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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS A DETERMINANT OF EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY; A COMPETING VALUE FRAMEWORK BASED ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Employee creativity can contribute significantly in academic settings; however, understanding about what factors can promote employee creativity remains limited. In the present study, we investigated employee creativity using organizational culture as a predictor in the higher educational context of Oman. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey-based approach and a total of 132 academic staff participated in the survey. The result shows that out of four types of organizational culture, developmental and group culture exert a positive and significant effect on employee creativity; while, hierarchical culture exerts a negative and significant effect. Furthermore, we found negative and insignificant effects of rational culture on employee creativity. The result shows that the right type of organizational culture can promote employee creativity in academic settings.

Keywords: Creativity, Culture, Group, Rational, Hierarchical, Academic, University, Higher Education, Oman.

INTRODUCTION

Employee creativity is very important among the academic staff and in the present study, the issue is investigated in the context of a public sector university in Oman. The study is important

since it highlights the type of culture required in academic settings especially in the academic unit under investigation in order to foster employee creativity. The benefit is that if employees, especially academic staff are creative, they can use more innovative educational techniques and foster student learning. The importance of the study is that it enables identifying the impact of organizational culture on employee creativity using the Competing Value Framework (CVF).

Research Question

What are the effects of different types of organizational culture on employee creativity among the academic staff?

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to test the effects of organizational culture types on employee creativity. The sub-objectives are as follows;

- To test the effects of clan culture on employee creativity among the academic staff.
- To test the effects of market culture on employee creativity among the academic staff.
- To test the effects of adhocracy culture on employee creativity among the academic staff.
- To test the effects of hierarchy culture on employee creativity among the academic staff.

Significance of the Study

Studies related to employee creativity and organizational culture relationship in the context of higher education in Oman are limited. The study is significant as it fills this literature gap. This literature gap is important as a greater understanding of the determinant of employee creativity in this context can lead to improved and innovative methods of teaching by academic staff which can benefit students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational culture is defined as the participated introductory hypotheticals, values, and beliefs that characterize a setting and are tutored to beginners as the proper way to suppose and feel, communicated by the myths and stories people tell about how the association came to be the way it's as it answered problems associated with external adaption and internal integration (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). There are different models of organizational culture and their types but in the present study, we will investigate the four types suggested by Cameroon and Quinn (2012) refers to as the Competing Value Framework model (CVF). The model suggests four types of organizational culture with different priorities and constraints. For example, an organization needs to be flexible and adaptable but also well-controlled and stable. There should be an external focus but also an internal mechanism of information sharing. The CVF therefore suggest a good combination of organizational culture types which adequately covers the complex nature of organizational culture based on internal and external dimension and stability versus flexibility structure. Based on these dimensions, the model proposes four types of organizational culture including clan, adhocracy, market, and rational culture. The CVF is used in many studies in various contexts which shows its widespread use and validity (e.g. Buhumaid, 2022; Osei, Papadopoulos, Acquaye, & Stamati, 2023; Sybesma, 2022). The four types are as follows;

Clan Culture

The clan culture is characterized by human relations perspective and is based on internal focus and flexibility (Cameron & Quinn, 2012). In the clan culture, there is an emphasis on sharing

information and decision-making based on a participative style. The culture holds tribal values and has features similar to a family. This culture respects family traditions but such culture also hampered diversity and innovation (Wigmore, 2012). This type of culture is mostly found in small-scale family-owned firms. The culture seeks to foster group cooperation and collaboration among the members (Lindquist & Marcy, 2016).

Adhocracy Culture

The adhocracy culture is based on an open system perspective and is based on external focus and flexibility (Cameroon & Quinn, 2012). It is a type of organizational culture in which opinions are made in a natural way and concentrate on getting the job done. There may be little emphasis on position planning, advance planning, or formal procedures concentrated on the work being done. The culture also features innovation, creativity, growth, resource acquisition, and adaptation (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011). The adhocracy culture drawback is that in the situation of new technology, this culture of domination will not be very effective.

Market Culture

The market culture is based on external focus and predictability and emphasizes competitiveness, goal clarity, efficiency, productivity, and accomplishment (Cameroon & Quinn, 2012). It is created by the emphasis on the client and aims at maintaining a high position of robust performance by effectively and efficiently the behavior needed to achieve customer value. Thus, market culture is focused on customer orientation and is functional, action-oriented, and creates value for the customers throughout the organization (Ogbeibu, Senadjki, & Peng, 2018; Yoon, 2005).

Hierarchy Culture

The hierarchical culture is based on internal processes and is characterized by internal focus and predictability (Cameroon & Quinn, 2012). The culture focuses on control, continuity, reutilization, stability, centralization, and documentation (Lindquist & Marcy, 2016). It is also based on rules and well-defined procedures and all members of the organization have to follow the procedures (Ogbeibu, Senadjki, Emelifeonwu, & Vohra, 2020). The structure handed by the rules and regulations keeps the organization running and leaders encourage this to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & Wiley, 2000).

Overall, the four types of organizational culture are not unique as no organization solely focus on only one type; instead, the elements of all four types of culture can be found with different level of emphasis. However, an organization that creates a suitable balance in all four types can perform better compared to organizations which have a culture with a single focus.

Employee Creativity

Employee creativity refers to the products of ideas or issues that are both new and applicable to something (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). Similarly, Ogbeibu, et al. (2018) view creativity as a cognitive process of a worker that incorporates the development of creative ideas concerning a product, service, or process and provides a result to the problem, and improves upon being idea towards the addition of value, and novelty in any given domain. This implies that employee creativity occurs at an individual level and involves the application of innovative ideas to organizational problems. In this regard, an individual staff member who is creative will produce new ideas about the offers to be given, ways of communication, and understanding that can

affect the work done in the course of his/her work. Amabile and Pillemer (2012) further stated that employee creativity is an individual-level phenomenon that mirrors the production of creative ideas. Organizations can build strong resilience against a future of constant change using employee creativity. For achieving this end, the organization need to have a benevolent top management leader who strongly expresses emotions that reflect goodwill, compassion, care, altruism, and kindness towards employees in order to engender employee creativity.

Organizational Culture and Employee Creativity

There are relevant studies conducted in different contexts which investigated the influence of organizational culture on employee creativity. For example, a study by Makumbe (2022) investigated the effects of organizational culture on academic staff in Zimbabwe. The key findings of the study are that group, developmental, and rational culture has positive effects on employee creativity, while, hierarchical culture has negative effects. Another study conducted by Shao, Feng, and Liu (2012) tested the effects of organizational culture on employees. The key findings are that specific facets of culture influence employees' motivation and creativity. Another study conducted by Yee (2022) focused on organizational culture and employee creativity link. The study reported that organizational culture influences employee creativity. A study conducted by Awadh and Alyahya (2013) investigated the organizational culture and employee performance connection. The key findings are that the values and norms of an organization influence employee performance. The study by Slocum and Hellriegel (2007) showed that the presence of a suitable organizational culture can boost employee performance. A study by Mubarak and Noor (2018) showed that organizational culture is derived from its humanistic philosophy, policies, and practices. Furthermore, the study reported that a positive organizational culture can contribute towards organizational carbon reduction programs thus facilitating the achievement of three pillars of reward, recompense, and development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study is causal since it tests the effects of the independent variable on a dependent variable. The present study is cross-sectional and quantitative in nature. Furthermore, the study is based on a cross-sectional method of data collection through a survey.

Population and Sampling

The study focused on a single campus of a public sector university where the total population of academic staff is 357. For sampling, convenience non-random sampling is used and a total of 132 academic staff participated in the survey.

Data Collection and Instrument

Primary data is collected from a survey distributed on the selected campus. The questionnaire for organizational Culture is adapted from Denison and Spreitzer (1991) and consists of 4 items for each type making it a total of 16 statements. The questionnaire for employee creativity is adapted from Tierney, Farmer, and Graen (1999) and consists of 7 items.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed using SPSS version 26 and includes frequency, correlation, and regression for hypotheses testing.

RESULTS

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	71	53.8%
Female	61	46.2%
Age		
18 to 30 Years	27	20.5%
31 to 45 Years	81	61.4%
46 to 60 Years	24	18.2%
Origin		
Omani	62	47.0%
Non-Omani	70	53.0%

N=132

A total of 71 males and 61 females participated in the survey making a total of 132 participants. In terms of age, 27 belonged to the age group of 18 to 30 years; 81 belonged to the age group of 31 to 45 years; and 24 belonged to the age group of 46 to 60 years. 62 participants were of Omani origin and 70 were non-Omani origin.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
Developmental Culture	04	.888	1.34	4.77	3.324	1.165
Group Culture	04	.843	1.25	4.54	3.340	1.045
Hierarchical Culture	04	.818	1.00	4.32	4.457	1.013
Rational Culture	04	.901	1.13	4.87	4.145	.923
Employee Creativity	07	.822	1.24	4.49	3.565	.893

The result in Table 2 shows that there is a moderate level of developmental culture (M=3.32, SD=1.16); and group culture (M=3.34, SD=1.04); whereas, close to a high level of hierarchical culture (M=4.46, SD=); and rational culture (M=4.14, SD=). Finally, employee creativity is also moderate level (M=3.56, SD=.89) as reported by the respondents. The Cronbach alpha of all variables is also above 0.70 so it shows a satisfactory level of reliability.

Table 3
Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
Developmental Culture	1				
Group Culture	.477**	1			
Hierarchical Culture	-.004	.039	1		
Rational Culture	-.047	-.140	.788**	1	
Employee Creativity	.603**	.593**	-.211*	-.261**	1

*P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

Correlation analysis indicates that all independent variables are positively and significantly correlated with employee creativity including developmental culture (r=.603, P<.05); group culture (r=.593, P<.05); and negatively with hierarchical culture (r=-.211, P<.05); and rational culture (r=-.261, P<.05).

Table 4
Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.642	.271		6.065	.000
Developmental Culture	.297	.050	.409	5.924	.000
Group Culture	.353	.063	.403	5.615	.000
Hierarchical Culture	-.155	.075	-.209	-2.061	.041
Rational Culture	-.012	.063	-.020	-.196	.845

R=.731
RSquare=.535
Adjusted RSquare=.520
FStat=36.51 (P Value=0.000)

Regression result shows that developmental culture ($\beta=.297$, $P<.05$); and group culture ($\beta=.353$, $P<.05$) have positive and significant effects on employee creativity. Furthermore, Hierarchical culture ($\beta= -.155$, $P<.05$) has negative effects and the result is significant. However, Rational culture ($\beta= -.012$, $P>.05$) has negative and insignificant effects on employee creativity. The R-square value indicates that our independent variables of organizational culture dimensions explain a 53.5% change in the dependent variable of employee creativity. The Fstatistics indicate that our model is fit and significant (Fstat=36.51, $P<.05$). Based on these results, we accept H1, H2, and H3 but reject H4.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to test the influence of four types of organizational culture on employee creativity in a higher educational context in Oman. The result shows that out of four types of cultures, developmental culture, and group culture have positive and significant effects on employee creativity; while, hierarchical has negative and significant effects, and rational culture has negative and insignificant effects on employee creativity. The result shows that if higher education units need to improve employee creativity among the academic staff, they need to focus on developing the right culture, especially with an emphasis on developmental and group culture. On the other hand, the presence of hierarchical culture can reduce employee creativity so it needs to be minimized.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that developmental and group cultures contribute positively to employee creativity and should be fostered in academic departments and units. Whereas, since hierarchical and rational culture exerts a negative influence on creativity, it should be reduced. The study contributes to our understanding of the connection between organizational culture and employee creativity. Furthermore, the study shows that employee creativity is important in academic settings and can be fostered using the right type of organizational culture.

Recommendations

We recommend that higher educational institutes should build a sense of belonging and a culture of group orientation where staff are encouraged to be more creative. Higher educational institutes need to have a clear vision and set of values that should be communicated to all employees. For creativity to be fostered, managers should provide constructive and timely feedback and make

employees feel comfortable for sharing their ideas. Mistakes should be used for learning and not for punishment. It is also recommended that employees should be updated with new resources and technologies so that they can perform more efficiently and achieve better results. Their management should also foster a competitive work environment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study limitations include a small sample size collected from a single academic unit and perceptual measures. Future researchers can investigate organizational culture along with other mediator or moderator variables and their influence on employee creativity. A more robust method of data collection and analysis is also recommended for future researchers.

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