

VALUE PREFERENCES AND DOMINANT CULTURAL PRACTICES IN BULGARIAN ORGANIZATIONS during the COVID-19 crisis

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Abstract: The dominant cultural practices and the value preferences for the type of organizational culture in Bulgarian organizations are investigated. The survey was conducted among 103 people - 51 employees from a private and 52 from a government organization at the time of Covid-19 in early 2020, of which men - 63.3%, women - 36.7%, aged 26 to 55 years. The main goal of the research is to establish the value preferences for the types of cultures, as well as the dominant cultural practices in Bulgarian organizations during Covid-19. The model for studying Hofstede's cultural practices, adapted by Sonya Karabelova for the Bulgarian socio-cultural context, is applied, where the dominant cultural practices in the dimensions "distance to power", "individualism-collectivism", "avoidance of uncertainty" are analyzed. Cameron and Quinn's OCAI was also used to study value preferences for the type of culture: hierarchical, adhocratic, market, clan. The data were processed in SPSS var. 21 and for the analysis regression was applied. The results show significant variations in the dimensions of the studied cultural practices and dominant value preferences for the clan type of culture, followed by the hierarchical, market and adhocratic ones.

Keywords: organizational culture, cultural practices, Bulgarian organizations, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern risk society, when crises of different nature become an integral part of its functioning, the analysis and assessment of the capacity of the institutions involved in the processes of their resolution are especially relevant. The organizations themselves are embodied in a given cultural context. But they, in turn, develop the specific socio-cultural characteristics that sharply distinguish them from each other. This paradigm views the organization as a system composed of interconnected subsystems, such as structure, technology, leadership styles, goals and values. Symbols, myths, stories and rituals are seen as processes that create and form a meaning that is fundamental to the existence of the organization. The organization is only the basis for the symbiotic relationships and meanings that are maintained in the process of long-term interactions between people (Ilieva, 2006). Organizational culture is seen as an important factor in organizational behaviour, determining individual and group understanding of life in the organization, a set of assumptions, beliefs, values and norms that are shared by all members, and is formed over time. "The idea of organizational culture has an abstract character, because it cannot be seen or touched, but is present and spread everywhere and affects everything that happens in the organization - a dynamic systemic concept, culture affects virtually all events in the organization." (Karabelova, 2012) The environment is understood as a generalized concept of the whole set of various conditions that affect the activities of the organization, or with which the organization must comply, for example, global, regional, national and local, economic, social, demographic, political or others. The intersections between crisis and culture are precisely the values professed. In this way, values ensure the direction of human activity, including the choices people make about their work. The crisis is a global phenomenon that threatens the basic values, interests and goals of social organization, and poses a threat to human life, health and property. Culture is formed around critical incidents. One of the ways is on the occasion of significant events, from the lessons of which the desirable and undesirable behaviour is learned. The dominant value orientation varies greatly according to the context. X. Hofstede (Hofstede, 2005) further develops these ideas and believes that organizational culture can be defined as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another. Cultural differences in organizations can be found not only in value preferences but especially in applied cultural practices. Therefore, the interest in the present study is focused on establishing the effects of value preferences for cultural practices in Bulgarian organizations during Covid -19.

The empirical part of the present study assumes that a set of factors belonging to the organizational environment influence the individuals functioning in it and thus determine their behavioural manifestations. Such a hypothesis is based on the understanding that culture is a two-way process of interaction, in the course of which changes take place both in the individual's perceptions of the environment and changes in the environment itself and in particular in dominant cultural practices, norms, rules and values. Consequently, it is expected that value orientations (cultural types) will have an impact on cultural practices as an environmental factor.

AIM AND METHODS

The study used the variant adapted by S. Karabelova (Karabelova, 2011), in which the items are evaluated with a five-point Likert rating scale. Answer options range from "fully compliant" to "not compliant at all." The methodology includes 24 statements, divided into four scales, each of which contains six items. The study of the psychometric characteristics of the used questionnaire registered high indicators in its adaptation in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context (2000-2003), respectively on six statements:

Clan culture - the item analysis shows that this scale has a high internal consistency - $\alpha = 0.868$, and the correlation coefficient of each item with the whole scale varies from $R = 0.326$ to $R = 0.748$.

Adhocratic type of culture - concerning this dimension the highest coefficient of reliability is registered - $\alpha = 0.892$, and the correlation of the items varies from $R = 0.618$ to $R = 0.773$.

Market type of culture - also has a high internal homogeneity - $\alpha = 0.907$, and the correlation coefficient between the items is in the range from $R = 0.613$ to $R = 0.832$.

A lower coefficient of reliability is established for the hierarchical type of culture - $\alpha = 0.815$. The correlation varies from $R = 0.413$ to $R = 0.699$.

For the research, a specially created S. Karabelova questionnaire was used to measure the usual cultural practices in the organization, based on the questionnaire of G. Hofstede about the cultural dimensions. It contains 17 pairs of opposing statements located at both ends of a scale from "1" to "5". Based on the expert assessment, the following scales are differentiated:

Power distance - the degree to which inequality in the organization is taken for granted, with issues dominated by practices supporting short distance to power, decisions are made with the participation of employees, and changes are introduced after consultation. In organizations where dominant practices support the great distance to power, the style of government is directive and authoritarian.

Individualism versus collectivism (task orientation versus relationship orientation) - the degree to which people are encouraged primarily to achieve their individual goals or to achieve team goals first.

- Avoiding insecurity - the degree to which people feel safe or threatened at work; strict adherence to procedures is more important than results and their achievement.

103 people from two Bulgarian organizations are covered - 51 employees from a private organization and 52 from a state organization. Data was processed with SPSS-21.

RESEARCH RESULTS

According to S. In Karabelova's research, the Bulgarian conditions are characterized by the support of the great power distance, the dominance of individualistic values and the avoidance of uncertainty with a short-term orientation. These dimensions differentiate the socio-psychological features of the usual cultural practices depending on the authority of the leader, the interests of the individual against the interests of the group and the search for clearly defined structures and rules in the organization. "Control is a way to ensure the normal and the regular" (Petkova, I., Kiryakov, Z., Dimitrov, G. 2019) and its non-observance is perceived as an encroachment on the order, especially in times of crisis like Covid-19.

To study the effects of value preferences for the type of culture on cultural practices, regression analysis was used, as in the regression equation constructed for the whole population, the dependent variable is "cultural practices" and independent variables are the studied value preferences for the type of culture. The figure presents the obtained significant data, showing the standardized beta coefficients (β) of the variables that are part of the regression equation and the refined coefficients of explained variation (R^2).

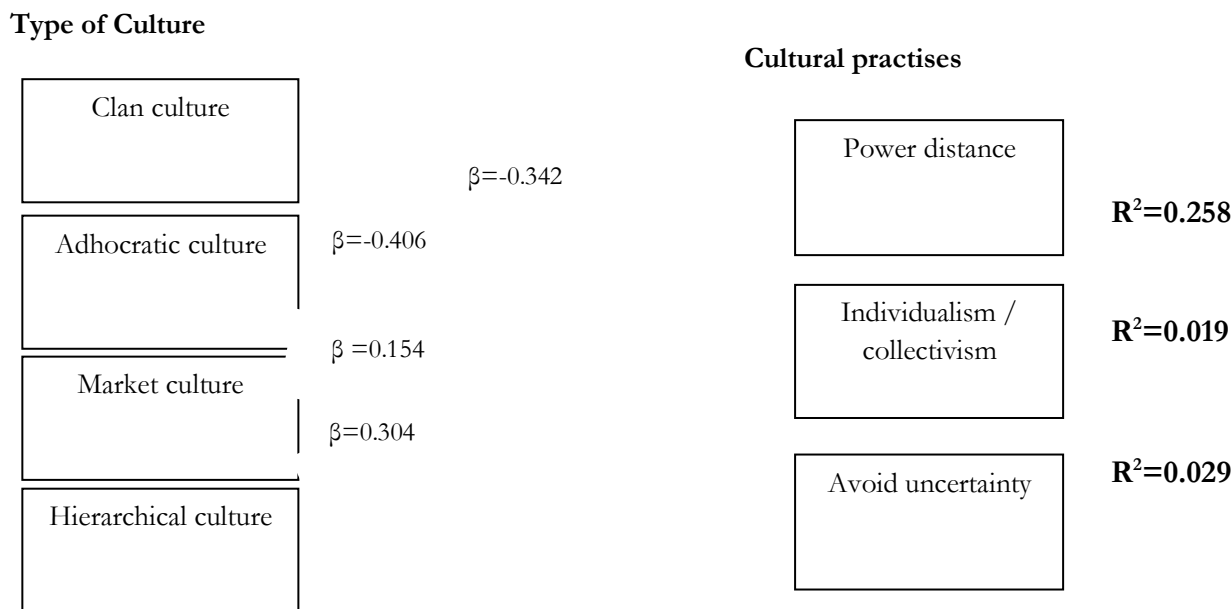


Figure 1. Effects of value preferences/type of culture / on cultural practices

Cultural practices under the Distance to Power dimension are strongly influenced by the value preferences supporting clan culture ($\beta = -0.330$) and adhocratic culture ($\beta = -0.406$). The precision coefficient of determination is $R^2 = 0.258$, which means that the value orientations that form the organizational culture explain 26% of the cultural practices professed in the organization. The values that make up the clan type of culture $\beta = (-0.342)$ have a significant impact on cultural practices in the dimension "Individualism/collectivism". The values supporting the hierarchical type of culture ($\beta = 0.304$) also have a significant influence on this dimension. The precise coefficient of a determination here is $R^2 = 0.019$.

Cultural practices under the "Avoiding Uncertainty" dimension are mainly influenced by value preferences for the market type of culture ($\beta = 0.154$), although not so statistically significant and strong, an impact is still reported. The specified coefficient of determination is $R^2 = 0.029$

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The study shows that in the surveyed organizations there is a strong internal orientation during Kovid 19, the dominant values are teamwork, empathy, loyalty, affection and willingness to participate, appreciating the structured work environment, specific procedures, stability, predictability, efficiency.

Regarding the usual cultural practices, it was found that in the surveyed organizations there is a small distance of power and a strong preference for individualistic practices and values, and a strong avoidance of insecurity is reported. This means that employees are perceived as initially equal and do not feel anxious to consult with management, and conversely, management seeks advice from employees in making decisions that affect them. Workers have a desire for self-expression, but are not open to change and innovation, due to the perception of change as a stress factor.

Regarding the effects of value preferences on the type of culture, a strong negative influence of the values supporting the clan and the adhocratic type on the cultural practices with a focus on great power distance, ie striving for flexibility and freedom of action. People in organizations with common cultural practices with strong uncertainty avoidance prefer specific detailed goals and the many clear rules set by competent leaders. This is a way to avoid anxiety and stress. These situations are also characterized by conservatism and resistance to innovation. Conversely, for the weak avoidance of unpredictability - changes are perceived as a normal feature of life, it is also socially unacceptable to show emotions and there is no need for many formal rules, but those that exist are largely observed. Extensive assignments and freedom in time, original ideas and behaviours are valued. It was found that cultural practices outline the socio-psychological features that allow the application of consensus management in decision-making for change.

Dominant values are predominantly individualistic, which means that people are encouraged first to achieve their individual goals and then to achieve the goals of the team, without compromising the effectiveness of the organization. Job security is expressed in a framework of few rules to follow but also respect for hierarchical status - thus avoiding uncertainty and uncertainty. The view that leadership does not hinder initiative and innovation is supported. On the other hand, this shows correspondence with the opinion of the leader and high motivation of people to perform tasks and take responsibility, without depriving the leader of the opportunity to guide the processes in the organization. Collectivist cultural practices and related human behaviour are also supported. Typical for the individualistic perception of the achievements is the result for the distribution of the prizes - they are determined based on individual achievements. According to the study, individualistic values are the basis of success. The hypothesis was partially confirmed in terms of the significant influence of clan culture, ie.

Desirability to support a predominantly benevolent-authoritarian style of crisis management, characterized by strict adherence to hierarchy subordination, a strong need for a structured environment and clear rules.

The obtained results largely reflect the dominant cultural practices in Bulgarian conditions, namely the orientation towards stability and control, towards strict observance of formal rules and procedures.

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