

## Strong vs. Weak Organizational Culture: Assessing the Impact on Employee Motivation

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### Abstract

Organizational culture and motivation are crucial variables in every Organization. This is due to the general recognition that these variables do not only influence the individual employee's performance but the whole Organization's effectiveness, performance and sustenance. The interest in Organizational culture stems from the belief that culture influences behavior, decision-making, Organizational strategies, individual motivation and Organizational performance. Employees are conscious of Organizational culture, and they learn it in their life at workplace, then align their professional goals with the Organization's goals. The extent to which they learn and embrace the Organizational culture varies and is determined, partly, by the Organization's culture being either weak or strong. Non-motivated employees, generally portray a dissatisfied attitude at work, hence are less committed, and are more likely to quit the Organizational. The purpose of this review was to compare the impact of strong and weak Organizational culture on employee motivation.

**Keywords:** Organizational culture; Motivation; Organizational performance; Strong Organizational culture; Weak Organizational culture

### Introduction

Organizational culture and motivation have received an almost exhaustive attention in research studies. This is due to the general appreciation that these two variables do not only influence the individual employee's performance but the whole Organization's effectiveness, performance and sustenance. The interest in Organizational culture stems from the belief that culture influences behaviour, decision-making, Organizational strategies, and individual and Organizational performance. Non-motivated employees, generally portray a dissatisfied attitude at work, hence are less committed, and are most likely to quit the Organizational. Even if opportunities to quit do not avail, they are likely to have a detached attitude or emotionally and psychologically withdraw from the Organizational. It is for that reason, suggest that employee motivation is one of the characters to assess to determine the employee's intention to quit. The focus of this review will be to critically analyse the difference in weak and strong Organizational on keeping employees motivated [1-3].

### Methods

An analytic review of literature published between 2011 and 2016 on employee motivation, Organizational culture, and Organizational performance was done.

### Organizational culture

In the last two decades, there has been a great deal of insight-sharing and research concerning culture within Organizations, and its impact on various aspects of the Organizational, motivation included. The term culture is abstract and general and involves various aspects of an Organizational. Albeit there is diversity in literature concerning Organizational culture, they all have one consensus – Organizational culture has both tangible and non-tangible aspects [4].

Organizational culture is the Organization's orientation towards its employees and customers, and includes written and verbal circulated rules that guide the employees' behaviour added the aspect of stable beliefs, values and principles developed and shared within the Organization. On another note, in his definition includes goals and

philosophies, visible structures and processes, and the assumptions that underlie the thoughts processes, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of individuals within Organizations [4-6].

From this definition, Organizational culture does not only involve employees, but even customers. In an Organizational, the employees' behaviour is not only guided by rules but over time values and beliefs develop and are internalised by the employees as a code of conduct, hence it can take some time before these values and beliefs are enshrined in the Organizational. Hence Contiu, Gabor and Oltean [7] contends that employees are conscious of Organizational culture, and they learn it in their life at workplace, then align their professional goals with the Organization's goals. These values, rules, beliefs and principles also govern the management practices and systems used by an Organization [4]. Organizational culture helps the Organizational members understand what the Organizational stands for, how it operates, and what is its area of focus and scope of practice [8]. Thus, Organizational culture becomes the underlying factor of member's decisions, choices; and is very vital since it can either unite or divide the Organization's members. Therefore, it forms an integral part of an Organization's environment.

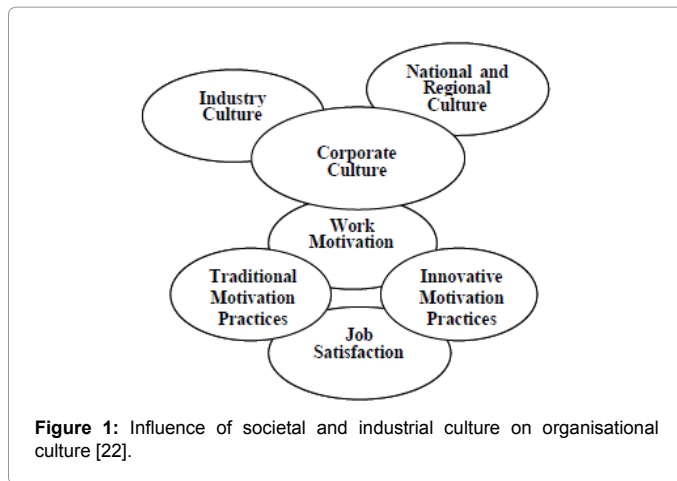
Since Organizational do not operate in isolation, Organizational culture, as synonymously referred to as corporate culture, is influenced by societal (national and regional) culture and industrial culture as depicted in Figure 1. This implies that each Organization's norms and values, rules and regulations have an element of societal norms and industrial regulations. The variations in national and industrial cultures are evident in the way Organizational are structured and managed [9].

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The power and importance of Organizational culture cannot be overemphasised. Arifin [10] argues that Organizational culture determines Organizational behaviour much more than directives from senior management and can affect the implementation of strategies if they differ from the Organization's culture. This emphasises the power of Organizational culture in the Organization's operations. An Organization's culture establishes the regulations within which members of the Organization act and communicate, and know what is required of them in various situations [11]; and as such strict procedures and control mechanisms are rarely necessary, because it functions as an internal control measure that coordinates employees' effort [12]. On another note, if Organizational culture is fragmented, that is, there is little consensus between employees' values (less group think) or Organizational culture is differentiated, that is, Organizational values are embraced by some parts of the Organization, it affects efficacy and efficiency within the Organization [13]. Organizational cultures differ and so their success in enhancing the Organization's performance, as alluded to below.

### Types of Organizational culture

Organizational culture is not a superficial concept, but a dynamic aspect in all Organizations. Since all Organizations have cultures, it is only logical that some Organizational cultures stand lofty than others. Organizational culture can take one of two forms: strong or weak. The extent to which members of the Organization adopt the Organizational culture mainly depends on the type of culture that prevails in the Organization [4,14].

**Strong Organizational culture:** According to Madu [6], a strong Organizational culture refers to the set of values and beliefs that are strongly adhered to and shared widely within the Organization, but such a culture requires the Organization to do more culture specific investments, and such a culture is unlikely to change. This implies that in this form of culture, Organization should take serious actions to instil and spread its norms and values to its employees. According to Ehteshamul and Muhammad [8] the strength of the Organizational culture is determined by the level of shared meaning of principles, norms and values; and the more universal the meaning is shared among the Organization's members, the stronger the culture [15]. Cultures where employees' goals are aligned to the Organization's goals are often thought of as successful cultures [13].

**Weak Organizational culture:** According to [16], a weak Organizational culture refers to values and beliefs not strongly and

widely shared within the Organization. This implies that individual members of the Organization rely more on personal principles, norms and values. Organizations with a weak Organizational culture engage little in culture specific investments, and such cultures are more volatile [11]. To guide the behaviour of its members, Organizations with weak Organizational cultures rely more on rules and regulations than on a shared understanding of values and beliefs [17], hence there is a strict emphasis of rules and regulations with which members' behaviour should be aligned.

Since Organizational culture has an influence on motivation of employees, it is necessary to understand motivation: how it develops and why it is necessary in an Organization, as alluded to below.

### Motivation

Motivation is very important in the success of every Organization. Motivated members of an Organization are likely to be persistent, creative and productive [7] whereas non-motivated members are inefficient and costly. However, the biggest contention on how to motivate the members still exists. This is due to that there is no universal method for motivating an individual, secondary to the variations in individual's needs. Methods have changed over time and depend on situations that employee's experience [14]. Motivating people is, in fact, becoming even more difficult due to that personalized needs are dynamic and volatile. For instance, as Wani [1] argues, initially an employee may be satisfied and motivated by the monetary compensation he/she receives, but over time other factors need to be considered to keep the employee motivated. Hence managers have a vital duty to identify their subordinate's motivational factors and implementing them as a culture in the Organization.

Motivation is defined as the influence on direction, persistence of action, and vigour [1], while Mihaela and Cătălin [18] add that motivation governs one's choice among alternative voluntary activities. According to Arifin [10], voluntary activity influences the extent and persistence of one's behaviour, while continuing relentlessly with the effects of ability, skill, and understanding of the task, within the restraints in the operating environment.

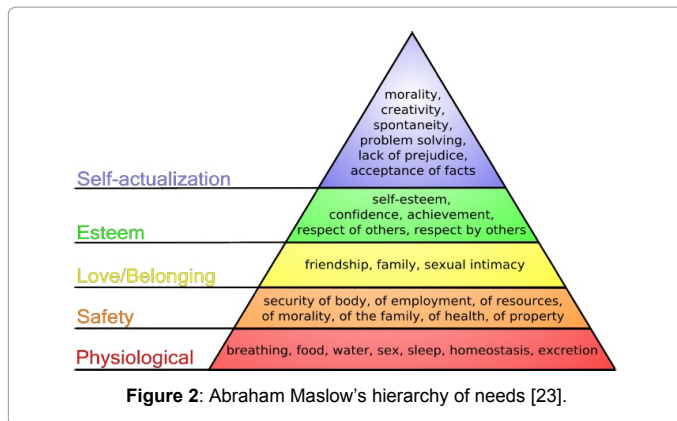
### Type of motivation

Motivation occurs from within the individual (intrinsic motivation) or can be stimulated through external forces (extrinsic motivation) [19].

**Intrinsic motivation:** Intrinsic motivation is defined as behaviour performed out of interest, and one requires no reimbursement other than the experience of interest and enjoyment that accompanies it [7]. Intrinsic motivation in the work place can be triggered by different individual's needs such as the need to feel competent, desire to master the environment, desire for autonomy or desire for a positive feedback from a performed task [3]. It can be concluded, then, that intrinsic motivation cannot be influenced directly but can be triggered through indirect ways such as ensuring that the employee feels valuable and respected at the workplace [4].

Based on psychology literature, intrinsic motivation comes from innate needs. For instance, Abraham Maslow's concept of hierarchy of needs depicts that every individual has various needs that should be satisfied as showed in Figure 2. If a manager can identify the level at which an employee is, he can use that to indirectly influence intrinsic motivation towards the job [1].

**Extrinsic motivation:** External motivation refers to behaviour triggered by external rewards or consequences that accrue from the



performance [18]. Besides rewards such as remuneration and bonuses, recognition in the form of promotion, acceptance, status or a good working environment can serve as external triggers of motivation [16]. Through extrinsic motivation one can adopt the Organization's regulations as personally important or can assimilate and integrate the Organization's identity with one's identity and sense of self.

There are various motivational factors that can be incorporated into Organizational culture in order to motivate employees [2]. Since motivation is more individual dependent, various methods of motivating employees have differing strengths, hence it is logical to expect differences in the impact of various Organizational structures. The next section of this review will delve on the interaction between Organizational culture and motivation.

## The Interaction between Organizational Culture and Motivation

In this time of vicious competition in the business world, it is even more imperative that Organizations reach their goals in order to survive and grow. Understanding the interaction and impact of Organizational culture can enable Organizations to achieve their goals. Many studies have shown that an Organization's culture can affect its performance, to the extent that some business successes and failures have been attributed to corporate cultures contends that there is a link between culture and motivational factors, which are essential for the Organization's performance [6,8,10].

Organizational culture plays an important role in an Organization pertaining how people feel about the job, their level of motivation, commitment, and in turn job satisfaction [4]. It can encourage employees to give out their best for the sake of Organizational goals, or it can discourage or demoralize them with a subsequent detriment to the Organization's success [20]. Organizational culture impacts on working operations as it impacts on Organizational behaviour as well as employees' motivation. Hence, understanding Organizational life is important as it is widely acknowledged that Organizational cultures have an impact upon Organization's performance.

There is a mutual interdependence between the Organization and its employees, and both parties have an impact on each other's success [4]. Some researchers even emphasize the importance of Organizational cultures for performance, growth, and success of Organizational [15]. There is, therefore, a need to prompt Organizational culture to ensure employee motivation and to achieve Organizational goals.

According to Koesmono [2], Organizational culture consists of basic assumptions that the Organizational as a group has developed,

discovered, or invented in order to be able to function, cope with its problems from the external environment, or adapt. These assumptions have been observed to work well enough within the Organizational to be considered valid, then, can be taught to new members as the right way to perceive, think, and feel within the Organizational. Based on the fact that human beings can identify with Organizations and internalize values and norms of behaviour, and the interest of others [4], it can be deduced that employees can feel involved in the Organizational and identify with its culture. If employees feel involved in the Organizational they may be more willing to pursue the Organizational goals and are more dedicated to the cause [11]. It is important for an organizational to bind employees to the Organizational through Organizational culture, so it can ensure that they unitedly pursue Organizational goals [16].

Motivation is a key component of Organizational culture. Mihaela and Cătălin [18] contends that at the core of Organizational behaviour is human motivation at work. The behaviour of Organizations reflects human motivation [11]. It can, therefore, be deduced that employees' motivation plays a significant role in performing the job, hence managers need to identify ways to motivate their employees.

Organizational culture is argued to have a significant role in providing a framework where motivational factors operate [4]. For instance, Organizational culture provides five sources of motivation, namely: mission which provides inspiration to employees to believe in the importance of their work; agenda control which enables employees to control their careers; shared value creation which involves rewarding the employee for successful efforts; provides learning opportunities; and gives employees reputation, that is, employees have the opportunity to make a name for themselves in that field or profession [1]. Based on the above-mentioned evidence, there is a strong interaction between Organizational culture and motivation, and more so in strong cultures which often results in motivated work force [4].

Besides motivation, Organizational culture facilitates important aspects of Organizational life such as unity among employees and overall wellbeing [7]. It is for that reason [6], argues that Organizational culture can be viewed as the total sum of all needed Organizational activities in order to fulfil its purpose. The effectiveness of Organizational culture in stimulating motivation varies between strong and weak Organizational cultures, as alluded to below.

## Impact of a strong Organizational culture on motivation

When Organizational culture is strong, it can be a determinant of performance through employee behaviour and decision-making patterns. Bigliardi, Dormio, Galati, and Schiuma [14], argued that even if people can change Organizations, their effectiveness is partly dependent on that Organization's culture. This implies that Organizational culture creates the platform for employees to perform their duties. Yeh and Chien [17] further contends that creativity while carrying one's tasks, job satisfaction, the inclination to taking risks, job involvement, and the possibility to leave the job are affected by Organizational culture.

Organizations with strong Organizational cultures are also argued to be more successful than Organizations with weak cultures as a result of unity among employees as they hold common beliefs and values [15]. This implies that Organizations with strong cultures have a greater propensity to achieve their goals than those with relatively weak cultures.

Of more interest to this review is that Organizations with strong cultures are thought to have a higher degree of Organizational



success because of the perceived link to motivation. According to Karlsen [13], the higher performance achieved in Organizational with a strong Organizational culture are presumed to be derived from consequences of having widely shared and strongly held norms and values, which comes in three forms: an enhanced coordination, control within the Organizational and improved goal alignment between the Organizational and its members leading to increased employee motivation and effort.

Several studies support that Organizations with strong cultures outdo Organizations with weak cultures [15,21]. Sokro [4] argues that the bases for the greater success of Organizations with strong cultures is that a strong Organizational culture supports the effective transfer of information, knowledge, processes, programs, resources and people. Having the same perception of values and beliefs can make employees to have a strong connection with each other and with the Organization [2], hence the employees have a strong group feeling and motivate each other.

The connectedness and unity within the Organizational also influences new employees who join the Organizational to put an effort to understand the Organizational and be participating members [14]. The employees are motivated to make sense of their environment and understand how and why things are done in a particular way [5]. This implies that the employees feel an intrinsic motivation to be part of the Organizational and gain autonomy, and they derive satisfaction in being productive participants in the Organizational and seeing their behaviour as the right thing to do. New employees observe behaviours that are common in the members of the Organizational, then determine what behaviours are expected.

On another note, extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards on prescribed values and norms then stimulates the employees to regard the Organizational values and behaviours as positive and start embracing them [7]. As employees adhere and embrace the Organizational culture and receive rewards from the Organizational, these values become integral to their own behaviour that they may find it difficult to separate them from their own [4]. It is then logical that a strong Organizational culture creates a feeling of belonging, increased commitment and job satisfaction. It can be argued that a strong Organizational culture often results in motivated employees, and the result is job satisfaction as portrayed in Figure 1.

### **Impact of a weak Organizational culture on motivation**

Weak Organizational cultures, in comparison to strong Organizational cultures, are argued to be less successful in achieving Organizational goal due to the perceived link of culture and motivation. Organizations with a weak Organizational culture focus more on action by the individual employee, hence sharing of norms, values and philosophies among employees is less important. There is also less groupthink and less group action in Organizations with weak Organizational cultures, hence there is less inter-influence and motivation among the employees.

To ensure persuasion of its goals, Organizations with weak Organizational cultures rely more on enforcement of rules and regulation. This implies that employees adhere to Organizational rules because of fear of unkind consequences, not because they derive satisfaction from their jobs. These Organizations also use extrinsic motivators to persuade employees to achieve its goals. These extrinsic motivators are used to keep employees excited and motivated to do their jobs and perform well. Organizations with weak Organizational cultures use reward systems to promote the desired behaviour from

its employees. This means that employees who perform their tasks independently are rewarded [4-10].

A weak Organizational culture, by stimulating individual action, triggers intrinsic values like responsibility and challenge in the individual employee. The individualised approach apparent weak Organizational cultures has benefits such as independent decision making and risk-taking spirit, and can lead to greater innovation. It can be deduced that while Organizations with strong cultures use intrinsic motivation initially to produce the desired behaviour from employees, weak cultures initially use extrinsic motivators through rewarding the desired behaviour in the Organizational, and as the individual assumes the roles and responsibilities and relies more on independent decision making and innovative character, intrinsic motivation develops over time [15-23].

### **Results**

Weak Organizational cultures are argued to be less successful than strong Organizational cultures in achieving Organizational goal due to the perceived link of culture and motivation. This is due to that Organizations with strong Organizational cultures have more unity among employees as they hold common beliefs and values. Having the same perception of values and beliefs makes employees have a strong connection with each other and with the Organizational, hence the employees have a strong group feeling, are motivated and motivate each other.

### **Conclusion**

In entanglement, the importance of Organizational culture in an Organizational cannot be overemphasised. Organizational culture plays a significant role in motivating employees. Both strong and weak Organizational cultures can utilise intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to keep employees motivated. Based on the above reviewed literature, it is tempting to advocate for a strong Organizational culture compared to a weak one due to that it is quick to indirectly influence intrinsic motivation in employees, and the use of rewards as extrinsic motivators enable employees to embrace and identify with the Organization's values and norms much quicker than in weak cultures. Notwithstanding that a weak Organizational culture stimulates independent thinking, entrepreneurship and innovation in the individual employee, strong Organizational cultures proffer more advantages such as more motivated employees, unity and groupthink among employees, and often Organizations with the later culture outdo the ones with the former.

Since Organizational culture has a great impact on motivation, and motivated employees take pride in their job and feel responsible for success of the Organization, it is important for managers to identify proper ways to use Organizational culture to motivate their employees. Based on the fact that individual needs are dynamic and volatile, hence keeping employees motivated is a challenge to managers, relying on traditional motivational practices such as money and promotion are no longer adequate, managers need to identify innovative motivational measures. This implies that there is need for more studies aimed at investigating innovative motivational tools that will fit the differing industries and Organizational cultures, and to assess managers' understanding and acceptance of those tools. There is also a need to study employees' patterns of deriving motivation from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, so that that can be used by managers as tools to drive and keep their employees motivated and achieve more Organizational success.

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