



**Exploring the factors that affect organisational culture of a high school in
Johannesburg, South Africa**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Sasha Govender, declare that:

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ABSTRACT

Organisational culture is a relevant concept across all industries and environments. It is complex in nature but of critical importance to investigate due to the impact it has on everything from staff turnover to profit. The aim of this study was to investigate what organisational culture looks like at a school level and revealing the factors that affect it. In particular, the study explored four key driving factors influencing organisational culture within the school context, namely leadership, parental involvement, individual personalities within the organisation, and market pressures. This study took on a qualitative nature which enabled insights and discovery from the research conducted through the inductive approach. The data obtained was done through semi-structured interviews engaging a varied group of 15 participants. These participants were a mixture of administrative and academic staff at the high school and came from different positions in the hierarchy. Some of the common themes that emerged from the research include leadership impact, employee and customer impact, drastic changes and overall policies, procedures and behaviours enabled at the school. These influence how organisational culture is generated and sustained in an organisation. These themes confirmed what was depicted in some of the literature but provided further detail that is not found in the aforementioned literature. Additionally, the research showed that many participants have concerns about the current state of the organisational culture. However, a few participants had positive perceptions about the future organisational culture in light of organisational changes to come. With all participants, it was clear that organisational culture is a noteworthy consideration as an employee and directly impacts the way that they experience the organisation. When it came to changing or improving organisational culture, most participants believed that it was possible but that it would take time and intention. It would be advised that another study on the organisation is done at a different period from now after the abovementioned changes are implemented.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

A driving force in the existence and running of an organisation is its success (Forster, 2006). Understandably, most organisations devote their efforts to organisational development and, in turn, often achieve success. In the journey to achieving this success, an important consideration is the organisational culture as literature has proven a link between organisational culture and success (Denison, cited in Forster 2006).

In fact, Du Toit (cited in Forster 2006) discovered that international organisations such as Coca-Cola, Starbucks and Disney are in alignment when attributing its stellar success to its organisational culture rather than technological, leadership or strategic manoeuvres. This is why many researchers have opted to delve into studies relating to the concept of organisational culture and it is also why it is a chosen area of interest for this research project.

Sun (2008) has described organisational culture as “software” which implies mechanisms which should be learnt or studied. This indicates that organisational managers and leaders should wilfully invest in uncovering and understanding this “software” in order to be successful. Interestingly, Killman (cited in Muriithi, 2021) states how one would have to look beneath the surface, at organisational culture, to uncover an organisation’s true essence. As such, organisational culture, at its core of being difficult to replicate, provides an organisation with competitive advantage (Muriithi, 2021).

However, understanding organisational culture is a critical step in organisational success yet only the first step in the journey. It does not develop or mature overnight; organisations are challenged to understand its cultural characteristics but also to consciously build on strengths and capabilities that make it work (Muriithi, 2021).

For this study, the organisation of focus will be a private school in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is a day high school, accommodating grades 8-12, which is underpinned by core values revolving around respect, responsibility and nurturing relationships whilst remaining agile. The school is more than two decades old, consisting of academic staff, admin staff, operations staff and students. As compared to other competitor private schools, it is a relatively new school.

The school has done very little preliminary research on organisational culture so there is value that this study can add – especially considering that it is a comparatively new school. The staff

is considered representative and diverse and this is also true of the students. Later, in the literature review, it will be demonstrated that the impact of such diversity has a significant impact on organisational culture (Naik, 2012). Furthermore, it is crucial to explore organisational culture factors for the school to ensure further financial success and to give it a sustained competitive advantage.

This chapter presents an overview of the study. It begins with a brief background to organisational culture as well as its relevance within the South African educational context. This is followed by a justification for the study and the statement of the research problem. In addition, the chapter further outlines the research aim, objectives and research questions. The chapter is concluded with a brief overview of the research methodology.

1.2. Background

A popular understanding of organisational culture in the literature comes from Schein who saw it as a group undertaking, using shared foundational assumptions to overcome any problems experienced when external adapting and internal incorporation meet (Schein, cited in Forster 2006). In essence, he had explained that culture is the manner in which things are done at an organisation (Schein, cited in Culbertson 2024). Additionally, it is - and has been - viewed as the shared values and belief systems of all employees within an organisation (Uttal, cited in Sun 2008).

Attempting to oversimplify this concept would be a massive error, though, as organisational culture is unique and a complex mixture of individuals' values and norms (Singh, cited in Naik 2012). Indeed, organisational culture is a concept that is intricate, rich, multi-faceted and plentiful (Forster, 2006). A research topic will fail to entertain a researcher if it lacks layers to uncover, ample literature and statistics to investigate and further research to add. Indeed, organisational culture can hardly be regarded as "light" or simple, touting its roots in anthropology, social psychology and sociology since the mid-60s (Durkhei, cited in Forster 2006). Since then, it has grown research wings fuelled by definitions and theories introduced by Ouchi, Schein and more (Forster, 2006).

In a South African school context, the literature lacks studies in organisational culture. Therefore, it is believed that this study will add value to the current body of organisational culture but, specifically, to the body that exists within the country's educational sector (Naik, 2012).

1.3. Justification of the Study

If this study is done, the organisation may experience a foundational - yet deeper - understanding of their current organisational culture which will have a number of benefits. Firstly, Willcoxson and Millett (2000) have highlighted that there is a perception of organisational culture's role in an organisation's success. Indeed, organisational culture (used interchangeably with the term "corporate culture") interestingly can be seen as "software" that needs to be studied by leaders due to its importance (Sun, 2008). For a school, specifically, Meskauskiene (2019) stated that even a school requires an organisational culture and that it is imperative for attaining all its objectives.

Secondly, to expand on the importance of this study around organisational culture, Hofstede (cited in Sun 2008) stated that a culture within an organisation influences humanistic behaviour and, ultimately, how people will act or think. If an organisation has a poor culture, one that is not defined clearly with the ability to maintain it, it will lead to employees that may act and react poorly. This will lead to inefficiencies in an organisation for the short and long term. The intention of the study is to identify the factors affecting the organisational culture so that it will lead to a greater understanding of what works and doesn't so that humanistic behaviours can thrive in the workplace.

As a school marketer, sitting on the executive team at this organisation, it is evident that it is a necessary step in enhancing the brand – internally and externally. One can foresee that investing in organisational culture – and this study – will result in changes in old behaviours, healthier patterns and a driven yet positive brand image created. With insight that would be available specifically to our organisation, it would help us leaders in cultivating the ideal dynamic within our organisation, facilitated by analysis, research and recommendations. Indeed, organisational culture prioritises, stabilises and generates reality and leaders need to understand their culture and think of the culture they aspire to (Genetzky-Haugen, 2010).

For other private or semi-private schools countrywide, as well, it's possible that these results and recommendations could be beneficial. This especially holds true since there is limited research on this specifically (as one will see when reading the literature review).

With this study, a healthy culture can be developed which will also lead to a strong sense of identity across the organisation. A competitive edge can also be realised through motivated employees, high employee morale (also leading to low staff turnover), productivity, creativity and innovative thinking and execution (Sun, 2008). The model of organisational culture that is

created, defined and activated by staff members will have a spillover effect on the culture that the students within the school adopt. Thus, the power of this study is all encompassing and affects various people, of all ages and creed, in this organisation.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

The main problem to be looked at in the study is the lack of clarity on what the actual determinants are that influence organisational culture. The organisation is unanimously unclear on what precisely impacts, builds or is damaging to its organisational culture. This is, seemingly, not a unique phenomenon as many organisations in South Africa (educational institutions in both the public and private sector, nonetheless) are struggling with organisational culture as a whole – especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ndelu and Utete, 2023). The studies that have been highlighted so far have shown that an organisational culture affects many elements in a business including the creativity of its employees (Makumbe, 2022). However, knowing the mere benefits and impact of an organisational culture on the organisation itself is not helpful if the factors affecting it are unclear.

It is important to further examine the domino effect that not knowing the factors affecting organisational culture will have. Firstly, not understanding what the factors are means that there is a level of unpredictability, an inability to govern what you don't know due to not entirely identifying them. If it becomes clear that something within the culture has to be fixed, changed or undone, it will be difficult to do so because the starting point (what is actually influencing it) is unclear. In an organisation like this, which is innovative and progressive, this could have an additional negative impact because instability within an organisational culture is considered the main problem to innovation failing (Ndelu and Utete, 2023).

Secondly, Maull, Brown and Cliffe (2000) have clearly detailed that organisational culture has an influence on daily operations, its overall workings, internal and external relationships as well as how staff will be treated by the organisational culture. By not clearly grasping what the influential factors are in the first place, it could wreak havoc on all the above by-products. It is also imperative to note that by understanding organisational culture, immediate success will not be instantly obtained but starts a process to address any issues and organisational culture can be mapped out to assist individual managers (Maull et al. 2000). Therefore, fully understanding organisational culture is still important and without doing so, the organisational leaders don't have a solid foundation or a guiding system to begin with. It becomes difficult to imagine a clear roadmap to success without it.

Currently, the organisation being researched does not have a full understanding of its organisational culture and the factors affecting them; this is a problem for the reasons outlined above. It is believed that broader conversations need to be had with various staff members to begin to understand it as this is not currently happening. In the educational environment, especially amongst private schools in Johannesburg, there is a fair share of staff turnover. Without us fulling the understanding of our organisational culture, we may be overlooking the possibility that our organisational culture is not strong enough yet to maximise job satisfaction.

1.5. Aims and Objectives

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the factors affecting the organisational culture in a high school in South Africa, based in Johannesburg.

Research Objectives

Objective 1: To explore the factors affecting organisational culture in a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Objective 2: To identify the factors affecting the organisational culture across different levels

Objective 3: To explore the challenges existing between the different levels of the hierarchy considering organisational culture factors.

Objective 4: Provide recommendations on how the organisation can develop and uphold a positive/healthy organisational culture.

The thought process around listing these specific objectives was to look at the proposed topic and aim. From there, the aim is to break down the aim into singular objectives which would ultimately help address the aim.

1.6. Research Questions

The following questions will form part of the study:

Research Question 1: What are the factors affecting organisational culture in a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa?

Research Question 2: What are the factors influencing the organisational culture across different levels?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges that exist between the different levels of the hierarchy?

Research Question 4: What are the recommendations on how the organisation can develop and uphold a positive/healthy organisational culture?

In order to arrive at the research questions, the objectives were assessed and then transformed into questions.

1.7. Research Methodology

Considering the nature of the topic, organisational culture, (values, emotions, beliefs of people) and its inherent complexity with people and behaviours, the Social Constructivism approach will be employed for this study (Creswell, 2018).

The research design used for this study will be qualitative since it supports the ability to be flexible, probe emotions and enables a researcher to infiltrate layers of speech possibly linked to organisational culture. By its nature, this is the inductive approach as it is not testing theory but rather more exploratory for understanding (Creswell, 2018). In terms of sample, we are looking at approximately fifteen individuals and their data would be analysed using the thematic data method.

Given that this was a very people-oriented research study, it is pivotal to provide participants with a safe space and this can be done so by ensuring them that their information will be confidential. They could not be forced or feel forced to participate in the study (Chetty, 2016). Overall, they should not feel disrespected (Chetty, 2016). During the research process, ethical clearance was sought from University of KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, a consent form was sent to participants prior to the interview so they do not feel blind-sided.

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter provides an overview and background to the research study. It stipulates the importance of understanding organisational culture and how its linked to organisational success and competitiveness. Additionally, the reasons why it could add value in an educational setting is highlighted. An overview of the study motivation, research problem, objectives and questions were also provided. The next chapter examines the literature on organisational culture.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Organisational culture is nothing short of a universal phenomenon in its intricacies and similarities. From small schools to big corporates, it is a complex topic and undertaking with people going through their entire careers without understanding it, let alone mastering it. Why it is to be mastered in the first place, is key.

The culture of an organisation is instrumental for its effectiveness and efficiency (Veerankutty & Rehna 2020, p.1). Core values, norms and procedures make up the DNA of organisational culture and significantly determines and controls employees' behaviour (Veerankutty & Rehna, 2020, p.2). This chapter explores the origins of organisational culture and all relevant sub-topics.

2.2. Background

There are various attempts at defining and explaining the concept of organisational culture. The term, "organisational culture" was once coined by an ex-military psychologist named Elliot Jacques who viewed it as a customary, shared and traditional way thinking and performing activities (Pincus, 2023). A key component of this explanation is that this way of thinking and behaving is shared amongst the group almost entirely.

Pettigrew (1979) published a critical, foundational study on organisational culture (Culbertson 2024, p.36). This provided a foundation which paved the way for further meanings through combining culture, beliefs and rituals. With time, researchers combined concepts from anthropology and sociology to further understand behaviours of employees in organisations (Culbertson 2024, p.36).

Famously, Schein has referred to organisational culture as patterns of shared group assumptions as the group learns how to cope with various problems (Kucharska & Bedford, 2019). Organisational culture, which is also used interchangeably with "company culture", can also be viewed as a habit which applies to an organisation (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Interestingly, it has also been described as the personality of an organisation (Whelan, 2016).

Deal and Kennedy (cited in Gebretsadik 2022) also very simply explained that organisational culture is also how promotions are given, decision-making, dress codes of employees and even

what activities are done; this is why it's so crucial. Moreover, organisational culture is the glue in the organisation, holding the various parts together whilst simultaneously attaining goals.

Muriithi (2021) also described it as a collective will of all employees, created by organisations that ultimately leads to shared expectations - expectations which develops norms and rules, driving performance and non-performance. It is enough to conclude, then, that organisational culture plays a pivotal, ongoing role in any organisation.

Akpa, Asikhia and Nneji (2021) showed that although there are many ways to describe and define organisational culture and that they generally have four common, overarching traits. First, they tend to have a sharing undertone which implies that organisational culture occurs in groups. Then, it also appears to be a social construct relative to location, history, working environment and events.

Third, the definitions generally speak to the concept being multidimensional and complex, with symbols and cognitive elements. The fourth and final common thread is that organisational culture is holistic, determined by historical leaders, has an anthropological element to it (for example, symbols and rituals), is a social construct and is difficult to change (Akpa et al. 2021, p.263).

Through evaluating different definitions, there appears to be some indication that organisational culture can have cognitive and behavioural aspects (Gasela 2022, p.2). Whilst there is debate on whether it is one or the other, this study focuses on the belief that it is both of cognitive and behavioural nature (Gasela 2022, p.3).

2.3. Organisational Culture: Variable vs Metaphor

Due to its complexity, organisational culture is a topic that can be deeply debated. One aspect of the debate is about whether organisational culture is a variable or metaphor (Whelan 2016, p.584). On one end of this debate is the view of organisational culture as a variable and on the other end, the view is that it is a metaphor.

Simply put, some view organisational culture as something an organisation has whereas others view it as something an organisation actually is (Whelan 2016, p.585). This blurs the lines and further complicates accurately defining the concept. However, the more popular view is that culture is something that an organisation has, existing in the organisation. This means that organisational culture can be found and analysed (Whelan 2016, p.585).

Despite this, there are still researchers that prefer to use organisational culture as a tool that provides insight into organisational life rather than take the variable route (Whelan 2016, p.586). However, there is still plenty value to be found in taking the approach of analysing culture as a variable.

2.4. Theorists, Models and Perspectives: Organisational Culture

This section will focus on various perspectives in the literature on organisational culture. This serves as a foundation in understanding the various dimensions and schools of thought surrounding organisational culture. Whilst they are plentiful, the focus will be on the following:

- Ouchi and Theory Z (1981)
- Schein's Organisational Theory (1984)
- School Culture (1985)
- Hofstede and Organisational Culture (1991)
- Deal and Kennedy – The Four Prototypes (1982)
- The Denison Model (1996)
- Organisational Culture as an Independent and Dependant Variable (2001)
- The Iceberg Model (1976)
- The Behavioural Norms Model (2024)
- Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy (1999)
- Handy's Model (1976)

2.4.1. Ouchi and Theory Z

Ouchi (cited in Culbertson, 2024) realised an organisational theory and named it Theory Z which primarily focused on building trust with employees but also on employee well-being. He believed that when an organisation focused on the well-being of their employees, productivity would increase and so, too, would profits.

Sharma and Sharma (2024) claimed that varying research has shown that Theory Z serves as a base for decision-making and trust; it is also shown that organisational culture is key dimension of the theory. Gupta (cited in Sharma & Sharma 2024, p.2) has also alluded to the point that Theory Z is applicable to numerous professions including those in the educational sector. Theory Z has also brought to light the aspects of human resource management and the consequences thereof for organisational culture (Sharma & Sharma 2024, p.2).

2.4.2. Schein's Organisational Theory

Schein is a very popular scholar in the organisational culture field. Culbertson (2024) recollected Schein's popular definition of organisational culture – when presented with problems and in an effort to solve them, groups would find a pattern of shared assumptions which was then handed down to new members of the group. Additionally, it's simply the way things are done at an organisation and becomes the perspective of the employees when assessing the organisation.

Schein (cited in Culbertson 2024, p.14) looked at three levels of organisational culture – artifacts, values and assumptions. The first (artifacts) referred to the physical parts in an organisation which relays the culture – these are symbols ranging from dress code to imagery. These are things that can be heard, seen and are tangible (van Schaik, 2023).

The second (values) are the claims made by organisations which may or may not manifest in reality and can be developed through learning shared by employees. Relational meanings are pertinent here and they are referred to as espoused values (van Schaik, 2023). In fact, it is not uncommon for organisation's espoused values to be viewed as contradictory.

The third (assumptions) are powerful because they define the organisation, are hard to change and also forms a template with which employees make daily decisions with. Assumptions gathered from various employees forms the basis of organisational culture (van Schaik 2023, p.3). Assumptions impact the organisation's way of thinking as a sort of anchor, defining the overall objective, focus and reasoning (van Schaik 2023, p.20).

Values and assumptions, as a combination, are particularly worth taking note of as they help organisations' employees make sense of their environment as opposed to focusing on the physical “artifacts” which can actually be misleading (Culbertson 2024, p.28).

2.4.3. School Culture

Schein's organisational theory model created a foundation for “school culture” (Culbertson 2024, p.29). Similar to how various researchers have defined (either in a complex or simple form) organisational culture, so too has been the case for school culture. Regardless of the various definitions, it has been clear that school culture as a concept is unique and requires the necessary attention when looking at values, norms and rituals (Culbertson 2024, p.29). After studying multiple schools, Deal and Peterson (cited in Culbertson 2024, p.29) defined school culture as rituals and traditions in the school that develop over time as teachers, students and

all other staff members collaborate. Since school culture was a result of organisational culture, there are many similarities. Many can agree that it does take a long time to develop and, as such, a long time to change.

2.4.4. Hofstede and Organisational Theory

Hofstede (cited in Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.3) has described organisational culture as a distinguishing concept for different organisations. He had also believed that national culture influenced corporate culture and that corporate culture affected knowledge sharing. Famously, Hofstede believed that organisational culture could be measured by five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and long-term orientation (Kucharska & Denise, 2019, p.3).

Power Distance, as the first dimension, refers to the extent to which organisational members from the lower end of the hierarchy accept that power is distributed unequally amongst them. In low power distance cultures, subordinates are able to consult and even confront their bosses readily whereas a high-power distance does not have these elements. A high power distance culture may present employees who don't respect or fear older colleagues or leaders (Hofstede 2011, p.9).

Uncertainty avoidance, the second dimension, refers to the extent to which organisational members feel threatened by what is unknown or ambiguous (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.4). Different from risk avoidance, this is specific to the extent in which an organisation conditions its employees to be comfortable in undefined situations (Hofstede 2011, p.10). Cultures that have a high uncertainty avoidance, like to share their knowledge and collaborate in an effort to avoid the uncertain (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.4). In an organisational culture with high uncertainty avoidance, there may be higher stress and anxiety as compared to an organisational culture with low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 2011, p.10).

The third dimension, individualism/collectivism, refers to how strong or loosely the bonds between organisational members exist (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.3). For example, with the individualism culture, people feel that they need to take care of themselves and so, the bonds between each other are loose. The opposite is true for a collectivism culture in which group goals are achieved because the individuals are all willing to work together as a team (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.3).

The fourth dimension, masculinity, refers to the dominating male role model in differing societies (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.3). In a masculine society, traits are seen as male-like – such as being assertive, dominant and strong. In a feminine society, traits such as supportiveness, care and being relationship-oriented is present (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.5). Whilst the former does not work in favour of sharing knowledge and collaborating, the latter has been associated with possible job satisfaction through pay and material self-accomplishment (Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.5).

The last dimension refers to whether a company is more present-oriented or future-oriented – this is known as long-term orientation. Yoo et al. (cited in Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.5) developed this concept to measure this at an individual level. Ford and Chan (cited in Kucharska & Denise 2019, p.5) discovered that members of a future-oriented culture tend to collaborate and share knowledge.

Hofstede's model has value in it as it allows us to compare and evaluate various traits across different organisations. This not only has power locally but in international business as well. Additionally, there is value in referring to this model for diverse settings as well as different sub-cultures.

Hofstede (cited in Sun 2008, p.138), additionally developed the well-known “Onion Diagram” where he allocated culture into four layers as represented in Figure 1:

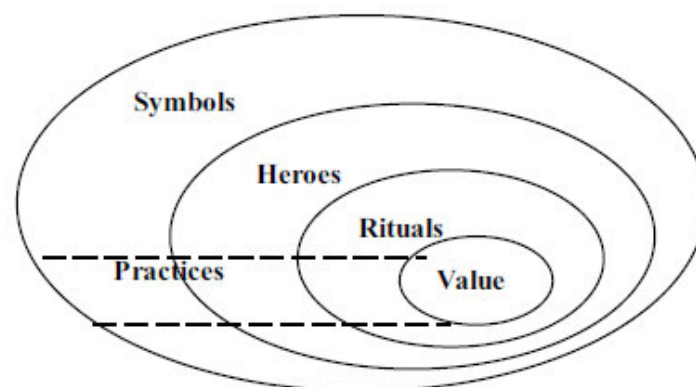


Figure 2.1: Onion Diagram

Source: Sun (2008), P139

As per Figure 1, values are the innermost portion of the culture diagram. They are closely linked to morals and ethics but also guide employees on what they think should be done as well as likes and dislikes for employers and employees (Sun 2008, p.139). Collective activities can

be portrayed by the rituals layer whilst the heroes part refers to individuals with favourable traits, such as those who have a motivating trait (Sun 2008, p.139). Words, acts, gestures and objects are captured by the symbols layer (Sun 2008, p.139).

2.4.5. Deal and Kennedy - The Four Prototypes

Deal and Kennedy (cited in Culbertson 2024, p.37) created four prototypes of organisational culture. The first prototype (the tough-guy macho) referred to cultures where high risk was enjoyed, there was immediate feedback and enthusiasm. The second prototype (the work hard/play hard) described organisations where there were low risk, high energy and fast feedback. The third prototype (bet-your-company) referred to organisations with high risk, long-term results but delayed feedback. The fourth prototype (process) described cultures where there is low risk but also slow feedback.

2.4.6. The Denison Model



Figure 2.2: The Denison Model

Source: Chau et al. (2021), P13

The Denison Model highlighted four key traits that is pivotal for an organisation to excel at – Mission, Adaptability, Involvement and Consistency (Chau, Thach, Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). These four traits are used to assess and measure the organisational culture’s behaviours which are driven by beliefs and assumptions which lie at the centre of his model.

The research has shown that thriving organisations have high scores in all four traits when being assessed (Chau et al., 2021). So, one can conclude that successful and effective organisations must be adaptable, consistent, have high involvement and possess a clear, shared mission across the organisation.

2.4.7. Organisational Culture as an Independent and Dependant Variable

Culture can be seen as an independent variable which may be added into the organisation, desirable traits which can be readily added or incorporated into the current organisation (Maull, Brown & Cliffe 2001, p.3). With this view, organisational culture is seen as some ideal formula which organisations can take and apply.

With the dependant variable view, organisational culture is a result of the organisation's history, growth and present circumstances. It is also distinct since each organisation will end up creating unique artifacts, rituals and products. This take specifically highlights the socio-cultural element (Maull et al. 2001, p.3). Both perspectives are accepted by different groups.

2.4.8. The Iceberg Model: Using the Iceberg Model to Examine Culture

Although created for overall strategic and managerial assistance, The Iceberg Model can be quite helpful in determining hidden cultural elements (Biewendt, Blaschke & Bohnert, 2021). Simply put, even organisational culture has elements that can be easily detected (above water in the case of a literal iceberg) as well as elements that are not so easily visible (below the surface and the hidden part of the iceberg). The main point to note here is that if organisations want to fully create an effective culture, an examination of what is below the surface is necessary.

2.4.9. The Behavioural Norms Model

The Behavioural Norms Model is a popular framework for understanding organisational culture since it alludes to behavioural norms that shape the organisational culture which ultimately guides employees on how to act. As one can imagine, if this is used correctly, there is a common understanding of what behaviours are acceptable or not which creates a unified, healthy culture (Bogale & Debela, 2024). More on this model will be covered later in this chapter.

2.4.10. Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy Culture

Cameron and Quinn (cited in Aktas, Cicek & Kiyak 2011, p.1561) developed four widely recognised dominant culture types. These were Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy. These types, derived from their framework, also considers whether the culture is external or internal focused (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1561).

The Clan culture leans towards a healthy culture centred around teamwork, mentorship, collaboration and stabilisation (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1562). It is typically seen as an extended family within the organisation (Gebretsadik, 2022). Within this culture, there is a sense of belonging. The leaders that fit in well with this culture are considered mentors and parent figures (Gebretsadik 2022, p.14).

The Adhocracy culture involves taking risks, is unstable and fleeting. It is active during a task, tapers away in between, then re-emerges during a new project start or activity (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1562). Its nature is temporary. However, the positives are that it provides employees with plenty opportunities for development and leaders are considered advanced and visionaries (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1562).

With the Market Culture, the focus is on the external environment more than the internal environment. The competitive organisation's aim is to make profits through competition and as such, internal relationships often take a backseat (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1562). Leaders that fit well here are truly competitors, typically tough and demanding of employees (Gebretsadik 2022, p.14).

With the Hierarchy Culture, a unique organisational structure present with firm rules, clear control and defined roles/responsibilities. Employees that succeed here are those that achieve their tasks as originally laid out for them and who contribute to the stability in the organisation (Aktas et al. 2011, p.1563). Leaders considered efficient in organisations with this culture are good organisers (Gebretsadik 2022, p.14).

One can conclude that organisations may be able to identify which culture they fit with or, at the very least, which mix of organisational cultures they resonate with. Moreover, they could become curious about which culture they most want to be emulate and take steps accordingly. The steps to move into the desired organisational culture is covered later in the chapter.

2.4.11. Handy's Model

Patnaik (2011, p.80) examined a study by Charles Handy which was based on work done by Roger Harrison centred around organisational culture and structure. The four types have been described as per the below:

Power Culture can be explained as a web of sorts (Idowu 2021, p.10). This means that from the centre of the organisation, power erupts to different parts of the organisation. This type of culture is particularly common in smaller organisations. Rules are few in this organisation and it tends to be quite political (Patnaik 2011, p.80).

In a Role Culture, structures are very defined with specific delegated authorities and also encompass hierarchical bureaucracies (Patnaik 2011, p.80). Additionally, a person's power is derived from the position that they hold. In other words, role descriptions, definitions of authority as well as procedures establish control. It is predictable and stable but also slow to implement change – if they even identify it (Idowu 2021, p.10).

With a Task Culture, Idowu (2021) stated that this type of culture is more job oriented in that employees work as a team towards a common goal and power, which is expertise, is only used when required. A matrix structure may be present here with many reporting lines. The approach is that of small team with plentiful skills and expertise. It is also referred to as a “net” culture because different parts of the organisation come together to form task and project teams (Patnaik 2011, p.80).

Last is the Person Culture in which the employees consider themselves superior to the organisational itself (Idowu 2021, p.11). These organisations struggle to be sustainable since it would need employees working together towards the organisation's goals. Instead, it finds itself in a position where it cannot measure up to its competitors (Patnaik 2011, p.80).

2.5. Organisational Culture: Integrated, Differentiated or Fragmented

Whelan (2016, p.585) alluded to another debate about organisational culture: whether it exists at an integrated level, differentiated level or fragmented level. With the first perspective which is the integrated perspective, culture is seen as a shared concept involving values, beliefs, attitudes and norms. It is a strong culture due to its shared nature and accurately reflects the values and goals as dictated by senior leaders.

Then, he explains that the second perspective which is the differentiated perspective and looks at culture as something that is not integrated within the whole organisation but instead has values, beliefs, attitudes and norms found in subcultures. These typically exist in different departments in the organisation (Whelan 2016, p.585).

The third perspective which was known as the fragmented perspective, showcased the angle of culture being too complex to examine and make sense of regardless of whether it involves scholars or employees. Schein (cited in Whelan 2016, p.586) believed that some organisations will have a culture that is integrated in nature whereas others will experience a culture which is more differentiated. To add to this, he mentioned that the larger the organisation is, the more likely it is to have a differentiated culture. With these definitions of organisational culture, researchers are better able to understand the sensitivities of cultural change and the possibilities thereof (Whelan 2016, p.586).

2.6. The Importance of Organisational Culture

The functioning of an organisation depends on organisational culture (Karan 2023, p.1). When a culture is strong, everyone in the organisation is on track. Culture helps categorise knowledge into what is logical, interchangeable and manageable; this knowledge is also expressed through the employees in the organisation and culture will ultimately determine how it will be used (Karan 2023, p.15).

Organisational culture gives the organisation its identity; it provides a lens to an organisation on how it will solve its problems (Karan 2023, p.16). Culture explains issues from the outside and also allows for a localisation of external learnings. With the culture present at an organisation, employees, too, are able to develop their own sense of identity which in turn influences the organisation (Karan 2023, p.16).

When it comes to behaviours, organisational culture serves as a framework for employee behaviour, governing attitudes and behaviours of employees with the use of beliefs, values and rules (Karan 2023, p.16). When ethics is intertwined with the organisational culture, this sets the tone for how employees behave internally and how they will be judged externally. The organisational culture will or will not create ethical behaviour from employees. From the outside, customers and society at large are able to gauge information about the organisation's culture. The public is able to determine where the organisation is in terms of achieving their goals with the people that they have (Karan 2023, p.16).

As American organisations investigated their lack of performance as compared to their Japanese counterparts, more attention was given to organisational culture (Akpa et al. 2021, p.363). The concept became a serious topic in the business world as books by authors such as Ouchi were released in the eighties (Akpa et al. 2021, p.363). The books strongly alluded to organisational performance being closely related to corporate culture and that by managing the latter, a company's competitive advantage could be improved (Akpa et al. 2021, p.363). Similarly, Makumbe (2022), pointed out that culture is a predictor for many organisational variables, including competitive edge/advantage.

Although an increasing interest arose around culture in organisations, Muriithi (2021) disagreed to an extent with the above. She claimed that despite its importance to leadership and management, effective communication, behaviour, risk management, innovation and overall profitability and effectiveness, there is still a gap in the literature around clear links between organisational culture and competitive edge.

To begin analysing and defining an organisation's competitive advantage, strategic planning needs to occur first. Even on a foundational level, at the planning stage, organisational culture is critical. This is due to organisational culture being pinpointed as an essential component of organisational strategy (Whittington, Angwin, Regner, Johnson & Scholes 2023, p.480). In fact, culture is a part of strategy and, therefore, helps to define it (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.480). One can conclude, then, that when there is a weak organisational culture, this infiltrates deep into the organisation and is also reflected in the strategy.

To be competitive, there should be something unique about the organisation, something distinctive and difficult to imitate in the way things are done – this in itself is fuelled by its organisational culture. A strong organisational culture facilitates competitive edge (Whittington et al. 2023, p.480). Indeed, it is the glue that bonds employees and a system together in order to produce innovative work, propelling leaders in an organisation (Khan, Ismail, Hussain & Alghazali, 2020).

Furthermore, since organisational culture can be considered the behaviours and assumptions of employees in an organisation, it makes sense that if the employees are not committed to a strategy (after the planning stage) and have different assumptions about what is crucial, strategy implementation would fail. This was echoed by Hough et al., 2008 (cited in Gasela 2022) who explained that there are eight organisational factors influencing strategy implementation –

strategy/purpose, leadership style, processes and systems, resources, staff skills, strategic outcome and shared values (organisational culture).

If an organisation wishes to change their strategy to better their competitiveness, so too will there be a need for change in organisational culture. This change element will be covered in detail later in this chapter but is necessary to facilitate competitive edge.

Sustainable competitive advantage is the ultimate goal when looking at competitiveness and longevity. Whilst competitive advantage may be temporary, sustainable competitive advantage stands the test of time, opposing efforts by competitors. By nature, organisational culture can be difficult to imitate and the more complex, tacit and specific it is, the more sustainable the competitive advantage (Muriithi, 2021).

Kim and Jung (2023) also alluded to the importance of organisational culture in relation to employee performance. They claimed that it directly correlated to employee effectiveness and efficiency and that the organisation's culture will determine how employees perform and engage; this is because an organisational culture will ultimately dictate how employees operate. Therefore, if customers being prioritised aren't a notable trait within organisational culture, employees are likely to perform accordingly. Similarly, if the organisational culture does not promote accountability, this will be seen in the attitudes of employees and their resulting performance.

A stealthy organisational culture emphasises shared values and goals – it creates employees that are readily aligned, that know which direction to take in varying circumstances because they would align to the shared mission and goals (Kim & Jung 2023, p.3). In similar fashion, Narayana (cited in Kim & Jung 2023, p.3), proved that successful companies have widely shared beliefs that are held together by structure and strategy.

From a revenue perspective, it was also pointed out that organisations with healthier organisational cultures were better off (Kim & Jung 2023, p.3). Similarly, several researchers have attested that culture affects various dimensions of organisational effectiveness – this being market share, sales, ROI, profit and overall productivity (Gebretsadik, 2020).

Organisational culture also has a profound impact on employee well-being, employee retention and overall performance (Monteiro & Joseph 2023, p.293). It has been proven that positive organisational cultures which encompass traits such as trust, leadership, open communication and teamwork enable healthy employee well-being, job satisfaction and performance

(Monteiro & Joseph 2023, p.292). This is somewhat echoed in research that shows that engaged employees are a result of a healthy organisational culture and this also affects performance (Culbertson, 2024).

Conversely, if there are dissatisfactory organisational cultures present, characterised by conflict, stress and toxic behaviours, this has a significantly negative effect on employee well-being. Therefore, culture has to be prioritised in an organisation or the cost begins with employee well-being and the domino effect it will bring (Monteiro & Joseph, 2023).

Kim and Jung (2023) also point out that employee motivation is also dependant on organisational culture in that if employees feel a sense of belonging, there are more likely to commit to organisational goals. Feeling like they are part of the organisation, creates belonging which also ties up to Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs; this alludes to employees' needs and happiness in the fulfilment thereof.

2.7. Organisational Culture and Diversity

Whilst commonly known forms of diversity include that of race, age and gender, other emerging elements of diversity include those tied to appearance such as weight, attractiveness, disabilities, etc. and these create problems in the workplace for affected individuals (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.80). A major problem is that an unwelcoming organisational culture is formed and affected individuals are ostracised.

When such an awkward and uncomfortable culture exists, affected individuals are left with psychological and physiological damage (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.64). Instead of focusing on other aspects of their work, they may strive to prove their "worth" in an effort to be included in the established culture (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.64).

When members of diverse work groups suspect a culture that is unwelcoming, they tend to react at work in ways synonymous with hostility, drawing associations with certain individuals, out of frustration due to being unable to articulate what is happening, being embarrassed and in pain as well as being rageful (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.64). These are organisational red flags which are born from an unwelcoming organisational culture, begging for the urgent attention from leaders.

Typically, organisational culture across various pieces of literature has been described in ways relating to it being values, norms and beliefs about expected conduct and behaviour. However, three unique forms of organisational culture had been introduced by Sandra E. Spataro (2005)

which had a specific focus on diversity. These three ways include culture of differentiation, culture of unity and culture of integration (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.61).

In the first type of culture, culture of differentiation, values that are either positive or negative are placed on salient, differentiating characteristics (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.61). A highly qualified person, for example, may be placed in a higher ranking of being different whereas a person on the spectrum might be ranked lower. In this culture, those like the highly qualified person will enjoy different treatment and even privileges due to the positive state of difference as compared to someone who is viewed as negatively different. This also impacts performance on individuals who are negatively ranked (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.61).

In a culture of integration, organisations readily welcome and are energised by the various outlooks that would come with diversity. It is seen as a value-adding feature (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.61). Lastly, we have the culture of unity which is about having an identity which is common across the board. For example, in a professional that is dominated mostly by males or females, there is a risk of a specific culture being engrained which ends up being slow to change.

The central theme here is diversity and the focus it should bring with regards to organisational culture. Familiar traits of diversity in the workplace include disabilities and marital status, however, organisations are encouraged to recognise that more individual traits of diversity exist such as physical appearance. New and evolving forms of difference will and should continuously challenge organisational cultures to change (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.61).

Stereotyping, prejudices and discrimination, in all its various forms, refer to unfair social practices, values, attitudes and/or beliefs (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.84). This often creates scenarios in which certain individuals or groups do not receive the desired fair treatment. Ultimately, unfairness in the workplace leads to feelings of oppression which directly impacts the culture for these diverse groups (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.62). Therefore, within this aspect of organisational culture, it appears that the term is actually a system in which rites are denied based on biases and prejudices (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.62).

Oppression culture is then maintained through social networking systems (organisational social culture), allowing prejudices and biases to thrive, creating a never-ending cycle of unfair social behaviours – fostering exclusion and alienation. The aforementioned organisational social culture will, ultimately dictate who is accepted and who is not – ultimately impacting the latter in a myriad of ways. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all organisations to facilitate a climate

which welcomes all individuals regardless of any differences – one that has respect and not hostility (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.62).

2.8. Unhealthy Organisational Culture

An organisational culture can become toxic easily and through various ways. By nature of what organisational culture is, it is easy to deduce that once an organisational culture has been established, it spreads – to other employees as well as to newcomers. Byrd and Scott (2024, p.61) note that culture plays a role in overall organisation behaviour, from individuals to groups. This behaviour has a profound impact on organisational climate, the interactions among employees as they react and accept members entering the organisation (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.62).

An organisational culture can either curb or enhance deviant behaviour such as going against recognised standards which has been proven by extensive studies (Ruslan, Wahat, Ismail and Ismail, 2024). An organisation that has more market and hierarchy cultures tend to witness more deviance whereas clan and adhocracy cultures see fewer deviant behaviours.

Sull, Sull and Zweig (2022) stated that culture is a significant driver of resignations. It was discovered that a large percentage of employees may consider leaving their jobs and consequently leave in batches over time. Mass resignations may baffle leaders as they make sense of each resignation.

Sull et al. (2022) analysed what was a great resignation period in the U.S during 2021 – 34 million profiles were examined. What was discovered was that industry trends could be tied to a number of resignations and can explain some of the variations across organisations, however, organisations that are known to have “healthy cultures” had lower-than-average turnover rates that their industry counterparts.

Whilst salaries and wages are often touted as the main driver behind resignations, the study highlighted that monetary considerations were ranked surprisingly low as reasons for leaving (Sull et al., 2022). It was concluded, thereafter, that pay was only moderately impactful with regards to turnover. What was particularly noteworthy is that a toxic organisational culture is 10.4 times more powerful than pay in predicting an organisation’s attrition rate (Sull et al., 2022).

The study also alluded to main elements that contribute to toxic culture and they were not promoting diversity, inclusion and equity, disrespect in the workplace and unethical behaviour

(Sull et al., 2022). This is echoed by van Steenberg et al., (2021) who stated that a root cause of unethical behaviour is an organisation's culture.

Anjum and Ming (2018) stated that unhealthy work environments typically have an organisational culture which contains dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. This would need to be corrected especially in the times we live in where human resources directly correlates with growth and innovation. Leaders should be able to pick up these organisational red flags and address them or suffer the innovative consequences (Anjum & Ming, 2018).

Forbes (2025) mentions these red flags in an organisation which signals a need for cultural change:

- High rate of turnover
- Declining employee engagement
- Lack of accountability with finger-pointing
- Unresolved conflict that endures
- Employee hesitation to speak up or share ideas
- Deficient decision-making and too much bureaucracy
- Teams opposing authority and leaders being avoided

The above are useful and powerful indicators of a need for cultural change due to serious misalignment.

Since organisational culture and climate are closely related terms, it is important to note that a healthy organisational culture will typically have a healthy organisational climate. The opposite is also true and an unhealthy climate or environment can cause significant physical and mental distress in the workplace (Karan, 2023).

2.9. Healthy Organisational Culture

Nabella, Rivaldo, Kurniawan, Sari, Luran, Saputra, Rizki, Sova, Sidik and Wulandari (2022) believed that a strong and unique organisational culture influenced the success of an organisation. Organisations may have different subcultures and something important can be deduced from them. It has been seen that in organisations that fail that subcultures differ from one another or that cultures present are held back from evolving due to past cultures (Nabella et al. 2022, p.123).

A healthy organisational culture breeds a healthy environment containing productive employees and maintained performance (Sugiarti, Finatariani & Rahman 2021, p.222). In such an environment, employees should take care of each other, display kindness, facilitate various ways of effective working and offer support to each other in pursuit of the common goal (Sugiarti et al. 2021, p.222). Additionally, a culture of accountability is advised by researchers (Rachmad, 2022).

Wu et al. (2021) spoke of the impact organisational culture has on mental health. Most companies have deeply embedded behavioural patterns due to established organisational structures which manifest as power relationships and political constructs. These patterns of behaviour impact other organisational factors and behaviours which in turn determine the organisational culture (Wu et al., 2021).

Creating an organisational culture which is supportive in nature is critical in improving employees' mental health (Wu et al., 2021). In order to create healthy behaviours which will feed into organisational culture, there should be agile mental health resources and support sponsored by the organisation.

Furthermore, workplace policies and procedures are critical in preventing and eliminating toxic behaviours (Wu et al., 2021). These include policies and training which address everything from workplace violence to bullying and discrimination. By putting these policies, teachings and procedures in place, toxic behaviours can be reduced. This is critical to foster a healthy organisational culture which in turn will curb long-term suffering, negativity and turnover (Wu et al., 2021). Leadership support, too, can assist in reducing turnover by addressing mental health concerns.

In 2025, in a post-COVID19 world, it is important to also consider implications for organisational culture for teams that often work remotely from each other and do not have the benefit of regular face-to-face sit-downs. Arena, Hines and Golden (2023) researched specific ways to have an efficient and effective organisational culture even within a hybrid environment. These included incorporating modelling behaviour, teaching on the periphery, engaging local masters, building mutually valuable connections, facilitating appropriate behavioural spillover and cultivating positive energy.

2.10. Organisational Culture and the Probability of Change

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in order to change strategy and implement it successfully, changing organisational culture is an inevitable step. In order to do so, the following steps are recommended:

Determining the required culture: Once the organisation's leaders are clear about the strategy, there needs to be discussions on what the new, required culture would look like – this needs to be clearly envisioned in order to move to the next step (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.50). Forbes (2025) also highlights the need for honesty at this stage, objectively identifying what currently exists.

Analysing the gap between existing culture and required culture: Inevitably, there will be a gap between what exists and the desired organisational state – this needs to be determined clearly (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.50).

Plan Development: A plan must be developed, step by step, to achieve the desired organisational culture state (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.51).

Plan Implementation: This stage involves implementing the developed plan, incorporating the “four Rs” – *recruiting* new employees and managers that align with the new culture, *retrain* the current employees and managers aligning to the new culture, *reward* desired behaviours expected in the new culture (this includes promotions, incentives and increases) and *reinforcement* in the form of celebrating positive behaviours, transparent communications from leaders, dress code and branding changes (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.51).

Cultural Change Review: Organisational leaders need to review the organisational culture change and make more changes if necessary. After all, culture isn't just set out and spoken about, it is reaffirmed over time (Whittington, et al. 2023, p.51). In fact, this was affirmed by Byrd and Scott (2024, p.66) who alluded to “cultural audits” being required in organisations where tones and attitudes of employees are periodically and consistently assessed. Metrics can also be incorporated into the review stage with key indicators being monitored (Forbes, 2025).

Knowing *what* to do is part of the process – the other part of the process is optimising the plan with individuals of influence. Senior leaders and managers are responsible for the transformation of culture into one that embraces the various forms of diversity in the workplace; from relaying the sentiment to creating action plans, executives and all other organisational leaders must create this transformation and inclusion (Byrd & Scott 2024, p.67).

Perhaps some decisions are easier than others; indeed, one of the most challenging experiences they will face is changing organisational culture (Karapancheva, 2020).

Byrd and Scott (2024, p.63) also add that Human Resource specialists are particularly crucial in designing a curriculum which is educational in nature because with this education, leaders are that much more equipped in correctly and adequately creating inclusive environments for all to thrive in. This will create opportunities for all individuals to better their performance in the organisation.

Anjum and Ming (2018) raised an important point in all change considerations: for the most part, organisational culture is driven from the top-down (leaders to the rest of the organisation). This implies that if leaders do not find a need to change the organisational culture and/or do not pick up the urgent changes that need to be made, change will inevitably become very difficult.

Another consideration for cultural change is the likelihood that organisational culture can actually change. There are three perspectives in this area (Whelan 2016, p.586). The first perspective alludes to cultural change being possible if senior management put specific interventions in place. The second perspective argues that the opposite is true – an organisation cannot easily change its culture by design given the complex nature of it. The third perspective is on the other side of the spectrum arguing that organisational culture cannot be controlled due to the concept being metaphorical in nature (Whelan 2016, p.586).

Another outlook on probability of change is the type of culture. Malik and Garg (cited in Olafsen, Smedsrud & Kamaric, 2021) proposed that learning cultures typically had a strong commitment to change and showed employee resilience. The study further explained that learning cultures were similar to flexible organisations.

Organisations with flexibility like Clan and Adhocracy cultures showed a more positive correlation with organisational change (Olafsen et al., 2021). This was explained by the nature of the cultures in that change is to be expected and thus employees in these cultures will naturally feel more positive towards it. However, the opposite is also true in that cultures characterised by stability like Market and Hierarchy cultures see change as a disturbance or hindrance rather than something to be embraced (Olafsen et al., 2021).

Another aspect that influences the probability of change is individuals' values and how they relate to their environment (Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.526). Values are said to guide

individuals as they navigate their environment and decide if it is right for them. In decision-making, how important a value is to an individual is what plays a big role in this process; this directly affects behaviour (Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.517).

Values also invoke attention to a particular situation or act that will affect their goals; it also affects how scenarios and behaviours are interpreted in relation to their own personal goal (Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.519). Feather (cited in Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.538) adds that values influence whether choices and actions are attractive and that actions that enable their goal attainment are immediately attractive whereas the opposite is true if they inhibit them.

What controls the link between behaviour and values is personal experience and the culture that they find themselves in (Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.538). Culture curbs the strength of links between behaviour and values through other angles; where there is a loose culture, employees are more likely to feel that their personal values can heavily link to their behaviours and the opposite can be witnessed where there is a tight culture in which the organisation's norms and values are prioritised regardless of employee inclinations (Sagiv & Schwartz 2022, p.538).

2.11. Organisational Culture in a Post-COVID Era

Research has alluded to organisational culture having gone through transformation in the years after the global COVID-19 outbreak (Pelegriin & Munoz 2024, p.25). It responds to the new era of uncertainty and strained well-being (emotionally and physically), a far cry from one which was once present and stable. It is for these reasons that cultural models are suggested to have strong elements of being people-driven, resilience and flexibility (Pelegriin & Munoz 2024, p.25).

Updated academic literature points out that employees, since the pandemic, are holding meaningful work in high regard as well as demanding transparency, equitable practices, recognition in the workplace (Pelegriin & Munoz 2024, p.25). Due to this, it can be concluded that the organisational climate and culture are pivotal as intangible concepts that motivate and sustain employees in a world that no longer offers stability (Pelegriin & Munoz 2024, p.27).

2.12. Organisational Culture vs Organisational Climate

Although there may be a few overlaps in terms of what organisational culture is as compared to organisational climate, there are also a number of distinctions (Karan 2023, p.32). Organisational culture is more forward-facing and long-term in nature, being foundational in

concept which include core values, beliefs and behaviours which ultimately define how things are done. Organisational climate is more short-term in nature and expresses how employees currently describe the mood of the organisation (Karan 2023, p.34).

2.13. Leadership's Role

Jerab and Mabrouk (2023) argued that several factors within the leadership sphere can directly affect organisational culture, including changing it for the better:

Set the tone: Organisational Leaders are able to define the tone for all employees. By establishing a defined vision, mission and values which align with the optimal culture, a leader is able to have a great impact. Moreover, they can have even greater impact by modelling these behaviours and communicating them on a consistent basis, encouraging the rest of the organisation to adopt it.

Lead by example: As the above implied, leaders will need to model behaviour, demonstrating behaviours and attitudes which will reflect the desired organisational culture. If a leader does this, it may encourage other employees to do the same. For example, if a leader expects a culture of honesty and transparency but consistently lies, no employee would be encouraged to demonstrate honesty.

Behavioural expectations: In how they react to various situations, the employee feedback given and actions they reward, leaders are able to create a narrative of what sort of behaviours are tolerated and/or encouraged.

Crisis Management: How leaders behave during times of crisis is telling and employees learn from these behaviours.

Empowering employees: By encouraging employees to take accountability for their role, a sense of ownership exists and unique perspectives can be sought.

Communication: If an organisation wants to improve their culture, effective communication is essential. Once changes and strategy have been determined, it is up to the leader to effectively communicate the need for changes, what it will involve and how it aligns to the goals of the organisation. This should ideally be on a consistent basis.

Training and development: Leaders should encourage skill development through training programmes which also demonstrates a leader's intention to build a positive work environment.

Recognition and reward of ideal behaviours: When employees display traits of the desired culture, leaders should recognise this and reward accordingly.

Resistance addressed: If the organisation decides on changing its organisational culture, there might be employees who will resist. A leader should be able to listen to the concerns, explain the plan and further explain how people will be affected.

Continuous improvement: An organisation should have a culture of constant improvement, where mistakes are acknowledged and adaptability is woven in. This contributes to organisational evolution and cultural adaptation.

Leadership actions serve as the foundation where cultural norms, values and procedures are created (Jerab and Mabrouk 2023, p.9). Additionally, even from an ethical perspective, leaders forge ethical direction. Moreover, leadership plays a role in cultural shift and sustainability. In the era we live in where change is rapid, the role a leader plays is more crucial than ever (Jerab & Mabrouk 2023, p.2).

Leadership, therefore, plays a crucial role in the development of organisational culture. What is important to note is that the relationship between leadership and culture is symbiotic and reciprocal. Leadership shapes the culture of the organisation but the existing culture, too, shapes the leadership (Jerab & Mabrouk 2023, p.4).

This was echoed by Surucu and Yesilada (2017, p.3) as they highlighted the importance of the existing culture to leadership. They further stated that if a new leader enters an organisation, the pressure of that organisational culture may overpower them. It was also highlighted that for these reasons, leaders are more successful in some organisations than they are in others. Furthermore, a leader's leadership style may also change depending on the organisational culture.

Surucu and Yesilada (2017, p.3) further illustrate the above point by stating that the organisational culture may influence the leader in behaving in accordance with the organisation that they find themselves in.

2.14. Organisational Culture at School Level

Whilst majority of existing academic research focuses on higher education when speaking about educational contexts, there are a few pieces of research that cover primary and secondary schools. The themes of the latter range from leadership to the impact of organisational culture

to the principal's performance (Cardona, Valencia & Hernandez 2023, p.2). Further themes include school effectiveness, working and collaborating effectively and safe school environments (Cardona et al. 2023, p.3). Schools have characteristics – political, pedagogical and cultural in nature – which can be considered as differentiating (Torres 2022, p.1).

School culture is a term that has resulted in the marrying of organisational culture at a school level and is described as being both a consequence and result of interactions with individuals and their environment (Cardona et al. 2023, p.4). It makes organisational processes possible and defines what the long-term goals are whilst simultaneously developing its overarching strategy (Cardona et al. 2023, p.4). Torres (2022, p.1) stated that organisational culture is pressing in helping understand how schools encourage and build equity, inclusion and democracy.

Schools, like many other organisations, have personalities and while many schools have similar structures and hierarchies, they may ultimately have different personalities (Cardona et al. 2023, p.4). These personalities can have traits of rigidity, flexibility, collaboration and individualism. These, tied in with values, beliefs and assumptions create the foundation of that school's culture (Cardona et al. 2023, p.4).

Cavanagh and Dellar (cited in Cardona et al. 2023, p.6) looked at nine factors which showcase school culture values and norms which affects school effectiveness. These are high expectations, an efficient management team, approach consistency, instruction of high quality, a focus on students and parent buy-in. In order to promote school performance, which is sustainable, Stoll (cited in Cardona et al. 2023, p.6) claimed that it is crucial that there is an understanding of school culture. This has to be an in-depth study, necessary for determining what values and norms influence sustainable school performance.

Creemers (cited in Cardona et al. 2023, p.6) linked school effectiveness with school culture and highlighted the importance of sharing goals, showing a sense of responsibility, respecting and supporting others, togetherness, transparency and an attitude focused on learning. Cultures with a constant and consistent nature leads to togetherness and influences the rules and policies (Cardona et al. 2023, p.6).

School culture is critical if an important goal is happy parents, staff and students. Research by Cardona et al. (2023, p.6) indicated that the culture formed by the school directly impacts students' academic achievements. So, even if this study is focused on the school culture as experienced by the staff, the students at the school also experience the repercussions of any

healthy or unhealthy culture exhibited. Moreover, Ismail et al. (cited in Cardona et al. 2023, p.6) stated that the quality of school culture directly correlates to the experience that students receive by all school staff.

When examining the school climate as a close neighbour of school culture, Derwoska (cited in Cardona et al. 2023, p.6) having all humans at a school feel seen, safe, supported, motivated, satisfied with outcomes and motivated to add to school improvement, creates a positive school climate. This positive school climate is essential to an efficient, healthy learning experience for students (Cardona et al. 2023, p.6).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, three types of culture within an organisation were mentioned – integrated, differentiated and fragmented (Whelan 2016, p.585). However, Torres (2022) argues that the real question isn't whether there is a culture at a school or not but rather to determine the manifestations of culture and, additionally, to understand the various processes that impact policy development.

As research over decades continued, researchers were perplexed by the idea that stronger organisational cultures were linked to higher efficiencies (Torres 2022, p.4). This catapulted research in the direction of discovering what most thought was the hidden formula. Furthermore, there were motivations in the research space to prove that integrated cultures were linked to academic achievements (Torres 2022, p.4).

Leadership also features as an important beacon in a culture's development – especially one which is inclusive in nature (Torres 2022, p.6). This also sheds light on the expectation that such a leader would need to be charismatic and prophetic. However, expecting a singular culture drop down from top to bottom is unrealistic.

2.15. Organisational Culture: Crucial in 2025

Organisational culture matters more now than ever. However, even in 2025, many leaders do not understand the importance of organisational culture in making organisations successful (Forbes, 2025). In an increasingly demanding and competitive landscape, it is no longer an option for organisations to ignore the need for fast culture change or to stay married to cultures that are dated; it should be an active process to coincide culture and strategy (Forbes, 2025).

However, as explored in parts of this chapter, organisational change, even of the cultural variety, is not easy. In fact, it can take years to get right – there will be failures along the way

despite the best of intentions but with consistent effort, a clear direction and acceptance from all stakeholders, success can be achieved (Forbes, 2025).

To reiterate earlier points found in other literature, organisations have various subcultures and this makes for understanding and fixing organisational culture difficult. However, it is well worth the effort as employees' sense of connection to an organisation is heavily connected to its culture and affects their engagement and potential to recommend the workplace (Forbes, 2025).

By intentionally assessing, aligning and transforming organisational culture, it sets that organisation up for success for 2025 and beyond (Forbes, 2025). This is echoed by Ghaleb and Dahaim (2024) who stated that a robust organisational culture will enable business success through employee satisfaction, innovation, change management, efficient recruitment, diversity and sustainable CSR.

2.16. Notable Factors Influencing Organisational Culture

In studying and evaluating organisational culture, a few common threads can be found. Organisational culture can be considered the culmination of an organisation's history, policies, vision and values (Akpa et al., 2021). This implies that the organisation's history and foundational factors influences its culture.

A recurring element that appears as a factor influencing organisational culture is leadership. Leadership is said to be responsible for how organisational culture is manifested (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023). However, as we have seen various definitions of organisational culture, there is a strong group/shared component which implies that leaders alone cannot create culture. Therefore, it can be concluded that leaders and employees both influence organisational culture.

Since organisational culture was affected in many cases due to COVID-19, one can deduce that current circumstances, drastic changes and environment may play a role in influencing organisational culture (Pelegrin & Munoz, 2024). This can be further substantiated when understanding that organisational culture is about shared values and beliefs derived from interaction. The present circumstances will naturally affect interaction, which in turn will affect the manifestation of organisational culture.

2.17. Summary

This chapter aimed to look at the various topics that are popular in the subject of organisational culture as well as themes associated with the subject. What can be concluded is that organisational culture is a complex concept with varying definitions across the literature. There are numerous models and perspectives to help understand the foundation of the topic.

However, what steadily came up in the research is the need for understanding organisational culture as it has far-reaching implications for employees and organisational goals.

Without an understanding of organisational culture - simply understood as the way things are done at an organisation – the organisation is not set up for success, will have less chances to be sustainable and will struggle with implementation of strategic change.

Organisational culture has many facets to it – from how it appears at a school level to how it has transformed since COVID-19. It is also unacceptable to not examine it in these dynamic times in order to attain organisational goals.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the simplest definition, Patel and Patel (2019) defined research as a quest for knowledge. Additionally, they pointed to the scientific element to consider when viewing research as a systematic, organised hunt for information on a specific topic. Walliman (2021) explained that the purpose of research is to advance current knowledge.

When a subject is chosen to research, gathering information and analysing it will lead a researcher down a path where practical problems require solutions (Walliman, 2021). When there is a research problem, research methodology exists in order to solve it (Patel & Patel, 2019). Through this process, there is a science in examining how research is done and what the various steps are in conducting this research.

The previous chapter covered theory pertaining to the subject of organisational culture which included its origins, definitions, impact and likelihood of change. This chapter covers the methodology and design that will be applicable to this research. It will include details on the research such as location, participants, methods of data collection as well as the ethical component.

3.2 Research Paradigm

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.54), worldviews or paradigms are an important consideration in the research space and is explained as the philosophical orientation that a researcher has about their surroundings and also how they will approach the research. Moreover, the beliefs held by the researcher will impact the route they will take from a research approach point of view (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54).

There are many versions of what these paradigms look like but four types will be focused on in this chapter. They are postpositivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54). Each are briefly described below:

3.2.1 Postpositivism

Elgeddawy and Abouraia (2024, p.71) described this worldview as emphasising what is required through empirical and objective means. This worldview is more applicable to quantitative research than it is to qualitative research since it is scientific and empirical in nature (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54) It challenges traditional views about current knowledge

being considered the end-all be-all (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54). Additionally, something quite crucial for postpositivists is to measure observations and behaviour in a numeric manner to test objective reality (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54)

3.2.2 Constructivism

This approach is an alternative to positivism and is sometimes referred to as relativism (Walliman 2021, p.21). This concerns the concepts of humanism and idealism whilst seeing the world as one in which the mind has created (Walliman 2021, p.22). To specify, this refers to the fact that the world is experienced in a personal way through values, beliefs and preconceptions and as a part of the greater society, not governed by universal laws (Walliman 2021, p.22).

Social constructivism, specifically, seeks to explain that humans develop subjective meanings around them and that people seek to understand the environment around them (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54). This approach also lends itself to qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.54).

3.2.3 Transformative

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.54), a transformative view revolves around politics, justice and challenging oppression, a life-changing agenda which is enveloped into the research with the intention of reform in the lives of participants and their environment. This tends to be a central point of the researcher's plan and the participants are often individuals who are marginalised.

3.2.4 Pragmatic

With this worldview, researchers are focused on the research problem as well as the question and seek numerous approaches in solving it (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.58). According to Elgeddawy and Abouraia (2024, p.71), this worldview involves both nature and experience entwined, reflecting each other. Additionally, this paradigm employs mixed methods research, intertwining quantitative views and subjectivity (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, p.71).

Table 3.1: Four Worldviews

Postpositivism	Constructivism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination • Reductionism • Empirical observation and measurement • Theory verification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Multiple participant meanings • Social and historical construction • Theory generation
Transformative	Pragmatism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political • Power and justice oriented • Collaborative • Change-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences of actions • Problem-centered • Pluralistic • Real-world practice oriented

Source: Creswell and Creswell (2018), P 55

Due to the nature of this research topic (organisational culture which examines values, emotions and beliefs of people), **the Social Constructivism approach** will be applicable for this study (Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Research Design

Resign can be described as a process to gather information and a form of answering questions through a systematic and creative means (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.11). Additionally, it has been explained that research design is a technique for the collection and analysing of data collected by the researcher for the intended study.

Qualitative Research has origins in anthropology, humanities and sociology (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.61). Data is usually collected in the person’s environment and data would need to be analysed and interpreted. It generally concerns human behaviour and has value for interviewers as they can pick up on feelings, opinions and attitudes (Patel & Patel 2019, p.48).

An interesting viewpoint raised by Chivanga and Monyai (2021, p.12) is that qualitative research requires that the researcher immersive themselves in the participants’ experiences which differs quite greatly from quantitative research.

Quantitative Research focuses on research that is objective in the sense that two different researchers conducting research in the same situation would arise with similar results (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.12). Simply put, the world is viewed as existing independently from its observers (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.12).

Table 3.2: Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Qualitative Method	Quantitative Method
Focuses on words	Focuses on numbers
Favours open-ended responses	Favours close-ended responses
Human/Social problems	Testing objective theories
Inductive data analysis	Deductive data analysis
Final report structure: flexible	Final report structure: set structure

Source: Adopted from Creswell and Creswell (2018), P 51

Mixed Methods Research, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.39), concerns the collection and combining of both quantitative and qualitative information. Many believe that only relying on one or the other is insufficient and as a result, this form of research has become increasingly popular (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.39).

The research design that was used in this study is qualitative as it caters for flexibility, to question emotions and allows a researcher to uncover layers of speech that could pertain to organisational culture. By its nature, this is the inductive approach as it is not testing theory but rather more exploratory for understanding (Creswell 2018, p.62).

There are various approaches to employ when wanting to use qualitative measures and they include through Narrative research, Phenomenological research, Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Case Studies. From these options, the chosen path for this study will be the Business-Related Ethnography design as the study focuses on the organisational culture within a specific organisation (Creswell 2018, p.62). In other words, it addresses business issues and, therefore, is a fit for this study.

Figure 3.1 shows the thought process researchers can take in order to identify which approach may work best for them in answering their research questions and aims (Islam and Aldaihani 2022, p.3)

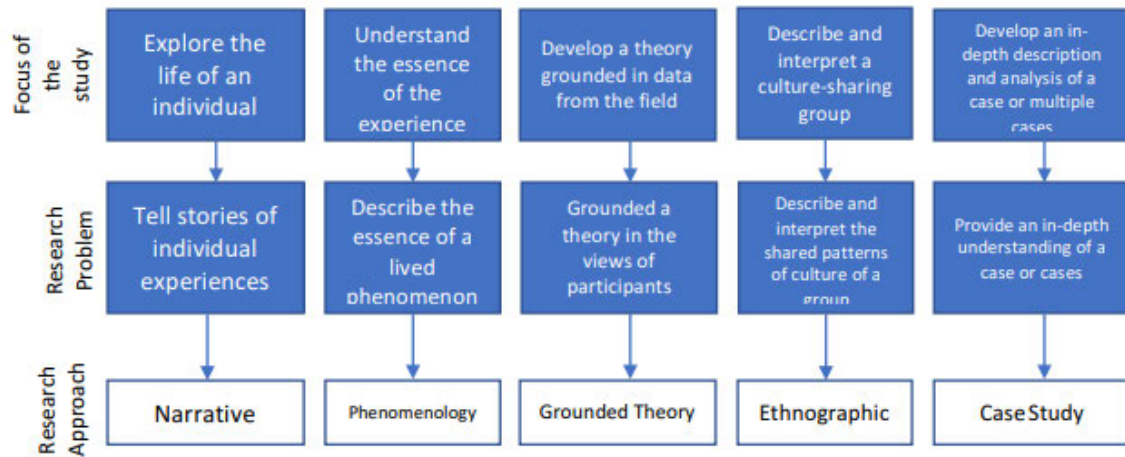


Figure 3.1: Approaches in Qualitative Research

Source: Islam and Aldaihani (2022, p.3).

3.4 Population and Sample

The organisation (the school), in its entirety, has approximately 110 staff members. Participants were selected based on specific criteria which ensured relevance to the research objectives. Participants had to be permanently employed at the school and had to have served at least one year in order to ensure sufficient exposure to the organisational culture.

Participants were also selected if they were proficient in English to ensure thorough understanding of the topic and accompanying questions. Further to this, they were selected if they were employed in either academic or administrative roles, occupying junior, middle or senior positions to ensure hierarchy representation. Additionally, it would be too difficult to manage the interviews of a very large sample. Therefore, between the senior and mid-junior employees most likely to participate, and that will be representatively included, the sample was 15.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

As already established, the direction in terms of design will be that of a qualitative nature. An example of a qualitative sampling procedure is called, “purposive non-probability” sampling (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.13). Researchers who use this method are able to eliminate participants who may not offer the data required (for example, those who may not understand or have an interest in the topic of organisational culture through their judgment, thus eliminating costs and time wasted (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.13). For this research study, purposive non-probability sampling will be utilised.

3.6 Data Collection

Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar and Khan (2021, p.6) stated that there are two types of data and they are primary data and secondary data. With primary data, they explained that the data is new, fresh and collected for the first time. In contrast, they stated that secondary data is the previously collected data which has been collected by somebody else.

Secondary data can be collected through numerous sources of published data through journals, books, government documents, newspapers, academic papers and other public records (Mazhar et al 2021, p.8). Additionally, Mazhar et al (2021, p.8) mentions that sources of unpublished data also form part of the secondary data umbrella.

According to Patel and Patel (2019, p.52), the following are considered important ways to collect primary data:

- Questionnaire
- Interview
- Observation

Additionally, Mazhar et al (2021, p.7) include warranty cards, consumer panels, audits and content analysis. They further stated that with interviews, this is the preferred option if the proximity allows. Additionally, it was stated that with personal interviews in which the researcher conducts the interview face to face, there was an appropriateness for thorough investigation.

According to Chivanga and Monyai (2021, p.13), face-to-face interviews assists researchers in obtaining in-depth data from participants. Furthermore, they stated that this method allows for researchers to clarify responses and handle private information with care.

For the aforementioned reasons, the data will be collected through face-to-face interviews which will consist of questions in a semi-structured manner.

3.7 Data Collection Methods and Tools

As mentioned before, there will be fifteen staff members who will be interviewed face-to-face. The interviews will be semi-structured in nature and open-ended to allow for participants to speak freely and to fully reflect their feelings and attitudes towards the topic.

Figure 3.2 details the various options for researchers in terms of the type of interviews they would want to follow (Islam & Aldaihani 2022, p.3).

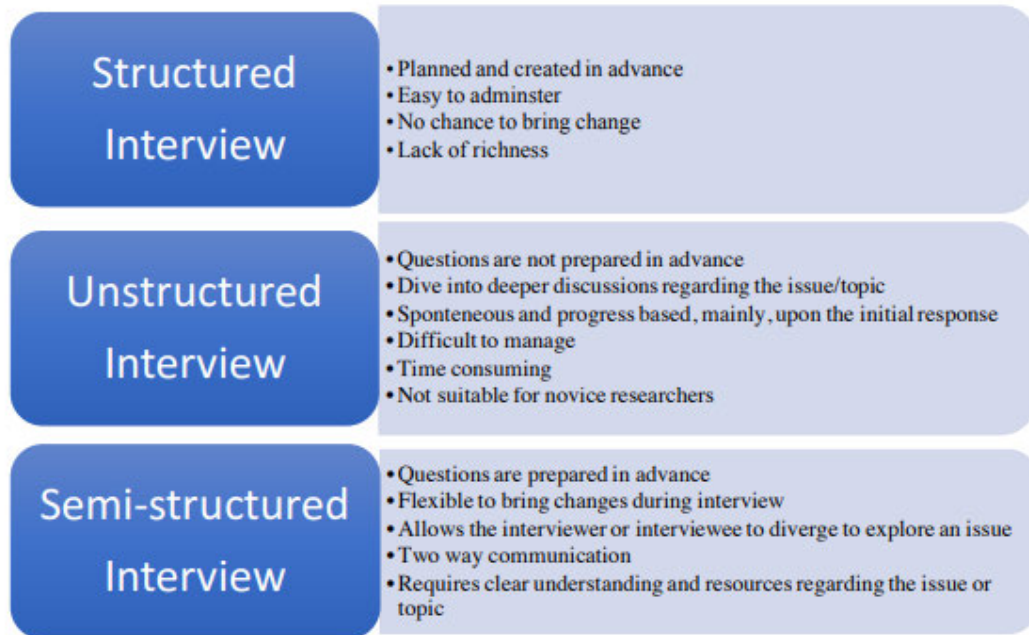


Figure 3.2: Types of Interviews

Source: Islam and Aldaihani 2022, p.3.

Appendix 1 contains the interview schedule which covers the topics and sub-topics related to the study. A consent form is also added in Appendix 2 which enabled data to be collected through audio as well as notes. The consent form was given to the participants before the interview was conducted and the interview began after the form had been completed in full by the participants.

Below is a table of the fifteen participants, briefly describing them. The participants were varied in terms of gender but also in age, department and experience to offer a holistic view on the topic and problem statement.

Table 3.3: Participants Listed

Participants	Age	Gender	Level
P1	40-49	Female	Senior
P2	20-29	Male	Junior
P3	40-49	Female	Senior
P4	50+	Male	Senior
P5	50+	Male	Senior
P6	30-39	Female	Junior
P7	40-49	Female	Junior
P8	30-39	Male	Junior
P9	40-49	Male	Junior
P10	40-49	Female	Senior
P11	40-49	Female	Junior
P12	50+	Male	Senior
P13	30-39	Female	Junior
P14	30-39	Male	Junior
P15	20-29	Male	Junior

3.8 Data Analysis

After collection of the data, the researcher moved onto the data analysis process. This part of the process involved bringing structure to a large amount of content gathered (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.14). With qualitative data, there are numerous analytic techniques that can be employed in order to understand and make sense of the data (Lochmiller 2021, p.2029).

A rather common technique when qualitative research is concerned is called thematic analysis which revolves around identifying patterns from data and unearthing overarching themes and statements (Lochmiller 2021, p.2029). The power of this technique lies in its ability to enable researchers to answer the “why” and “how” questions through analysing of remarks and the probing of reasons (Chivanga & Monyai 2021, p.14).

The thematic analysis technique was utilised in this study as the aim is to understand and conclude patterns and themes from the gathered data. The thematic analysis was conducted through a manual coding process. After the interviews were conducted, each transcript was read through multiple times in order to be familiarised with the data. Recurring ideas and themes, key phrases and statements were identified and grouped using colour coding. Codes were further organised into categories which enabled patterns to emerge. Overarching themes were identified thereafter. A finalised table using Microsoft Excel presented the findings.

3.9. Knowledge/Trustworthiness

A researcher must be self-assured in the data trustworthiness received and what is analysed/reported back. As such, validity was ensured by keeping the same questions (with the exception of probing or clarifying answers), guarantee that participants were asked in simple language so as to not cause confusion and to keep all questions linked to objectives. Furthermore, the questions were posed to employees that would have firsthand experiences with the organisational culture making their recollection reliable and valid.

Using triangulation of data, a researcher can validate their data through the utilisation of other sources of information such as examining previous data to identify links to results gathered or policy documents for similar patterns or connections (Walliman 2016, p.88).

3.10 Research Ethics

This study is a rather people-oriented research study, therefore, it is crucial to provide participants with a safe space and this can be done so by ensuring them that their information will be confidential. They should feel like the interview is voluntary, not forced participation in any way.

Due diligence has been done in obtaining ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, a consent form was also sent out to participants prior to the interview so they do not feel blind-sided or forced.

3.11 Conclusion

The research design, methods and procedures outlined the chapter – a focus on the methodology. Simply put, the qualitative approach was used with face-to-face interviews. With the data gained, the objectives and questions could be addressed. In summary, Appendix 3 paints an overall view of the timelines associated with the research.

The next chapter focuses on the results and findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

As previously mentioned, the process of thematic analysis was conducted in this study. Through this intricate process, the data that was collected was able to be categorised and analysed this providing key insights.

At the high school, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to extract data from fifteen participants. These fifteen participants ranged from management to juniors and from academic staff to administrative staff. The transcribed data was reviewed multiple times to uncover common themes. Some themes and sub-themes that emerged were healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures as well as driving factors.

This chapter describes the findings of the study. It highlights the strengths of the current organisational culture, the roadblocks and ideas for strengthening it.

4.2 Detailed Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis was used. By transcribing data verbatim and highlighting patterns and key words, themes and sub-themes emerged. Table 4.1 presents the themes and sub-themes found.

Table 4.1: Summary Table of Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
4.2.1 Claims of school's values	Spoken values
	Derived values
4.2.2 Own Values	Accountability
	Respect
	Trust and authenticity
4.2.3 Experienced school values and culture	Unfairness
	Communication
	Subcultures
	Evolution and uncertainty
4.2.4 Driving factors	Leadership
	Employees' personalities
	Parents
	Change
4.2.5 Healthy and Unhealthy organisational cultures	Workload and wellness
	Inequality
	Overall communication
	Self-gain vs holistic gain
4.2.6 Roadblocks and Improvements	HR processes
	People
	Direction
	Transparency
	Probable change
4.2.7 Timing of change	Intentionality
	Journey
4.2.8 Strengthening of Existing Culture	Accountability
	Environment and structure
	Training

4.2.1 Claims of School's Values

4.2.1.1 Spoken Values

Most participants were able to list the school's values verbatim which consist of four in total. These include respect, resilience, responsibility and relationships. They were familiar with these as they are marketed internally and externally and are not limited to features on the property alluding to these values as well as on the school's website.

Respect for your people, for your peers, for all the people that you interact with. To push your boundaries for the resilience and relationships, to have sound relationships, positive relationships with the people that you interact with at school. That's basically the long and short of it, basically surrounding the four Rs. (P5)

The core values of the school are respect, responsibility, relationships and resilience. (P3)

Oh, well, that's quite clear. I think they display it, they proclaim it quite easily and reinforce it so it is the four Rs, it is respect, responsibility, relationships and resilience. (P12)

Participant 15 mentioned that there are four that come to mind but the main ones appear to be responsibility and resilience. Overall, most of the participants recalled the values with ease.

4.2.1.2 Derived Values

When discussing the values of the school, whilst many participants were able to list the values as marketed by the school, many also had their own sense of what the school's values are from their own observations and experiences. Some participants examine the four Rs and feel that it is the goal but this is not always attained and demonstrated.

Okay, it's respect, responsibility, resilience and also relationships. I believe that's what the school aspires to instil in the students and staff alike. And to a certain degree, they live by those and then you have students that take responsibility and then we've had students here that were really resilient because they really had adversaries. And so, to a certain extent, they live by those. And I mean, this morning I arrived at school and saw the trash on the floor and it felt like that there are those that have not really respected the environment and I had to pick it up. (P8)

Inclusivity was a value that came across quite strongly during the interviews and was highlighted a number of times. One participant said:

I think that the main focus of the school is to teach students regardless of their sports abilities, even academic abilities hence the school doesn't have entrances exams. So, those are the core values, to give everyone a chance. (P2)

Another participant echoed this point by specifically referring to inclusivity:

I think the school definitely values inclusivity which became very evident when I came to the school and I saw there were no rules around gender, around hair, around nails, earrings and things like that, things I would typically not agree with. (P13)

Additionally, another employee mentioned that as much as there's a strong awareness of the institution's values and the perception thereof, employees have their own interpretation:

I think there's a very clear outward perception of what the core values are. I think the core values that are marketed are not the core values that are practiced. So, respect, responsibility, resilience and relationships are marketed, however, the actual values are around being marketable and profitable rather than that of an educational institution. (P6)

The above statement builds the foundation for the next theme which is about the employees' own values.

4.2.2 Own Values

Whilst participants were given the opportunity to speak on the school's values (either marketed or experienced firsthand), they were also given a chance to reflect on their own values. Whilst some of them matched that of the school's, some were different.

The below participant highlighted the importance of humility and trust, over and above the school's values such as respect.

Ethical considerations, humility, trust and respect are among some of the values of mine that I can think of. (P1)

Honesty became a strong element in the interviews and showed up with the following participants:

Honesty, loyalty and authenticity. (P11)

My values would be more along the lines of honesty, integrity, inclusivity, nurturing and kindness. (P4)

Another value that showed up strongly is that of integrity.

My values are integrity and knowing that God is watching. (P14)

My personal values are integrity and accountability. (P3)

A common thread amongst most of the participants seemed to be integrity and elements of trust or authenticity.

4.2.3 Experienced school values and culture

4.2.3.1 Unfairness

During the interviews, some participants expressed experiencing and observing unfairness at the institution. This varied from being overlooked for promotional opportunities to the types of rules (or lack thereof) that exist across departments.

One participant specifically alluded to not feeling a need to be overly friendly to people just to prove their worth and be seen:

I don't need to sit and have tea with you or be your friend for you to have to see my value. I have seen others get treated differently to me. (P14)

Another participant experienced their own sense of unfairness when evaluating how their own department functions compared to other departments:

I remember getting in a sort of a dispute with my Head of Department because I would compare departments and the response was that it's different for everyone. It's up to whoever wants to do whatever. Well, I don't think that helps us because then I'll feel like there's an unfairness. (P13)

Additionally, another employee observed an overall sense of unfairness and expressed room for improvement in that sense when comparing the workings at the school in relation to that of another school:

In terms of fairness, I think fair to a certain degree, up to a level, I always feel that there's room... where you look at other people at other organisations and you always feel like okay we could be treated a bit differently or there could be more fairness. (P11)

In some cases, there was an implication that there is an existence of cliques which leads to experiences of unfairness.

Currently, it's...if you're not in the clique crowd then you don't get much support. (P7)

4.2.3.2 Communication

In the interviews, some of the participants expressed a desire to see a holistic improvement in the communication at the school, across the departments. They had mentioned that there were feelings of being disjointed or left out of important communication. Additionally, there is a

sense that staff members across the organisation operate in silos and don't know each other well enough.

It feels as if everyone is splitting into their departments or isolating and everyone is creating an ethos for themselves, you sort of just leave each other out and we don't have a sort of shared anything. (P6)

As staff, we don't know each other so we can't expect the kids to have a culture when don't have it ourselves. There's so many new staff and we don't know them until they leave. (P15)

Some participants also felt that they needed written, tangible communication so that rules are clear across different topics.

Communication – poor, always has been. I can only assume that we are all pulling in the same direction but I have not seen anything tangible. (P3)

Hmmm, I wouldn't even know how to describe the organisational culture at the school. I think, perhaps, it's all over the place. It's almost like it's on the job training, that there are things that are not communicated clearly and ahead of time. It creates rules that are coming as we go along which is not great. There needs to be a culture to say when it comes to communication, this is what we follow, when it comes to discipline, this is what we follow, when it comes to late coming, this is what we follow. (P13)

4.2.3.3 Subcultures

When asked to examine and reflect on the culture at the school, some participants made mention of subcultures. Participants explained that there is differentiation between holistic organisational culture and the different subcultures that exist.

Oh, the organisational culture is diverse...I think it's different things on different levels. (P10)

Some participants spoke to how the existence of subcultures affects how praise and problem-solving is approached whilst others expressed how it affects their freedom to express themselves.

The English department must function this way, the Maths department must function this way and you sort of just leave each other out and then we do our own thing in another department. I suppose as long as the child is fine, we continue moving that way but when we all sit together in one room, like in a staff meeting, we nod our heads along but when we go off and have our own smaller meetings, we decide ourselves how we are going to do what they're asking us to

do. When there's a problem, we are expected to solve it in our groups but when things go well then "oh, we are a family and a unit" (P6)

So, for me, I break organisational culture into two parts. There's my department which is more internal. I think within my department, there's a lot of transparency. There is freedom to speak your voice and that's very important to me. I think holistically, in the school, I think it's a little bit different – not as authentic as I should be, I don't have the freedom to say anything I want to say and I have to be a little more careful. (P11)

4.2.3.4 Evolution and uncertainty

In the interviews, participants also explained that they viewed the organisational culture at the school as something that is uncertain. In some cases, participants elaborated on how much change is happening and that is directly impacting organisational culture. Overall, there were also sentiments of uncertainty and transition.

It's a tricky hierarchy, I feel like there isn't much transparency in a way that sometimes you just don't know where to go or who to go to. (P2)

Right now, it's a transition. When I first got here, it was patriarchal with male dominance at the top and it stemmed from a single, absolute decision-maker. He pushed his personal value system that pretty much dictated how the school was moving but at a Council level, there were differing opinions and perspectives. (P4)

You know when it comes to culture, it evolves as people come into the institution and leave. I think to some extent, there was a good culture at the school and maybe there still is a good culture at the school. In other schools, parking is designated according to seniority but not at this school. That is one part of the culture at the school. (P8)

Another participant highlighted that the uncertainty is across the masses when asked about the current state of the organisational culture:

Murky – there is no clear-cut plan visible to the masses. (P3)

4.2.4 Driving factors

4.2.4.1 Leadership

During the interviews, participants highlighted the impact that leadership has in cultivating and defining organisational culture. To some, it was very immediate and straightforward that the

main factor influencing organisational culture was leadership or management. These sentiments were illustrated in the statements below.

A participant pointed out how leadership sets the tone for how people are treated at the organisation which drives the overall organisational culture:

It's a question of how you are perceived within this space, how you are supported, how you are respected. Leadership should set the tone. If that's what they portray then it's easy for others to blend in. (P5)

One participant spoke about how two different directors having different impacts on how the organisational culture is built and shared:

So, we have had a recent change of Director, I think previously the organising principal was reaching out, accommodating and growing. So, that for me was the culture. I am not sure, fully, what the picture is here. (P12)

Similarly, another participant spoke to the impact of two different leaders and also the domino effect of one leader taking over another:

It's tough because we had a change in leadership. I think if I observe the previous leader versus the current one, I will say what's driving the current one is as a result of the previous one. They had that hands-off approach. So, I would say that they're the ones that drove this culture. I would assume that this is the case in any other organisation, the leader would always be the one that drives the culture because we take direction from them. (P13)

Additionally, the same participant expressed the power that the leader holds in modelling behaviours and shaping the culture through their actions:

And in those moments, then we look to the leadership as well to say, "how do you model this culture that you want us to follow? So, if you are not modelling the thing you want us to do, chances are people will not. They start to believe that arriving late, not going to certain events or whatever, it will start to sink to the bottom. (P13)

Other participants simply state that mostly management or leadership affects organisational culture:

What influences the organisational culture? Management. (P7)

4.2.4.2 Employees' personalities

Participants also highlighted that over and above the leadership at the institution, the other employees also mould the organisational culture. Participants also pointed out that in selected people having significant voices, the organisational culture is influenced accordingly.

One participant specifically mentioned the lack of processes which lends itself to people's personalities taking over what the organisational culture looks like:

I think personalities drive the organisational culture. When I got here, I couldn't see respect, responsibility, resilience or relationships. I saw the different personalities running things, I think you see pockets of personalities. There aren't clearly defined processes that run the function, rather the personalities that sit within. (P4)

The wrong type of people that have too much to say influences the culture (P7)

So, if you get used to the respecting of one person's voice over another, that might overshadow truth, that might overshadow identity. And, also, I think that there would be biases and I think that sometimes we get in the way of ourselves. (P11)

Similarly, another participant mentioned that due to no set rules and processes, each department is subject to their own ways of working which is dependent on that leader:

And if the Heads allow that leeway of you create your own culture...to an extent, yes, there's things that you should be allowed to say fits your department but if there's too much room to create, then it causes a bit of confusion and it can lead to things like some employees feeling a bit unfairly treated (P13)

Another participant spoke to the hunger for success and willingness of employees to do their jobs well which contributes to the organisational culture.

People want to be promoted – there's a need for power and status as well as pride and financial responsibility. (P14)

Similarly, another participant echoed those sentiments illustrating that what drives people and the organisational culture is financial and status reasons:

Different people are in different positions for different reasons and the main factor being power and financial stability (P2)

Coincidentally, there was another participant who highlighted power as a driving force and something that can be picked up despite it being occasionally subtle.

We do have power struggles, without a doubt we do. If you are not an observant person, you won't really pick it up because sometimes, it is subtle. It's not really out there and you can immediately, you know, pick it up. A person like me has been at different institutions and then you've experienced different people and how they do things (P8)

One participant alluded to people being here for reasons that don't lend itself to crafting passionate employees.

What drives the organisational culture is that people are here because they have to be here right now. It's not that people want to be here or that people enjoy what they do. (P15)

A lot of these statements imply that organisational culture isn't just as a result of the leaders in the organisation but other employees as well. The various personalities all contribute to what the organisational culture looks like and this can be across departments.

When it comes to driving the organisational culture, I think there are times where it's top-down and there's times where it's bottom-up but I would say for the most part, I would say the driving factor is very much middle management. (P3)

Another participant spoke to people who have been at organisation's too long and may oppose change:

There are people who have been here too long and they start maintaining the status quo and that's when things stay the same. (P8)

4.2.4.3 Parents

Whilst the interviews were aimed at and included staff within the organisation, some participants believed that parents play a crucial role moulding the organisational culture even though they exist externally.

Parents – its number one. They pay a lot. I mean, I can't afford what they have to pay to have their children here. So, of course what they want is what we are going to try and give them within certain boundaries, hopefully. (P10)

I think in our environment, the external factors like parents putting pressure also influences organisational culture. (P4)

I think it's clients so the client base, it's going to affect organisational culture. So, for example, it's about what the client wants. And I think a school would kind of change its culture to suit the client because I feel like schools are becoming more business-like. (P11)

I think the whole idea of absent parents or overbearing parents, parents wanting, you know, to feel that they're getting value for their money but without understanding what they actually have bought into. (P3)

I think parents have got too much say. We don't have our own product. (P15)

The above statements from participants reinforces the sentiment that organisational culture is also the result of external factors.

4.2.4.4 Change

Participants have pointed out how much the organisational culture has changed in their time served due to the number of significant changes from leadership to overall executive body.

I believe how the values have been embodied by the school have changed, it has evolved, definitely. I think it has become more rigid than it used to be, it was much more fluid a few years ago. (P12)

We have gone through an entire new executive body. I haven't even been here that long. The people who come here, come for their stability and then you get here and then there's no stability. (P6)

Another participant linked constant change to the development of unhealthy organisational culture.

An unhealthy organisational culture is a culture that is always changing to what's relevant and what works now. A culture not embedded in a strong foundation. So, the culture is going to be influenced by social media, by parents and by everyone. (P11)

4.2.5 Healthy and Unhealthy organisational cultures

Participants were asked to evaluate their understanding of what healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures look like.

4.2.5.1 Workload and Wellness

One participant pointed out that a healthy organisational culture should embody aspects of caring for staff and ensuring their wellness. Participants also acknowledged the importance of not being pushed to an unhealthy level of work stress.

It's becoming quite an increasing concern, is the looking at wellness for the staff because our product is a soft product in a way because we are raising human beings. If you do not look after those who are raising, then they cannot raise properly. And then, you have a flawed product or you have a flawed service. So, I think that the wellness aspect and looking after people and saying, "how can we help?" (P12)

People should care about others' workload, that's what healthy organisational culture looks like. (P14)

A balance of different factors makes a healthy organisational culture. It should not only focus on work itself. We should focus on the individuals. In our case, the staff. The wellness aspect from the Wellness department that we are exposed to from time to time serves a purpose. It gives us a platform where we can get away from the formalities and interact. An unhealthy organisational culture is just about you giving and giving. They just push you constantly. And then sometimes when you are pushed to the limit, some people tend to say, "okay, I am not quite comfortable being exposed to this high level of pressure all the time". (P5).

Participants also mentioned that the goal was to have overall happy employees who look forward to coming to work every day.

Healthy organisational culture is where people enjoy coming to work, are happy to come to work. They don't necessarily see things as a job that's bearing down on them. (P3)

I expect to see happiness, people being happy, people being in a happy space. Sometimes, you have difficulties and stressful days but generally, you shouldn't have to drag or jump out of bed to go to the institution. We expect a positive atmosphere where people step in here and they feel happy. (P8)

A participant spoke to not denying or expecting difficulties to exist but rather find the positives and still find happiness even when times are challenging which was very similar to what the above participant had said:

There's a good energy when you walk into the school, the shoulders are not heavy, you're happy. I can say, you're ready for battle. It's not that there aren't arguments or difficulties but the grass is as green as it should be (P15)

4.2.5.2 Inequality

Earlier in the interviews, the participants mentioned that to them, there were elements of unfairness present at the organisation. They seemed to feel that different people were treated differently according to the various relationships and connections held at the school. Similarly, when participants reflected on what healthy and unhealthy organisational culture looks like, themes of equality and inequality, fairness and unfairness came up again.

Participants expressed a desire to have everyone treated fairly, to feel like they belong, to show respect and be respected despite differences and for cliques to not exist.

Some schools, respect is a huge thing and that's my number one goal. It always doesn't matter if I like you or not, I am always going to deal with you with respect. It's different personalities and different circumstances but if people can actually just try and be decent human beings and just sometimes suck it up (mutual respect), it's going to help you in close relationships. I hate privilege. I cannot stand privilege. So, no one I feel is better than the other. (P10)

One participant specifically called out favouritism and briefly explained that it creates a culture of chaos:

So, you know that favouritism creates a culture of chaos and unhealthy culture. (P13)

Another participant highlighted that a healthy organisational culture is where everyone feels that they are a person of value and belong at the institution:

I think a healthy organisational culture should be such that everyone feels valued and they feel that their opinion is valued. They can feel like they can voice their opinion whenever they want to and if they feel aggrieved, they feel that they can go a person and talk to and feel that action will be taken. A sense and feeling of belonging. (P8)

In addition, another participant spoke about rules that are put in place that apply to everyone which makes an organisational culture healthy.

For me, a healthy organisational culture is more so that there's a shared ruling for almost everybody. The rules cannot be changed and be warped because somebody is experiencing something or has been here longer or has more ties to the institution. There has to be

consistency all the time. The moment that stops happening, that is really where the unhealthy working environment begins to fester because it can start so small. It can start as minor thing, for example, one event being prioritised over another event. But what you forget is that for each event, there are maybe fifteen people involved. So, those fifteen people have now just learned that other thing is being prioritised over my thing. (P6)

4.2.5.3 Overall Communication

One participant simply mentioned that by staff communicating and being familiar with each other, communication as a whole at an organisation is more positive:

I think it's an environment where the staff know each other. (P15)

Another participant highlighted the importance of communicating deadlines and expectations as it indicates that proactive planning has taken place:

Unhealthy organisational culture is where they are reactive. If anything feels as if nothing has been thought through or communicated, that is not healthy, it doesn't add to healthiness. Anything that sort of undermines plans and being reactive, not being proactive in communicating deadlines and expectations, anything that upsets the status quo. (P3)

To me, unhealthy organisational culture looks like a lack of unity, common goals and common vision. (P4)

Everybody has to have the same consequences. It is to be written down on paper, we acknowledge it beforehand. When the rules change, the rules are communicated. We almost want to function like a corporate in the sense that rules and regulations are stipulated clearly and that contracts are signed. Office hours are office hours, personal lives are personal lives, when rules change, they do so in a way that is fit for a professional. That's a healthy organisational culture. (P6)

What's stopping us from getting there? If I am being honest, communication. People need to know why they are doing what they're doing. What is the ultimate goal? So, open communication across the board. I am not saying that everyone must know everything...but still have communication and a sense of you need to deal with something this way. People just need to feel empowered. (P13)

Participants felt strongly about the need for unity and a common understand through efficient communication.

4.2.5.4 Self-gain vs Holistic Gain

During the interviews, quite often participants mentioned themes of employees collaborating for the greater good versus working alone or in smaller, personal groups to attain their own goals. The latter is seen as unhealthy culture to them:

An unhealthy organisation is one in which no one sticks together; there are just cliques here and there. (P15)

One participant specifically mentioned their personal experience at another school where it was a case of unhealthy organisational culture due to people only caring about their own motives:

So, I have been in an unhealthy school as well. There was suspicion, interpersonal relationships are purely egotistical driven. There is no collegial reciprocity or anything. No one wants to do anything for anyone else. (P12)

Another employee highlighted the importance of collaboration and being able to ascertain where help is needed most in a healthy organisational culture:

I think it's good to mention collaboration, to always help and I think it leads back again to the kindness. When you have capacity. And sometimes if you don't, if you are just able to notice that I think they need help more than I do at that stage. Let me extend a hand of kindness and the hand of assisting. So, collaboration, that's healthy for me. (P13)

One participant mentioned that at its core, an organisation's processes and the way that they do things should stem from its values. Additionally, the participant relayed the importance of having sound processes in place to avoid personal biases and preferences affecting people and the organisational culture:

Healthy organisational culture in this instance is about the children and processes. And when I say, "process driven", it reinforces and everything embeds what the organisational culture as a collective should look like. So, whatever process is here should speak to your values and shouldn't be about personality. (P4)

Some participants pointed out that what should drive employees is a holistic pull towards the benefit of the child and not the individual:

Healthy interpersonal relationships are crucial, relationships that are based on the well-being of the child, relationships that divert from individual benefits and privileges if I can put it that way. (P1)

What I expect to see in an organisational culture at a school level is a holistic one where the child comes first. That is sometimes not always the case. Some feel that their subject matters more than the other subjects (P10)

4.2.6 Roadblocks and Improvements

4.2.6.1 Human Resources Processes

A few roadblocks to achieving healthy organisational culture or improving organisational culture came up in the interviews. One of the factors that requires improvement that were mentioned by a few participants was HRM and its processes (including the recruitment process).

One participant felt strongly about the role HRM, leadership and the selection process play in creating the organisational culture.

A huge driving factor that influences organisational culture is recruitment. It's who you recruit into the team you've built because when leadership in the school opens a vacancy and it starts conducting interviews together with HRM, they are the first people that meet the person that they are about to bring into the team. So, they get to see them whilst having a view of the current team. And so, with that you're able to compare having studied this person in front of me and having worked with the people that are behind me, is this going to work? Will they make it better or will they make it worse? So, I think it starts with selection. (P13)

Another participant felt that HRM as a department did not offer sufficient support. Moreover, they had felt that they could not trust HRM since they had voiced their frustrations a few times and nothing had changed nor were investigations properly done:

My problem is very much HR. I feel like I don't have the support. For instance, everyone who knows me, knows that I am not someone who complains. So, when I come to you about something and I complain and say, "listen, I can't do this anymore", then actually, there is something going on. After I have done it maybe three, four, five times, still nothing has been done. They're losing teachers one by one and mental health is a huge thing so for me, HR is very much a huge problem. PIPS – do we actually use them? Have we ever tried to use them? Is there actually due diligence when it comes to investigations? Trust is a huge problem. (P10)

4.2.6.2 People

During the interviews, a participant mentioned that people will need to improve from various standpoints in order to holistically improve the organisational culture:

I think that there needs to be less secrecy between people, fewer secret conversations and a united front without bringing each other down. The cliques need to stop. (P1)

The people aspect of improvement and as a stumbling block came up with other participants as well, believing that when aspects, status and behaviours of people change then the culture will also improve. This included certain people leaving at the time of the interview

I think getting rid of some people may improve the current organisational culture. I think now that certain people have left already, things might go in the right direction. (P7)

Interestingly, a different participant pointed out the disadvantages of people leaving when trying to craft a healthy organisational culture:

But beyond leaders, it's the staff themselves because when you are selecting and creating a team and then today you have a perfect team then someone resigns. Now, you're starting to bring another team member to try and teach them the culture, then another person resigns. So, you're constantly starting from zero and it can affect progress. So, retention is crucial because it keeps that culture growing and progressing (P13)

Another declaration was made by a participant which was linked to people. In this case, this participant believed that if certain voices are being preferred and respected over others, it becomes a roadblock to cultural improvements:

Sometimes, we can get blinded by familiarity. So, if you get used to respecting one person's voice over another, that might overshadow truth, that might overshadow reality. I also think that there would be, maybe, biases. (P11)

Other participants mentioned that the attitudes and behaviours of certain individuals become a roadblock to the achievement of healthy organisational culture:

People are being overlooked by the jobs that they have and people look down on others – it's a problem. (P9)

Things can improve when people are not treated according to the friendships that they have. There's too much judgment and people protecting some and not others. (P14)

Another participant looked at how the diversity of people within the organisation demands an organisational culture which is geared towards addressing those differences:

I do feel, here and there, that some staff members perceive that they are ignored or misdirected but they are basically not heard. I think the problem for us at the moment is that we are a multi-generational organisation and I'm not sure if our organisation is geared towards dealing with millennials, generation Alpha, Gen Z. We have proven ability to deal with Generation X, Baby Boomers, all of those things and we can speak to those values and those things working but I'm not sure we are fully equipped yet. (P12)

4.2.6.3 Direction

Some participants felt that in order to improve and move towards an ideal organisational culture, elements that would provide more direction are needed:

I think the key thing is not just to have a reflective session where things are said but listen to the voices and put that into practice. Because many times, you want to say the things and they hear you but then it stops there. It's about taking what you have heard, being intentional with it and jumping into unfamiliar territories. (P11)

One participant felt that the organisation could benefit from clearer direction in order to improve the organisational culture:

I think we could benefit from proper direction (P14)

4.2.6.4 Probable Change

Participants had mentioned the need for the organisation to do things differently in order to encourage and facilitate change.

I think that we need a baseline and we need to constantly measure where we are against that. We don't measure these things. (P4)

Similarly, another participant pointed out that a more methodological approach would be more likely to bring about real change to the organisational culture:

It's just the assumption that everyone should get it right, if eventually, and you can't do that. You just watch long enough and you'll see what we're doing. Perhaps say it and communicate it and model it and recognise when it's happening, the right way. And sometimes, rewards help. (R13)

4.2.6.5 Transparency

One of the topics that came up under roadblocks and room for improvement is transparency and communication. One participant felt that transparency is something difficult for some people in the organisation but something that is needed, following deep introspection:

I think that the roadblocks will always be personalities and those who don't want things to come out. Transparency is not embraced by all. Introspection is needed and deep introspection, not the fluffy stuff. (P4)

Another participant felt that open communication and transparency helps both people that are picture-minded or detail-oriented:

The current way of doing things can be improved by transparency and open communication. Get ahead of the game. Tell people what is expected of them and start it up. Some people are big picture people and some are about the "nitty gritty". I think you have to do both. (P3)

With the same theme of transparency, a participant explained that there is room to improve here in conjunction with other factors such as structures and reporting:

I think there is room for improvement in terms of transparency, in terms of hierarchical structures, in terms of systems of reporting so responsibility is a poor factor there that I think is something that could be worked on. (P1)

4.2.7 Timing of change

4.2.7.1 Intentionality

During the interviews, participants mentioned that organisational change can occur for the better, however, the theme of intentionality came up. What this means is that change can happen with time but how long it will actually take will be directly dependant on the intentions of the stakeholders.

Most participants felt that it would take a handful of years or maybe longer but would still be based on intentionality. For example, one employee felt that if a leader comes from an angle of non-bias, then concrete change can be achieved in those years:

If you have strong leadership who is able to come in with non-bias, then it would take anything from five to ten years I would estimate. But have relaxed school leadership that is not willing to change systems then it may never happen (P1)

Another participant pointed out that the effort behind creating change in organisational culture needs to be very intentional and deliberate to actually see it come into fruition:

But I think if you're not intentional and you're just going with the flow, the culture change and development could take ages, like twenty years before it ever changes because it mainly depends on us. It's all based on intentionality more than actually just giving the time span or a time period (P11)

Similarly, another participant felt that willingness is the key to real change:

It depends on the willingness. I mean, change can take place in a short period of time, if you are willing and if you are not willing, then it can take a long time. (P8)

One participant felt that timing specifically depended on the mindset of the leader at that time:

I think that it takes very long. It can take years because organisational culture depends on whoever is in charge. So, I wouldn't describe how long it takes but what it takes. It takes changing people's mindset or changing people themselves because a person who is in charge controls what the organisation will look like (P2)

4.2.7.2 Journey

When speaking about timing when it comes to organisational culture change, a theme of it being seen as a journey came up. In other words, many participants did not see it as a simple plan but rather a journey that the organisation would need to go on before real change occurs.

One participant saw it as a process in which there are many steps including reflection and reassessment over calendar years:

So, we work on a yearly calendar, for example. There are multiple events slotted in throughout the year and when we go through every single event, there should be feedback on every single event, what needs to be improved. So that the next year, you can improve on that. So, you can create change and improvement in a year or two, give yourself two years to do that cycle of "let me look at this". I would say maybe for the sake of the student, five years. (P6)

Another participant felt that retention directly impacts the time it would take to improve or change organisational culture. They felt that it can be a fairly straightforward journey if staff turnover isn't drastic during the time period:

You know, it could definitely take years to change and that's why the point I mentioned about staff retention is crucial because for you to maintain that, to get it embedded, it would be that you're sticking to this and have the same people in front of you every time that they're trying to knit into this form and shape. It could be much shorter when you're the same people. So, it shouldn't take too long when the first phase was done right and with the same people. (P13)

Similarly, another participant spoke about cultural change boiling down to a journey involving staff turnover and buy-in:

That's a question that's totally dependent on the staff compliment. If we have high turnover, then it's an ongoing thing where you're just extending the period. People will embrace change if you highlight the positives and not just say that this is what we expect. They need to buy-in and that will also shorten the period. (P5)

Conversely, one participant felt that the people coming in held great significance in the journey or organisational change:

After a specific leader having been here 15-20 years and suddenly asking the school to turnover and change, I don't believe it can just happen. In our school environment, we need new blood. That's the only way you are going to get a meaningful transition. The critical mass must move to fresh blood. I would say judging from the ages of people here and those coming in, it would take about six years. (P4)

4.2.8 Strengthening of Existing Culture

4.2.8.1 Accountability

Participants spoke about what they felt was necessary to uplift the current organisational culture. One theme that came up in various forms was that of accountability.

One participant alluded to this where it applies to parents, students and staff. They felt that by having one common expectation of what is and isn't allowed, people can be held accountable accordingly.

So, actions would be more channels of communication around expectations of staff, students and parents. More boundaries being put in place of where students and parents must adhere to instead of overstepping the line. Also, leadership not indulging whimsical demands of parents and students, more disciplinary measures being put in place to have the resulting factors of

respect, resilience, relationships and responsibility coming to the fore more. Staff having one common goal in terms of what is expected and not allowed. (P1)

In a similar breath, another participant highlighted the importance of ascertaining whether staff are aligned to the expectations of the school and what is required of them:

First, we need to check overall if people are aligned to the expectations because we keep getting new people and we are not sure how they align to the vision. In order to create the culture, we need to ensure that we can take these people through a process that will expose them to the expectation in this environment because the sooner they know that, the sooner they will know what to do to align themselves with the expectations (P5)

Another participant specifically pointed out the accountability towards leaders and how they show up and lead the rest of the organisation:

Our leaders need to physically show up, not sit back and dictate the reality. If our leaders can't show up and give us a product that we believe in and also be open and honest with us, we can't rely on lies and dreams. (P15)

One participant looked at accountability from all members of the organisation. It was stated that opportunities need to be presented for the different employees to voice their concerns and provide feedback but the accountability also lies with them to bring forth solutions to avoid it simply being complaints.

I think that there has to be opportunities for people to air their opinions but in a constructive way so it's not just a moaning session. It's sort of like, this is what I think is wrong but this is how I have come up with solutions. It has to be constructive criticism that has solutions (P3)

Another participant also spoke to the theme of accountability in that power should be devolved in order to grow ownership and accountability across the greater organisation:

Generally, I think a healthier organisation is empowering people. Power should be devolved and not sitting at Council or sub-committees. That's accountability, that's ownership and with ownership comes a shift, the "I am proud to be here, I need to own this". What we tend to do is the command and control and we rather push down something. (P4)

4.2.8.2 Environment and Structure

An element of reflection and working internally amongst stakeholders within the environment to make significant change was a theme that came up with participants. Changes need to be made without external interference and between interpersonal relationships at the school.

One participant mentioned how building trust internally will produce change in the positive direction instead of staff leaving the school out of frustration:

Action is getting input, getting output and feedback from everyone in the organisation and showing people that they can be honest. By honest, I mean showing people that they can trust their management because some people end up being too frustrated to a point that they just leave the school. They have no one to talk to because they can't trust their management or the organisation itself. (P2)

Besides relationships, some participants looked at structures and the environment and how by changing that, we are able to move forward positively and strengthen the organisational culture:

I think first would be a review of existing structures versus structures, perhaps even a comparative of existing structures versus structures that have worked in different environments. I think environments are ever-changing so to stick with the structure that was created during the inception of the school makes absolutely no sense. Then, once you have reviewed and compared, then implement those changes in microdoses. I believe in phase-by-phase change. (P6)

4.2.8.3 Training

In considering what actions would lead to the strengthening of the organisational culture, one participant mentioned the benefit of including training for all staff. This did not imply training as in hard skills but rather soft skills and how to adequately deal with different types of people:

You're working with such a diverse group of people in ages and social, economic conditions. It's psychological training, like psychology. You know, how to deal with people. Not managing skills, how to deal with people. I know languages but, on that side, how do I work with a person that's different, to even help students in your class. (P10)

In the spectrum of learning and improving, one participant felt that we could benefit from bringing an external consultant to aid us in our organisational culture journey. They feared that

in not doing so, we stand the risk of having someone from the inside expose unhappiness to the outside:

I think it will take someone from outside, like a consultant. But I really think it takes just one unhappy person who will report thing to like an external institution that will then come and investigate (P8)

4.3 Sentiments Across Different Levels

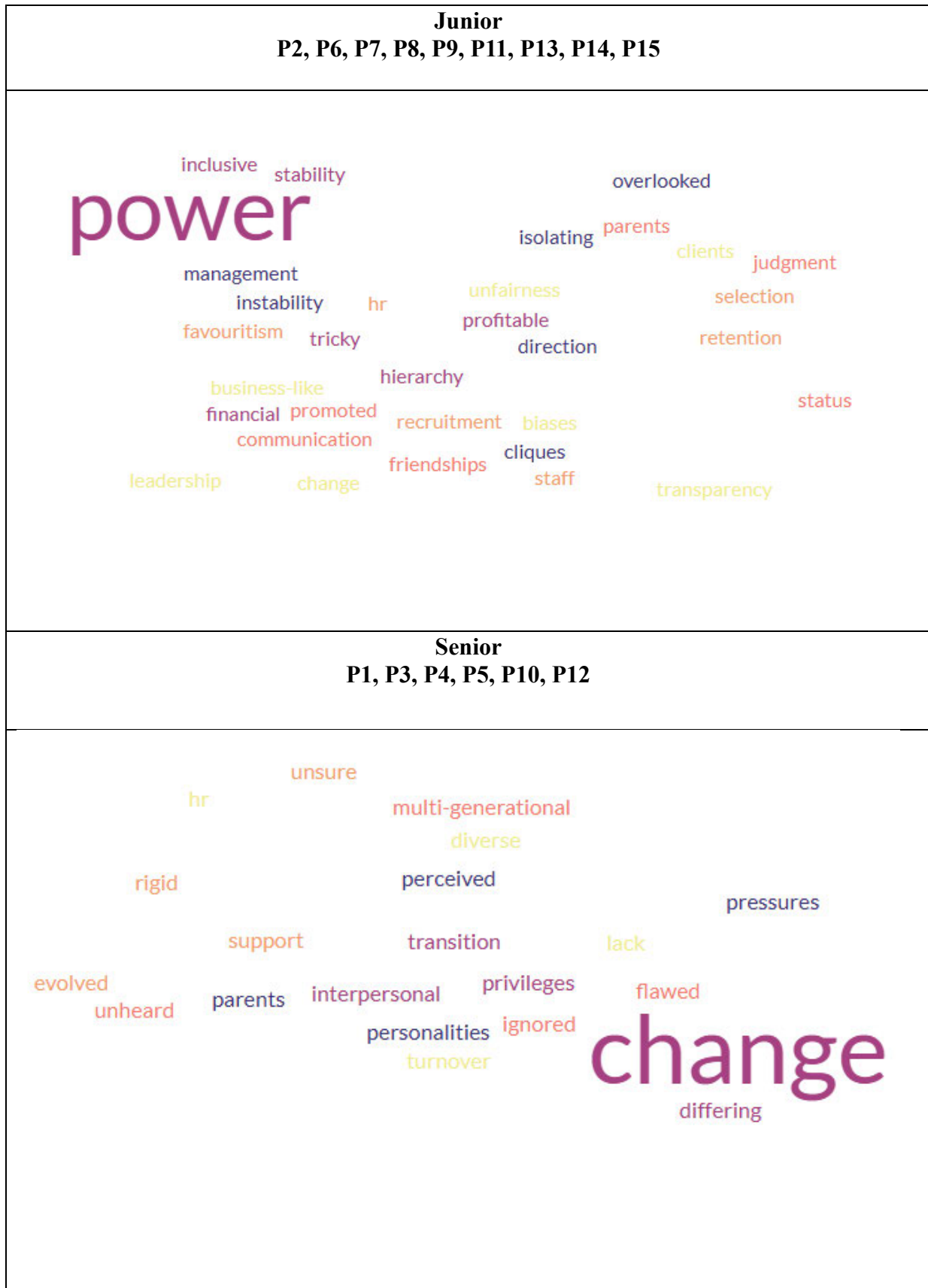
As previously stated, participants involved in this research study were from various departments and held varying roles from junior to senior. An interesting exercise was to compare and contrast word clouds between junior and senior levels when they described the current organisational culture and identified factors that affected it. Table 4.2 illustrates these word clouds below.

It is important to note that participants were categorised into “senior” if they held management roles such as Head of Departments, Grade Heads or belonged to Executive Management. When comparing word clouds in consideration of the current organisational culture and its accompanying factors, words that are the same or similar across both groups are HR, retention and turnover, management and leadership, parents and change.

Both groups also acknowledge diversity and different personalities with words such as “personalities” and “differing”. Additionally, both groups alluded to instability and being unsure of the current state of the organisation.

What was unique about the junior participant group was that there were more observations of the organisational culture resembling that of a corporate or business with words such as “business-like” and “profitable”. Furthermore, whilst the Senior group indirectly spoke about biases, the Junior group was more forthcoming in naming biases and favouritism.

Table 4.2: Organisational Culture Factors Word Clouds Across Senior and Junior Levels



4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter served the purpose of presenting the results from the research that was conducted at the school. Fifteen participants were interviewed in total and held both senior and junior roles in the organisation. All the participants were willing participants and showed a great understanding of the concept of organisational culture as well as the values, norms and processes at the school.

Through the process of thematic analysis, several themes were revealed and within those, sub-themes. These themes were listed in tabular form and expanded later in the chapter. With quotes from the participants (who were kept anonymous), a deeper understanding on what the current organisational culture looks like, what affects it, the roadblocks and suggestions to improve it were all addressed. The next chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the results which were presented in this chapter, along with references to applicable literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research findings that were detailed in the previous chapter by comparing and contrasting previous and new literature, where applicable. Through this process, the research findings are supported by the literature's similarities and differences. A brief overview of the participants and their selection begin this chapter. This is followed by a discussion of the themes that were identified during the research in conjunction with the objectives and supporting literature.

5.2 Participants of the Study

As mentioned in Chapter Three, fifteen participants were selected for this study. The selection of participants was based on their level and title held at the school in order to have a representative pool which would include a mixture of senior leadership and junior-level employees. Moreover, participants ranged from long-term employees to employees that have been at the school for less than two years. This was to cater for in-depth knowledge of the school and its changes but also welcoming relatively fresh perspectives of the school and its culture.

5.3 Claims of School's Values and Participants' Own Values

The findings illustrated the school's values as defined by the school itself as well as how the participants perceived the values of the school to be. Aleveesson and Sveningsson (2024) emphasised that culture may create problems and is an important aspect to consider, especially since it is seen as a central aspect of competitiveness. Moreover, it was noted that in order to make working together easier, shared values is of utmost importance.

Further to their research, they uncovered that how values are presented may be different to how they are experienced. This theme showed that the knowledge of the schools' values were strong but since participants have their own unique perceptions, other values were also brought forward. This was shown in the research as some participants recall seeing these marketed and communicated values in action at the school, but that some values may fall short in reality. Inclusivity was also seen as a value that came across in experience and is not typically marketed as part of the official four core values. This reiterates the notion that marketed values and experienced values are not always the same.

What had also come across as a theme was the participants' own personal values. Sagiv and Schwartz (2022) noted the importance of individuals' values and how it pertains to their environment. This would be particularly crucial when looking at the future potential for positive change. The findings show that key values across all participants were accountability, trust, authenticity and respect. Whilst personal values like respect are echoed by the school, the four core values of the school (respect, resilience, responsibility and relationships) don't necessarily cover participants' own core values. This implies that a gap exists between most employees and what the school stands for. This may influence overall job satisfaction in the event that participants feel that there is a disconnect between their core values and that of the school's.

5.4 Experienced School Values and Culture

This was a revealing theme during the interviews as it showed potential contrast between what is marketed as the organisation's non-negotiable core values and what was actually experienced by employees every day. This goes hand-in-hand with the popular Iceberg Model in which the emphasis to understand a concept fully is to dive beneath the surface (Biewendt et al., 2021).

The findings revealed that unfairness was a feeling and experience relevant to many of the participants. The participants had mentioned the various ways that they encountered unfairness or biases in the promotional sense as well as not fitting in specific groups who received different treatment. This leaves employees with a feeling of frustration and alienation. This view is supported by Byrd and Scott (2024) who alluded to oppression culture which leaves employees feeling excluded and alienated, pointing out that it fosters an ongoing cycle of unfair behaviours in a social setting.

Memon, Bakari and Umer (2023) pointed out the benefits of overcoming biased discrimination and unfairness which leads to employees exuding positive behaviour. It is implied that by making a concerted effort to make all employees feel included and fairly treated, employees should feel a sense of belonging. This would ultimately benefit all parties, including the organisation, as positive employees will reap better performance.

Another finding showed that communication was a facet which the organisation could improve on and this is applicable to organisational culture as it relates to the behaviours and norms of the organisation. Participants had pointed out feeling that the communication was disjointed at times and there were missing pieces of information related to the rest of the organisation. Whittington, et al. (2023) supported the importance of efficient communication in any plans

involving the improvement of organisational culture. Similarly, Jerab and Mabrouk (2023) revealed that communication is vital in improving organisational culture. It is suggested that when communication is fragmented, uncertainty amongst employees is created which further results in a weakened sense of collective understanding regarding goals and expectations of the organisation. Without this collective understanding, it can be assumed that a sense of belonging and united culture will be absent.

Giving us further insight to the current organisational culture at the school, participants had also mentioned that their culture also differed from one department to another which implies the existence of subcultures. Interestingly, Aldhobaib (2022) examined various studies and found that whilst some studies completely exclude the existence of subcultures, numerous empirical studies do allude to the existence of subcultures and its influence.

This is important in any assessment of organisational culture as it asks researchers to look at the various divisions instead of unilaterally examining the organisation. For example, some participants mentioned that the culture in their department was different to how they perceived the organisation as a whole and was also different to the culture witnessed in other departments. This indicates that culture is not experienced unilaterally at an organisational level and that it is shaped and formed depending on departmental leadership styles, dynamics of the team and daily operations within that department.

Findings had also revealed that there was a level of discomfort experienced by some participants due to the perception of uncertainty in the organisation. Many participants had felt that they are in a state of transition and evolution, acknowledging changes in leadership and other staff. This would directly affect the culture and is bound to change as leaders, staff and also processes change. Some participants mentioned that they could already sense that the culture has begun changing.

This perception of uncertainty indicate that employees are finding it hard to adjust to the evolving environment and in this time, morale has been impacted. These findings coincide with studies by Khaw, Alnoor, Al-Abbrow, Tiberius, Ganesan and Atshan (2023) who stated that whilst some people feel either positive or negative about organisational change, some individuals are indecisive about change which leads to feelings of anxiety and disruption.

5.5 Driving Factors

The findings revealed critical insights related to this study's objectives surrounding factors which drive organisational culture. When asked about which factors they believed to directly influence organisational culture, four overarching sub-themes arose. These included leadership, employees' personalities, parents and change. These findings imply that organisational culture is a result of combined internal and external influences and cannot be minimised to a single, dominant factor. This reiterates the notion of organisational culture as a complex concept.

Leadership came across quite strongly in the interviews as a strong influence in the development and condition of an organisation's culture. Jerab and Mabrouk (2023) echoed this sentiment having stated that leadership crafts the foundation on which cultural norms, procedures and values are forged. However, the authors also had come to an interesting conclusion that as much as leaders influence the organisation's culture, the culture also influences the leader. This reciprocity implies that leaders are often a product of their environment rather than a single, unaffected force that may adapt their behaviours as a response to existing norms.

Therefore, the culmination of everyone's contribution does impact the overall culture as well as affecting the leader themselves. This conclusion also addressed the other driving factor for organisational culture, that of all employees influencing the state and nature of the organisation's culture.

During the interviews, some participants felt that personalities drive the organisation as a result of too few processes and that in many cases, the wrong type of personalities seem to be running the organisation. Similarly, participants spoke to different departments having different rules and processes. Moreover, there was an acknowledgment of power struggles and people being at the organisation because they have to be, not because they want to be. This leads to the assumption that other employees, their personalities, norms, beliefs and values are crucial in developing organisational culture.

However, there are not a lot of studies that support this. In fact, Aldhobaib (2022) specifically pointed out this very notion by highlighting the lack of studies that illustrate the roles that lower-level employees play in creating organisational culture. What the findings indicate is that organisational culture can be moulded by employee personalities rather than structured systems at the organisation.

Another limitation in the literature is the type that addresses the role that external stakeholders like clients play in cultivating culture. In the findings, it was revealed that many participants were of the belief that parents strongly influence the current culture and that the school may be similar to a business. This raises an interesting possibility of the power of external stakeholders in influencing the culture inside the organisation. This further reiterates the complexity of organisational culture as it is a result of additional forces such as external pressures and expectations.

Another driving factor of organisational culture which was identified during the interviews was that of change. Change can affect the employees' beliefs, assumptions, habits and even processes of employees which can ultimately affect the organisation's culture. Changes in different forms (leadership changes, process changes and even staff changes) can also cause anxiety and uncertainty further strengthening a change in overall perceptions.

The relationship between change and organisational culture has been noted in literature such as that from Bannikova and Mykhaylyova (2024) who stated that to focus on organisational culture is critical in a rapidly changing world. This is because there is value in a stabilising force and organisational culture can be that force. Furthermore, they found that prioritising organisational culture during changing times is needed to enhance innovation.

5.6 Healthy and Unhealthy Organisational Cultures

The theme of healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures also was revealed during the interviews. Participants explained what they perceived as healthy or unhealthy organisational cultures. It's important to note here that this was not specific to or singling out the current organisation but rather their general feelings about what makes an organisational culture healthy or unhealthy.

One of the first themes that emerged was workload and wellness. Participants claimed that wellness is becoming a concern and that as an organisation, there should be a level of care about others' workload. Others mentioned welcomed interventions and participation from the school's Wellness department. Overall, there was a feeling that the goal should be to have happy employees at work, not those who feel a sense of burden when coming to work. This implies that employees correlate their work environment and experiences to their wellbeing and work-life balance. If employees perceive their work experience to be negative, it may also impact their attitude towards the organisation.

The essence of mental health and its relation to organisational culture was covered by Wu et al. (2021) who stated that deeply engrained behaviours in an organisation affects all other behaviours which will, ultimately, affect organisational culture. By enabling the right resources, procedures and processes, they believed that this will positively affect organisational culture by eliminating toxic behaviours. This will lead to a mentally healthy organisation and happier employees.

Another theme which emerged was that of equality and inequality. As previously mentioned in the findings, feeling like there was unfairness at times in the organisation was felt by a number of the participants. Similarly, participants mentioned that in an unhealthy organisation, there is favouritism and discrimination. Having an organisational culture which enables these behaviours leaves employees despondent. This indicates a relationship between perceived unfairness and trust in an organisation as well as feelings of belonging which are both notable aspects of healthy organisational culture.

This was echoed by Saadi, Taleghani, Dillard, Ryan, Heilemann and Eisenman (2023) who stated that discrimination in the workplace has long-lasting negative effects on employees. Conversely, according to the participants, a healthy organisation has rules that apply to everyone and is a place where everyone feels like they belong.

Participants had also revealed that the nature of communication at an organisation can also be a determining factor of health. Many pointed out that when employees have a common goal and attempt to be familiar with each other through communication, it makes for a healthy organisational culture. This notion is supported by Mdletye (2025) who stated that efficient communication is a central factor for productivity and behaviour. Since organisational culture is a result of behaviours or ways things are done at an organisation, one can deduce that communication is linked to the nature of organisational culture.

Another sub-theme that had come up under the umbrella of healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures was that of self-gain versus holistic gain. Essentially, this referred to employees at an organisation being driven by their own motives versus considering the group or the organisation as a whole. Participants spoke of how unhealthy it would be in an organisation where people were more interested in how they would benefit versus working for the greater good or being helpful to others. This might range in reason from working up to promotion or the perception that one department is superior to others. This indicates a potential

for internal competition and disjointed working relationships which could negatively impact collaboration and unity.

Conversely, a healthy organisational culture would be one in which employees support each other and have the same purpose. This type of culture was spoken about in a study by Bamidele (2022) after he analysed the work made famous by Harrison and Stokes. It was discovered that this was referred to as achievement-oriented culture which brings employees together with a singular vision and team orientation. Additionally, Chau et al., (2021) had studied the Denison Model and pointed out the importance of having a shared mission across an organisation in order for it to be a success. This leaves little room for selfish, disjointed involvement from employees.

5.7 Roadblocks and Improvements

A few participants had spoken about the employees, leadership and HRM as possible stumbling blocks to success in the organisation. Some participants looked at HRM specifically as a function that could improve from the selection process to enabling trust with other employees across the board. There was mention of biases and cliques that further worked against the organisation having its best possible culture.

The difficulties with having optimal HRM functions in organisations is an ongoing, universal struggle as pointed out in a study by Chimati and Kelemba (2023), in which they had also illustrated the imperative role that HRM plays in formulating organisational culture. This role was found to directly impact employees' motivation and efficiency. This suggests that HRM operations may impact the values and tone within the organisation through recruitment, development and employee relations.

Participants had also revealed the existence of biases and cliques across different groups within the organisation. This existence had been brought up with negative feelings with individuals noting that it affected the organisation and treatment of employees, affecting the culture. The negative impacts of biases and cliques are echoed in literature as well. Foster (2021) explains that a clique is a group that keeps power and information close, excluding others resulting in a feeling of not belonging which ultimately affects how things are done and overall productivity. However, Dodson (2024) highlighted the other side of cliques, pointing the positive emotions felt by those who were members of cliques. It was discovered that some members of cliques felt happier than when they were outside cliques. It is to be noted that there are both sides to

cliques but what would ultimately matter in this context would be the benefits of the whole organisation.

Other elements that proved to be roadblocks to the participants in the study were feeling that there was a lack of direction and transparency. Furthermore, participants highlighted the need for change whilst discussing the probability of change. Literature also highlights the benefits of promoting transparency. Lacey (2023) specifically highlighted the importance of transparency during uncertain and changing times as it promotes trust, positivity and engaged employees. This is particularly important to note as change within an organisation had come up in the interviews as a sub-theme. This indicates that clear, transparent communication may reduce uncertainty and build trust during tumultuous or changing times.

5.8 Timing of Change

Participants had highlighted the areas within the organisation which could be improved to positively influence and mold the current organisational culture. Participants had also broken down this theme into intentionality and the journey that the change would involve. Many participants expressed that change was possible but that it would likely take a few years, noting that organisational culture isn't a simple thing to change. This indicates that employees recognise the complexity of culture change and that it cannot be improved instantly due to norms and values that are created and embedded over time.

Many mentioned that within this journey, there had to be deliberate effort and even the mindset of the leader. Similarly, Whittington, et al. (2023) explains a detailed process that can ultimately result in positive cultural change in an organisation which involves determining what the desired organisational culture, identifying and analysing the gap that exists between what exists and what is wanted, a plan development and implementation thereof as well as doing a review of the culture. This reiterates what the participants had revealed in that it was a journey dependant on planned steps which have to be intentional.

5.9 Strengthening of Organisational Culture

Participants had also highlighted what they had felt could further strengthen the current organisational culture. The concept of accountability had many components from having clear expectations to dissolving power. This may indicate that participants associated strong and healthy organisational cultures with clear responsibility and accountability. Participants felt that there should be clear expectations for all in the organisation, including what is or isn't

allowed. This may lead to a shared understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and could provide repetitive, consistent portrayals of how policies should manifest. This will also enable a stronger sense of accountability.

Overall, participants emphasised an overall need for change internally, ranging from strengthening trust, reviewing current structures and also enabling training to enhance the soft skills which will help working with other colleagues and students easier.

5.10 Sentiments Across Different Levels

Participants that were interviewed ranged from junior employees to those in senior leadership positions. This enabled a view of the topic from different positions. Whilst there were many similarities as evidenced from the word clouds, there were also some differences between the groups. The interviews revealed that junior employees were more likely to acknowledge the side of the organisational culture that was more corporate and concerned with financial gain. The senior staff did not voice this issue.

It is possible to deduce that employees may view the current organisational culture as a Market Culture in which the organisation's aim is to make a profit and internal relationships are not a core driver (Aktas et al. 2011). According to Cameron and Quinn's framework, a Market Culture has characteristics linked to competitiveness, financial performance and an overall external focus (Başar, İlkan & Mutair, 2022). During the study, junior employees' responses indicated a tendency to observe financial tendencies and corporate priorities which aligns to the characteristics of Market Culture, in which success is measured by external satisfaction and key performance indicators. This indicates that the lens in which junior staff view the organisation aligns to Market Culture.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the research findings as presented in Chapter Four whilst referencing literature presented in Chapter Two and additional literature. The themes and sub-themes derived from the interviews in relation to the organisation's culture were discussed. Regarding main factors which drive organisational culture, leadership, employees' personalities, parents and change were identified. However, by exploring the concept of organisational culture, other factors also were identified as having an effect on organisational culture. These included communication and transparency, workload and wellness as well as HRM. The next chapter

looks at recommendations and concludes the study. Moreover, the study's limitations and further areas of research are considered.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by drawing conclusions as well as offering recommendations to the school to improve its current organisational culture. The aim of this study was to explore and identify the factors which drove organisational culture at a high school in Johannesburg. Due to the importance of organisational culture in any organisation with regards to success and being competitive, this study offers value in identifying gaps and opportunities which will enrich the school.

The literature presented in Chapter Two covered the concept and definition of organisational culture, various models, what makes healthy and unhealthy culture, school culture, the effects of leadership as well as how to approach change. A qualitative approach was employed in this study using fifteen participants across various departments and roles. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and thematic analysis techniques were employed.

To begin this chapter, the objectives of the study will be addressed. Thereafter, recommendations will be made in relation to the research questions. The recommendations, moreover, seeks to add value in not only understanding the current organisational culture in-depth but by also finding gaps and a way forward. Implications of the study and limitations conclude the chapter.

6.2 Addressing the Research Objectives

6.2.1 To explore the factors affecting organisational culture in a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa

The first research objective within this study was to explore the factors affecting organisational culture in a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa. Having asked questions which explored how participants felt about organisational culture against their own values and beliefs, this objective was exploratory and began the journey to the deeper layers and assumptions about the school's culture. With the questions tied to this objective, participants described the current organisational culture as an entry point into what affects it.

During the interviews, participants spoke about experiencing and witnessing levels of unfairness at the school. They had also mentioned room for improvement with communication across the board. Another interesting sub-theme that was found during the interviews was the

existence of subcultures. This alluded to the complexity of organisational culture and that it is multi-dimensional. Various subcultures contribute to the whole organisational culture which makes it an interesting and varied concept to identify, understand and improve. Participants had also mentioned that the school was experiencing a lot of change and this left many feeling uncertain. This sub-theme was further explored and tied to a driving factor of organisational culture.

6.2.2 To identify the factors affecting the organisational culture across different levels

Questions related to this objective built on the learnings from the previous questions and gave more insight to what drives organisational culture in general and also at the school. Although there were many sub-themes, concepts and sentiments in relation to organisational culture drivers, four main umbrellas were recognised and discussed during the interviews. These main factors included leadership, employees' personalities, parents and change.

Within leadership as a driving factor, the leaders in the organisation are seen as those who mould the culture and provide directive whilst also mitigating unhealthy behaviours leading to toxic organisational culture. The personalities of employees across the organisation also play a role in creating organisational culture, especially if there are no set processes and rules for all in an organisation or a lack of consequences. In this case, it was revealed that some employees have more say than others which leads to certain cultural contributions.

Parents (in this case, the customer) was also revealed as a main driving factor. Participants revealed that leaders often reacted according to the wants of the parents which ultimately affected the way things are done at the school, thus contributing to organisational culture. Finally, change was also seen as a driver. If an organisation (like the school) goes through sudden changes which impacts how things were done, beliefs about the school may change which then also affects organisational culture.

During the general discussion on healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures also revealed other concepts that may influence organisational culture such as wellness (including workload), equality, communication and motives (such as employees that are there for self-gain versus holistic gain).

6.2.3 To explore the challenges existing between the different levels of the hierarchy considering organisational culture factors

The same set of questions were posed to all participants regardless of their title or designation. Findings had revealed that many of the sentiments around organisational culture (the beliefs and assumptions of the organisation) were the same. However, some minor changes were discovered such as junior employees acknowledging and discussing their perceptions of the school's tendency to adopt a corporate style driven by finances.

6.2.4 Provide recommendations on how the organisation can develop and uphold a positive/healthy organisational culture

Findings revealed that participants describe a healthy organisational culture as one in which employees are happy to come to work. The workload is manageable and wellness is prioritised. Whether an organisation was fair or equal was also critical. Therefore, the school and any similar organisation should strive to prioritise these aspects to ensure a healthy organisational culture. The role players required to realise and implement these potential changes start with leadership and flows to the rest of the organisation.

Additionally, some roadblocks seen were the HRM function and cliques throughout the organisation. Findings revealed that by addressing these issues will result in happier employees. To add, findings had also revealed that the organisational culture can be improved if communication is carefully planned, clear and transparent. This also feeds into the main drivers affecting organisational culture which are leadership, employees' personalities', parents and change. Through efficient communication, all drivers will inevitably improve which will improve organisational culture.

6.3 Recommendations to Address the Research Problem

One of the main determinants to address organisational culture factors is understanding organisational culture and being intentional with identifying opportunities for change and then creating a sustainable plan to address those changes. This starts with leadership. Those in leadership need to realise the importance of understanding the organisation's culture and will need to address any changes in manageable steps, eventually revising and reflecting on the progress made.

A possible solution would be for leaders to periodically conduct audits of the organisational culture using departmental surveys and interactive feedback sessions. These would include

every member of the organisation, not just selected departments. However, as indicated by the drivers, leadership is not the only responsible party in contributing to the organisational culture, therefore, these surveys and sessions should extend to leaders taking these assessments as well.

To further address the impact of employee personalities in relation to organisational culture, clearer expectations of behaviour and norms can be established through policies such as a sound Code of Conduct and other policies. This form of governance could assist in eliminating feelings of biases or unfairness. It may also eradicate power given to one individual or group of individuals over the others.

Similarly, policies and formalised feedback sessions which adequately cater to parent influence and market pressures should be made readily available. In these sessions, explanations as to why certain decisions are made need to be transparent. This could lead to staff feeling that their concerns and wellness are a priority and that they are not products of what the external pressures require.

Once issues and plans are identified, a clear plan is made to mould or change the organisational culture, clear communication needs to be at the centre of the rollout and at every stage, to ensure buy-in. Additionally, it is critical that all employees have the same vision and motives or the organisational culture will not improve.

6.4 Implications of this Study

This study intends to enrich the school being studied as well as other schools in Johannesburg and the rest of South Africa. Studies focused on school culture are limited. The drivers of organisational culture were carefully grouped and explained with recommendations to improve. Moreover, the findings within this study are not limited to schools or entities in the education industry and can be extended to other organisations since organisational culture is a universal topic. Similarly, it may be applied to countries outside South Africa.

6.5 Limitations of this Study

This study was conducted during a specific period of time and only covers the factors leading to recommendations and not the realisation of any recommendations. Whilst leaders may benefit from the recommendations, it would have been more advantageous if studies were conducted during that period as well.

Moreover, the organisation is undergoing many changes and whilst the period in which the study was done was advantageous in covering the “before, during and after” change, it would have been insightful if a study covered a period three to six months (or longer) after the changes.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Studies

The organisation should have other studies done with similar aims but at different periods especially due the changes currently happening. It would also prove beneficial in comparing the results from different periods. Furthermore, a quantitative or mixed methods approach may add value.

6.7 Chapter Summary

This study explored what the current organisational culture at the school looked like whilst also identifying influencing factors driving culture. Recommendations were also made to address any cultural improvement areas, considering what has been perceived as healthy organisational culture. Further studies were also recommended to complement to this study and by facilitating a comparison of findings.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Graduate School of Business and Leadership

MCLS Research Project
Researcher: Sasha Govender (205511381)

Which Factors Affect Organisational Culture?

Objective 1: To explore the factors affecting organisational culture in a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa

1. What are the core values of the school?
2. What are your personal values?
3. How would you describe the organisational culture of the school?

Objective 2: To identify the factors affecting the organisational culture across different levels and

Objective 3: To explore the challenges existing between the different levels of the hierarchy considering organisational culture factors

4. What do you think is the main factor that drives the organisational culture at the school?
5. What are other factors that influence organisational culture?
6. What does healthy organisational culture look like to you?
7. What does unhealthy organisational culture look like to you?
8. What do you expect to see in an organisational culture at a school?
9. How do you think the current organisational culture can be improved?
10. What are some roadblocks, in your opinion, to us reaching the desired organisational state?

Objective 4: Provide recommendations on how the organisation can develop and uphold a positive/healthy organisational culture.

11. How long do you think it takes for an organisational culture to change?
12. What actions would lead to the strengthening of the current organisational culture?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Employee

My name is Sasha Govender from University of KwaZulu-Natal (Graduate School of Business), student number 205511381, contact details: 205511381@stu.ukzn.ac.za / [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I am the researcher in this project and my supervisor is Professor Bibi Chummun, contact details: chummunb@ukzn.ac.za / [REDACTED]

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research around organisational factors in a school in Johannesburg, South Africa. The aim and purpose of this research is to uncover the factors that influence organisational culture in this organisation. The study is expected to enrol approximately 15 participants within Sunninghill. It will involve the following procedures – one-on-one interview which will be recorded and analysed. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 45 minutes or less. The study is funded by the organisation which is being studied.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts – discussing personal opinions and/or experiences about organisational culture. We hope that the study will create the following benefits – inform senior management of overall organisational perceptions and what steps can be taken to improve it.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number _____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 205511381@stu.ukzn.ac.za / [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Supervisor (Prof Bibi Chummun) at chummunb@ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

The participation in this study is voluntary and will be kept anonymous in this study. You are welcome to withdraw from participation of this study at any point and will not incur any penalty or loss. Please let me know in advance should you wish to do withdraw. The study will also not incur any costs to the participants nor will there be any reimbursement.

All participants will be kept anonymous – no names and surnames will be used as identifiers. The data gathered during the study will be stored privately on a personal computer and drive.

--

CONSENT

Ihave been informed about the study entitled “Exploring the Factors that Affect Organisational Culture of a High School in Johannesburg, South Africa” by Sasha Govender.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 205511381@stu.ukzn.ac.za / [REDACTED]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

APPENDIX C: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER



**ST PETER'S
COLLEGE**

College Lane off Maxwell Drive
Sunninghill, Sandton, South Africa
PO Box 901, Illovo 2128
Tel +27 (0)11 807 5315
Email info@stpeterscollege.co.za
www.stpeters.co.za

30 May 2025

To whom it may concern

Subject: Gatekeeper's Consent

I, Ms Annabel Roberts, as Executive Head of St Peter's College, hereby give permission to the primary researcher – Sasha Govender (student number 205511381) – registered in the Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal – for the following:

1. To engage and conduct a research survey with a pool of employees of the abovementioned company.

The abovementioned is required for the research project entitled:

Exploring the Factors that Affect Organisational Culture of a High School in Johannesburg, South Africa

This authorisation is based on an understanding from both parties that the abovementioned company's name cannot be revealed in this project. Information provided by the employees or any other means is solely for academic purposes and will not be used for other purposes.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Ms Annabel Roberts.

Ms Annabel Roberts (Executive Head)

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



05 June 2025

Sasha Govender (205511381)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear S Govender,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00008740/2025
Project title: Exploring the factors that affect organisational culture of a high school in Johannesburg, South Africa
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 27 May 2025 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 05 June 2026.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Doctor Shamila Naidoo (Interim Chair)

/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 200 8150/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukm.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukm.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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