

The Effect of Organizational Culture on Enhancing Employee Creativity Within Institutions: An Empirical Study on Saudi Universities

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Abstract

The importance of this study is that it is timely and strategically important for both academic research and the growth of institutions in Saudi Arabia. As Saudi universities work to meet the high goals of Vision 2030, encouraging innovation, creativity, and development based on knowledge has become a national priority. Universities are no longer just places to learn and share knowledge. They are today expected to be engines of innovation, coming up with new ideas, solutions, and discoveries that help the country's social and economic advancement. In this environment, comprehending the influence of organizational culture on fostering innovation among university staff is not only important, but also imperative.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Employee Creativity, Saudi Universities.

Introduction

Because of the unpredictable nature of the modern business environment, it is now widely acknowledged that the inventiveness and creativity of employees are essential to the improvement of the organization's overall performance, according to (Ferreira et al, 2020) these personnel are fundamental competences that businesses need to cultivate to continue existing, growing, and gaining competitive advantage. Most of

the time, workers are interested in modifying aspects of their work or the products that they manufacture to create beneficial outcomes for themselves or the broader organization. Making use of creative and inventive efforts is how this objective is realized. In accordance with the findings of (Ali Taha et al, 2016). These advantages include improved work performance, increased productivity, enhanced products, optimized manufacturing routines, enhanced service delivery, and the development of new markets. In addition to contributing to the accomplishment of organizational goals, each of these advantages also helps to generate a competitive edge for the organization, However, the incorporation of cultural components like diversity, inclusiveness, empowerment, and autonomy can result in the formation of a culture that stimulates the creativity of employees, which in turn leads to ongoing improvement and a competitive advantage (Ogbeibu et al., 2021).

The research that (Mayasari and Kemal, 2020) revealed that a culture that is broad and inclusive brings together a wide variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas. This was one of the conclusions of the research. Employees can draw on a variety of perspectives to find solutions to problems and develop new products or processes. This is made possible by the diversity that exists within the organization. The possibility exists that this will result in a great deal of fresh concepts. The outcomes of a study that was carried out by (Ogbeibu, 2018a, b) found that empowering employees by providing them with more control over their employment led to an increase in the level of creativity that they exhibited in their work. In situations when employees are provided with the opportunity to experiment with new methods and when they have the perception that they are trusted, there is a larger likelihood that innovation will develop. (Odetunde and Ufodiana, 2017; Ogbeibu et al., 2018a, b) To summarize, the creativity of employees can have a substantial impact on the culture of an organization, as well as being impacted by it. At the same time, the culture can have an impact on these individuals. On top of that, the culture that exists within the organization might also influence them. According to (Mayasari and

Kemal's,2020), employees are more likely to feel encouraged to take risks and think outside the box when they are working in a workplace that is supported by a culture that promotes innovation. This is since culture has the capacity to foster creative thinking. Employees are more likely to engage in creative participation in the workplace when their leaders and supervisors make the development of new ideas a priority and offer them with rewards for their engagement. This increases the likelihood that employees will contribute creatively to the workplace. In accordance with the findings of (Gorzelany et al, 2021), firms that have a culture of open communication can develop an atmosphere in which employees are able to openly share their thoughts without the fear of being assessed.

The increased collaboration that results from this transparency, as well as the blending of different points of view, both of which can foster innovative thinking, are both beneficial. The effect of this openness is an increase in the amount of collaboration that occurs. According to the findings of study carried out by (Khan et al, 2020a, b), a significant contributing factor is an organizational culture that encourages employees to pursue creative enterprises by giving them the appropriate resources, such as time, money, and tools for experimentation. This culture also provides employees with the opportunity to experiment with new designs and ideas. The statement made by (Triguero-Sánchez et al, 2022) indicates that a culture that places a significant emphasis on ongoing learning and development acts as a source of incentive for employees, motivating them to better their knowledge and expand their skill set. The dedication that people have to their own personal and professional development is the source of inspiration that drives them to think creatively and innovate. The reason for this is that they also come up with fresh perspectives and incorporate them into their job, which in turn motivates them to think creatively and come up with new ideas.

Problem Statement

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing global scene, the importance of creativity not only in educational institutions like universities but also in other types of institutions cannot be overstated. As societies adjust to the effects of digital transformation, globalization, and innovation-driven economies, it is becoming increasingly necessary to have staff members who can think creatively and come up with new ideas. This is especially true for people who work in academic institutions. Because they are the center of the country's intellectual development and the invention of new information, Saudi Arabia's universities have a significant impact on the future of the country. They will be able to adapt, compete, and lead in a world that is changing at a rapid rate to the extent that they are able to establish an environment that stimulates innovation among all their employees.

Although creativity is becoming more widely acknowledged as an essential component of prosperous institutions and the progression of society, there are still a great deal of factors that either encourage or discourage creative thinking in academic settings. When it comes to the internal factors that influence creativity in Saudi academic contexts, organizational culture is one of the most essential but also one of the least studied things. Culture in the workplace is the sum of an organization's shared values, beliefs, conventions, and practices. As a result, it influences the attitudes, behaviors, and productivity of employees. The answer to this question influences whether employees are willing to speak up, take risks, or question established workplace procedures. Both the cultures of universities have the potential to either inspire innovation and the very characteristics that they seek to promote (supportiveness, openness, and collaboration) or they can be detrimental to innovation (rigidity, hierarchy, and a lack of personal agency).

The most recent national changes in Saudi Arabia, which are a component of Vision 2030, have placed a significant emphasis on innovative thinking, growth that is built

on knowledge, and investments in human resources. Given that universities are expected to correlate with these national goals, it is of the utmost importance to understand the ways in which the internal cultural contexts of universities either encourage or discourage the promotion of creative thinking and innovative activities. There is a lot of literature about organizational culture and employee creativity; yet very little is known about how these dynamics emerge in Saudi institutions since Saudi institutions have a distinct social, cultural, and administrative makeup.

Additionally, it is essential to keep in mind that inspiration does not occur in a vacuum, even though the enthusiasm and talent of employees are surely among the aspects that contribute to their creative production. A variety of organizational characteristics, including managerial philosophies, techniques of engagement, sensitivity to new ideas, compensation structures, and opportunities for teamwork, have the potential to either encourage or discourage creativity. There is a possibility that the efforts to foster creativity could be hampered if many institutions unintentionally adopt cultural practices that discourage taking risks or thinking in new ways. This dilemma takes on an even greater sense of urgency when we consider the fact that universities are not just venues for teaching but also centers for research and innovation.

There has been a conspicuous paucity of research conducted in Saudi Arabian higher education about the influence of organizational culture and the strategic value of creativity. However, the bulk of the published works do not provide a full study of the lived experiences of university staff within their respective cultural contexts. This is because most of these works are either too theoretical or too limited in scope. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to conduct an exhaustive empirical study to explore the impact that organizational culture has on the creative output of employees working in Saudi institutions. If the goal is to cultivate academic environments that are more dynamic, innovative, and responsive, then policymakers, university

administrators, and human resource practitioners might stand to gain a great deal from this kind of research.

Consequently, the purpose of this research is to fill that information gap by exploring the ways in which the culture of an organization affects the level of creativity among faculty members at a few Saudi institutions. The purpose of this study is to gather and examine empirical data to establish which cultural factors encourage creative thinking and which ones inhibit it. Additionally, it tries to supply organizations with methods that may be utilized to make use of their internal environments in order to foster inventive thinking among their staff members. The ultimate purpose of the study is to contribute that is both tangible and academic to the ongoing discussion regarding the ways in which Saudi universities have the potential to become innovation hubs that move the country towards its development goals.

Research Questions

Main Research Question:

- What is the effect of organizational culture on employee creativity in Saudi universities?

Sub-Questions:

1. What is the effect of organizational culture on creative thinking among employees in Saudi universities?
2. What is the effect of organizational culture on employees' ability to solve problems in innovative ways?
3. What is the effect of organizational culture on initiative and idea generation among employees?

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is that it is timely and strategically important for both academic research and the growth of institutions in Saudi Arabia. As Saudi universities work to meet the high goals of Vision 2030, encouraging innovation, creativity, and development based on knowledge has become a national priority. Universities are no longer just places to learn and share knowledge. They are today expected to be engines of innovation, coming up with new ideas, solutions, and discoveries that help the country's social and economic advancement. In this environment, comprehending the influence of organizational culture on fostering innovation among university staff is not only important, but also imperative.

Even if there is more interest in creativity and invention, there is still a big gap in empirical research that looks at how the culture of an organization affects the creativity of employees at higher education institutions. While some global studies have examined this relationship, there is a lack of study conducted within the unique cultural and institutional framework of Saudi universities, which function under special administrative structures, societal norms, and leadership approaches. This study fills this important gap by offering grounded, context-specific insights into how organizational culture can either facilitate or impede creative expression and innovative thinking among employees in the Saudi higher education sector.

Theoretically, this study enhances the expanding literature on organizational behavior, human resource management, and workplace innovation. It aims to provide a nuanced comprehension of the relationship between organizational culture and creativity, emphasizing the cultural factors—such as receptiveness to change, encouragement of risk-taking, communication methods, and recognition systems—that affect employees' readiness and capacity to produce innovative ideas. The research enriches previous theories and models by incorporating empirical facts from the Saudi setting.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study can inform decision-makers and university leaders about how to create and shape their institutional environments in ways that promote creativity. University administrators can use focused techniques to make the workplace more dynamic and open to new ideas by figuring out which cultural practices and values are most helpful for creativity. This entails reevaluating leadership strategies, amending HR regulations, encouraging cooperation, and cultivating a sense of psychological safety—all of which are essential for stimulating creative contributions from employees at every level.

This research is also important for the employees themselves, such as academic staff, researchers, and administrative professionals, because it shows how important a supportive cultural environment is for their professional progress and creative development. A deeper knowledge of what makes people creative can help employees push for change, take charge, and feel more involved in their work, which will improve both individual and institutional performance.

Ultimately, the study's broader significance encompasses the societal and economic growth of Saudi Arabia. Universities that foster organizational cultures that encourage creativity are more likely to create new research, entrepreneurial activities, and graduates who are better equipped to think critically and creatively in a world that is becoming more complicated. The study supports the transformation of Saudi universities and the larger national goals of creating a knowledge-based economy and a culture of creativity in this way.

Research Objectives

Main Objective:

- To examine the effect of organizational culture on enhancing employee creativity among staff members in Saudi universities.

Sub-Objectives:

1. To identify the effect of organizational culture on creative thinking among employees in Saudi universities.
2. To explore the impact of organizational culture on problem-solving in innovative ways among employees.
3. To determine the influence of organizational culture on initiative and idea generation among university staff.

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and employee creativity in Saudi universities.

Sub-Hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and creative thinking among employees in Saudi universities.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and problem-solving in innovative ways among employees.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and initiative and idea generation among employees in Saudi universities.

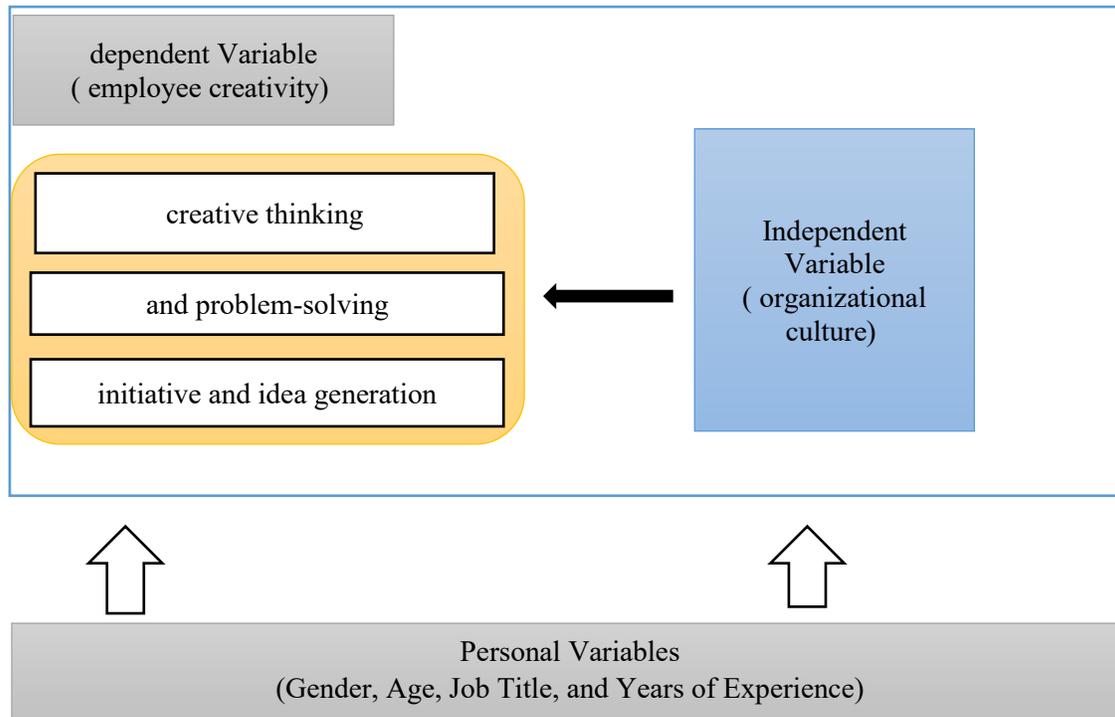
Study Model

Based on the research problem, the independent and dependent variables of this study can be summarized as follows:

- **Independent Variable:** Organizational Culture
- **Dependent Variable:** Employee Creativity, which includes the following dimensions: (Creative Thinking, Problem-Solving, Initiative, and Idea

Generation).

The study variables can be represented as illustrated in the model below:



Previous Studies

A study by (Panta, 2024) entitled "Role of HR Practices in Fostering Employee Creativity" The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact that human resource (HR) practices have in encouraging creative thinking among employees, with a particular emphasis on leadership, motivation, training, and positive reinforcement programmes. There is a research gap in the context of Nepal, where cultural, social, and economic issues may impact how HR practices interact with organizational culture to nurture creativity. This is even though existing literature

addresses similar topics on a worldwide scale. The goal(s) – The major purpose of this article is to evaluate the degree to which HR procedures play a role in fostering creative thinking among employees. In addition to this, the purpose of the article is to investigate whether the culture of the organization acts as a mediator in the connection between HR practices and employee creativity. Design, methodology, and strategy: This study employs a quantitative research approach, gathering data from 131 employees working for a variety of organizations in Nepal by use of a structured questionnaire. To analyze the data and determining the correlations between the variables, SMART PLS software was utilized. The research concluded that to foster the creative potential of workers in the workplace, it is necessary to provide them with the appropriate level of leadership, encouragement, and rewarding opportunities. Training, on the other hand, does not appear to have a substantial association in terms of encouraging creative thinking among employees. In a similar way, the culture of an organization does not inhibit the creative potential of its employees. By gaining an awareness of the variables that contribute to the development of the employee's creativity in the workplace, it is possible to generate more creative and original ideas for the performance of the worker's duties. A small sample size of 131 respondents, the majority of whom were from Kathmandu Valley, is one of the limitations of the study. Additionally, the study is restricted to a limited number of employee relations practices. In addition, the gender imbalance, which represents 74.81% of the total population, may restrict the findings' potential to be generalized. To gain a better understanding of the impact that HR practices have on employee creativity, future research should involve a sample that is both more varied and more balanced. Originality and value – This study offers innovative insights into the relationship between human resources and creativity within the specific cultural and economic environment of Nepal. It also offers value to HR practitioners and scholars who are interested in boosting employee creativity in developing nations.

A study by (Aldabbas et al, 2023) entitled" The influence of perceived organizational support on employee creativity: The mediating role of work engagement" Specifically, the purpose of this research is to investigate the connection between the perception of organizational support and the creativity of employees, with job engagement serving as a mediator. The results of a questionnaire survey that was administered to a sample of 492 professional personnel working in two major industries in the United Kingdom are presented here. Of the total number of respondents, 219 were females, 44.51% were men, and 273 were males, 55.49%. The findings that we obtained through regression analysis indicate that the association between perceived organizational support and employee creativity is mediated by the employees' level of involvement in their work. To summarize, employees who have a higher degree of perceived organizational support will be more likely to foster employee creativity and work engagement than employees who have a lower level of perceived organizational support. Through the incorporation of social exchange theory, we provide a contribution to the body of knowledge by putting up an overall theoretical underpinning to organizational support theory and the work demands-resources model. Only a small amount of research has been conducted up until this point that investigates the role that job engagement plays in the connection between perceived organizational support and employee creativity. Even though researchers are aware of the ways in which perceived organizational support influences employees' commitment, productivity, satisfaction, and intention to leave their jobs, the focus of this study is on how perceived organizational support influences employee creativity.

A study by (Zulkifli et al, 2023) entitled" Employee performance of Sharia Bank in Indonesia: The mediation of organizational innovation and knowledge sharing" To improve employee performance through the mediation of organizational innovation and knowledge sharing, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that competency and Islamic organizational culture have

regarding this improvement. Within the scope of this research, the population consisted of 941 individuals working for Islamic banks in Ekambar, Indonesia. A total of 273 employees were selected to serve as samples. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) Analysis using AMOS is the instrument that is utilized for the purpose of data analysis. According to the findings of the research, competency and Islamic organizational culture have a significant positive impact on organizational innovation. Additionally, organizational innovation has a significant positive impact on knowledge sharing. Furthermore, organizational innovation, Islamic organizational culture, and competency all have a significant impact on employee performance. Competency and Islamic organizational culture, on the other hand, do not have a large impact on the sharing of information, and the act of sharing information does not have a substantial impact on the performance of employees. Based on the findings of the indirect impact test, it can be concluded that organizational innovation has a role in mediating the relationship between employee performance and the effects of competency and Islamic organizational culture. On the other hand, the influence of competency, Islamic organizational culture, and organizational innovation on employee performance cannot be mediated by knowledge sharing.

A study by (Kim et Jung, 2022) entitled” The effect of employee competency and organizational culture on employees’ perceived stress for better workplace” The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact that organizational culture and staff competency have on workers' perceptions of stress. Stress is a prevalent occupational disease that has a negative impact on employees' mental and physical health, which in turn has an impact on their performance. The statistical findings of the current research, which were based on 641 replies, demand that human resource practitioners should match the type of organizational culture and employee competency situationally to reduce employee stress. It is suggested by the writers of this article that companies that want their staff to have adaptive competencies (professional

competencies) should establish a clan organizational culture. On the other hand, businesses ought to foster a market organizational culture for their staff members who are able to demonstrate consumer orientation competency (sometimes known as simply result-oriented competency). A substantial knowledge basis for further empirical research is provided by the findings of the research, which offer new information to the current body of literature, improve academicians' grasp of the subject matter of the research, and provide further learning opportunities.

A study by (Diana et al, 2021) entitled” Factor influencing employee performance: The role of organizational culture” In order to better understand how leadership style and organizational culture influence employee performance, this study investigates both of these factors. The objectives of this study are as follows: 1) to determine the direct impact that Democratic Leadership has on employee performance; 2) to determine the direct impact that Democratic Leadership has on organizational culture; 3) to determine the direct impact that organizational culture has on employee performance; and 4) to investigate the role that organizational culture plays in mediating the impact that Democratic Leadership has on employee performance. Each one of the respondents was a member of staff at the Education Office East Java. The methodology of sampling was utilized to collect data from 106 personnel working at the Education Office in East Java, Indonesia, using questionnaires and surveys. The Path Analysis with SPSS statistics software was utilized to do the analysis on the data that was gathered. There were four findings from the study. In the first place, democratic leadership has a substantial impact on the performance of employees overall. It is also important to note that democratic leadership has a substantial impact on the culture of an organization. The third point is that the culture of an organization has a substantial impact on the performance of its employees. According to the fourth point, the effect of democratic leadership on employee performance is mediated by the culture of the organization. An additional factor that contributes to the accumulation of knowledge is the direct influence of

leadership style and the role of mediation. Based on the findings, it was determined that the implementation of Democratic Leadership, which is backed by a culture that is suitable to the organization, guides employees to perform better.

Commentary on Previous Studies

An increasing number of people are interested in gaining an understanding of the organizational elements that influence employee creativity, as indicated by the literature that was evaluated. However, even though these studies provide useful insights, they approach the subject from a variety of perspectives and frequently perform their research within a variety of cultural and organizational contexts.

Panta (2024), for example, conducted research on the impact that Human Resource (HR) practices play in encouraging employee creativity. The research focused on aspects such as leadership, motivation, training, and reward systems. Although organizational culture was acknowledged, it was investigated more as a factor that mediated the relationship than as the primary independent variable. In addition, the research was only conducted in Nepal, which may limit the extent to which its findings may be generalized to other locations, particularly when considering the cultural and socio-economic contrasts that exist between Nepal and other regions.

In contrast, Aliabbas et al. (2023) investigated the connection between employee creativity and the perception of organizational support, with a particular focus on the function that job engagement plays as a mediator in this relationship. The outcomes of their study revealed that employees who had a strong view of the support they received from their organization exhibited higher levels of creativity and involvement in their work. The researcher did not directly address the issue of organizational culture as a main influencer of creativity, even though this study makes a significant contribution to the idea of organizational support.

An investigation on the performance of employees working in Sharia banks in Indonesia was carried out by Zulkifli et al. (2023). The researchers focused on Islamic organizational culture and competency as potential predictors of performance, with organizational innovation and knowledge sharing serving as mediators. Even though culture was taken into consideration, greater emphasis was placed on performance outcomes rather than creativity. Furthermore, the organizational setting (the banking industry) is very different from that of higher education.

In their study, Kim and Jung (2022) investigated the relationship between feeling stress in the workplace and the influence of organizational culture on employee competency. The results of their study highlighted the significance of aligning the culture of an organization with the competencies of its employees to lessen stress and increase well-being. The study focused on stress management rather than creativity as a performance objective, even though either topic was relevant.

Finally, Diana et al. (2021) investigated the ways in which democratic leadership and organizational culture influence employee performance, with organizational culture acting as a moderate variable in their study. Although their findings demonstrated that culture plays a significant role in improving performance, the primary focus of their investigation was not on innovation, and the environment was restricted to an education office in East Java.

These studies, taken as a whole, provide evidence that organizational characteristics play a significant role in determining a variety of employee outcomes, such as performance, engagement, and innovation. On the other hand, none of the studies that were examined designated organizational culture as the primary independent variable that was directly linked to the dimensions of employee creativity. Furthermore, none of these studies investigated the relationship between

organizational culture and the Saudi university context, which is undergoing rapid transformation in accordance with Vision 2030.

What Sets Apart the Present Study from Others That Have Been Conducted in the Past

The current study makes several significant advances to the existing body of literature, including the following:

- **Paying Particular Attention to the Culture of the Organization as the Independent Variable:** In contrast to previous study that investigated culture as a mediating or secondary component, the current investigation explores organizational culture as the key independent variable, evaluating the direct influence that it has on the creative output of employees.
- **The study provides a more nuanced understanding of how culture influences various aspects of creative performance by dissecting employee creativity into three well-defined dimensions:** creative thinking, problem-solving in innovative ways, and initiative/idea generation. This allows for a more comprehensive examination of the variables that influence creative performance.
- **Specific Context of Saudi Universities** While previous research has concentrated on organizations in Nepal, Indonesia, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, this study is situated within Saudi higher education institutions. This context is particularly pertinent given the ongoing educational and organizational reforms that are being implemented as part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.
- **A Significant Research Vacuum Is Addressed** The study is a response to a significant vacuum in the existing body of literature, which is that there is a lack of empirical information about the relationship between organizational

culture and creativity in the Arab Gulf region, particularly in academic institutions.

- The findings of this study are likely to provide actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers who are striving to develop a more creative and innovative academic workforce through cultural transformation. This is the practical relevance and applicability of the study.
- Methodology that has been updated and contextualized the research uses a quantitative research approach that has been adapted to the environment of the Saudi university. This ensures that the findings are both empirically sound and are relevant to the context in which they were conducted.

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