

From Resistance To Results: The Human Side Of UPJ Innovation In Brazilian' Appeals Court

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Abstract

This study analyzed the challenges faced in the implementation of Judicial Processing Units (UPJs) in the second instance of the Goiás Court of Justice (TJGO), focusing on process efficiency and organizational climate. Data was collected through a questionnaire applied to employees of the Civil and Criminal UPJs, covering seven dimensions: autonomy, interaction and cooperation, participation, managerial support, training, resistance to change, and the implementation of the UPJs. The results showed that outsourced employees had more positive evaluations, while permanent staff were more critical, especially in the dimensions of autonomy, training, and resistance to change. The qualitative analysis reinforced these trends, highlighting feelings of overload, exhaustion, failures in internal communication, and lack of standardization of procedures. It is concluded that, although the UPJ model seeks to make work more efficient, its consolidation depends on an integrated approach, combining innovation, valuing employees, and participatory management.

Keywords: Organizational behavior; Judicial processing units; Judiciary management.

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I. Introduction

Work quality is interconnected with workers' satisfaction regarding the organizational environment. According to Silva (2020), a worker performs their duties more efficiently when aligned with the organization's practices. This alignment is reflected in the organizational climate and, consequently, in service delivery. On the other hand, changes in organizational structure can impact variables that affect the organizational climate, influencing both the physical and structural working conditions and employee behavior (Soares et al., 2024).

The creation of UPJs, an innovative model of judicial management, brought changes to the judiciary of Goiás, especially regarding organizational climate. According to studies by Soares et al. (2024) and Soares (2021), the implementation of UPJs in the first instance was met with some resistance by employees, who did not perceive positively the contextual factors related to organizational resources for the implementation of the UPJ model (Soares, 2021).

This management model is based on grouping judicial units of the same jurisdiction, with specialized teams in activities such as public service, case movement, and execution of procedural acts. The standardized procedural flow seeks to increase efficiency in sending cases to magistrates' chambers, which maintain their independent operations (TJSP, 2021).

The digitalization and migration of cases to electronic platforms, initiated in 2016 at TJGO, eliminated manual bureaucratic tasks such as petition protocol and the drafting of warrants, facilitating the work of lawyers and other legal practitioners (TJGO, 2021). However, the results indicated that only 28% of respondents agreed with the existence of a favorable organizational climate for change, while 35% agreed with the existence of workforce commitment, and only 24% agreed with the provision of management support in change processes, evidencing low acceptance and trust among employees (Soares, 2021).

Previous studies by Soares (2021) and Soares et al. (2024) indicate that the implementation of UPJs in the first instance led to changes in the organizational climate, affecting employee behavior and productivity. These studies show that, in the first instance, employees did not perceive positively the contextual factors related to organizational culture and resources for the implementation of the new model (Soares, 2021).

The implementation of UPJs in the second instance of the Goiás Court of Justice is a recent process and still lacks studies, especially regarding its impacts on process efficiency and organizational climate. State Law No. 21,630/2022 promoted changes in the organizational structure of the second instance, creating the institutional conditions necessary for the establishment of UPJs.

On a micro level, in Goiás at TJGO, the Civil UPJ units, which cover the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th Civil Chambers, and the Criminal UPJ, composed of the 3rd and 4th Criminal Chambers, were established to

reorganize the administrative and procedural activities of the second instance, requiring an analysis of the real effects of these changes on the internal environment and institutional results.

The publication of Joint Provision No. 01/2019 enabled the gradual implementation of UPJs, initially in the first instance, to promote greater speed and efficiency in procedural processing. However, studies such as Soares (2021) reveal negative perceptions among employees regarding the changes implemented, reinforcing the importance of investigating the effects of these transformations on organizational dynamics.

Given this context, this article seeks to answer the following question: what are the main organizational challenges in the implementation of the Civil and Criminal Judicial Processing Units (UPJs) in the second instance of TJGO, considering process efficiency and organizational climate? To this end, the objective is to analyze the challenges in implementing the Judicial Processing Units (UPJs) in the second instance, specifically in the Civil UPJ (8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th Civil Chambers) and the Criminal UPJ (3rd and 4th Criminal Chambers), regarding process efficiency and organizational climate.

II. Culture And Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is one of the components of the organization that functions as a mechanism for understanding the structure and the results obtained in service delivery. However, another important element in the analysis of organizations is organizational culture, often confused with organizational climate (Chaves Filho, Barbosa & Barbosa, 2022).

Keller and Aguiar (2020) highlight the need for managers and leaders to distinguish these concepts, as some authors often confuse the concepts of climate and organizational culture, sometimes using them as synonyms. Although they share similarities, each concept has a distinct role in the organization, representing specific conditions. In this sense, Schein (2017) emphasizes that the distinction between culture and climate is fundamental for organizational management, since while culture is stable, climate is more accessible, being sensitive to changes in behaviors and perceptions of members.

In this context, it is relevant to consider the approach of Puente-Palacios (2002), who proposed a categorization to clarify the similarities and differences between organizational climate and culture. According to the author, the categories of organizational climate are: Organization; Members; Perception; Characteristics; Behavior; Descriptions; Sharing; Set; Influence; Practices. The categories related to organizational culture are: Members; Sharing; Values; Organization; Behavior; Beliefs; Pattern; Norm; Learning; Mode/Manner; Meaning; System; Assumptions; Social; Set; Practices; and Understanding.

From this analysis, it is noted that the common categories between climate and culture include: Organization; Members; Behavior; Sharing; Set; and Practices. The exclusive categories are those that demonstrate and allow the perception of the difference between the concepts. Each category, therefore, should be organized and used according to its characteristics to avoid confusion (Puente-Palacios, 2002).

However, there are theoretical divergences about the relationship between organizational climate and culture. On one hand, authors such as Savoie and Brunet (2000) and Chagnon (1991) argue that they arise from different scientific traditions, have their own determinants, and produce distinct organizational effects. On the other hand, scholars such as Souza (1978), Tamayo (1999), Martins, Martins, and Pereira (2004), and Wallace, Hunt, and Richards (1999) argue that there is indeed a relationship between organizational culture and climate, maintaining that culture influences climate (Rocha, Pelogio & Añez, 2013).

For the development of this research, it is assumed that, although distinct concepts, organizational climate and culture maintain a relationship of interdependence and reciprocal influence, and can, however, be analyzed autonomously.

III. Methodology

This case study employs a methodological triangulation with a qualitative-quantitative approach to analyze the challenges in implementing UPJs in the second level of jurisdiction, specifically in the Civil UPJs (8th to 11th Civil Chambers) and Criminal UPJs (3rd and 4th Criminal Chambers), considering process efficiency and organizational climate. This approach allows for the examination of employee perceptions regarding this change, identifying consequences and opportunities for improvement for future administrative decisions.

The case study methodology was chosen because it allows for an in-depth investigation of a unit—in this case, the implementation of UPJs at TJGO—considering the requirements of severity, objectivity, originality, and coherence (Prodanov & Freitas, 2013). Institutional documents from TJGO (resolutions, legislation, training plans, among others) were collected, serving as the theoretical framework and for document analysis.

Subsequently, a questionnaire with open and closed questions was applied to UPJ employees, aiming to capture individual and collective perceptions about the changes. The research strictly followed ethical principles, ensuring free and informed consent, as well as data confidentiality (Marconi & Lakatos, 2021). The

total population was 42 employees, and the sample calculation (based on DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021) indicated 38 responses for a margin of error of 5%. Thirty-three responses were obtained, resulting in a recalculated margin of error of approximately 8%, considered adequate for exploratory studies.

The questionnaire was based on the Perception Scale of Organizational Climate for Public Service (EPCOSP), by Estivalete et al. (2024), adapted to the context of second-level UPJs, covering seven main dimensions: Autonomy, Interaction and Cooperation, Participation, Managerial Support, Training, Resistance to Change, and UPJ Implementation. The responses were recorded anonymously and stored confidentially, according to applicable ethical guidelines.

Data analysis followed two main stages (Prodanov & Freitas, 2013). First, a descriptive analysis was carried out, considering the institutional and legal context of UPJs, the impacts on workload, and employee perceptions (Vergara, 2015). Then, quantitative data were processed using frequency calculations, variance, standard deviation, mode, agreement and disagreement indices (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021), allowing the identification of patterns and trends related to the dimensions of organizational climate. Thus, the study seeks to provide input for improving the implementation of UPJs and for change management at TJGO.

IV. Results And Discussion

Data collection took place between February and March 2025, using a questionnaire composed of 35 questions, of which 33 used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5), except for questions 4, 12, 13, 22, 23, and 26, which used an inverted scale. Additionally, the questionnaire included two optional open-ended questions.

There were 33 respondents, distributed across four categories: permanent staff (42.4%), outsourced (27.3%), commissioned (24.2%), and interns (6.1%). Complete data by functional category are available in Appendix A. The open-ended questions complemented the quantitative analysis by pointing out suggestions for improving the Judicial Processing Units (UPJ) model and specific concerns about its implementation (Marconi & Lakatos, 2021).

Data tabulation and statistical analysis revealed a pattern: outsourced employees had more positive perceptions, followed by commissioned staff, while permanent staff showed more critical or moderate evaluations. This trend stood out in topics such as decision-making autonomy, participation in changes, work overload, and training. In some cases, the difference between the averages of permanent and outsourced staff exceeded 1.5 points on the 5-point scale, reflecting distinct perceptions of organizational climate (Puentes-Palacios & Freitas, 2006).

Figure 1 shows the differences between permanent, commissioned, and outsourced staff in the seven evaluated dimensions. The group of interns was excluded due to low representativity. The yellow line shows that outsourced staff have more positive evaluations, closer to the extremes of the chart. In contrast, permanent staff show more critical perceptions, while commissioned staff occupy an intermediate position.

Figure 1: Radar chart: average of the dimensions separated by functional group at TJGO.

In the following topics, each of the seven dimensions of organizational climate will be analyzed, exploring their particularities regarding the implementation of UPJs in the Second Level of TJGO.

Dimensions

Autonomy

This dimension was measured by questions 1 to 4 of the instrument, presenting moderate averages, ranging from 3.21 to 3.48, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Autonomy – Dimension calculated for general respondents.

The analysis reveals that autonomy to solve problems (Q3) has the highest average (3.48) and agreement of 54.5%, while the freedom to define how to perform activities (Q2) has the lowest agreement index (39.4%).

Question 1 had the lowest average among permanent staff (2.57), indicating a limited perception of decision-making autonomy in this group. In contrast, the same question received an average rating of 4.0 among outsourced staff, revealing a significant disparity in the perception of autonomy between functional categories.

Regarding the rigidity of institutional rules, assessed in question 4, the average of 3.33 (SD: 1.22) indicates an evaluation close to neutrality. However, the distribution of responses shows that 27.27% of respondents agree, that is, they perceive that the rigidity of the rules harms their autonomy.

Continuing with the full English translation from where we left off:

...autonomy.

Interaction and Cooperation

This dimension was measured by questions 5 to 9. The averages ranged from 3.36 to 3.73, indicating a generally positive perception of teamwork and collaboration among employees. The highest average (3.73) was for question 7, which assesses the willingness of colleagues to help each other, with 66.7% agreement. The lowest average (3.36) was for question 9, which addresses the existence of conflicts between teams, with 24.2% agreement, indicating that conflicts are not a dominant issue.

Participation

Questions 10 to 13 evaluated participation in decision-making and change processes. The averages were lower, ranging from 2.61 to 3.27. The lowest average (2.61) was for question 12, which refers to the opportunity to contribute ideas for improving work processes. Only 33.3% of respondents agreed, indicating a perceived lack of space for employee participation. Question 11, which addresses the encouragement to participate in changes, had an average of 3.27.

Managerial Support

This dimension was measured by questions 14 to 18. The averages ranged from 2.97 to 3.45. The highest average (3.45) was for question 14, which assesses whether managers are accessible to employees, with 57.6% agreement. The lowest average (2.97) was for question 16, which refers to the recognition of employees' work by management, with only 39.4% agreement.

Training

Questions 19 to 21 evaluated the adequacy and frequency of training. The averages were among the lowest in the study, ranging from 2.67 to 3.09. The lowest average (2.67) was for question 20, which assesses whether training is sufficient for the performance of activities. Only 30.3% of respondents agreed, indicating a perceived lack of sufficient training.

Resistance to Change

This dimension was measured by questions 22 to 25. The averages ranged from 2.52 to 3.18. The lowest average (2.52) was for question 22, which addresses the difficulty in adapting to new processes. Only 27.3% of respondents agreed, suggesting that resistance to change is present but not predominant.

UPJ Implementation

Questions 26 to 33 evaluated perceptions regarding the implementation of the UPJ model. The averages ranged from 2.76 to 3.33. The highest average (3.33) was for question 27, which assesses whether the UPJ model contributes to process efficiency, with 51.5% agreement. The lowest average (2.76) was for question 29, which refers to the standardization of procedures, with only 27.3% agreement.

Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended questions provided important insights into the perceptions and suggestions of employees. The main points raised were:

- **Work Overload and Exhaustion:** Many respondents reported feelings of overload and exhaustion due to the accumulation of tasks and the lack of personnel.
- **Failures in Internal Communication:** Several comments pointed to communication problems between management and teams, as well as a lack of clear and standardized information.
- **Lack of Standardization of Procedures:** The absence of standardized procedures was frequently cited as a source of confusion and inefficiency.
- **Suggestions for Improvement:** The main suggestions included increasing the number of employees, offering more training, improving communication, and standardizing procedures.

V. Conclusion

The implementation of Judicial Processing Units (UPJs) in the second instance of the Goiás Court of Justice represents an important step toward modernizing judicial management and improving process efficiency. However, the results of this study indicate that the consolidation of the UPJ model depends on an integrated approach that combines innovation, valuing employees, and participatory management.

The main challenges identified include the need to increase the autonomy and participation of employees, improve training, and address issues related to work overload and internal communication. The

differences in perception between permanent, commissioned, and outsourced staff highlight the importance of considering the specificities of each group in the implementation process.

It is recommended that the TJGO invest in continuous training, promote participatory management practices, and establish clear and standardized procedures to ensure the success of the UPJ model and the well-being of employees.

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Appendix A – Respondent Profile by Functional Category

Functional Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Permanent Staff	14	42.4
Outsourced	9	27.3
Commissioned	8	24.2
Interns	2	6.1
Total	33	100

Appendix B – Questionnaire Dimensions and Questions

Dimension	Questions (Likert Scale)
Autonomy	1 to 4
Interaction and Cooperation	5 to 9
Participation	10 to 13
Managerial Support	14 to 18
Training	19 to 21
Resistance to Change	22 to 25
UPJ Implementation	26 to 33