Article

The Influence of Organizational Culture on Employees' Performance: Evidence from Oman

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Abstract - In a knowledge-based environment, the employee's performance has remained a popular demand in all sectors. All types of organizations have realized that workplace value makes businesses flourish. The aim of this paper is to examine the role of organizational culture on an employee's performance within the context of public sector organizations. Data were collected from 250 employees using a questionnaire based on a well-known and extensively used measurement tool developed by Wallach. From the result, two out of the three cultural dimensions identified in this study are found to have a significant positive influence on an employee's performance. This paper contributes to the understanding of organizational culture by providing empirical evidence from a public sector organization in Oman. As a future research direction, we highlight the need for studies on cultural research to examine other types of culture applicable within the public sector domain using a larger sample.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Employee's performance, Public sector

1. Introduction

In times of economic recession, maximizing output is of utmost importance to shareholders. Organizations realize that employees make businesses work and the culture of an organization connects employees to the organization. This has resulted in the idea that maximizing an employee's performance in public organizations requires the implementation of policies, practices, and procedures that match the employee's needs. The idea that organizations can have a culture that affects the performance of its employees started when scholars within the field of sociology responded to Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy. Weber illustrated that the ideal bureaucracy is subjected to formalized and compartmentalized offices with sharply defined labor rules, fixed jurisdictions, a clear chain of command as well as rules of professional conduct to ensure consistent, objective application of rules to the governed (Nier, 2009). Weber asserted that bureaucracies were strictly efficient instruments of administration because their institutionalized rules as well as regulations permit all employees to perform

their duties at their best (Weber, 1922/1978, p. 980); as such, Schein (1996) suggested that organizational culture needed to be continuously researched. Since then, the study of organizational culture has continued to evolve until today. However, the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance has not been clearly understood within the domain of public organizations by researchers. It has failed to agree on a universal theoretical framework primarily due to the lack of study on public sector organizational culture, even though researchers such as Denison (1990) and Kotter and Heskett (1992) have established a relationship between culture and performance. Conversely, these studies have focused on private sector organizations with financial measures as their most important performance indicator. However, very few studies have been conducted on organizational culture in the context of the public sector (Nier, 2009). This limits the generalization of culture-based results in the public sector, particularly because public sector organizations are generally more focused on non-financial measures of performance such as public services. Hence, it would be important to examine the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance within the context of the public sector (Nier, 2009). Specifically, only a few cultural studies have recognized the Wallach model and conducted studies within the context of European private organizations (Silverthorne, 2004). Following this, Taormina (2008) suggested a study using the Wallach cultural model within the domain of the public sector to better understand and validate the concept. Moreover, there is limited study conducted on organizational culture and employee performance in the Gulf countries' public sector organizations.

In view of the above, this study aims to address the need for an improved understanding of the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance in public sector organizations. This study is rooted in the research that identifies bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative cultures as the key traits of cultural dimensions that drive performance in public organizations (Wallach, 1983). This is because Wallach's (1983) cultural model best examines the empirical linkages between organizational culture and employee performance in public sector organizations. Moreover, some cultural traits may improve the employee's performance in one context but may be unsuccessful in another context. Following this, Rose, Kumar, Abdullah, and Ling (2008) argue that culture differs based on the role and power structure.

Therefore, recognizing the Wallach cultural model is significant towards developing a better understanding of organizational culture in the public sector. Besides, researchers have been challenged to add an improved understanding of organizational culture to the scientific database in relation to employee performance, particularly in the applied environment such as the public sector (Nier, 2009). This study will add to the existing research by examining the relationship between bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative cultures and employees' performance in public sector organizations.

Accordingly, this study is structured as follows: The next section contains the review of literature and the research hypotheses. The methodology used is presented in the third section. After that, the outcome of the research is presented in the fourth part of this study. Following the results, a discussion will be presented in light of the theoretical background; suggestions for future studies as well as the limitations of the study will be presented in the fifth section.

2. Literature Review

Over the past decades, the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance has gained a great deal of research interest in management studies. This relationship is affected by organizations' openness and the manner in which they seek and use information in the market (Stoica, Liao, & Welsch, 2004). The primary concern is that the organizational culture creates the value of an institution not only by the manners and behaviors of every individual in the organization but also by the collective attitudes and behavior of the organization in general (Aksoy, Apak, Eren, & Korkmaz, 2014). A model of norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes has a significant effect on organizational behavior (Akta, Çiçek, & Kıyak, 2011). It is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes as well as assumptions that may not be expressed but shapes the ways in which people in an organization conduct themselves and get things done (Armstrong, 2006). Understanding the culture of an organization is important in order to remove the challenges faced by the organization in the process of making organizational changes. Following this argument, Ezirim, Nwibere, and Emecheta (2012) claim that managers must shape and build a culture that is more favorable to both employees and the organization in order to achieve the needed organizational goals.

In an effort to have a better understanding, many cultural typologies have been developed, because a particular type of culture produces a different outcome and the overall performance of an organization is subject to the extent to which the values of the cultures are extensively shared (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). For instance, the competing value framework (CVF) classifies organizational culture into four cultural categories such as clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy (Quinn & Robert 2011; Tseng, 2010). According to this school of thought, clan culture builds a warm and friendly work environment where employees can generously share their knowledge, while the adhocracy culture creates self-motivated, entrepreneurial, and innovative work settings, encouraging individual initiative and provides autonomy for those individuals who are prepared to take risks. Market culture creates a work environment through hard driving competitiveness, and result oriented organizations directed by tough and demanding leaders who are hard drivers, producers, as well as competitors (Tseng, 2010). The hierarchical culture has an unambiguous organizational structure, standardized policy and procedures, stringent control, and well-defined responsibilities. Gu, Hoffman, Cao, and Schniederjans (2014) classify organizational culture into four dimensions such as leadership ability to take risks, tolerance, results oriented, institutional collectivism, and positive work environment. Other researchers further narrow the organizational culture into three dimensions. For instance, Zehir, Ertosun, Zehir, and Müceldili (2011) classify organizational culture into competitive, bureaucratic, and community dimensions. Yiing and Ahmad (2009) divide the organizational culture into supportive, innovative, and bureaucratic culture. Wallach (1983) distinguishes each characteristic with adjectives that make a distinction between attitudes, behaviors, as well as values. According to Wallach, a bureaucracy culture is hierarchically structured, arranged, routine, and highly coordinated. Innovative culture is identified as being creative, enterprising, risk-taking, and results-oriented. Supportive culture is distinguished by unbiased, friendly, trusting, as well as shared behaviors. However, a study by Klehe and Anderson (2007) divided organizational culture into two categories such as collectivism and individualism. This demonstrates that there is no one acceptable way of examining organizational culture. This is consistent with Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013) who claim no precise way on how organizational culture should be studied. It is

emphasized that no one type of organizational culture is better than the other, and different types of culture are better for different workplaces, different corporate philosophies and different type of companies (Schneider, et al. 2013). Hence, it is better for an organization to focus on the type of culture that will create a better performance (Iliuta, 2014).

Many organizational behavioral theorists believe that a good fit between employees and the organization is significant to performance. A well-built organizational culture serves as a powerful tool to execute innovative ideas, influences employee's behaviors, and increases performance (Kim Jean Lee & Yu, 2004). When an individual's values and organizational practices are well integrated, it will largely affect the level of individual and organizational output. The more employees identify that an organization provides uninterrupted learning, dialogue with employees, and has a well-connected system with good leadership, the more committed they will be to the organizational goals (Joo & Lim, 2009; Joo & Shim, 2010). Possibly, employee's dissatisfaction with an organizational culture is the most important reason that causes poor performance and turnover in current organizations. Consequently, Silverthorne (2004) argues that the better the fit, the better the extent of job satisfaction, not considering the type of organizational culture. Following this, literature suggests that organizations should pay attention to their culture and build suitable communication and capability to manage uncertainty and to achieve the needed organizational commitment (Cheung, Wong, & Wu, 2011; Ezirim, Nwibere, & Emecheta, 2012).

In view of the above, different cultural practices have gained research attention. For instance, a study by Higgins and McAllaster (2002) opined that an innovative-supportive culture is obtained from values, an informed underlying belief structure in addition to strong daily practices. Accordingly, Detert, Schroeder, and Mauriel (2000) argue that the values of an organization serve as the foundation of cultures that promote process innovation that permit or hinder performance improvement. It is a system that allows innovation, necessitates a culture of discipline (for example, an attitude and practice that emphasizes the monitoring of quality to be aware of problems), and encourages creativity in the process of solving problems. A study by Silverthorne (2004) involving a sample of Taiwanese employees argues that a bureaucratic organization has a larger problem in sustaining employee job satisfaction than organizations that have an innovative or supportive culture; thus, emphasizing that an organization that has a bureaucratic culture results in the lowest level of job satisfaction. Taormina (2008) examined 220 Chinese adults working in local organizations in an international port city on the coast of southern China. The result showed that bureaucratic culture is characterized by leaders who favor the use of control rather than flexible behaviors. The result also showed a strong support for a supportive culture and socialization (Taormina, 2008). A study by Ogbonna and Harris (2000) also established that competitive and innovative cultures had a direct relationship with employees' performance, while community and bureaucratic cultures had no direct relationship with performance. According to Damanpour and Gopalakrishnan (2001), effective innovation improves organizational effectiveness and responsiveness. However, despite the significant argument on innovative culture, other researchers argue that innovation-supportive culture remains a difficult and unstructured phenomenon (Higgins & McAllaster, 2002). An innovative culture poses great challenges. For instance, Baer and Frese (2003) and Black, Carlile, and Repenning (2004) argue that an innovative culture is highly disruptive, changes relationships across functional as well as occupational limits or causes adjustments to the organizational structure and climate. These

results further indicate that different cultural practices have different effects on employees' performance.

Furthermore, Khazanchi, Lewis, and Boyer (2007) found that congruence around control values have no significant effect on plant performance. Similarly, Rose, Kumar, Abdullah, and Ling (2008) showed that culture would have a significant relationship with superior performance only if the culture is able to adapt to changes in environmental conditions. In view of this, Acar and Acar (2014) suggested that due to the differences in organizational culture and the ways in which organizations respond to the external environment, there will always be a difference in performance achievement. Thus, to enhance effectiveness, organizations should enhance their managerial practices such as developing a suitable culture (Wei et al., 2011).

Regardless of the multitude of studies on cultural values, there is no agreement as to what culture is and how it should be examined (Schneider et al., 2013). Following this, Detert et al. (2000) argue that the complexity of building theories on organizational culture is matched by the paucity of empirical studies on innovative, supportive, and bureaucratic cultures. To understand this phenomenon, we examine an important building block of culture (innovative, supportive, and bureaucratic) that has received little attention in management researches. In addition, this study adopts the Wallach framework to examine the relationship between these cultural practices and employees' performance in the Oman public sector, particularly as no clear empirical validation exists in relation to what type of cultural values significantly influence employees' performance within this context. Organizations that implement bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative cultures will be more likely to improve employees' performance and rally these individuals to achieve a common goal. In summary, we bring to a close that an organization with shared value and belief will improve its employees' performance. Employees will reciprocate this shared value by placing high importance on the organization as well as its goals, thereafter increasing the organization's chances of survival. As a result, this study presupposes that supportive, bureaucratic, and innovative cultures may enhance employees' performance. We therefore hypothesize that:

H1a. Supportive culture has a positive influence on employees' performance.
H1b. Bureaucratic culture has a positive influence on employees' performance.
H1c. Innovative culture has a positive influence on employees' performance.

3. Methodology

The quantitative approach adopted in this study draws on the study by Silverthorne (2004) and Wallach (1983). The procedure is to solicit a survey of the organizational culture practices in the areas of bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative cultures and to match these with indices of employee performance. To achieve this objective, a survey was sent to employees of the identified organization. After the pilot testing, surveys were administered to employees identified in the sample organization, followed by reminder letters.

3.1 Sample and procedure

Based on data from personal contacts, six departments from the Ministry of Education were identified for inclusion in this study. To enhance the content validity, suggestions on the questionnaire design, survey piloting by Churchill (1991) was adopted. The pilot survey was distributed to 20 employees from the six departments in the ministry. The alpha coefficients of the items were above 0.7. The results of the pilot study proved that each of the department sampled had three types of culture that were upheld in the ministry. Subsequently, the items were used for later analysis. The study was executed from May to October 2015. We conducted the study using a sample of 250 employees drawn from the employee identification numbers in the database of the Ministry of Education in Oman. From the population, it was evident that female employees were much higher than male employees, as the stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure gender equality. The sample incorporated all levels of employees working in the ministry. Overall, 250 employees participated; 153 completed and returned the survey (which was necessary for a reliable result). Unfortunately, 15 of the questionnaires were not qualified to be used because of inappropriate completion of the survey instrument and the issue of outliers. Individual confidentiality limitation was presented and as such, the names of the employees were not provided resulting in an overall usable response rate of 61.2%. The response rate was satisfactory as suggested by prior researchers. There was no threat of response bias because the threat of non-response bias only exists whenever significant numbers of the targeted population decline to respond.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire comprises of items on supportive, bureaucratic and innovative cultures and employee performance. Data regarding supportive, bureaucratic and innovative cultures were obtained from Wallach's (1983) cultural survey. The measure of employee performance was taken from Jelinek, Ahearne, Mathieu, and Schillewaert's (2006) survey. All items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale apart from the items on the demographic variables such as the respondents' age, gender, designation, educational qualification, work experience, and department. All the items were first translated from English to Arabic by professional, native-Arabian, bilingual translators in the language translation center of the ministry. The instruments have been confirmed for use both in the developed and in the Asian context. In addition, the validity as well as the reliability for the Arabic usage was established in the pilot survey. A correlation matrix was created to check the relationship between the identified cultural dimensions and employees' performance. Lastly, multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the study's hypotheses.

4. Results and discussion

Tables 1 and 2 present the correlation and regression results of the study's variables. The individual level data allows for the assessment of hypotheses 1 through 3, which predict significant relationships between the three cultural dimensions: bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative. Table 1 presents the results of the correlation of the study's variables. The correlations (Table 1) indicate that the data are consistent with the hypotheses. We used regression analysis as the major test for the research hypotheses. The regression results are presented in Table 2. Overall, our models accounted for 41.6 percent of the variance (r^2) in

employee performance. The analysis shows that bureaucratic culture has a significantly higher influence on employee's performance above the effects of a supportive culture. These results support Hypothesis 1b, which predicts that bureaucratic culture significantly influences employees' performance.

4.1 Tests for multicollinearity

Multicollinearity was examined by a tolerance $(1-r^2)$ test for each of the dimensions of organizational culture in which a tolerance value of less than 0.10 is problematic (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Using all the cultural typologies, all the tolerance values were above the 0.10 threshold, signifying that multicollinearity was not a threat in these data.

4.2 Correlation analyses

The correlation between the variables was examined using the Pearson correlation. Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation for the variables hypothesized in this study. A more detailed analysis recognizes that the correlation matrix is predominantly prominent in the areas of bureaucratic and supportive cultures where the factors involved relate to employees' performance. The strong correlation between supportive culture and employee's performance suggests that when organizations show a high value for a supportive culture, there is high tendency to increase employee performance. It is interesting that the bureaucratic culture also shows significant correlations with employee's performance indicating that formalized, sharply defined labor rules, and a clear chain of command and rules of professional conduct does bring positive benefits. The innovative culture did not correlate with employee's performance. The result of the correlation analysis is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Coefficient

	Bureaucratic culture	Supportive culture	Innovative culture	Employees' performance
Bureaucratic	1			
Supportive	.361**	1		
Innovative	.628**	.402**	1	
Employee performance	.169**	.353**	.031	1

4.3 Testing of hypotheses

In order to confirm the model presented in this study via testing of the hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis results are presented at the significant level of $p < 0.05$. The multiple regression analysis is conducted to determine the dimension that has stronger or weaker relationships to employee's performance as literature has revealed (Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2007). The three dimensions of organizational culture explain 41.6 percent of the variance (R^2) in employee performance and are significant at F-values $(P< 0.05)$. In Hypotheses 1a and 1b, we predicted that supportive and bureaucratic cultures significantly influence employees' performance. The relationship between supportive and bureaucratic cultures is supported and the result is consistent with this prediction. However, the prediction that innovative culture significantly influences employees' performance is not supported. Table 4.2 presents the

results of the multiple regression testing. Based on the R-values, the three dimensions of organizational culture contribute positively to the prediction of employee's performance (p, <.05). Accordingly, innovative culture has no positive effect on employees' performance (ß = 0.028, P<0.418). Bureaucratic culture has the highest contribution to employees' performance in the public sector with a beta value of (ß=0.341, P<0.000**), followed by supportive culture (ß=0.259, P<0.002**), which strongly supports Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Innovative culture has the least contributing value to employees' performance in the public sector (ß=0.028). The relationship between innovative culture and employee's performance is not supported which therefore, rejects Hypothesis 1c. The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Analysis

Variables	Beta (ß)	Sig
Bureaucratic culture	0.341	0.000**
Supportive culture	0.259	0.002**
Innovative culture	0.028	0.418

*P<0.10, **<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

The concept of organizational culture and employees' performance has gained some research attention. However, little attention has been given to this relationship in the public sector. In view of the above, this study seeks to deepen this understanding by examining the role of supportive, bureaucratic and innovative cultures on employees' performance in order to fill the gap in the literature by building on Wallach's (1983) cultural framework. The findings reveal that the culture of a public organization in Oman is mainly skewed towards a supportive and bureaucratic culture. Hence, employee's performance is significantly credited to the bureaucratic and supportive cultures. This demonstrates that every cultural value has a different impact on the performance of employees. Following this, our study significantly contributes to cultural literature by broadening the generalization of Walach's (1983) framework as suggested in the literature (Taormina, 2008). Another contribution made by this study refers to the relative paucity of research regarding organizational culture and employee's performance in the public sector (Nier, 2009). The result indicates that organizations that develop a bureaucratic and supportive culture would improve the quality of work among its employees. We now discuss each of the findings (for summary, see Table 2).

4.4 Discussion

This study has found that a supportive culture has a significant positive influence on the employee's performance. The result shows consistency with Rose et al. (2008) who found that an organizational culture has a significant relationship with superior performance only if the culture is supportive and able to adapt to changes in the environmental conditions. Taomina (2008) also found strong support for supportive culture and socialization. Similarly, Yiing and Ahmad (2009) claimed that an organizational culture significantly strengthens the relationship between supportive leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. This demonstrates that a supportive culture promotes hard work, creates trust, and mutual respect among employees. In so doing, it helps the employees to meet the organization's set goals. Thus, a supportive culture largely balances the human resource development of an

organization and facilitates the employee's cooperation to achieve a better outcome. This result further indicates that a supportive culture enhances employee's performance and creates a more active workplace environment where employees of different demography bring a sense of unity, and promote better communication and understanding towards achieving a common goal. Supportive culture encompasses teamwork, encouragement, and a trusting work environment (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009). Therefore, the more managers and subordinates share views, the better the performance improves. Thus, through a supportive culture, organizations create a workplace that encourages employee's loyalty and commitment to the organization. Besides, when employees perceive that an organization has a culture that is supportive, they will be more willing and committed to help the organization achieve its goals.

Second, this study also found that the bureaucratic culture has a significant positive influence on employee's performance. Similar studies such as Taormina (2008) also found that the bureaucratic culture has a significant relationship with organizational socialization, while an innovative culture has the opposite pattern (Taormina, 2008). The significant effect of a bureaucratic culture on employee's performance within the context of the public sector organizations can be caused by a number of factors. First, a bureaucratic culture enhances alignment and sets consistency and common expectations for employee behavior in dealing with others and the surrounding environment. Apart from the above, a bureaucratic culture creates a high level of formality in the way organizations function, making every employee understand who is in charge and who is responsible for every situation. This is consistent with Yiing and Ahmad (2009) that a bureaucratic culture is hierarchical, compartmentalized, systematic, and has clear lines of responsibility and authority. Thus, a high level of formality promotes work independence among the employees with little interference. It decreases the risk in tasks where the management or an employee intervenes in the task of others. This type of environment promotes individual value and the tasks they perform.

Finally, contrary to our expectation, the result shows that an innovative culture does not have a positive effect on employee's performance in the context of the public sector. The result is somehow consistent with the argument by Baer and Frese (2003) and Black et al. (2004) that an innovation culture is highly disruptive, changes relationships across functional and occupational limits or causes adjustment to the organizational structure and climate. On the contrary, Ogbonna and Harris (2000) found a direct relationship between innovative culture and employee's performance, effectiveness, and responsiveness (Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001). However, there is discrepancy in the result of the innovative culture. One possible reason for the overlap is that a majority of the previous studies on innovative culture focuses on private organizations using a different set of measures. Apart from the above, public organizations have numerous layers of management. Because of the many layers of management decision making, authority has to pass through a higher number of layers. Due to the separation of power, public organizations are very sensitive to making changes. This compels them to uphold tight procedures and causes them to be reluctant to adjusting to changes. The divisions also create difficulty in making changes within a short term. It also creates difficulty for innovation due to low feedback and activities that reduce risk, emanating from norms that are institutionalized within the sector. Another possibility is due to the common nature of formal structures that exist in every public organization, which limits individual and personal decisions. The policy and procedure only permit little deviation from

the established norms of the organization and as such, every employee is expected to act according to the norms, and this creates difficulty for innovation to take place rapidly.

4.5 Implications of the Study

One major implication of the result of this study is that even though supportive and bureaucratic cultures have a significant effect on employees' performance, the bureaucratic culture appears to be the most common culture among public organizations because of the stronger nature of bureaucratic activities in these organizations. This is possible because employee's behavior in the public sector is subject to formal rules, norms, and implicit ways of behaving. Apart from the above, the result of this study is important because it clearly indicates the specific type of culture that is essential to employee's performance in public organizations. The implication is that an organizational culture plays a significant role prior to employee recruitment because when the culture guides employee's recruitment, it helps managers to achieve a better fit and subsequently better performance. This is because employees may be more successful in their jobs and recognize their best potentials, when there is a match between the employee and the organizational culture. Regardless of the type of cultural practices, the better the cultural fit, the higher the employees' performance. This reveals that public organizations need to pay close attention to supportive and bureaucratic cultures in order to positively improve employees' positive feelings about their jobs.

5. Conclusion

Considering the dynamic nature of the workplace environment as well as the important role of culture in enhancing the overall competitiveness of organizations, it is expected that organizational culture will continue to gain research attention. Thus, this study has identified the specific type of culture that improves the quality of employee performance. However, we only paid attention to Wallach's framework to identify three cultural practices that we deemed suitable within the public sector organization. Although no specific type of culture is most effective across all contexts, the type of culture rewarded in each context is subject to the prevailing cultural value that is highlighted in the society. It is also imperative to note that this type of study also has some shortcomings. First, even though this study provides significant results in relation to the Gulf values, the limited sample of employees in this study is not a representation of other Gulf countries. Care should be taken in applying the findings of this research. Apart from the above, caution has to be also applied in the fact that the consistency of the model with the data does not automatically represent a verification of cause and effect; it only lends support to it. While we recognize this view, it would be interesting for studies on cultural researches to examine other types of culture that are suitable within the public domain with a larger sample.

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