



Michał Adam Leśniewski

PhD, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2411-8911>

The manager and the safety culture of the organisation: a conceptual model

Introduction

The issue of safety is a fundamental insight into the future of any organisation.¹ It can be argued that a secure organisation functions and develops better than an organisation without safety. Every day people strive to maintain safety.² Organisational safety can be defined as a process, a state that relatively guarantees a sense of certainty for the permanent functioning of an organisation in a changing environment. By analysing the environment, we are able to identify/indicate factors that can stabilise or destabilise organisational safety. Paying attention to the issue of organisational safety reinforces the field of practice and theory of management and quality sciences. Safety as a component of an organisation cannot exist without the participation of a human being (employee).³ The person responsible, from the point of view of the implementation of the management process, for shaping the safety of the organisation is the manager embedded in the realities of

¹ *Bezpieczeństwo: wymiar współczesny i perspektywy badań*, ed. M. Kwicciński, Kraków: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne. Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, 2010.

² A. Chodyński, "Sieciowość w zarządzaniu bezpieczeństwem na poziomie regionalnym i lokalnym", *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka*, no. 1, 2014, pp. 13–27.

³ M. Silic, P.B. Lowry, "Using design-science based gamification to improve organizational security training and compliance", *Journal of Management Information Systems*, vol. 37, issue 1, 2020, pp. 129–161, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2019.1705512>.

the given organisational culture. This positioning of the manager in the safety reality of the organisation constitutes the shaping of the manager's safety culture.

The purpose of the study is to present the author's conceptual model of an organisation's safety culture manager. The paper is the result of a study of the literature on the subject together with the author's interpretation.

Manager in organisation management

The manager creates the future of the organisation in carrying out the management process and the organisation, owing to the functioning of the manager, will be able to stay in the market and gain a competitive advantage. It is the person responsible for the present and future of the organisation (enterprise). The term "manager" is used to refer to a director, manager, supervisor or superior, including a master or foreman.⁴

A manager is defined as a planner, organiser, leader, controller of an organisation. He/she is a politician representing the team, a coach motivating and helping the team to spread its wings, a strategist and an administrator enabling the team to work.⁵ Every manager is characterised by multi-characteristics as a set of qualities that enable him or her to be a manager.

Skills have to be modified according to the circumstances, the situation in which the managers or the organisation find themselves. Taking the view that a manager is a multifaceted person who interacts with others, it is correct to say that an effective manager is a person who modifies his or her skills. A manager's skills cannot lack safety skills.⁶ The operation of an organisation in a changing environment means that the profile of the manager's physique is constantly being changed, refined and modified so that the manager is fully adapted to the organisation and the organisation to the environment.⁷

The functioning of managers in an organisation contributes to the formation of the organisational culture.⁸ A changing environment creates conditions for the

⁴ U. Ornatowicz, *Menedżer XXI wieku. Definicja, identyfikacja, edukacja*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej, 2008, s. 18.

⁵ *Kierownik* [headword], Encyklopedia Zarządzania, <https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Kierownik> [accessed: 1 April 2022].

⁶ Safety skills are the manager's learned abilities to provide a sense of assurance and a relative reduction in the level of threat in the organisation.

⁷ A. Gurba, J. Kowal, Z. Knecht, "Menedżer w procesie zarządzania zmianą we współczesnym przedsiębiorstwie", *Gospodarka, Rynek, Edukacja*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2016, p. 14.

⁸ M. Choi, "Leadership of information security manager on the effectiveness of information systems security for secure sustainable computing", *Sustainability*, vol. 8(7), 638, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8070638>.

interest of the organisation's managers in the issue of safety.⁹ The concept of safety is fully shaped by organisational culture. Safety culture (subculture) is a component of organisational culture (leading culture).

Organisational culture vs. safety culture of the organisation

The changes that are taking place in the external environment mean that organisations are constantly looking for new ways to achieve competitive advantage in the market.¹⁰ Increasingly, competitive advantage is being determined by the originality of the company, its employees and the way in which potential customers perceive the economic entity. It is important to perceive the differences and similarities between the economic entity under analysis and the companies in its external environment. Answering the questions: who are we? how do we act? what motivates us?, becomes one of the fundamental elements of the competitive game. With this approach, the tool that makes it possible to concretise strategy is organisational culture, which is strongly linked to the company's areas of development. When employees have a sense of connection between the company's activities and their own values, their motivation and point of view about the rightness of the work they do increases to a great extent.¹¹

Business practitioners regard changes in organisational culture as a unique social entity, an element, a resource that develops the organisation.¹² Executives quite often do not take the decision to modify the organisational culture in the organisation, but draw from it patterns, symbols, values or ways of communication. The external environment is dynamic in nature, changes in the organisation and the associated modification of the organisational culture are processes that are not easy, but realistic to implement.¹³ The modification of organisational culture should occur from the needs of the exogenous and endogenous environment. With the

⁹ D. Fatuła, "Elementy kultury bezpieczeństwa a zachowania klientów instytucji finansowych", *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka*, no. 4, 2018, pp. 17–34.

¹⁰ A. Jabłoński, M. Jabłoński, "Zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem w transporcie kolejowym – kluczowe aspekty", *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka*, no. 3, 2014, pp. 57–68.

¹¹ P. Gajewska, M. Kubański, Wpływ kultury organizacyjnej na efektywność przedsiębiorstwa, [in:] *Etyka, kultura organizacyjna i społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu w kształtowaniu potrzeb i relacji z klientami*, eds. H. Howaniec, Z. Malara, W. Waszkielewicz, Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Techniczno-Humanistycznej, 2014, pp. 78–79.

¹² J. Stachowicz, J. Michulik, "Dylematy procesu koniecznych zmian kultury organizacyjnej przedsiębiorstw przemysłowych. Przypadek transformacji przedsiębiorstw przemysłów tradycyjnych", *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi*, vol. 6, 2008, pp. 59–69.

¹³ J. Szubielska, Kultura organizacyjna i kultura bezpieczeństwa, [in:] *Kultura bezpieczeństwa w przedsiębiorstwie. Modele, diagnoza i kształtowanie*, ed. A. Rakowska, Warszawa: CeDeWu, 2013, pp. 9–46.

modification of the organisational culture the culture of safety is modified,¹⁴ which should provide a relatively possible sense of certainty, a guarantee for the organisation in question.

The discussion in the world of practice and academia about the importance of safety culture as a variable of management processes began with the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine. In 1986, the International Atomic Energy Agency published the Chernobyl Accident Summary Report, which used the term “safety culture” for the first time to illustrate how the thinking and behaviour of safety personnel caused the disaster.¹⁵ The origins of safety culture in practical and scientific considerations are characteristic of management and quality sciences (e.g. safety management or crisis management), where the bulk of problems originate in business practice. The exploration of safety culture issues needed to be located in the research conducted, with a particular focus on organisational culture.¹⁶ Relating the exploration of safety culture to research into organisational culture was facilitated by the research programmes conducted, i.e.: it made it possible to define the relationship between organisational culture and safety culture. It has made it possible to define the essence of safety culture more comparably to organisational culture which has made it possible to use concepts, models and tools to represent safety culture.¹⁷

Safety culture can be verified in its three basic dimensions, i.e.:¹⁸

- 1) the mental dimension: norms, values, ideas, etc.,
- 2) the social and rational dimensions: socio-cultural interactions, law-organisations or innovation-entrepreneurship, etc.,
- 3) the material dimension: the material features of human existence and functioning.

A sustainable safety culture¹⁹ needs a holistic approach to the trichotomy of its dimensions. The tendency towards the predominance of detailed, specialised approaches that suppress or fail to take into account the return to synthesis or

¹⁴ M.A. Leśniewski, “Decyzyjność i decyzja a bezpieczeństwo pracy menedżera w organizacji – studium teoretyczne problemu badawczego”, *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka*, vol. 4, 2021, pp. 155–168, <https://doi.org/10.48269/2451-0718-btip-2021-4-009>.

¹⁵ Y. Kim, J. Park, M. Park, “Creating a Culture of Prevention in Occupational Safety and Health Practice”, *Safety and Health at Work*, vol. 7, 2016, pp. 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2016.02.002>.

¹⁶ K.S. Cole, S.M. Stevens-Adams, C.A. Wenner, *A Literature Review of Safety Culture*, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM – Livermore, CA, 2013, pp. 3–47.

¹⁷ P. Jedynek, “Od kultury bezpieczeństwa do kultury prewencji – terminologia i relacje znaczeniowe”, *Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie*, vol. 19, no. 11, part 1, 2018, pp. 9–17.

¹⁸ A. Kłoskowska, *Socjologia kultury*, preface Z. Bokszański, 3rd edition, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007, p. 103; A. Kroeber, *Istota kultury*, transl. P. Sztompka, 3rd edition, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002, p. 195.

¹⁹ J. Czaja, *Kulturowe czynniki bezpieczeństwa*, Kraków: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne – Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, 2008.

comparative capture of exploratory results can result in a lack of knowledge of safety culture and a decline in its level.²⁰

In the situation of organisational culture and safety culture, the supervisor is the safety culture manager, who should base the organisation on models of organisational culture formation with features, safety elements appropriate to the situation.

The organisation's safety culture manager: a conceptual model

The manager in the process of building a safety culture is a key figure. His or her responsibilities are comprehensive and largely dependent on the size of the company.²¹ Each manager is responsible for achieving the company's objectives, maintaining the values, norms and principles of the organisation's safety culture. His or her assurance of proper working conditions, their reporting and analysis affect the organisational capacity of all units in the enterprise.

A safety culture manager is a person who implements and is responsible for the management process towards the formation of such an organisational culture that will create conditions in which the organisation, despite the external threat,²² will achieve its objectives.

The safety culture manager takes full responsibility for the working conditions in the company, by constantly checking the workstations of production workers, ensuring that machines are in working order and that the tools needed to make the product are safely accessible.²³ He/she is responsible for the mistakes of workers related to non-compliance with these rules, while at the same time he/she is obliged to rectify any irregularities arising from non-compliance with H&S rules. The most important aspect of the safety culture manager is his or her knowledge, skills or attitudes and beliefs in the area of safety. Among the prerequisites for an effective safety culture are his or her commitment to knowledge transfer regarding safety rules and open communication.²⁴ Open and honest communication is based on

²⁰ M. Cieślarczyk, Fenomen bezpieczeństwa i zjawisko kryzysów postrzegane w perspektywie kulturowej, [in:] *Jedność i różnorodność: kultura vs. kultury*, eds. E. Reklajtis, R. Wiśniewski, J. Zdąnowski, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, 2010, p. 96.

²¹ A.B. Ruighaver, S.B. Maynard, S. Chang, "Organisational security culture: Extending the end-user perspective", *Computers & Security*, vol. 26, issue 1, 2007, pp. 56–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2006.10.008>.

²² An external threat is any action of the external environment closer or further away that has a destructive, detrimental effect on the functioning of an organisation. Examples of external threats are: socio-economic crises, states of war, war or other situations that destabilise organisations.

²³ S.R. Kessler, S. Pindek, G. Kleinman, S.A. Andel, P.E. Spector, "Information security climate and the assessment of information security risk among healthcare employees", *Health Informatics Journal*, vol. 26(1), 2020, pp. 461–473, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1460458219832048>.

²⁴ M. Milczarek, *Kultura bezpieczeństwa pracy*, Warszawa: CIOP, 2002.

communicating with others in the organisation, persuading, teaching, listening, talking, reaching a compromise or consensus. Communication applies to all employees, at all levels of the organisational structure. In terms of occupational health and safety, it should include honest and systematic communication about the risks involved, technical protection measures, as well as desirable behaviour to minimise the risks involved.²⁵

A safety culture manager, in order to be able to effectively protect an organisation from external threats, should have a safety culture model developed and implemented in the organisation. The creation of such a model should involve all managers (regardless of management level) and subordinates, i.e. the whole community of the organisation. Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of the organisation's safety culture manager.

Figure 1. The organisation's safety culture manager: conceptual model²⁶



Source: own elaboration based on: R. Tyszkiewicz, "Istota kultury bezpieczeństwa pracy w systemie zarządzania", *Quality Production Improvement*, no. 2, 2019, pp. 94–101; P. Jedynak, "Od kultury bezpieczeństwa do kultury prewencji – terminologia i relacje znaczeniowe", *Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie*, vol. 19, no. 11, part 1, 2018, p. 13.

Shaping an organisation's safety culture manager model is not an easy task, but it is very important for the future of the organisation. Every aspect of an organisation's

²⁵ *Kształtowanie kultury bezpieczeństwa i higieny pracy w organizacji*, ed. J. Ejdyś, Białystok: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Białostockiej, 2010.

²⁶ The factors presented in the model are not quantified, e.g. from most important to less important or which factor is first and which is last, and do not have weights, but are based on a qualitative, out-of-the-box and non-hierarchical occurrence in the reality of a given organisation.

functioning should take safety into account. The order of the factors for shaping the safety culture manager in the model presented is not important, but the application of these factors is.

The starting point in the model presented is the organisational culture, which should be conducive to organisational safety. Each organisation should develop its own concept of safety. Another element of the model is the safety behaviourality of employees, which manifests itself in safety-enhancing behaviour. Safety behaviourality is supposed to be a certain habit in employees moving towards security. The work environment refers to the interior of the organisation and the prevailing atmosphere (organisational climate) in the workplace. The work environment is also influenced by the external environment, which is a source of safety risks for the organisation.²⁷ Among other things, the work environment is linked to the organisational structure, which should be modified under the influence of increasing the organisation's safety capacity. Human interaction is another factor in the model presented, which relates to the relationships existing at work between employees. The external environment of an organisation is a situation resulting from changes in this environment and having a direct impact on the organisation. One of the changes in the external environment is, for example, the war in Ukraine (migration of the Ukrainian population to Poland), which translates directly into changes in the functioning of the organisation. Trust between managers and subordinates is another factor of the model. A safety model based on trust will provide a strong foundation for the development of organisational safety. Adherence to safety is any kind of guideline that enables safety, e.g. H&S, occupational hygiene or firefighting regulations. Employee safety conformism and non-conformism are two opposites. Safety conformism is the adaptation (subordination) of the employee to the norms, values related to the safety model created or developed by the organisation. Safety non-conformist is the non-adaptation or non-subordination of the employee to the norms, values associated with the safety model created or developed by the organisation. The quality of organisational safety is the relatively satisfactory utility value of the systemic sense of safety and the guarantee of its preservation in the long term. This quality will manifest itself in the organisation whenever a sense of safety is created among employees. Improving safety means making fundamental changes to the way in which solutions are implemented that provide a basis for a relative sense of safety in the organisation. A correlating factor with the improvement of safety is the competence and responsibility of the manager creating support for measures to improve the organisation's safety against the adverse effects of the external environment.

²⁷ An example of this is the war in Ukraine (date of war: 24.02.2022), which could contribute to a war with NATO, which could consequently lay the foundations for World War III.

Conclusions

The issue of safety is not only related to the military sphere (e.g. army, police, border guards or municipal guards) aimed at internal or external order, but also to the sphere of operation of any organisation in the state, e.g. businesses. The issue of safety concerns every state and every organisation. It can be said that safety is an interdisciplinary, multidimensional and multi-organisational concept. The interdisciplinarity of safety is the perception of safety by different scientific disciplines (e.g. management and quality sciences, economics and finance, sociology, psychology or political science, etc.).²⁸ The multidimensionality of safety means that it applies to every area of an organisation (e.g. marketing, finance, logistics, organisational structure, production, the organisation's customer service office or the organisation's resources, etc.). The multi-organisational nature of safety means that it applies to any organisation (e.g. hospitals, universities, local government or commercial organisations, etc.). This framing creates a clear picture that provides an opportunity to understand the fundamentals of organisational safety functioning. A significant role in shaping safety is played by managers from the point of view of the organisational management process. Managers and subordinates are the foundation of organisational safety. One of the areas of implementing safety is an organisational culture profiled towards a safety culture headed by a manager. A manager with the safety of the organisation in mind constitutes the existence of a safety culture manager, who can be defined as a person who safeguards the organisation against threats arising from the external environment and is able to implement the management process in such a way that the organisation can face potential threats in the future. The concept of the safety culture manager emphasises the softness of safety, an issue that can be shaped by organisational culture. The norms, values and behaviour of employees related to safety can influence the overall safety of an organisation. It is important to remember that safety is also a perception of the state in which an organisation or an individual employee is.

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²⁸ W. Jiao, "Portfolio manager home country culture and mutual fund risk taking", *Financial Management*, vol. 49, issue 3, 2020, pp. 805–838, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fima.12265>.

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Manager and the safety culture of an organisation: a conceptual model

Abstract

Safety is a problem that every organization that wants to shape its competitiveness must be able to face in order to maintain its advantage on the market. From the point of view of the management process, the implementer of the organisation's safety is a manager who – in shaping the organisational culture – must take into account safety factors in the broad sense of the word. Safety culture is a determinant of an organisation operating in the second decade of the 21st century. The aim of the study is to present the proprietary conceptual model of the organisation's safety culture manager. The article was created as a result of a study of the literature on the subject along with the author's interpretation.

Key words: manager, organisational culture, organisational safety culture