

The Relationship Between the Organisational Culture of the Managerial Cadre and Societal Culture

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Abstract—This study examines the reciprocal relationship between organisational culture and societal culture, proceeding from the premise that an organisation does not operate in a social vacuum but rather emerges and functions within an environment bearing a system of values, customs, norms, and perceptions that influence its members as well as its modes of management and decision-making. Conversely, through their practices and work patterns, organisations can contribute to the reproduction or modification of certain social values. The study aims to clarify the concept of organisational culture and its components, to explain the concept of societal culture and its levels, and then to analyse the points of interaction between the two, with a focus on leadership, communication, authority, teamwork, human resource management, incentives, conflict, and organisational change. The study also discusses the challenges organisations face when organisational values conflict with prevailing societal values, and it highlights the importance of building a flexible alignment that enables the organisation to preserve its distinctiveness without becoming detached from its social environment. The study concludes that organisational culture and societal culture mutually influence each other, and that understanding this relationship is an important factor in explaining organisational behaviour and the success of change and development programmes.

Keywords—organisational culture, societal culture, values, social norms, organisational behaviour, leadership, communication, organisational change, human resources

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I examine the relationship between the organisational culture of the institution's managerial cadre and societal culture, or, in other words, whether societal culture influences the organisational culture of the managerial cadre and, in turn, their work performance within the institution.

Culture has become one of the central concepts in the social and administrative sciences, because it helps to explain the way in which individuals and groups think, how their expectations are formed, and how they determine what they regard as acceptable or unacceptable within their surroundings. As interest shifted to the study of organisations, the concept of organisational culture emerged to denote the set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that take shape within the organisation and influence its members' behaviour.

However, organisational culture is not formed in isolation from society. Workers and managers enter the organisation carrying prior social experiences, language, rules of conduct, and conceptions of authority, work, success, time, and human relations. Consequently, the organisation's culture is influenced by the culture that surrounds it. At the same time, the organisation may produce new patterns of behaviour and interaction whose effects can extend to the family, society, and the labour market.

The importance of studying the relationship between the two cultures becomes particularly evident in the context of globalisation, digital transformation, the multiplicity of nationalities, and the transfer of management methods between countries. A managerial practice may succeed in a particular cultural context yet require adaptation when applied in another. Hence, transferring rules and procedures is not sufficient; rather, the deep values that give those procedures their meaning must be understood.

This study proceeds from a central research problem: How does organisational culture interact with societal culture, and what limits does each place on the behaviour of individuals and organisations? This problem raises questions about the sources of organisational culture, the effects of social values on leadership, communication, and teamwork, and organisations' role in reproducing societal culture or changing some of its elements.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, presenting fundamental concepts, discussing the well-known literature on organisational culture and national and social culture, and then analysing the domains of interaction between the two levels. The study does not aim to assert the existence of a mechanical or deterministic relationship between the culture of society and the behaviour of every organisation, because the organisation possesses its own history, leadership, systems, incentives, and human resources; rather, the study regards societal culture as one of the influential contexts.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Defining concepts precisely is the first methodological step in every analytical study, because terms such as culture, values, and organisation are used across multiple fields of knowledge with divergent meanings. This section specifies the meaning the study adopts for each fundamental concept, in preparation for analysing the relationship between organisational culture and societal culture and its effect on organisational behaviour.

The Concept of Culture

Linguistic Meaning

In Arabic, the origin of the word goes back to the verb *thaqifa*, meaning skillfulness, perspicacity, and quickness of learning; from it comes the expression *thaqqafa al-rumh*, that is, he straightened the spear and levelled it (Ibn Manzur, n.d.). Thus, from its very origin, the word carries the meaning of refinement, rectification, and polishing, a meaning close to the modern connotation of the term as that which is acquired through learning and practice.

Terminological Meaning

Definitions of culture are as numerous as the disciplines that have addressed it. Among the most famous classical definitions is that of the British anthropologist Edward Tylor, who regarded culture as a complex whole comprising knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and all the other capabilities and habits that the human being acquires as a member of society. Modern definitions, despite the diversity of their approaches, agree in highlighting fundamental characteristics of culture:

- *Acquired*: The individual learns it from their surroundings and does not inherit it biologically.
- *Shared*: It is based on meanings and values shared by the members of the group.

- *Symbolic*: It expresses itself through language, symbols, rituals, and practices (Geertz, 1973).
- *Cumulative and changeable*: It is passed on from generation to generation and is modified as economic, technological, and social conditions change.

Adopted Definition

In this study, culture is understood as a system of shared meanings, values, norms, and symbols that provides a frame of reference for interpreting events and relationships and guides the behaviour of individuals and groups without determining it deterministically.

The Concept of Organisational Culture

Definition

Organisational culture is the set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms shared among members of an organisation, shaped by its history and its experience adapting to its external environment and achieving internal harmony, and which guides employees' perceptions and behaviour while distinguishing the organisation from others. Stephen Robbins described it as a system of meanings shared among members that distinguishes one organisation from another, a description that emphasises the collective and symbolic dimension of the phenomenon.

Levels of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is usually studied through three overlapping levels, graded from the visible to the hidden:

- *The visible level*: Symbols, slogans, rituals, buildings, dress codes, and the language in common use; these are manifestations that are easy to observe but difficult to interpret in isolation from the other two levels.
- *Espoused values*: The principles that the organisation proclaims and regards as a reference for its work, such as quality, integrity, customer service, and innovation.
- *Basic assumptions*: The deep, implicit conceptions that members take for granted without discussion and that ultimately determine how they interpret reality and act within it.

Organisational Culture and Organisational Climate

Some researchers conflate the two concepts, whereas the correct view is that they are complementary yet distinct. Culture refers to deep, relatively stable meanings that explain why individuals behave a certain way, while organisational climate refers to employees' immediate perceptions of their work environment, such as fairness, support, or work pressure. Accordingly, it may be said that culture is the soil in which climate grows.

Adopted Definition

In this study, organisational culture denotes the system of values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that the members of the organisation share and that is reflected in its daily practices relating to leadership, communication, decision-making, motivation, and dealing with error and change.

The Concept of Societal Culture

Definition

Societal culture is the set of values, beliefs, customs, norms, and conceptions prevalent in a given society that form the general framework within which its members interact. It is formed through processes of socialisation undertaken by the family, the school, religion, language, the media, and the peer group.

Spheres of Influence

Societal culture is connected with major questions that people experience in their daily lives: the place of the family, the meaning of trust, the boundaries of individual and collective responsibility, and the way in which authority, status, time, and work are viewed. When the individual enters the organisation, these questions turn into implicit expectations regarding their relationship with their superiors and colleagues and with the work itself.

Adopted Definition

In this study, societal culture denotes the general environment of values and norms that individuals carry with them from their society into the organisation and that influences their expectations, their ways of communicating, and their understanding of authority, work, and responsibility.

The Concept of the Organisation

An organisation is a consciously coordinated social unit with relatively clear boundaries that operates continuously to achieve a shared goal or set of goals. This unit is complete only when it includes complementary elements: individuals, goals, the structure that distributes roles and powers, the division of labour, material and intangible resources, and the environment in which it operates. In this study, the organisation refers to any economic, administrative, or service institution that brings individuals together to achieve specific ends and operates under a system of values that influences its performance and behaviour.

The Concept of Organisational Behaviour and the Behaviour of the Organisation

Organisational Behaviour

Organisational behaviour is a field of knowledge that studies what individuals and groups do within organisations and analyses how this behaviour affects the organisation's performance and effectiveness. It is studied at three levels: the individual (motivation, attitudes, and perception), the group (communication, leadership, and conflict), and the organisation (structure, culture, and change).

The Behaviour of the Organisation

In this study, the behaviour of the organisation refers to observable collective patterns in the organisation's work: how it makes decisions, manages communication and authority, and deals with employees, customers, and the surrounding environment. In this sense, it is broader than individual behaviour because it reflects the organisation's culture, structure, and incentive systems, and it is also shaped by the social context in which the organisation operates.

The Concepts of Values and Social Norms

Values

Values are general, deeply rooted conceptions of what is desirable, commendable, or worth striving for, such as trustworthiness, justice, solidarity, and excellence. They provide a deep frame of reference for evaluating actions and situations, and they are characterised by their relative stability and generality.

Social Norms

Social norms are rules of conduct, whether explicit or implicit, that translate values into specific expectations in everyday situations and are coupled with positive or negative social sanctions that encourage adherence. Examples include custom, tradition, the etiquette of conversation, and the rules of respect for elders.

The Relationship Between Them

The relationship rests on the fact that values define the desired ends, whereas norms define the acceptable ways of attaining them. In organisations, this relationship is clearly apparent: The value of *quality*, for example, is translated into practical norms in inspection, documentation, and evaluation procedures, and the value of *respect for time* is translated into rules on attendance and meetings.

The Concepts of Socialisation and Organisational Socialisation

Socialisation is the process by which individuals acquire the values, norms, and behavioural patterns of their society through family, school, and their surroundings. Organisational socialisation, by contrast, is the process by which a new member learns the organisation's values, unwritten rules, and the meaning of roles within it through training, observation, and interaction with colleagues and superiors. The importance of distinguishing between the two is that the former precedes joining the organisation and provides the individual with their value background, whereas the latter aligns this background with the organisation's requirements. The more closely the two sets of values converge, the faster and less strained integration becomes.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

A number of researchers have conducted studies on culture, personality, and organisational behaviour, and this work has culminated in the crystallisation of theories that explain the relationship between culture, individuals, groups, and organisations. Four of these theories can be summarised as follows.

The Theory of Values

This theory holds that every culture is founded on a single integrative principle and that a given group shares a limited number of values and attitudes that shape its members' perception of reality. According to Opler, every culture contains fundamental forces to which the group accords particular importance and which therefore guide interaction among its members and determine many of their cultural patterns. This means that an understanding of employees' behaviour is attained through knowledge of the central values around which the organisation rallies.

The Theory of the Spirit of Culture

This theory posits that the culture of every institution has a distinctive spirit of its own, consisting of abstract characteristics and traits that are derived by analysing the institution's cultural data and that are reflected in the personality of the leaders and employees. This spirit is the sum of the values the group members regard as their frame of reference. It also sets the limits of the possibilities available for the institution's growth, because the institution derives its values from the culture of its society, which places this spirit in the service of both continuity and development, as well as the institution's specific goals.

The Theory of Interaction With Life

This theory focuses on the manner in which the organisation deals with its environment and the way in which it views life. In this view, the organisation's culture expresses a general philosophy for understanding work and relationships, and it varies with the group's view of the world. One merit is that it maintains the link between culture and the institution and preserves the individual's values within the organisation, so members do not feel compelled to relinquish their values to be in harmony with the organisation.

The Theory of Disposition (the Nature of Culture)

This theory centres on the accumulated experience to which the members of the organisation attach a shared value. Over time, this experience is transformed into an affective formula for behaviour, by which

individuals' feelings and emotions towards what they encounter within the organisation are determined. Through training and practice, this experience grows and becomes entrenched until it becomes a stable pattern of thinking and acting.

Analytical Reading

These theories converge in considering organisational culture to be a common meaning shared by members, but they differ in where they place their focus. The theory of values focuses on content, the theory of the spirit on the organisation's identity, the theory of interaction with life on its orientation towards its environment, and the theory of disposition on learning and experience. All agree that organisational culture is inseparable from societal culture because individuals' values and experiences come from society and are then reformulated by the organisation in line with its goals. This forms the foundation of this study's research problem.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND SOCIETAL CULTURE

The Concept of Culture

Culture is a broad concept that encompasses the meanings, values, symbols, customs, knowledge, and patterns of behaviour that the members of a group learn and share to varying degrees. It includes not only material manifestations but also unwritten assumptions that shape how events and relationships are interpreted.

The Concept of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture refers to the shared meanings, values, assumptions, and practices that distinguish one organisation from others and guide members' behaviour. It may appear in written rules, but it often shows up in informal rules, such as how employees address the manager, how errors are handled, or how initiative is rewarded.

Societal Culture

In this article, societal culture refers to the set of values, norms, and conceptions that are prevalent in a given society and that constitute the general framework for social interaction. It includes notions such as family, trust, responsibility, social status, time, cooperation, individualism and collectivism, and society's view of authority and work.

The Difference Between the Two Concepts

Societal culture is broader and encompasses many domains of life, whereas organisational culture is concentrated within a specific group or organisation. An organisation may be influenced by societal culture, yet it is able to develop a subculture of its own as a result of its history, strategy, and leadership.

Levels of Culture

Culture can be studied at several levels: society, profession or sector, organisation, and team. These levels may overlap; thus, an employee may simultaneously hold general social values, professional values, organisational values, and team values.

COMPONENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture consists of a set of interrelated elements. Foremost among these are values, which are the principles that determine what the organisation considers important, such as quality, customer service, innovation, or commitment. Beliefs and basic assumptions also shape employees' interpretation of reality, such as the belief that mistakes are opportunities for learning or grounds for punishment.

Culture also manifests itself in symbols, slogans, stories, and rituals (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Stories about the organisation's founders or employees who succeeded in difficult circumstances may carry cultural messages more influential than official instructions. Offices, clothing, the system of meetings, and the way in which achievements are celebrated can likewise reflect the organisation's values.

One of the characteristics of organisational culture is that it is acquired rather than innate; the new member learns it through interaction with colleagues and superiors. It is also social, because it is transmitted within the group, and dynamic, because it can change as leadership, strategy, and the environment change (Hatch, 1993). Furthermore, it may be strong when the majority share the core values, or weak when informal rules multiply, and there is no clear consensus (Denison, 1990).

Culture performs several functions: It provides individuals with a sense of identity, offers a framework for understanding behaviour, facilitates coordination, sets the limits of what is acceptable, and supports commitment. However, it can become an obstacle when the organisation clings to old habits despite environmental changes or penalises difference and initiative.

It is important not to regard organisational culture as something entirely fixed or uniform. Subcultures linked to departments, professions, and managerial levels may exist within the organisation. The culture of a technical department may differ from that of a commercial department, despite shared values at the organisational level.

COMPONENTS AND DIMENSIONS OF SOCIETAL CULTURE

Societal culture comprises shared values relating to the family, social relations, authority, work, responsibility, time, and success. These values shape individuals' expectations before they enter the labour market and therefore carry into organisations through socialisation.

One of the important dimensions is the relationship of the individual to the group. In some contexts, solidarity and collective belonging come to the fore, whereas individual autonomy holds greater standing in others (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). This does not mean every individual behaves the same way; rather, it indicates that society may make certain behaviours more acceptable or expected.

Authority is another important dimension. The degree of acceptance of hierarchy and status differences can influence how employees communicate with managers (Hofstede et al., 2010). In environments that give formal authority considerable weight, direct objection may be more difficult, whereas participation in decision-making may be more customary in other environments.

Societal culture also shapes the concept of time and discipline, people's views of work and private life, the nature of professional relationships, and trust. However, these dimensions are not absolute judgements about individuals, and they should not be used to classify people stereotypically.

Societal culture changes with education, migration, technology, urbanisation, the economy, and the media. Therefore, an organisation that treats society as static may find it difficult to keep pace with new generations and with the changing expectations of employees and customers.

THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND SOCIETAL CULTURE

The relationship between the two cultures is one of mutual influence, not a one-way relationship. Society provides the organisation with part of the values that individuals carry, while the organisation offers a daily environment that can reinforce or weaken certain values. For this reason, the organisation can be regarded as a space for reproducing culture and, in some cases, for renewing it.

The relationship first manifests in the recruitment process. When the organisation selects people according to specific criteria, it gains not only technical skills; it also gains patterns of thinking and

communication. Moreover, the candidates themselves evaluate the organisation on the basis of what they consider suited to their values and expectations.

Second, the relationship manifests itself in organisational socialisation. New employees learn what is acceptable through training, observation, and feedback. A gradual alignment may occur between the individual's values and the organisation's values, or tension may arise if the values are conflicting.

Third, it manifests itself in leadership. The leader's style of distributing authority, listening to employees, managing errors, and granting rewards interacts with social conceptions of authority and justice. Nevertheless, the leader can build internal rules that differ from what prevails in society.

The fourth relationship manifests itself in the market and the local community. Organisations that serve a particular public need to understand the language, values, and customs that influence customers. Conversely, the organisation's campaigns and services can change habits of consumption, communication, and work.

IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIETAL CULTURE FOR ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Societal culture influences organisational behaviour through the prior expectations that individuals carry. This is evident in the concept of commitment to work, in the way individual and collective responsibility is understood, and in the level of reliance on personal relationships or formal procedures.

In communication, social customs can shape how direct or indirect people are, and how much importance is placed on context and personal relationships. Multicultural organisations therefore need to develop intercultural communication skills rather than assume that a single style suits everyone.

In decision-making, collective participation may matter more in some environments, whereas others may prefer clear individual responsibility. The manager needs to distinguish between what is a cultural preference and what is an actual requirement of the work.

In the sphere of trust, some professional relationships may rely heavily on personal experience and reputation, whereas others rely more on contracts, regulations, and procedures. This does not mean that trust is absent in either case, but rather that the ways in which it is built differ.

In conflict management, culture shapes how individuals express disagreement. Some may prefer confrontation, while others avoid embarrassment and prioritise preserving the relationship. The organisation must provide fair, transparent mechanisms that allow disagreements to be addressed without turning cultural differences into personal problems.

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISATION IN INFLUENCING SOCIETAL CULTURE

The relationship is not limited to society influencing the organisation; organisations also influence society. This influence grows with the expansion of economic, technological, educational, and media institutions.

The organisation can influence work values through recruitment, promotion, and training policies. When it rewards competence, learning, and cooperation, it reinforces these practices among employees. When it relies on unclear criteria, it may reinforce different behaviour patterns.

The organisation can also influence society through social responsibility, training programmes, support for local initiatives, environmental protection, and the provision of new services. The effect varies with the organisation's size, field, and relationship with society.

Digital companies, in particular, influence patterns of communication, consumption, and work. Remote work, electronic services, digital platforms, and e-commerce can change an individual's relationship with time, place, and institutions.

However, the organisation's influence is not necessarily positive or negative in absolute terms. It depends on how it is practiced and what it achieves. Therefore, the organisation's social impact must be evaluated alongside its financial or administrative performance.

ANALYTICAL-SYNTHETIC STUDY

Comparing organisational culture and societal culture reveals a multilevel relationship between them. The organisation receives individuals who carry social values and then reshapes part of these values through work rules, incentives, and leadership. Subsequently, some organisational experiences may be transferred to social life.

This relationship can be conceived in three stages: first, cultural input, whereby social values enter the organisation through individuals; second, organisational adaptation, whereby the organisation reformulates certain behaviours in accordance with its goals; and third, external influence, whereby certain organisational practices are transferred to society.

However, this process is not linear. Organisational culture may conflict with certain social values, which may make it difficult to recruit or retain employees. The organisation may succeed in creating its own professional culture when it provides strong reasons to adhere to it, such as clear rules, fairness, and opportunities for development.

This view suggests that managers need two complementary skills: understanding the social context and building a clear organisational culture. Social understanding alone is not sufficient because the organisation needs values linked to strategy; organisational culture alone is not sufficient if it ignores the society in which it operates.

Furthermore, globalisation does not eliminate cultural differences. Management tools may move between countries, but the way in which they are used is influenced by context. Successful international management therefore combines general professional principles with local adaptation.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that organisational culture and societal culture overlap. Societal culture is one source of the values and expectations individuals bring to organisations. In contrast, the organisation transforms some of these values into practices, rules, and everyday patterns of interaction.

The organisation's behaviour cannot be explained by societal culture alone, because other factors, such as strategy, structure, leadership, technology, the incentive system, and the organisation's history, also matter. Nor can the organisation be separated from its environment, because its legitimacy, resources, and relationships with customers, workers, and institutions are shaped within society.

Cultural alignment matters in human resource management, leadership, communication, teamwork, and change. The better the organisation understands the social context, the more realistic its policies can be while maintaining a clear organisational identity.

Ultimately, the relationship between organisational culture and societal culture is not one of absolute dependence but one of interaction, negotiation, and mutual influence. Understanding this interaction helps build organisations that can adapt, manage difference, and achieve their goals within a changing social context.

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