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RECENT SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS)

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Abstract:

This systematic literature review explores the evolving landscape of organizational culture in higher education institutions (HEIs), aiming to understand its multifaceted impact on institutional dynamics and performance. In recent years, organizational culture has garnered increasing attention in higher education due to its critical role in shaping employee behavior, leadership effectiveness, and overall institutional success. However, there is limited consolidated insight that holistically maps the scope of current findings in this domain. To address this gap, we conducted an advanced systematic search using the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases, guided by the PRISMA framework. The search strategy employed key terms such as "organizational culture," "workplace culture," and "higher education institution," resulting in a final dataset of 40 peer-reviewed articles. Through rigorous screening and thematic synthesis, three core themes were identified: (1) Organizational Culture and Employee Outcomes, which highlights how workplace culture influences motivation, engagement, and performance; (2) Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Institutional Performance, emphasizing the interconnection between leadership styles and cultural alignment in driving institutional effectiveness; and (3) Organizational Culture Typologies, Structures, and Academic Environment, which examines various cultural models, governance structures, and their implications for teaching and research ecosystems. The review reveals that a strong, well-aligned organizational culture positively correlates with improved employee satisfaction, leadership cohesion, and institutional performance. In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive synthesis of current literature, offering valuable insights for policymakers, academic

leaders, and researchers seeking to cultivate effective organizational cultures within higher education institutions.

Keywords:

Organizational Culture, Workplace Culture, Higher Education Institution

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) operate in an increasingly complex and competitive global environment, wherein organizational culture plays a vital role in shaping institutional effectiveness, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement (Boichuk & Fast, 2017; Demissie & Egziabher, 2022; Tierney, 1988). Defined as the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide behavior within an organization, organizational culture influences academic and administrative practices, pedagogical approaches, leadership behaviors, and the capacity for innovation (Chayomchai, 2024; Kaur & Hemlata, 2023; Smart & St John, 1996; Tadesse Bogale & Debela, 2024; Thokozani SBM, 2017). In the context of HEIs, culture is more than a conceptual construct—it is an operational force that shapes faculty identity, student experiences, institutional governance, and responses to change. As such, cultivating a resilient and adaptive organizational culture is imperative for institutions seeking to enhance their academic reputation and meet the evolving expectations of global stakeholders.

The literature highlights the multidimensionality of organizational culture within HEIs, emphasizing both its components and variability. Studies underscore the significance of mission clarity, adaptability, leadership styles, and communication strategies in fostering effective organizational cultures (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Gillian & Bennett, 2016; Kicir & Altunoglu, 2024; Sušanjan et al., 2020). Furthermore, the digital presence of universities such as the way they project institutional values online has emerged as a contemporary indicator of cultural strength (Minkov & Zlateva, 2023). Research also suggests that different cultural models such as bureaucratic, entrepreneurial or corporate, can coexist or dominate depending on historical contexts and strategic goals (Nauffal & Nader, 2022). However, internal differences between faculty categories, administrative staff, and departments often lead to the formation of subcultures, which may complicate organizational coherence (Gebera & Zea, 2020). While a well-integrated culture enhances morale, performance, and student engagement (Burhanuddin et al., 2019; Bustamante et al., 2022), misaligned or fragmented cultures can hinder institutional progress and adaptability (Yusuf, 2020).

Despite growing scholarly attention, significant gaps remain in understanding how public universities—particularly in diverse socio-economic and political contexts—can strategically shape and manage organizational culture. Cultural heterogeneity, inconsistent leadership practices, and resistance to change continue to challenge institutional transformation. Although previous studies have explored cultural models and their implications, limited research has addressed the practical mechanisms by which HEIs can reconcile internal differences and foster unified, ethical, and performance-oriented cultures (Azzolini et al., 2018; Carrillo Punina et al., 2022; Tzianakopoulou & Manesis, 2018; Verboncu & Todoruț, 2012). This calls for a shift in focus toward applied strategies that emphasize inclusivity, trust, shared governance, and continuous cultural assessment. Future research should investigate context-specific interventions and leadership competencies that promote cultural alignment and institutional resilience. It is recommended that HEIs invest in ongoing capacity-building, digital

transformation aligned with institutional values, and inclusive dialogue mechanisms to reinforce their cultural foundations and more effectively respond to global academic challenges.

Literature Review

Organizational culture in higher education institutions (HEIs) is a critical factor influencing various aspects of institutional performance, including leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, and academic outcomes. This review synthesizes findings from multiple studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture shapes dynamics within HEIs and universities.

Organizational culture in HEIs significantly impacts leadership performance and the overall management of the institution. Studies indicate that a strong organizational culture, characterized by shared values and trust, enhances leadership effectiveness and administrative services (Burhanuddin et al., 2019; Pagnozzi et al., 2024). For instance, a study of Indonesian universities found that organizational culture positively influences leadership performance and student academic culture, suggesting that university leaders must align their leadership styles with the prevailing organizational culture to achieve desired outcomes (Burhanuddin et al., 2019). Additionally, value alignment and active employee participation are crucial for fostering a flexible and innovative organizational culture, particularly in the context of hybrid work environments (Pagnozzi et al., 2024).

The cultural dimensions within HEIs such as involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission traits play a pivotal role in shaping employee engagement and satisfaction. Research conducted in state universities in Bukidnon, Philippines, revealed that high levels of these cultural traits contribute to a positive organizational environment, enhancing decision-making processes and strengthening employee relationships (Villanca, 2023). Similarly, a study in Ecuador highlighted that continuous learning and a formal structure that promotes internal unity are essential for achieving organizational objectives and enhancing institutional capacity (Carrillo Punina et al., 2022). These cultural dimensions are integral to creating an environment in which employees feel valued and engaged, ultimately leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Organizational culture in HEIs also directly affects academic performance and the achievement of institutional goals. For example, a study conducted at a Peruvian university found that differences in cultural subgroups among professors such as hierarchical and clan cultures can foster innovation and autonomy, thereby positively impacting institutional life (Gebera & Zea, 2020). Moreover, the internationalization of universities is heavily influenced by organizational culture components, including leadership practices, resource management, and organizational communication (Heidari et al., 2021). An effective organizational culture promotes strategic thinking, creativity, and a sense of belonging, all of which are essential for the internationalization and overall success of universities.

Table 1: Key Institutional Outcomes Influenced by Organizational Culture

Aspect	Key Findings	Supporting Studies
Leadership Performance	Strong culture enhances leadership effectiveness and administrative services.	Burhanuddin et al., 2019; Pagnozzi et al., 2024
Employee Engagement	High involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission traits boost engagement.	Carrillo Punina et al., 2022; Villanca, 2023
Academic Performance	Cultural subgroups foster innovation and autonomy, impacting institutional life.	Gebera & Zea, 2020
Internationalisation	Culture influences strategic thinking, creativity, and belonging.	(Heidari et al., 2021)

Research Questions

In formulating the research question, two sources were utilised; first, ideas from previous studies such as by (Demissie & Egziabher, 2022; Heidari et al., 2021; Kaur & Hemlata, 2023). All the articles were related to research about organizational culture in HIEs. Second, using the mnemonic of PICO, which signifies ‘P’ (Population or Problem), I’ (interest) and ‘Co’ (Context) (Lockwood et al., 2015). PICO is a simple yet effective way to organize research questions in qualitative studies and help researchers focus their questions more clearly and meaningfully. Based on these concepts, the researchers addressed the following three research questions:

1. How does organizational culture influence employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and retention in public universities?
2. In what ways does the alignment between organizational culture and leadership style affect institutional performance in public universities?
3. How do different organizational culture typologies and structural arrangements shape the academic environment, including teaching, research, and governance, in public universities?

Material and Methods

This study is a systematic literature review (SLR). According to (Lockwood et al., 2015), an SLR is a type of research that focuses on evidence, impact, validity, and consequences, prompting researchers to examine study design information, analytical methods, and causal pathways. Accordingly, SLRs inherently ensure the quality of literature reviews by verifying that prior research evidence is robust and aligned with the study's objectives.

In collecting prior studies using the SLR methodology, several guidelines or protocols can be applied to ensure that the selected literature is relevant for synthesis. One such protocol is the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021). This protocol is highly recognized and widely adopted across various disciplines due to

its comprehensive structure, which enhances review accuracy and reduces researcher bias (Mishra & Mishra, 2023). Therefore, this study employs the PRISMA protocol as a guideline to produce a high-quality SLR, as previous evidence has demonstrated that PRISMA facilitates complete reporting and systematic reviewing (Page et al., 2021).

The PRISMA framework structures the review process into four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and data extraction. In the identification stage, a systematic search is conducted to locate relevant studies, followed by the screening stage, where studies that fail to meet predefined criteria for quality or relevance are excluded. The eligibility stage confirms the final selection based on adherence to inclusion criteria, while the data extraction phase involves methodically collecting and synthesizing key information from each study. This structured methodology strengthens the rigour and credibility of the review, enabling the development of well-founded conclusions that support both future research directions and practical implementation.

Identification

In this study, essential steps of the systematic review process were employed to collect a significant body of relevant literature. The process commenced with the selection of keywords, followed by the identification of related terms through dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, and existing research. All pertinent terms were compiled to formulate search strings used in the Web of Science, and Scopus databases (see Table 2). This initial stage of the systematic review resulted in the retrieval of 4,514 publications relevant to the study topic from the two databases.

Table 2: The Search String

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("organizational culture" OR "workplace culture") AND ("university" OR "universities" OR "higher educational institutions" OR "higher learning institutions")) AND PUBYEAR > 2023 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final"))
Date of Access: June 2025	
Wos	((("organizational culture" OR "workplace culture") AND ("university" OR "universities" OR "higher educational institutions" OR "higher learning institutions")) (Topic) and 2023 or 2024 or 2025 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and 2025 or 2024 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Psychology or Social Sciences Other Topics (Research Areas)
Date of Access: June 2025	

Screening

During the screening step, potentially relevant research items are evaluated to ensure they align with the predefined research question(s). This phase often involves selecting research items based on the implementation and approach of flipped classrooms in Malaysia. Duplicate papers are removed at this stage. Initially, 901 publications were excluded, leaving 118 papers for further examination based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 3). The first criterion was literature, as it is the main source of practical recommendations, including reviews, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, books, book series, chapters, and conference proceedings not covered in the most recent study. The review was limited to English-language publications from 2022 to 2024. Overall, eight publications were rejected due to duplication.

Table 3: The Selection Criterion In Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2024 – 2025	< 2023
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject	Business, Management and Accounting, Decision Sciences dan Social Sciences	Besides Business, Management and Accounting, Decision Sciences dan Social Sciences

Eligibility

In the third step of the process, known as the eligibility phase, a total of 169 articles were initially prepared for detailed assessment. During this stage, the titles and core content of each article were thoroughly reviewed to verify their compliance with the established inclusion criteria and their relevance to the current research objectives. As a result, 129 articles were excluded due to misalignment with the study's scope, lack of significance in the title, abstracts unrelated to the research aim, or absence of accessible full-text versions supported by empirical evidence. Ultimately, 40 articles were deemed eligible and retained for the subsequent review phase.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

An integrative analysis approach was employed in this study as part of the assessment strategy to examine and synthesize diverse research designs, primarily focusing on quantitative methods. The primary objective was to identify relevant themes and subthemes. The process began with data collection, forming the foundation for theme development. As illustrated in Figure 1, the authors conducted a thorough analysis of 40 selected publications, extracting assertions and content aligned with the study's focal areas. Subsequently, key studies related to organizational culture were critically evaluated, including their methodologies and findings. The authors collaborated closely to derive themes grounded in the context of current research, ensuring coherence and relevance. Throughout the analysis, a log was maintained to document interpretations, reflections, unresolved questions, and analytical insights. In the final phase, the

authors cross-examined the derived themes to identify potential inconsistencies. Any conceptual disagreements were resolved through discussion and consensus among the research team.

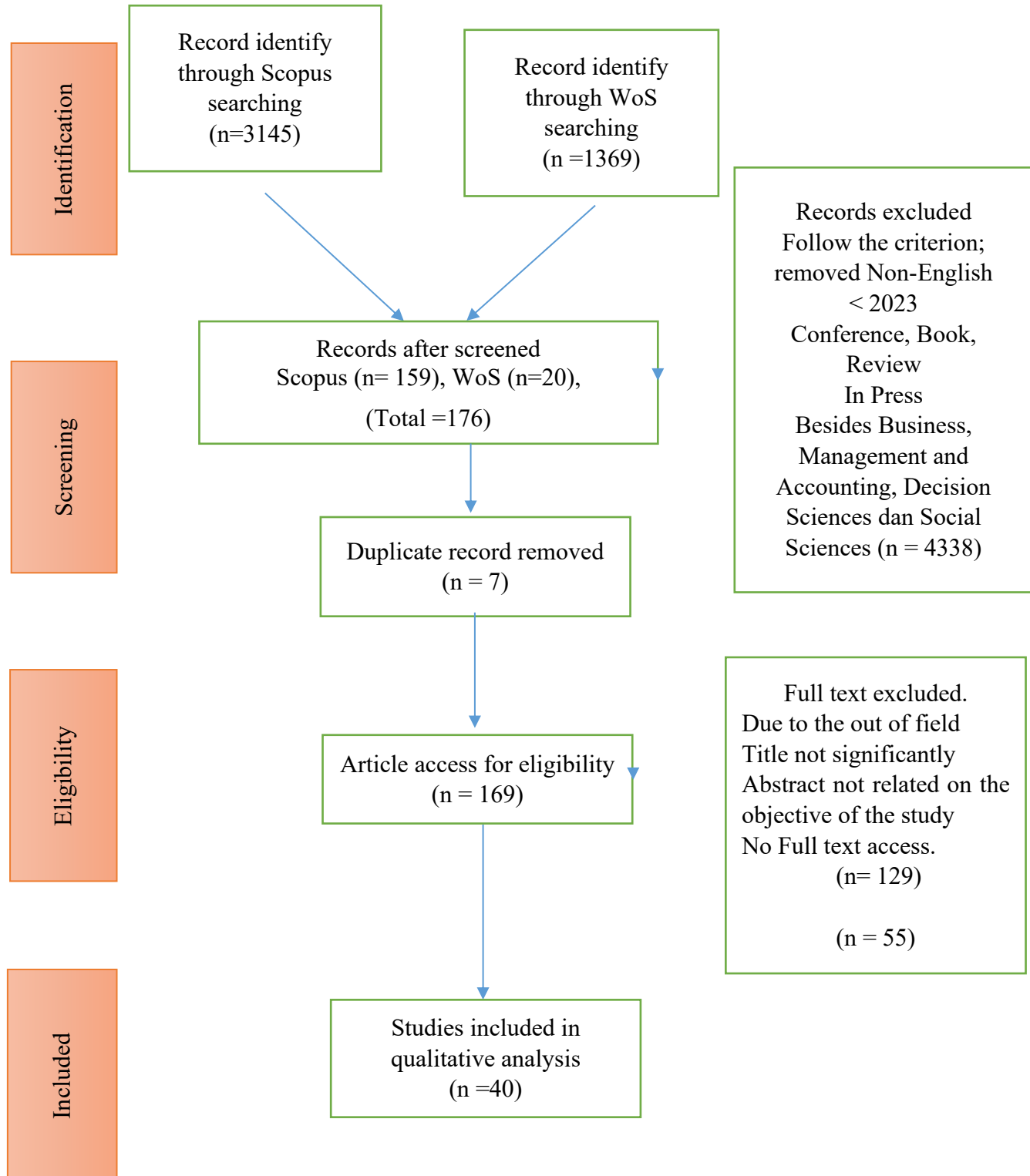


Figure 1. Flow Diagram Of The Proposed Searching Study [1]

Result and Finding

Organizational Culture and Employee Outcomes

The analysis of the findings and discussions across the selected abstracts within the "Organizational Culture and Employee Outcomes" theme reveals a strong interrelation between organizational culture, leadership style, work climate, and psychological outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, burnout, and performance across various higher education settings. Several studies emphasize the direct and mediated influence of organizational culture on job satisfaction and employee performance. Alemu Ambo, 2024 and Jianchun, 2024 identified that organizational climate and culture directly affect job satisfaction, with factors like employee happiness and specific cultural models (e.g., adhocracy and market cultures) acting as significant predictors. Similarly, Huda et al., 2024 demonstrated that organizational culture, along with leadership and self-efficacy, plays a pivotal role in driving teacher performance, primarily through work motivation as a mediator. Aldjufri et al. (2024) expanded this model in a faith-based academic setting, highlighting that both Islamic leadership and organizational culture influence job satisfaction and performance, with satisfaction serving as a critical mediating variable. These findings collectively underscore the necessity for institutions to cultivate supportive and aligned organizational cultures that directly enhance employee engagement and indirectly influence outcomes through internal motivational processes.

The psychological well-being of academic staff and its interaction with work climate and organizational practices are also notably explored. Koňářík et al., (2024) addressed the pandemic-induced burnout in the public university sector, establishing that organizational culture significantly mitigated negative psychological symptoms when work-life balance and other individual factors were considered. Yiming et al., (2024) further revealed that organizational climate positively influences job satisfaction and well-being, with technology (e.g., AI applications) acting as a moderating tool. Hassanein et al., (2025) examined toxic leadership in Middle Eastern universities, concluding that a lack of trust and poor cultural practices amplify job dissatisfaction. Collectively, these findings illustrate that healthy organizational environments serve as buffers against psychological distress and are instrumental in enhancing mental resilience in academic settings. In studies related to transformational leadership and performance, Nurtjahjani et al., (2025) and Samsuri et al. (2024) confirmed the importance of leadership style and job satisfaction as mediators between culture and performance. These findings were consistent with the conclusions of Krishnan et al., (2024), who demonstrated that green organizational culture fosters motivation, which in turn enhances lecturer performance. The presence of sincere behaviour (Nurtjahjani et al., 2025) and job satisfaction (Samsuri et al., 2024) as effective moderating elements suggests that cultural values and individual integrity can augment or inhibit the impact of leadership and organizational strategies. The synergy between transformational leadership and supportive culture is essential for maintaining high performance among academic staff.

Further insight comes from context-specific assessments such as Corbett et al. (2024), who discussed how bullying and harassment are shaped by hostile cultural norms in STEM academia. They argued that exclusionary practices within dominant groups undermine minority identities, further alienating individuals from professional engagement. Meanwhile, Edema et al. (2024) emphasized the role of mentoring, revealing that an enabling organizational culture amplifies the benefits of mentoring in enhancing service delivery quality. Vidak et al.

(2024) reinforced these claims by showing that organizational climate affects stakeholder behavior, research integrity, and satisfaction, particularly among early-career researchers. These examples demonstrate that an inclusive and ethically grounded cultural structure enhances institutional effectiveness and employee wellbeing. In conclusion, the integration of findings across diverse cultural and institutional settings affirms the central role of organizational culture in shaping employee outcomes in higher education. Positive cultures—those characterized by trust, ethical leadership, motivation, and inclusivity—consistently correlate with higher levels of job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and overall performance. The moderating and mediating roles of leadership styles, individual behaviors, and technological adoption add complexity to these relationships, but also present opportunities for institutional policy reform aimed at performance and well-being enhancement.

Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Institutional Performance

The interplay between organizational culture and leadership plays a critical role in shaping institutional performance in public universities. A strong and adaptable organizational culture has been shown to significantly influence institutional direction, particularly during periods of expansion or transition. For instance, Kicir & Altunoglu (2024) demonstrated that as the organizational environment of Anadolu University's Open Education Faculty evolved, so did its dominant cultural style shifting from a collaborative and dynamic model to one that was more bureaucratic and analytical. Despite external pressures, the institution managed to maintain a culture that supported coordination, innovation, and performance. Similarly, Riza et al. (2025) found that organizational culture substantially enhanced innovation and organizational commitment within Indonesian state universities, even though its direct effect on performance was limited. Meanwhile, Aggarwal & Singh (2024) introduced a validated framework to evaluate developmental, relational, and facilitating culture types, further supporting the argument that culture transformation is central to institutional success.

Leadership behaviors are deeply embedded in cultural frameworks and are critical for sustaining academic identity and integrity. A study by Trenggono et al. (2024) illustrated that effective internal communication by university leaders, particularly during crises, preserved the academic culture and institutional stability at the University of Lampung. The implementation of symbolic messages and participatory communication strategies helped rebuild trust and foster a resilient academic environment. Paredes-Saavedra et al. (2024) also reported that emotional intelligence and team-oriented leadership significantly enhanced work team effectiveness in a Peruvian university, with culture and climate acting as key mediators. Moreover, Abawari et al. (2024) concluded that transformational leadership styles, when aligned with a constructive culture, significantly supported successful change management in public institutions. These studies underscore the necessity of leadership that reflects cultural values, especially when managing transitions, promoting engagement, and steering institutional direction.

The alignment of organizational culture with strategic partnerships and knowledge management further amplifies institutional performance. Sartor de Oliveira et al. (2025) revealed that cultural compatibility is essential for productive university–firm cooperation, where mutual trust, flexibility, and shared norms contribute to successful outcomes. This was supported by Franco et al. (2025), who identified the coexistence of multiple cultural types in university-SME collaborations, which were shaped by work nature, goals, and organizational levels. In a broader perspective, Alkhamees & Durugbo (2025) explored the concept of

ambidextrous organizational culture—one that balances exploitation and exploration—and found that leadership and knowledge systems within Gulf universities significantly enhanced institutional learning, thereby fostering innovation and adaptability. These findings suggest that institutions that cultivate strategic alignment between leadership practices, cultural traits, and external collaboration are more likely to sustain performance and learning in dynamic academic environments.

In terms of sustainability and innovation, organizational culture provides the foundation for achieving long-term institutional goals. Al Daghan et al. (2024) found that green values and green culture mediated the impact of green HRM practices on institutional performance in Egyptian universities. This illustrates how culture and leadership jointly enable universities to meet environmental and performance targets. Complementing this, Dzimińska (2024) provided insights into Polish academics' vision of an ideal university, characterized by a culture that supports openness, creativity, and multidisciplinary essential conditions for sustainable innovation. Similarly, (Subha & Ramnath Babu, 2024) demonstrated that organizational ownership (private or public) moderated how culture influenced effectiveness, where adhocracy culture was particularly conducive to institutional improvement. These studies suggest that fostering a culture of innovation and sustainability, supported by visionary leadership, is essential for universities navigating today's complex and competitive landscape.

The internal application of organizational culture also extends to knowledge systems and student behaviour. Mohammed (2024) identified a strong correlation between organizational culture and knowledge management strategies in Iraqi public universities, noting that culture provides the structural support necessary for effective knowledge sharing and retention. Likewise, Burhanuddin et al. (2024) discovered that organizational culture in Indonesian universities influenced students' academic behavior, with observable differences by gender and institutional background. Lastly, Saraswati et al. (2024) examined the effect of culture on firm value and lean practices, noting that while organizational culture facilitated lean manufacturing processes, it also had unintended negative effects on value creation, highlighting the complexity of cultural impact. Collectively, these findings indicate that culture, guided by strategic leadership, affects not only external performance but also internal practices that sustain long-term institutional growth.

Organizational Culture Typologies, Structures, and Academic Environment

The typologies of organizational culture in public universities are intricately linked to institutional performance and structural frameworks. Using a data-driven classification approach, Aitimbetov et al. (2024) clustered 29 Kazakhstani state universities based on institutional size and performance indicators, revealing dominant organizational culture types within each cluster. Their findings highlighted how specific cultural typologies determined through objective performance metrics contribute to or hinder institutional success. Similarly, Al-Alawneh et al. (2024) emphasized the role of green organizational culture (GOC) in shaping environmental performance (EP) through green HRM (GHRM) practices. The mediating influence of GOC in enhancing management support and promoting sustainable strategies underscores the practical significance of culture typologies in institutional outcomes. Meanwhile, Garmamo et al. (2024) found that organizational structure plays a mediating role between culture and governance in Ethiopian Olympic sports federations. Although not university-based, this parallel case reinforces the importance of aligning culture and structural

design to achieve effective governance, suggesting transferable relevance to academic environments.

The academic environment within universities is not solely determined by formal systems but is also shaped by interpersonal dynamics and micro-level cultural practices. El-Astal (2024) investigated the culture within a university writing center using a quasi-ethnographic design. The results identified values such as collaboration, commitment, and respect as central cultural traits, shaping both academic and non-academic discourses. This nuanced exploration demonstrates that micro-cultures within universities possess their own typologies that influence service delivery and institutional identity. Similarly, Soltani et al., (2025) explored how negative cultural phenomena, such as academic bullying, emerge in environments marked by unhealthy organizational climates and autocratic leadership. The resulting academic stagnation, shaped by discriminatory behaviours and job burnout, signals the need for proactive cultural restructuring. Wang et al. (2025) provided complementary insights from Chinese universities, identifying that scholars' perceptions of organizational support are strongly influenced by institutional culture, leadership, organizational justice, and colleague support. These studies collectively illustrate how culture at both organizational and sub-organizational levels affects academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, and the overall working environment.

The interdependence of culture, leadership, and trust further defines the academic environment in public universities. Jankelová (2024) conducted a mediation analysis within Slovak universities and demonstrated that the relationship between leadership style and organizational culture is significantly mediated by organizational trust. The strength of the total effect in this model suggests that trust serves as a vital mechanism through which cultural change can be facilitated, especially in hierarchical academic systems. Wang et al. (2025) further validated the influence of leadership and justice on perceptions of institutional support, underlining how organizational culture serves as a lens through which structural and managerial behaviours are interpreted. Moreover, the findings by Soltani et al. (2025) also imply that restoring trust and transparency in academia requires systematic reform targeting both individual behaviours and broader cultural dimensions. Together, these studies point to the foundational role of trust as a cultural currency in enhancing institutional cohesion, faculty well-being, and knowledge productivity.

In conclusion, organizational culture typologies in universities are multidimensional, intersecting with leadership style, governance structures, environmental initiatives, and trust dynamics. The identification and reinforcement of positive cultural traits such as collaboration, fairness, and sustainability are central to cultivating healthy academic environments and driving institutional performance. Culture does not operate in isolation but functions alongside organizational structure, support mechanisms, and interpersonal dynamics. Therefore, tailoring cultural development to suit institutional typologies and aligning it with strategic objectives remain essential for achieving excellence in higher education.

Discussion and Conclusion

This systematic review was conducted to explore how organizational culture shapes key dimensions of public university operations, with specific attention to employee outcomes, leadership and institutional performance, and structural typologies influencing the academic environment. The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2022

and 2025, selected through a rigorous screening process using PRISMA guidelines. Forty articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases were chosen based on defined inclusion criteria, including language, subject relevance, and publication stage. The main objective was to answer how organizational culture interrelates with human resource behaviour, administrative effectiveness, and academic structural systems in higher education institutions.

The analysis identified three central themes. First, organizational culture significantly influences employee well-being, motivation, and job satisfaction, acting through mediators such as leadership behaviour and internal climate. Second, the alignment of leadership practices with institutional culture strengthens organizational performance, decision-making, and strategic direction. Third, various cultural typologies such as clan, adhocracy, and hierarchical models are deeply embedded in university governance, affecting innovation, academic freedom, and policy enforcement. Common patterns across the literature included the role of transformational leadership, psychological safety, and inclusive governance in supporting positive academic environments. This review contributes to the body of knowledge by synthesizing fragmented insights and highlighting the contextual relevance of culture in public higher education settings. A novel categorization into three thematic lenses provides a framework that helps in understanding how culture operates at interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels. It offers a comprehensive reference for future conceptual or empirical development.

Practically, these findings inform institutional policymakers and academic administrators in designing interventions that align leadership strategies, organizational values, and academic systems. Implementation of evidence-based cultural reforms may help in enhancing employee engagement, increasing institutional resilience, and supporting sustainable academic performance. However, this study is limited by its reliance on English-language sources and a selective range of social science-based databases, potentially overlooking relevant studies from broader interdisciplinary fields. Future studies may expand by including diverse geographic regions, longitudinal data, and mixed-method evidence to deepen cultural understanding in higher education.

In summary, the importance of conducting systematic reviews in this area lies in their ability to provide structured, evidence-driven insights into complex organizational phenomena. Such reviews enable universities to base strategic cultural reforms on a consolidated body of empirical findings, thus advancing both theoretical development and practical application in higher education studies.

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