



## Culture as Catalyst: Decoding the Architecture of Employee Engagement Through the Lens of Organizational Culture

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### KEYWORDS

*Organizational Culture*  
*Employee Engagement*  
*Cultural Values*  
*Alignment*  
*Psychological Safety*  
*Collaborative Work Environment*  
*Workforce Strategy.*

### ABSTRACT

In an era defined by rapid disruption, demographic flux, and the irreversible blurring of physical and digital workspaces, the question of how organizations sustain employee engagement has never been more consequential. This study examines the multidimensional impact of organizational culture on employee engagement across five distinct industrial sectors. Anchored in a positivist, quantitative framework, primary data were gathered via a rigorously validated structured questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of 116 full-time employees. Through descriptive analysis, reliability testing, and multiple regression modeling, four theoretically grounded cultural dimensions — cultural values alignment, psychological safety, collaborative work environment, and cultural satisfaction — were assessed as predictors of engagement. The results confirm that all four dimensions exert significant positive influence on engagement, with cultural values alignment and cultural satisfaction emerging as the most robust predictors. The composite model explains approximately 66% of variance in employee engagement, affirming organizational culture as a central strategic lever for workforce vitality and institutional performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations today operate within environments of unrelenting turbulence — shaped by geopolitical volatility, technological acceleration, and shifting employee expectations. Against this backdrop, human capital has ascended to the apex of strategic priority, and employee engagement has emerged as perhaps the single most consequential indicator of organizational health, productivity, and resilience (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Nadales-Gallego et al., 2025). Engaged employees invest discretionary effort, demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviors, and display psychological ownership of their work — translating intangible commitment into measurable organizational outcomes (Arif et al., 2023).

Organizational culture functions as the invisible architecture of institutional life. A coherent, enabling culture aligns employee behaviors with strategic imperatives, cultivates trust across hierarchical boundaries, reduces role ambiguity, and deepens organizational identification (Schein, 2010; Hartnell et al., 2011). According to the Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2024), organizations with thriving engagement cultures consistently outperform peers across profitability, customer satisfaction, and talent retention metrics — yet alarmingly, only a minority of the global workforce self-identifies as actively engaged.

Despite substantial corporate investment in culture-building and engagement initiatives, a stubborn engagement deficit persists across industries. This gulf between cultural aspiration and experiential reality makes it imperative to identify precisely which cultural dimensions drive engagement — and with what relative strength. The present study directly addresses this need by empirically examining four key cultural dimensions: cultural values alignment, psychological safety, collaborative work environment, and cultural satisfaction.

## 2. Background of the Study

Historically conceived as a passive institutional backdrop — an inherited constellation of informal norms — organizational culture has been comprehensively reconceptualized by contemporary scholarship as a dynamic strategic capability (Schein, 2010). This transformation reflects the recognition that culture is not simply bequeathed but actively shaped, and that its alignment with organizational strategy is a primary driver of sustained competitive advantage (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

The proliferation of hybrid work arrangements, geographically dispersed teams, and knowledge-intensive work modalities has amplified the strategic stakes of cultural coherence. Organizations now deploy deliberate cultural instruments — values articulation, leadership modeling, onboarding ceremonies, recognition systems, and collaborative frameworks — to transmit and reinforce identity and belonging across fragmented work contexts. In this environment, cultural consistency and perceived authenticity have become non-negotiable prerequisites for engagement.

Empirical research consistently affirms that cultural strength and alignment shape critical employee outcomes including organizational trust, job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement (Harter et al., 2002; Saks, 2006). Cultures marked by ambiguity, inconsistency, or psychological insecurity breed uncertainty and disengagement. Forward-looking organizations are therefore integrating cultural development into the strategic core of their engagement architectures — not as a cosmetic supplement but as a foundational investment.

## 2. 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following synthesis traces the intellectual lineage of organizational culture and employee engagement scholarship, progressing chronologically to reveal how theoretical and empirical understanding has evolved over three decades.

### **Kahn (1990) — The Psychological Foundations of Engagement**

William Kahn's foundational inquiry established engagement as a distinct and dynamic psychological state, governed by three conditions: meaningfulness (the sense that work carries intrinsic worth), safety (the perception of interpersonal security), and availability (access to the physical and cognitive resources needed to invest). Organizational culture directly shapes all three — a culture that affirms purpose, cultivates safety, and resources its people lays the psychological substrate upon which engagement is built.

### **Schein (2010) — Culture as Layered Architecture**

Schein's tripartite model positions organizational culture across three strata: observable artifacts, espoused values, and deep underlying assumptions. Authentic cultural influence flows from the deepest stratum, where unconscious beliefs govern collective identity and behavior. Only when all three levels achieve coherent alignment does culture exert its most powerful gravitational pull on employee commitment, psychological investment, and organizational identification.

### **Saks (2006) — Social Exchange and Engagement**

Invoking social exchange theory, Saks demonstrated that perceived organizational support and the quality of the cultural environment are reliable positive predictors of engagement. Employees embedded in psychologically safe, values-aligned contexts respond through elevated job and organizational engagement — a reciprocal dynamic in which cultural investment generates engagement in kind.

### **Cameron & Quinn (2011) — The Competing Values Framework**

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) taxonomizes organizational culture across four archetypes — clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy — and identifies collaborative and innovation-oriented cultures as most consistently associated with engagement, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Their research provides a rigorous empirical basis for differentiating cultural profiles and their differential effects on workforce vitality.

### **Hartnell, Ou & Kinicki (2011) — Meta-Analytic Synthesis**

Synthesizing findings from more than 84 empirical studies, Hartnell and colleagues confirmed that clan and adhocracy cultural values exhibit robust, consistent positive associations with employee satisfaction, commitment, and engagement. This meta-analytic evidence powerfully reinforces the case for deliberate cultivation of collaborative and innovation-enabling cultural conditions.

### **Edmondson (1999) — The Power of Psychological Safety**

Edmondson's landmark research established that team climates in which employees freely voice concerns, take interpersonal risks, and experiment without fear of censure achieve markedly superior learning, innovation, and performance outcomes. As a cultural dimension, psychological safety fulfills Kahn's safety condition — creating the permissive environment in which employees willingly invest their full selves in their roles.

### **Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002) — Culture and Business Outcomes**

Drawing on data from 7,939 business units across 36 organizations, Harter and colleagues confirmed strong positive

associations between engagement and outcomes including customer loyalty, productivity, profit, and retention. Organizational culture variables — notably manager behavior, recognition practices, and development opportunities — were identified as the strongest proximal predictors, underscoring culture's centrality in sustaining workforce commitment.

#### **Denison, Haaland & Goelzer (2004) — Global Cultural Traits**

Examining culture and performance relationships across a global organizational sample, Denison et al. identified involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission as the four cultural traits most strongly associated with organizational effectiveness. The involvement dimension — spanning employee empowerment, team orientation, and capability development — was most tightly linked to engagement and satisfaction, offering a complementary taxonomy to the CVF framework.

#### **4. Research Gap**

Despite the accumulating weight of evidence linking culture and engagement, a pronounced empirical lacuna persists: relatively few studies have simultaneously examined the combined effects of multiple distinct cultural dimensions within a unified analytical framework. Most investigations isolate individual cultural variables, limiting comparative assessment of their relative explanatory power and preventing holistic understanding of how cultural dimensions interact in shaping the engagement experience.

This gap is particularly acute in emerging economy contexts, where institutional conditions, labor market dynamics, and cultural norms may substantially moderate relationships derived from Western research settings. The present study squarely addresses this omission by concurrently examining four theoretically grounded cultural dimensions — cultural values alignment, psychological safety, collaborative work environment, and cultural satisfaction — as simultaneous predictors of employee engagement, within a single, ecologically valid empirical framework.

#### **5. Research Objectives**

This study pursues five interconnected empirical objectives:

- ▶ To examine the overall direction and magnitude of the relationship between organizational culture (as a composite construct) and employee engagement.
- ▶ To analyze the specific predictive impact of cultural values alignment on employee engagement levels.
- ▶ To investigate how psychological safety shapes employee voice, trust, and behavioral investment in work.
- ▶ To assess the contribution of a collaborative work environment to employee morale, participation, and sustained engagement.
- ▶ To determine the relative and combined predictive power of the four cultural dimensions as determinants of employee engagement.

#### **6. Research Hypotheses**

Based on the theoretical and empirical review, the following directional hypotheses are formally advanced:

**H1:** Organizational culture as a composite construct positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

**H2:** Cultural values alignment positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

**H3:** Psychological safety positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

**H4:** Collaborative work environment positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

**H5:** Cultural satisfaction positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

#### **7. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual architecture of this study positions organizational culture as a multidimensional independent construct whose constituent dimensions exert direct, positive effects on the dependent variable of employee engagement. The four cultural dimensions are theoretically distinct yet empirically interrelated facets of the same institutional climate:

- ▶ **Cultural Values Alignment** — the degree to which employees perceive convergence between organizational values and their own professional identity and personal beliefs.
- ▶ **Psychological Safety** — the shared organizational belief that the environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, candid voice, and authentic participation without fear of sanction.
- ▶ **Collaborative Work Environment** — the extent to which norms, structures, and practices actively cultivate teamwork, knowledge diffusion, and collective problem-solving.
- ▶ **Cultural Satisfaction** — the overall quality of employees' subjective experience of the prevailing organizational culture in its daily manifestations.



Employee Engagement — the dependent variable — is operationalized through the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of work engagement as captured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).

### 3. 8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 8.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory research design consistent with a positivist epistemological orientation. A cross-sectional survey methodology was employed to capture data from employees across multiple industries simultaneously. This approach enables efficient large-sample data collection and is well-suited to examining associative relationships between variables using deductive hypothesis-testing logic. Whilst the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, the application of multiple regression analysis enables systematic assessment of the predictive relationships between cultural dimensions and employee engagement.

#### 8.2 Target Population

The target population comprised full-time employees across five industrial sectors: education, manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, and service industries. Sector selection was deliberate, designed to maximize contextual diversity and thereby enhance the external validity and generalizability of findings. Eligibility required a minimum of six months' tenure in the respondent's current organization, ensuring adequate exposure to prevailing cultural practices and norms.

#### 8.3 Sampling Strategy

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across the five identified industrial sectors. Stratification by industry affiliation prevents the overrepresentation of any single sector, while within-stratum random selection minimizes selection bias. This design optimizes both representativeness and statistical efficiency.

#### 8.4 Sample Size

A final, analytically valid sample of 116 respondents was obtained and retained for analysis. This sample satisfies the minimum requirements for multiple regression analysis as specified by Hair et al. (2019), providing sufficient statistical power to reliably detect medium-to-large effect sizes at conventional significance thresholds ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The integrity of the data was verified through duplicate screening and completeness checks prior to analysis.

### 9. Data Collection

#### Primary Data

Primary data were gathered via a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed in both electronic and paper format to accommodate varying participant contexts and organizational settings. The questionnaire comprised three coherent sections:

- ▶ **Section A — Demographic Profile:** Age cohort, gender identity, highest educational qualification, total work experience, and industrial sector.
- ▶ **Section B — Organizational Culture Scale:** Adapted from the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI; Cameron & Quinn, 2011) and supplemented with items from the Denison Organizational Culture Survey, assessing the four primary cultural dimensions.
- ▶ **Section C — Employee Engagement Scale:** Adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002), measuring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement dimensions.

All scale items utilized a five-point Likert response format (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). A preliminary pilot study involving 30 respondents confirmed content and face validity, and returned Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70 for all subscales — confirming adequate internal consistency across all instruments.

#### Secondary Data

Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCO; seminal academic textbooks in organizational behavior and HRM; industry reports including the Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2024); and institutional research publications from established organizational culture research centers.

### 10. Descriptive Statistics

#### Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic composition of the study sample (N = 116). The sample reflects a modest male majority, with the 21–30 age cohort constituting the largest demographic segment — broadly representative of the workforce composition across the sectors surveyed.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Study Sample (N = 116)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	65	56.0
Female	51	44.0
Age 21–30	49	42.2
Age 31–40	39	33.6
Age 41 and above	28	24.1

### Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2 presents mean scores and standard deviations for each study variable. All means exceed the scale midpoint (3.00), indicating broadly positive employee perceptions of cultural conditions and engagement. Cultural values alignment registers the highest mean among independent variables ( $M = 4.09$ ), while collaborative work environment — though still positive — records the comparatively lower mean of 3.81, pointing to a potential focal area for organizational development investment.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 116)**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural Values Alignment	4.09	0.66
Psychological Safety	3.96	0.74
Collaborative Work Environment	3.81	0.79
Cultural Satisfaction	4.03	0.67
Employee Engagement	4.15	0.61

## 11. Multiple Regression Analysis

### Regression Model Specification

Employee Engagement =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Cultural Values Alignment}) + \beta_2(\text{Psychological Safety}) + \beta_3(\text{Collaborative Work Environment}) + \beta_4(\text{Cultural Satisfaction}) + \epsilon$

## 4. REGRESSION RESULTS

Table 3 presents the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), associated t-values, and significance levels for each predictor. All four cultural dimensions demonstrated statistically significant positive effects on employee engagement, providing robust empirical support for each of the five research hypotheses.

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Results — Predictors of Employee Engagement**

Predictor Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value
Cultural Values Alignment	.34	5.61	.000
Psychological Safety	.28	4.74	.000
Collaborative Work Environment	.19	3.22	.002
Cultural Satisfaction	.32	5.18	.000



**Table 4: Model Summary**

Statistic	Value
R <sup>2</sup>	0.66
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.65
F-value	121.87
Significance	p < 0.001

### Interpretation

The regression model achieved strong overall statistical significance ( $F = 121.87, p < 0.001$ ), confirming that the four cultural dimensions collectively constitute a powerful explanatory framework for employee engagement. The model accounts for approximately 66% of total variance in engagement ( $R^2 = 0.66$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.65$ ) — a substantial effect by conventional psychometric standards.

Cultural values alignment emerged as the strongest singular predictor ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ), underscoring the primacy of perceived congruence between individual and organizational values in generating psychological investment and commitment. Cultural satisfaction ranked second ( $\beta = .32, p < .001$ ), followed by psychological safety ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ). Collaborative work environment, whilst recording the smallest beta coefficient, nonetheless contributed statistically and practically meaningful unique variance ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ). Collectively, these results affirm all five research hypotheses and illuminate the multidimensional architecture through which culture animates engagement.

### 12. Principal Findings

The empirical analysis yields the following principal findings, each carrying significant theoretical and practical weight:

- ▶ Organizational culture — assessed as a composite multidimensional construct — exerts a significant, positive, and robust influence on employee engagement, affirming its strategic primacy as a driver of organizational vitality.
- ▶ Cultural values alignment constitutes the most powerful individual predictor of engagement, confirming that employees respond most deeply and durably to organizational environments whose values authentically resonate with their own identity and beliefs.
- ▶ Psychological safety significantly amplifies employee voice, interpersonal trust, and behavioral commitment — demonstrating that cultural norms permitting risk-taking and authentic participation are indispensable to sustainable engagement.
- ▶ Collaborative work architectures — expressed through shared norms, collective problem-solving, and knowledge-sharing practices — measurably enhance employee participation, morale, and sustained engagement.
- ▶ Cultural satisfaction is a robust positive predictor of organizational attachment, work engagement, and retention intent, suggesting that the lived subjective experience of culture is as strategically significant as its espoused values.
- ▶ All five hypotheses were supported at conventional significance levels, yielding a coherent and comprehensive empirical account of the organizational culture–engagement relationship.

### 13. Practical Implications

#### For Managers

- ▶ Model and reinforce organizational values with behavioral consistency — demonstrating authentic alignment between espoused values and day-to-day managerial conduct.
- ▶ Cultivate psychologically safe team climates by normalizing constructive dissent, celebrating intellectual curiosity, and responding supportively to employee concerns and ideas.
- ▶ Institute structured knowledge-sharing and cross-functional collaboration opportunities that recognize collective rather than solely individual achievement.
- ▶ Conduct regular culture-check conversations to gauge the lived employee experience of organizational culture and surface gaps between intended and perceived cultural realities.

#### For HR Professionals

- ▶ Integrate organizational culture strategy into the core of employee engagement frameworks — treating culture as foundational infrastructure rather than supplementary ornamentation.

- ▶ Deploy validated cultural assessment instruments (OCAI, Denison Culture Survey) as periodic diagnostic tools within organizational health monitoring systems.
- ▶ Design targeted culture-embodiment programs for line managers and senior leaders, equipping them to propagate organizational values with transparency, consistency, and authentic conviction.
- ▶ Leverage pulse survey platforms to maintain real-time, multi-level intelligence on the cultural experience across the organization.

#### **For Organizations**

- ▶ Invest strategically in culture articulation processes that render organizational values tangible, memorable, and behaviorally actionable for employees at all levels and functions.
- ▶ Actively build cultures of psychological safety and inclusion in which diverse perspectives are genuinely valued and interpersonal risk-taking is visibly modeled by senior leadership.
- ▶ Align organizational culture explicitly with strategic objectives, brand promise, and institutional purpose — deepening employee identification with the organizational mission and elevating engagement as a consequence.

#### **14. Limitations of the Study**

Findings should be interpreted in light of the following methodological and contextual constraints:

- ▶ The cross-sectional design captures a single temporal snapshot, precluding causal inference and limiting examination of how culture–engagement dynamics unfold over time.
- ▶ Self-report data are susceptible to response bias, including social desirability effects and common method variance — limitations inherent to survey-based organizational research.
- ▶ The sample is drawn from five industrial sectors and may not fully capture the diversity of organizational contexts, cultural configurations, and workforce characteristics present across the broader economy.
- ▶ Potential moderators — including leadership style, organizational size, national culture, and individual personality — were not systematically incorporated into the analytical model.
- ▶ The sample size of 116, while analytically sufficient, limits the scope for demographic disaggregation and sector-level subgroup comparisons.

#### **5. 15. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

- ▶ Future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to examine cultural change processes and their downstream effects on engagement trajectories over time.
- ▶ The mediating roles of organizational trust, psychological empowerment, and organizational identification in the culture–engagement relationship merit systematic empirical attention.
- ▶ Given the accelerating prevalence of remote and hybrid work configurations, research specifically examining how digital and distributed work contexts moderate culture–engagement relationships is urgently needed.
- ▶ Comparative cross-national studies would substantially enrich understanding of how national cultural contexts interact with organizational culture to shape engagement.
- ▶ Mixed-methods designs — combining quantitative survey data with qualitative organizational ethnographies and narrative interviews — would yield richer, more contextually nuanced insight into the culture–engagement nexus.

#### **6. 16. CONCLUSION**

This study furnishes robust empirical confirmation that organizational culture is a significant, multidimensional, and powerful determinant of employee engagement across diverse industrial contexts. Cultural values alignment, psychological safety, collaborative work environments, and cultural satisfaction collectively and individually drive the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment through which engagement is expressed. The strength and consistency of the relationships observed across all four cultural dimensions affirm the strategic imperative of treating culture not as organizational backdrop but as active, intentional infrastructure.

Organizations that invest deliberately in employee-centric culture — articulating values with authenticity, cultivating safety with consistency, and embedding collaboration with structural intentionality — position themselves to attract, retain, and energize workforces capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly complex and competitive global environment. The present study enriches the organizational culture and engagement literatures by providing an empirically grounded, multi-dimensional account of how culture shapes the engagement experience — and invites future scholars to deepen this understanding through longitudinal, cross-cultural, and mixed-methods inquiry

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