



## The Role of Organizational Culture in Promoting Sustainability Practices in Educational Organizations

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### Abstract

This review paper investigates the relationship between organizational culture and sustainability practices at educational organizations by examining the impacts of communication, innovation, motivation, involvement, and empowerment on sustainability practices. Results reveal that organizational culture significantly influences sustainability practices, with communication, innovation, motivation, involvement, and empowerment being critical factors. In contemporary times, there is an increasing expectation for organizations to enhance their economic, social, environmental, and technological performances, as well as to make meaningful contributions to both local and global communities. Moreover, a positive correlation emerges between organizational culture implementation and sustainability accomplishment. Organizations face expectations to enhance performance while contributing to communities. Experts agree that organizations seeking sustainability must evaluate and transform fundamental values and beliefs while fostering a consistent, shared culture. However, empirical research on the features of such a culture and its contribution to sustainability integration is limited. This review paper underscores robust and integrative sustainability practices and their connection to an organization's culture, serving as a basis for future research.

**Keywords** *organizational culture, sustainability practices, industries, educational organization*

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainability practices have become increasingly important as organizations seek In order to mitigate their ecological impact and promote the welfare of forthcoming cohorts, individuals should endeavor to diminish their impact on the environment. Embedding sustainable practices within schools and universities, such as waste reduction and energy efficiency initiatives, helps to instill sustainable habits and ways of thinking in students from an early age. Developing a sustainability-oriented organizational culture, where sustainable ways of thinking and operating are deeply ingrained, is key to implementing successful sustainability initiatives on campus and promoting sustainability literacy (Lozano et al., 2015).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of organizational culture in promoting sustainability practices in higher education institutions. Lozano et al. (2015) found that played a pivotal role in the achievement of sustainability efforts within the campus environment. They

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argued that an organizational culture that values sustainability can foster the concept of collaborative duty among staff, and students and promote sustainable habits and behaviors.

However, despite the growing recognition of the importance of organizational culture in promoting sustainability practices, there is a lack of empirical research on this topic in the context of Indonesian universities (Jusuf et al., 2020). While 66 universities were included in the 2018 Green Metric World University Rank issued by the University of Indonesia, only 48 submitted sustainability reports. This suggests that the majority of universities engage in sustainability practices, although they often fail to document or may lack a complete understanding of the imperative to submit a formal report. (Sari et al., 2020). Thus, this research aims to investigate the role of organizational culture in promoting sustainability practices at organizations. The research findings have significance for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders with an interest in advancing sustainable practices in educational organizations. The research will contribute to enhancing the existing body of information regarding sustainability practices in the field of education, while also offering practical recommendations for promoting sustainable development at the institutional level. This research holds significance for educational organizations seeking to advance sustainability. It demonstrates that organizational culture significantly influences such practices, with values like communication, innovation, motivation, involvement, and empowerment proving critical. When sustainability is ingrained in an organization's core values and norms, greater accomplishments are realized. This indicates higher education must transform fundamental assumptions and behaviors institution-wide to foster an integrative culture prioritizing sustainability. By cultivating shared commitment among stakeholders, sustainability goals can be more successfully implemented and taught. The findings offer guidance on cultural changes to enhance sustainability practices and outcomes. Further context-specific studies are warranted to better guide universities' contributions to sustainable development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Sustainability practices**

Sustainability has been an imperative topic of debate in contemporary scholarly literature. According to Fok et al. (2023), sustainability refers to “satisfying the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This concept promotes the harmony of growth in the economy, preservation of the environment, and welfare for society and technological advancement. Sustainability also entails adapting to change while maintaining system identity (Fok et al. 2023). Deirmentzoglou et al. (2020), argued that Sustainability poses a challenge in terms of implementation, as it involves various factors, including society, economics, and the environment. Sustainable development was defined as an improvement that satisfies present needs while not impairing the ability of the next generation to fulfill their own demands (Deirmentzoglou et al., 2020).

Several studies have put forth conceptual models for incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into university curricula and research. These frameworks aim to advance sustainable development within local communities and foster the development of essential sustainability capabilities (Lozano et al., 2019; Wiek et al., 2011; Leal Filho et al., 2018). Universities may help achieve the SDGs locally, nationally, and internationally by making these efforts. SDGs have been categorized under four main dimensions which are economic, social, environmental, and technological.

#### *Economic Dimension of Sustainability*

The capacity of an organization to derive financial benefit from its activities and improve its

financial performance is considered to be the economic dimension of sustainability. Choi and Ng (2011) emphasized the significance of economic sustainability, highlighting its potential consequences such as layoffs and unemployment when it is lacking, and impeding public programs, which can negatively affect a nation's economic and industrial growth. Nandan and Jyoti (2020) identified two significant elements of sustainability, namely reducing overall costs while addressing the economic concerns of other parties involved, including the improvement of economic conditions in general as well as life quality. Furthermore, the pursuit of company sustainability necessitates the pursuit of economic prospects that result in heightened revenue and earnings, bolster the firm's reputation, and augment its brand value. Unilever, a prominent corporation operating in the consumer goods sector, has made a commitment to get all of its agricultural raw materials from sustainable sources, aiming to achieve this objective by 2020. By adopting sustainable sourcing practices, Unilever has been able to lower costs and enhance efficiencies in its supply chain, resulting in increased profitability (Unilever, 2021).

#### *Social Dimension of Sustainability*

According to Nandan and Jyoti (2020), the social dimension of sustainability encompasses sensitivity and action toward social issues such as respect for diverse perspectives and equality in all domains of life. Additionally, this dimension focuses on promoting the well-being and quality of life of society. In contemporary times, consumers have become increasingly discerning and socially aware, and the social dimension has emerged as a crucial factor for businesses. Organizations are expected to act in a manner that benefits society, as organization governance scandals continue to rise. For instance, Starbucks, a coffee company has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at addressing social issues, such as ethical sourcing of coffee beans, supporting local communities, and creating employment opportunities for underprivileged youth. The firm has adopted eco-friendly procedures such as recycling, cutting down on waste, and using renewable energy to power its daily operations. Similarly, Ben & Jerry's, a renowned ice cream firm, has been a longstanding advocate for social justice issues, supporting causes such as marriage equality, racial justice, and climate justice, and raising awareness about these issues through its brand.

#### *Environmental Dimension of Sustainability*

Nandan and Jyoti (2020) underscore the growing societal expectations for firms to adopt environmentally-friendly practices that generate profits, driven by increasing concerns for nature conservation. The researchers have identified several rising environmental and social difficulties that have implications for the sustainability of businesses. These challenges encompass changes in the climate, emissions, and healthcare concerns, the rise of globalization, scarcity of energy, and the loss of trust among consumers.. To effectively address these concerns, sustainability should be integrated throughout a lifespan of a product encompassing various stages, commencing with its creation and production, followed by transportation, allocation, and ultimately, disposition. The adoption of new technologies that reduce pollution and enhance process effectiveness can improve environmental sustainability by conserving resources, reducing energy consumption, and promoting forest regeneration (Nandan and Jyoti, 2020).

Revell et al. (2010) have identified various factors that contribute to the success and long-term viability of enterprises when adopting sustainable practices. These factors encompass decreased expenses achieved through resource efficiency, adherence to laws and regulations, retention of personnel, expansion of clients, growth in the share of the market, and favorable media coverage. A case in point is Tesla, which has successfully pioneered sustainable transportation by producing electric vehicles with a smaller environmental footprint than traditional gasoline-powered cars. Although the initial cost of a Tesla may be higher than that of a traditional car, the company's focus on sustainability has enabled it to build a strong brand and attract customers who are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly products. The company's efforts to mitigate its environmental footprint by implementing strategies such as incorporating used supplies into its goods and allocating resources towards sources of clean energy have not only yielded cost reductions but additionally fostered customer loyalty and differentiated the brand from competitors (Revell et al., 2010).

### *Technological Dimension of Sustainability*

Technological innovations have a profound impact on individual behaviors, organizational practices, and decision-making processes that influence environmental sustainability. In this context, the adoption of sustainable technologies, particularly green technology, is essential for achieving environmental sustainability and promoting a sustainable future. For example, management information systems can gather and communicate information to facilitate business strategies and environmental sustainability initiatives. The adoption of green thinking and cleaner production practices is increasingly significant for organizations seeking to achieve environmental sustainability (Licup and Materum, 2021).

Pascarella and Bednar (2020) contend that innovation and technology have become integral pillars of businesses and societies, given their progress and impact. The integration of technology with the social sphere of work practices supports business sustainability and development. However, it is imperative to maintain a balance between technology and other aspects, such as employee knowledge, environmental concerns, and economic factors, to achieve sustainable development. Contemporary theories have attempted to integrate technology with sustainability approaches, and the appreciation of both social and technological aspects is crucial for staying flexible and competitive in an ever-evolving context (Pascarella and Bednar, 2020).

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture refers to the acquired patterns of behavior within an organization, wherein fundamental presumptions and ideas are collectively recognized and ingrained by its staff, with such presumptions often being accepted without question, from the standpoint of the organization and its operational context. The aforementioned presumptions and ideas manifest through societal regulations that are enforced through regulations or societal standards for suitable attitudes and behaviors, which facilitate the organization in achieving its goals (Assoratgoon & Kantabutra, 2023). Appreciating the impact of organizational culture on business performance is crucial for professional managers. The impact of culture on company success is well-acknowledged in academic research. To enhance organizational performance and comprehend the influence of organizational culture on personnel, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture directly influences the success of an organization (Cura, 2018). Researchers suggested that an adequate organizational culture may contribute to a path for businesses' sustainable growth (e.g., Deirmentzoglou et al., 2020). The effective establishment of a culture centered around sustainability will yield optimal benefits for society, the economy, and the environment (Deirmentzoglou et al., 2020).

Empirical investigations have demonstrated that a positive organizational culture can enhance both organizational performance and employee well-being (Denison, 1990; Schein, 2010; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This can be affected by various dimensions such as teamwork, innovation, adaptability, and organizational values. For example, Petty et al. (1995) emphasize the importance of teamwork and trust, while Calori and Sarnin (1991), highlighted innovation, stability, and respect for people as important work-related values. Similarly, Denison and Mishra (1995) stress the importance of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

### **The Relationship between Organizational Culture and Sustainability**

Organizations should develop a strong and cohesive culture that is focused on sustainability, according to those who support it. This culture should foster a sense of shared commitment to environmental goals as well as a sense of community among employees. The achievement of this objective can be facilitated through the cultivation of a sustainability-oriented culture by the founders of the business and senior executives, thereby engendering an internal comprehension of environmental issues among all staff members (Gutterman, 2020). Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010), conducted a study to investigate the correlation between organizational culture and corporate sustainability, with the objective of evaluating the characteristics of an organizational

culture that is oriented towards sustainability. It has been acknowledged that there exists a divergence of opinions in relation to the definition and conceptualization of business sustainability, wherein different perspectives place varied degrees of importance on ecological considerations or social responsibility. Numerous proponents propose a comprehensive framework of sustainability that encompasses the conventional economic endeavors of organizations alongside the imperative to tackle ecological and social challenges. The concept of "corporate social responsibility" has gained significant traction, referring to the incorporation of environmental, social, and economic considerations into an organization's culture, decision-making processes, strategic planning, and day-to-day activities (Gutterman, 2020).

Miska et al. (2018), discussed that performance-focused cultures may hinder economic, and environmental sustainability practices due to a focus on growth and personal achievement. In such cultures, economic sustainability is not easily translated into rewardable performance, leading to a lower likelihood of companies engaging in economic sustainability practices. An excessive emphasis on performance-oriented may impede the cultivation of social wealth, which is intricately linked to the social dimension of sustainability. In comparison with cultures that prioritize low-performance orientation, which prioritize establishing harmony with the environment rather than exerting control, companies characterized by a higher degree of performance orientation are less inclined to take part in environmental sustainability practices. This is due to the fact that such practices often involve the adoption of more expensive environmentally conscious technologies, which are slower to be adopted and hinder the company's ability to respond effectively to environmental concerns. To attain favorable results, it is imperative for an organization's culture to cultivate expectations that prioritize sustainability, actively participate in innovative activities and growth of suppliers, and garner support from all staff members, including those occupying top management positions (Gandhi et al., 2018; Ghadimi et al., 2021).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Method**

This review paper employs a qualitative research design. Unlike systematic reviews that benefit from guidelines, the literature review does not have any acknowledged guidelines (Sony et al., 2020). This research was manually carried out using Google Scholar, Springer, and Scopus focusing on original papers. The keywords used in this study were organizational culture and sustainability practices, sustainability practices, organizational culture in industries and sustainability, organizational culture in educational organizations and sustainability, communication and sustainability, innovation and sustainability, employee motivation and sustainability, involvement and sustainability, empowerment and sustainability. The eligibility criteria included full papers and relevant publications that have been scanned and analyzed thematically to identify critical patterns and themes. The title, abstract, and full-text article were scanned to check their relevancy in making the necessary assessments to obtain the final results for this review paper.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The review paper highlights the significance of organizational culture in advancing sustainability in universities. Insights into transforming culture more deeply embed values and practices, providing guidance. Effective communication and collaboration cultivate knowledge sharing and idea generation, spurring sustainability innovation that leads to enhanced practices, innovative problem-solving, and opportunities. A motivated workforce finding meaning in initiatives actively participates in behaviors; initiatives achieve goals when work is purpose-driven. Involving employees in decision-making fosters responsibility and engagement through shared outcomes. Empowering staff through training and autonomy enables informed, high-quality service and strengthened practices. Innovation drives progress by developing sustainable solutions, technologies, and models; it fosters efficiency, and waste reduction, and addresses challenges through sustainable products and services. Contextualized investigations can offer direction to leverage human and cultural factors maximizing impact.

## CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This review paper aims to enhance comprehension regarding the significance of organizational culture in fostering sustainability practices within educational organizations. The insights presented can offer valuable guidance to universities aiming to enhance their sustainability practices and foster sustainable mindsets among their student body and faculty. In the present era, It is becoming increasingly important for companies to improve their economic, social, environmental, and technological capabilities, while also making significant contributions to local and global communities. Furthermore, there is a discernible positive correlation that arises among the implementation of a culture within an organization and the realization of its sustainability goals. Organizations are confronted with the imperative to improve their performance while simultaneously making positive contributions to the communities they operate in. According to expert consensus, organizations aiming for sustainability must undertake an assessment and modification of their core values and beliefs, while simultaneously cultivating a cohesive and unified organizational culture. Additional research is required to examine the correlation between organizational culture and sustainability practices within the Indonesian context, as well as to ascertain potential avenues for enhancing sustainability practices within campus settings.

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