

Understanding Organisational Culture: A Review of Definitions, Theoretical Frameworks, and Empirical Studies

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Abstract

Organisational culture is widely recognised as a key factor influencing organisational effectiveness, employee behaviour, and institutional development. This paper reviews the major definitions, theoretical foundations, and empirical studies related to organisational culture. It first examines influential perspectives proposed by Schein (1985, 2010), Hofstede (1991), Cameron and Quinn (1999), Denison (1990), and Ouchi (1981), highlighting the evolution of the concept from shared assumptions and values to multidimensional and performance-oriented frameworks. The paper then discusses Harrison and Stokes's (1992) Organisational Culture Theory and its alignment with the five dimensions of the Organisational Culture Scale developed by Huang and Teo (2019): *Goal Orientation*, *Participative Decision Making*, *Formal Relationships*, *Innovation Orientation*, and *Shared Vision*. In addition, empirical studies conducted in international higher education settings, across China, and specifically in Inner Mongolia are reviewed to identify major research trends and gaps. The review indicates that although organisational culture has been extensively studied, limited attention has been paid to ethnic minority regions, multi-level cultural influences, and the mechanisms through which culture affects important psychological and organisational outcomes. The paper concludes by highlighting directions for future research and the practical importance of fostering a supportive organisational culture in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Organisational Culture, Organisational Culture Theory, Theoretical Framework, Higher Education, Organisational Effectiveness

Introduction

Organisational culture has long been recognised as a key factor influencing organisational behaviour, employee performance, and institutional effectiveness (Schein, 2010). Beyond formal structures and policies, shared values, beliefs, and behavioural norms shape how organisational members interact, make decisions, and pursue organisational goals (Schein, 2010). Consequently, organisational culture has become an important topic in management, organisational studies, and higher education research. In higher education institutions, organisational culture plays a particularly significant role because universities operate through complex interactions among academic values, governance systems, and institutional traditions (Alvesson, 2012). Previous studies have shown that organisational culture is associated with organisational effectiveness, academic collaboration, innovation, and employee commitment, highlighting its relevance to institutional development (Tierney, 1988; Smart & John, 1996; Denison, 1990).

Despite extensive research, several issues remain in understanding organisational culture. First, organisational culture is a multidimensional concept that has been conceptualised in different ways, with scholars emphasising shared assumptions, cultural dimensions, organisational values, and performance-related characteristics (Hofstede, 1991; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). These different perspectives make it necessary to clarify the concept and examine how the various approaches contribute to understanding organisational culture. Second, although different theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain organisational culture, the relationship between these frameworks and the specific dimensions used to describe and assess culture requires further clarification. This issue is particularly relevant in higher education, where organisational culture operates within complex institutional structures and academic traditions. Furthermore, examining empirical studies across international higher education settings, China, and Inner Mongolia can help contextualise existing knowledge and identify how organisational culture has been investigated across these different settings. Without a coherent synthesis of these conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives, it may be difficult for researchers to develop a clear understanding of organisational culture and its application in higher education institutions.

To address these issues, this paper reviews major definitions of organisational culture, examines the theoretical framework proposed by Harrison and Stokes (1992), and analyses the relationship between this framework and the dimensions of organisational culture. It also synthesises empirical research conducted in international higher education settings, across China, and specifically in Inner Mongolia. By bringing these perspectives together, the review aims to clarify the conceptual and theoretical foundations of organisational culture, demonstrate how the framework can inform its understanding in higher education, and identify areas that warrant further investigation. In doing so, the paper seeks to provide a coherent foundation for future research on organisational culture in higher education institutions.

The Definition of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has received extensive and continuous attention in the fields of organisational behaviour, management, and sociology for a long time (Alvesson, 2012). Schein (1985, 2010) is regarded as one of the founders of research on organisational culture.

He defined organisational culture as *“a set of basic assumption patterns formed by the organisation in the process of addressing external adaptation and internal integration issues and widely recognized by all members of the organisation”* (p. 18), and these assumptions gradually became the “correct way” for organisation members to perceive problems, think, and act. Schein (1985, 2010) proposed the well-known three-level model, which includes surface-level visible artifacts, the middle-level values, and the deep-level fundamental assumptions. The surface-level visible artifacts serve as the most intuitive level, manifesting as observable institutional arrangements, material symbols, and behavioural patterns within the organisation, such as the office environment of the enterprise, organisational logos, employee uniforms, and ritualised meeting procedures. The middle-level values reflect the core beliefs that organisation members publicly declare and generally agree with, such as “customer-centeredness”, “encouraging innovation”, or “emphasising teamwork”. The deep-level fundamental assumptions constitute the deepest foundation of the organisational culture, including the underlying beliefs that members have internalised over a long period of practice regarding issues such as human nature, power relations, and environmental adaptation, such as “leaders should have parental-like care” or “market competition is inevitable”. Schein (1985, 2010) emphasised that organisational culture is characterised by historical accumulation and inheritance, and it continuously influences new members through socialisation.

Unlike Schein’s (1985, 2010) perspective on deep structure, Hofstede (1991) regarded organisational culture as *“a collective programme that distinguishes the mental programming of different organisational members”* (p. 181). He believed that culture is a collective way of thinking that influences how individuals perceive problems and make decisions. Hofstede (1991) advocated for separating organisational culture from national culture, and proposed several dimensions, such as process orientation and result orientation, as well as work orientation and employee orientation, for comparing organisational differences. This perspective emphasises the measurability and comparability of organisational culture and applies to cross-organisational and cross-cultural research.

In addition, Cameron and Quinn (1999), based on the “Competing Values Framework”, classified organisational culture into four typical types: clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture, and hierarchy culture, which correspond to different management styles and organisational value orientations, respectively. Clan culture emphasises that the organisation is like a big family, focusing on teamwork, participatory management, and employee commitment. Its typical features are high interpersonal affinity and cohesion. Adhocracy culture centres on flexibility and creativity, encouraging an adventurous spirit and autonomy, and is suitable for dynamic environments and organisations that require continuous innovation. Market culture highlights result orientation and competitive advantage, focusing on efficiency, productivity, and external market position, usually emphasising goal achievement and performance assessment. Hierarchy culture is based on rules, procedures, and stability, emphasising authority, order, and predictability, and is suitable for organisations that pursue consistency and risk control. Cameron and Quinn emphasised that organisational culture is not a single static structure, but a multi-dimensional and dynamically balanced system.

Besides, Denison (1990) focused on the direct impact of organisational culture on organisational performance. He defined organisational culture as *“the values, beliefs, and principles that form the basis of the organisational management system, as well as the management practices and behaviors that embody these principles.”* (p. 2). He identified four key organisational cultural characteristics: involvement, which refers to the active participation and autonomy of employees in decision-making and organisational activities, emphasising empowerment and teamwork; consistency, which is manifested in the coordination and unity of the organisation’s values, systems and behaviours, maintained through shared core values and coordination mechanisms to ensure organisational integration; adaptability, which indicates the organisation’s sensitivity and responsiveness to external environmental changes, including learning, innovation and rapid responses to market demands; and mission, which emphasises the organisation’s clear strategic direction and long-term goals, providing members with a common vision and behavioural guidance. He also developed the Denison Organisational Culture Model and Measurement Tool (DOCS), making cultural research more empirical and valuable for management applications.

Additionally, Ouchi (1981) pointed out in his Z Theory that organisational culture is *“a set of shared values, beliefs and norms that influence the thinking, emotions and behaviours of employees”* (p. 41). He advocated drawing on the management concepts of Japanese enterprises, advocating for long-term employment, collective decision-making, and trust mechanisms, demonstrating the unique role of organisational culture in stimulating employees’ intrinsic motivation and building a high trust working environment. According to Z Theory, when employees perceive a culture characterised by trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility, they are more likely to develop stronger organisational commitment and actively contribute to organisational goals (Ouchi, 1981).

In short, different scholars have defined and explained organisational culture from various perspectives, such as structure, function, management practices, and cross-cultural aspects. Although the specific contents may vary, they all jointly emphasise the core position of organisational culture in shaping organisational identity, coordinating organisational behaviors, and enhancing organisational performance. Succinctly, the concept of organisational culture is defined as a kind of cultural characteristics in an organisation, including the values, beliefs, behaviour patterns, norms, and habits. It has a great cohesive effect on the members of one organisation. Shared cultural values and beliefs make cooperation and interaction smoother among organisational members, which contributes to the overall development of the organisation. Additionally, it can also stimulate the enthusiasm of the organisational members for future exploration and innovation and encourage them to continue to innovate and break through, which is very significant for the sustainable development of the organisation.

Theoretical Foundation of Organisational Culture

In the field of organisational behaviour, Harrison and Stokes (1992) built a systematic and practice-oriented theory of organisational culture based on the cultural classification theory proposed by Charles Handy (1976). Harrison and Stokes (1992) classified organisational culture into four typical types: *Power Culture*, *Role Culture*, *Task Culture*, and *Person Culture* to explain the cultural differences among different organisations in terms of power structure, decision-making methods, organisational goals, and member interactions.

This classification not only helps to analyse the behavioural logic and value orientation within the organisation but also provides a clear framework and theoretical support for the identification, diagnosis, and strategic intervention of organisational culture (Alvesson, 2012).

Power Culture is a cultural form characterised by centralised leadership (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). Its power structure is like a “wheel”, with power and information flowing in the organisation revolving around the central figures such as the founder, CEO, or senior manager (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). In this culture, the decision-making process is highly centralised with efficiency taking precedence over democratic consultation (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). This kind of culture is usually found in start-up companies in the early stage of development, family businesses, or organisations operating in a highly competitive environment (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). It is conducive to establishing a clear strategic direction and unified value standards, thereby enhancing the organisation’s adaptability and execution efficiency in a changing environment (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011).

In addition, *Role Culture* places greater emphasis on order and stability (Alvesson, 2012). Its core lies in institutionalised management, clear job responsibilities, and a rigorous organisational structure (Alvesson, 2012). It usually adopts a bureaucratic management model, with rules and regulations, policy documents, and job descriptions serving as the main operational basis (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). This culture holds significant value in ensuring the standardised operation of organisations, enhancing controllability and compliance (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). It is particularly applicable to organisational forms such as government agencies, large state-owned enterprises, and financial institutions that aim for long-term stability and risk control (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). By establishing clear job divisions and superior-subordinate relationships, the *Role Culture* helps to achieve efficient collaboration and hierarchical management within the organisation (Alvesson, 2012).

Besides, *Task Culture* is centred on goal-driven and outcome-oriented approaches, and it is a highly flexible and cooperative cultural form (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). Its main feature is to form cross-functional teams around the project, guided by problem-solving and goal achievement, and emphasising knowledge sharing and dynamic adjustment (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). In this culture, power is not determined by position but is distributed based on individual ability and contribution (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). This culture is widely applicable in innovative enterprises, consulting firms, research institutions, and other organisations that require frequent knowledge integration and creative solutions (Alvesson, 2012). It can stimulate team vitality, encourage bottom-up innovative thinking, and facilitate the efficient completion of tasks and continuous improvement (Alvesson, 2012).

Finally, *Person Culture* focuses on the realisation of individual values and the harmony of interpersonal relationships (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). This culture centres on “people”, emphasising respect, equality, freedom, and inclusiveness (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). The organisation is regarded as a platform for members to achieve self-realisation and express their individuality (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). In this cultural environment, employees enjoy greater autonomy and trust, emphasising the intrinsic meaning of work rather than merely performance-oriented approaches (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). *Person Culture* is commonly found in universities, non-profit organisations, professional associations, and other organisations that place emphasis on spiritual motivation and humanistic care for their

members (Alvesson, 2012). Its value lies in creating a positive psychological environment, enhancing the cohesion of the organisation and the sense of belonging among members, thereby achieving a win-win situation where both organisational goals and individual growth are realised (Alvesson, 2012).

In general, these four cultures do not exist in complete isolation from each other; instead, they often coexist and interweave within the actual organisations (Hartnell & Kinicki, 2011). An organisation may exhibit the concentration of *Power Culture* at the strategic decision-making level, adopt the normative characteristics of *Role Culture* at the execution level, apply the flexibility of *Task Culture* in project development, and demonstrate the caring nature of *Person Culture* in human resource management (Alvesson, 2012). Just as Harrison and Stokes (1992) pointed out, organisations should flexibly combine and adapt different cultural types according to their development stage, external environment, and strategic goals, to build a cultural ecosystem that best meets their own needs. Therefore, the organisational culture theory proposed by Harrison and Stokes (1992) not only offers a structured approach for understanding and analysing organisational culture but also provides strategic tools for organisational leaders in the practice of cultural design and management. It helps organisations to provide theoretical support and direction guidance in areas such as cultural transformation, performance improvement, employee motivation, and institutional innovation (Alvesson, 2012).

Theoretical Foundation and Operationalisation of Organisational Culture

The Organisational Culture Scale developed by Huang and Teo (2019) is grounded in the core principles of Harrison and Stokes's (1992) Organisational Culture Theory. To enhance the understanding of organisational culture, the theory is discussed in conjunction with this measurement scale, which translates its underlying concepts into observable and measurable dimensions. The Organisational Culture Scale (Huang & Teo, 2019) consists of five dimensions, namely *Goal Orientation*, *Participative Decision Making*, *Formal Relationships*, *Innovation Orientation*, and *Shared Vision*.

Firstly, the *Goal Orientation* dimension emphasises the significance of organisations having clear goals in driving the actions of their members and achieving the organisation's mission (Huang & Teo, 2019). In Harrison and Stokes's (1992) theory, *Task Culture* particularly embodies this dimension. This cultural type centres on projects and tasks, emphasising that achieving specific goals is the fundamental driving force for the organisation's operation. In this cultural environment, members will collaborate based on their professional capabilities and carry out efficient cooperation around a common goal. The sense of purpose in *Task Culture* not only enhances the directionality of the organisation but also facilitates the optimal allocation of resources, thereby improving organisational performance. Therefore, *Task Culture* provides a solid cultural foundation for the establishment and realisation of the *Goal Orientation*.

The dimension of *Participative Decision Making* emphasises the extensive participation and autonomy of organisational members in the decision-making process (Huang & Teo, 2019). This dimension is particularly evident in the context of *Person Culture* of Harrison and Stokes (1992). *Person Culture* emphasises individual value, advocates equality, respect, and democracy, and the decision-making process is usually open and consultative (Harrison &

Stokes, 1992). Each member can express their opinions and participates in the decision-making process, thereby enhancing a sense of belonging and responsibility (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). Meanwhile, *Task Culture* also partially embodies the characteristics of *Participative Decision Making* of Huang and Teo (2019), especially in project management, where members are encouraged to propose suggestions and solutions to problems. Therefore, by emphasising the participation mechanism in different cultural types, this theory effectively explains the implementation path of *Participative Decision Making* in organisational culture.

The *Formal Relationships* dimension emphasises the collaborative relationships formed among organisational members based on professional grounds (Huang & Teo, 2019). This dimension is prominently manifested in the field of *Role Culture* of Harrison and Stokes (1992). *Role Culture* is oriented toward rules, systems, and division of positions, characterised by a tightly structured organisation with clear responsibilities, where members communicate and collaborate through formal channels (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). This culture emphasises proceduralism and standardisation, which helps maintain the stability and consistency of organisational operations, and is particularly suitable for large institutions or government organisations (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). Furthermore, in the *Task Culture* of Harrison and Stokes (1992), although the structure is relatively flexible, team members still need to collaborate to achieve their goals. Therefore, it also encompasses cooperation, information sharing, and feedback mechanisms in *Formal Relationships* of Huang and Teo (2019).

The *Innovation Orientation* dimension refers to the situation where an organisation regards innovation as the core driving force for development and transformation and attaches great importance to the exertion of creativity (Huang & Teo, 2019). In Harrison and Stokes's (1992) theory, *Task Culture* best embodies this orientation. This cultural type emphasises flexibility and adaptability, encouraging employees to come up with new ideas and methods in the process of problem-solving, thereby stimulating their innovative potential (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). Additionally, under certain conditions, *Person Culture* of Harrison and Stokes (1992) also supports an innovation-oriented approach, as it emphasises individual development and free expression, providing a fertile ground for the generation of creativity. These cultural types collectively create an environment conducive to the development of an innovation-oriented mindset.

Finally, the *Shared Vision* dimension emphasises the recognition and pursuit of common ideals, goals, or missions by organisational members (Huang & Teo, 2019). This is evident in both the *Power Culture* and the *Task Culture* of Harrison and Stokes (1992). For *Power Culture*, although decision-making power is concentrated among a few core leaders, the leaders often, through their own strong vision, influence and drive the organisation members to identify with and act towards the common direction. In the *Task Culture*, *Shared Vision* of Huang and Teo (2019) is manifested as the team's consensus and commitment to the project goals. All members work collaboratively towards this shared objective, thereby enhancing organisational cohesion. *Shared Vision* not only promotes cooperation among members but also helps to achieve consistency between the organisation's strategy and culture.

In summary, Harrison and Stokes's (1992) theory of Organisational Culture, through its four cultural types, provides structural support and a theoretical basis for the five dimensions

of the Organisational Culture Scale developed by Huang and Teo (2019). Each cultural type has interpreted the formation mechanisms and practical manifestations of these dimensions from different perspectives. By flexibly applying this theory, organisations can more effectively identify their own cultural characteristics, adjust management strategies, and thereby create a cultural environment that is both goal-oriented and participatory, normative, innovative, and with a common vision, laying a solid foundation for achieving long-term development.

Research on Organisational Culture

Organisational culture, as a core concept in organisational studies, has long attracted extensive attention from management, education, and organisational behaviour disciplines (Alvesson, 2012). Schein (1985, 2010) pointed out that organisational culture is the basic assumption system formed by the organisation when dealing with external adaptation and internal integration issues, which is shared and passed on by the members. It plays a profound role in shaping the organisational operation mode and the values of the members. Hofstede (1991) from the perspective of cross-cultural management proposed that organisational culture is a “collective mental programme” formed under the influence of national culture and institutional background and explained the behavioural differences among different organisations through the cultural dimension model. Cameron and Quinn (1999) classified organisational culture based on the Competing Values Framework into four types: family-oriented, innovative, market-oriented, and hierarchical. They revealed the close relationship between different cultural types and organisational effectiveness. Subsequently, scholars gradually came to realise that organisational culture not only influences strategic planning, performance improvement, and innovation development but also is an indispensable core factor for higher education institutions in terms of academic autonomy, quality assurance, and governance structure (Denison, 1990; Ouchi, 1981).

In overseas research, the relationship between organisational culture and higher education has long been a significant topic. Smart and John (1996) conducted an empirical study and found that if universities can establish a consistent and positive cultural atmosphere, it will significantly enhance academic development and the satisfaction of both faculty and students. Tierney (1988) emphasised that the organisational culture of universities is jointly shaped by history, tradition, and institutions and it is an indispensable dimension for understanding university governance. Marginson (2006) pointed out in the context of globalisation that university organisational culture plays a crucial role in regulating and adapting to external competition and policy pressures. Meanwhile, Ahmed et al. (2016) emphasised that quality management practices and organisational learning must be linked by culture to achieve the best results. The action research by Lycke and Tano (2017) further revealed the significance of cross-functional collaboration and process culture in enhancing quality assurance. These studies not only highlight the structure and types of organisational culture but also emphasise its dynamic functions in educational innovation, institutional reform, and quality assurance.

In China, research on organisational culture has developed alongside higher education reforms and governance transformation. Organisational culture has been recognised as an important mechanism through which universities shape institutional values, coordinate organisational activities, and improve educational quality. Yang (2020) argued that political

culture and governance structures significantly influence the development of higher education institutions in Chinese societies. Similarly, Zhou (2021) highlighted the cultural foundations of university governance and emphasised the importance of shared values in guiding organisational behaviour and institutional development. Existing studies have suggested that organisational culture influences faculty participation, organisational effectiveness, institutional identity, and quality assurance practices within Chinese universities. Compared with international studies, Chinese research tends to place greater emphasis on the interaction between organisational culture, government policies, and administrative governance structures due to the distinctive institutional environment of Chinese higher education (Yang, 2020; Zhou, 2021).

In Inner Mongolia, the organisational culture of universities exhibits distinct regional and ethnic characteristics. Han (2024) highlighted that the organisational culture of universities in Inner Mongolia is deeply influenced by the local economic structure and ethnic diversity and exhibits the characteristic of the interweaving of policy orientation and local culture. The research conducted by Wang and Li (2018) indicates that the organisational culture of universities plays an indispensable role in ethnic unity education and multilingual teaching but it also faces challenges such as insufficient teacher identification and unbalanced cultural integration. Li and Zhang's research (2023) further revealed the tension between "academic pursuit" and "application orientation" in undergraduate universities in Inner Mongolia, highlighting the complex role of locality and ethnicity in the construction of organisational culture.

In comparison, foreign research mainly focuses on the tradition of institutional diversity and academic autonomy and emphasises the identification of the types, dimensions of organisational culture as well as its impact on governance, reform, and quality assurance. For example, Smart and John (1996) emphasised the strong correlation between organisational culture types and effectiveness. Lycke and Tano (2017) then revealed the interaction mechanism between quality culture and organisational learning. Most of these studies are based on the relatively autonomous environment of universities in Europe and the United States and therefore tend to explore the role of culture in promoting innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and teacher satisfaction (Kezar & Holcombe, 2025; Bryk et al., 2024). Meanwhile, foreign research also pays close attention to the dynamics and diversity of organisational culture such as the tension between the dominant culture and subcultures (Kezar & Holcombe, 2025) as well as the adaptability of organisational culture in different governance models (Rytioja & Raisanen, 2024).

On the other hand, Chinese research is more influenced by the institutional environment and policy orientation, generally emphasising the shaping effect of administrative control and market orientation on the organisational culture of universities (Zhang, 2010; Li, 2012) and revealing the contradiction between administrative control and academic ideals (Ma & Yang, 2025). In recent years, domestic research has gradually shifted to the context of "Double First-Class" construction and education quality assurance, focusing on the integration of organisational cultural characteristics and governance mechanisms among different universities (Wu, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2023). In ethnic regions such as Inner Mongolia, the organisational culture of universities is more characterised by regional and ethnic features (Han, 2024; Wang & Li, 2018). It is necessary to seek a balance between national policies, local

culture, and the multi-ethnic environment. This is different from the “Organisational Culture-Effectiveness” logic emphasised in foreign research and it highlights the unique mechanism resulting from the interweaving of policies, administration, and organisational culture.

All in all, foreign research has focused on the construction and cross-national validation of organisational culture theories and models while domestic research has been dedicated to in-depth description of the institutional context where policies and organisational culture interweave. The differences between the two indicate that the role of organisational culture is both universal and dependent on specific contexts. In foreign countries, the organisational culture of universities often promotes reform and efficiency improvement through shared governance and academic autonomy; however, in China, the organisational culture of universities is more influenced by policies and administrative logic and its impact on teachers’ psychological capital and organisational commitment is also more complex.

However, there are still research gaps in existing studies. Firstly, the research scope is limited. There is a lack of systematic research on the cultural characteristics and functioning mechanisms of universities in ethnic minority areas. The existing literature mainly focuses on universities in the eastern coastal regions and overlooks regional cultural differences (Sun & Xia, 2021). Secondly, the research level is insufficient. Most studies only examine the culture at the overall university level, ignoring the different impacts of institutional, departmental, disciplinary, and team cultures on individuals (Liu, 2021). Thirdly, the mechanism analysis is not thorough enough. The mediating and moderating mechanisms through which organisational culture influences important outcomes remain insufficiently explored. For example, organisational culture may affect organisational commitment through psychological capital, job satisfaction, work engagement, organisational identification, knowledge sharing, or innovative behaviour, yet these pathways have not been adequately examined in different educational contexts. Finally, the research methods are limited. Although quantitative research is widespread, it lacks longitudinal designs and qualitative supplements, making it difficult to capture the dynamic evolution of culture (Suddaby et al., 2020; Liu, 2021).

Conclusion

This review examines the major definitions, theoretical foundations, and empirical studies related to organisational culture. The literature demonstrates that although scholars have proposed different conceptualisations of organisational culture, they consistently emphasise the importance of shared values, beliefs, and behavioural norms in shaping organisational effectiveness and member behaviour. Among the various theoretical perspectives, Harrison and Stokes’s (1992) Organisational Culture Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the dimensions of Goal Orientation, Participative Decision Making, Formal Relationships, Innovation Orientation, and Shared Vision.

The review also indicates that organisational culture plays an important role in higher education institutions by influencing governance, innovation, organisational learning, and employee outcomes. However, research gaps remain, particularly regarding universities in ethnic minority regions, the interaction of culture at different organisational levels, and the mechanisms through which organisational culture affects outcomes such as psychological capital, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and work engagement.

Future studies should employ more diverse methodologies, including longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, and examine universities across different regional and institutional contexts, particularly those in ethnic minority areas, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of organisational culture and its effects. Such efforts will contribute to a deeper understanding of organisational culture and provide valuable guidance for enhancing organisational effectiveness and sustainable development in higher education institutions.

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