CASE STUDY

Male perspectives on gender differences in the organizational mood of the Air Force Cadet Corps*

Perspectivas masculinas acerca de la diferencia de géneros en el clima organizacional del Cuerpo de Cadetes de la Aeronáutica

Perspectivas masculinas acerca da diferença de gêneros no clima organizacional do Corpo de Cadetes da Aeronáutica

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ABSTRACT

This article, based on an eponymous monograph, presents the main results and conclusions obtained in a study of cadets of both genders coexisting in the Air Force Academy, under the male point of view. To do so, we carried out a quantitative research through a survey in an intentionally non-probabilistic sample of 40 (forty) male cadets, chosen at random. The results showed that, among others, 62.5% of the sample agrees that women cadets soften the barracks' ambient and 55% did not change their tone or demeanor in their presence. The biggest influence resulting from living with them was felt in the following aspects: higher precaution, interdependence and dealing with divergent thoughts. We conclude, therefore, that the atmosphere is not unanimous for all members of the Cadet Corps cadets and the coexistence of both sexes is, in fact, able to influence the organizational climate, from the point of view of some of its male cadets.

Keywords: Gender differences. Organizational climate. Culture. Management.

RESUMEN

Este artículo, basado en la Monografía del mismo nombre, presenta los principales resultados y conclusiones obtenidos en un estudio acerca de la convivencia de cadetes de ambos géneros en la Academia de la Fuerza Aérea, bajo el punto de vista masculino. Para eso, se realizó una investigación cuantitativa por medio de cuestionario en una muestra no casual intencional compuesta por 40 (cuarenta) cadetes del género masculino, escogidos de manera aleatoria. Los resultados mostraron que, entre otros, 62,5% de la muestra concuerda que cadetes mujeres amenizan el ambiente del cuartel y 55% no cambia su modo de hablar y actuar en presencia de ellas. La mayor influencia resultante de la convivencia con ellas fue sentida en los aspectos: mayor precaución, interdependencia y trato con pensamientos divergentes. Se concluye, por lo tanto, que el clima no es unánime para todos los integrantes del Cuerpo de Cadetes y que la coexistencia de cadetes de ambos sexos es, de hecho, capaz de influenciar el clima organizacional, bajo el punto de vista de algunos de sus cadetes hombres.

Palabras-clave: *Diferencia de géneros. Clima organizacional. Cultura. Gestión.*

RESUMO

Este artigo, baseado em Monografia de mesmo nome, apresenta os principais resultados e conclusões obtidos num estudo acerca da convivência de cadetes de ambos os gêneros na Academia da Força Aérea, sob o ponto de vista masculino. Para isso, realizou-se uma pesquisa quantitativa por meio de questionário numa amostra não probabilística intencional composta por 40 (quarenta) cadetes do gênero masculino, escolhidos aleatoriamente. Os resultados mostraram que, dentre outros, 62,5% da amostra concorda que cadetes mulheres amenizam o ambiente do quartel e 55% não muda seu modo de falar e agir na presença delas. A maior influência resultante da convivência com elas foi sentida nos aspectos: maior precaução, interdependência e trato com pensamentos divergentes. Conclui-se, portanto, que o clima não é unânime para todos os integrantes do Corpo de Cadetes e que a coexistência de cadetes de ambos os sexos é, de fato, capaz de influenciar o clima organizacional, sob o ponto de vista de alguns de seus cadetes homens.

Palavras-chave: *Diferença de gêneros. Clima organizacional. Cultura. Gestão.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find in our society an exclusively male profession. World level events such as the Industrial Revolution, the First World War and the feminist movement granted women many rights and access to the labor market, once exclusive to men. Thus, by taking more and more representative positions, the male perception and the attitude towards women's figure in society shifted (BAQUIM, 2008; RIBEIRO, 2011).

As for the profession of arms, the Brazilian Air Force (*Força Aérea Brasileira* – FAB) pioneered in the country with regard to the inclusion of women in their main Officers Training Courses, i.e., of Aviation and of Quartermaster (*Cursos de Formação de Oficiais de Aviação* – CFO*Av* and - *de Intendência* – CFO*Int*, respectively). However, given the modernity of such an opening – 1996 for the CFO*Int* and 2003 for the CFO*Av* – are not yet fully understood the impact of coexistence of these young soldiers in a training academy.

Therefore, due to the lack of studies on this subject, we tried to identify how the female cadets influence the organizational mood in the Air Force Cadet Corps (*Corpo de Cadetes da Aeronáutica* – CC*Aer*), from the point of view of its male cadets. Given the unprecedented women's entry

into the Naval Academy in 2014 and in the Agulhas Negras Military Academy, scheduled for 2017, we hope, through this research, to contribute to a better understanding and people management in these particular settings (BRASIL, 2014).

2 THEORETICAL REFERENCES

Aiming to base our work, concepts of group theory and organizational climate and culture were used. Regarding the former, Basic Foundations of Group Therapies, by Zimerman (2000), and Bonding Theory, by Pichon-Rivière (2009). For the theories of organizational culture and climate, Management of organizational climate: criteria proposal for diagnostic methodology, measurement and improvement, via case study, in national and multinational organizations located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, by Luz (2003), among others, came in handy.

2.1 Group psychology

A man cannot be understood by himself, but by the groups and society in which he lives (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009). According to Zimerman (2000) and

Pichon-Rivière (2009), it is natural for a human being to adapt to the environment, to groups and individuals with whom they live along. They act in order to achieve greater safety and productivity on tasks.

Therefore, human relations are subject to the experience of each, thus existing different roles corresponding to their biological grouping (gender, age) and social adjustment, acquired through growth and training. Through the process resulting in the definition of roles for each individual, being themselves becomes able to influencing others (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009).

However, Zimerman (2000) explains that there have been changes in these papers, which sometimes are reversed, which can lead to conflicts, as is the case of the woman in her family relationships, political and professional. An identity crisis is thereby generated both at the individual level and as well as within the social group.

In this context, Pichon-Rivière (2009) defines social psychology as a science that deals with the relationship between social structure and the subject's internal world, by studying interpersonal relationships and other forms of interaction. Thus, bonding is "a complex structure that includes a subject, an object and their mutual interrelation with communication and learning processes" (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009, p. 75). These intersubjective relations are based on needs, motivational foundations for the bondings.

Zimerman (2000) defines three bonding natures: specular, complementary, and supplementary. The specular bonding is when a person believes that others are like themselves and does not accept that there may be differences, thus generating intolerance; the complementary bonding is the case between two persons who may have similar or opposite personalities, setting a healthy and balanced relationship; the supplementary bonding is when a person has emotional needs which may be met by the other.

Through the bondings the group is formed, which is "a set of people articulated by their mutual internal representation" (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009, p. 218). To Zimerman (2000), the key point of any group is the fact that its members possess common interests. Thus, a new identity is formed, with own specific laws and mechanisms.

According to Pichon-Rivière (2009), the structure of every human group is governed by three basic principles: belonging, cooperation and relevance. The first has to do with the initial phase of affiliation or identification with group processes, which later evolves towards a sense of belonging, and the second relates to a contribution, whatever it may be, to the group task. Finally, the relevance expresses the "feeling or locating themselves directionally about the task" (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009, p. 269).

To Pichon-Rivière (2009), a learning situation generates two basic anxieties in individuals: fear of loss of balance in the status quo and in the established structures, and fear of attack in the new situation, where they still do not feel comfortable. Both fears show a resistance to change, which can be expressed by communication or learning difficulties. So stereotypes in the group as a whole's thoughts and actions can be generated.

2.2 Organizational culture and climate

Culture is a group phenomenon, typical of a community, and can be learned, transmitted and shared. As members acquire and internalize the collective codes from the group where they live, they conform to them, integrating and adapting to the social environment. Consequently, all that was absorbed becomes normal and natural (SOUZA, 1978 apud LUZ, 2003; SROUR, 1998 apud LUZ, 2003).

It (culture) consists of aspects that provide the organization with a particular way of being. There is a relationship between the two similar to that between the individual and their personality. This way, it grants to the social group an identity and recognition (LUZ, 2003).

According to Luz (2003), climate and culture are complementary phenomena, the former a consequence of the latter. While climate is a timely, less durable phenomenon, culture evolves slowly over time and evolution of historical events, since it stems from the organization's routine practices (MORAN; VOLKWEIN, 1992 apud RIZZATTI, 2002).

Luz (2003) explains the concept of organizational climate with the idea of psychological atmosphere, i.e. the state of mind of employees with each other and their superiors and the predisposition to do the work at a given moment experienced by the group. As climate is generated by the personal impressions of employees, opinions about it will never be unanimous (BEDANI, 2003).

Thus, as shown by Pichon-Rivière (2009), the so-called the "*tele* factor" is the willingness or ability, whether positive or negative, to work with any member of the group. "It is a sign of labor" (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009, p. 270). While the "positive *tele*" helps the process of learning and task-performing, the "negative *tele*" hinders interpersonal relationships at work.

Notably, the organizational climate can change the behavior of individuals, influencing them positively or negatively regarding teamwork, communication, decision-making and commitment. In short, regarding people's conduct in said environment.

2.3 Air Force Cadet Corps Contextualization

The Air Force Academy is a higher education institution which aims to form the career officers for this armed force, in the frameworks of Aviation, Quartermaster and Infantry. To fulfill its mission, a very specific organizational culture was created, with numerous symbolisms, values, rules of conduct and traditions that should be revered by all cadets (BRASIL, 2013b).

As soon as they join the AFA, young cadets undergo a strenuous period called adaptation stage (*Estágio de Adaptação* – EAD), during which they learn the rules of military conduct. At this stage, the CC*Aer* plays a key role in coordinating the moral teachings to the new class and the new cadets develop the *esprit de corps*.

3 METHODOLOGY

A survey of intentional non-probabilistic sampling was carried out. ten (10) male cadets from each squad were selected at random, totaling forty (40) male CC*Aer* cadets. Consequently, the results obtained are valid only for this specific group (BARROS; LEHFELD, 1990).

3.1 Selected techniques and tools for data collection

Part of the original questionnaire consists of 08 (eight) closed questions with a four-point Likert scale. The questions were based on the theoretical framework already presented and adapted to the Cadet Corps' routine, focusing on the male point of view regarding the existence of female cadets. The instrument for data collection has the following format:

Consider the following propositions and give every one of them a score of 1-4 as set out in Chart 1, according to your personal evaluation.

Chart 1 - Scoring Options.

Score	
1	I strongly disagree
2	I partially disagree
3	I partially agree
4	I totally agree

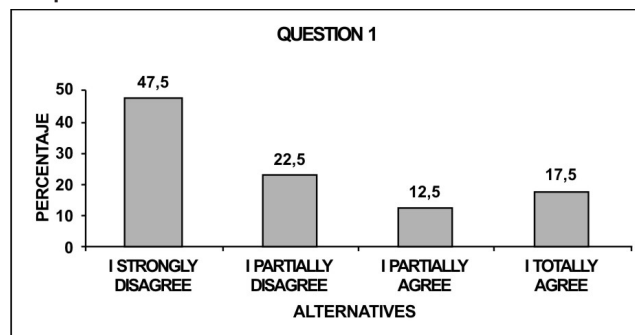**Source:** The author.

As for female cadets in the AFA:
1. ( ) There should not be.
2. ( ) Their presence alleviates the barracks' environment.
3. ( ) Their presence is inadequate for the military culture.
4. ( ) I do not change my manner of speech or behavior if I'm in their presence.
5. ( ) Their presence compromises the esprit de corps of cadets, who become less cohesive.
6. ( ) They are fully capable of exercising military leadership roles.
7. ( ) I generally dislike having to carry out military activities with them.
8. ( ) Their attitudes on occasions involving decision-making sometimes influence my own way of acting in the same situation. Examples: campaign and survival exercises, heading of class, etc.

4 RESULTS

Following the questionnaire, the graphs for questions 1-8 are presented with the sum of the absolute values of the entire sample (forty cadets). The data are distributed within four degrees of personal evaluation.

As it can be seen in the graph below, 70% of all cadets involved in the research consider the presence of female cadets acceptable.
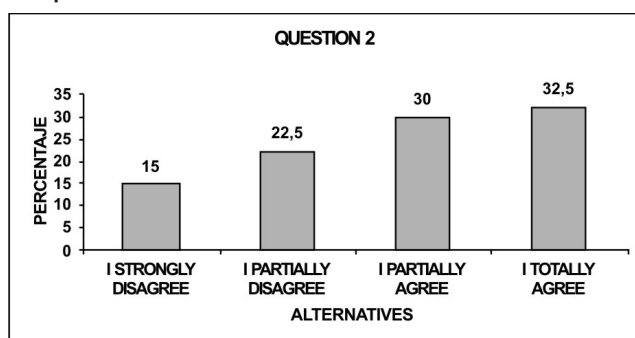
Graph 1 - There should not be.

Source: The author.

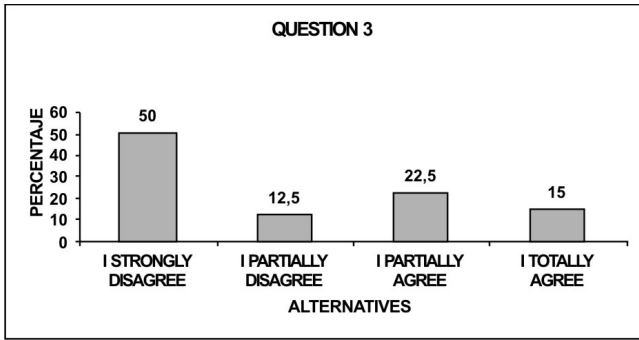Over 60% of respondents realize that women cadets soften the barracks' setting.

Graph 2 - There should not be.

Source: The author.

The graph shows that 62.5% of respondents consider the presence of female cadets adequate for the military culture.
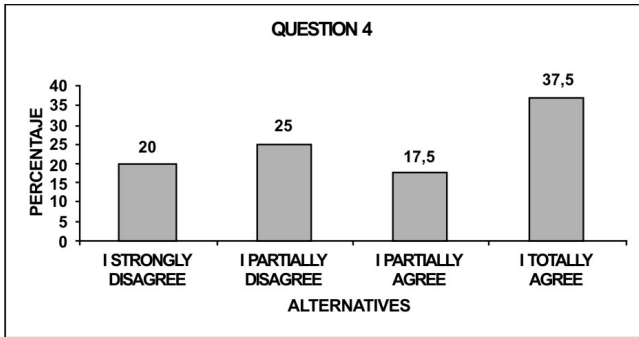
Graph 3 - Their presence is inadequate for the military culture.

QUESTION 3

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 50 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 12,5 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 22,5 | I TOTALLY AGREE 15

ALTERNATIVES

Source: The author.

It was observed that 45% of respondents change their way of speaking and acting. Furthermore, 55% act naturally in the presence of female cadets.
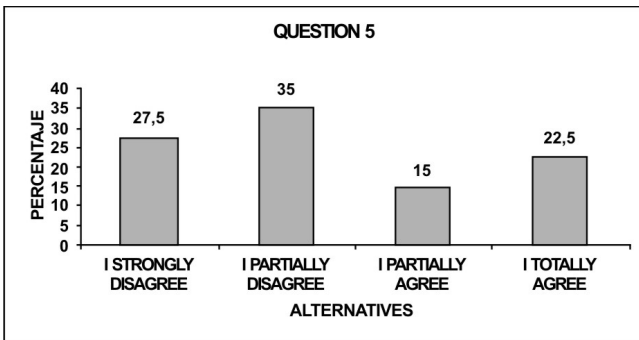
Graph 4 - I do not change my manner of speech and behavior if I'm in their presence.

QUESTION 4

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 20 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 25 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 17,5 | I TOTALLY AGREE 37,5

ALTERNATIVES

Source: The author.

Of the respondents, 37.5% agree that the presence of women undermines the *esprit de corps*.

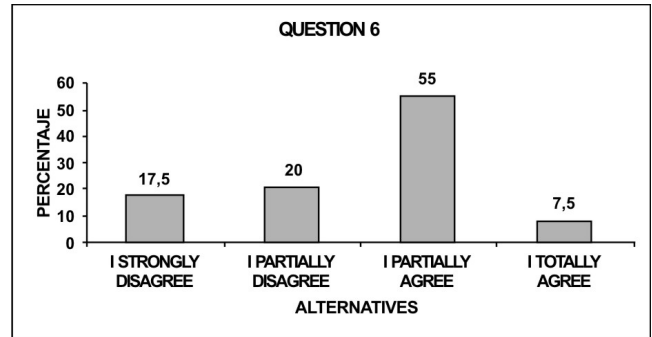**Graph 5 -** Their presence compromises the *esprit de corps* of cadets, who become less cohesive.

QUESTION 5

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 27,5 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 35 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 15 | I TOTALLY AGREE 22,5

ALTERNATIVES

Source: The author.

Graph 6 shows that 62.5% of those involved agree, to some restriction, that female cadets are able to exercise military leading roles.
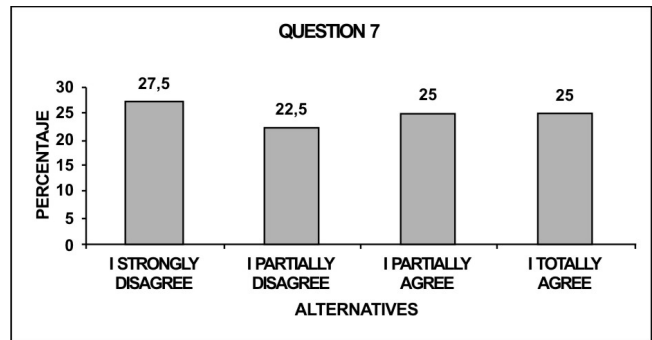
Graph 6 - They are fully capable of exercising military leadership positions.

QUESTION 6

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 17,5 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 20 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 55 | I TOTALLY AGREE 7,5

ALTERNATIVES

Source: The author.

Joint activities please 50% of all respondents.

Graph 7 - Geralmente me desagrada ter que realizar atividades militares com elas.

QUESTION 7

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 27,5 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 22,5 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 25 | I TOTALLY AGREE 25

ALTERNATIVES

Source: The author.

It was noticed that 52.5% of respondents agree that they are influenced by living along with cadets of the opposite gender.

Graph 8 - Their attitudes on occasions involving decision making sometimes influence my own manner to take action in the same situation.

QUESTION 8

I STRONGLY DISAGREE 20 | I PARTIALLY DISAGREE 27,5 | I PARTIALLY AGREE 27,5 | I TOTALLY AGREE 25

ALTERNATIVAS
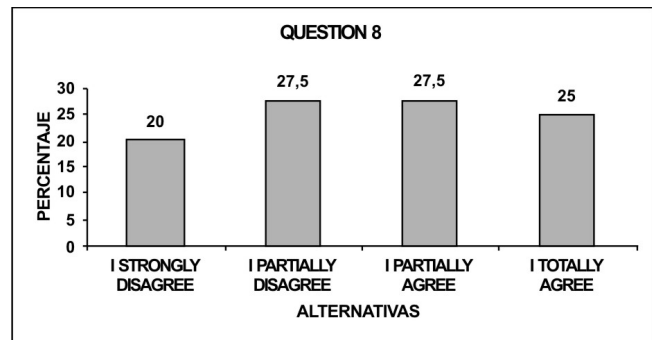
Source: The author.

5 DISCUSSION

Though minority, 30% of respondents do not support the existence of female cadets in the AFA, and half consider them inadequate for the military culture. For these cadets, the relationship with the cadets may have specular nature, as they show intolerance to different people.

Such discomfort and resistance may translate from a fear of facing unfamiliar situations, namely the introduction of women in the military environment. Thus, there is a chance a stereotype of the female cadet that has been created by male cadets, since half of those surveyed is displeased to have to conduct military activities with some female cadets.

A percentage of 37.5% of young people understands that the CC*Aer* is less cohesive with the presence of female cadets, which may indicate that they are still in the early stages of affiliation with the group process of both-gender-cadet coexistence. It becomes clear, therefore, a relationship with Pichon-Rivière's (2009) basic principle of belonging, a principle that evolves into that of cooperation. In the environment under study, by transposition of personal differences, the CC*Aer* may gain their full integration.

Among the respondents, 62.5% agree with the statement that female cadets somehow soften the barracks' environment. This high rate confirms Luz (2003) and Bedani (2003), according to which the culture of an organization directly influences its climate and this, in turn, can change the behavior of individuals positively or negatively.

Though the statistics so far indicate a partial acceptance of female cadets in the CC*Aer* by their male colleagues, it was reported that 55% of them do not change the way they speak and act in their presence. It can be inferred that these cadets learned and internalized the Cadet Corps culture in such a way that this interaction for them is normal. For them, the cadets are normally integrated into the group.

The other 45% of the same question (4) may be related to the change in social roles proposed by Zimerman (2000). As a result, the female achievement of roles formerly exclusively masculine in society can be the reason for these cadets to change their behavior when in the presence of their female peers. In this study, we aimed not figure out the nature of such behavioral change, i.e., whether it is positive or negative; only if it exists.

With regard to military lead, 55% of young cadets fully or partly agree that female cadets are able to perform it. So for them, the female cadets have the necessary features to exercise leadership positions in military circles.

The young men, when asked whether they feel influenced by the way female cadets make decisions, also responded affirmatively in a percentage of 55%. If the CC*Aer* is perceived as a Zimerman (2000) group system, where all members interact affectionately with each other, the action of one shall be passed on to others. Thus, as the roles for the members of a group are defined, each becomes capable of influencing the remaining (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2009).

6 CONCLUSION

Women entering the Air Force Academy is a relatively recent development in Brazilian history. With this research, we tried to understand male cadets' opinions about their female colleagues and how it affects CC*Aer's* organizational climate.

It has been found that the coexistence of cadets of both genders may be able to influence CC*Aer's* organizational climate in some way, from the point of view of the sample presented. In addition, the practice performed showed the possible ability the organizational climate has to change and influence the behavior of individuals in their midst.

In this regard, however, the indexes showed, in most matters, a division into two main views. Thus, the idea that the climate is not unanimous for all group members was ratified (BEDANI, 2003).

Given the modernity of the issue addressed, there is a need for more studies on CC*Aer's* organizational climate to be conducted. We hereby leave the suggestion for future studies, the continuation of the research presented here, with the possibility of a more comprehensive approach or even one comprehensive of the entire population to be taken.

As a consequence, a better understanding about the coexistence of male and female cadets in the AFA is expected to have been achieved, thus enabling a more efficient management of these young trainees. It is noteworthy that a good management of the organizational climate is a crucial factor in the achievement of the institution's goals.

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