

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations organized in county emergency units/inspectors, like other entities, operate in a turbulent environment. One of the special features that sets it apart from other nonprofit institutions is its dominant culture. Organizational culture seems to be a determining factor of the successful operation of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, which implies the achievement of its social goals. In the practical functioning of an organization, the existence of an organizational culture seems to be a priority. Organizational culture is one of the most important factors affecting both human resource management and performance management within the organization.

KEYWORDS: *fire service, human resources management, organizational culture, performance management.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture (beliefs, perceptions, and shared values) of fire-fighting teams in Romania directly influences their behaviors and practices in daily missions. The General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations can be seen as an organization whose organizational culture endures over time due to the sedimentation of the strong elements that define it. In the case of any strong organizational culture, rituals and customs play an important role in maintaining it and instilling in the organization's personnel a strong sense of belonging to the group. Historically, firefighters, these everyday heroes, have been in the service of citizens, through the nature of their work, both in times of peace and in times of war.

An important aspect in the management of military firefighter structures relates to organizational culture, which is extremely rich and represents the foundation of the firefighter organization. By promoting customs, ceremonies, and openness to society, the manager of these institutions can manage public relations and highlight the positive aspects of their activities. The immense trust in the firefighting institution from society is a result of the propagation of organizational culture beyond the organization's boundaries. The development of volunteering and partnerships with civil society bring the institution closer to citizens and their needs.

Organizational culture is a motivating factor for individuals towards accepted goals, with culture being an essential element in organizational excellence. Ștefan Buzărnescu analyzes organizational structures as "*ideal models of social realities*" where organizational culture is defined by a lifestyle and civilization to which most employees adhere, based on the formal and informal norms and rules present in the defined organizational space.

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For Nicolescu and Verboncu (2001, p. 273), "*organizational culture resides in the set of values, beliefs, aspirations, expectations, and behaviors developed over time in each organization, which predominate within it and directly or indirectly condition its functionality and performance*" In this definition, we can observe the temporal nature of organizational culture, as well as its direct or indirect role in influencing how the organization functions and its efficiency. In different types of social organization, an important area is covered by organizations with purposes other than economic ones. These institutions are of interest because they must function in environments as turbulent (unstable) as profit-driven organizations. To properly fulfill their objectives, these organizations must utilize their full potential. The organizational culture of these institutions is a significant part of this. One of the most interesting non-profit organizations, and perhaps the most well-known and trusted institution in Romania, is the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (I.G.S.U.). Of the many elements that differentiate entities in the world around us, one of the most important characteristics at the organizational level is culture. An adjustment in the sphere of culture and environmental challenges becomes a strong point for an institution.

One of the leading experts on organizational culture (Edgar Schein) described organizational culture as a model of basic assumptions, developed over time by a group learning how to deal with issues of internal integration and external adaptation. These assumptions must be sufficiently effective to be considered valid pathways of perception, thinking, and feeling, which allow new members of the organization to learn them as valid (Schein, 1985), and even as desirable models of thinking and action. Specialist literature offers various definitions and approaches to the topic of organizational culture. Differences even appear at the level of terminology and methods of perception, interpretation (Sikorski, 2006), elements and manifestations (Hofstede, 2007; Stoner et al., 2001; Steinman & Schreyögg, 2001; Nogalski & Foltyn, 1998), as well as research methods and possibilities (Gableta, 2006; Zbiegień-Maciąg, 2002). The label "culture" is applied to phenomena as diverse as norms, values, repertoires, schemas, codes, categories, narratives, frameworks, toolkits, language, knowledge structures, common meanings, mental programming, and unconscious assumptions (Giorgi et al., 2015; Gorton et al., 2021; Patterson, 2014).

From a theoretical standpoint, but especially from the practical functioning of the organization, the mere existence of an organizational culture seems to be a priority. These important issues should certainly not cloud or distort the perception of organizational culture, which is one of the most significant factors affecting both human resource management within organizations and the management of the organization's performance, which in turn determines its functioning.

Schein noted, "*there is currently very little agreement on what the concept means or should mean, how it should be observed and measured, how it relates to other classical organizational theories, and how it should be used in efforts to sustain and develop organizations*" (Schein E.H., 1990, pp. 109-119). Organizational culture, like social culture, operates at deep levels of human beliefs, expectations, and values. These manifest in behaviors, rituals, and symbols, forming the foundation for most of the existing behavior patterns in the organization (Rusu, 2003). "*Organizational culture is the personality of an organization*" (McNamara, 1997). "*Organizational culture is a unified thinking system of group members that differentiates them from other groups*" (Hofstede, 1991). "*Organizational culture is a model of common assumptions the group has learned while solving problems, which have proven functional and were considered valid to a sufficient degree to be passed on to new members as the correct way to perceive and approach similar problems that may arise later*" (Schein, 1996).

Among military firefighter services, organizational culture is a unique blend of tradition, discipline, camaraderie, and a deep commitment to the community. This is a culture forged in the heat of action, where each team member has a crucial role, and where core values are tested in the most difficult situations. Denise Lee Yohn, an expert in organizational development, defined culture in Harvard Business Review as: "*The ways people in an organization behave, the attitudes and beliefs*

that inform those behaviors (i.e., 'how we do things around here')—including both formal, stated norms, and implicit ways in which people work and interact. Many organizations have a gap between the existing culture and the 'desired' culture—the culture needed to support and promote the company's goals and strategies. In a new model of building culture, everyone is responsible for cultivating the desired culture" (Yohn, 2018).

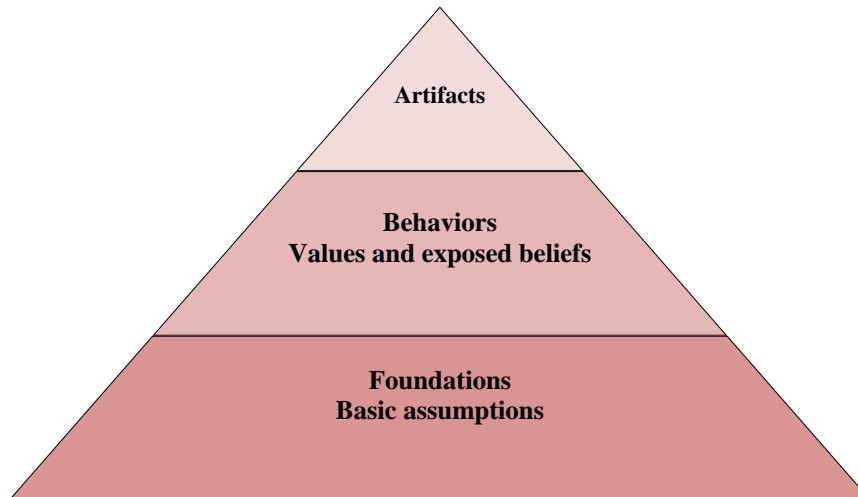


Figure 1: Levels of Organizational Culture

Source: Adapted from Schein (2004, p. 26)

This likely explains the problem we are facing – if it is everyone's responsibility, then it is no one's responsibility. Denise Lee Yohn talks about the role of different actors within an organization as being influential on the culture, which I paraphrased as: "*Senior leadership, the board of directors, the CEO, managers, and the management team help guide the definition and development of culture and should ensure that it aligns with organizational goals and meets the needs of all stakeholders. Human Resources departments should design employee experiences that interpret and reinforce the desired culture through recruitment, retention, and promotion processes.*"

2. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS SERVICES

Organizational culture has many functions. It directly affects the organization itself and, more or less indirectly, the surrounding environment. However, we should not ignore that it is also influenced by various factors that affect it during its uninterrupted existence and even lead to changes within it. The most general specification of the pillars of organizational culture is present in both internal and external factors, where internal stimuli are those that arise within the organization, and external stimuli are derived from the broader environment and its culture. Marian Năstase (2004, p. 18) defines organizational culture from the perspective of its component elements, its transmission methods, and its importance: "*Organizational culture represents the totality of values, symbols, ceremonies, myths, attitudes, and behaviors that dominate an organization, are passed on to future generations as the normal way of feeling, thinking, and acting, and have a determining influence on its results and evolution.*"

The personality of the organization and the way it functions are represented by its specific organizational culture. The organizational culture existing in professional emergency services was created over time, influenced by the history of military firefighters, their constant relationships with society, and its people. The General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (I.G.S.U.), like any organization, functions within specific social and market conditions, which is certainly not

irrelevant to its culture. The influence of external factors is twofold, as they determine a number of cultural manifestations and standards; therefore, we can talk about their immediate impact. On the other hand, they indirectly form the individual characteristics of an organization's culture.

In the case of professional emergency services, organizational culture can be described as one that is old and strong, anchored in many artifacts, rituals, stories, customs, legends, and heroes. However, institutional reform and changes driven by external factors have also left their mark on organizational culture, giving rise to ethical codes and regulations based on principles and values specific to firefighters since the very foundations of the profession's recognition in Romania.

The legislative act that underpins the organization and operation of the I.G.S.U. is Government Decision No. 1490 of September 9, 2004, which approves the Regulation for the organization and functioning and the organizational chart of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations. This legislation established the main and specific duties of the I.G.S.U., the structure of the general inspectorate, its subordinated units, as well as the human, material, and financial resources necessary for its operation (GR, 2004a). To complement the above-mentioned normative act, Government Decision No. 1492 of September 9, 2004, regarding the principles of organization, functioning, and responsibilities of professional emergency services, laid the foundations for the county/municipal emergency inspectorates, which are established as public services under the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations to manage emergency situations according to the types of risks in their competence (GR, 2004b). Additionally, another document that regulates the organization and functioning of components of the National Emergency Management System is Emergency Ordinance No. 21 of April 15, 2004, regarding the National Emergency Management System. The legislative document presents: the principles of emergency management, the components of the system, its main duties, and the human, material, and financial resources.

European integration has brought benefits for professional emergency services, both in terms of experience exchange and joint training, as well as international support in emergency situations and the protection offered by the European Civil Protection Mechanism. The satisfactions of this profession are often of an immaterial nature, providing a high level of self-satisfaction. Furthermore, the economic situation of the state is of great importance for organizational culture, or the general economic situation, which seems to be an even more significant factor due to globalization. While favorable conditions allow the flourishing of various forms of organizational cultures, economic crises become a real survival test for many organizations. A more comprehensive view of the environment, according to one of the authors, might conclude that, the less dynamic the treatment of the environment, the more necessary it is to invest in developing a strong culture, which in turn leads to benefits for the institution. In fact, the more a culture fits the environment, the fewer difficulties employees will encounter in fulfilling their demands (Aniszewska, 2007). Such explanations seem to confirm the effect of the market environment on organizational culture and its importance. Organizational culture refers to "*the common assumptions, values, and beliefs that characterize an environment and are taught to newcomers as the correct way to think and feel*" (Schneider B, 2013, p. 361–88).

In parallel with external factors affecting the organizational culture of professional emergency services, there are internal factors that can be divided into three subgroups: the type of organization, its characteristics, and the characteristics of human resources. The essence of professional emergency services includes broadly defined activities related to risk prevention and, in times of crisis, the execution of rescue operations. Preventive activities manifest in a range of actions aimed at eliminating or minimizing risks. They are based on monitoring and enforcing safety and security regulations, both for people and the environment, as well as continuous monitoring of the situation. Operational activities primarily focus on maintaining and improving preparation for intervention/operational missions. This is achieved through specific and ongoing training, with practical activities/exercises holding a special place.

The implementation of human resource policies is reflected mainly in hiring, retaining, and dismissing employees, moving them within the organization, and improving their skills. Personnel policies are based on managing a plan for all target positions that must be filled to ensure the optimal functioning of the organization. The factors mentioned above, both external and internal, do not seem to be irrelevant to the culture of military firefighters. The focus of activity and the legislative acts applied in the field of emergency management establish the general form of the institution, its responsibilities, impose a framework of standards, and oversee their implementation. All these details are important from the perspective of organizational culture, and their effects determine, more or less directly, the organizational culture of professional emergency services/military firefighters.

3. DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN FIRE SERVICES

The organizational culture within the fire services plays an essential role in ensuring an effective and coordinated response during emergencies. From the formation of intervention teams to how stress and safety are managed, the organizational culture directly influences the firefighters' ability to respond quickly and efficiently. The distinctive elements that define the organizational culture of firefighters are:

- *Discipline and hierarchy*: The military structure of firefighters imposes strict discipline and a clear hierarchy. Each team member knows exactly what their responsibilities are and follows orders precisely.
- *Camaraderie and team spirit*: Firefighters work in tight teams where trust and mutual support are essential for survival and for accomplishing specific missions. The bonds formed during service and in dangerous missions create strong and lasting camaraderie.
- *Courage and sacrifice*: Firefighters face danger daily, putting their lives at risk to save others. Courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty and their fellow human beings are core values of this profession.
- *Adaptability and resilience*: Emergency situations are unpredictable and require rapid adaptation to the circumstances on the ground. Firefighters must be able to cope with stress, make quick decisions, and work in extreme conditions.
- *Respect for tradition*: Firefighters have a long and rich history, full of acts of heroism. Respect for tradition and for those who came before is an important part of the organizational culture.
- *Commitment to the community*: Firefighters are more than just rescuers; they are active members of the community. Participating in local events and interacting with citizens strengthen the bond between firefighters and the community they serve.

Organizational culture plays an important role within fire services. A strong organizational culture contributes to better performance during missions, thanks to the trust, coordination, and efficiency of the team. The core values of the firefighters' culture, such as discipline and safety, help reduce risks during interventions. A positive organizational culture can attract and retain qualified personnel who wish to be part of a united and dedicated team. A community-oriented organizational culture contributes to building trust and respect for firefighters. In conclusion, the organizational culture of firefighters is a critical factor for the success of missions and the well-being of the team. This is a culture forged in fire, based on strong values and a full commitment to the community.

Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as "*a pattern of basic assumptions shared by a group as it solves its external adaptation and internal integration problems*" (p. 18). He argues that cultural phenomena become visible only by examining them at three levels. The first level consists of artifacts, the tangible and easily identifiable elements (e.g., buildings, office organization, dress code, behaviors) that can be observed. The second level consists of the values and beliefs declared

by a group. The third level includes the basic and self-evident assumptions, which are hard to recognize because they are so deeply embedded in behaviors.

The long history of this institution and its rich tradition have enabled it to overcome numerous challenges over the years, including issues related to personnel turnover (especially during the conscription period), survival, and thus demonstrate its strong culture today. Since every culture has a personal character, culture also represents a form of individualization that can be analyzed and explained, especially from the perspective of the people, as both the founders and the bearers of culture are human beings. The staff of each institution has its own approach to actions, inherited from their predecessors, and the preservation of the core values from the past forms the culture. Saluting practices, communication styles, and behavioral norms have reinforced the cultural identity profile over time. Alongside the people involved in the organization, the socialization process, and the environment in which the institution operates, the organization's history is one of the fundamental elements that decisively influences its organizational culture. The history of the organization has a strong impact on its culture. The principles, norms, and values established and passed down over the years by strong leaders are amplified by every event in the organization's life and are not altered by organizational change phenomena.

Other distinctive elements defining the organizational culture of military firefighters are rituals and symbols. The military uniform represents a special symbol of belonging to the group, discipline, and professional status. Badges and medals awarded to military firefighters are proof of individual achievements and collective success, as well as the experience accumulated by some of the most distinguished firefighter-rescuers. Military ceremonies or festive occasions highlight and strengthen the sense of unity and belonging. Integrating rituals and ceremonies have always been held through meetings, sports competitions, and various occasions (e.g., February 28 - Civil Protection Day, March 8, September 13 - Romania's Firefighters' Day, December 1 - Romania's National Day, and the annual evaluation of the inspectorate's activities). These events have significant importance because they provide opportunities for professional emergency service employees from each county to get to know each other better, communicate informally, and relax in a friendly environment. Myths and stories about acts of heroism and courage from the history of firefighters who saved lives in extreme conditions serve as role models and sources of inspiration. *The act of heroism on September 13, 1848 (the Battle of "Spirii Hill"), demonstrated by the firefighters' company led by Captain Pavel Zăgănescu to block the Ottoman Empire's troops, remains the most significant heroic act in firefighter history, and this day is celebrated annually as Romania's Firefighters' Day.* Additionally, following a request from the Military Firefighters' Corps leadership in 1997 to the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church to establish a patron saint for this institution, the Synod approved Saint Hierarch Iosif the New of Partoș to become the spiritual patron of all Romanian firefighters.

Artifacts are artificial creations of organization, visibility, audibility, and tangibility, being a consequence of the organization's norms and values. However, not every artifact of organizational culture is a symbol. An artifact becomes a symbol only if members of the organization associate a specific meaning with it. An artifact is a symbol when it is used by people to create meaning. It should also be noted that if the given symbols are indeed a manifestation of the organization's culture, the culture is determined by employees' attitudes towards them. If employees do not consciously accept certain symbols but only use them in accordance with formal orders, these symbols are not manifestations of culture. When employees consciously accept certain symbols and use them, these symbols become actual elements of organizational culture (Sikorski, 2006).

One group of artifacts includes highly visible symbols such as specific language, communication styles, firefighter heroes, and myths or stories. On one hand, the language used by firefighters is very simple but characterized by a series of acronyms and abbreviations, often incomprehensible to those outside the system. These abbreviations refer to various aspects of planning, preparation, and

conducting intervention operations. They are used both to identify organizational units and to describe equipment used. The simplest team, consisting of two firefighters equipped with personal protective equipment, is called a "binom." The specific intervention team for each vehicle/equipment represents the basic module of a subunit, usually consisting of four firefighters, one driver, and one team commander. A subunit (detachment, section, station, outpost) is a structure where there are between one and at least seven intervention teams and is led by a subunit commander. The intervention group is the unit that is assigned a portion of the responsibility within the inspectorate's area of competence and supervises 3-4 subunits such as special detachments, detachment, section, station, or outpost (MAI, 2004).

In addition to the characteristic language used by firefighters in daily life, it is worth noting the specific style and manner of communication used during rescue operations (and exercises). Communication enables the essential coordination of interventions and is carried out using special communication devices (transceivers). To function smoothly, communication is dominated by various abbreviations and uses a coded language. Also, during rescue operations, firefighters communicate through non-verbal communication—using specific gestures, signs, and signals. This is especially true when working in areas where there is no signal for radio communication, which hampers or significantly reduces the possibility of verbal communication.



Figure 2. The Heraldic Emblem of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.

Source: Order No. 490 from May 21, 2008, regarding the heraldic symbols of the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

The current name is solidified by the heraldic emblem of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU) (Figure 1), composed of elements taken from the Coat of Arms of Romania and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as follows: the large blue shield (outer), the eagle, the small purple shield (inner), situated on the eagle's chest (with a composition specific to IGSU) – elements derived from the Coat of Arms of Romania; the green olive branch, which replaces the scepter in the country's coat of arms – an element derived from the heraldry of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The significance of the combined elements:

- a) The golden crusading eagle, with its head turned to the right, wings spread, red beak and claws, holding a golden Orthodox cross in its beak, a silver sword in the right talon, and a green olive branch in the left talon – represents a symbol of peace and order;
- b) Two crossed silver axes in a jumping position, overlain by a firefighter helmet in profile – represents the insignia of military firefighters used since the second half of the 19th century;
- c) The silver grenade exploding – refers to the participation of military firefighters in the War for Romania's Independence;
- d) The silver oak branches – suggest strength, power, and ancient authority;
- e) The green olive branch – symbolizes peace and order;

f) The orange shield with the blue triangle, angled – represents civil protection. Below the eagle, at the bottom, on a white ribbon, the motto is written in black uppercase letters: AUDACIA ET DEVOTIO (COURAGE AND DEVOTION). The colors used in the heraldry of the inspectorate have the following symbolic meanings: purple: nobility, authority; white: peace, sobriety; silver: sacredness, purity; gold: achievements, wisdom; red: courage, sacrifice; yellow: energy, optimism; green: determination, focus; blue: perseverance, order. (MIRA, 2008). The banner plays a role in various national, professional, and religious celebrations.

Since 2006, the Mobile Emergency, Resuscitation, and Extrication Service (SMURD) has expanded nationwide, becoming a functional structure within the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations. SMURD intervenes to save people whose lives are at risk, in extrication operations, and in cases with multiple victims, such as natural disasters or fires. SMURD is an integrated public emergency service of strategic importance, which includes specialized resuscitation teams offering medical and technical emergency assistance, as well as teams with paramedical personnel trained in providing qualified first aid. This service operates within the county emergency inspectorates, with aviation structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (General Inspectorate of Aviation) serving as air operators, in collaboration with county hospitals' Emergency Reception Units (UPU) and local public authorities. The guiding motto for personnel working within this service is: "HE WHO SAVES A LIFE, SAVES A WHOLE WORLD!".

The tradition and loyalty of military firefighters are fundamental aspects of their organizational culture, emphasizing close cooperation and a solid hierarchy. The work, although often perceived as a necessary evil, is carried out with great passion and dedication. Cooperation within the organization is key, and despite external changes, the spirit of camaraderie is preserved. Interestingly, where formal norms do not reach, professional firefighter services organize themselves according to the clan culture model. Additionally, within the institution, a mild but positive influence of the market culture and adhocracy can be observed.

4. THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY CHANGES ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF MILITARY FIREFIGHTERS

The cooperation among firefighters is not merely a formal registration of rules but a practical and applied method for accomplishing tasks. Among employees, loyalty and respect for the history and tradition of the firefighting profession are emphasized. The most significant influence within the organization is the system of norms and the subsequent formal structure, which fosters a culture of hierarchy. However, it can be observed that, where specific legislation does not extend, the professional firefighter service personnel organize themselves according to guidelines typical of clan culture. At the same time, within the institutional organizational culture, there are slight but positive influences from market culture and adhocracy.

Costache Rusu, in his work *Management of Change*, points out the stages of changing organizational culture as:

- ✚ *Identifying the existing culture: cultural diagnosis, framing the culture within the broader organizational factors*
- ✚ *Planning the change: listing necessary changes, evaluating cultural risks, action plan*
- ✚ *Desired outcome: a culture that aligns with the organization's overall direction, favors change, modifies behaviors in accordance with the new culture, and supports the change that has been made.*

Key factors for change include: Control and freedom of action, alignment of the new culture with its objectives, leadership, management, and teamwork. The most common models for changing organizational culture include:

- *Organizational culture change through organizational therapy*
- *Change through the promotion of hybrid forms within the culture*
- *Change through the selective promotion of subcultures*
- *Planned change through organizational development projects and creating organizational learning structures*
- *Thawing and changing organizational culture through technology*
- *Organizational culture change through external personnel infusion*
- *Change through conflict and challenging myths*
- *Change through the fundamental reshaping of organizational culture*
- *Change through coercion.*

The organizational culture of firefighters, rooted in tradition, loyalty, and camaraderie, faces significant transformations in the context of contemporary changes. These changes affect both how firefighters perceive their roles and identities and how they interact with the community and other team members. The increasing diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and cultural background brings new perspectives and skills but can also generate tensions in traditionally homogeneous teams. Adapting to different communication styles and values can be challenging, requiring extra efforts to build cohesion. The introduction of advanced technologies in equipment and procedures radically changes how interventions are carried out and how communication occurs, requiring continuous training and adaptation to new equipment. Adapting to these technologies requires investment in ongoing training and may generate resistance from more experienced firefighters who are hesitant to change.

Climate change and extreme weather events, reflected in the increased frequency and intensity of such events, impose new demands on preparedness and intervention for both natural and human-made disasters. Adapting to these new realities can generate additional stress and fatigue for firefighter teams. Moreover, the increased awareness of mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress and depression, necessitates a more holistic approach to team well-being. Implementing psychological support programs and burnout prevention measures is becoming essential for the leaders of firefighting units.

The demographic and social changes brought about by globalization require an adaptation in how firefighters interact with the community, particularly with new communities formed by migration. Building trust and cooperation with diverse social groups is becoming increasingly important. Effectively transmitting organizational culture to new members of the firefighter services is crucial for ensuring the continuity of core values, improving collaboration, and preparing them for the challenges faced in emergency missions. Why is transmitting this culture so important? Firstly, transmitting organizational culture to future generations plays a vital role in maintaining identity and ensuring cultural continuity, making sure that the values and traditions of the organization are preserved over time. Transmitting the organizational culture to future firefighters is essential for developing effective, cohesive, and resilient teams capable of facing the challenges in emergency interventions. By educating them about the core values of safety, courage, professionalism, and respect, as well as fostering an environment of trust and continuous learning, firefighting organizations can ensure solid preparation for new generations of firefighters. By promoting values such as mutual support, stress management, and the importance of mental health, future firefighters will be better prepared to handle trauma and emotional pressure. If the organizational culture includes a system of psychological support and a supportive team atmosphere, new members will learn to manage stress better and seek help from colleagues when needed.

In this profession, each intervention can involve significant risks, and any error can have severe consequences. Therefore, it is essential that future firefighters understand the importance of following procedures and organizational standards. Organizational culture must convey, from the

first days of training, that adhering to procedures is not optional but a necessity. Additionally, fostering a culture of transparency and open communication helps new members understand the importance of constructive feedback and self-evaluation, contributing to the continuous improvement of team performance.

In a firefighting service, mutual trust and respect are essential, both within the team and between intervention teams and the community they serve. Organizational culture plays a crucial role in developing this climate of trust. Future firefighters must learn that every action matters, and to succeed in interventions, there must be a strong relationship of trust and respect among all team members. By transmitting such an organizational climate, future team members will understand that their work depends not only on their own abilities but also on their ability to work together as a unified team, where each member is valuable. So, transmitting organizational culture to future firefighters is essential for developing effective, cohesive, and resilient teams capable of facing the challenges in emergency interventions. By educating them about the core values of safety, courage, professionalism, and respect, and fostering an environment of trust and continuous learning, firefighting organizations can ensure solid preparation for new generations of firefighters. Organizational culture thus becomes a powerful tool for maintaining a high-performing and resilient team, capable of successfully responding to any emergency situation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Human resource management "brings to life" the overall management of an organization, while organizational culture provides meaning to the human factor's performance and its valorization (Verboncu I., 2019).

The success of every organization, regardless of how it is defined, is determined by its proper functioning. Despite the variety of studies and models of effective management, it is difficult to identify and implement one that fits all organizations, because each one is unique. It could even be argued that no two organizations are exactly the same. The organizational culture is specifically about the thinking and actions of its members. The organizational culture of fire services is made up of certain elements that remain at different levels of visibility and awareness. The most external manifestations are represented by artifacts, which, due to their meanings, create cultural symbols classified into three groups: physical, linguistic, and behavioral. The organizational culture of firefighters is in a process of continuous transformation, influenced by a number of internal and external factors. Adapting to these changes represents both a challenge and an opportunity to strengthen team cohesion, improve performance, and better meet the needs of the community. Through a strategic approach and the involvement of all members of the organization, a strong organizational culture can be built, contributing to the long-term success of the fire services.

In conclusion, organizational culture is an essential pillar of success in fire services, influencing all aspects of the activity, from intervention safety and team performance to employee mental health and organizational adaptability. A well-defined and consolidated culture helps create a work environment where all team members are motivated, prepared, and supported to respond effectively to any challenges.

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