

Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement of a Water Utility Service Provider

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ABSTRACT

This paper looked into the dimensions of the organizational culture and the parameters of employee engagement. The primary purpose of the research is to identify the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement, the independent and dependent variables, respectively. The study utilized the quantitative descriptive correlational design. The researchers gathered data from eighty (80) local water utility provider employees. The data were collected using an approved questionnaire and analysed using descriptive analysis and Pearson Correlational Coefficient (r) statistical tool. The study's findings showed that in terms of organizational culture, the organization occasionally demonstrated its cultural dimensions. The result implied a sometimes practiced culture, meaning it has a moderate strategy and structure contributing to employee involvement and internal practices. Among the dimensions of organizational culture, uncertainty avoidance is the highest implying that employees tend to avoid unpredictable situations because they feel anxious when things are different. The study also revealed that the drivers of employee engagement strongly engaged the participants. The result suggested that higher employee engagement may boost employee dedication and involvement, which fosters a collaborative workforce for organizational success and sustainability. The driver shared mood is the highest suggesting that positive mood is a motivator of engagement. The correlational analysis showed a moderate positive relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement which means that the variables are moderately related to each other. The study further suggests that having a positive corporate culture will lead to higher employee engagement. Researchers recommend further research in the academic area for future researchers.

Keywords: Organizational culture, employee engagement, utility service provider

INTRODUCTION

An industry's ability to succeed depends on how a workforce is engaged. Motivating employees to improve their skills and abilities gives way to employee engagement which facilitates positive outcomes for employees and the industry (Kalia & Veram, 2017). Creating solid dynamics within the organization could also attract employees to engage and work to achieve the goal. Therefore, looking into employee engagement, including the different dynamics, is essential to build organizational development, otherwise, it may lead to decreased productivity (Zondo, 2020).

A water service provider, a publicly-owned utility, may be defined as an organization that is majority-owned and controlled by the government (Kayaga et al., 2017). Water utilities involve the provision of vital infrastructure, which ensures the availability of clean water and proper sanitation as a basic necessity of consumers, which is critical to our economy (Grant, 2020). According to 2017 data, the Philippines has over 4,700 water utilities, roughly half of which are comparably small and uncontrolled (Castro, 2017). In a local context, a single water utility company installs, improves, maintains, and operates water supply and distribution systems within the boundaries of such districts.

Shmailan (2016) emphasized that it is necessary to look into employee engagement. Employee engagement is critical in determining organizational performance, creativity, and competitiveness, a concern for leaders and managers worldwide (Bedarkar, 2014). Edwards (2018) expressed that employee engagement consists of different motivation levels, such as job characteristics, leadership style, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, working relationship, shared vision, and shared mood. For Patro (2013), engagement occurs when a sufficient number of people care about doing a job well, as well as what the organization is seeking to accomplish and how it proposes to accomplish it. This caring attitude and behavior can only occur when people are satisfied with their jobs and believe that the organization supports them.

In Gallup's current state of the workplace, employee engagement is regarded by 71% of senior executives as being a crucial component of a successful business strategy, with reports showing highly engaged companies are 21% more profitable; on the other hand, disengaged employees who endure 18% to 43% higher than highly engaged are more likely to quit their job (Kvasnevskaya, 2023). Al Shehri et al. (2017) further contend that highly engaged employees are seen as benefits by the company and as a baseline for keeping a skilled and experienced workforce. Contrarily, disengaged workers are considered burdens on the company since they increase training expenses, reduce profitability, and exhibit absenteeism.

Apart from employee engagement, companies must also evaluate their culture as it holds the key to their success (Fidyah, 2019). Organizational culture is how the members perceive and interpret their organization and behave accordingly (Nebojša, 2013). In addition, Schneider et al. (2013) stated that organizational culture includes norms that employees experience and describe as their working environment. These norms influence how members act and develop to attain the organization's objectives. Moreover, organizational culture is how employees interact with one another and other stakeholders (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014). Bolboli & Reiche (2014) demonstrated that more than 90% of initiatives for organizational success fail due to the inadequate cultural integration of corporate managers.

On the other hand, employee engagement ratings at companies with strong organizational cultures are 72% higher than those at companies with poor cultures. The profitability of involved business units has increased by 22% (Heinz, 2021). Employees who work for companies with strong cultures have a cause to support and a reason to do so passionately. Organizational culture greatly influences employee performance, which may increase productivity and improve organizational performance (Kharazmi, 2013). Therefore, managers should carefully assess the organizational culture and ensure it upholds positive stakeholder relationships. In this regard, a business can only improve organizational culture by emphasizing it to create an environment of greater transparency among all stakeholders and boost competitive advantages over its competitors. The organizational culture inside a company is significant. The primary stakeholders are affected by it as well. The performance of the business will be affected (Shanak, 2017).

Studies have been conducted on employee engagement to determine how organizational culture affects employee engagement (Njuguna, 2015). In a study done by Parent & Lovelace (2015), they concluded that businesses with great organizational culture also support job and organizational engagement in their employees. Another study on the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance by Naidoo & Martins (2014) demonstrated that it was understandable for a company to foster a good culture that guarantees that people feel and remain engaged in their work to keep them for longer than those companies that do not encourage and promote employee engagement. Moreover, Odai et al. (2021) showed that supportive company culture significantly positively impacts employee engagement. The study also manifested that a culture of trust in a business promotes open relationships where workers may openly speak with their co-workers and, most importantly, their bosses. Such sincere relationships enable employees to contribute more ideas and solutions, strengthening an organization's competitive edge. Exploration of the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement has been conducted, such as the study of Al Sheri et al. (2017), which focused on banks. The study claimed to find that societal factors influenced employee engagement.

In the Philippines, Abun et al. (2021) study focused on the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement in a region anchored on the "Competing Value Framework Model." Locally, Sayson (2021) studied the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement in a school environment. Seeing these previous studies conducted, the researchers aimed to look further into the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement, this time in a water service provider environment. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement, specifically in water utility companies, in a local context, given the demand for more information on the subject. In order to accomplish this, the study explored the dimensions of organizational culture and the drivers of employee engagement in a local water service provider.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to determine the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement. Specifically, we aimed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' assessment on organizational culture in terms of:
 - 1.1 power distance;
 - 1.2 uncertainty avoidance;
 - 1.3 masculinity;
 - 1.4 collectivism; and
 - 1.5 Confucian work dynamics?
2. What is the respondents' evaluation on employee engagement in terms of;
 - 2.1 job characteristics;
 - 2.2 value congruence;
 - 2.3 leadership style;
 - 2.4 perceived organizational support;
 - 2.5 workplace relationship;
 - 2.6 procedural justice,
 - 2.7 shared vision, and
 - 2.8 shared mood?
3. Is there a significant relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement in a water utility company?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis in null form (H_0) that guided the study, was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement in the water utility company.

Framework of the Study

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory (1980) was the anchor of this study. The development of this theory is to determine the variation of cultures. Initially, the theory proposed four (4) dimensions to represent the independent preferences within an organization, namely: individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity-femininity (Moradi et al., 2020). Hofstede expanded on these

aspects by including Confucian work dynamics, which he refers to as long-term orientation (LTO), as the fifth dimension of cultural values (Francesco, 2015).

Apart from the cultural dimensions' theory, Employee Engagement was also the anchor of this study. Kahn (1990) introduced this theory. Two contrasting perspectives on employee engagement exist—the dominant, functionalistic perspective versus the alternative perspective grounded in communication constitutes organization (Heide & Simonsson, 2018). This theory suggests the division of engagement into cognitive, emotional, and commitment. The factors introduced by Edwards (2018) that improved engagement through an evidence-based approach: were job characteristics, value congruence, leadership style, workplace relationship, perceived organizational support, shared vision, shared mood, and procedural justice.

Figure 1 presents the interaction between organizational culture (independent variable) and its different cultural dimensions: individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, work dynamics, and employee engagement (dependent variable) specifically, job congruence, value congruence, leadership style, perceived organizational support, working relationship, procedural justice, shared vision, and shared mood. Connecting the variables and their components to each other portrays the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement.

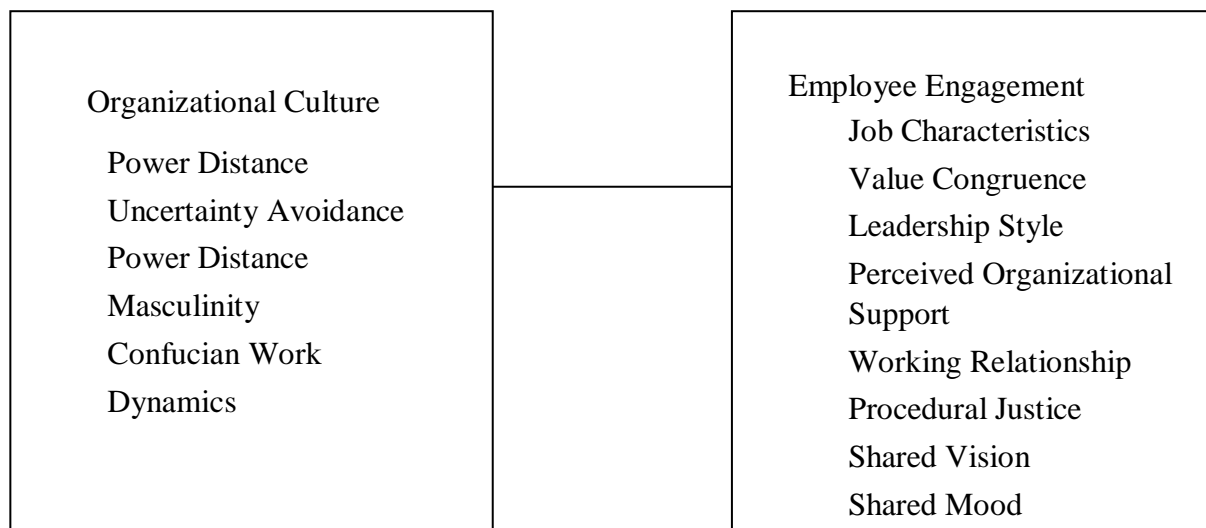


Figure 1 - The Schematic diagram showing the interplay of the variables involved in the study.

Employee engagement is a focal point in leadership as organizations persistently look for new ways to maintain workforce involvement. The Hay Group defines employee engagement as an outcome produced by motivating employees' involvement and excitement in their jobs and channeling it toward the organization's success (Chandani et al., 2016). In identifying the level of employee engagement, it needs to understand the factors of job characteristics, value congruence, leadership style, perceived organizational support, working relationship, procedural justice, shared vision, and shared mood.

Ghosh et al. (2015) defined job characteristics as the emotional factors affecting employees' intrinsic motivation. It relates to a view of an employee on different skill types and in giving significance to a task. Next is value congruence, which according to Mustafa et al. (2017), is the correspondence in personal values between employees and individuals. They used correspondence to identify the willingness of subordinates to follow and support their leaders (Wang et al., 2018). Another factor is leadership style, which is how a leader directs and inspires others to achieve organizational objectives—viewing behavior and strategy as a combination of various traits, characteristics, and behaviors in interacting with subordinates (Ichsan et al., 2021). Then the driver of perceived organizational support (POS) is the degree to which employees believe their supervisor is worried about their personal and professional welfare, as well as the degree to which they

value their contribution to the organization and foster a supportive work environment for them (Li et al., 2022). Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu (2018) also described workplace relationships as interpersonal correspondence between employees, being a fount of information and social assistance.

Moreover, procedural justice influences an employee's work behavior and performance (He et al., 2014). It focuses on how fair the decisions were made by those in authority, influencing the attitude/s and emotion/s of employees (Ruano-Chamorro et al., 2021). In addition, according to Alvarez et al. (2021), shared vision is a psychological model of the future condition of the team or its tasks that contributes to the foundation of action within the team and identified as a set of goals and purposes which stimulates a group of employees and develop conversion in organizations. Lastly is the driver of shared mood, which discusses that emotions are a ubiquitous part of the workplace, and mood sharing suggests that people often seek out others to express and share their emotions (Reynolds-Kueny & Shoss, 2020).

Organizational culture has become a high priority for leaders across all industries. According to Serra, Cuerva et al. (2021), organizational culture is an essential concept given its importance for organizational functioning and employee welfare. A better understanding of the inherent nature of each type of culture and its relations to the environment is needed to better cope with suffering. Moreover, knowing the essential characteristics of the types of organizational culture and its dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, collectivism, and Confucian work dynamics, could help manage employees' involvement and performance better.

Dai et al. (2022) described power distance as the degree of acceptance of unequal power distribution in societies. In a higher context, the acceptance of inequality conflicts with the operation of modern organizations. Meanwhile, Hancıoğlu (2014) stated that uncertainty avoidance is the cultural dimension of determining a community's tolerance of uncertainties and the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and have built beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these. In addition, Hussein (2020) defined masculinity as a cultural dimension that relates to the established gender roles in leadership. A higher masculinity score indicates that participants prefer males to hold positions of authority and anticipate men to lead organizations successfully.

Furthermore, the collectivism dimension considers how strongly a society integrates into groups and how dependent it feels on those groups (Fatehi et al., 2020). Additionally, Confucian work dynamics, the respect for tradition, preference towards face-saving, and long-term goal preferences and objectives over short-term ones, which deals entirely with Confucius' teaching, and its positive side reflects a dynamic, future-oriented mentality. In contrast, its negative side reflects a static and tradition-oriented mentality (Hua, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive correlational quantitative design to identify the relationship between variables and give static descriptions of situations. A descriptive correlational study is appropriate for demonstrating how one phenomenon can be related to other instances where the researchers have no control over the independent variables (Seeram, 2019).

The researchers conducted the study in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. The researchers have chosen Malaybalay City as the research locale because it is the particular location of the sole water service provider. The participants of the study were the employees of the water service provider, as their involvement and performance are determining factors for crucial decisions in the water service industry. The study considered eighty (80) water utility company employees as participants. To ensure retrieval and to promptly respond to any queries of the participants, the researchers personally floated the questionnaire, which was suitable for 10-15 minutes to answer.

The primary data for the study were collected through the survey method using standardized questionnaires. The researchers adopted questionnaires from the Cultural Dimensions Questionnaire of Wu-Rutgers, M. Y. (2006) and the Employee Engagement Questionnaire of Montales, J. A. (2021). Hence, there is no need for the questionnaire to undergo a validity and reliability test. Researchers sought permission from the authors before adopting the questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprised two (2) parts—the first part aimed to give data in determining the participant's organizational culture assessment. The second part, on the other hand, provided data in identifying the level of employee engagement. The results from the survey instrument were summarized and tabulated according to a 4-point Likert Scale, a 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree on Organizational Culture to determine the degree to which the respondents rate the quality of a given statement. The equivalent interpretation of the scoring guide for organizational culture was a 4=extremely demonstrated, 3=mostly demonstrated, 2=slightly demonstrated, and 1=not demonstrated.

Additionally, a 4-point Likert Scale, 4=strongly agree into 1=strongly disagree, was used on Employee Engagement to understand the level of the respondent's agreement with a given statement. The equivalent interpretation of the scoring guide was 4=highly engaged, 3=engaged, 2=slightly engaged, and 1=not engaged.

The statistical analysis used was descriptive statistics to determine the assessment of organizational culture and the level of employee engagement such as mean and standard deviation. On the other hand, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) statistical tool was utilized in identifying the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement, the dependent and independent variables, respectively.

Ethical Consideration

The study ensured ethical integrity by securing approval from the institution before the conduct of the study. Additionally, the researchers gave the organization an approval letter and gave the participants a consent form according to their participation in the survey. The researchers provided each participant with a protection guarantee regarding the security of their personal information following ethical standards. This is in adherence to the RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2001. Their participation is entirely voluntary. Moreover, the researchers ensured that this research could cause no potential harm to the participants, whether legal, physical, psychological, or social.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study looked into the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement in a water service utility provider considering the five dimensions of organizational culture, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, collectivism, and Confucian work dynamics. Also, the eight parameters of employee engagement include job characteristics, value congruence, leadership style, working relationship, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, shared vision, and shared mood.

Table 1 - Summary of the Assessment of Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Power distance	2.918	0.940	Mostly demonstrated
Uncertainty avoidance	3.575	0.604	Strongly demonstrated
Masculinity	2.503	0.976	Mostly demonstrated

Collectivism	3.388	0.704	Strongly demonstrated
Confucian work dynamics	3.006	0.815	Mostly demonstrated
Grand Total	3.067	0.910	Mostly demonstrated

Legend:

Scale	Range	Assessment of Organizational Culture
4	3.25 – 4.00	Strongly demonstrated
3	2.50 – 3.24	Mostly demonstrated
2	1.75 – 2.49	Slightly demonstrated
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not demonstrated

Table 1 represents organizational culture's overall mean ($M=3.067$, $SD=0.910$). Uncertainty avoidance is the highest among the five cultural dimensions, with a mean of 3.575 and a standard deviation of 0.604. It suggests that observance of uncertainty avoidance is high within the organization, which shows that the organization and its employees are upheld with awareness of the information given and taken from the organization. The respect given to everyone's capabilities is high. The result indicates that employees often prefer clear rules and procedures and need a better tolerance for ambiguity. Following company rules should be a priority even when employees believe it is in their best interests (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). In addition, employees may regard the future as something to be feared rather than embraced since they frequently have a strong need for predictability and control (Wennberg et al., 2013). The result implies that the industry had a strong inclination toward avoiding uncertainty. The claim stated by Shao et al. (2013) is that the organization demonstrated a strong tendency to avoid uncertain or unpredictable situations because employees are more likely to feel anxious when things are different.

On the other hand, men do not solely hold achievement, do not control the organization, and do not always hold power, which showed masculinity as ranking the lowest (Dissanayake et al., 2015). The result denotes that the organization did not consistently uphold the cultural dimension of masculinity. Khlif's (2016) claim aligned with the study's findings that masculinity was not always evident in the organization. According to him, this may be because they prioritize values such as caring for others and quality of life over traditional masculine traits. Masculinity was still noticed to a certain degree, even though it was not visibly present in the organization. As observed, men are better at managing meetings in some instances. That is because they are more frequently in those positions (Eagly & Carli, 2018).

Table 2 - Summary of the Evaluation of Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Job Characteristics	3.384	0.613	Highly engaged
Value Congruence	3.346	0.678	Highly engaged
Leadership Style	3.388	0.659	Highly engaged
Perceived Organizational Support	3.195	0.723	Engaged

Working Relationship	3.293	0.674	Highly engaged
Procedural Justice	3.343	0.676	Highly engaged
Shared Vision	3.340	0.621	Highly engaged
Shared Mood	3.435	0.646	Highly engaged
Grand Total	3.341	0.666	Highly engaged

Legend:

Scale	Range	Level of Employee Engagement
4	3.25 – 4.00	Highly engaged
3	2.50 – 3.24	Engaged
2	1.75 – 2.49	Slightly engaged
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not engaged

Table 2 shows the "Employee Engagement" variable has the overall mean ($M=3.341$, $SD=0.666$). It has eight sub-variables, seven of which are rated extremely engaged by the participants within the organization. The most demonstrated sub-variable of employee engagement is "Shared Mood," with a mean ($M=3.435$, $SD=0.646$). The sub-variable "Perceived Organizational Support" with mean ($M=3.195$, $SD=0.723$) is least demonstrated.

Both the employee and the organization gain from high levels of employee engagement. According to Baldoni (2013), developed employee engagement results from organizations directly related to workers. Moreover, for McFeely (2021), higher employee engagement boosts individual and organizational performance. Moreover, Osborne & Hammoud's study suggests that developing employee engagement strategies is essential to an organization's profitability (2017). They added that disengaged employees would reduce workplace productivity and decrease customer service skills.

The summary concluded that shared mood has the highest mean, indicating that participants are highly engaged in this factor. The fact that employees' shared positive moods influenced the degree of organizational engagement proved this result. In addition, a positive employee mood is a motivator that ties employees' personal lives to their work. Therefore, it should be unsurprising to learn that employees are more involved when there is a positive shared mood (Mahon et al., 2014). Moreover, there is growing evidence that a positive mood impacts variables vital for organizational growth (Diener et al., 2019). These variables include work engagement, teamwork, collaboration, satisfaction, leadership, and performance.

The implication of the high engagement of shared mood within the organization can be paralleled to a particular study by Arewasikporn et al. (2018) that showed positive mood can be an integral part of developing a resilient attitude and that sharing is a potential structure that can influence mood. A positive sharing of emotions in an organization can increase positive affect among employees. A study by Sarmad et al. (2020) stated that employees' positive mood-sharing dramatically affects their performance, which can cause organizational productivity to increase. In consequence, a negative shared emotion can likely cause a decrease in performance.

Furthermore, "Perceived Organizational Support" is less practiced and has the lowest mean in this dimension. It implies that employees need to perceive organizational support. When low POS happens, there is more

likely a lower level of engagement and higher employee turnover in the organization (Bonaiuto et al., 2022). However, this dimension should be given more support and demonstration within an organization. A study by Dai & Qin (2016) stated that perceived organizational support (POS) reflects, in a subjective way, the organization's overall expectations of its members and their recognition of their personal value and contribution to the organization.

Shoss et al., (2013) stated that a decrease in POS can arise from in-role and extra-role performance and counterproductive work behaviour directed against the organization. Moreover, a longitudinal study by Armstrong-Stassen found that managers with high levels of perceived organizational support reported higher levels of job satisfaction than employees with lower levels of organizational support (Maan et al., 2020) as opposing to the result of this study.

Table 3 - Test of significant relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement

Dependent Variable: employee Engagement

Independent Variable	n	Correlation coefficient	p-value	Remark
Organizational culture	80	0.421**	0.000	Significant

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 3 demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Specifically, the figure showed a moderately positive relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement ($r=0.421$, $p=0.000$). It also denotes the p-value (0.000), which is lesser than the significance level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. In assessment, as the organizational culture increases, employee engagement also increases. Therefore, the two variables are moderately related to each other.

The result is the same as the study of Putri et al. (2021), which stated that organizational culture positively and significantly affects employee engagement. It also quoted that the more positive an organization's culture, the greater the level of employee engagement is. The study further proposed that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employees is confirmed both theoretically and statistically. Moreover, the study by Hasan et al. (2020) suggested that organizational culture is closely related to employee engagement. They stated that when the organizational culture matches employees' expectations, employee engagement will be high, and vice versa.

The result above proves that a positive organizational culture promotes productivity, engagement, and improved employee performance. It also posited that employee engagement directly results from a distinctive organizational culture (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). More specifically, a study by Krog (2014) showed that the dynamics of organizational culture have a moderate to significant positive relationship with engagement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found that the organizational culture and employee engagement in a water utility service provider is moderately related to each other. The results suggest a moderate positive relation between organizational culture and employee engagement which implies that the company mostly demonstrated Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the water utility service industry. It implies that the organization only sometimes practices collectivism, Confucian work dynamics, masculinity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. In the dimension of organizational culture, uncertainty avoidance is the highest which means employees fear the unknown, relying mostly on clear suggestions and rules. Additionally, masculinity is the lowest which implies that the organization clearly consider other traits and opinions rather than solely focusing on men superiority.

As demonstrated on Edwards' employee engagement in the organization, employees are highly engaged, implying that job characteristics, leadership style, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, shared mood, shared vision, value congruence, and working relationships within the organization are reasonable and consistently practiced. In this parameter, shared mood is the highest. It means that fostering positive mood within the organization can impact the involvement of employees on work engagement, teamwork, and collaboration. Moreover, the lowest in this indicator is the perceived organizational support. The tendency of low POS may contribute to low engagement which can negatively affect the performance of employees.

Findings of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Edwards' employee engagement factors within a water utility service provider were a basis for concluding a moderately positive relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement. It implies that the relationship between cultural dimensions present and practiced by employees, and employee engagement factors that engaged employees could only sometimes be practiced and seen in the water utility company.

Water utility service providers may use the findings of this study to review their operations for the internal assessment and enhancement of their organization. The study recommends that the management may foster a more inclusive leadership roles and influence employees to be more active in participation. As masculinity still being present in the organization, it means there is little value on the quality of involvement. Therefore, the organization may strengthen the drive equality and equal opportunity.

Moreover, the study recommends that managers lessen the causes of lack of fairness to raise employees' perceived organizational support engagement, such as lowering organizational politics and giving the employees better working conditions. With the conclusion of a relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement, raising perceived organizational support will increase the presence of cultural dimensions such as power distance and Confucian work dynamics.

Additionally, there is an opportunity for knowledge-based research on creating an employee engagement program for industries. It could develop from a more extensive analysis of how organizations have clasped employee engagement and created successful methods for improvement. It might also be advantageous for academic community research and other industries. Some examples of how your references should be listed are given at the end of this template in the 'References' section, which will allow you to assemble your reference list according to the correct format and font size.

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