


## Trabalho precarizado como preditor do assédio moral no Sistema Único de Assistência Social (SUAS) brasileiro

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**BR Resumo:** Na lógica do gerencialismo neoliberal, a intensificação do trabalho, o culto à performance e a busca da produtividade e do lucro em detrimento dos direitos laborais e da saúde dos trabalhadores exacerbam práticas de gestão abusivas, como o assédio moral. Este estudo investigou se diferentes dimensões do trabalho precário seriam preditores de assédio moral numa amostra de 747 trabalhadoras do SUAS, com idade média de 38,34 anos ( $DP = 8,22$ ), majoritariamente femininas (88,6%). Utilizou-se um questionário sociodemográfico, a Escala Laboral de Assédio Moral (ELAM) e a Escala de Percepção da Qualidade das Condições de Trabalho e do Vínculo Laboral (EPCTVT). “Qualidade do Vínculo Laboral”, “Qualidade das Relações Interprofissionais e Isonomia no Trabalho” e “Trabalho Precário” foram preditores significativos deste tipo de assédio, explicando 35% da variância no assédio moral devido às condições laborais. “Qualidade das Relações Interprofissionais e Isonomia no Trabalho” e “Ambiente de Trabalho Saudável e Seguro” explicaram 13% da variância no assédio moral por preconceito. “Qualidade das Relações Interprofissionais e Isonomia no Trabalho” teve uma associação negativa com assédio moral por situações de humilhação, explicando 32,3% da variância. O estudo conclui que o assédio moral e a precarização do trabalho são fenômenos interligados que impactam os trabalhadores do SUAS e refletem, inclusive no âmbito da gestão pública, as lógicas das relações sociais de produção capitalistas e do neoliberalismo.

**Palavras-chaves:** Assédio moral no trabalho; Precarização do trabalho; Sistema Único da Assistência Social; Análise de regressão múltipla; Trabalhadores/as.

## ENG Precarious work as predictor of moral harassment in the Brazilian Unified Social Assistance System (USAS)

**Abstract:** In the logic of neoliberal managerialism, the intensification of work, the cult of performance, and the pursuit of productivity and profit at the expense of labor rights and workers' health exacerbate abusive management practices such as moral harassment. This study investigated whether different dimensions of precarious work would predict moral harassment in a sample of 747 SUAS workers, with a mean age of 38.34 years ( $SD = 8.22$ ) and predominantly female (88.6%). A sociodemographic questionnaire was used, along with the Moral Harassment Workplace Scale (MHWS) and the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond (PSWCQEB). “Quality of Employment Bond,” “Quality of Interprofessional Relations and Workplace Equality” and “Precarious Work” were significant predictors of this type of harassment, explaining 35% of variance in moral harassment due to labor conditions. “Quality of Interprofessional Relations and Workplace Equality” and “Healthy and Safe Work Environment” explained 13% of variance in moral harassment due to prejudice. “Quality of Interprofessional Relations and Workplace Equality” was negatively associated with moral harassment in situations involving humiliation, explaining 32.3% of variance. The study concludes that moral harassment and precarious work are interconnected phenomena that impact SUAS workers and reflect the logics of capitalist social relations of production and neoliberalism, even in the context of public management.

**Keywords:** Moral harassment; precarious work, Unified Social Assistance System; multiple regression analysis; workers.

## ES Trabajo precarizado como predictores del acoso moral en el Sistema Único de Asistencia Social (SUAS) brasileño

**Resumen:** En la lógica del gerencialismo neoliberal, la intensificación del trabajo, el culto al rendimiento y la búsqueda de la productividad y el lucro en detrimento de los derechos laborales y la salud de los trabajadores exacerban prácticas de gestión abusivas, como el acoso moral. Este estudio investigó si diferentes dimensiones del trabajo precarizado serían predictores de acoso moral en una muestra de 747 trabajadoras del SUAS, con una edad media de 38,34 años ( $DE = 8,22$ ), mayoritariamente femeninas (88,6%). Se utilizó un cuestionario sociodemográfico, la Escala Laboral de Acoso Moral (ELAM) y la Escala de Percepción de la Calidad de las Condiciones de Trabajo y del Vínculo Laboral (EPCTVT). La "Calidad del Vínculo Laboral", la "Calidad de las Relaciones Interprofesionales e Isonomía en el Trabajo" y el "Trabajo Precarizado" fueron predictores significativos de este tipo de acoso, explicando el 35% de la varianza en el acoso moral debido a las condiciones laborales. La "Calidad de las Relaciones Interprofesionales e Isonomía en el Trabajo" y el "Ambiente de Trabajo Saludable y Seguro" explicaron el 13% de la varianza en el acoso moral por prejuicio. La "Calidad de las Relaciones Interprofesionales e Isonomía en el Trabajo" tuvo una asociación negativa con el acoso moral por situaciones de humillación, explicando el 32,3% de la varianza. El estudio concluye que el acoso moral y la precarización del trabajo son fenómenos interrelacionados que impactan a los trabajadores del SUAS y reflejan, incluso en el ámbito de la gestión pública, las lógicas de las relaciones sociales de producción capitalistas y del neoliberalismo.

**Palabras clave:** Acoso moral en el trabajo; Precarización del trabajo; Sistema Único de Asistencia Social; Análisis de regresión múltiple; Trabajadores/as.

**Sumario:** Method. Participants. Exclusion Criteria: a) Have been a worker for less than 6 months and b) not provide consent to the FICF made available online. Instruments. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR). Data Collection Procedure. Results. Correlations between Quality of Work Conditions and Employment Bond and Moral Harassment. Do the Dimensions of Precarious Work Predict MHW in the Context of SUAS? Discussion. References

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Moral harassment at work (MHW) is a form of work-related violence that causes significant harm to workers in physical, psychological, and social terms (Cunha, Vieira, & Oliveira, 2021; Soares & Oliveira, 2012; Vieira, 2023). Although it became more notorious in Brazil starting in the 2000s (Barreto, 2005), it is a globally recognized phenomenon under various names: "Mobbing" and "psycho-terror" (Leymann, 1990, 1996), "Pesten" in Germany, "Harcèlement Moral" in France, "Workplace Bullying" in the USA, "Acoso Moral" in Spanish-speaking countries, and "Assédio Moral" in Brazil (Cunha, Vieira, & Oliveira, 2021; Soares, 2012; Soares & Duarte, 2014).

French psychiatrist Marie-France Hirigoyen was instrumental in popularizing the concept, defining it as any abusive conduct that harms the personality, dignity, or physical or mental integrity of a person, compromising their employment or degrading the work environment (Hirigoyen, 2017). Hirigoyen highlights that moral harassment is a process of systematic psychological violence with devastating consequences for the health of victims. Earlier, Leymann (1990, 1996) also characterized this violence as repetitive attacks intended to destabilize the worker, aiming for their exclusion from the work environment.

In Brazil, Margarida Barreto pioneered studies on moral harassment at work. In her master's thesis "Uma jornada de humilhações" (A journey of humiliations, 2000) and her doctoral dissertation "Assédio moral: A violência sutil" (Moral harassment: Subtle violence, 2005), Barreto incorporated Hirigoyen's influences and developed an approach that includes not only the individual but also organizational and work dimensions (Barreto, 2005; Barreto & Heloani, 2015; Souza, 2019).

The precarization of work, marked by the flexibilization of labor relations and the erosion of labor rights, has been accentuated in recent decades, raising concerns about workers' well-being, especially regarding moral harassment. In the Brazilian context, this relationship is widely discussed. Barreto (2005) investigated the occurrence of moral harassment in various industries and examined the relationship between work precarization and the increase in cases of moral harassment, emphasizing the organizational and social dimensions contributing to such a phenomenon. Barreto argues that work environments characterized by authoritarian management practices, lack of support, and inadequate human resource policies are more prone to moral harassment cases. She notes that the precarization of labor relations, characterized by job insecurity, low wages, lack of benefits, and inadequate working conditions, is associated with a higher incidence of moral harassment.

Vieira, Lima, and Lima (2012) recognize consensus on the foundations of moral harassment but point out theoretical divergences regarding its causes, especially those emphasizing individual and psychological

aspects over psychosocial and material dimensions. They argue that the psychologization of moral harassment hinders effective action against the problem. According to the authors, MHW is primarily “a manifestation of ‘harassed work,’ of an activity that cannot develop in the face of social contradictions materializing in certain forms of organization and current management models” (p. 261).

Similarly, Vieira (2017) criticizes the approach that emphasizes the individual and psychological dimensions of moral harassment, proposing that the phenomenon should be examined from a perspective considering multiple organizational dimensions and precarious work in the contemporary capitalist context. He argues that performance demands and the intensified pursuit of capital profitability, at the expense of labor rights and workers’ health, exacerbate abusive practices.

Vieira (2017) and Vieira, Lima, and Lima (2012) assert that work precarization deteriorates interpersonal relationships in the work environment, facilitating moral harassment. Antunes and Praun (2015) reinforce this view, showing that labor law flexibilization and outsourcing contribute to the degradation of working conditions, intensifying conflicts and tensions between employers and employees.

Araújo (2006) and Druck (2011) discuss how precarization manifests in various sectors, highlighting the lack of protection and rights of temporary and outsourced workers. Druck (2011) analyzes how the intensification of precariousness in labor relations contributes to work environments more prone to abusive practices. In a case study, Araújo (2006) explores the relationship between the precarization of working conditions in the service sector and the occurrence of moral harassment, emphasizing how job insecurity and poor conditions facilitate abusive practices.

Antunes and Praun (2015) discuss changes in the structure of work in Brazil, noting that informality and precarization are associated with increased moral harassment, exploring dynamics in labor relations.

Despite the significant relationships between labor precarization and moral harassment, few studies have analyzed moral harassment in Social Assistance. Santos and Manfroí (2015) studied the working conditions of social workers in Santa Catarina and Espírito Santo, concluding that restructuring work processes leads to temporary hires, outsourcing, low wages, lack of autonomy, and inadequate working conditions in the public sector. These conditions directly impact workers’ health and subjectivity.

Studies involving social workers in the SUS context also confirm the relationship between work precarization and psychosocial repercussions (Lourenço et al., 2019) or examine the relationships between moral harassment and perceptions of working conditions (Nascimento, 2013).

This review indicates that studies in Brazil involve workers from various areas, with few addressing social workers in different services (Santos & Manfroí, 2015) or in SUS (Lourenço et al., 2019; Nascimento, 2013). No comprehensive studies were found in the SUAS context involving professionals from all country regions or investigating the role of precarization in workers’ perceptions of moral harassment.

To fill this gap, this study investigates whether different dimensions of precarious work predict moral harassment in a sample of SUAS workers. Analyzing this relationship is crucial for developing policies and practices to mitigate the negative effects of precarization and promote a healthier work environment.

## Method

### Participants

The sample included 747 workers with an average age of 38.34 years ( $SD = 8.22$ ), of which 662 were female (88.6%). The study included all the higher education professions that work in social assistance, based on the Resolution of the National Social Assistance Council (CNAS), Resolution 17 of 2011, which recognizes the higher education professional categories to meet the specific needs of social assistance services and the essential management functions of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS). The majority of the participants have a degree in psychology (44%) and Social Work (42%).

Translated with DeepL.com (free version) According to the 2021 SUAS Census, the total number of SUAS workers was 425,173 (Brazil, 2022). The calculation for the minimum sample size was based on the formula:  $n = [z^2 * p(1-p)] / e^2 / [1 + (z^2 * p(1-p)) / e^2 * N]$ , where:  $Z = z$ -score = 1.65 (90% confidence level) and  $p$  = standard deviation = 0.5. Thus, based on the formula, the minimum sample size would be 272 subjects. A priori statistical power analysis was conducted using G\*Power (Faul et al., 2009). The results indicated that with a sample of 747 subjects, an effect size of 0.25, a significance level of 0.05, and 5 predictors, the power of the multiple linear regression analysis would be 1.000. This indicates that the probability of detecting a significant effect, if it truly exists, is practically guaranteed (100%).

Inclusion Criteria: a) Be a worker in social assistance (either in public networks or social assistance entities and organizations), regardless of the type of employment relationship, including permanent, contracted, or commissioned staff, and b) have signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) made available online.

Exclusion Criteria: a) Have been a worker for less than 6 months and b) not provide consent to the FICF made available online.

### Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect sociodemographic information from participants, along with a 4-point Likert scale, the Workplace Moral Harassment Scale (WMHS), to measure the perception of moral harassment, and the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond (PSWCQEB), the latter developed for this study.

The ELAM scale was developed by Rueda, Baptista, and Cardoso (2015), based on Leymann's theory (1990, 1996) and the Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (IPT), an instrument created by Heinz Leymann containing 45 items concerning situations that might characterize moral harassment at work. The WMHS factors showed good reliability indices, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.82 to 0.87 (Rueda, Baptista, & Cardoso, 2015), and in a study by Campos and Rueda (2016), new validity evidence for WMHS was found. The scale consists of 27 items distributed across three factors, with 11 items for the Work Conditions dimension, 8 items for Humiliation, and 8 items for Prejudice, with Likert-type response options ranging from 1 ("never") to 4 ("always").

The Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond (PSWCQEB) consists of 28 items evaluated on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") and was developed for this study. To validate the instrument, a preliminary validation procedure was conducted, including Factor Analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method (Matos & Rodrigues, 2019). Before PCA, criteria such as sample size, level of measurement of the variables, correlation matrix, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test were verified (Matos & Rodrigues, 2019). All criteria were met.

Table 1 presents the order of extracted factors, the items loaded on each factor and their naming, the explained variance, and the cumulative explained variance of each factor and total.

Table 1. Factors extracted and their respective items, Explained Variance, and Cumulative Explained Variance (n = 354)

Order of Factors	Factors e Items	Explained Variance (%)	Cumulative Explained Variance (%)
1°	Quality of Work Management (15,16, 10, 19, 13, 10, 14)	20.959	20.959
2°	Healthy and Safe Work Environment (2, 1, 21, 22, 8, 9)	7.988	28.947
3°	Quality of Employment Bond (25,24, 11, 12)	7.185	36.132
4°	Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Isonomy (6, 5, 23, 17, 27, 28)	5.448	41.579
5°	Precarious Work (3, 26, 4, 18, 7)	4.669	46.248

In Table 1, all 28 items of the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond were retained, as none presented a factor loading lower than 0.35. These items were grouped into five factors that together explained approximately 46% of the scale's variance. The first factor, related to the perception of the quality of work management, contributed nearly 21% of the explained variance. This final factorial structure of the scale, validated in this study, served as the basis for subsequent analyses of construct validity, composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations, and multiple regression analysis.

Table 2 presents the items that make up each dimension of the scale.

Table 2. Items Comprising Each Dimension of the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond (PSWCQEB)

Ítem	Dimensión
<b>Quality of Work Management</b>	
15.	There is training and development for professionals at my workplace, as Permanent Education has already been implemented or is being implemented.
16.	The Work Management Policy has already been implemented or is being implemented at my workplace.
20.	I observe that the management indices adopted are well-articulated with qualitative analyses of the social impact of work on families.
19.	There are policies for the promotion and prevention of the health of workers in my workplace.
13.	In my workplace, professionals follow a plan that is prepared in advance and later evaluated.
10.	In my workplace, workflows and protocols have been implemented to organize and guide my actions.
14.	In my workplace, there is no fragmentation of actions among the levels of social protection.
<b>Healthy and Safe Work Environment</b>	
2.	The noise and temperature conditions in my workplace are good.
1.	The cleaning and lighting conditions in my workplace are good. .
21.	In my work environment, the physical/architectural structure supports the performance of my role.

Ítem	Dimensión
22.	In my work environment, there are no shortages of consumables and permanent materials.
8.	My workplace is safe, meaning I do not face any risks while getting there or while I am there.
9.	My type of work is safe, meaning I do not face any risks while performing it.
<b>Quality of Employment Bond</b>	
25.	I am satisfied with the conditions imposed by my type of employment relationship (for example, if I am a civil servant, under the CLT regime, or another).
24.	I am satisfied with my type of work contract (for example, whether it is temporary, indefinite, outsourced, or another).
11.	I have the opportunity for growth/progression in my career, as there is a Career, Positions, and Salaries Plan (CPSP) for my role.
12.	I receive benefits (such as a Health Plan, for example) at my workplace.
<b>Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Isonomy</b>	
6.	I evaluate my relationship with my immediate supervisor as positive and/or healthy.
4.	I evaluate my relationships with my coworkers as positive and healthy.
23.	In the organization of my work, there is space to express my ideas, concerns, and suggestions.
28.	In my workplace, there is isonomy in working hours.
27.	In my workplace, there is salary isonomy (everyone receives the same salary for the same roles).
17.	Communication between management and workers occurs smoothly in the workplace where I operate.
<b>Precarious Work</b>	
3.	In my work environment, there is a lack of operational/logistical support for carrying out community actions (e.g., transportation, food, and other support).
26.	There is high turnover of professionals due to contracts linked to government/politics.
3.	I believe that the compensation I receive for the work I do is low.
18.	I do not notice much turnover of workers in my sector/workplace (Reversed).
7.	I have experienced delays in my payment on more than one occasion.

### Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR)

To evaluate the accuracy of the scores of this Scale, techniques such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) were used. According to Valentini and Damásio (2016), both AVE and CR provide evidence of score accuracy, which also indicates construct validity. Table 3 presents the results obtained through the analysis of Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted.

Table 3. Lambda ( $\lambda$ ), Error Variance ( $\epsilon$ ) of each item, and Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability of each Factor ( $n = 747$ ).

Fator	Items	$\lambda$	$\epsilon$	AVE	CR
Quality of Work Management	15.	.756	.428	.39	.82
	16.	.745	.445		
	20.	.691	.522		
	19.	.628	.606		
	13.	.596	.645		
	10.	.527	.723		
	14.	.464	.785		
	15.	.385	.851		



Fator	Items	$\lambda$	$\epsilon$	AVE	CR
Healthy and Safe Work Environment	2.	.774	.401	.42	.81
	1.	.734	.462		
	21.	.688	.526		
	22.	.583	.660		
	8.	.560	.686		
	9.	.483	.766		
Quality of Employment Bond	25.	.788	.378	.45	.76
	24.	.772	.405		
	11.	.576	.668		
	12.	.513	.737		
Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Isonomy	6.	.721	.480	.33	.74
	4.	.665	.557		
	23.	.648	.580		
	28.	.496	.754		
	27.	.428	.817		
	17.	.405	.836		
Precarious Work	3.	.580	.664	.26	.63
	26.	.570	.675		
	4.	.521	.729		
	18.	.476	.773		
	7.	.347	.880		

The results in Table 3 indicate that the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond exhibits good Composite Reliability (CR), with values exceeding 0.7 for most factors. The most critical factor was Precarious Work, which still reached acceptable levels of CR.

Regarding Average Variance Extracted (AVE), all factors obtained results below the reference value of 0.5, ranging from 0.26 (Precarious Work) to .45 (Quality of Employment Bond). However, considering the cutoff point for exploratory research of 0.40 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), two factors achieved adequate values (Healthy and Safe Work Environment and Quality of Employment Bond), while one was marginally acceptable (Quality of Work Management). This suggests potential issues in these subscales. Despite the AVE being below .5, when CR is above .6, as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the convergent validity of the construct can still be considered adequate. Therefore, the Perception Scale of Work Conditions Quality and Employment Bond demonstrates reliability and presents satisfactory indices of construct and convergent validity.

### Data Collection Procedure

To reach the participants of the research, posts were created regarding the objectives of the study and published through the following electronic addresses: <https://www.psicologianosuas.com/> (blog); @psicologianosuas (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube), and emails were sent as invitations to state secretariats of social assistance or equivalent entities, along with dissemination through the researcher's groups and contacts via instant messaging services such as WhatsApp and Telegram.

The research dissemination for data collection involved providing a link for access to the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) in digital format to be signed remotely through the Google Forms platform. After the participants agreed to take part in the research, the questionnaire and scales were made available on the same link for them to respond to.

The research complied with Resolution No. 466/12 from the National Health Council (CNS) and Circular Letter No. 2/2021/CONEP/SECNS/MS regarding guidelines for procedures in studies with any stage in the environment, and it was submitted to the Ethics Committee in Research with Human Beings at the Federal University of Southern Bahia. The study received approval on its third version, under opinion number: 5.804.225 (CAAE 61822122.4.0000.8467) on December 9, 2022.

### Data Analysis

To verify the normality of the distributions of the variables, Skewness was considered between -3 and +3, and Kurtosis between -10 and +10 (Brown, 2006; Kline, 2011). All variables under study, except for the dimension of moral harassment due to prejudice situations, had a normal distribution. As a result, this variable was

normalized using the square root transformation method, which is one of the most commonly used methods (Campos, 2000). Pearson's test was employed to check for correlations between work precarization and moral harassment, as well as between work conditions and moral harassment. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate whether the dimensions of work precarization would be good predictors of moral harassment at work (MHW). An analysis of missing data was also performed to assess its influence on the results. A total of 16 missing data points were observed, corresponding to 2.12% of the sample, which is below the critical threshold of 5%. The missing data were identified as MCAR (missing completely at random), not interfering with subsequent analyses (Rubin, 1996). The significance level adopted was 0.05 for all analyses. Jamovi version 2.3.28 was used for data analysis.

## Results

### Correlations between Quality of Work Conditions and Employment Bond and Moral Harassment

Once it was determined that the scale used to measure the quality of work conditions and the employment bond could be considered valid and reliable, the correlational analysis proceeded. Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson correlation test.

Table 4. Correlations between Quality of Work Conditions and Employment Bond and the Three Types of Workplace Moral Harassment (WMH) (n = 747)

	WMH due to Working Conditions	WMH due to Humiliation Situations	WMH due to Prejudice
Quality of Work Management	-.32**	-.28**	-.16**
Healthy and Safe Work Environment	-.30**	-.21**	-.22**
Quality of Employment Bond	-.27**	-.18**	-.14
Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Isonomy	-.56**	-.57**	-.34**
Precarious Work	.35**	.24**	.18**

\*\* Significance level at .001

The results in Table 4 reveal significant correlations among all dimensions of the scales used in the study. Specifically, the dimensions "Quality of Work Management," "Healthy and Safe Environment," "Quality of Employment Bond," and "Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality" exhibited negative correlations, ranging from weak to moderate, with the three types of moral harassment. This indicates that the worse work management was perceived to be, the more unhealthy and unsafe the environment was, the more precarious the conditions of the employment bond were, and the more problems observed in professional relationships and workplace equality, the greater the perceptions of moral harassment, including working conditions, humiliation, and prejudice.

On the other hand, a significant positive correlation, albeit weak, was observed between "Precarious Work" and the three types of moral harassment. This suggests that the more workers identify signs of precarious work in their environment, the more likely they are to report experiences of moral harassment. Therefore, according to this study, precarious working conditions and employment bonds are significantly associated with moral harassment at work, as reported by the workers of the Unified Social Assistance System (USAS).

#### *Do the Dimensions of Precarious Work Predict MHW in the Context of SUAS?*

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether "Quality of Work Management," "Healthy and Safe Work Environment," "Quality of Employment Bond," "Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Isonomy," and "Precarious Work" predicted MHW due to working conditions, prejudice, and humiliation situations.

To investigate the role of these predictors on MHW due to working conditions, the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were tested using scatterplots of the residuals, and it was found that these assumptions were met. All Cook's D values were < 1, indicating that there were no outliers. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.70 indicated that the assumption of independence of the residuals was satisfied. The tolerance and VIF values were all within the acceptable range (VIF < 5 and Tolerance > .1), indicating that the assumption of multicollinearity was satisfied. The QQ plot analysis showed that there was no violation of the normality assumption. The regression model was significant, and the five predictors explained 35% of the variance in workplace moral harassment due to labor conditions [ $R^2 = .35$ ;  $F_{(5,726)} = 8.17$ ;  $p < .001$ ]. The  $R^2$  value is moderate, meaning that there are other factors not included in the model that explain the observed variation in this type of harassment.

When analyzing the predictor variables individually, it was observed that "Quality of Work Management" ( $\beta = -.003$ , 95% CI [-.006, .006],  $p = 0.92$ ) and "Healthy and Safe Work Environment" ( $\beta = -.03$ , 95% CI [-.07, .01],  $p = 0.18$ ) were not significant predictors and were negatively associated with MHW due to working

conditions. On the other hand, “Quality of Employment Bond” ( $\beta = -.06$ , 95% CI [- .10, - .02],  $p = .001$ ), “Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality” ( $\beta = -.32$ , 95% CI [-.33, - .24],  $p < .001$ ), and “Precarious Work” ( $\beta = .12$ , 95% CI [.06, .17],  $p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of this type of moral harassment. The first two predictors were negatively associated with MHW, while precarious work was positively associated. This means that as the quality of the employment bond, the quality of professional relationships, and workplace equality increase, the incidence of moral harassment decreases. In other words, better working conditions and fairer, more respectful relationships are correlated with fewer cases of moral harassment. In contrast, precarious working environments, where workers face insecurity and unfavorable conditions, are associated with a higher incidence of moral harassment. Notably, the standardized beta indicates that the strongest predictors were “Quality of Employment Bond” and “Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality” (standardized  $\beta = -.47$ ), followed by “Precarious Work” (standardized  $\beta = 0.13$ ).

To examine the role of these predictors on workplace moral harassment (MHW) due to prejudice, the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were also tested using scatterplots of the residuals, which were found to be appropriate. Similarly, all Cook's D values were less than 1, indicating the absence of outliers. The Durbin-Watson value was 1.47, suggesting a slight positive autocorrelation in the residuals but not a significant violation of the independence of the residuals. The tolerance and VIF values were within acceptable limits (VIF < 5 and Tolerance > .1), indicating that multicollinearity would not be an issue. The QQ plot analysis confirmed the normality assumption. The regression model was significant, with the five predictors explaining 13% of the variance in MHW due to prejudice [ $R^2 = 0.13$ ;  $F_{(5,726)} = 21.17$ ;  $p < .001$ ].

When analyzing the predictor variables individually, it was found that “Quality of Work Management” ( $\beta = -.008$ , 95% CI [- .004, 0.02],  $p = .22$ ), “Precarious Work” ( $\beta = .007$ , 95% CI [.005, 0.02],  $p = .25$ ), and “Quality of Employment Bond” ( $\beta = -.005$ , 95% CI [-.01, .003],  $p = .18$ ) were not significant predictors of MHW due to prejudice. However, “Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality” ( $\beta = -.03$ , 95% CI [-.04, - .02],  $p < .001$ ) and “Healthy and Safe Work Environment” ( $\beta = -.01$ , 95% CI [-.02, -0.002],  $p = .013$ ) were significant predictors of this type of moral harassment. The strongest predictor was “Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality” (standardized  $\beta = -.30$ ). The negative beta coefficient indicates that better quality of professional relationships and workplace equality is associated with a reduced incidence of moral harassment of this type. In other words, environments where relationships among colleagues are good and where there is equal treatment tend to have fewer cases of moral harassment due to situations of prejudice. Additionally, a healthy and safe work environment is also associated with a reduction in the incidence of moral harassment, although the effect is smaller compared to the quality of professional relationships and workplace equality.

Finally, when investigating the role of these five predictors in workplace moral harassment (MHW) in humiliation situations, all assumptions were tested, and none were violated. The regression model was significant, with the five predictors explaining 32.3% of the variance in workplace moral harassment due to humiliation situations [ $R^2 = .323$ ;  $F_{(5,726)} = 69.2$ ;  $p < .001$ ].

In the final regression model, only “Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality” ( $\beta = -.39$ , 95% CI [- .44, - .34],  $p < .001$ ) was a significant predictor and was negatively associated with MHW due to humiliation situations. All other predictors were not significant. The observed negative association ( $\beta = -.39$ ) indicates that work environments characterized by good relationships among colleagues and equal treatment significantly reduce the incidence of this type of moral harassment.

## Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate whether the dimensions of precarious work would predict three types of workplace moral harassment (MHW): due to working conditions, prejudice situations, and humiliation situations.

The results show consistent relationships with existing literature by identifying precarious labor bonds, poor professional relationships, unhealthy and unsafe work environments, and precarious working conditions as significant factors associated with moral harassment in all three types.

The study demonstrated that the quality of the employment bond negatively relates to moral harassment due to working conditions, which supports the discussions made by Vieira, Vieira, and Lima (2012) and Vieira (2017). They emphasize that solid and fair employment bonds promote a healthier environment and protect against abusive practices. Alves (2015) argues that strong bonds foster a sense of belonging and security, reducing the likelihood of moral harassment.

Antunes (2009) and Antunes and Alves (2004) highlight that the lack of equality and issues in professional relationships can create toxic work environments where abusive practices, including moral harassment, become common. Soares (2013) points out that organizational cultures promoting equality and good interpersonal relationships reduce the risks of moral harassment.

Alves (2015), Antunes (2009), Antunes and Praun (2015), and Druck (2021) explore the theory that work precarization results in less job security, less bargaining power, and greater vulnerability—factors that intensify exposure to moral harassment. Precarization often implies fewer rights, security, and stability, creating fertile ground for abusive practices. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019) confirms that work precarization is associated with an increase in psychosocial problems, including moral harassment, and advocates for policies promoting job security and decent working conditions to mitigate these risks.

The absence of a significant relationship between a healthy and safe work environment and the incidence of moral harassment due to working conditions may be explained by the complexity of the phenomenon.



Factors such as organizational culture, management policies, and power dynamics may be more decisive. Confounding variables may mask or moderate this relationship, such as individual characteristics of workers and leadership styles that influence the perception and experience of moral harassment. Furthermore, improvements in physical working conditions may not directly impact the human relationships and management practices that give rise to moral harassment. Even without statistical significance, Soares (2013) and Raichelis (2011) emphasize the importance of a healthy environment to prevent abuses and promote worker well-being.

The lack of significance of the variable "Quality of Work Management" may indicate that other management-related factors were not captured by the model. Future studies should consider a more comprehensive model that includes mediating and moderating variables to capture the complex relationship between precarious work and moral harassment.

The quality of professional relationships and workplace equality, as well as a healthy and safe work environment, are associated with a significant reduction in moral harassment due to prejudice. This underscores the importance of promoting equality and good relationships among colleagues to minimize prejudices and abusive behaviors.

Gois (2020) suggests that management effectiveness is crucial for maintaining a healthy work environment. However, the lack of significance for effective management in this context may indicate that specific factors could have a more direct impact on moral harassment due to prejudice. Moral harassment due to prejudice may be more directly linked to professional relationships and the safety of the work environment.

In the case of moral harassment due to humiliation situations, the quality of professional relationships and workplace equality was a significant predictor. Antunes (2009) and Antunes and Alves (2004) argue that equality and the quality of interpersonal relationships significantly impact the work environment, potentially fostering environments susceptible to abuse and discrimination.

Gois (2020) highlights the importance of good management for organizational climate. However, the absence of significance may indicate that, in terms of specific humiliation, management alone may not be as determinant compared to direct interpersonal relationships.

The variable "Quality of Professional Relationships and Workplace Equality" was a predictor of all three types of moral harassment investigated. Researchers like Hirigoyen (2019) and Leymann (1990) provide a solid theoretical basis for the importance of an equal and respectful environment in minimizing moral harassment.

The findings of this study are aligned with the fields of Work Psychology and Brazilian Sociology, grounded in historical-dialectical materialism to address labor precarization under neoliberal capitalism. Soares (2013) explains that workplace moral harassment involves targets, aggressors, and organizational and social contexts. Alves (2015) describes moral harassment as an expression of capital's power, while Raichelis (2011) highlights that labor flexibilization and precarization lead to illness and deteriorate working conditions.

The findings indicate that organizational and social contexts are fundamental for the occurrence of moral harassment, suggesting that precarization is not limited to the workplace but also affects workers' social lives. Neoliberal management, which demoralizes public service, especially in SUAS, results in labor relations marked by selfishness and individualism, facilitating moral harassment (Vieira, Lima, and Lima, 2012).

Work organizations within USAS, as delineated by the 1988 Constitution and Organic Law of Social Assistance (OLSA) of 1993, may be influenced by political maneuvering and individualistic practices that do not adhere to the principles of public administration and promote moral harassment. Management in these contexts often favors labor relations based on selfishness and individualism, intrinsic elements of the sociability of capital that contribute to moral harassment (Vieira, Lima, and Lima, 2012, p. 265).

This study presents some limitations. The non-random sampling may introduce biases and limit the generalization of the findings. The inadequate representation of participants with secondary and elementary education levels and the geographic concentration of participants in the southern and southeastern regions of the country are also limiting factors. This suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution.

Future studies should consider more diversified and representative samples, both in terms of geographic distribution and educational levels, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. Further exploration of the relationship between moral harassment and labor precarization in different sectors beyond USAS, including public and private sectors, will be relevant. Longitudinal investigations should follow workers over time to observe changes in neoliberal policies and working conditions.

Developing interventions and policies aimed at mitigating the effects of precarization and moral harassment in the workplace and assessing their effectiveness in promoting the health and well-being of workers can provide valuable insights. Training programs, psychological support, and reforms in organizational policies may be useful practices to combat these issues in the world of work.

These recommendations for future research aim to enrich the fields of Work Psychology and Sociology and social work, as well as the area of workers' mental health, contributing to the development of effective coping strategies and protections for workers in a scenario influenced by neoliberalism and its implications for labor relations.

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