

The Role of Organizational Culture in Healthcare: A Rapid Review

Ljupcho EFREMOV^{a,1}, Vera DIMITRIEVSKA^b, Layal KALLACH^c and Sahar NAKHL^a

^a *Liberal Arts Department, American University of the Middle East, Kuwait*

^b *University of American College Skopje, N. Macedonia*

^c *College of Business Administration, American University of the Middle East, Kuwait*

ORCID ID: Ljupcho Efremov <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2660-4422>

Vera Dimitrievska <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0410-1645>

Layal Kallach <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4934-505X>

Sahar Nakhl <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0319-8400>

Abstract. The paper examines the concept of organizational culture within the healthcare sector. Inspired by different compelling evidence in management literature, the authors explore the link between the organizational culture in healthcare and different theoretical concepts. The purpose of this paper was to investigate the function of organizational culture in the healthcare industry through a rapid review of the literature in an attempt to determine the links between culture and other concepts within healthcare. The review identified 20 relevant studies, focusing on research directly related to healthcare. The conclusions from the rapid review shed light on the role of organizational culture in healthcare ultimately revealing its importance as a success factor for healthcare organizations. There are three types of studies which examine organizational culture in healthcare: studies related to performance, consequences for employees and studies which describe different cultures. The study suggests that healthcare organizations should focus on understanding organizational culture and its various types and consequences. These aspects are crucial for improving the well-being of both patients and healthcare professionals. By promoting an environment where healthcare professionals feel valued and supported, organizations can enhance patient care outcomes, reduce stress, and improve overall organizational efficiency.

Keywords. Organizational Culture; Healthcare; Rapid Review, Wellbeing, Topics

1. Introduction

An organizational culture in healthcare is a topic which has not received much attention in the existing literature. Having in mind that healthcare is a specific industry and patients are specific clients where health as the most important aspect of their lives is treated. Organizational culture does play a role in overall quality of each specific health system and therefore this paper aims to explore further the role of organizational culture in the healthcare sector. In the words of Shanafelt et al. [1] US physicians have faced significant changes in the past decade. Many feel that the healthcare system hinders rather than

¹ Corresponding Author: Ljupcho Efremov, Liberal Arts Department, American University of the Middle East, Egaila, Kuwait; E-mail Ljupcho.efremov@aum.edu.kw

facilitates high-quality care. While physician distress and its causes are well-known, much of it stems from underlying cultural issues within the medical profession, healthcare organizations, and the healthcare delivery system.

The first part starts with defining organizational culture and continues with different areas which have examined the link between organizational culture and employee attitudinal outcomes like performance, commitment and satisfaction. To begin with, Schein defines the organizational culture as a set of beliefs, values, behavioral patterns, and assumptions shared by members of an organization. Studies have shown that a positive organizational culture is a crucial factor that not only fosters employee satisfaction and well-being, but also improves their overall performance [2]. Additionally, the organizational culture results in positive outcomes for the healthcare service delivered to patients, namely in terms of the overall experience, satisfaction, and sense of security felt by the patients [3]. Another study shows that emotions and attitudinal outcomes such as organizational commitment are related to safety at work [4]. Liu et al. [5] conducted a study to test the effectiveness of a tool designed to assess organizational culture in primary health in Ethiopia. They believed that organizational culture is a significant factor in healthcare system performance and outcomes. Based on theoretical principles, they identified five key domains: learning and problem-solving, psychological safety, resistance to change, time for improvement, and commitment to the organization. The resulting scale offers a broader perspective on organizational culture compared to the narrower safety culture measures commonly used. While the study has not yet evaluated the tool's ability to predict primary healthcare system performance, the importance of organizational culture in shaping performance is well-established. In another study, Cameron and Quinn [6] categorized organizational culture in healthcare into four distinct typologies: Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy. Each category possesses distinct attributes and consequence. Each culture type has implications for organizational behavior, employee engagement, and overall performance. Understanding these cultural dimensions can help leaders and managers align their organizational strategies, structures, and practices to achieve their desired outcomes in different contexts and environments. The critique of this study is that it is a rigid categorization and that this four-type model might oversimplify the complex and multifaceted nature of organizational culture. The model does not capture the subtle variations and nuances within each typology.

The literature provides some empirical evidence that certain factors of the organizational culture could be considered as crucial to healthcare quality [7]. Apart from this, various scholars have examined the concept of organizational culture and possibility to impact performance and services of an organization, i.e. healthcare organization [8–10]. The connection between organizational culture and patient satisfaction is well-documented. Extensive research in the United Kingdom and the United States has demonstrated how organizational culture influences both patient satisfaction and healthcare performance [11]. Similar studies have been conducted in China [12, 13] and Greece [14], further highlighting this link. Despite the numerous cultural layers within the healthcare sector, there are fundamental human values that are universally shared. These values, such as empathy, respect, and compassion, serve as a crucial common ground when discussing organizational culture in healthcare. Recognizing and emphasizing these shared values can provide a solid foundation for fostering a positive organizational culture that transcends cultural differences. Research supports this notion, indicating that when healthcare organizations prioritize these core values, they can enhance both patient satisfaction and staff well-being [15, 16]. This further supports the

idea that fostering a strong organizational culture in healthcare is essential. The abovementioned researches summarize the existing literature on the relationship between organizational culture and healthcare quality. However, these studies did not explain the mechanisms and factors which underlie organizational culture and how they are empirically linked to healthcare outcomes. Additionally, some of the potentially mediating or moderating variables that may influence the relationship between organizational culture and patient satisfaction are not tackled.

The previous studies examine organizational culture in healthcare and its link to different employee outcomes. As some of the results show, there is a correlation between a positive organization culture and employee success, encompassing job satisfaction, engagement, commitment, and along with voluntary effort for better performance in the organization. The main reason for exploring organizational culture are the arguments made in available management literature on the link between organizational culture and patient satisfaction [11]. Moreover, it is important to highlight that employees in the health sector come in a variety of forms, including administrative, technical, and health employees. These employees have varying perspectives of the organizational culture within the health sector, which can have an impact on their job satisfaction and performance [17]. Another important angle for conducting the study is that the majority of studies that explore organizational culture have been extensively explored in business-related research, using a variety of research methods. Therefore there is a need for summarizing main concepts related to organizational culture in healthcare settings. While many studies have explored the connection between organizational culture and employee outcomes, the underlying mechanisms remain unclear. This knowledge gap presents an opportunity for further research. To address this, the study aims to identify specific topics related to organizational culture in healthcare that can contribute to our understanding of this complex relationship. The research question focuses on exploring the links between organizational culture and various interrelated topics that have been discussed in existing literature.

2. Methodology

The research technique employed in the paper is a rapid review. Rapid reviews are a form of knowledge synthesis in which components of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted to produce information in a timely manner [18]. Rapid reviews offer a faster and more efficient approach to traditional systematic reviews. They are particularly useful when healthcare decisions need to be made quickly. These reviews summarize evidence in a way that is easily accessible to decision-makers, promoting evidence-based decision-making [19]. The goal of this rapid study was to analyze existing research on organizational culture in the healthcare sector. The research question aims to determine the role of organizational culture in healthcare. The identification of the studies was done through inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria focus specifically on studies written in English which examined the link of organizational culture in healthcare to other concepts (meaning there was an empirical study). The focus was on literature published in English between 2007 and 2022 covering a span of 15 years. The majority of papers were collected from Google scholar database. The search strategy was based on several words which were used alone or in combination. The used key terms were: “organizational culture”, “healthcare”, “health” and “culture”. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were related to studies about organizational culture

in other industries (not related to healthcare at all). For example if a paper was found to be exploring organizational culture in marketing, it was not taken into account. Regarding study selection, articles were eligible for inclusion in this review if there was an empirical research that explored the link between organizational culture and healthcare. The rapid review identified 20 papers and they are presented in the next part of the paper. The analysis focused on identifying which key topics are linked to organizational culture in healthcare. By grouping related topics and assigning "code families," the researchers were able to identify the three main topics presented in the results section. The overall conclusions are based on a comprehensive review and synthesis of existing research on organizational culture in healthcare. The analysis aims to discover which concepts are related to organizational culture in healthcare, while the hypothesis is that organizational culture in healthcare is linked to several different topics.

3. Results - Review of Organizational Culture in Healthcare

The findings reveal three interconnected topics: organizational culture and performance, culture and employee outcomes, and studies describing different types of organizational cultures. Three were eight studies identified in the first group, seven in the second and five in the third group of topics. The study's conclusions, summarized in Table 1, are centered on these three topics.

Table 1. Topics related to organizational culture in healthcare and explored studies

Topics	Study of interest
Organizational culture and performance.	Sen et al., 2022; Genc, 2017; Ortega et al., 2015; Rovithis et al., 2017; Pilav and Jatic, 2017; Zahra et al., 2012; Aharbi et al., 2014; Carney, 2011
Organizational culture and consequences for employees	Williams et al., 2007; Stone et al., 2007; Mijakoski et al., 2015; Szara et al, 2018; Kourakos and Kafki, 2019; Shanafelt et al., 2019; Sow et al., 2017
Types of organizational cultures	Oveseiko and Buchan, 2012; Minvielle et al., 2008; Mesfin et al., 2020; Shurbagi and Zahari, 2014; Hung et al., 2016

The first group of studies explores the link between organizational culture and performance, productivity and quality of care. Rovithis et al. [20] illustrate that the theoretical model about the “operating cultures” of organizations is not supposed to have direct relationship with their values nor should have influence from the missions and paradigms. Nonetheless, emerging norms and expectations could be influenced by many factors in the organization's structures itself, system patterns, as well as by skills of employees and their experiences. Still, the authors conclude that a detailed analysis of the organizational culture within a specific organization or health system is essential to identify the type of established culture, and what kind of influence that culture has on objectives and performance, and additionally to flag next improvements. To understand the experiences of frontline healthcare workers in India, researchers Sen et al. [21] conducted a study involving 22 prominent healthcare organizations. These organizations were chosen at random to ensure a representative sample. The study relied on responses

from 358 frontline employees, providing valuable insights into their perspectives. The results suggest that building a superior culture is a key to maximizing patient satisfaction and ensuring the organization's long-term success. The above-mentioned results require that all employees understand both the dominant culture and any subcultures in the company. The next study [22] about organizational culture analyzed the concerns regarding productivity of management staff. The research included managers in UK hospitals during three periods: 2001/2002, 2006/2007, and 2007/2008. Analysis of study results demonstrated a relationship between productivity and existing organizational culture, whereby the more merged existing organizational culture and desired culture, productivity was higher. Examining this matter, Ortega et al. [23] argue that the organizational culture of a healthcare unit reflects the general image of one culture or the system in one society, which further impacts the society as whole in terms of economical, legal, technological, political, religious and moral issues. It has been observed that, in many healthcare facilities, performance of one unit is noticeably better and staff motivation considerably higher compared to another unit which operates with similar structures and levels of resources. Hence the conclusion that the way healthcare activities are performed is interchangeable of its elements. Furthermore, authors argue that these types of behavioral patterns can be constructive or not which, at a later stage, could lead to behaviors and attitudes that will define how members interact with each other. Pilav and Jatic [7] write that in an effort to improve overall health status among the population, many developing countries have implemented major healthcare reforms and are facing healthcare challenges: declining health standards, introduction of private healthcare, lack of financial resources, inability of organizational and management structures to ensure efficient and effective provision of health services, as well as gaps between healthcare needs and demands. The conclusion is that cultural features of the healthcare system are considered crucial for provision of good services to patients. The study conducted by Zahra et al. [24] found that nurses perceived the organizational culture in the selected hospitals to be moderately positive. While the highest scores were for control, the lowest scores were for conflict tolerance. The findings suggest that this type of organizational culture may negatively impact nurses' performance. Improving the organizational culture could enhance nurses' performance and motivation to provide higher-quality care. The study of Alharbi et al. [24] suggests that there is a possible link between organizational culture and patients' health-related quality of life after discharge. While a flexible organizational culture is often seen as beneficial for implementing new healthcare models, the findings suggest that it might not always be helpful in achieving desired outcomes. Carney [25] sought to explore how organizational culture might influence the relationship between cultural factors and quality healthcare. Through interviews with 50 healthcare managers in Ireland, they found that organizational culture is more complex than previously believed. Key cultural determinants for quality care delivery include excellence in care, ethical values, involvement, professionalism, value for money, cost of care, commitment to quality, and strategic thinking.

The second group of studies explores organizational culture and consequences for employees. The MEMO study by Willimas et al [24] examined the relationship between organizational culture, physician work attitudes, and patient safety. They found that while organizational culture plays a less significant role than initially hypothesized, a strong emphasis on quality within the culture is crucial for positive patient outcomes. Stressed, burned out, and dissatisfied physicians are more likely to make errors and deliver suboptimal care. Therefore, creating a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes quality and supports the well-being of healthcare providers is essential for the

healthcare system. Another study that attracts attention [26] is the one analyzing organizational culture in health assessed in the United States among nurses in 13 hospitals. Results of that study show positive correlation between negatively evaluated organizational climate and occupational burnout among nurses assessed through Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) tool. It showed that the organizational climate influences the sense of personal achievement, emotional exhaustion, and the sense of depersonalization. The research team led by Mijakoski [27] investigated organizational culture in relation to occupational burnout, engagement in work and performance quality of professional duties. Target participants were physicians (138) and nurses (148) employed at a hospital in Skopje, Macedonia. The study relied on standard research instruments, as follows: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, and Competing Values Framework. Both groups most often indicated the clan culture as the desired organization culture, abounding in factors that protect against occupational burnout, and conducive to motivation for work engagement. Szara [28] argues that the largest group of available scientific publications on organizational culture in healthcare systems refer to hospital staff, chiefly nurses and physicians. Some researchers, particularly in Poland, have studied the relation between organization culture and “psychological load” which employees in this sector face. Moreover, the study repeated the results that the amount of psychological capacity was related to organizational culture. That would mean that an increase of psychological capacity among healthcare workers in healthcare institutions is conditioned as difference between the current (present) and expected (desired) organizational culture. Kourakos and Kafkia [29] discovered that organizational culture influences all aspects of the healthcare system, significantly impacting both healthcare delivery and decision-making. They found that organizational culture has far-reaching effects on healthcare providers and recipients, affecting factors like work-life balance, organizational commitment, empowerment, job satisfaction, employee turnover, and overall organizational performance and efficiency. Additionally, it can influence patient access to care, patient safety, health outcomes, and patient satisfaction. Shanafelt et al. [1] argue that when cultural challenges arise in healthcare, they often stem from specific subcomponents of the culture, even if the overall culture is generally positive. They propose that cultural issues contribute significantly to the problems facing the healthcare delivery system and the high rates of burnout among US physicians. To address these issues and improve the professional culture, they suggest a framework based on organizational science. Sow et al. [30] studied the connections between leadership style, organizational culture, and job satisfaction in the U.S. healthcare industry. They aimed to understand how transformational leadership and organizational culture can influence job satisfaction in an industry with high burnout and low satisfaction. By surveying 111 American healthcare employees, they found that while transformational leadership initially seemed to impact job satisfaction, this effect disappeared when considering organizational culture factors. The study suggests that healthcare organizations should focus on shifting away from externally focused cultures to improve job satisfaction and social outcomes.

The third types of studies describe different types of organizational cultures. Ovseiko and Buchan [31] surveyed academic physicians and scientists at the University of Oxford and its partner health system in 2010. They found that the health system had a dominant hierarchical culture, with moderate rational and team cultures, and a weak entrepreneurial culture. The university had a more balanced culture, with strong rational and entrepreneurial cultures, and moderate-to-strong hierarchical and team cultures. Both groups preferred a future culture that emphasized team and entrepreneurial cultures,

with less emphasis on rational and hierarchical cultures. A study in France by Minvielle et al. [32] was conducted in 26 hospitals. The study, examined the relationship between occupational burnout, productivity and organizational culture. The data shows that there were four types of cultures: adhocracy culture, clan culture, market culture and hierarchy culture. Mesfin et al. [33] conducted a study in Ethiopia. This study found that primary hospitals in the Jimma zone primarily exhibited a hierarchical culture, characterized by rigid rules, well-defined processes, and a controlling management style. The market culture was the second most prominent culture type. The results of this study align with the findings from a previous study done in Greece, which identified hierarchical culture as the predominant organizational culture type, followed by market culture. A further research carried out in Libya revealed that the main culture type was hierarchy, followed by clan culture type [34]. The study of Hung et al. [35] investigated the connection between organizational culture and patient-centered outcomes in primary care. By analyzing data from 357 physicians in 41 primary care departments, the researchers found that different organizational culture types had varying impacts on patient access, care continuity, and overall patient experiences. For example, a "Rational" culture was linked to longer wait times, while "Hierarchical" and "Developmental" cultures were associated with less care continuity, but better patient experiences. These findings highlight the importance of understanding how organizational culture can influence the delivery of patient-centered care.

The abovementioned studies provide an overview of the researches on organizational culture in relation to healthcare and other concepts. The results of the study show three different topics that emerged from this study. The conclusions are outlined in the next part.

4. Conclusions

In the light of this discussion, the study elaborates, in great details, the concept of organizational culture and its definition by main scholars; empirical research on organizational culture and its relation to different concepts. Organizational culture is considered as important strategy of an organization and defines the course for the organization and its employees. A crucial aspect of all the presented studies is their recognition of the complex context within healthcare organizations and the results highlight the complex nature of organizational culture in healthcare. This is in line with previous researches where many scholars clearly demonstrate that complex organizations, such as healthcare units with multiple layers of cultures and cultural schema, are interconnected with a large organization point and are not readily able to accept changes [36]. The quality of care is deeply influenced by organizational culture. The main results of the study show that there are three types of studies which examine culture and organizational variables. Those are: studies about culture and performance, studies about culture and consequences for employees and studies which describe different types of organizational cultures. The findings demonstrate that the role of organizational culture has been proved as important in the complex health system and apparently related to various concepts. Thus, research based on the professionals' perspective helps to shed a light on the immense role that organizational culture has. The limitations of the study are about specific sector in which it is examined. Further research that can provide additional insights about the role of organizational culture in healthcare should focus on longitudinal studies which assess the long-term effects of

organizational culture changes or exploring the specific impacts of organizational culture in different types of healthcare institutions. Apart from that, it would be beneficial to create an instrument for organizational culture in healthcare through factor analysis in order to confirm the findings of the study. Another future research could be replication of the exact study in different industries. The study recommends examining organizational culture in healthcare and paying attention to the different types of culture and consequences, as these aspects are important for the benefit of both patients and healthcare professionals.

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