

A systematic review of organizational culture literature: Lessons from the past and avenues for future research

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture is an important factor in human and organizational behavior, but there are disagreements over its definitions and measurements. Previous research has demonstrated positive aspects associated with corporate culture, such as its role in the effective adoption of quality management and its importance in the organizational change process. It can affect workers' willingness to embrace a change process. The purpose of this study is to review the past literature on organizational and identify research issues that could influence the body of knowledge of organizational culture. A systematic review of literature was carried out using PRISMA method. Data was obtained from four databases and a total of 30 relevant journals were identify for further analyses. The study revealed that different conceptualization and operationalization of Organizational culture creates the inconsistencies in findings previous studies. The study developed a framework for determining choice of constructs in each cultural context.

KEYWORDS

Organizational Culture; Cultural Dimensions; Organizational Culture Profile; PRISMA Method

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Introduction

According to O'Reilly et al. 1991 and Yipa et al. 2020, the study of human and organizational behavior can only exist considering organizational culture. Even though there is an almost universal consensus regarding its impact on workers (O'Reilly et al., 1991), there have been numerous disagreements over the issues of its definitions and measurements. Previous research has demonstrated numerous positive aspects associated with corporate culture. Chapman et al. (1991) discovered that the company's existing organizational culture was one of the most critical factors in the effective adoption of comprehensive quality management. Second, the cultural organization's culture is essential for the organizational change process since it can affecters' willingness to embrace a change process (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). According to Bhuiyan et al.'s 2020 research, organizational culture can also affect the corporate social responsibility initiatives that companies decide to implement. In addition, Pan et al. (2022) suggested that workers, the organization's reputation, performance, and the organization as a whole are all significantly impacted by organizational culture. Similarly, organizational culture can foster favorable outcomes such as work satisfaction, commitment, innovation, productivity, and financial perspective (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Chapman et al., 1991). These findings were published in two separate studies.

There are two primary schools of thought regarding the conception and definitions of organizational culture. (O'Reilly, et al. 1991; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996) The first school of thinking on organizational culture believed in it as a system of shared values that defines what is important, norms, and proper attitudes and behaviors. This school of thought conceived of organizational culture as basic assumptions and beliefs that members of a corporation share. This conception is founded on two assumptions that are generally accepted. First, according to O'Reilly et al. (1991), the primary role of an organization's leadership is the manipulation of the culture of the organization. Therefore, the value system of the leadership of a business is reflected in the organizational culture of the organization. Second, they thought that the organizational culture affected the company's performance. However, the findings from several research on this topic must be more consistent. The disparities in the conception and measurements of organizational culture and cultures associated with methodology continue to be the primary cause of the discrepancies (Schneider et al., 2013; Detert et al., 2000).

The opposite school of thinking, on the other hand, focuses on explaining what organizations are and what they are focused on (Powell et al., 2021). Consequently, a wide range of definitions of organizational culture have begun to appear in published works. One study conducted by Verbeke et al. in 1998 compiled a list of 54 different explanations of organizational culture. According to the work of O'Reilly et al. (2014), several academics have posited that personalities and values are the essential building blocks of culture. Therefore, the beliefs and personalities of the firm's leadership will affect how organizational culture is understood and implemented. Schein (1984) provided one of the earliest definitions of organizational culture. He is also considered to be one of the authors who is most frequently quoted about organizational culture. He thinks of organizational culture as a pattern of fundamental assumptions that a particular group has invented, discovered, or developed in order to deal with its external and internal integration. These fundamental assumptions have proven effective enough to be considered valid, and they

can be communicated to new members as the accepted way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling in relation to the challenges they face. He defines organizational culture as "the accepted way for perception, thought, and feeling about their problems." The primary purpose of this research is to systematize academic contributions by systematically assessing the existing literature on organizational culture. This review will focus on the many different conceptualizations, metrics, and processes associated with organizational culture. In the context of the organizational culture, we perform a synthesis and consolidation of the existing body of knowledge. By providing a framework to determine which conceptualizations and metrics of organizational culture are particular in different cultural contexts, we have contributed to the body of organizational culture scholarship. This framework serves as a guide to determine which conceptualizations and measurements are best appropriate for each study. Second, the framework helps illuminate the contrasts between the various measurement constructs. Thirdly, our investigation offers further light on the significance of the company's culture. In conclusion, the framework combines the previous research on organizational culture into a single body of work to establish a research path that will drive future studies on the implications of organizational culture within the contexts of both organizations and cultures.

Methods

We conduct a systematic review of literature using the Preferred Reporting items for Systematic Review (PRISMA) method for the data collection process. The PRISMA method offers an acceptable methodology that adopts a guideline checklist (Abelha, et al. 2020). This was adhered to in this article in order to ensure reproduction and quality. Consequently, we developed a review strategy which captures (a) a study review plan (b) a search strategy (c) refinement of our findings in light of study aims and objectives (d) assessment of the remaining studies within the organizational culture disciplinary context (e) identified relevant themes (f) synthesized the findings.

Research scope

The scope of the study is organizational culture and its takes to account the literature on human resource management, International Business, Management, and Work Place and Organizational Psychology. This helps to keep the study's scope within relevant works within the stud's disciplinary context.

Research plan

We develop a review plan based on the motivation to review the varied conceptualizations and measurements of organizational culture adopted in previous studies. Our review process adopted both a descriptive and exploratory approaches. We mapped out the organizational culture OC research domain using a systematic review and classify themes and trends within the literature.

Research strategy

Our search strategy lies in identifying peer-reviewed publications linked to organizational culture using PRISMA method of the systematic literature review (See Table 1. Inclusion criteria). Four databases were used, Elsevier (Science Direct), Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. The choice of these databases is largely because of the contains journals that covers the areas related to the study in consideration. These databases are hosts to top-peer reviewed journals in Human Resource Management, Work Place and organizational Psychology, International Business Management, Information Management and Organization behavior and Management. More so, these databases are among the most used databases for systematic literature review. We searched for articles and checked references to note articles which though do not meet our search criteria but were relevant for our discourse. Lastly, we conducted a backward and forward search to identify the varied conceptualizations and measurements that were hitherto not identified in our previous review.

We removed duplicates and screened abstracts, titles, keywords and relevant paragraphs that does not contribute meaningfully to our research aim and objectives. Also, we removed papers that use the keywords generically with focus on the study's context. Furthermore, articles from Harvard Business Review and Strategic Review were removed. The quality and eligibility of all articles used depended on the fact that they are articles published in top-peer reviewed journals such as those hosted by Science Direct (Elsevier). The articles were searched and carefully reviewed; titles, abstracts, keywords and paragraphs. A total of thirty articles were finally selected for the study's analysis. Our study reviewed that a majority of the literature deals with interrelationships between organizational culture and other organizational practices such as corporate social responsibilities (Bhuiyan, et al. 2020). However, our focus lies heavily on literature that address organizational conceptions and measurements. Table down below summed the review process with focus on the databases searched and other literature.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria

Criteria	Definition
Studies related to the research aim and objectives	Definitions of Organization culture, Organization cultural profile, Hofstede' model
Synonyms related to Organizational culture	Organizational culture, firm performance, corporate social responsibility, organizational culture profile
Peer-reviewed journals	Peer reviewed articles that focus on conceptualizations and measurements of OC
Relevant studies/Papers	Paper relevant to the discourse irrespective of their age
Cross References (forward and backward search)	Other themes not captured but relevant for the present discourse

The elimination criteria for this research are studies without full text, duplicates, and non-english articles.

Results

Seventy-two articles were found through the search that was based on the inclusion criteria. Following applying the requirements for removal, the number of pieces was reduced to thirty. Articles that generally did not contribute to the aim and objectives of the research were eliminated. Elsevier's Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were the databases utilized for this study. The selection of these databases is based mainly on the fact that they contain publications concerned with topics relevant to the investigation under consideration.

Table 2. Summary of the reporting items for systematic review based on the PRISMA statement

Identification	Elsevier (n=28)	Scopus(n=19)	Web of Science (13)	Google Scholar (n=12)
Screening	Screened by abstract, titles and keywords (n=72)			
Eligibility	Full text assessed for eligibility (67)		Non-Eligible (n=5)	
Inclusion	Studies included in synthesis studies (n=30)			

The preliminary review which identifies three themes were refined and reviewed into two main themes in light of the research aim and objectives:

1. The varied conceptions and definitions of organizational culture
2. Measurements and its processes

Discussion

Despite the importance of organizational culture, there has yet to be much agreement on how to define or conceptualize it. For instance, (Chen, 2022) stated that corporate culture is an abstract notion. They based their argument on Schein (1987). As such, it connects the fundamental hypotheses created by a group and leads and impacts the behavior of individuals and groups. They are ideas, assumptions, values, and norms that are generally accepted within a group and significantly impact the actions and behaviors of the members of that group. Chen underlined that a healthy culture would lead to favorable patterns of performance and behavior. The perspectives of various authors on organizational culture were compiled and analyzed by Bhuiyan et al. (2020). They defined it as the pattern/systems of shared meanings, ideas, ideologies, values, symbols, language, rituals, assumptions, and myths that evolve and are created inside a firm/unit over time and are significant to guiding and controlling members' behaviors and group cohesion.

Additionally, they said it is significant for forming myths and assumptions. However, some scholars (Schneider et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2021) characterize it as the shared beliefs and fundamental assumptions explaining why companies do what they do and the reason for their focus. Distinct writers have distinct definitions and concepts of organizational culture, which results in varying viewpoints on the impacts of these cultures. These perspectives are based on various definitions and conceptions. For instance, Kalyar et al. (2013) identify humanist organizations, and they confirm that these organizations have a good influence on public service. Humanist organizational culture relates to the social aspects of an organization (Goddard, 1997). On the other hand, Miao et al. (2012) identifies with the clan organization culture, which emphasizes tradition and loyalty.

On its own, Yian (2017) identifies ethical organizational culture as influencing corporate social responsibility. According to Ashkanasy and Trevor-Roberts (2001), one perspective on organizational culture is that it is a cultural environment. Therefore, it must apply to a particular nation or geographical area. This suggests that the effect of a company's culture differs from country to country, making it challenging to evaluate nations side by side. The following table provides examples of some possible definitions of OC.

Table 3. Various definitions of Organizational Culture

Definitions	References
"The pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered or developed by a group of people in coping with their problem of external adaptation and internal integration"	Schein, 1987
"Described as the patterns/systems of shared meanings, beliefs, ideologies, values, symbols, language, rituals, assumptions and myth that evolve and are established within an organization over time and play significant role in guiding and coordinating members behaviors and for group cohesion"	Bhuiyan et al. 2020
"The shared values and basic assumptions that explain why firms do what they do and the reason for their focus"	Schneider, et al. 2017; Powell et al. 2021

Just as it is with definitions and conceptualizations, so also it is with operationalization of the constructs of OC. Powell et al (2021) identify 18 types of measurements.

Conclusion

This study aims to develop systematic review of organizational culture; its conceptualizations and operationalization. The paper also highlights the various definitions of OC and its implications. More so, OC is cultural-context, thus, there is need to develop a framework that determines the appropriate methods of OC that fits into each societal construct. Most studies on OC often relates its impacts with other business activities such as financial performance, non-financial performance, corporate social responsibility, business innovation and modelling. However, the inconsistencies in methodologies which is a direct product of its varied definitions and operationalization of its instruments had created more mixed results. Thus, there is need for a framework that determines choice of methods to adopt and perhaps how to compare OC in different societal context using similar constructs/methods. This will help promote cross-cultural study and also increase the credibility and reliability of results. This review adopted the PRISMA methodology. Many eligible studies were identified and four databases were utilized for the study. While we acknowledged that the publications used are top-peer reviewed articles, which have made contribution to the body of knowledge and research but we limited our analyses to 30 papers and do not focus on geographical differences. In future studies, adding more databases to our search and also extending our review to compare and contrast between organizational culture between the developed and the developing countries will add more scientific rigor to this research.

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