ROLES OF MANAGERS IN CORPORATE CULTURE MANAGEMENT IN SELECTED CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

Despite being characteristically intangible, organisational culture has remained one of the most distinguishing factors of competitive advantage. As organizations increasingly recognize the pivotal role of culture in achieving strategic objectives, attention turns to managers, the linchpin in its cultivation and sustenance. Through an in-depth analysis of literature, this study examined the diverse roles and responsibilities managers play in the intricate domain of corporate culture management. We found evidence scattered all over the literature for the role of managers in corporate culture management. Regardless of their position on the organisational hierarchy, managers play significant roles in shaping, managing, and/or transforming both the overall corporate culture and various subcultures. The roles of managers in corporate culture management are multifaceted and vary depending on the nature and specific needs of their organisation. Hence, for managers to have a true impact on corporate culture, they must first invest time into comprehending existing dynamics and gradually introduce new rules and behaviours aligned with new or desired values, beliefs, and norms. Overall, the study offers insight into the unique ability of managers to deliver competitive advantage and other desirable outcomes through corporate culture management.

Key Words: Corporate Culture; Competitive Advantage; Organisational Culture; Management

Introduction

In the dynamic tapestry of the corporate world, organizational culture stands as a cornerstone, shaping the identity, behaviour, productivity, and performance of entities (Ghumiem et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2017; Amah et al., 2013). Despite being characteristically intangible, organisational culture has remained one of the most distinguishing factors of competitive advantage, defying many other conditions (high barriers of entry, non-substitutable product, large market share, suppliers' low level of bargaining power, rivalry among competitors, etc.,) believed to be crucial (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). According to Cameron and Quin (2011), a distinctive, well-developed, and identifiable organisational culture is the foundation and most distinguishing competitive advantage of almost every high-performing organisation. Peters and Waterman (1982) in an earlier study also corroborate this resolve by demonstrating that high-performance firms differ from low-performance ones because they have certain cultural traits and a strong culture. In fact, Ahmed, and Safiq (2014) concluded that organisational culture is the single, most important factor for organisational performance.

Corporate culture, defined as the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape the behaviour of individuals within an organization, is a powerful force influencing employee engagement, performance, and overall organizational success (Schein and Schein, 2017; Denison, 1990). Aside from promoting individual and corporate success, corporate culture helps to attract and

retain top talent, coordinate employee conduct, facilitate motivation and enhance self-satisfaction (Odor, 2018; Sadri and Lees, 2001). Schein (2011) noted that corporate culture performs four basic functions; it provides employees with a sense of identity, shapes behaviour through control mechanisms, strengthens organizational values and improves employee readiness.

Recognizing the impact of culture, organizations are increasingly turning their attention to its management as a strategic imperative (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). More specifically, organisations are beginning to realise the importance of the managerial competence of corporate management and leadership for developing and/ or maintaining corporate culture. As emphasised by Kane-Urrabazo (2006), the idea that culture is predetermined is false and leaving something as crucial as corporate culture to chance may be detrimental to organisational success. Hence, managers are often charged with the responsibility of maintaining a strong culture.

One crucial aspect of a manager's responsibility in the realm of corporate culture management lies in the establishment and reinforcement of cultural norms and values. Managers act as cultural architects, shaping the ethos of an organization through their decisions, behaviours, and communication styles (Schein, 2016). According to Kane-Urrabazo (2006), the conscious or unconscious behaviours of managers or organisational leaders have direct or indirect consequences for corporate culture with ripple effects on both employee and organisational wellbeing and performance. Hence, absolute care must be taken during decision-making to ensure fairness, equity, and consistent compliance with ethical standards. As we delve into the intricacies of this role, it becomes apparent that managers, consciously or unconsciously, become the embodiment of the values they seek to instil within the organizational milieu.

Furthermore, managers serve as custodians of organizational culture, safeguarding its integrity amid the ebb and flow of internal and external dynamics (Barney, 1986). In times of change, uncertainty, or crisis, the role of managers becomes particularly pronounced as they navigate the organization through cultural shifts while preserving the core elements that define its identity (Bautista and Uy, 2023; Kapotwe and Bamata, 2023). This aspect of culture management requires a delicate balance, a nuanced understanding of when to evolve cultural elements and when to anchor them for stability. According to Panda and Gupta (2001), a firm's corporate culture reflects the roles and challenges of the organisational leaders. Leaders, therefore, have the capacity to manipulate cultural elements to help organisations adapt to evolving internal or external realities. The communication prowess of managers emerges as another pivotal facet of their role in corporate culture management. Effective communication serves as the lifeblood of culture, as it permeates through all levels of the organization, reinforcing shared values and fostering a sense of belonging (Hofstede, 1980). Managers, through their verbal and non-verbal communication, transmit cultural messages, influencing the perceptions and behaviours of employees (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This necessitates a keen awareness of the impact their words and actions have on the cultural tapestry, shaping the narrative that defines the organization.

Moreover, managers act as cultural brokers, bridging the gap between the espoused values and the day-to-day practices within an organization (Denison, 1990). Their ability to align formal organizational structures and processes with the underlying cultural dynamics is instrumental in fostering a cohesive and harmonious work environment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). This role demands a keen understanding of the cultural nuances at play and an adeptness in aligning them with the strategic objectives of the organization. As organizations become increasingly diverse and globalized, the role of managers in managing multiculturalism within the organizational

culture gains prominence. Managers serve as cultural integrators, fostering an inclusive environment that embraces diversity and leverages it as a source of strength (Hofstede, 2001). In doing so, they contribute to the development of a dynamic and adaptive culture that can thrive in the face of the complex challenges posed by a globalized business environment.

Considering the significance of organisational culture in firms' overall performance, this study embarks on an extensive exploration of the multifaceted roles managers undertake in the intricate realm of corporate culture management. This is even more important because "while most managers do not deny the importance of organisational culture... few fail to realise the direct impact they have in shaping it" (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006 p. 189). By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse responsibilities managers shoulder in shaping, sustaining, and adapting organizational culture.

Research Methodology

Using the five-stage process proposed by Briner and Denyer (2012), we conducted a systematic evaluation of the literature. In contrast to narrative and integrative reviews, systematic reviews reduce bias and improve the rigour and transparency of the review process (Fan et al., 2022; Rojon et al., 2021; Crawford and Jabbour, 2023). In addition, they employ a well-defined technique that helps to identify, analyse, and interpret all pertinent evidence in a transparent and replicable manner, (Crawford and Jabbour, 2023). Transparency and replicability of the literature search are guaranteed by providing the search strings used in various database searches and the date the search was conducted. Furthermore, since the study was literature-based there was no requirement for ethical review (Burden, et al., 2016).

Data Sources

Using this framework and following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines, a literature search was performed in the Scopus databases.

Search Strategy

The quality of a systematic review is dependent on the quality of the literature search (Higgins & Green, 2011). Furthermore, a successful literature search not only helps to identify current knowledge (Popay, et al., 2006) but is transparent and replicable.

For the current study, relevant resources were gathered using a combination of index terms and text-based queries in five databases. To search for articles, search terms were used to identify corresponding terms for the concepts under study and joined using the AND or OR Boolean operators. The search terms used include the role of managers, leadership, corporate culture management*, and organisational culture management*.

Further studies were identified through additional searches conducted on google and Google Scholar, and manual hand searches of reference lists of relevant journals and references of the articles obtained from the database search.

Table 1: Scopus Database Search (25 January 2024)

	1	,	
S/n	Search terms and filters	Number	
		of hits	
	Role of managers OR Leadership AND Corporate culture	8994	
	Management* OR Organisational culture Management*		

2015-2024	4,810	
Articles	2976	
English	2866	
Search term in the title, abstract or keyword	1869	
Subject area; Business management & accounting, social science, Economics, econometrics & Finance, Art, and Humanities, Mulidisciplinary	804	

Study Selection

An effective search strategy is sensitive and specific. This implies picking out all the relevant articles and excluding irrelevant studies respectively (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014; Bettany-Saltikov, 2012). Given the foregoing, the final search output was scrutinised and assessed for inclusion or exclusion in the study based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria.

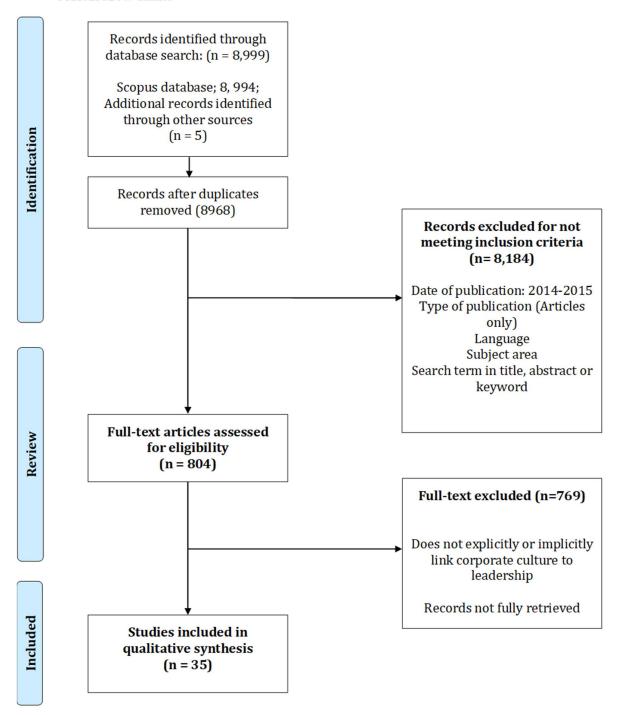
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The primary interest of this study is the role of managers in corporate culture management. However, most studies examined leadership and organisational culture, while other studies also examined leadership, organisational culture, and organisational performance jointly. These studies were included, but only findings on leadership and organisational culture were reported in this study. Studies were included if they discussed at least one contribution of leaders or managers to corporate or organisational culture.

Other inclusion criteria include studies published in English language, between 2015 and 2024, had one or more of the search terms in their title, abstract or keyword, and fall within the subject areas of business management & accounting, social science, economics, econometrics & finance, arts & humanities, and multidisciplinary fields. Hence, non-English literature and articles published before 2015 were excluded to focus on recent and up-to-date evidence. Only studies based on primary data (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies) were also included. Literature-based studies (i.e., systematic reviews and meta-analyses) were excluded from the study. Studies were also limited to journal articles (books, book chapters, editorials and conference papers were excluded), published (pre-prints were excluded) and full-text papers (abstract-only papers were excluded).

All research results were independently checked by titles and abstracts against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that they were relevant to the study. Articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded, and reasons were noted. Repeated articles were also excluded from the study, along with materials that could not be accessed.

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Findings and Discussion Corporate Culture

Corporate organisational culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes that guide behaviours within an organisation. Pillay et al., (2023) described organisational culture as abstract elements that are only perceived, felt, and experienced, yet have a very strong influence on tangible and intangible organisational outcomes, including performance. Moreover, in an increasingly global and competitive environment, corporate culture has been identified as a crucial factor that sets organizations apart from one another (Groysberg et al., 2018).

Defined as a pattern of shared assumptions, organizational culture is also influenced by socially constructed norms and behaviours, and employees acquire these shared assumptions, which reflect their perceptions, thoughts, and emotions (Pillay et al., 2023). Organizational culture represents the collective mental programming, encompassing heroes to emulate, symbols providing meaning, rituals fostering social acceptance, and values shared through common experiences (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Schein, 2010). The significance of corporate culture is not determined by whether it is soft or complicated, what is rather important is its existence, identifiability, and ability to guide actions and behaviour towards a desired end (Odor, 2018).

There are several models for analysing corporate culture in the literature. However, one prominent model that aids in comprehending and assessing organizational cultures is the Competing Values Framework (CVF). The CVF, developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh, (1983) offers a comprehensive perspective by categorizing organizational cultures into four distinct quadrants based on two core dimensions: flexibility vs. stability structure, and internal focus vs. external focus. These categories are further spit to represent categories of culture; Clan, Adhocracy, Hierarchy and Market (see Figure 1 below).

Clan Culture within the CVF represents organizations that prioritize internal focus and flexibility (Hinteregger et al., 2022). This culture is characterized by a family-like atmosphere where members share common values and collaborate closely. Leaders in Clan Cultures often act as mentors, emphasizing teamwork, employee development, and cohesion. The organization values long-term relationships and a nurturing environment. An example of a Clan Culture can be found in companies that prioritize employee well-being and engagement, fostering a sense of community (Tembo et al., 2022). According to Oney-Yazic et al. (2006), clan culture emphasises teamwork, inclusion and commitment and leaders are seen as mentors, team builders, and facilitators.

Adhocracy Culture, situated in the flexible and externally focused quadrant, is characterized by a dynamic and innovative environment. Organizations in this quadrant encourage risk-taking, experimentation, and adaptability. Leaders promote creativity and are open to new ideas, valuing agility and the ability to respond effectively to external challenges (Tembo et al., 2022). Examples of organisations that adopt the adhocracy culture may be tech companies that thrive on innovation, constantly pushing boundaries and seeking new opportunities in the ever-evolving tech landscape.

Hierarchy Culture, found in the quadrant emphasizing control and an internal focus, is characterized by a structured and rule-bound environment. Organizations in this quadrant prioritize efficiency, stability, and clearly defined roles. Leadership is often hierarchical, with a focus on coordination and execution of tasks. Traditional financial institutions, such as banks and insurance companies, often exhibit a Hierarchy Culture. These organizations emphasize adherence to established procedures and regulatory compliance to maintain stability and control (Tembo et al., 2022).

Finally, market Culture, positioned in the externally focused and control-oriented quadrant, is characterized by a competitive and results-oriented environment. Organizations in this quadrant prioritize market share, competitiveness, and achievement. Leadership is often focused on goal attainment, and employees are driven by measurable outcomes. Examples of organizations with a Market Culture include large corporations like Amazon and Coca-Cola. These companies are

known for their emphasis on market dominance, strategic positioning, and a relentless pursuit of success in the marketplace.

The Competing Values Framework offers a nuanced understanding of organizational cultures by recognizing the coexistence of competing values within organizations. It emphasizes the importance of balancing conflicting priorities to achieve organizational effectiveness. Organizations may exhibit characteristics of multiple cultures simultaneously, and the CVF provides a valuable tool for leaders and managers to assess, understand, and navigate these complexities.

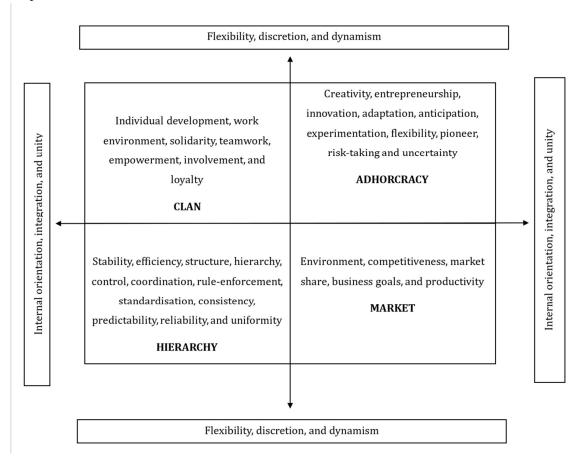


Figure 1: Competing Values Framework

Roles of managers in corporate culture management.

Managers play a crucial role in the development, maintenance, and transformation of corporate culture. Pieces of evidence from the literature have shown that managers bear the responsibility not only for implanting culture based on the convictions and values of founding members but also for steering the transformation and development of prevailing cultures. According to Panda and Gupta (2001), corporate culture is an element that managers can manipulate to achieve desired outcomes within organisations. Hence, managers play proactive roles in creating and maintaining corporate culture. For instance, in describing the role of transformational leadership and corporate culture on organisational excellence, Lasrado et al., (2021) found that leaders promote participation and positive employee engagement that leads to organisational excellence by "creating" an involvement culture. The term "create" underscores the deliberate action and ability of managers or leaders to manipulate corporate culture towards achieving corporate goals.

Lasrado et al., (2021) also tested hypotheses on the association between leadership and different types of organisational cultures (involvement culture and adaptability culture), found a strong significant association, and concluded that leaders maximize organisational excellence when they develop a culture that has a direct impact on organisational excellence. Lasrado et al., (2021), however, emphasised transformational leadership as crucial for developing corporate culture. They describe transformational leaders as leaders who serve as models to employees, show high levels of consideration, empower followers, delegate responsibilities, generate high levels of trust, teach, listen, influence, and empower followers, and as such play a huge role in the development of strong corporate cultures.

Muisyo et al. (2022) argued that managers can positively influence corporate culture through human resource practices such as recruitment, training, performance management and compensation. Hence, by hiring talents that fit into the desired culture and through further training, and performance management compensatory practices, managers can influence corporate culture. In their study, Muisyo et al. (2022) demonstrated the use of HR practices to ensure that members of staff adhere to sustainability practices by introducing "proenvironmentalism and sustainability" in almost all aspects of organisational processes and practices, leading to environmental waste reduction and the promotion of green culture within the organisation. Similarly, Miller et al., (2020) analysis of the positive experiences of people working in residential aged care found that leaders play a crucial role in creating a work environment within which happiness thrives by creating a culture of happiness, which eventually leads to improved health outcomes for care workers and their patients. According to Miller et al., (2020), leadership, management structures and human resource practices are crucial for creating a person-centred culture where happiness is prioritised. To achieve this, managers educate and hire talent who share this vision, and take deliberate action, through reflective engagement, training, and reinforcements (Miller et al., 2020). In another study in the healthcare setting, Gadolin et al., (2022) demonstrated the role of managers in promoting organisational support among nurses by first being responsive and supportive of themselves.

Blokland and Reniers (2021) discussed the importance of creating and maintaining mindset, perceptions, or mental models by establishing a strong corporate culture. Blokland and Reniers (2021) believed that mental models are the foundation of employee attitudes, behaviour, and performance, which may (or may not) generate desired outcomes for organisational success. Hence, managers can avoid or eliminate damaging models to protect the value and generate the desired mental models that create success. Managers can achieve this by understanding, managing, and generating mental models through leadership and an inclusive environment, and by creating a shared vision, mission and goals that determine what is valuable. By doing this, managers can align members' mental models towards what the organisation considers valuable and, as such, create a well-designed corporate culture that promotes positive values and sustainable performance.

Park et al. (2021) also emphasized the crucial significance of organisational leadership for the achievement of successful innovations in the public sector. According to Park et al. (2021), the effort of organisational leaders to consciously dispel old, contradictory customs and promote a culture of innovation and self-learning was key to achieving successful innovations in the Korean public sector, a feat that has proven futile despite several government efforts such as the reformation of processes, structures, and outcomes. Park et al. (2021) concluded that strategic

planning and performance are dependent on leadership roles and decisions, without it developing and sustaining corporate culture becomes extremely difficult. Idris et al., (2022) also concluded that for managers to be able to influence employee performance, they must invest in creating an adaptive, collaborative, flexible and team-oriented corporate culture and enhance political skills such as the ability to influence and understand others and high social skills, as leadership does not directly affect employee performance.

Aside from improving performance, achievement and success for employees and organisations, studies have also shown that the role of organisational leaders in corporate culture management is also crucial for helping organisations navigate and survive through crisis periods. For instance, Kapotwe et al., (2023) proved organisational leaders who demonstrate high levels of adaptiveness, resilience, courage, and positivity had a positive influence on and were able to initiate similar traits in their followers. These characteristics, according to Kapotwe et al., (2023) were crucial for the organisation to thrive during the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, Kapotwe et al., (2023) concluded that organisational leaders create strong, positive, and resilient organisational cultures through constant reconnection with their followers at professional and emotional levels, to build empathy, trust, care, compassion, all of which build the necessary bond for organisational success and resilience through crisis periods. While Kapotwe et al., (2023) study identified the role of leaders in corporate culture management for survival through business crisis, their study focused on Christian leadership and the use of Christian religious practices in the organisational setting. Similarly, to Kapotwe et al., (2023), Bautista et al. (2023) examined the role of organisational leaders in corporate culture management in crisis situations. Unlike Kapotwe et al., (2023), however, Bautista et al. (2023) were focused on secular leadership and their contributions towards maintaining organisational performance during crisis. Specifically, Bautista et al. (2023) conclude that although the link between corporate culture and performance is well established, the onus is on managers to define the core values that govern behaviour and business operation to achieve the desired end. Doing so also helps organisations not just to survive during crisis periods, but to thrive (Bautista et al., 2023).

Table 2: Role of Managers in Corporate Culture Management

Reference	Context	Role of managers in corporate culture management
Okwata et al. 2022	Organisational performance	Managers ensure that old habits are dropped and encourage employees to adapt to changes and be flexible, especially in the face of rapid environmental transformations; create a conducive work environment by encouraging employees to care about colleagues, customers, and stakeholders; serve as role models and set ethical standards; encourage work ethics and

		commitment through effective communication
		that leads to improved performance.
Muisyo et al., 2022	HRM and	Human resource managers created a culture of
	Environmental	environmental sustainability by shaping
	sustainability	employee beliefs, behaviour and values through
		recruitment, training, performance management
		and compensation
Idris et al., 2022	Tourism	For managers to improve employee
		performance, they must invest in creating an
		adaptive, collaborative, flexible and team-
		oriented corporate culture and enhance political
		skills such as the ability to influence and
		understand others and high social skills, as
		leadership does not directly affect employee
		performance.
Blokland and	Organisational	Managers can evolve corporate culture by
Reniers, 2021	alignment,	developing shared vision, mission and ambitions
	safety, and	that allow employees and to align with corporate
	sustainable	goals.
	performance	

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidence scattered all over the literature shows that leaders exhibit specific behavioural characteristics that influence organizational culture and other desired outcomes such as performance (Schein, 2018; Nohria, 2022). Regardless of their position in the hierarchy, leaders play significant roles in shaping, managing, and/or transforming both the overall corporate culture and various subcultures (Schein, 1999). However, for leaders to adequately influence corporate culture, they must exhibit the behaviour, values, and outcomes they desire to establish through corporate culture. For instance, most of the studies demonstrate that managers are the initial actors of the change they intend to see (Gadolin et al., 2022; Kapotwe et al., 2023).

Furthermore, while the role of managers in corporate culture is established in the literature, cultures are characteristically inimitable and non-transferable between organisations. This is probably why Ahmed and Safiq (2014) concluded that corporate culture is the single most important factor for organisational competitive advantage. Hence, for leaders to have a true impact on corporate culture, they must first study and understand the uniqueness of their organisation. According to Schein (2009), a more effective approach to corporate culture management involves leaders actively steering the evolution of the current culture by mastering

the forces that drive its transformation (Chima & Gutman, 2020). Leaders must, therefore, invest time in comprehending existing dynamics and gradually introduce new rules and behaviours aligned with different values, beliefs, and norms (Newman & Ford, 2021; Schein, 2009).

Overall, the role of managers in organisational culture is crucial, regardless of the type of organisation, sector, or industry. Pieces of the evidence from the review demonstrated the role of managers in several types of industries including healthcare, manufacturing, service, technology, tourism, etc. What is crucial is an understanding of the desired change and the knowledge of the organisation.

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