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The Evolution of the Organizational Culture:
A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT:

This article provides a systematic literature review (SLR) on Organizational Culture. Our objective was to delineate the progression of these topics over the last 125 years, providing a substantial enhancement above a conventional bibliographic study. This systematic literature review (SLR) surpasses traditional literature reviews (TLR) by offering a comprehensive overview of the subject matter across decades. TLR showcases the most relevant or recent articles rather than their progression. A total of 2,500 records of scientific publications were amassed from four distinct databases using keyword searches, yielding 2,300 articles (200 exclusions) with an aggregate of 1,801,726 citations, excluding patents. We performed a bibliometric study with these data. The number of citations about organizational culture has risen ninefold in the last 50 years and is anticipated to double in the coming decades. Our data also reveal patterns in research investigations and the regional distribution of scholarly contributions. Additionally, our work presents implications and suggestions for future research in this domain.

Keywords:

Organizational Culture; Evolution; Systematic Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational Culture can be defined in many ways. Schein (2009) defined group culture as "its accumulated and shared learning, as this group solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has proven sufficiently effective to be deemed valid" (p.5). Organizational culture is also studied as rituals and formal celebrations (Deal & Kennedy, 1982); publicly articulated values (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014); identity and self-perception (Hatch & Schultz, 2004); formal philosophy (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014; Ouchi, 1981); group standards (Homans, 1958, 2017; Kilmann & Saxton, 1983); symbols of integration (Morgan & Frost, 1983); and shared meanings (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

This article examines the progression of this study domain, thoroughly examining many databases according to stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria, outlining the subject matter and its development over the last 125 years (1900-2025). The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) facilitates the identification of prominent authors in the study domain and patterns in publications and citations over a specific timeframe, as Hart (2018) noted. We may articulate essential ideas in the literature review summary upon examining the data. In this section, we present the SLR strategy, adopting the approach recommended by Goyal and Kumar (2020), Denyer &Tranfield (2009), Singh and Walia (2020), Hart (2018); Cheng et al. (2018); Prashar et al. (2020) which are introduced in the following sections. The choice was made based on how widely accepted it was in bibliometric analyses. SLR has attracted recent research (Dias, Vivanco, & Teixeira, 2024; Schmitz & Dias, 2023; Teixeira et al., 2024; Dias et al., 2023, 2023a, 2023b; Dias et al., 2022), including other fields or subfields of study such as (a) large corporations (Manral, 2016; Levitt, 2014); (b) Internet banking (Smith & Anderson, 2024), for instance.

Despite its relevance to the current epistemology, some relevant aspects still need to be clarified through the following questions: Q1: How has Organizational Culture been cited in the last 125 years? Q2: What is the geographical distribution and development of the theme? Q3: How did the publications behave in relation to these themes in the timeline—what were the gaps and how were they answered in each period?

2. Research Design

This study used a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology outlined by Denyer and Tranfield (2009). The selection was subsequently based on its extensive acceptability in bibliometric assessments (Cheng et al., 2018; Prashar et al., 2020; Singh & Walia, 2020). The research is further discussed in the following subsections.

2.1. Objectives

The primary goal is to chart knowledge development on the above-stated topics during the last 125 years, 1900–2025. We examined scholarly articles and citations, omitting patents in line with Goyal and Kumar (2020). In addition, the objectives of the study are organized into sub-objectives following the model of Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa (2020), which included (a)

mapping the top publications on the topics and (b) identifying important research papers using citation network and text network analysis to present new trends in the field. Finally, Table 1 summarizes the objectives of the review, including publications and citations of both topics cited, in accordance with the general research objectives, as follows:

Table 1. Research objectives and preliminary results.

Objectives Total	Research	
	Publications	Citations
Organizational Culture Total	2,300	1,801,026

Source: database.

2.2. Search Strategy

Table 1 lists 2,300 articles among 1,801,026 citations identified by the thorough literature analysis. The survey coverage between 1900 and 2025 was examined using the Publish or Perish program (Harzing, 2007) version 8.0. Since most of the current publications are in English, the study used words in English and Portuguese to provide the issues with breadth and depth.The application of the above-mentioned criteria resulted in the following research databases: Google Scholar; Crossref; Scopus, and Semantic Scholar. The inclusion/exclusion criteria are summarized below:

2.2.1. Inclusion Criteria

A comprehensive search was conducted in (a) English and (b) Portuguese languages, covering (c) publications from 1900 to 2025. The search was performed across (d) reputable databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, Crossref, and Semantic Scholar, which are highly relevant to the academic environment. The search was (e) limited to articles, excluding patents, to focus on scholarly publications that contribute to the academic discourse.

2.2.2. Exclusion Criteria

Publications were excluded from the systematic review based on the following criteria: (a) invalid entries, (b) duplicates, (c) patents, and (d) irrelevant publications. Invalid entries included (e) non-research articles, (f) publications not in English or Portuguese, (g) unavailable full texts, and those (h) outside the 1900-2025 timeframe. Duplicates comprised identical or substantially similar articles. Irrelevant publications were those unrelated to transformational leadership and motivation in technology companies, lacking empirical research results, or being purely theoretical/conceptual without practical application. These criteria were rigorously and transparently applied to ensure the quality and relevance of the included publications.

Using a text network analysis after the initial round of searches, the most relevant developing themes were identified; these themes provided keyword inputs in the next iteration cycle. Next, the data underwent content analysis and a text network. Google My Maps® lets us additionally investigate the new trends geographically. The process of screening and choosing will be covered at great length.

2.3. Screening and Selection Process

The search included 2,500 articles on Organizational Culture, of which 200 were deleted after visual consultation due to duplicates and invalid entries. Table 2 shows the total number of citations and publications for Organizational Culture:

Table 2. Organizational Culture results.

Database	Product centric	
	Publications	Citations
Google Scholar	100	580,465
Crossref	1,000	8,887
Scopus	200	215,251
Semantic Scholar	1,000	996,423
Total	**2,300**	**1,801,026**

Source: database.

2.4. Data Analysis

The results emerged after several rounds of interactions, through consultation with the bases individually.

3. Findings and Analysis

3.1. Bibliometric Analysis

The approach used to assess and measure the piece was bibliometric analysis, which found trends, patterns, and links between the chosen works. It helps map knowledge, control research policies, assess author and institution output, and provide academic performance measures. Furthermore, contributing to efficient research management and the progress of scientific knowledge is the identification of developing research fields, eminent authors, and cooperation networks (Braun et al., 2006; Georghiou, 1995; Garfield, 2006). Figure 1 summarizes the entire research design, organized by sections, as follows:
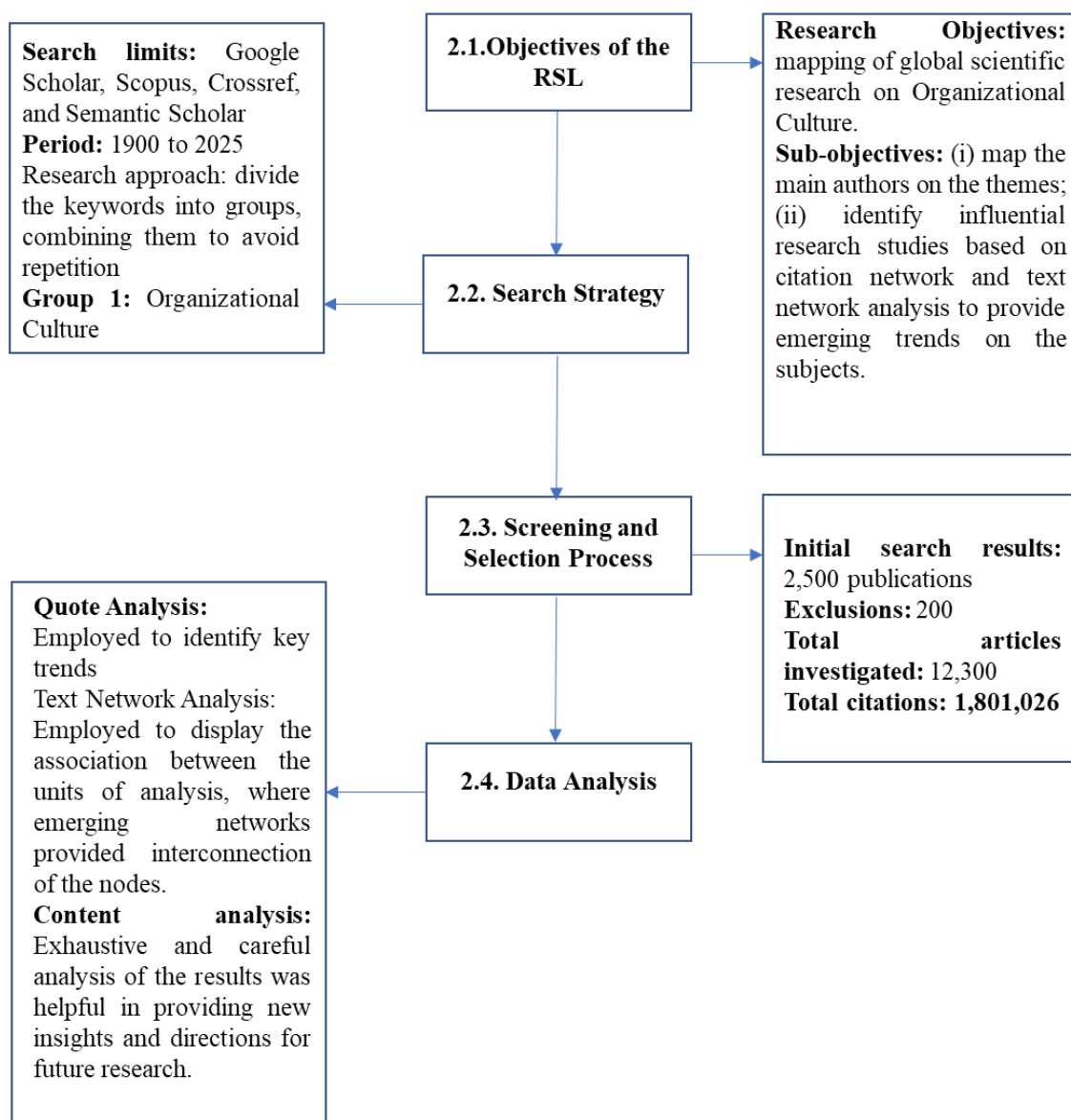
Figure 1. Research design. Source: adapted from Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa (2020).

3.2. Trend Analysis

Table 3 shows the total number of publications of Organizational Culture, while Table 4 shows the total number of publications.

Table 3. Publications Organizational Culture

Timeline	Google Scholar	Crossref	Scopus	Semantic Scholar	Total
1900-1949	0	0	0	0	**0**

1950-1969	0	1	0	9	**10**
1970-1979	2	0	0	19	**21**
1980-1989	11	16	6	106	**139**
1990-1999	27	35	50	320	**432**
2000-2009	39	170	112	402	**723**
2010-2025	21	778	32	144	**975**
Total	**100**	**1.000**	**200**	**1.000**	**2.300**

Source: database.

Table 4. Citations Organizational Culture

Timeline	Google Scholar	Crossref	Scopus	Semantic Scholar	**Total**
1900-1949	0	0	0	0	**0**
1950-1969	0	0	0	48.473	**48.473**
1970-1979	13.881	0	0	97.859	**111.740**
1980-1989	44.094	6	22.338	252.554	**318.992**
1990-1999	126.012	53	80.135	313.380	**519.580**
2000-2009	216.292	1.660	93.598	223.076	**534.626**
2010-2025	180.186	7.168	19.180	61.081	**267.615**
Total	**580.465**	**8.887**	**215.251**	**996.423**	**1.801.026**

Source: database.

Figure 2 summarizes the evolution of publications in the frequency distribution format, from 1900 to 2025.
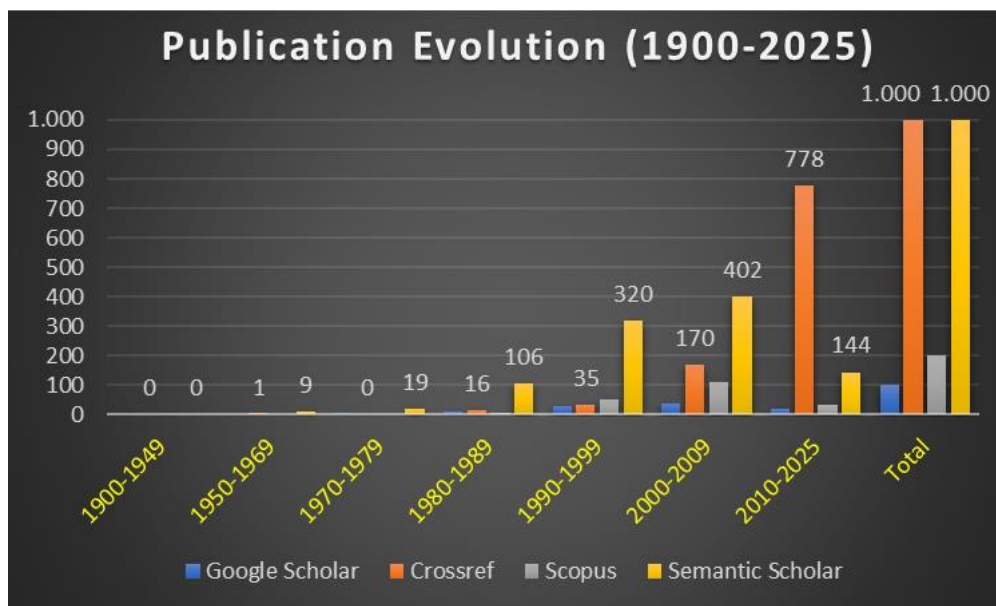
Figure 2. Evolution of publications (1900-2025). Source: excerpted from Harzing (2007).

Figure 2 shows that in the last decade, they have doubled in relation to previous decades. Figure 3 shows the evolution of citations regarding the aforementioned period.
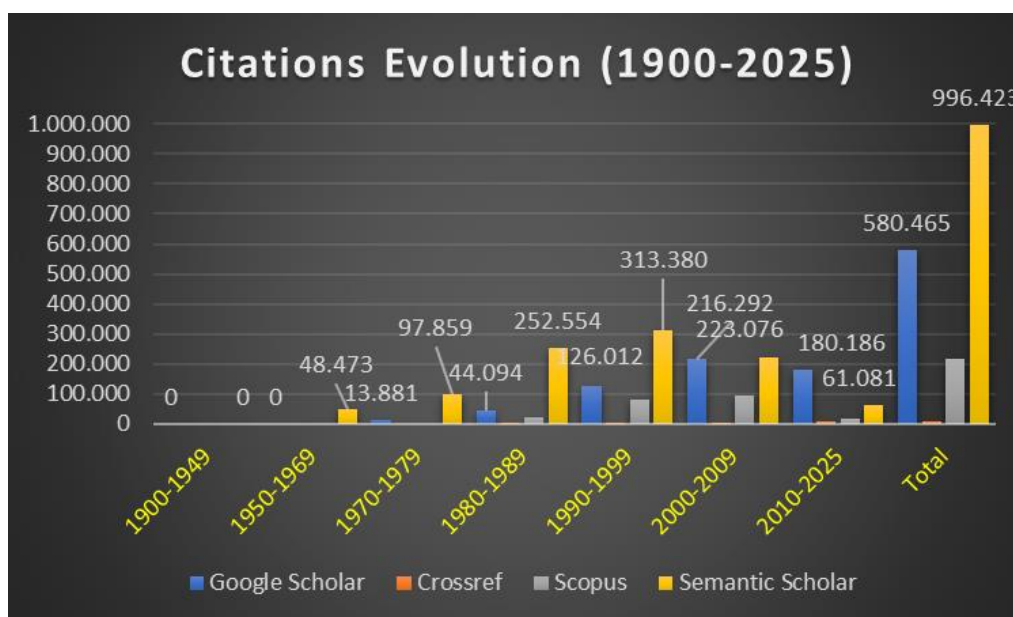

Figure 3. Evolution of citations (1900-2025). Source: excerpted from Harzing, 2007.

Figure 4 displays the geographical distribution of publications, for better visualization.

Figure 4. Map of the distribution of publications by country. Source: Google MyMaps.

We then gathered the publications' affiliations from the .csv saved archive of Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007).

Using https://www.google.com/intl/pt-BR/maps/about/mymaps/ (Google My Maps), the geographic distribution of the top publishers is illustrated in Figure 4.

4. Discussion

In this part, we assess the coverage of the found trends and literary gaps. According to the critical assessment, research should include growing and emerging areas to have a more worldwide viewpoint. This method will help define corporate culture clearly and functionally, therefore allowing researchers to monitor and evaluate this idea regularly. Research could include ideas from several fields, like conflict management and leadership, to provide a picture of trends and literary gaps.

First, concerning gaps in the literature, evidence points to three main ones: Once the topic includes significant elements, artifacts, values, and hidden assumptions, a clear description of corporate culture becomes more important (Schein, 2009). Although the book emphasizes the need for organizational culture, its definition is not evident. 2) Geographical restrictions With little regard paid to other areas of the globe, the book focuses mainly on the financial sectors in the US and Europe.

The discussion also presents the answers to the following research questions: Q1: How has Organizational Culture been cited in the last 125 years? Q2: What is the geographical distribution and development of the theme? Q3: How did the publications behave in relation

to these themes in the timeline—what were the gaps and how were they answered in each period?

4.1. How Has Organizational Culture Been Cited in the Last 125 Years?

The answer to Q1 is shown in Figure 3. Over the past century, product and customer centrism, as well as customer experience and customer loyalty are topics that have been widely studied in the past century, especially from the 1990s to today. Table 1 presents a total of 2,300 publications analyzed and 1,801,026 citations in the databases afore mentioned.

4.2. What Is the Geographical Distribution and Development of the Theme?

The answer to Q3 is found in Figure 4, where Google MyMaps® showed a higher prevalence of publications in North America, followed by Europe.

4.3. How Did the Publications Behave in Relation to These Themes in the Timeline—What Were the Gaps and How Were They Answered in Each Period?

The answer to Q4 is introduced as follows. Over time, the themes and gaps varied according to the interest aroused by the theme and the gaps that existed at the time. As demonstrated in Figure 3, Organizational Culture became prominent from the 1990s onwards. Organizational culture runs throughout all times consistently. A topic that has been immensely important since the 1980s is leadership. In particular: - Since the 1990s, innovation and organizational learning topics have been more pertinent. Since the 2010s, knowledge management and sustainability concerns have been more important. Therefore, we divided the study into five time periods,as detailed:

4.5.1. Period from 1970 to 1979

Studies on organizational culture started in the 1970s–1979s. During this time, organizational socializing and organizational culture dominated the discussions. The methodologies used were mostly case studies and qualitative analysis.

Early research on organizational culture, which underlined the need for organizational socializing, was one of the most important contributions of this era. Still, some significant research gaps persisted. One of them constrained the knowledge of this idea by the absence of theoretical frameworks to describe organizational culture.

Furthermore, significant were restrictions on research techniques and minimal variation in terms of approaches. Finally, a pertinent issue for companies received little focus on the link between organizational performance and organizational culture. These research voids opened the path for further studies on organizational culture.

4.5.2. Period from 1980 to 1989

Research on corporate culture developed still from 1980 to 1989. During this era, the key concerns covered were organizational effectiveness, leadership, and organizational culture. Mostly case studies, qualitative analysis, and organizational culture models—such as the

Competing Values Framework—the methodological techniques used were case studies, qualitative analysis, and organizational theory.

The creation of theoretical models to describe organizational behavior, notably the Competing Values Framework, marked the most important achievements of this era. This paradigm clarified the intricacy of organizational culture and its link with organizational success.

Still, some significant research gaps persisted. One of them was the dearth of longitudinal research looking at corporate culture change throughout time. Furthermore, significant were restrictions in generalizing the findings from the lack of variety in terms of industries and organizational settings. Finally, a pertinent issue for businesses received little focus on the link between corporate culture and individual behavior. These voids in knowledge opened the path for further studies on organizational culture.

4.5.3. Period from 1990 to 1999

Studies of organizational culture grew from 1990 to 1999. During this time, organizational culture, transformational leadership, creativity, and organizational learning dominated the subjects covered. The methodological tools used were mostly case studies, qualitative analysis, models of organizational culture, and survey research.

The evolution of ideas on transformational leadership and its interaction with corporate culture is the most important contribution of this era. Transformational leaders have been shown in studies to improve corporate culture, therefore encouraging learning and creativity.

Still, specific crucial study gaps persisted. One subfield studied was research on the link between organizational performance and organizational culture in international environments. Furthermore, a significant discrepancy was the restriction in the use of quantitative approaches to study organizational culture. Finally, the link between organizational culture and sustainability—a significant issue for companies—got little attention. These voids in knowledge opened the path for further studies on organizational culture.

4.5.4. Period from 2000 to 2009

Between 2000 and 2009, research on corporate culture changed and diversified. Throughout this time, organizational culture, leadership, knowledge management, creativity, and organizational learning were the key topics covered. The methodological tools used mostly included case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models, surveys, and quantitative analysis.

The evolution of ideas on knowledge management and their connection with corporate culture is the most important contribution of this era. According to the research, corporate culture may affect knowledge management; therefore, leaders can be crucial in advancing it.

Still, specific crucial study gaps persisted. One was the lack of research analyzing the link between corporate culture and personal behavior worldwide. Another significant gap was the

restrictions on using mixed methods—qualitative and quantitative—to study corporate culture. Finally, the interaction between organizational culture and corporate social responsibility—a significant company issue—was not given much thought. These voids in knowledge opened the path for further studies on organizational culture.

4.5.5. Period from 2010 to 2025

From 2010 to 2025, research on organizational culture continued to evolve and diversify, addressing increasingly complex and relevant topics for contemporary organizations. Organizational culture, leadership, knowledge management, innovation, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility dominated the agenda across this era. The methodological instruments primarily included case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models, survey research, quantitative analysis, and social network studies.

The most important contributions of this era were the evolution of ideas on corporate social responsibility and sustainability and their connection with organizational culture. Studies have shown that CEOs may significantly help to promote sustainability and corporate social responsibility and that business culture can favorably affect these ideals.

Still, there are some really significant research voids. Among these is the dearth of research looking at the link between organizational performance and organizational culture in climate change settings. Furthermore, a significant void is the restriction on using machine learning techniques to study organizational culture. Finally, the link between company culture and employee well-being in remote work environments gets little emphasis. These research voids provide the path for further studies on organizational culture.

5. Conclusion

The database information, accessible between March 10 and March 11, 2025, limits our study. The paper only addresses organizational cultures. This article does not touch on other themes or research subjects; they should be investigated independently. Furthermore, surveys are restricted to the stated era, 1900–2025.This methodical SLR on organizational culture covers 125 years—from 1900 to 2025. The search over four separate databases turned up 2,300 papers and 1,801,026 references. The findings revealed that organizational culture has been a changing subject, with a notable rise in citations within the last 50 years.

Data analysis highlighted trends in research studies and the regional distribution of scholarly contributions. Furthermore, the research noted significant gaps in the literature, particularly the dearth of studies looking at the link between organizational culture and organizational performance in climate change settings and the scant application of machine learning methods to analyze organizational culture.

Emphasizing issues like sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and employee well-being, the study also underlined the need to consider organizational culture in worldwide environments. Moreover, the study implies that leaders may greatly develop knowledge management and organizational culture.This SLR offers a thorough picture of the issue's development over time, stressing patterns, gaps, and opportunities for further studies.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the requirement of organizational culture for company success and the need to consider this culture in worldwide and complicated environments.Table 5 summarizes major contributions, approaches, themes, and research gaps, as follows:

Timeline	Themes	Approaches	Contributions	Research Gaps
1970-1979	Organizational culture, organizational socialization	Case studies, qualitative analysis	Initial studies on organizational culture	Lack of theoretical models, limitations in research methods, little attention to the relationship between organizational culture and
1980-1989	Organizational culture, leadership, organizational effectiveness	Case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models	Development of theoretical models to explain organizational culture	Lack of longitudinal studies, limitations in the generalization of results, little attention to the relationship between organizational culture and individual behavior
1990-1999	Organizational culture, transformational leadership, innovation, organizational learning	Case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models, survey studies	Development of theories on transformational leadership and its relationship with	Lack of studies examining the relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance in global contexts, limitations in the use of quantitative methods, little attention to the relationship between
2000-2009	Organizational culture, leadership, knowledge management, innovation	Case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models, survey studies, quantitative analysis	Development of theories on knowledge management and its relationship with organizational culture	Lack of studies examining the relationship between organizational culture and individual behavior in global contexts, limitations in the use of mixed methods, little attention to the relationship between organizational culture and corporate social responsibility
2010-2025	Organizational culture, leadership, knowledge management, innovation, sustainability	Case studies, qualitative analysis, organizational culture models, survey studies, quantitative analysis, social network studies	Development of theories on sustainability and its relationship with organizational culture	Lack of studies examining the relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance in climate change contexts, limitations in the use of machine learning methods, little attention to the relationship between organizational culture and employee well-being in remote work contexts

Source: database.

Future research is encouraged as follows: longitudinal research tracks the change in organizational culture over time, while comparative studies compare organizational cultures in many fields and environments—studies on the link between organizational culture and sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and employee well-being.

Other variables are employed in the development of theoretical models, including organizational culture, which is combined with organizational factors like knowledge management, innovation, and leadership. Corporate culture is examined using combined qualitative—quantitative methods and machine learning. These ideas further help executives and human resources experts understand the company culture and provide them with helpful advice.

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