

Prevailing Organizational Culture Strategies in Public Primary Schools in Rorya District Council, Tanzania

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Abstract: *The study investigated the prevailing organizational culture strategies in public primary schools in Rorya District. The study was guided by cultural dimensions theory and organizational culture model. The study employed pragmatism research philosophy and concurrent triangulation mixed research design. The target population comprised Chairpersons of School Management Committees, teachers, and heads of schools. Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection. To ensure validity and reliability, various strategies were implemented, including expert reviews, member checking, Cronbach's Alpha, and pilot studies. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were addressed through obtaining approvals from relevant authorities. The study found that the organizational culture in public primary schools in Rorya District is generally perceived positively by teachers, with strong support for collaboration, shared values, teamwork, and effective communication. The culture also fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to school goals. However, areas such as continuous learning and professional development were rated slightly lower, indicating potential opportunities for improvement. The study recommends strengthening collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging in Rorya District's public primary schools while enhancing continuous learning and professional development to further support teachers and align with effective organizational culture practices.*

Keywords: organizational culture strategies and public primary schools

INTRODUCTION

The field of education holds a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and societies alike (UNESCO, 2022). It serves as a cornerstone in fostering academic and social development, particularly during the formative years of primary education. Public primary schools, as the

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primary agents of this foundational phase, play a crucial role in laying the groundwork for students' lifelong learning journeys (de Armas et al., 2022). Decisions made within these institutions carry significant weight, directly impacting educational quality and the overall learning experience of students.

Organizational culture within educational settings encompasses the beliefs, values, and norms that shape how decisions are made, implemented, and perceived (Komariyah et al., 2023). In the context of primary schools, organizational culture influences everything from curriculum development to classroom management practices. A strong, positive culture can foster collaboration among teachers, encourage student-centered approaches to learning, and promote a supportive environment conducive to academic and personal growth.

This study focuses on identifying and analyzing the specific organizational culture strategies employed in public primary schools in Rorya District. By doing so, it aims to uncover how these strategies contribute to or hinder the development of a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, the research seeks to understand how these strategies influence decision-making processes within schools, particularly in terms of inclusivity, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of school management. Given the lack of extensive research in this area, this investigation into the prevailing organizational culture strategies in Rorya District's public primary schools is not only timely but also critical for informing policy and practice aimed at improving educational outcomes in the region.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Cultural Dimensions Theory, a framework developed by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede in the late 1970s to understand and compare cultural differences across societies (Hofstede, 1980). The theory emerged from a comprehensive study of IBM employees across various countries and is based on the premise that culture significantly influences people's values, beliefs, and behaviors. It encompasses six key dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence vs. restraint. These dimensions provide a structured approach to analyzing how cultural values impact organizational practices and interpersonal interactions.

One of the key strengths of Cultural Dimensions Theory is its ability to offer a systematic framework for comparing and contrasting cultural values across different countries or regions. This framework facilitates cross-cultural communication and understanding by elucidating how different cultural contexts shape behavior and preferences (Hofstede, 1980). For instance, dimensions such as individualism vs. collectivism and power distance offer valuable insights into how cultural values influence organizational decision-making processes and leadership styles. This theoretical perspective is instrumental in identifying how cultural factors can be leveraged to enhance organizational effectiveness.

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However, the theory is not without its weaknesses. One notable limitation is its tendency to oversimplify complex and dynamic cultural realities. By relying heavily on national averages, the Cultural Dimensions Theory may overlook significant within-country variations and the nuanced ways in which individuals experience and interpret cultural values (Hofstede, 2001). Additionally, the theory may not fully capture the effects of globalization and the increasing cultural hybridity that can blur traditional cultural boundaries. This can result in a less accurate depiction of contemporary cultural dynamics and the influence of cross-cultural interactions.

Despite these limitations, Cultural Dimensions Theory remains highly relevant to this study. It provides a valuable framework for examining how cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance shape the organizational culture and decision-making processes in public primary schools. By applying this theory, the study offers insights into how these cultural dimensions influence leadership styles, interpersonal relationships, and overall school management. Understanding these cultural influences is crucial for developing effective organizational culture strategies that align with the local cultural context, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes and improving management practices within the schools of Rorya District.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Rorya District, Tanzania. The Pragmatism philosophy, which focuses on using the most effective methodological approach for the research problem, was adopted as it provides a flexible and practical framework for understanding the research problem (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). A concurrent triangulation mixed research design which integrates both qualitative and quantitative data was used. The targeted population consisted of members of School Management Committees, including teachers and heads of schools, selected to provide diverse perspectives on the research topic. Data collection was conducted using questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequency and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data while qualitative data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, including securing ethical approval and maintaining participant confidentiality throughout the study, ensuring that the research was conducted responsibly and ethically (Taherdoost, 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on determining the prevailing organizational culture strategies in public primary schools in Rorya District. Findings related to teachers' perceptions of the prevailing organizational culture strategies in public primary schools within their premises are presented in verbatim quotes in Table 1.

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Table 1: The Prevailing Organizational Culture Strategies

Items / Scales	f (%)					Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The organizational culture is supportive and fosters collaboration.	6 (5.5%)	4 (3.6%)	28 (25.5%)	55 (50.0%)	17 (15.5%)	3.66
There is a strong sense of shared values and beliefs among the staff.	4 (3.6%)	8 (7.3%)	43 (39.1%)	36 (32.7%)	19 (17.3%)	3.53
The organizational culture promotes innovation and creativity.	5 (4.5%)	7 (6.4%)	27 (24.5%)	52 (47.3%)	19 (17.3%)	3.66
The staff members are treated with respect and dignity.	4 (3.6%)	5 (4.5%)	41 (37.3%)	45 (40.9%)	15 (13.6%)	3.56
There is effective communication and cooperation among different departments.	5 (4.5%)	3 (2.7%)	46 (41.8%)	36 (32.7%)	20 (18.2%)	3.57
The organizational culture promotes a sense of belonging and teamwork.	4 (3.6%)	8 (7.3%)	19 (17.3%)	60 (54.5%)	19 (17.3%)	3.75
In public primary schools, there is a shared commitment towards achieving the school's goals and objectives.	5 (4.5%)	6 (5.5%)	24 (21.8%)	50 (45.5%)	25 (22.7%)	3.76
The organizational culture encourages continuous learning and professional development.	7 (6.4%)	9 (8.2%)	46 (41.8%)	26 (23.6%)	22 (20.0%)	3.43

Source: Field Data (2024)

The data from Table 1 regarding teachers' perceptions of prevailing organizational culture strategies in public primary schools within Rorya District show a range of agreement levels, with mean scores providing additional insights into the strength of these perceptions. One notable aspect is the perception of a supportive and collaborative organizational culture, with a mean score of 3.66. This indicates that a significant portion of teachers agree that the culture within these schools fosters collaboration and provides support, as reflected in the combined percentage of 75.5% who agree or strongly agree. This positive perception suggests that many teachers feel supported in their work and value collaborative efforts within the school environment.

These results were supported by one head of school A who noted, *“Our school’s culture is centered around collaboration, respect, and a strong sense of community. These elements are evident in our daily activities, such as morning assemblies where everyone gathers and shares updates.”* (Interview - Headteachers Schools A, 13 May 2024). This finding highlights that the school’s culture revolves around collaboration, respect, and fostering a close-knit community. These values are reflected in routine activities like morning assemblies, which serve as occasions for gathering, sharing updates, and reinforcing community bonds. The findings align with the study by Amos et al. (2022) which found that participative decision-making is still limited in many organizations, including educational institutions. One of the reasons for that is the lack of a supportive organizational culture.

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A strong sense of shared values and beliefs among staff members is also perceived positively, with a mean score of 3.53. Despite some variation in responses, the combined percentage of 69.4% who agree or strongly agree indicates a generally shared understanding of core values and beliefs within these schools. These results aligned with another head of School D's statement: "*We emphasize mutual respect, teamwork, and a commitment to student success. These values guide our interactions and decision-making processes.*" (Interview - Headteachers Schools D, 15 May 2024). This finding indicates that the school places importance on mutual respect, teamwork, and dedication to student achievement. These principles are foundational in shaping how interactions occur and decisions are made within the school community. The findings align with Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of Collectivism, which emphasizes group cohesion and loyalty, and Power Distance, which can reflect a harmonious organizational hierarchy. Additionally, strong shared values often correlate with Uncertainty Avoidance, where a collective preference for established norms and practices reduces ambiguity and reinforces cultural alignment.

Regarding the promotion of innovation and creativity, the mean score of 3.66 aligns with the combined percentage of 64.6% who agree or strongly agree. This suggests that a significant number of teachers perceive the organizational culture as conducive to innovation and creativity, although there is room for improvement to further nurture these aspects. As emphasized by a head of school A, "*Our culture is built on a foundation of trust and continuous improvement, encouraging everyone to contribute their best.*" (Interview - Headteachers Schools A, 13 May 2024). This finding suggests that the school's culture is characterized by trust and a commitment to ongoing enhancement, motivating all individuals to actively contribute their utmost efforts. These findings are in parallel with the study by Hashim et al. (2022) which found that organizations that foster a participative decision-making culture tend to have improved problem-solving abilities, higher levels of creativity, and increased innovation.

The perception of being treated with respect and dignity receives a mean score of 3.56, indicating a generally positive view among teachers. With 78.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing, this aspect of organizational culture is perceived as relatively strong, contributing to a positive work environment. These results were consistent with the comment from a head of school H who mentioned, "*We focus on nurturing a supportive environment where both students and staff can thrive.*" (Interview - Headteachers Schools H, 17 May 2024). This finding indicates that the school prioritizes creating a nurturing atmosphere where both students and staff are provided with the support needed to succeed and grow. These findings are in agreement with the Organizational Culture Model by Schein (2010) which posits that organizational culture is formed by three layers: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. When staff members are treated with respect and dignity, this practice reflects the organization's espoused values of mutual respect and ethical treatment, which are visible in its artifacts such as policies and behaviours.

Effective communication and cooperation among different departments are also perceived positively, with a mean score of 3.57. The combined percentage of 74.5% who agree or strongly agree reflects a generally cohesive approach to communication and cooperation within these

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK schools. This view was echoed by a head of school C who said, *“Inclusivity and open communication are at the heart of our school culture. We ensure every voice is heard and valued.”* (Interview - Headteachers Schools C, 14 May 2024). This finding emphasizes that inclusivity and transparent communication are fundamental to the school’s culture, ensuring that all perspectives are respected and considered valuable within the community. The findings align with the Organizational Culture Model by Schein (2010) which noted that effective communication and cooperation among different departments reflect the presence of shared espoused values, such as teamwork and openness, which Schein identifies as crucial for a cohesive culture. Additionally, these behaviours indicate that underlying assumptions about mutual support and collaboration are deeply ingrained, promoting a seamless and cooperative working environment across departments. The promotion of a sense of belonging and teamwork stands out with a mean score of 3.75, indicating a particularly strong perception among teachers. With 71.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing, this aspect of organizational culture is a significant strength, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration among staff members. These results were reinforced by a head of school B’s observation: *“Our school culture promotes a sense of belonging and shared responsibility among all members.”* (Interview - Headteachers Schools B, 13 May 2024). The finding indicates that within the school community, there is an emphasis on fostering inclusivity and mutual accountability among all its members, aiming to create a cohesive and supportive environment. The findings align with the Cultural Dimensions Theory by Hofstede (1980) which suggested that, in cultures that score high on collectivism, there is a strong emphasis on group cohesion and loyalty, which naturally enhances teamwork and a sense of belonging among employees. Furthermore, dimensions like power distance and uncertainty avoidance influence organizational practices and structures, supporting environments where employees feel secure, valued, and part of a cohesive team.

In terms of shared commitment toward achieving the school’s goals and objectives, the mean score of 3.76 reflects a high level of agreement among teachers (68.0% agree or strongly agree). This highlights a collective dedication to the school’s mission and vision, contributing to a focused and goal-oriented organizational culture. The findings align with the Cultural Dimensions Theory by Hofstede (1980) which suggested that high levels of Collectivism (versus Individualism) emphasize teamwork and a collective effort toward school goals, fostering unity and shared responsibility among students and staff. Secondly, a low Power Distance can encourage open communication and collaboration between teachers and students, making goal achievement a collective endeavor. Lastly, a strong Uncertainty Avoidance culture ensures that clear guidelines and structured plans are in place, which helps align everyone’s efforts toward the school’s objectives.

Finally, the encouragement of continuous learning and professional development receives a mean score of 3.43, indicating a moderate level of agreement among teachers. While 64.4% agree or strongly agree, addressing areas for improvement in professional development initiatives could further enhance this aspect of the organizational culture. These results were supported by one head

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK of school I remarked, “*We foster a culture of lifelong learning and professional development for both teachers and students.*” (Interview - Headteachers Schools I, 17 May 2024). The finding highlights that the institution prioritizes continuous learning and growth, encouraging ongoing development not only for teachers but also for students, fostering a dynamic educational environment. The findings concur with the study by Louis (2016) which suggested that sustainable education change must be grounded in the continuous learning and development of teachers.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that the organizational culture strategies in public primary schools in Rorya District are perceived positively by teachers, emphasizing strengths in fostering collaboration, a sense of belonging, and teamwork. Teachers generally agree that the culture supports a collaborative environment, promotes shared values, and encourages a unified approach toward achieving school goals. These findings emphasize the effectiveness of the existing cultural practices in enhancing the educational environment. However, there is room for improvement, particularly in areas such as continuous learning and professional development, to further strengthen the organizational culture. Overall, the study confirms that a supportive and cohesive culture is crucial for achieving educational objectives, aligning with established theories on organizational culture that emphasize the importance of shared values and collaborative practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends maintaining and enhancing the positive aspects of organizational culture in public primary schools in Rorya District, particularly the practices that foster collaboration, a sense of belonging, and teamwork among teachers. To further improve the educational environment, the study suggests placing greater emphasis on continuous learning and professional development, which can reinforce and build upon the existing strengths of the culture. By addressing these areas for growth, schools can better support their teachers and align more closely with the organizational culture theories that highlight the importance of shared values and collective efforts in achieving educational success

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