.107	[-.018; .166]	H4c	
Conditional effects																
EB*GenXY (direct)	-.161*	1.707	.044	[-.316; -.009]	H5d	-.002	0.025	.490	[-.160; .159]	H5a	.225*	1.687	.046	[.010; .448]	H5c	
EB*GenXY (indirect)						-.045*	1.679	.047	[-.089; -.003]	H6a	-.015	0.934	.175	[-.047; .005]	H6c	
R ² adj= 39.7%						R ² adj= 30.6%						R ² adj= 4.9%				

Note. **p*<.05; ***p*<.01

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Attracting and motivating employees to be engaged in their tasks and be loyal to their employers has become a challenge. This is because a knowledge-based economy is developing and there is a consensus on human resources being vital to organizational success. Investments are now made not only on employees' education but also on their health, work-life balance, and positive environment, taken from the perspective of organization's social responsibility. Because people are an essential resource, these strategies are critical to give organizations a competitive advantage (Ludviga & Sluka, 2023).

The present study explores how positive initiatives can increase employees' engagement levels, resulting in the occurrence of behaviors that protect, promote, and benefit organizations, which are collectively named as organizational citizenship behaviors (Sulea et al., 2012). Most importantly, these behaviors are spontaneous, not being formally required in a job description. So, they fall entirely within the discretionary power of each individual. Subtly, these behaviors benefit the general performance of the organization and can be predicted by the conditions and satisfaction of individuals' needs and expectations (Wörtler et al., 2019).

Such universal statements are usually departing from the assumption that best practices hold irrespective of the context. However, the nature of the variables under study advise otherwise. As the motivational profile of generations changes, i.e., the specific needs, expectations, and valued outcomes from a work experience (Becton et al., 2014; Park & Gursoy, 2012), so should employer branding differentially enact (enhance or diminish) the motivational strength associated with a specific employer branding perception. Therefore, a generational perspective is needed to accommodate the current challenges in recruiting and retaining individuals through generations.

The conceptual model thus, depicts a moderated mediation where generations are the moderator, and the mediation is observed in the indirect effect of employer branding experience and organizational citizenship behavior via work engagement.

The first finding that deserves attention concerns the descriptive and bivariate statistics. These suggest participants hold a modest view on employer branding experience albeit it tends to be more positive than neutral and that their level of work engagement is also positive but of modest magnitude. Some of the variables in the conceptual model are associated with education and organizational tenure which can be ascribed to the concomitant "young-more educated" sample. It also suggests employer branding has a specific cohort subjective experience, thus encouraging the moderator

role of generations, especially because generation XY is not found to be statistically associated with work engagement and citizenship behaviors.

Findings on the six hypotheses corroborated a few direct, indirect, and conditional effects proposed. The first hypothesis proposed that a positive employer branding experience leads directly to a higher occurrence of OCBs. However, two components of OCB are analyzed in this study, and OCB helping behavior was found to be the only one positively predicted by EBE, which supports H1a and rejects H1c, corresponding to the other component, OCB Sportsmanship. This indicates that EBE does not predict employees' sportsmanship, i.e., a positive and loyal attitude towards the organization, preventing negative incidents to harm its success. From a Social Exchange Theory viewpoint, which proposes that needs satisfaction and favorable conditions given by employers may enhance employees to exhibit OCBs (Gupta et al., 2021), helping behavior is the OCB component that is most clearly visible as a behavior, which under the rule of reciprocation can easily be characterized as a social exchange. Conversely, sportsmanship is less visible as a behavior (and less frequently reported than other OCB components) and thus gains less centrality.

The second hypothesis is also supported, encouraging a positive employer branding experience so to promote higher levels of work engagement. This result goes in line with other investigations that conclude employees that feel supported by their employer and their EB strategies are more involved in their work tasks (Davies et al., 2018; Gupta et al. 2021; Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

As for the association that work engagement has with OCB components, findings show that employees that are engaged display more OCBs in the form of helping behaviors but not in the form of sportsmanship. This is supported by the literature (Chen et al., 2020; Christian et al., 2011; Shantz et al., 2013), however most studies use OCB as a unitarian construct and this sportsmanship dimension is not isolated in this line of studies.

As for the mediating role of work engagement, and following findings pertaining to the previous hypotheses, it is logical to witness different indirect effects according to the OCB component. In this case, work engagement only mediates the relationship between EBE and OCB helping behavior. As Gupta et al. (2021) reports work engagement is a strong mediator of the association of employer branding with organizational citizenship behavior, where employees with high levels of engagement feel supported by their organizations in such a way that they are willing to go beyond their predefined tasks. However, again, this study uncovers the possibility that such indirect effect does not reach all OCB behaviors, just the altruistic ones. This can be explained by the

“dedication” facet of work engagement which may be expressed in a pro-social way, by extending the sense of significance into helping co-workers.

As for the role of generations as a contextual variable, in this study a conditional effect was expected in the direct relationship between EBE and OCB, but also, in the indirect association between EBE and OCB via work engagement. Findings did support a generational effect where Millennials (Gen Yers) reporting a positive EBE exhibit more helping behavior than its counterparts in generation X. This means that EBE can enact stronger OCB (helping behavior) in Gen Yers without the need to strengthen work engagement, thus suggesting highest sensitivity to EBE in this cohort. Although this could be attributed to being more trusting in organizational communication (as observed in EBE) it is worth noticing that age has no association with OCB, thus discouraging this interpretation.

This result goes in line with two Gen Y main characteristics, i.e., being collaborative and valuing a healthy work environment and development and training opportunities. These features are included in employer branding as potential attractors, and they are especially effective for millennials. Conversely, Gen Xers are more individualistic and may not identify so strongly with current EBE.

The examination of the specific interaction effect on the first step (EBE on work engagement) offered a surprising finding suggesting Gen Xers experience stronger effect than Gen Yers. This can be since Xers do not directly activate OCBs based on EBE, and thus all the psychological process flows through work engagement, while Yers work both ways (as the concept of “partial mediation” refers to). It is important to highlight that both Xers and Yers do increase their work engagement in association with an increased EBE and that this effect is faint. Because of this finding and those reported in the previous hypotheses, none of the sub-hypotheses pertaining to the mediated moderation gained empirical support. However, this rejection occurred only because literature review pointed towards stronger effects in Gen Yers. When uncovering how these effects would be mediated by work engagement, the opposite was found which can have several interpretations. Firstly, as stated, Gen Yers can be so reactive to a valued EBE that OCB behaviors are triggered directly as a means of reciprocation to the organization. This would reduce the effect through WE. Secondly, as a construct that gained ground in organizational psychology, work engagement, may not comprehend the entire psychological processes that account for such indirect effect, and it is possible that other constructs play a stronger role as intervening variables for Gen Yers.

4.1. Limitations

The results obtained allowed to investigate the hypotheses proposed. However, like all studies, this one presents a few limitations to consider and improve in future studies.

As for the sampling technique, using a non-probabilistic convenience always casts doubts on its representativeness that cannot be assured. The choice for using a quantitative approach only, may hamper the ability to gain a deeper perspective and testimony on the variables in question. However, there is enough literature to support a hypothetic-deductive approach although it is reasonable to consider that generations, due to its historical grounds, may bring novelty depending on the country.

Although data diversity tends to be valuable, it may also mask context-specificities that could be ascertained by conducting this study in e.g., the same industry. Likewise, the conceptual model could benefit from the inclusion of an objective performance measure to better relate with valued KPIs.

Although there is some skepticism about using generational cohorts as a moderating variable and a risk of working upon stereotypes, we endeavored to adjust cohort boundaries to the specific Portuguese history. Still, this may not take into consideration the intra-cohort differences that will pass unnoticed. As an alternative, studies can extend this one by focusing on life stage instead of age to define cohorts.

4.2. Practical and Theoretical Implications

This dissertation may offer some relevant contributions, especially for organizational psychology and behavioral sciences as well as to inform organizational practice.

Despite some criticism to the construct itself of generational cohort, research focused on cohort effects are persistent and journals continue to find them relevant. For organizational psychologists and HRM professionals this sort of studies offers insights to improve their practice in managing people. Such is the case of our findings as organizations can maximize their attractiveness by means of employer branding adjusting its importance according to generational cohorts. Additionally, organizational psychologist can closely work with communication and marketing departments to leverage future organizational citizenship behaviors.

Considering that if this study contributes for the literature by supporting the effect that employer branding has on OCB, this may impulse the need for future studies to understand and investigate how employer branding initiatives should be formulated considering that the most recent generations are becoming less connected to their employers and with reduced work centrality in their lives. In this sense, this sort of future

research line can contribute to widening theory to sustain a high level of OCB even when employees give less importance to the EBE of their organization. Still in the generational implications, this work can be a propulsor for thinking about how OCB can be constant in the self-centered generations that are the future of the workplace.

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Annex

Annex A – Questionnaire applied to participants.

O presente questionário foi desenvolvido no âmbito de uma investigação académica no ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. O objetivo do mesmo é investigar alguns aspetos relativos à atividade profissional da população portuguesa.

Contamos com o seu contributo. A sua participação é anónima e voluntária, assim como os dados obtidos são confidenciais e serão estritamente utilizados para fins académicos. Não existem respostas certas ou erradas, pelo que pedimos a sua opinião sincera durante o preenchimento. O questionário tem a duração média de 5 minutos.

Se houver alguma dúvida por favor contacte-nos em mramh@iscte-iul.pt.

Se estiver de acordo em participar, por favor carregue na seta abaixo.

Agradecemos a sua disponibilidade em participar!

Rita Horák

Annex B – Work situation

De momento está a trabalhar?

☐ Sim

☐ Não

Annex C – Employer Branding Scale

Tendo em conta a sua perceção acerca da organização em que trabalha, indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações.

Discordo Fortemente (1)	Discordo (2)	Não Concordo, Nem Discordo (3)	Concordo (4)	Concordo Fortemente (5)
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1. A minha organização dá autonomia aos colaboradores para tomarem decisões.
2. A minha organização oferece oportunidades para desfrutar de um bom clima de trabalho.
3. Tenho amigos no trabalho que, na minha ausência, estão prontos para assumir as minhas responsabilidades no trabalho.
4. Obtenho reconhecimento da minha organização quando faço um bom trabalho.
5. A minha organização oferece um ambiente de trabalho relativamente livre de stress.
6. A minha organização oferece a oportunidade de trabalhar em equipa.
7. A minha organização oferece aos colaboradores cursos de formação online.
8. A minha organização organiza regularmente várias conferências, workshops e programas de formação.
9. A minha organização oferece oportunidades para trabalhar em projetos no estrangeiro.
10. A minha organização investe fortemente no desenvolvimento dos colaboradores.
11. O desenvolvimento de competências é um processo contínuo na minha organização.
12. A minha organização comunica de forma clara a trajetória de progressão para os seus colaboradores.
13. A minha organização oferece horários de trabalho flexíveis.
14. A minha organização oferece a oportunidade de trabalhar a partir de casa.
15. A minha organização dispõe de instalações desportivas no próprio local.
16. A minha organização tem uma atitude justa para com os colaboradores.
17. Espera-se que os colaboradores sigam todas as regras e regulamentos.
18. A minha organização é humanitária, no sentido que procura devolver à sociedade.
19. Existe um procedimento confidencial para denunciar má conduta no trabalho.
20. Em geral, o salário oferecido pela minha organização é alto.
21. A minha organização paga horas extra.
22. A minha organização oferece bons benefícios /planos de saúde.
23. A minha organização oferece cobertura de seguro para os colaboradores e dependentes.

Annex D – Work Engagement Scale

As seguintes afirmações relacionam-se com a forma como se sente no trabalho. Por favor, leia atentamente cada uma delas e indique em que medida as seguintes frases descrevem a frequência de como se sente no seu local de trabalho.

Nunca/Quase Nunca (1)	Raramente (2)	Às Vezes (3)	Regularmente (4)	Sempre/Quase Sempre (5)
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1. No meu trabalho sinto-me cheio/a de energia.
2. No meu trabalho sinto-me forte e ativo/a.
3. Estou entusiasmado/a com o meu trabalho.
4. O meu trabalho inspira-me.
5. Quando me levanto de manhã, apetece-me ir trabalhar.
6. Sinto-me feliz quando estou a trabalhar intensivamente.
7. Acho que o meu trabalho tem muito significado e utilidade.
8. Quando estou a trabalhar esqueço tudo o que se passa à minha volta.
9. O tempo passa a voar quando estou a trabalhar.

Annex E – Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale

Indique em que medida os seguintes comportamentos são característicos na sua equipa de trabalho.

Discordo Fortemente (1)	Discordo (2)	Não Concordo, Nem Discordo (3)	Concordo (4)	Concordo Fortemente (5)
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1. Entregue ajuda quando alguém se atrasa no seu trabalho.
2. Partilhar de livre vontade o conhecimento com outros membros da equipa.
3. Tentar agir como mediadores quando outros membros da equipa têm desentendimentos.
4. Tomar medidas para tentar evitar problemas com outros membros da equipa.
5. Dar voluntariamente o seu tempo para ajudar os membros da equipa que tenham problemas relacionados com o trabalho.
6. Entrar em contacto com outros membros da equipa antes de iniciar ações que os possam afetar.
7. Encorajar-se mutuamente quando alguém está em baixo.
8. Apresentar sugestões construtivas sobre como a equipa pode melhorar a sua eficácia.
9. Estar disposto a arriscar a desaprovação para expressar as suas crenças sobre o que é melhor para a equipa.
10. Estar presente e participar ativamente nas reuniões da equipa.
11. Focar sempre no que está errado, em vez de ver o lado positivo.
12. Passar muito tempo a queixar-se de assuntos triviais.
13. Encontrar sempre falhas no que os outros membros da equipa estão a fazer.

Annex F – Sociodemographic variables (gender, year of birth, education level, organizational tenure)

Indique o seu género:

- ☐ Feminino
- ☐ Masculino
- ☐ Outro
- ☐ Prefiro não partilhar

Indique o ano em que nasceu:

Indique o seu nível de escolaridade:

- ☐ 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico (4º ano)
- ☐ 2º Ciclo do Ensino Básico (6º ano)
- ☐ 3º Ciclo do Ensino Básico (9º ano)
- ☐ Ensino Secundário (12º ano)
- ☐ Licenciatura
- ☐ Mestrado
- ☐ Doutoramento

Há quantos anos trabalha na organização em que está?
