

Trust and organizational climate: an essential link in the business environment

Confianza y clima organizacional: Un vínculo esencial en el ámbito empresarial

ABSTRACT

Trust and organizational climate are factors that affect performance and job satisfaction in companies. This study analyzes the relationship between trust and organizational climate, key factors for performance and job satisfaction in different business environments. Through a systematic review based on the PRISMA methodology, with a qualitative and descriptive-analytical approach, recent empirical research published in academic databases such as Scopus was examined. The results showed that a positive organizational climate, based on mutual trust, improves employee motivation, commitment, and productivity, while reducing staff turnover. Factors such as role clarity, leadership, effective communication, and organizational support were identified as determining factors in this relationship. It is concluded that strengthening trust within organizations contributes significantly to team cohesion and talent retention. It is recommended that future research delve deeper into the ethical dimensions of trust and its integration into business management models.

Keywords: Trust, organizational climate, job satisfaction, business performance, leadership.

RESUMEN

La confianza y el clima organizacional son factores que afectan el rendimiento y la satisfacción laboral en las empresas. El presente estudio analiza la relación entre la confianza y el clima organizacional, factores clave para el desempeño y la satisfacción laboral en diferentes entornos empresariales. A través de una revisión sistemática basada en la metodología PRISMA, con un enfoque cualitativo y descriptivo-analítico, se examinaron investigaciones empíricas recientes publicadas en bases de datos académicas como Scopus. Los resultados evidenciaron que un clima organizacional positivo, fundamentado en la confianza mutua, mejora la motivación, el compromiso y la productividad de los empleados, al tiempo que reduce la rotación de personal. Factores como la claridad de roles, el liderazgo, la comunicación efectiva y el soporte organizacional fueron identificados como determinantes en esta relación. Se concluye que fortalecer la confianza dentro de las organizaciones contribuye significativamente a la cohesión del equipo y a la retención del talento, recomendándose que futuras investigaciones profundicen en las dimensiones éticas de la confianza y su integración en modelos de gestión empresarial.

Palabras clave: Confianza, clima organizacional, satisfacción laboral, desempeño empresarial, liderazgo.

INTRODUCTION

Trust and organizational climate (OC) represent two fundamental pillars in any company structure and functioning. Trust is defined as the inclination of individuals to be vulnerable to the actions of others, confident that these will be aligned with their expectations and values. OC, in turn, refers to the set of shared perceptions among employees regarding the company's policies, norms, and practices, as well as its general atmosphere. Although distinct, both elements are intrinsically related and play a crucial role in business success and employee well-being.

Trust in the business context can be multidimensional, encompassing confidence in the integrity, competence, and benevolence of leaders and coworkers. Without this trust, collaborative efforts can be undermined, and ultimately, productivity and innovation may suffer. A high level of trust can mitigate conflict, foster more open communication, and improve team cohesion and morale, leading to superior and more sustainable organizational performance (Blanco et al., 2020).

At the same time, Bustamante-Ubilla et al. (2018) point out that the organizational climate is shaped by tangible and intangible variables, such as the hierarchical structure, decision-making, growth opportunities and achievements recognition, as well as employees' subjective perception of their work environment. A positive organizational climate translates into an environment where employees feel valued, secure, and motivated, which facilitates their personal and professional growth. Furthermore, this climate can directly influence talent retention and reduce employee turnover, critical elements in today's business dynamics.

Therefore, establishing a connection between the two concepts implies recognizing that a solid foundation of trust can improve the organizational climate by reducing uncertainty and promoting more transparent and equitable practices. Similarly, a healthy OC can strengthen trust by ensuring that company policies and practices are perceived as fair and consistent. This relationship points to a virtuous cycle in which trust and OC reinforce each other, driving organizations toward a more cohesive and resilient work environment.

In this way, OC has become a central issue for those who wish to foster a healthy corporate culture in which each member feels motivated and committed to their tasks and goals. This, in turn, contributes to the organization success in an increasingly professional business environment (Bravo et al., 2023).

Trust and OC are two fundamental elements of success in business. According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is an acceptance of being exposed to the actions of third parties, based on the belief that the third party will perform a specific transaction that is significant for the person placing their trust in, regardless of the possibility of supervising or controlling that person. This can influence communication and collaboration between members of a specific group.

In turn, OC, according to Chiavenato (2000), refers to the work environment characteristics observed by the members of a certain group of individuals, and which directly impact the workers performance. Authors such as Vargas-González (2022) consider that

currently, trust is an element that leads to the organizations success, for this reason, actions are developed for its acquisition, increase, conservation, and even recovery. In the authors' of this research opinion, these definitions are relevant in the business field.

Therefore, the controversial situation that emerges from this study is that many organizations experience an environment of distrust that negatively affects the work environment, which, in turn, impacts their employees' performance and job satisfaction (Ancarani et al., 2018). Thus, the research is justified by the need to understand how trust and OC interrelate to improve business results and employee well-being.

Consequently, the following guiding research question is addressed: How do trust and OC influence employee performance and job satisfaction? The objective is to highlight the correlation between trust, OC, performance, and job satisfaction in different business contexts. These constitute variables in this study, which focuses on a population of companies from different sectors in an urban setting, allowing for a broader understanding of how these factors influence employees' work experience.

METHOD

This study conducted a systematic review using the PRISMA methodology to investigate the relationship between trust and OC in the business context. A qualitative approach was adopted, allowing for an in-depth analysis and detailed analysis of the interaction between these variables. The study was classified as descriptive-analytical and formulated as a review of the existing literature.

Inclusion criteria:

- Empirical studies that directly address the dimensions of trust and CO.
- Studies published in the last 5 years in Spanish or English.
- Research that addresses the relationship between CO, performance and job satisfaction.

Exclusion criteria:

- Studies that do not focus on the variables of trust and CO.
- Research that does not address the relationship between these variables and job performance and satisfaction.
- Articles that present a theoretical approach without empirical support.

Scopus academic database search terms related to "trust," "CO," "job performance," and "job satisfaction" were used, combined with Boolean operators to refine the results. Filters were set to include empirical studies published in the last 5 years and written in Spanish or English.

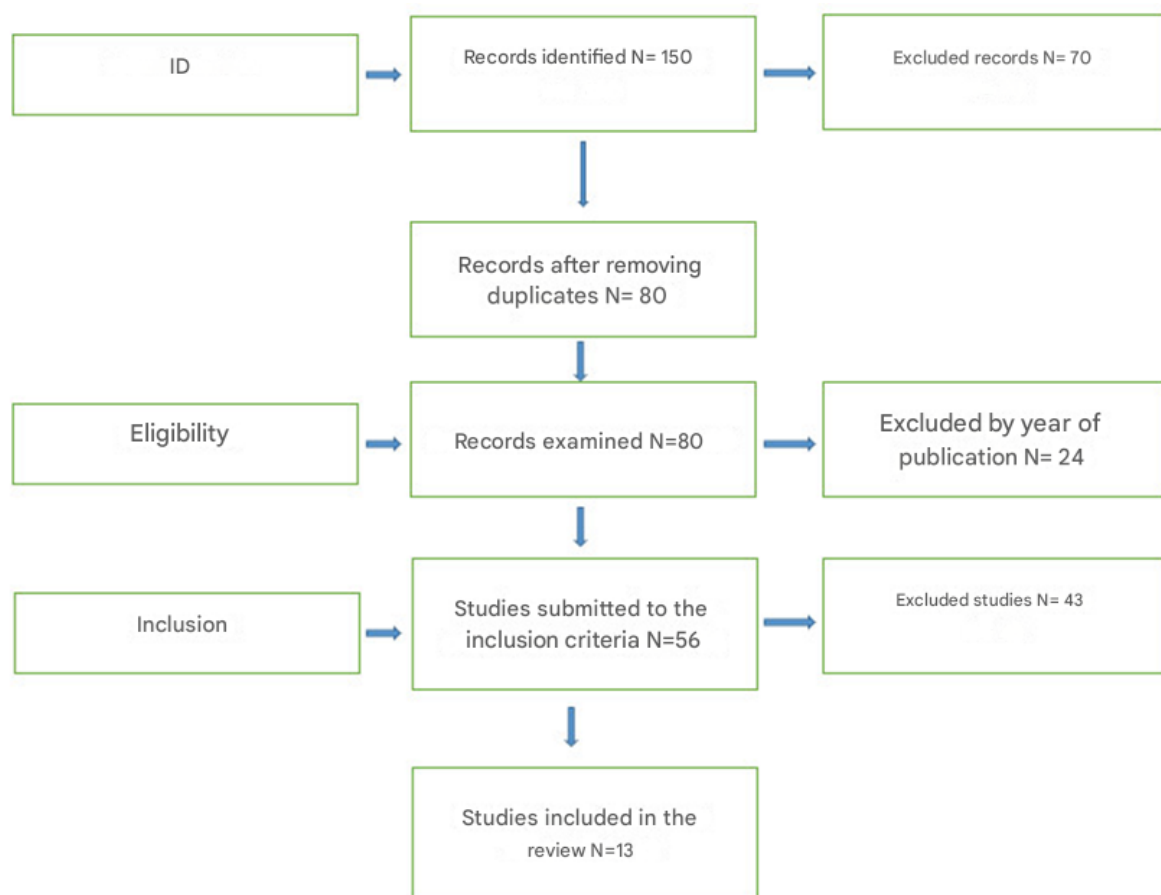
For the development of this research, a rigorous process was implemented to select the studies that would support the systematic review. Figure 1 shows, how a total of 150 relevant records were initially identified. However, of these, 70 were excluded for not meeting the established criteria, resulting in a reduction of the number to 80 records. The remaining

records were then assessed for eligibility. At this stage, duplicates were also removed, thus retaining the 80 records that were examined in detail.

Of these, 24 additional records were disqualified due to their age, as only studies published in recent years were considered. Finally, more specific inclusion criteria were applied to the records examined, resulting in a total of 56 studies that passed this phase. After further analysis, 13 studies were determined to fully meet the inclusion criteria for the final review. This process ensured that the selected articles were relevant and of high quality, which would strengthen the article's conclusions on the link between trust and OC in the business context.

Figure 1.

Document selection process for review (adapted from the PRISMA flowchart).



RESULTS

OC is defined as the collective perception employees have of their work experiences within a company. This perception is formed from the interaction of various elements of work environment, directly affecting both employee's motivation and productivity. When discussing OC, Triwiyanto et al. (2025) refers to a multifaceted construct that encompasses aspects such as organizational culture, management policies, leadership characteristics, internal communication, and the physical work environment itself. In essence, OC acts as a mirror that reflects the company's culture. It is key to business success, as a positive climate

fosters engagement and innovation, while a negative one can result in high turnover rates and poor performance.

For Zamora-Rodríguez et al. (2025), the main components of OC can be classified into several fundamental axes. A first component is role clarity, which involves understanding job responsibilities and expectations, essential for reducing ambiguity and stress. Another crucial aspect is leadership style. Leaders who foster trust and transparency tend to create a more positive and collaborative environment, where employees feel valued and listened to. Effective communication is another essential pillar; an accurate and unhindered flow of information promotes mutual understanding and reduces internal tensions.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider, according to Sagredo-Lillo et al. (2025), perceived organizational support, which refers to the degree to which employees feel the company cares about their well-being and supports their efforts. This support translates into recognition, professional development opportunities, and an adequate work-life balance. Likewise, work autonomy is a critical component that contributes to positive OC. Allowing employees to have control over their tasks and decisions enhances accountability and stimulates creativity.

Each of these components acts interdependently, shaping the organization overall atmosphere. OC, therefore, is not static, but dynamic and vulnerable to changes in any of its components. This dynamism implies that organizations must be vigilant and proactive, conducting periodic OC assessments to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies that strengthen a positive work environment. Thus, promoting trust between employees and leaders becomes an essential strategy for cultivating an OC that fosters employee well-being and, ultimately, business success.

Measuring OC is a fundamental exercise for companies seeking to understand and improve the work environment in order to foster trust among their employees. OC can be defined as the collective perception employees have about the formal and informal policies, practices, and procedures that characterize an organization (Ganga-Contreras et al., 2024). This perception significantly influences their behavior and work performance, as well as their level of engagement and satisfaction. Measuring OC allows companies to identify strengths and areas for improvement, thus implementing strategies that promote a healthier and more collaborative environment.

To carry out this measurement, it is essential to use tools and methodologies that adequately capture employees' perceptions and feelings. One of the most common methodologies is the OC survey, which typically includes questions structured around different dimensions such as internal communication, leadership, recognition, and perceived equity. These surveys must be designed to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, promoting honest and thoughtful responses. Furthermore, it is crucial that the surveys be administered and analyzed periodically to identify trends and changes in OC over time (Verenzuela-Barroeta et al., 2024).

Another complementary technique, according to Celis Domínguez (2024), is the conduct of focus groups, which delve into qualitative aspects of OC. These groups allow for

more dynamic interaction and can reveal underlying causes of problems that quantitative surveys might not capture. Additionally, individual interviews with selected employees also provide a more detailed and personal perspective on the company's culture.

The analysis of data collected through these tools must be carried out thoroughly and systematically. The use of specialized data analysis software can facilitate the identification of significant patterns and correlations between different OC variables. For example, when examining the data, it may be discovered that a negative perception of leadership correlates with low levels of trust among employees, which in turn can be linked to lower productivity and higher employee turnover.

Finally, OC measurement should not be an end in itself, but rather the starting point for implementing concrete improvements. The results obtained must be translated into specific and realistic action plans aimed at strengthening positive areas and correcting perceived deficiencies. Communicating these action plans at all levels of the company is crucial to ensure that employees see and feel the changes, which will strengthen trust in leadership and the organization as a whole. Continuous monitoring and the flexibility to adjust strategies based on new data and feedback will ensure that OC improvements are sustainable and effective over the long term.

OC refers to a company's internal environment, determined by employees' perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures prevailing in their work environment. This perception significantly influences their behavior and attitude, directly impacting their performance and, consequently, business performance. When OC is positive, where open communication, respect, and recognition prevail, employees tend to feel more motivated, satisfied, and engaged. This level of satisfaction and engagement not only boosts morale but also drives productivity and improves the quality of work performed. A healthy OC also fosters trust within the company, which is an essential component for effective team functioning and cross-departmental collaboration. Trust reduces conflict levels and facilitates the honest exchange of ideas, which fosters innovation and effective problem-solving (Torres et al., 2023).

Furthermore, in an environment where employees trust their leaders and colleagues, talent retention is optimized and staff turnover is reduced, factors that are crucial to maintaining organizational stability and growth. On the other hand, a negative OC, characterized by mistrust, lack of recognition, and poor communication, can lead to high levels of stress, job dissatisfaction, and absenteeism. These conditions not only undermine employee morale but also impair their performance and negatively impact overall company performance. Problems such as decreased productivity, frequent errors, and a lack of creativity are some of the consequences of a toxic work environment. Ultimately, the quality of OC is a fundamental determinant of business performance, representing a critical aspect that organizations must carefully manage to achieve their objectives and remain competitive in the market.

Regarding the interrelationship between trust and OC, García-Rubiano et al. (2024) point out that it is an essential aspect of contemporary business management. This dynamic link reflects how both variables influence each other and contribute to business objectives

achievement. OC can be defined as employees' collective perception of the policies, practices, and procedures they experience in their work environment. In turn, trust refers to the positive expectations employees have of the behaviors and their colleagues and leaders decisions.

First and foremost, trust acts as a key element in reinforcing positive OC. When employees trust their leaders and colleagues, they feel more confident expressing their ideas, taking calculated risks, and collaborating effectively. Trust reduces the perception of interpersonal barriers and facilitates open and honest communication. In organizations where trust is strong, employees are more willing to participate in decision-making processes and share essential information, which in turn enriches the process and the achieved results.

On the other hand, OC directly influences the level of trust employees develop. A supportive work environment, where employee well-being is valued, achievements are recognized, and professional development is encouraged, will foster feelings of trust in the organization. Fair organizational practices, such as rewards equitable distribution and impartial handling of conflicts, are essential for maintaining a positive climate and increasing trust among team members.

The opposite case is also relevant and worthy of analysis: a negative OC, characterized by a lack of transparency, high staff turnover, and a lack of support from management, can significantly corrode trust. This deterioration manifests itself in counterproductive behaviors, from decreased productivity to increased internal conflict and a lack of commitment. In an environment where distrust prevails, employees may withhold critical information, become emotionally disconnected from their tasks, and reduce their scope for collaborative effort (Moura et al., 2024).

In business practice, strengthening this interrelationship requires integrated strategies that promote both trust and a healthy OC. Implementing leadership development programs that emphasize empathy, effective communication, and ethical decision-making can be an effective intervention. Similarly, building an organizational culture where transparency, inclusion, and recognition are fundamental pillars will contribute to consolidating this two-way relationship between trust and work environment. Continuous feedback measures, such as surveys and work environment assessments, allow organizations to identify areas for improvement and proactively adjust their policies and practices.

In conclusion, the symbiosis between trust and OC is crucial for achieving a productive and positive work environment. Understanding and managing this interrelationship not only translates into better economic results but also into improved employee well-being overall, creating a virtuous cycle that facilitates company growth and sustainability in a competitive market (Almaqableha and Omarb 2024).

On the other hand, fostering trust in the workplace has become a strategic priority for organizations seeking to create a healthy and productive OC. Trust, an essential element for cohesion and efficient performance, can be enhanced through various strategies, which must be implemented delicately and consistently to address the specificities of each business environment. One of the primary strategies for generating trust in the workplace is open and transparent communication (Velarde-Molina, 2024). Leaders must strive to provide clear,

accurate, and timely information at all levels of the organization, thus ensuring that employees feel informed and valued. Two-way communication is equally crucial; this implies the existence of appropriate channels for employees to express themselves freely, share their concerns, and actively participate in decision-making that directly affects them.

Continuous and constructive feedback also plays a decisive role, helping to align expectations and correct potential deviations in a climate of mutual respect. Equally, the leaders' integrity and consistency are crucial for building trust. Employees must perceive that their superiors act ethically, consistent with corporate values, and faithfully fulfill their commitments. The leaders' visibility and accessibility, along with their willingness to consult and recognize their team merits, are key aspects that reinforce the perception of trustworthy and approachable leadership.

Additionally, Damiano-Aulla et al. (2024) express that recognition of individual and collective performance and achievements is another effective strategy. Implementing fair and equitable reward systems not only motivates employees but also reinforces a sense of belonging and recognition within the organization. Designing personalized professional development plans and growth opportunities also contribute to increasing trust, as they demonstrate the company's commitment to the comprehensive development of its employees. Finally, promoting an environment of collaboration and mutual support is essential. The organizational culture should be oriented toward cooperation, where teamwork and support among colleagues are deeply valued. Promoting integration and team activities building, as well as offering well-being and work-life balance programs, are concrete actions to strengthen interpersonal relationships and, consequently, trust within the company, Davila -Moran and Agüero-Corzo (2023).

In the business world, Flores Urbáez et al. (2023) indicate that the relationship between trust and OC is fundamental to a company's performance, productivity and cohesion. A work environment where trust prevails can establish an atmosphere in which employees feel valued, motivated, and willing to collaborate. Therefore, applying specific techniques to improve OC is not only essential but also strategic for fostering this atmosphere of trust.

An effective technique for increasing OC is the implementation of recognition and reward programs. For her part, Alegría-Zebadúa et al. (2023) indicate that these programs, based on individual and team performance and contributions, can reinforce positive behavior and channel efforts toward common organizational goals. Transparency in the selection criteria and processes for these recognitions is critical, as a lack of clarity can generate mistrust. A well-structured system not only rewards but also motivates other employees to reach their full potential.

Another vital technique is promoting open and effective communication. Creating two-way communication channels allows employees to express their concerns, suggestions, and ideas. Tools such as regular feedback meetings, both individual and group, work climate surveys, and suggestion boxes can be effective. Feedback should be constructive, and actively listening to employees' needs is essential for managing expectations and strengthening trust (Martinolli et al., 2023).

Continuous training and development also play a crucial role. By providing opportunities for professional growth, the company demonstrates an investment in its employees' future. Coaching programs, mentoring and workshops improve technical and leadership skills and increase job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. A culture of continuous learning can be very beneficial, as it creates an environment where development and innovation are valued.

In turn, Beltrán-Hernández et al. (2021) indicate that creating an inclusive and diverse environment cannot be underestimated. Inclusion fosters acceptance and respect for individual differences, which is essential for building strong trust. Policies such as diverse hiring, cultural awareness training, and the creation of employee resource groups are important for cultivating an OC where everyone feels included.

Finally, ethical and consistent leadership is necessary. Leaders must act with integrity, be fair, and consistent in their decisions and behaviors. Leaders who lead by example and demonstrate respect and consideration for their employees contribute significantly to positive OC. Effective leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire trust and successfully manage conflicts that may arise, while maintaining team cohesion. In short, improving OC is a comprehensive and multifaceted process. Implementing techniques focused on recognition and reward, effective communication, professional development, inclusion, and ethical leadership promotes trust within an organization. Adopting these initiatives will strengthen internal relationships and also drive long-term business success.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the research findings highlights the importance of trust and OC in the business context, aligning with the theoretical foundations put forward by several authors. Hernández et al. (2012) emphasize the relationship between OC and culture, as well as the multifaceted nature of the work environment, which cannot be limited to a single component of the competing values model. The study provides evidence that validates the notion that a positive work environment, built on trust and employee satisfaction, promotes motivation and performance.

On the other hand, Gonzalez et al.'s (2021) research on the lack of studies in the public sector that invites reflection on the need to further explore the particularities of these environments, where executive income and its impact on organizational trust are critical aspects to consider. This highlights one of the important contributions of the current study: the need to segment research on OC and trust in different contexts, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of work dynamics in diverse organizations.

However, important limitations must be considered. First, the research is based on theoretical assumptions and a limited review of existing literature, which restricts the generalization of the results to other organizational contexts. The lack of empirical data validating the recommended relationships limits the findings ability to offer firm conclusions. Second, the research does not deeply address cultural and contextual differences, which could

influence the perception of trust and OC in different countries or sectors (McGraw-Hill.Clavijo, 2023).

The present study presents findings that align with previous theoretical foundations on the relationship between OC and variables such as creativity, trust, commitment, and job performance. The approaches of Loaiza et al. (2019) highlight that a positive work environment fosters innovation and adapts to the internal company dynamics. This aspect is directly connected to the study's conclusions, which show that OC and its quality allow us to leverage gender diversity and its benefits for institutional performance.

In relation to Macías et al.'s (2021) approach to employee perceptions, the current study delves into the idea that communication, camaraderie, and working conditions are factors that influence OC and its effectiveness. The relevance of communication and a sense of belonging, also mentioned in the authors' findings, underscore the importance of implementing strategies that seek individual's well-being and foster group cohesion and collaboration.

For its part, the work of De Pelekais et al. (2006) emphasizes emotional intelligence in the construction of OC. In this context, the current study contributes to the field by demonstrating that emotional management and interpersonal skills are vital for effective leadership and the establishment of an environment of trust. The need for ongoing training to develop emotional competencies in managers is considered a key approach to improving job satisfaction and staff commitment.

However, other limitations must be considered, including the fact that the research could benefit from the inclusion of other empirical data to validate the proposed relationships. Also, the study could have delved deeper into the interaction of external factors, such as organizational culture or socioeconomic context, which also influence the perception of work environment.

Tinoco's study (2023) supports previous theories indicating how a favorable work environment significantly influences employee's well-being. Although climate and satisfaction levels have been characterized as moderate, the mostly positive perceptions reflect a work environment that, while not optimal, has elements that can be enhanced to improve the employee experience. This finding aligns with the assertions of Vargas and Toro-Jaramillo (2022), that also highlight that trust and OC are key factors contributing to job performance and satisfaction.

For their part, the work of Vargas and Toro-Jaramillo (2022) delves into the notion of trust as an essential component of OC. The authors argue that an environment of trust improves communication and collaboration, and also directly impacts job satisfaction, which is closely related to the findings of Pilligua and Arteaga (2019), since a climate that promotes trust is an effective means of achieving an increase in employee's satisfaction by strengthening the sense of belonging and commitment.

However, the study by Luna et al. (2019) has some limitations. First, although the results suggest a positive relationship, the characterization of moderate levels in both variables indicates that there are underlying aspects that limit a more positive and satisfactory

climate. The authors of the current research assume that the study would benefit from a more in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to these moderate levels, which would allow for a more precise situation diagnosis. Second, the research focuses on a specific entity, which, in this work's opinion, limits the results dissemination to other organizations or contexts.

However, the study by Alvarado-Ortega et al. (2023) offers significant contributions to understanding the relationship between OC and job satisfaction, underlining the role of trust and recognition in work environment. Despite limitations in the depth of analysis and the generalization of the results, it establishes a useful framework for organizations to assess their work environment and make improvements aimed at increasing employee's motivation and satisfaction, which in turn will positively impact organizational performance.

Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the relationship between trust and OC in business, while highlighting the need for further research in less-explored areas and for considering the specificities of different work environments. Additionally, it emphasizes the value of establishing effective feedback and exchange environments that strengthen trust and job satisfaction, positively impacting organizational performance.

The study's results underscore the importance of implementing a positive and collaborative OC, aligning with theories that support the relationship between work environment and trust as drivers of employee performance and satisfaction. Despite the noted limitations, the study contributes significantly to the debate on OC management and the need to adopt comprehensive approaches that promote effective communication, diversity, and emotional development within organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the literature reviewed, it is concluded that the connection with the corporate sphere highlights trust as an essential element for building and maintaining a healthy organizational climate. A review of various previous studies has shown that an environment based on mutual trust between employees and leaders contributes significantly to improving job satisfaction, strengthening organizational commitment, and increasing team productivity.

Likewise, it has been shown that organizational climate directly influences work perception within the workplace. A positive environment, characterized by objective communication, recognition of individual effort, and mutual respect, fosters employee motivation and satisfaction. In this sense, companies that prioritize trust and respect in their organizational dynamics manage not only to retain talent but also improve their employees' performance and stability.

Finally, it is suggested that future research delve deeper into the ethical and instrumental dimensions of trust within the organizational sphere. Exploring these aspects will allow companies to develop comprehensive management models where ethics and trust are supports for building strong labor relations and consolidating a collaborative and efficient climate. By achieving this balance, organizations will be able to strengthen their performance, optimize their productivity, and ensure employees' well-being.

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