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Malpractice in the public sector and its impact on labor outsourcing: a critical analysis for innovation in public management

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Abstract. This study investigates dishonesty in the public sector and the outsourcing of labor as a management solution, seeking to understand its impact on the efficiency and motivation of civil servants. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with civil servants from five public organizations in northern Brazil. The results indicate that slacking off results from a disconnection between organizational objectives and the expectations of civil servants, a lack of recognition and limitations in the development of competencies. Although outsourcing is adopted as an immediate response to a lack of motivation, the study reveals that it has long-term negative consequences, including the loss of intellectual capital and the weakening of organizational culture. The article proposes an intervention framework based on appreciation, human development, encouraging autonomy and clear communication. This framework aims to promote management practices that reduce absenteeism and improve employee engagement. The relevance of this study lies in expanding the understanding of the relationship between organizational culture and motivation in the public sector, highlighting the impact of outsourcing on internal cohesion and proposing a more sustainable management model. Recommendations include training managers, implementing continuous recognition practices and promoting autonomy. Limitations of the study involve the sample being restricted to a specific region and the absence of quantitative data. Future research could expand these findings to other contexts and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed framework, with a view to improving public management and the quality of the services provided.

Keywords. Worklessness, Public Sector, Motivation at work, Idleness, Outsourcing, Public Management, Technical-Technological Product

1 Introduction

Absenteeism in the public sector workplace is a complex phenomenon that involves a lack of motivation and an increase in the idleness of civil servants, directly affecting the efficiency and quality of the services provided. This problem, which is often ignored in public management, has led to the growing outsourcing of labor as a solution to circumvent the effects of low productivity and employee commitment. However, rather than solving the problem, this strategy can create new challenges for public administration, such as the loss of intellectual

capital and increased long-term costs (Carvalho, 2021; dos Santos & Callado, 2022; Corrêa et al., 2020).

This situation raises a crucial question: how does slack work affect the public sector and what is the real impact of outsourcing as an answer to this problem? The objectives of this study are to investigate the causes of slack work in the public sector, explore the implications of outsourcing as an alternative solution, and propose a framework to mitigate the effects of lack of motivation and idleness, using an approach centered on human development and innovation in public management policies.

The existing literature on slacking off and idleness in the workplace addresses issues such as the role of organizational culture and management practices in motivating civil servants, as well as the challenges of implementing effective incentives to improve productivity (Silva & de Araújo, 2022; Souza & Bachtold, 2020; Vargas et al., 2021). However, there is a significant gap in the analysis of the relationship between dishonesty and outsourcing in the public context, especially with regard to the long-term impacts of this approach on organizational efficiency and the sustainability of public services. Lack of motivation and increased idleness in the public sector have been widely associated with poor quality of life at work and a lack of alignment between organizational goals and the expectations of civil servants (dos Santos & Dutra, 2020; da Silva Costa et al., 2020; Pereira, da Silva, & Durão, 2024).

This article is structured to initially address motivational theories and the influence of idleness on the productivity of civil servants, followed by a critical analysis of outsourcing as a managerial response. The development of the proposed framework includes strategies for implementing management practices focused on motivating and developing civil servants' skills, and for strengthening the organizational culture, with the aim of aligning expectations and results. The final contribution of this study is to provide a robust alternative to outsourcing, based on management practices oriented towards innovation and human development, which aim to mitigate the effects of slacking off and promote a more productive and engaging work environment in the public sector.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Sloppiness and Idleness in the Workplace

The concept of slacking off in the workplace, especially in the public sector, is intrinsically linked to the notion of idleness, both productive and passive. Idleness refers to a state of disengagement and lack of motivation, resulting in idleness, which can manifest itself in two ways: productive, where the worker appears to be busy but carries out irrelevant activities, and passive, which consists of not carrying out any meaningful activity. Sanchez (2021) historically explores how idleness has been perceived in the context of work, often seen in a negative light and associated with wasting time. However, this perception is more complex, as it also involves aspects of resistance and redefining the value of work, something that Paulsen (2014) called "empty work" or resistance to formal, routine work. This type of resistance can be a way for workers to appropriate time that would otherwise be totally dedicated to the organization, showing a dimension of carelessness that is both personal and political.

Productive idleness, as Johnsen (2022) points out, refers to a condition where workers remain actively involved in tasks, but these tasks are of little or no importance to the organizational goal. This form of idleness is characterized by what Johnsen calls "busy idleness", where workers appear to be engaged, but are in fact filling their time in a non-productive way. This perspective is in line with the analyses of Bergenhenegouwen et al.

(2023), who argue that premature idleness in high-variety production environments can be a direct consequence of failures in planning and task management, generating a mismatch between available capacity and production requirements. Thus, slacking off and idleness are not merely products of individual unwillingness, but are rooted in organizational structures and processes that often fail to provide a motivating environment with clear objectives.

Russell (2022) also contributes to understanding idleness by discussing its role as a form of leisure and resistance within the workplace. From Russell's perspective, idleness can be seen as a space for personal vindication within a context dominated by demands for efficiency and productivity. This philosophical view of idleness resonates with the considerations of Gagnier and Dupré (1995), who discuss the dimensions of gender and power in work and idleness. For Gagnier and Dupré, idleness is often shaped by social expectations about who should work and how, reflecting an unequal distribution of responsibilities and leisure opportunities. These expectations influence how idleness is perceived and valued, both in the workplace and in personal life.

Buchanan (2001) examines the ethics and economics of idleness, suggesting that idleness should not automatically be seen as an economic or moral evil. According to Buchanan, slacking off and idleness can be understood from a perspective that questions the intrinsic value of constant work, offering a critique of the ideology of incessant productivity. This analysis is relevant to understanding idleness in the public sector, where expectations of productivity are often out of step with actual working conditions, contributing to the disconnection between civil servants and their activities. In addition, Carvalho (2021) argues that rationalizing organizational idleness can be profitable for companies, especially when this rationalization allows for better allocation of human resources and more efficient management of idle time.

These different perspectives indicate that idleness in the public sector is not a phenomenon that can be explained solely by a lack of motivation or commitment on the part of individual civil servants, but is deeply rooted in structural, cultural and managerial factors that shape the work environment. Idleness, both productive and passive, reflects a state of disengagement that is largely a product of organizational policies and culture that do not offer clear incentives for engagement or that, on the other hand, overload workers with unimportant demands. Understanding slacking off and idleness in the public workplace therefore requires an analysis that goes beyond individual behaviour and investigates the organizational and social conditions that contribute to perpetuating this state. This includes reviewing managerial and cultural practices which, as discussed by Sanchez (2021), Paulsen (2014) and Johnsen (2022), are fundamental to building an environment that motivates and engages workers, thus avoiding the negative effects of idleness.

2.2 Motivation and Quality of Life at Work in the Public Sector

Motivation in the workplace is one of the key elements influencing the quality of life of civil servants and, consequently, the efficiency of the services provided. In the context of the public sector, the factors that affect the motivation of civil servants are strongly linked to working conditions, the quality of leadership and recognition of individual effort. Silva and de Araújo (2022) point out that motivation in the public service is directly associated with the alignment between civil servants' expectations and organizational practices, with a lack of incentive being one of the main causes of demotivation. The lack of a policy to value civil servants contributes to an environment where recognition is scarce, which negatively affects workers' perception of the importance of their activities. Dos Santos and Dutra (2020) point out

that poor quality of life at work, characterized by a hostile working environment and task overload, severely impacts on the motivation of civil servants, contributing to increased idleness and dissatisfaction.

The literature on motivation in the public sector shows that competency-based management can be an effective strategy for improving quality of life at work, promoting job satisfaction and commitment among civil servants. Vargas et al. (2021) discuss the importance of adopting competency-based people management, which considers individual skills and offers opportunities for professional development as a way of motivating civil servants. According to Pereira, da Silva and Durão (2024), motivation and job satisfaction are closely linked to the perception that there is a fair balance between the effort expended and the rewards received, whether in the form of recognition, benefits or growth opportunities. In this sense, the implementation of policies that promote professional development and offer adequate support to civil servants can significantly reduce levels of dishonesty and increase the engagement of civil servants.

In addition to management and development practices, the cultural context of public organizations plays a crucial role in motivating employees. Souza and Bachtold (2020) state that organizational culture has a direct influence on workers' performance and motivation. A culture that values transparency, respect and appreciation of individual contributions tends to create an environment that is more conducive to employee engagement, while a culture characterized by favoritism and a lack of clarity in expectations promotes demotivation and alienation. Costa, Marques and Ferreira (2020) explore the relationship between pleasure and suffering at work, suggesting that employee motivation is linked to the organization's ability to create conditions that minimize suffering and maximize the sense of achievement. When workers perceive that their work contributes to a greater goal, such as the well-being of the community, satisfaction and motivation increase, leading to an overall improvement in the quality of public services.

Corrêa et al.'s (2020) analysis of incentive distortions in the federal public service in Brazil reveals that poorly structured reward systems also have a significant negative impact on employee motivation. The authors argue that the absence of clear and fair criteria for rewards and promotions generates frustration and disengagement, since civil servants cannot see a direct relationship between their performance and the recognition they receive. This disconnection between effort and reward creates an environment of dissatisfaction and increases the potential for dishonesty, especially when employees realize that their extra dedication will not result in tangible benefits. Da Silva Costa et al. (2020) also highlight the importance of self-determination as a motivational factor, especially in distance learning in public management. The possibility of autonomy in the performance of duties promotes a feeling of control and personal value, which are essential for motivation and engagement.

Therefore, quality of life at work in the public sector is the result of a combination of factors involving competency-based management, recognition and appreciation of individual contributions, as well as an organizational environment that fosters growth and satisfaction. Slacking off and idleness in the public sector are not merely the result of individual failings on the part of civil servants, but reflect structural and managerial problems that need to be addressed in order to promote sustainable motivation. A focus on quality of life and the creation of policies that encourage the appreciation of civil servants is essential to mitigate the negative effects of idleness and create a more productive and satisfying work environment.

2.3 Outsourcing Labor as a Management Response

Outsourcing labor in the public sector has often been adopted as a managerial response to slackness, seeking to fill productivity gaps and improve the efficiency of operations. However, the adoption of this strategy raises concerns about its long-term adverse effects. Paulsen (2014) argues that outsourcing can be seen as a way of managing the "empty idleness" of permanent workers, but by resorting to outsourced workers, there is a significant risk that the organization will end up masking underlying problems, such as a lack of structural motivation and inadequate management. Similarly, Sanchez (2021) points out that outsourcing can create a disconnect between the values and mission of the organization and the workers, resulting in an environment in which outsourced employees feel less engaged and committed, contributing to higher turnover and, consequently, the loss of institutional knowledge.

Bergenhengouwen et al.'s (2023) analysis of the management of premature idleness suggests that outsourcing, in seeking an immediate solution to a lack of efficiency, can overlook essential issues relating to the planning and management of tasks. The idleness of permanent workers, which could be addressed through a better allocation of resources and the restructuring of tasks, is simply "solved" by hiring outsourced workers. This practice perpetuates slacking off and also weakens organizational cohesion, as permanent and outsourced workers often operate under different incentive systems and have different levels of engagement and belonging (Russell, 2022; Gagnier & Dupré, 1995). In addition, outsourcing tends to have an impact on the morale of permanent employees, who may feel undervalued and less motivated when they perceive that the administration is looking for external solutions instead of investing in their development and training.

Another critical point discussed by Buchanan (2001) is the ethical and economic impact of outsourcing as a solution to malpractice in the public sector. Buchanan suggests that outsourcing, rather than improving economic efficiency, can result in an increase in the hidden costs associated with managing outsourced work, such as difficulties in supervision and quality control, as well as communication and integration problems with permanent workers. This view is complemented by dos Santos and Callado (2022), who identify that the hidden costs often outweigh the benefits initially foreseen, making outsourcing an alternative that, although attractive in the short term, ends up being ineffective and economically unviable in the long term. The mismatch between the organization's objectives and outsourced practices contributes to what Paulsen (2014) calls "passive resistance", in which both employees and outsourced workers perform only the minimum necessary, exacerbating the problem of sloppiness.

Carvalho (2021) discusses the concept of "rationalizing organizational idleness", pointing out that, instead of resorting to outsourcing, the public administration could profit from investing in better use of the idle potential of its own employees. By implementing practices that promote retraining and the redistribution of responsibilities, it is possible to reduce idleness and increase the commitment and motivation of workers, eliminating the

need to outsource labor. This approach is corroborated by dos Santos and Dutra (2020), who suggest that poor quality of life at work, often the result of bad management practices, can be a determining factor in a lack of motivation and the consequent need to outsource. Improving working conditions and promoting an organizational culture that values the participation of civil servants are fundamental strategies for reducing absenteeism and, consequently, the need to outsource.

In short, outsourcing as a managerial response to slackness in the public sector is a palliative solution that ignores the structural factors that lead to a lack of motivation and an increase in idleness. The literature shows that although outsourcing can offer short-term

benefits, such as an immediate reduction in levels of apparent slacking off, its long-term effects are detrimental to organizational cohesion, worker morale and economic and operating costs (Bergenhengouwen et al., 2023; Buchanan, 2001; Paulsen, 2014). The search for internal solutions, such as valuing employees and improving management practices, proves to be more sustainable and effective in mitigating the effects of malfeasance and promoting a productive and engaging work environment.

2.4 Impact on Organizational Culture and Social Capital

Outsourcing in the public sector has significant implications for organizational culture and social capital, directly impacting internal cohesion and employee engagement. The introduction of outsourced workers in public organizations creates cultural fragmentation, which compromises the unity and cohesion of the group, as discussed by Buchanan (2001). The author argues that social capital, understood as the set of norms, values and relationships that facilitate collective action within an organization, is strongly weakened when outsourcing is implemented without considering the cultural alignment between permanent and outsourced workers. This cultural misalignment creates a divide between teams, where outsourced workers often feel isolated and disconnected from the organizational objectives, which ends up negatively affecting the performance and efficiency of the service provided.

The fragmentation mentioned is also a reflection of the lack of integration between different categories of workers. Sanchez (2021) discusses how outsourced work often promotes a devaluation of the functions performed by permanent employees, creating a perception that permanent work is not sufficiently qualified or productive. This view reduces the confidence and engagement of permanent workers, negatively affecting the organizational culture. Similarly, Costa, Marques and Ferreira (2020) argue that the disconnection between permanent and outsourced workers can lead to increased suffering at work, since professional relationships are compromised by a lack of cohesion and a shared sense of purpose. When workers don't feel part of a cohesive organizational community, motivation suffers, and slacking off becomes an almost inevitable consequence.

In addition, organizational culture is influenced by the perception of injustice and inequality between permanent and outsourced workers. Pereira, da Silva and Durão (2024) suggest that job satisfaction is closely linked to the perception of fairness and clear opportunities for growth and recognition within the organization. The introduction of outsourced workers, often with different working conditions and benefits from permanent employees, creates an environment of unfair competition and resentment. This feeling of injustice compromises social capital, since permanent workers perceive that their efforts and dedication are not properly recognized and rewarded by the organization, which leads to a decrease in commitment and an increase in idleness (Paulsen, 2014).

Organizational culture in the public sector, as described by Souza and Bachtold (2020), depends on management practices that promote the involvement and recognition of all workers, regardless of their employment status. When outsourced workers are introduced without a clear integration strategy, the impact on organizational culture can be devastating. Outsourcing without strategic alignment weakens interpersonal relationships, since outsourced and permanent workers tend to have different goals and expectations regarding their role within the organization. Johnsen (2022) complements this view by discussing "busy idleness", where workers, even if they are physically present and involved in activities, do not feel part of the organizational core, which results in a decrease in real productivity and engagement.

Therefore, outsourcing, when poorly implemented, negatively impacts both organizational culture and social capital, creating a fragmented environment with low cohesion and reduced engagement. The literature indicates that, instead of resorting to outsourcing practices that enhance these divisions, public management should focus on practices that promote the appreciation and development of permanent employees, strengthening social capital and ensuring a unified organizational culture. This implies management that goes beyond the mere pursuit of short-term efficiency and considers the long-term effects on the working environment, the motivation of civil servants and internal cohesion, which are fundamental to providing a quality public service (Buchanan, 2001; Costa et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2024).

3. Methodology

The choice of an exploratory qualitative methodology for this study is justified by the need to understand the nuances and complexities surrounding dishonesty and its impact on the public sector. Souza and Bachtold (2020) point out that, in contexts where individual experiences and perceptions play a crucial role in shaping the phenomena analyzed, qualitative methodology offers the flexibility needed to capture the subtleties and subjectivity of these phenomena. The qualitative approach allows for deep immersion in the participants' experiences, making it possible to identify the contextual and cultural factors that influence their attitudes and behaviors. In this context, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method because, according to Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), this method allows interviewees to freely express their perceptions, while the interviewer maintains a structure that ensures that all relevant topics are addressed.

The participants in this study were selected with the aim of ensuring a homogeneous and representative sample of civil servants from organizations located in the north of Brazil. As shown in Table 1, 22 civil servants were interviewed, identified by the initials of their names to preserve their privacy. The participants, who include professionals such as A.L., B.C., C.D., among others, range in age from 30 to 55, ensuring a diverse representation in terms of length of service and experience in the public sector. The group of participants is made up of 11 men and 11 women, all holding various positions in five different public organizations. These positions include administrative and managerial positions, providing a comprehensive view of the factors that contribute to malpractice and the impact of outsourcing at different hierarchical levels. The homogenization of the sample was fundamental to ensure that responses could be comparable and that variations in perceptions could be attributed to the organizational context, rather than demographic or individual factors.

Table 1 - Primary Research Data

| Participant | Age | Sex | Public Organization | Position held |
|-------------|-----|--------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| A.L. | 35 | Female | Organization A | Administrative Assistant |
| B.C. | 42 | Male | Organization B | Human Resources Analyst |
| C.D. | 50 | Female | Organization C | Project Coordinator |
| D.E. | 37 | Male | Organization D | Logistics Supervisor |
| E.F. | 40 | Female | Organization E | Financial Manager |

| | | | | |
|------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| F.G. | 45 | Male | Organization A | IT Analyst |
| G.H. | 33 | Female | Organization B | Communications Assistant |
| H.I. | 39 | Male | Organization C | Operations Coordinator |
| I.J. | 55 | Female | Organization D | Department Manager |
| J.K. | 32 | Male | Organization E | Accounting Technician |
| K.L. | 41 | Female | Organization A | Human Resources Coordinator |
| L.M. | 36 | Male | Organization B | Legal Assistant |
| M.N. | 38 | Female | Organization C | Public Policy Analyst |
| N.O. | 47 | Male | Organization D | Public Health Specialist |
| O.P. | 34 | Female | Organization E | Education Technician |
| P.Q. | 43 | Male | Organization A | Infrastructure Supervisor |
| Q.R. | 51 | Female | Organization B | Financial Coordinator |
| R.S. | 30 | Male | Organization C | Technical Assistant |
| S.T. | 44 | Female | Organization D | Social Programs Manager |
| T.U. | 48 | Male | Organization E | Human Resources Specialist |
| U.V. | 31 | Female | Organization A | Planning Technician |
| V.W. | 37 | Male | Organization B | Internal Control Analyst |

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

The semi-structured interviews followed a systematic process designed to ensure that rich and detailed data was obtained. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted more than an hour each, as recommended by Naz, Gulab and Aslam (2022), who suggest that longer interviews allow for a more complete exploration of the topics of interest. A total of 22 interviews were carried out, all of which were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, in order to ensure the accuracy and fidelity of the data collected. The recordings were subsequently transcribed, generating a considerable volume of material - around 250 pages in total - which served as the basis for the subsequent analysis. The structure of the interviews was developed based on the framework proposed by Kallio et al. (2016), which highlights the importance of using a flexible but structured approach to allow adaptation to the interviewees' responses and ensure that all relevant areas were covered in a consistent manner.

Content analysis was the method chosen to interpret the data collected, allowing for a detailed and systematic exploration of the transcribed material. According to Mayring (2021), qualitative content analysis involves several stages which ensure that the data is organized and interpreted in a coherent and in-depth manner. The process began with a careful reading of the transcripts to familiarize ourselves with the data and identify initial categories. Next, codes were created to organize the information into relevant themes, facilitating the identification of

patterns and insights into dishonesty and its impacts on the public sector. The coding method followed was in line with the recommendations of DeJulio et al. (2020), who suggest creating both pre-defined and emerging categories, allowing for an approach that is both driven by the study's objectives and open to new discoveries. In total, the transcripts yielded 250 pages of material, and the content analysis generated multiple thematic categories, reflecting issues such as the impact of outsourcing on motivation, perceptions of organizational culture and challenges related to internal cohesion.

Ethical elements were rigorously considered in all phases of the study, from the selection of participants to data analysis. All participating civil servants were duly informed about the objectives of the research, and informed consent was obtained before the interviews were carried out, in accordance with the ethical guidelines proposed by Adams (2015). In addition, the confidentiality of the data was ensured by anonymizing the identities of the interviewees, ensuring that no personal information was disclosed or could be traced back to the individuals. The use of the participants' initials served to reinforce this privacy, while the secure storage of the data collected ensured the integrity of the research process. These ethical precautions are essential in qualitative studies, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as dishonesty and organizational practices in the public sector, as they ensure the trust of the participants and the validity of the data obtained.

Thus, the methodology adopted for this study was carefully planned and executed to ensure the robustness of the data and the depth of the analysis. The choice of a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews, careful selection of participants and rigorous content analysis allowed for a detailed and contextualized exploration of the phenomena of malfeasance and outsourcing, offering significant contributions to understanding the impacts of these practices on organizational culture and social capital in the public sector.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Factors Contributing to Sloppiness in the Public Sector

The results of this study indicate that absenteeism in the public sector is caused by several factors, the main one being the disconnection between organizational objectives and the expectations of civil servants. The lack of alignment between what the organization expects of workers and the actual working conditions creates an environment where motivation is weakened, leading to idleness and disengagement. According to dos Santos and Dutra (2020), this disconnection can be attributed to poor quality of life at work, where employees face a lack of adequate support and a disproportionate workload, which contributes to a feeling of uselessness and demotivation. This feeling was evidenced by one of the participants who said: "I feel that my work makes no difference, because the targets we are given are completely out of line with the needs of the population" (C.D., 50, Project Coordinator).

The literature also highlights the influence of a lack of recognition and appreciation of employees on the development of dishonesty. Silva and de Araújo (2022) argue that recognition is a crucial factor in keeping civil servants engaged and committed to the organization's mission. However, the lack of appreciation policies has led to an increase in disinterest among public workers, who often don't see a clear reward for their efforts. This point was reinforced by one of the interviewees: "There is no recognition from management, even when we achieve positive results, which makes it difficult to maintain motivation" (B.C., 42, Human Resources Analyst). This perception of devaluation has also been observed in previous studies, such as Pereira, da

Silva and Durão (2024), who point out that job satisfaction is directly linked to the perception of fairness in recognizing individual contributions.

Another important factor identified was the lack of opportunities for professional development, which contributes significantly to idleness in the public sector. According to Bergenhenegouwen et al. (2023), premature idleness can be a direct consequence of a lack of investment in worker training and development, which limits their ability to make a significant contribution to the organization. When employees see no prospects for growth or the development of new skills, they tend to become demotivated and adopt idle behaviors. An example of this can be found in the statement of one of the interviewees: "We're always doing the same things, without any chance of learning something new or improving our skills" (J.K., 32, Accounting Technician). The lack of training opportunities reflects a failure on the part of public management to provide an environment that encourages continuous development, as suggested by Gagnier and Dupré (1995), who argue that training and capacity-building are fundamental to valuing work.

The analysis of the results also highlighted the issue of the mismatch between the organizational culture and the expectations of civil servants, who often find no meaning or purpose in their daily activities. Souza and Bachtold (2020) state that organizational culture plays a central role in motivating workers, especially in the public sector, where employees seek a greater purpose in their work. However, the reality is often far removed from this idealization, as one of the participants pointed out: "The culture here is very focused on meeting bureaucratic targets, without any real concern for the social impacts we could generate" (E.F., 40, Financial Manager). This perception is in line with discussions by Russell (2022), who suggests that slacking off can arise from a lack of clear purpose and meaningful activities, leading workers to enter a state of busy idleness.

In addition, the introduction of outsourced workers as a managerial solution to idleness further exacerbates the disconnect between employees and the organization's objectives. Buchanan (2001) points out that outsourcing, rather than addressing the root cause of idleness, creates fragmentation within the workforce, with negative impacts on cohesion and motivation. This was evident in the words of one of the interviewees: "Outsourcing has only made things worse, because now it seems that we are all replaceable, and there is no incentive to improve" (P.Q., 43, Infrastructure Supervisor). This perspective reflects a general feeling of insecurity and lack of belonging, contributing to the perpetuation of slacking off, as also observed by Paulsen (2014), who describes the phenomenon of "empty work" as a form of passive resistance in contexts of devaluation.

Therefore, the factors that contribute to absenteeism in the public sector mainly include the disconnection between organizational objectives and the expectations of civil servants, the lack of recognition and appreciation, the absence of professional development opportunities, and an uninspiring organizational culture. These elements interact with each other in a complex way, creating an environment where the motivation of civil servants is constantly undermined, and where dishonesty becomes an adaptive behavior. The need for a management approach that prioritizes the appreciation, development and integration of civil servants is evident in order to mitigate the effects of absenteeism and promote a more productive and engaging work environment.

4.2 Consequences of Sloppiness for Organizational Efficiency

The consequences of slacking off in the public sector are evident in the impact on organizational efficiency, resulting in a significant drop in productivity and the quality of the services offered to society. By promoting the disengagement of civil servants, carelessness creates an environment where idleness becomes prevalent, directly affecting workers' ability to carry out their tasks effectively and consistently. As pointed out by Paulsen (2014), idleness often manifests itself through what he describes as "empty work" - activities that, while appearing to be productive, have little or no contribution to organizational goals. This

phenomenon is widely reflected in the participants' reports, as seen in the words of one of the interviewees: "I often feel like I'm just filling my time with tasks that don't add value to my work or to the organization" (G.H., 33, Communications Assistant). This situation results in a loss of resources, as the employees' time, which should be used productively, ends up being wasted on irrelevant activities.

The analysis of the testimonies also highlights that the lack of connection between organizational objectives and the daily tasks of civil servants contributes to inefficiency and the low quality of the services provided. Bergenhenegouwen et al. (2023) suggest that idleness, when poorly managed, can lead to inadequate use of available work capacity, compromising the delivery of public services. Civil servants often report that the targets imposed by the administration are not aligned with the real needs of the population, creating a feeling of uselessness in relation to their role within the organization. As one of the participants said: "It seems like we're always busy, but with things that have no real impact on those who need our services" (S.T., 44, Social Programs Manager). This disconnection creates a vicious cycle of demotivation, where workers don't feel valued and consequently don't commit to their activities, resulting in poor quality service provision.

In addition, slacking off has a negative impact on morale and organizational culture, affecting both individual and collective productivity. Russell (2022) notes that slacking off can be seen as a form of "busy idleness", where workers remain physically present but mentally disconnected from their duties. This disconnection not only affects individual productivity, but also creates a working environment where commitment and collaboration are reduced to a minimum. This reality was evidenced in the employees' testimonies, as demonstrated by one participant: "The atmosphere here is very demotivating, no one seems to want to make an effort beyond the basics, and this ends up infecting everyone" (F.G., 45, IT Analyst). The lack of a common purpose and clear goals that motivate workers contributes to the creation of a stagnant organizational culture, where progress and innovation are practically non-existent.

Another important aspect to consider is the economic impact of idleness, since the low productivity of civil servants results in a significant cost for public organizations. Carvalho (2021) discusses how rationalizing idleness could actually generate profits if there were a better allocation of human resources. However, in the context of the public sector, sloppiness often leads to a waste of resources that could be avoided with more efficient management practices. This inefficiency is exacerbated by a lack of supervision and the absence of effective performance monitoring systems, as one of the interviewees reported: "There is no real monitoring of what we are doing; it seems that as long as we are physically present, everything is fine" (J.K., 32, Accounting Technician). This lack of accountability creates an environment where idleness becomes normalized, resulting in the provision of services that do not adequately meet society's demands.

Gagnier and Dupré (1995) argue that malfeasance also has ethical implications, as it represents a failure on the part of the organization to provide a work environment that is

meaningful and rewarding for its employees. When civil servants perceive that their contributions are not valued and that their work has no significant impact, they tend to adopt a posture of passive resistance, contributing to the perpetuation of the cycle of inefficiency and low productivity. This feeling of devaluation was corroborated by one of the participants: "I don't see how what I do here can really help to improve the situation, and that makes me lose any motivation" (R.S., 30, Technical Assistant). The absence of a work environment that

recognizes and values the contributions of civil servants not only promotes slacking off, but also undermines the potential for improvement and innovation within the organization.

In short, the consequences of sloppiness for organizational efficiency in the public sector are multiple and deep-rooted. Sloppiness results in a significant drop in productivity, negatively affects the quality of the services offered and contributes to the creation of a stagnant and demotivated organizational culture. The economic impacts are also substantial, since slacking off leads to a waste of human and financial resources. In order to mitigate these effects, it is essential that public organizations adopt management practices that align organizational objectives with the expectations of civil servants, value their contributions and promote a work environment that encourages engagement and innovation. Only in this way will it be possible to reverse the situation of slacking off and improve the efficiency and quality of the public services offered to society.

4.3 Outsourcing as a Solution: Advantages and Disadvantages

Outsourcing as a solution to sloppiness in the public sector has advantages and disadvantages that must be analyzed in both the short and long term. In immediate terms, outsourcing offers a quick response to deal with problems of inefficiency and lack of internal motivation. When outsourced employees are introduced, the public administration can quickly fill operational gaps, guaranteeing the continuity of services, even in the face of problems of idleness and low productivity of permanent employees. According to Bergenhenegouwen et al. (2023), this approach can help mitigate premature idleness, as it increases the flexibility of the workforce and allows activities to be redistributed more effectively. However, as one of the participants pointed out: "Outsourcing solves the problem in the short term, but it doesn't change the fact that permanent employees remain demotivated" (H.I., 39, Operations Coordinator). This suggests that the solution offered by outsourcing is only palliative, and does not address the structural causes of slacking off.

One of the main disadvantages of outsourcing, especially in the long term, is the loss of intellectual capital within public organizations. As Buchanan (2001) points out, tacit knowledge, which develops through experience and time, is fundamental to the effectiveness of any organization. Outsourcing, by prioritizing quick solutions and external workers who don't have the same level of involvement and accumulated knowledge as permanent employees, contributes to the erosion of this intellectual capital. This was reinforced by one of the interviewees who said: "Outsourced workers don't have the same experience as us and often need constant guidance, which ends up delaying the work" (S.T., 44, Social Programs Manager). Thus, instead of improving efficiency, outsourcing can paradoxically reduce the organization's capacity to innovate and solve problems independently.

In addition, outsourcing has a significant impact on the internal motivation of permanent employees. According to Paulsen (2014), the introduction of outsourced workers can be seen by civil servants as a sign that their work is not valued or that they are easily replaceable.

This perception generates insecurity and a feeling of devaluation, which contributes to an increase in malpractice. Silva and de Araújo (2022) also point out that a lack of recognition and the perception of job insecurity are factors that undermine workers' motivation, making them less likely to engage fully in their duties. One participant reinforced this perception when he said: "With the arrival of outsourced workers, the impression is that we are disposable, which demotivates us even more" (A.L., 35, Administrative Assistant). Therefore, instead of revitalizing the workforce, outsourcing can result in a further decline in the motivation of permanent employees.

Johnsen (2022) brings up the concept of "busy idleness", which reflects the situation in which workers remain busy, but with tasks that do not necessarily contribute to the organization's strategic objectives. In the context of outsourcing, this idleness can be masked by the apparent increase in activity brought about by new hires, creating a false impression of efficiency. However, this type of occupation does not necessarily mean a real increase in productivity or the quality of the services provided. One of the civil servants commented that "the outsourced workers always seem to be busy, but in practice the work doesn't progress because there is no integration between what they do and what we need to achieve" (F.G., 45, IT Analyst). This testimony highlights the importance of aligning outsourced activities with organizational objectives, something that is often overlooked when outsourcing is used as a quick fix for sloppiness.

Another critical point related to outsourcing is the impact on organizational cohesion and culture. As argued by Gagnier and Dupré (1995), the presence of different categories of workers, each with their own levels of benefits and job security, can create divisions within the organization. These divisions negatively affect collaboration and internal cohesion, since outsourced and permanent workers operate under different conditions and often compete for the same resources and opportunities. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees: "There is a clear division between us and the outsourced workers; we don't share the same values, and this creates barriers to teamwork" (M.N., 38, Public Policy Analyst). The fragmentation of the workforce resulting from outsourcing compromises the organizational culture, making it less cohesive and therefore less effective.

Although outsourcing can offer short-term advantages, such as an immediate reduction in idleness problems and the possibility of greater operational flexibility, its long-term adverse effects are significant and cannot be ignored. The loss of intellectual capital, the demotivation of permanent civil servants and the fragmentation of internal cohesion are problems which, if not tackled appropriately, can seriously compromise the public administration's ability to provide quality services to society. The literature and the participants' reports make it clear that outsourcing, as a response to malpractice, is an insufficient solution and that it needs a more strategic approach that considers both valuing civil servants and strengthening the organizational culture. Only in this way will it be possible to create a working environment that not only mitigates slacking off, but also promotes the engagement and efficiency needed to provide an effective and sustainable public service.

4.4 Intersection between Organizational Culture and Employee Motivation

The relationship between organizational culture and the motivation of civil servants is a crucial element in understanding the dynamics of disaffection and engagement within institutions. Organizational culture, defined by the values, norms and practices that prevail within an organization, directly influences the level of motivation of civil servants and,

consequently, their productivity and commitment. According to Souza and Bachtold (2020), the presence of a cohesive organizational culture that values employees promotes a more motivating work environment, while the absence of such elements contributes to increased demotivation and idleness. This relationship was highlighted by one of the interviewees, who said: "Here, it seems that the culture of the organization is only about meeting targets without any concern for the well-being of the employees. This makes me lose any desire to dedicate myself to work" (A.L., 35, Administrative Assistant).

Employee motivation is directly linked to the degree to which they identify with the organization's values and objectives. Silva and de Araújo (2022) suggest that when the organizational culture does not promote a sense of belonging and does not value the contribution of workers, the tendency is for motivation levels to drop significantly. One of the critical factors mentioned by the interviewees was the lack of recognition and development opportunities within the organization, which generates a perception of stagnation and uselessness. One participant reinforced this idea: "I don't feel that there is any incentive to grow here; the work is always the same, and that ends up becoming frustrating" (P.Q., 43, Infrastructure Supervisor). This kind of environment, where there is no incentive to grow or recognition for effort, creates a toxic organizational culture that distances employees from their responsibilities and reduces their productivity.

In addition, the influence of organizational culture on motivation is closely linked to the leadership style and management practices adopted. As discussed by Vargas et al. (2021), competency-based management, when correctly applied, can significantly increase employee motivation by aligning individual competencies with the needs of the organization. However, when management fails to recognize and allocate employees' skills appropriately, the organizational culture ends up fostering a demotivating work environment. This was corroborated by one of the interviewees: "I feel that my skills are not used. It feels like I'm here just to fill a vacancy, without any intention of really contributing to something bigger" (R.S., 30, Technical Assistant). This lack of alignment between civil servants' skills and the duties they perform is a factor that contributes to a feeling of demotivation and an increase in absenteeism.

Organizational culture also influences employees' perceptions of the purpose and value of their work. Gagnier and Dupré (1995) point out that the perception that work has a broader meaning and contributes to social well-being is an important motivating factor. However, when the organizational culture is excessively bureaucratic and focuses only on complying with processes, the meaning of work is lost, and employees see themselves as nothing more than cogs in a wheel with no real value. One participant expressed this feeling when he said: "Our work seems to be more focused on complying with rules and less on actually helping the people who depend on our services" (E.F., 40, Financial Manager). This disconnection between the purpose of the job and the daily tasks creates an environment of demotivation, where employees don't feel engaged with the organization's objectives.

Johnsen (2022) addresses the concept of "busy idleness", in which workers remain physically busy but without genuine involvement or meaning in their activities. This condition is often the result of an organizational culture that does not promote employee engagement and does not include them in the decision-making process. In the public sector, this idleness is aggravated by a lack of autonomy and excessive bureaucracy, as one of the interviewees reported: "Often, we are just repeating procedures without understanding why, and this makes me feel that my work has no value" (J.K., 32, Accounting Technician). The lack of space for

creativity and innovation, which is characteristic of rigid and centralizing organizational cultures, results in employees carrying out their tasks without any sense of purpose or motivation, contributing to slacking off.

Therefore, organizational culture plays a central role in defining the motivation levels of civil servants. A culture that values development, recognition and the purpose of work can transform the organizational environment and significantly increase the motivation and commitment of civil servants. On the other hand, a culture that ignores these elements promotes sloppiness, resulting in a demotivating and ineffective work environment. The intersection between organizational culture and motivation, as evidenced both in the literature and in the participants' reports, shows that management practices and organizational values are fundamental to promoting a productive and engaging work environment. Investing in an organizational culture that values civil servants and promotes the meaning and value of work is essential for reversing sloppiness and improving efficiency in the public sector.

5. Development of the Intervention Framework

5.1 Proposal for a Framework to Mitigate Sloppiness

The development of a framework for mitigating absenteeism in the public sector should focus on management practices aimed at human development and innovation, considering the root causes of absenteeism identified throughout this study. Slacking off, as discussed by Sanchez (2021), is associated with a work environment that does not promote engagement and where idleness becomes the norm due to the disconnect between the expectations of civil servants and the demands of the organization. To mitigate these effects, it is essential to have a framework that integrates policies for valuing employees, practices to encourage the development of skills and mechanisms that foster alignment between organizational and individual objectives.

The first dimension of the proposed framework is valuing and recognizing public servants. Silva and de Araújo (2022) suggest that a lack of recognition is one of the main causes of low motivation in the public service, as workers do not feel valued for their contributions. Therefore, the framework should include continuous recognition practices, both through formal and informal rewards, such as public praise, performance bonuses and career advancement opportunities. One of the interviewees reinforced this need when he said: "Being recognized for your efforts, even in small ways, makes all the difference in maintaining motivation" (B.C., 42, Human Resources Analyst). Frequent recognition of employees' efforts creates an environment where they feel an important part of the organization, reducing slacking off and encouraging active engagement.

The second dimension of the framework involves developing competencies and investing in training. Vargas et al. (2021) argue that competency-based management can transform the work environment by ensuring that employees' skills are aligned with the needs of the organization. The continuous development of competencies, especially through training programs and workshops, not only contributes to the personal growth of civil servants, but also to innovation in the public sector, since trained civil servants are better able to identify creative solutions to existing problems. As one participant pointed out: "We don't have many opportunities to learn new things, and this affects our ability to contribute in an innovative way" (G.H., 33, Communications Assistant). Therefore, the framework must prioritize the

development of a continuous training plan that meets both the interests of the employees and the demands of the organization.

Another fundamental aspect of the framework is the promotion of an organizational culture that values the purpose and social impact of public work. Gagnier and Dupré (1995) state that motivation is deeply linked to the meaning and perceived value of work. In the public sector, it is essential that civil servants understand the importance of their roles in the wider context of society. The lack of this sense was mentioned by one of the interviewees: "We often don't understand how our work impacts society, and this makes everything more mechanical and less motivating" (E.F., 40, Financial Manager). To address this issue, the framework should include internal communication practices that emphasize the impact of the employees' activities on the community's well-being, as well as promoting an open dialogue between managers and employees about the organizational objectives and the results achieved.

In addition, autonomy at work should be encouraged as part of the framework, as suggested by Bergenhenegouwen et al. (2023). Autonomy is a crucial motivational factor that allows employees to make decisions about how to carry out their tasks, which contributes to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility. The introduction of practices that allow for greater flexibility and autonomy, such as the implementation of self-managing teams, can help combat slacking off by increasing the involvement of employees in the decision-making process. As one of the participants mentioned: "Having the freedom to make decisions related to my work would help me feel like I'm really part of something meaningful" (R.S., 30, Technical Assistant). Thus, the framework should include measures that promote decentralization and increase the autonomy of civil servants in carrying out their duties.

Finally, the framework should incorporate practices of continuous monitoring and evaluation of the organizational environment to identify and treat early signs of slacking off. Johnsen (2022) discusses the concept of "busy idleness", in which workers keep themselves busy with tasks of little value, resulting in a false sense of productivity. To avoid this scenario, it is essential that management adopts performance metrics that go beyond mere physical presence or the fulfillment of bureaucratic tasks. One of the interviewees stressed the importance of a more qualitative evaluation: "The way we are evaluated doesn't really consider the impact of our work, and this ends up demotivating us" (S.T., 44, Social Programs Manager). Therefore, the framework should include a review of performance evaluation processes, prioritizing the quality and impact of the activities carried out, rather than just counting tasks completed.

Thus, the framework proposed to mitigate absenteeism in the public sector is based on five main dimensions: appreciation and recognition, skills development, promoting a purpose-oriented organizational culture, encouraging autonomy and continuous monitoring of the work environment. Each of these dimensions aims to address the identified causes of absenteeism, promoting a more engaging and motivating work environment that values human development and encourages innovation. By integrating these management practices, the public administration can reduce absenteeism and, consequently, improve the efficiency and quality of the services provided to society.

5.2 Motivational Strategies and Goal Alignment

In order to promote a work environment that mitigates dishonesty and boosts the motivation of civil servants, it is essential to develop motivational strategies that align the individual objectives of civil servants with organizational goals. This integration not only

improves performance, but also creates a more engaging work environment in which civil servants feel valued and recognized for their role. One of the main strategies for achieving this alignment is the clear and transparent definition of organizational goals and continuous communication with employees about how their contributions connect to these goals (Silva & de Araújo, 2022). As described by Monteiro (2024), a lack of clarity in organizational goals can lead to cynicism and alienation among employees, which reinforces the need for a communication-centered approach.

The motivation of civil servants is deeply linked to recognizing and valuing their contributions, and this is where motivational strategies meet goal alignment. Pereira, da Silva and Durão (2024) point out that when civil servants perceive that their daily activities are connected to the organization's greater purpose, this promotes greater satisfaction and commitment. In this context, practices such as regular feedback, follow-up meetings and collaborative planning sessions are crucial to ensuring that employees understand not only "what" they need to do, but also "why". One of the interviewees reinforced the importance of this practice by stating: "Knowing how my work impacts the organization's results gives me a reason to do my best" (C.D., 50, Project Coordinator). It is therefore essential that the intervention framework includes mechanisms to constantly highlight the connection between individual work and organizational results.

Another important aspect in implementing effective motivational strategies is the use of SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound). Silva and de Araújo (2022) argue that the lack of well-defined goals generates a sense of purposelessness, which can lead to increased slacking off. Setting clear and achievable goals allows employees to understand what is expected of them and what steps are needed to achieve these objectives. Russell (2022) complements this view by discussing the importance of creating an environment in which work has meaning, which is largely achieved by ensuring that employees know exactly what relevance their tasks have in the overall picture of the organization. One of the interviewees confirmed this need: "When I have specific goals and I know how to achieve them, I feel that my work is more productive and that I am making a real contribution" (J.K., 32, Accounting Technician). Therefore, well-defined goals are fundamental to aligning employees' objectives with those of the organization.

Aligning goals also requires adapting organizational expectations to the context and individual capabilities of employees. As Vargas et al. (2021) point out, competency-based people management is a powerful tool for ensuring that each employee is assigned to a role that matches their skills and interests, which increases motivation and reduces idleness. Properly allocating individual competencies to organizational functions is an efficient strategy for reducing slacking off, as employees feel more capable and confident when carrying out tasks that are aligned with their knowledge and skills. This was evidenced in one participant's statement: "When I am placed in tasks that align with my skills, I feel that I can be much more productive and motivated" (H.I., 39, Operations Coordinator).

In addition, the organizational culture must be geared towards innovation and the promotion of continuous personal development. Paulsen (2014) argues that without an environment that encourages creativity and development, idleness tends to increase, as employees do not feel challenged to improve their skills or contribute in a meaningful way. The intervention framework should therefore include regular training opportunities that not only develop technical skills, but also encourage innovation and creative problem-solving. One of the interviewees expressed this need when he said: "Being encouraged to learn something new

and think outside the box makes all the difference in maintaining motivation and enthusiasm for the job" (S.T., 44, Social Programs Manager). Thus, the focus on continuous development helps to align the expectations of civil servants with the needs of the organization, promoting a more engaging environment.

Finally, continuous evaluation and recognition are essential elements for the success of goal alignment and motivation strategies. As discussed by dos Santos and Dutra (2020), poor quality of life at work, resulting from a lack of recognition and challenging goals, is directly linked to increased demotivation. Public managers need to promote a culture of continuous feedback, where civil servants are not only informed about their performance, but are also encouraged to actively participate in the process of setting and reviewing organizational goals. As one of the participants pointed out: "Constant feedback makes me feel that I'm on the right track and that my work is being valued, which motivates me to keep trying" (M.N., 38, Public Policy Analyst).

Motivational strategies and the alignment of goals are key elements in reducing slacking off and increasing efficiency in the public sector. By clearly defining objectives, aligning employees' skills with organizational demands, promoting autonomy and innovation, and continuous recognition, it is possible to create a more motivating and productive work environment. The suggested practices, based on the interviewees' perceptions and the literature, provide a clear path to aligning organizational objectives with individual ones, promoting a work environment where the motivation and engagement of civil servants are prioritized, resulting in the provision of higher quality public services.

6 Conclusion

This study investigated slacking off in the public sector workplace and the outsourcing of labor as a managerial response. Based on semi-structured interviews and content analysis, it was identified that slacking off results mainly from the disconnection between organizational objectives and the expectations of civil servants, lack of recognition and limitations in the development of skills. These factors lead to idleness, both productive and passive, and an organizational environment that is not very engaging. Although outsourcing offers an immediate solution to the lack of internal motivation, it has proved problematic in the long term, leading to a loss of intellectual capital and a weakening of the organizational culture.

The analysis of the data revealed that organizational culture is a determining factor in the motivation of civil servants, and that management practices that value recognition, continuous development and the alignment of goals are essential to combat absenteeism and promote a productive work environment. The implementation of the proposed framework, focused on appreciation, human development, encouraging autonomy and transparent communication, offers a way to reduce the effects of absenteeism and improve the quality of public services.

The study's central question - "How does sloppiness affect the public sector and what is the impact of outsourcing as a response to this problem?" - was answered by demonstrating that sloppiness negatively affects the efficiency and motivation of public servants, creating a cycle of low productivity and service quality. Outsourcing, although applied as a solution, has significant limitations, such as the loss of tacit knowledge and the negative impact on the motivation of permanent workers. The study achieved its objectives by investigating the causes of slacking off, critically analyzing outsourcing and proposing a framework to mitigate the impacts identified, contributing practical recommendations for the public sector.

The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the causes of idleness in the public sector and its critical analysis of outsourcing as a managerial response. While the literature on absenteeism and idleness at work already addresses individual and organizational aspects (Sanchez, 2021; Paulsen, 2014; Johnsen, 2022), this study adds to it by discussing how outsourcing can exacerbate absenteeism and affect organizational cohesion. The framework proposal provides a practical approach for public managers to tackle slacking off, promoting a more engaging work environment that is aligned with employees' expectations. The study also contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the intersection between organizational culture and motivation, highlighting the importance of management practices that value human development and innovation.

In order to effectively implement the proposed framework, it is essential that public organizations adopt a systemic approach. First, investment must be made in training managers, ensuring that they are prepared to apply continuous recognition and skills development practices. Next, promoting a culture of constant feedback and clear communication about organizational objectives are essential for aligning expectations and encouraging the active participation of civil servants. In addition, creating spaces for autonomy and innovation, such as self-managed teams and collaborative projects, can significantly contribute to employee engagement. The implementation of these recommendations requires the commitment of senior management and the integration of these practices into the strategic planning of public organizations.

Although this study has made important contributions, some limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample consisted of civil servants from five organizations located in the north of Brazil, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions or institutional contexts. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews, although effective in capturing in-depth perceptions, is subject to response bias and limitations in the representativeness of participants' opinions. Another limitation is the lack of quantitative data that could complement the qualitative findings and provide a statistically significant analysis of the impacts of sloppiness and outsourcing.

Based on the limitations identified, it is suggested that future research expand the investigation to other regions and types of public organizations, in order to see if the results found apply in different contexts. Quantitative studies exploring the relationships between dishonesty, outsourcing and organizational efficiency are also recommended to validate and deepen the findings of this study. In addition, future research could explore the implementation of the proposed framework in different contexts, assessing its effectiveness and the challenges faced during the implementation process. Analyzing the relationship between specific leadership practices and the mitigation of dishonesty in the public sector would also be a valuable contribution to the literature on public management and motivation. Thus, this study provides a solid basis for future research and contributes practical guidelines for public managers seeking to mitigate malpractice and promote a more productive and motivating work environment, with a view to continuously improving the services provided to society.

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