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## The organizational culture as a source of dysfunction in an organization

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### ABSTRACT

A lively and changing organizational culture can become the reason for the flourishing of an organization or be the driving force of its biggest difficulties. Therefore, as form of representation of an organization, organizational culture has to be formed intentionally as all too often it is common to encounter a dysfunctional culture in many areas. This publication attempts to look at the essence of organizational culture and the dysfunctions in organizations that result from the culture. The analyses carried out in this article are a result of the review of foreign and home literature, providing the basis for further discussions on the subject.

**Keywords:** organizational culture, culture, organization, the functions of organizational culture, dysfunction

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a “trend” in the management area concerning organizational culture emerged. Organizational culture is a unifying medium to integrate an organization, but its strength can have a crucial influence on the effectiveness and successes or failures. The theoretical discussions of organizational culture are visible in the contradiction that an organization features organizational culture and that an organization is culture. Apart from this, “organizational culture can be defined as the shared, basic assumptions that an organization learnt while coping with the environment and solving

problems of external adaptation and internal integration that are taught to new members as the correct way to solve those problems. Each organization has its unique culture, which develops overtime to reflect the organization's identity in two dimensions: visible and invisible. The visible dimension of culture is reflected in the espoused values, philosophy and mission of the firm while the invisible dimension lies in the unspoken set of values that guide employees' actions and perceptions in the organization" [1]. As a result, organizations are dysfunctional, which stems not only from the fact of their internal distortions, but also from the relations of an organization with its surroundings.

## **2. THE ESSENCE AND MEANING OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FOR DYSFUNCTION IN THE ORGANIZATION**

The illusory popularity of the significance of organizational culture masks the fundamental problems associated with its understanding. The multiplicity of its definitions is the cause for its many names in subject literature, including "a set of values, traditions, goals, beliefs and attitudes" [2], "a model of assumptions" [3], "the human invention" [4], , "the normative beliefs" [5], "the autonomous nervous system of an organization", "a network of meanings crafted by people in the process of organization", "a collectively programmed brain", "the spirit of an organization", "the organizational atmosphere" or "the organizational scenario", "the stimuli for the behavior of the members of an organization", or a "unique image of an organization" [6].

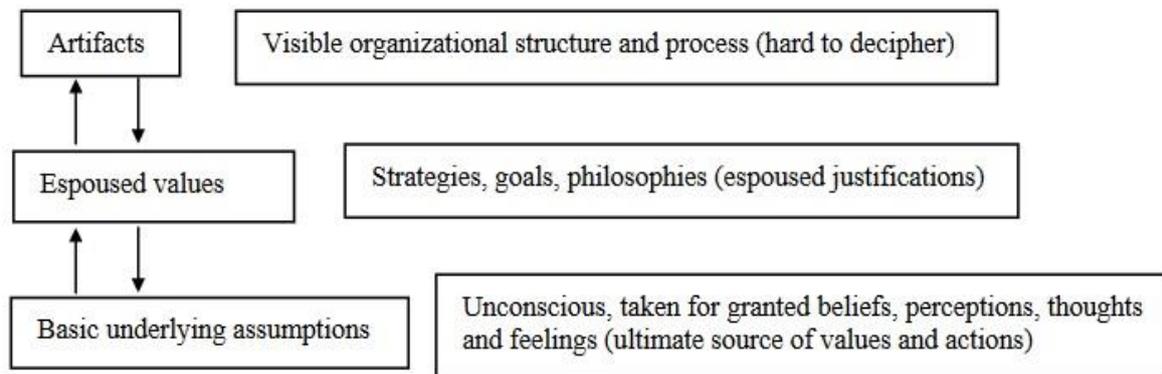
Therefore, it is assumed that organizational culture is a creation of internal relations, including "the history, tradition, the perception of the world, or the norms and beliefs of employees" [7], and external relations, such as "the political, cultural and environmental conditions, and the sector of operating" [8]. For the purpose of the article, the definition of organizational culture has been determined as follows: "wide range of social phenomena, including an organization's customary dress, language, behavior, beliefs, values, assumptions, symbols of status and authority, myths, ceremonies and rituals, and modes of deference and subversion". All of which help to define an organization's character and norms [9].

The Schein model, which is often quoted in literature, presented in Figure 1, divides organizational culture into three layers (levels), where artifacts – linguistic, behavioral and physical – form that which is "seen, heard and felt". "These include stories, arrangements, rituals, and language. Schein emphasizes that artifacts are the most visible layer of organizational culture. However, th meaning of artifacts is typicall hard to decipher" [10]. The espoused values, as a less visible element of culture, create the "philosophy of an enterprise", and the basic underlying assumptions, invisible and unconscious in an organization, form the connections of an enterprise with its external and internal surroundings. "Definition of organizational culture requires clarification regarding levels of analysis" [11].

Basing on the information mentioned above, organizational culture is a collection of basic behavioral norms and values, dominating in a given enterprise (organization), supported by assumptions and manifesting via artifacts, making it possible to determine the differences between organizations. Furthermore, organizational culture – as the personality and identity of an organization – being omnipresent and constantly accompanying interpersonal relations manifests itself in the behaviors and reactions of individual employees and groups, in the ways they make their decisions, their attitudes and opinions on the basis of both past and

current events. “The core values of an organization begin with its leadership, which will then evolve to a leadership style. Subordinates will be led by these values and the behavior of leaders, such that the behavior of both parties should become increasingly in line.

When strong unified behavior, values and beliefs have been developed, a strong organizational culture emerges. Leaders have to appreciate their function in maintaining an organization's culture. This would in return ensure consistent behavior between members of the organization, reducing conflicts and creating a healthy working environment for employees” [13]. Therefore, the attitudes of the members of an organization to the abovementioned factors of an organization are proof of the enterprise’s organizational culture.

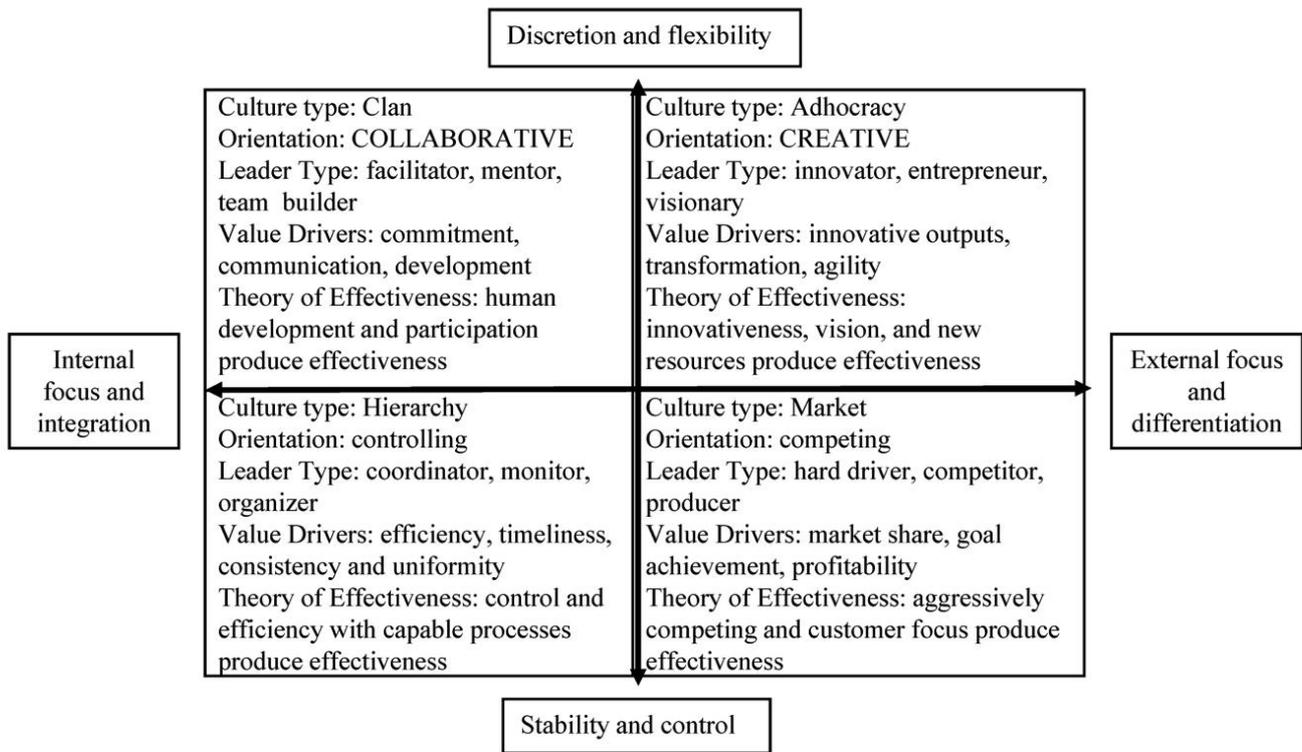


**Figure 1.** Structural model of culture indicating different levels of culture  
Source: K. Siew-Huat, 85 [12].

The analysis of every organizational culture leads to the problems with comparison of the specific types. The following article assumes the arrangement of organizational cultures proposed by Cameron and Quinn, who list four ideal types of culture: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market (Figure 2.). These types of organizational culture are an attempt to synthesize the profiles of culture present in an organization, which influence the shape of an enterprise and the behavior of its employees. At the same time, the employees that form the organization provide the enterprise with their own values and cultural conditioning. This is why it is so important to adjust as best as possible the requirements and support of organizational culture to the qualities of the employees.

“The internal-external dimension reflects whether the organization is focused on its internal dynamics, or on the demands of its external environment. The flexibility-control dimension reflects organizational preferences for structuring, coordination and control, or for flexibility. Organizations which emphasize the control end of the dimension tend to rely on formal mechanisms of coordination and control, such as rules, policies, direct supervision, financial planning, and budgets to enforce compliance with behavioral norms. Contrary, organizations which emphasize the flexibility end tend to rely more on social coordination and control through internalization of beliefs, training, participation, commitment, socialization and peer pressure, to achieve desired outcomes and behaviors.

Resulting from these two competing dimensions, four different quadrants (or cultures types) are formed” [15].



**Figure 2.** Four cultural archetypes according their main features  
 Source: Cameron and Quinn 2006, 46 [14].

The modeling of organizational culture is an extremely difficult task as it often concerns a very strong and in many areas dysfunctional culture, which is particularly difficult to learn. One would have to analyze interpersonal relations, the organization itself and the nature of its surroundings along with the individual as such. Every organizational culture has its different dysfunctions pointing out that the dysfunctions of an organization constitute the “abnormalities, which are defined as the deviations from the real functioning of an institution in comparison to its model functioning. Dysfunctions can have many sources and occur in different areas of an institution”. The sources of dysfunctions identified include “the disturbances present during the realization of the basic functions of an organization, the dysfunctions resulting from the state of the resources of an organization, and this state’s influence on the relations between the elements of a given organization and its surroundings”. Dysfunctions mean also “the disturbances and abnormalities in the real functioning of an institution in comparison to its model functioning, which result mainly from the disturbances within the basic areas of functioning of a given enterprise and the relations between its particular elements and the surroundings”.

Otherwise dysfunctions are understood as “the disturbances and abnormalities in the personnel aspect of an organization, which lead to the deviations from the state defined as a model one, causing unfavorable results”. Bearing the abovementioned information in mind, a dysfunction is a negative phenomenon which destabilizes the functioning of an organization and hinders the achievement of specified goals.

On the organizational level, the factors that disturb the proper functioning of an enterprise include:

1. the change of organizational structure (e.g. fusions, takeovers);
2. the organizational culture and the fact that it does not fit the national culture in reference to the activities of international enterprises;
3. the atmosphere at a given workplace and lobbying.

On the group level, dysfunctions result from:

- the lack of acceptance of the rules of behavior valid in a given organization;
- not fitting the valid values, norms and behaviors which constitute the organizational culture;
- the conflict of roles fulfilled by the members of a given group;
- the communication at the employee-supervisor level.

Therefore, a dysfunction should be considered a phenomenon that negatively influences a specific social system. As a result of dysfunctions, systems are subjected to stress and changes that go in an undesired direction. “A long-term exposure to a dysfunction may lead to a pathological state of a system”. However, the boundary between a dysfunction and pathology is sometimes difficult to determine. “In a certain context, specific types of organizational cultures will be dysfunctional. In other conditions, these dysfunctions will be regarded as models, e.g. in a situation of a strong competition based on material resources, dysfunctions might be in the form of personally oriented or weak cultures”.

Generally, the dysfunctional behaviors in an organization are most often referred to as the “pathological behaviors, which are counterproductive, offensive, routine, incompatible, bypassing, unethical, antisocial, retaliatory, unconventional, destructive, dangerous, bad and this also includes offenses or employee deviation, organizational deviation and social isolation”. Each of these terms represents a narrower or broader understanding of the problem of behaviors directed at the organization as such or its particular members, because “the model of organizational culture present in a given organization can significantly support the effectiveness of management of the organization itself as well as its employees, but it might also inhibit this effectiveness”.

Considering the abovementioned information, it seems necessary to study this problem further and to create preventive measures that would help in the struggle against the many manifestations of organizational dysfunction, not only from the economic point of view, but also in the scope of ethics.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

“With the increasing complexity, ambiguity, and dynamism of organizational life, organizational dualities and the inherent tensions they spawn are becoming more common” [16]. The review of the subject literature leads to the conclusion that the creation and preservation of such working environment should undoubtedly be supported by organizational culture which can be defined as “organizational standards and expectations about the behavior and behavior of an organization” [17].

Thanks to this approach, every enterprise will be able to determine the common and correct way of viewing the processes occurring in an organization, solve problems or create behaviors and unify the methods of action, ensuring the elimination of dysfunctions in the organization. The strength of these aspects conditions the effectiveness of the influence of culture on the functioning of an organization. Therefore, it is worth to create it consciously and to support the desired behaviors, highlight the successes and dangers associated with the everyday functioning of a company, paying particular attention that it all happens at every level of the organization, which will help avoid disturbances and abnormalities in the actual functioning of the organization in the long-term perspective.

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