

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL WATER COMPANY IN SAUDI ARABIA

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#### Abstract

Organisational culture is the collection of beliefs, shared values and norms that affect the way executives and employees feel, think and perform in the workplace. A proper understanding of the organizational culture takes exploration of the beliefs of the employees and assessment of the values upheld by the organisation's leaders. This study is focused on assessing the impacts of organizational culture to performance management of employees in National Water Company (NWC) in Saudi Arabia. The study utilized Hofstede's cultural dimensions to analyse the culture of NWC. Random sampling was conducted to select the employees through workplace identification numbers. A survey questionnaire written in Arabic was distributed randomly to 500 people from all levels of the organization as represented by hierarchical ranking. The survey was distributed to top management (approximately 20 questionnaires), middle management (approximately 100 questionnaires) and bottom management (approximately 380 questionnaires). The findings indicate that the NWC's standards and qualities have a solid effect on its employees. This study can be a helpful tool for NWC in creating strategies to achieve overall growth. The limitation of this study is that research has been carried out without considering the effects of change management on the NWC in Saudi Arabia.

**Key Words:** organizational culture, performance management, Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding organizational culture is a key to effective leadership that results to significant impacts on performance management of employees. Organisational culture is comprised of beliefs, shared values and assumptions about how employees should behave and interact among themselves, and effective procedures to make decisions and carry out work-based activities. It is essentially composed of two core factors: beliefs and values. Beliefs are the aspects of created expectation and reality [1]. On the other hand, values are the aspects presented by leaders and executives of the organisation as the ideal qualities to which people in the group should aspire [2]. Hence, understanding an organisation's culture incorporates taking a deeper look on employees' beliefs particularly on those that can possibly influence their performance in the company at the same time, it includes exploring the values held by the leaders in a company. Managers and leaders should be able to implement proper strategies and achieve organisational goals by having a thorough understanding of its culture [3]. Strategies that do not map with organisational culture are extremely difficult, or even impossible, to implement. On the one hand, Zhu, et al [4] affirmed that organisational culture may provide a means by which employees feel, learn and set the principles, norms, patterns and behavioural expectations, and promote a maximum level of accomplishment.

Seeing these both sides help the organization as a whole to create strategies that will contribute to achieving their goals primarily to empower leaders by taking a good consideration of their employees, which can result to higher productivity. The increasing interest in the study of organisational culture is due to a greater understanding of its potential to help achieve overall growth and deliver benefits to all stakeholders. The keen interest of many companies in developing, sharing, identifying and using knowledge in a more systematic way will help enhance and increase the performance of the entire organisation. Thus, this study aimed to discover how and why organisational culture is linked to performance and to use the findings to offer strategic advice to NWC managers and leaders.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is the collection of beliefs, shared values and norms that affect the way executives and employees feel, think and perform in the workplace [5]. Organisational culture is divided into four main functions: increasing commitment; providing a sense of identity to members; reinforcing organisational beliefs; and controlling mutual behaviour [6]. Moreover, organisational culture may provide a means by which employees feel, learn and set the principles, norms, patterns and behavioural expectations, and promote a maximum level of accomplishment [4].

Organisational culture is essentially composed of two core factors: beliefs and values. Beliefs are the aspects of created expectation and reality [1]. Conversely, values are the aspects presented by leaders and executives of the organisation as the ideal qualities to which people in the group should aspire [2]. Organisational culture can dictate the success of the company. Put simply, the best organisations are renowned for their corporate culture and organisational practices [2]. Further, every organisation has practices that have powerful effects on employees and management teams [5].

Studies on organisational behaviour in Saudi Arabia have found that several disruptions have hindered the improvement of organisations' performance. In the 1970s and 1980s, organisational culture was not very horizontal, which resulted in centralised decision-making. However, this has changed over the last few decades and organisations have begun implementing several techniques to improve organisational performance by empowering employees. The impact of these improvement techniques has resulted in substantial business growth across industries, which has brought them closer to the performance of their western counterparts.

## Saudi's Organisational Culture Interface

Managers and supervisors in the Middle East, of which Saudi Arabia is a major part, face the daunting task of improving the performance of their organisations. The greatest of their challenges are the issues related to culture and various practices at work. These factors hinder employee performance standards [7]. Saudi upbringings encourage the pursuit of a rewarding position in a company rather than professional excellence. This is because many Saudi people were raised in luxury and have observed their parents receive high salaries while holding respectable positions. Hence, in Saudi culture, labour category jobs are considered demeaning and demotivating [8].

At times, Saudi managers cannot give honest and proper feedback to subordinates since that might be deemed unfriendly or demeaning [9]. The social constructs in Arab culture are such that sharing honest reviews might hurt the ego of an individual. Hence, it is customary to share feedback via a third party to avoid miscommunication. In Arab culture, working in groups is highly valued. Thus, individual contribution is seldom recognised.

In Islamic culture, the manager is supposed to make all decisions for the organisation. They are also expected to act as the leading figure in the organisation. Since decision-making onus is on the managers only, they often find it difficult to engage employees in the decision-making process [10]. This is highly detrimental to the organisation because only managers participate in determining future direction. This creates a vertical organisational structure, which often leads to bureaucracy because the decision-making power is centralised in the hands of a few individuals [11].

Saudi organisations have better control over their employees and these kinds of superstitions are not encouraged as part of their organisational culture. However, the bigger problem is not the belief of the people but the misdirected portrayal of the teachings of Islam. While teaching that everything is within the control of God, Islam also teaches that an individual can make his or her life better through their own efforts. These misinterpretations of the teachings of Islam have an unavoidable impact on the organisational culture of the country, which affects the accountability of the individuals running the business [12].

Current research has developed cultural frameworks that analyse and describe cultures at various value scopes within the society and nation [13]. This study used Hofstede's framework, which means cultural norms give fondness or preference for certain behaviour over another.

### Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede defined national culture as the gathered programming of the mind, which effectively differentiates members of certain category or group of people from others. The national culture model developed by Hofstede consists of six different dimensions and these include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence, long-term orientation, masculinity, and individualism.

Power distance is one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions that refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of the society accept and expect that power in institutions and other organisations is distributed unequally [14], [15], [16]. People who are in the lower status in lower power distance have faith that they should be involved in decision-making and lose motivation if they are not included in the process [17], [18]. The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance, has been defined as 'the extent to which individuals feel threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations' [14], [15], [16], [19]. Uncertainty avoidance culture tries to limit such situations by installing rules, security measures and safety [18]. This estimation indicates how much people from an overall population feel uncomfortable with helplessness and lack of clarity. The third dimension, individualism and collectivism, supposedly indicates the tendency to which people are integrated into groups, thus, revealing whether the society is individualistic or collective [14], [15], [16], [19]. In individualistic societies, every individual is expected to look after themselves and their families. Conversely, in the collectivistic approach, people are engaged and integrated into strong groups since birth, which

sometimes extends to families [20]. Femininity and masculinity is the fourth cultural dimension; it refers to gender role distribution in society [14], [20], [21]. Time orientation (i.e. short and long terms) represents the extent to which members of a culture are cognitively programmed to accept delayed gratification of material, social and emotional needs [22]. Social interactions that score low on this estimation (e.g., maintaining time-honoured traditions) view societal change with uncertainty. Those with a culture that scores highly demonstrate a more rational technique; they engage thrift and follow guidelines to prepare for the future. In the business setting, this estimation is referred to as regularising (short term) versus serious (whole deal).

### **Impact of Organisational Culture to Performance Management**

Organisational culture has been defined in different and varied ways, but there are a few common aspects [23]. The differences in the approaches taken to define organisational culture are due to the unique influences that have affected the person defining the term. The social implications that affect organisational settings are largely drawn from culture and are very strong [24]. This is because they operate outside our awareness. Failure to recognise the operation of these forces can have consequences [25]. There is value in understanding organisational culture because it can explain a great deal of negative situations that can arise in the workplace [26].

The key principles of organisational culture include virtues such as collective attitudes, values, traditions and the discipline to adhere to the rules and routines of the organisation [27]. Organisational culture influences the firm's efficiency and output, and offers strategies on consumer care, product worthiness, turnout and reliability, and care for environment [25]. In addition, it extends further to production methods, advertising and marketing practices [24]. However, organisational culture remains unique in most organisations and under difficult circumstances, can be abandoned [28]. Organisational culture is a technical phenomenon, noticeable in behavioural customs, unknown assumptions and human character [26], [29]. The broader elements of organisational culture, specifically hypotheses, principles and human character, are almost impossible and laborious to create [30].

Performance management, as a sub-set of human resources management functions, places more emphasis on employee support to enable personal and organisational success [31]. Traditionally, organisations relied on age-old authority and control models to elucidate the preferred level of achievement from employees. However, contemporary performance management practices changed such beliefs by considering people as assets. People are the core drivers of future business growth [32]. This evidently structured the human resources development dimension of performance management, moulding it into a long-term strategic function of management [31].

It is a strategic tool, as improvement of individual performance helps a business achieve its objectives. Further, effective performance management focuses on the continuous development of human resources, which gives an organisation a competitive edge over rivals [33]. It assists with attaining business goals but is also important in aligning employee development with long-term organisational goals [34]. These factors position performance management as a critical tool in human resource development.

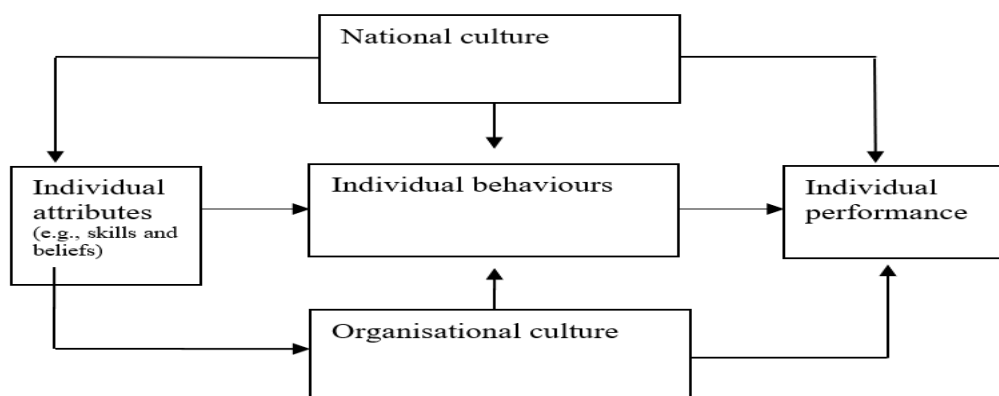
The increasing interest in the study of organisational culture is due to a greater understanding of its potential to help achieve overall growth and deliver benefits to all stakeholders. The keen interest of many companies in developing, sharing, identifying and using knowledge in a more systematic way will help enhance and increase the performance of the entire organisation.

This research used Hofstede's dimensions because his work has involved the most comprehensive study of cultural differences, and his five dimensions are the most widely accepted [35]. Therefore, Hofstede's model has validity and credibility [35], [36]. Further, it provides the most in-depth

measure of national culture [35], [37].

In addition, Hofstede's dimensions have been widely used because the model's cultural features fully include and elaborate on significant concepts. In relation to cultures that have been developed throughout the ages, Hofstede's model was experimentally developed, while others still are at the conceptualisation stage. Further, Hofstede's model has had a great influence on the social sciences and cross-cultural studies. Consequently, it has been praised as the most important and useful model used in cultural theory [38].

Figure 1 provided a well-defined organisational model developed for performance management. As can be seen, the culture of one's nation is evident in the individual's attributes such as skills and beliefs. These explain the behavior of individuals that contribute to one's performance in the workplace. At the same time, each individual's characteristics contribute to the culture of an organization. These primarily make an organization different from the others because it is made up of individuals who differ in upbringing, beliefs, and skills. The culture of an organization is a crucial factor in its performance. Cascio [39] asserted that performance is measured by how an employee contributes to achieving its mission. In this study, it sought to determine the impacts of culture of a National Water Company in Saudi Arabia on performance management. This was specifically done by looking at Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which included power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, and long-term orientation.



**FIGURE 1. ORGANISATIONAL MODEL OF CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ADAPTED FROM RAYMOND ET AL.'S [40] MODEL OF PERFORMANCE**

### III. METHODOLOGY

The case study is conducted at the NWC in Saudi Arabia. The data collection method utilised in this research was survey questionnaires in three branches of the NWC (Riyadh, Jeddah and Mecca). The questionnaires have been distributed to 500 employees of varying positions and levels of authority, such as top management (approximately 20 questionnaires), middle management (approximately 100 questionnaires) and bottom management (approximately 380 questionnaires). This distribution reflects the organisational structure of NWC.

A sample was selected using identification numbers. Sample characteristics were selected according to demographic variables (age, years of experience, position and education) and research variables (organisational culture, national cultures and performance).

The researcher used a questionnaire as a data collection tool in this study. The information needed included the aspects that determine the organisation's culture such as values, beliefs, rituals, symbols and the style of operation among employees. Further, the researcher needed to identify factors that

affect organisational culture. In this case, these factors were the organisation's management style, objectives, belief system and style of operation. The five-point Likert scale was used to answer closed-ended question, where (1) represents 'strongly agree' and (5) represents 'strongly disagree'. The questionnaires will be written in Arabic because it is the local language of Saudi Arabia.

The computer program SPSS was employed to analyse the respondents' answers. All data was coded to ensure a high level of data organisation, avoid any confusion, identify all themes and generally make the analysis process simpler. along with the main dimensions. Pearson correlation coefficient is used to examine the relationship between organisational culture and performance management.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Demographic profile of respondents

This study is focused on the assessment of the effectiveness of the performance management model used at the National Water Company (NWC) in Saudi Arabia. This section summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the performance model used at the NWC, and the impact of the organizational culture on employees' performance.

The study covered a total of 261 employees from the National Water Company (NWC) in Saudi Arabia. Majority of the population (57%) were from Riyadh while 24% were from Jeddah, and 19% were from Macca. In terms of gender, 213 of the respondents were male comprising 82% of the study sample. Females gave account for 13% of the respondents while the no response was recorded from the remaining 13 individuals. Majority of the respondents (27%) were aged between 30 and 34 years old. Sixty-one individuals (24%) belonged to age group of 25 to 29 years old, comprising the second most dominant age group among the respondents. Only five participants (2%) were between 59 to 60 years old. In terms of job levels, 56 individuals (22%) were academically trained professionals (but not managers), 21% of the respondents managed one or more subordinates (non-managers), 19% of them were generally trained office workers or secretaries. Thirty-four respondents (13%) were managers of one or more managers, 32 respondents (13%) were vocationally trained craftspeople, technicians, information technology specialists, nurses, artists or equivalent. In sixth place, 20 individuals (7%) were unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers and finally, 12 participants (5%) had no paid job since they included full-time students. Majority of the respondents (80%) were Saudis. Three respondents were Palestinians and another three were Eritrean. One percent of the respondents were Tunisian. In terms of positions in the company, 31 individuals, comprising 12% of the respondents, were managers or directors. Fourteen percent were technical staffs while 24% were support staffs. Finally, 131 individuals (50% of the respondents) were executives.

##### Performance management model at NWC

In assessing the effectiveness of the model of performance management at the NWC, it determined the impacts of managerial qualities on the company's performance. Managers were asked whether they avoided social interaction with employees. The results show that most individuals agreed to the separation of work and social interaction. In this case, the managers and the NWC merely implement the company's decisions and pursue management objectives without necessarily caring about employees' personal difficulties, issues and other predicaments that may influence their performance. The second question investigated the willingness of managers to delegate roles to their subordinates. The results indicate that managers and employees did not believe difficult tasks should be shared. It shows that managers are unwilling to delegate difficult and sensitive tasks since they are not confident about workers' performance, skills and competencies. This may imply that the organization does not nurture employees' growth and collaboration. The third question investigated whether employees are recognised for their good performance and it was found out that the respondents strongly agreed with the study question. Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation should be used to ensure that employees are satisfied. Recognising workers' contributions to the success of an

organisation creates satisfaction among employees and motivates them to invest additional effort. Conversely, employee recognition is greatly influenced by organisational culture and power distance. As power distance increases, employees' efforts are barely recognised and incidences of motivation and recognition are rare. When asked if managers should make decisions without consulting subordinates, the respondents disagreed with this statement. The results are consistent with most literature regarding management, leadership and employee motivation demonstrating the great moderating role of power distances and organizational culture. There is a growing need for employees and managers to interact during the decision-making process. Lastly, the respondents strongly agreed that managers have to clarify authority trends and functional tasks. These findings correspond to the study of Awadh and Saad in 2013 [41], which concluded that managers and leaders help in improving the level of the organization's performance because they serve as the foundation of a strong culture. Their recommendation can also be helpful to the NWC that as the managers see how the organization's performance is linked to its culture, they can function well in order to provide competitive advantage to firms.

Uncertainty avoidance is one of Hofstede's dimensions for determining the culture of a firm. It measures the extent to which members feel uncomfortable and comfortable in dealing with unplanned events. Phrase 4 ranked first, with most respondents strongly agreeing (4.29 out of five) that it is important for work conditions to be detailed so that staff is fully informed. The fact that most respondents want clear definitions of their duties indicates a high level of uncertainty. The results are consistent with Saudi Arabia's current uncertainty avoidance index rank of 68. This high index means that most employees would like to follow orders rather than take initiatives and risks to perform duties in a different manner. The second ranked phrase was that managers expect staff to pursue instructions and procedures as stipulated. Most respondents strongly agreed with this statement and this indicates that most respondents agreed with this fact that suggests a high uncertainty index. This indicates that managers do not trust employees to develop or use new methods to serve their customers indicating a high uncertainty avoidance among employees. This research indicates that the NWC has a high uncertainty avoidance index and this may result in low-level quality and customer satisfaction. The third ranked phrase related to job security. Respondents agreed with this statement, with an average of 3.74 out of five. The results indicate that employees agree by a small margin that the NWC offers job security. The fifth phrase investigated whether employees had healthy interactions within the company. Most respondents agreed that there was significant interaction at their workplace. A good culture promotes interaction between employees and employers and this reduces the power distance. Reduced power distance leads to a low uncertainty index and this is imperative in encouraging employee interaction. Phrase 1, which investigated whether employees felt danger, nervousness or tension about losing a job, ranked last. The risk of losing a job increases uncertainty avoidance risks because most employees perform as expected without deviation due to job loss fears [42]. These validate the findings of Inanlou and Ahn in 2017 where organizational culture was a critical factor to increase workers' motivation. The study also relates power distance to uncertainty index thus, affecting the performance. Inanlou and Ahn [43] pointed out that a better communication among superiors and subordinates positively affects organizational commitment. Hence, they emphasized the significance of human resource development which can act as the mediator between organizational culture and organizational commitment. This can also be adopted by the NWC in strengthening the commitment of its people to enhance the company's performance.

The next set of questions investigated the aspects of individualism and collectivism and their impacts on organisational culture. These two aspects affect the relationship between an individual and a group. From the respondents' answers, the employees strongly agreed that they should consider group objectives as opposed to individual goals. The results from the first phrase indicate that most

employees and managers at the NWC encourage teamwork and group-based initiatives rather than individual activities. The second phrase investigated whether employees were inclined to group success as opposed to individual success. Again, respondents agreed with the statement, with a score of 3.72 out of five. The results indicate that the NWC employees undertake group tasks as opposed to individual tasks because this symbolises a good organisational culture. The third ranked phrase asked the respondents whether NWC encouraged employees to work in groups. The score recorded was 3.52 out of five. This indicates that most company employees would like to cooperate with each other to achieve set goals. This is a reflection on the need for a healthy and productive culture in an organisation. Phrase 5 investigated if employees would regard personal rewards as important to group welfare. Contrary to the other phrases where employees pledged to work together, employees were unclear on shared rewards. Felfe et al [44] also found a positive impact in the organization brought by collectivism. The results of his study indicate that collectivism as a culture value orientation is related to commitment, where collectivistic countries portray higher commitment that led to better outcomes. It also corresponds to the findings of Wagner et al. [45] where they concluded that greater team member collectivism is associated with higher levels of individual-level performance in teams.

In terms of masculinity and femininity, the first ranked phrase asked the respondents if there were jobs that the masculine gender would perform better than their feminine counterparts. The respondents agreed that men had specific roles in which they would outperform women. The next phrase asked employees if meetings were more effective when chaired by men. The respondents agreed with this concept, with a score of 3.74 out of five. This indicates that the NWC has not embraced a culture of equality among the genders. The next question investigated whether men were more preferred for high-level positions than women. The results imply that the NWC culture has not attained gender equality in the divisions of roles. Women at the NWC are likely to encounter the glass ceiling and face more challenges in their quest to advance to higher management than men are. The next phrase asked whether men are encouraged to suggest ideas more than women are and the respondents gave a neutral score. Finally, the last question investigated whether women value promotion. This also had a neutral score. These two results indicate that the NWC culture does not support women's growth and equality. The last two results indicate that most employees are eager to earn promotions at their workplace. Research indicates that good organisational culture encourages employee participation, appraisal, promotion and motivation. Therefore, NWC should adopt a better culture that promotes gender equality and promotion. The same observations were made by Cundiff et al. [46] in 2010 where they determined that Saudi males portrayed very traditional attitudes towards working females. This applied to those who were relatively older males since age was considered to be the most important predictor of males' attitudes towards women.

In analysing the long-term orientation of NWC employees, the results show that most employees regarded NWC as having a healthy environment and were keen to further develop their career within the organisation. Good corporate culture promotes employee empowerment and positive appraisals, which contributes to lower turnover. Similarly, Brauer [47] attested that short-term orientated individuals created negative impacts on medium-term performance while long-term orientated behavior produced positive impacts on corporate performance in the medium term.

Lastly, elements of performance management were investigated using nine phrases. The two phrases that were ranked highest involved extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. These questions investigated whether motivation using financial benefits and other forms of incentive was able to increase performance. Workers strongly agreed with these statements. Motivation is one of the key methods of ensuring that workers perform optimally. There are two main forms: extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators involve cash and other financial rewards offered to employees. These had the highest ranking, meaning money is the most preferred motivator at the NWC. Phrase 3



asked whether strategies and rules affected the performance of employees. The results indicate that most employees believe they do have an effect. The development of rules is important in guiding workers and this increases performance. Phrase 4 asked whether employees are encouraged to strive for a strong performance. The respondents agreed with these statements. Good corporate culture motivates employees to work hard and achieve organisational goals. Phrase 6 investigated if customs and traditions affect the performance of employees. The results suggest that respondents believe this variable does have an impact. This is consistent with previous studies that document the influence of religion, culture and tradition on career choice, performance and growth. Phrase 5 investigated if customs influenced the standard of employee performance in companies. The results showed that most employees agreed with these statements. Finally, Phrase 7 indicated that rewards and promotion systems at the NWC were not effective and most employees sought improvements. Likewise, Abbas and Saad [48] also found a positive relationship between organizational culture and job performance in Saudi Arabian public sector work culture. This was determined by looking closely on the four organizational culture sub-elements such as managing change, achieving goals, coordinating teamwork, and cultural strength. These were basically almost the same with the phrases assessed in this study.

### **Impact of Organisational Culture on Employee Performance**

As seen in Table 1, there is a statistically significant direct correlation between performance management and organisational culture at a significance level of 0.461. Further, there is a high correlation between power distance and performance management and a mid-direct correlation between performance management and uncertainty avoidance. Conversely, individualism and collectivism and performance management have the same correlation. Femininity and masculinity also have a mid-direct correlation. Finally, long-term orientation has the same correlation.

**TABLE 1. CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE DIMENSIONS**

	Performance management
Power distance	. 561**
Uncertainty avoidance	. 375**
Individualism and collectivism	. 446**
Femininity and masculinity	. 404**
Long-term orientation	. 306**

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The culture of an organization has a vital role to play in the performance of its employees. A proper understanding of organisational culture is essential to effective leadership which in turn creates impacts on the performance management of employees. This study can assist the National Water Company in Saudi Arabia in evaluating its performance by taking a deeper look on the individuals' beliefs, values, and traditions, that define the culture of the organisation.

As stated by Dirani [25], one of the reasons why social implications that affect organisational settings are very strong is that they operate outside people's awareness. Furthermore, failure to recognise the

operation of these forces create consequences. Thus, understanding organisation culture can also contribute in dealing with negative situations that take place in the company.

Aside from identifying the company's culture through looking into its employees' culture, beliefs, and traditions, the study has also come up with recommended strategies to further improve its performance management. Performance management programs need to identify and recognise employees' achievements and accomplishments as part of performance reviews. Given the findings that there is a general high level of power distance, it is urged that the human resources management must commit to continual efforts to improve productivity and ensure a flexible and adaptable workforce. This can be achieved through training and advancement programs.

It is important to nurture an environment that encourages development and career advancement. It is also suggested that in order to remain responsive in a dynamic and competitive environment, performance management processes should remain flexible. This is through identifying more suitable procedures that work better for each individual to enhance one's efficiency. Eventually, this can contribute to significant development of the company in terms of employees' satisfaction and efficient and excellent output.

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