Green Organizational Culture: A Review of Literature and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract: Due to climatic changes across the globe, alignment of processes and products according to international environment standards is a rising concern for business stakeholders. Though this reform process to minimize environmental impact is occurring across different industries and countries but at a varying pace. Therefore, environmental management is still naïve and often compromised. If it is left unaddressed, it would lead to massive protests and social movements in future which will be messy to deal with, since climate change is occurring at an alarming pace. Moreover, the environmental consciousness is rising among masses, it is inevitable to deceive stakeholders for long time in this information era where controlling information is impossible. Corporate scandals and information/data leaks regarding greenwashing can lead to social protests and corporate defamation. Although in most of the countries environmental reporting is not a legal requirement however it is a societal requirement in different communities. Organizations use obfuscation eco-friendly claims, vague visual imagery, selective disclosure of corporate reports, and misleading communication modes to intentionally portray false environment-friendly claims of poor environmental performance to maintain positive social image by deceiving stakeholders. These symbolic strategic practices have stark difference with the real environmental impact. Human resource managers and employees play significant role in developing and implementing such environment friendly organizational culture. Therefore, human resource function can facilitate by designing systems to build green organizational culture in organizations. In this research paper the pre-existing literature on green organizational culture in organizations is be reviewed, since in the last decade many researches were conducted on this issue. This review will give a holistic view of existing literature to the future researchers and will help them to identify research gap. Moreover, it will help practitioners and

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decision makers in knowing the advantages and disadvantages of green culture in organizations, so that they will understand whole impact of opting it.

Keywords: Green organizational culture; sustainability culture; triple bottom line (TBL); pro-environmental/environment friendly organizational culture; eco-friendly organizational culture

1. Introduction

Environmental change has become a significant policy issue for both developing and developed countries. Today causes and effects of climate change poses serious environmental challenge to the humanity as they cut across every human being, sector of economy and nation. Environmental degradation is mainly caused by industries directly or indirectly. Since Pakistan is highly affected by climate related events in the past decade facing frequent floods (i.e. floods of year 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2014), droughts (i.e. from year 1999 to 2003), and storms, so environmental management is becoming a more related issue for Pakistani organizations. Hence, the issue of environmental degradation should be addressed on immediate basis for a sustainable business activity.

Many industries have started to prepare themselves for carbon-constrained world as a response to increasing consensus among governments and scientists to act in a way to avoid dangerous climatic change impacts. However, this action is not uniform among organizations and vary to a large extent. Mostly economic, technological, institutional and organizational barriers are predicted which vary among industries and countries (Küçükoğlu & Pınar, 2015). According to Venkatesh, G. (2010) as an individual starts from materialism (body) but needs a balance of physical, emotional & spiritual progress in life, Similarly, industrial ecology attempts to attain goal of sustainability as it is realized that in a long run economic benefits will lose their appeal then a spiritual outlook will be indispensable for global sustainability.

![Figure 1](https://www.acdmhr.theiaer.org)

**Figure 1.** Mapping global sustainable development to holistic individual development

3. Literature Review

3.1 Definitions of Organizational Culture

Other titles used for Green organizational culture include environment friendly culture, eco-friendly culture, pro-environmental culture, green consciousness, sustainability culture, Triple Bottom Line (TBL), sustainability culture and broadly corporate social responsibility is also used to refer it. Many researchers adapt definitions of organizational culture for green organizational culture (Gürlek & Tuna, 2017). For example, Norton, Zacher, and Ashkanasy (2015) recommended in his
study, “Pro-environmental organizational culture and climate”, that Schein’s (1990, 2010) organizational culture definitions can be used for defining green organizational culture as criteria to develop understanding of the concept. Definitions used by other researchers are also similar with the way Schein’s definition of green organizational culture (Umran, Kura & Ahmed, 2018; Chang, 2015; Marshall et al., 2015; Muster & Schrader, 2011). The seminal work on “Triple Bottom Line” was done by John Elkington as he coined the term in late 1990s. Performance measurement in TBL mostly includes environmental, social and economic dimensions (“Global Reporting Initiative,” 2006). Green organizational culture is controversial and changes over time as its causes, effects and solution are perceived differently by stakeholders. So, it is very important to have a review to all the differing views about green organizational culture to reach a thorough understanding of it.

Green Organizational Culture is the set of values, symbols, assumptions, and organizational artefacts reflecting the obligation or desire of trying to be an environment friendly organization (Harris & Crane, 2002). Organizational culture is defined as “a set of shared mental assumptions that guide actions and interpretations in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for different situation” (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Moreover, it is defined as “the pattern of shared basic assumptions about environmental issues and environmental management (Marshall et al., 2015; Chen, 2011; Schein, 2010). Green organizational culture includes shared beliefs, values, norms, symbols and social stereotype about organizational environment management and shapes the standard behaviours expected from the individuals (Chang, 2015). The symbolism for the environmental management and protection within environment friendly culture/ green organizational culture shapes the perceptions and behaviours of organization members (Umran, Mahmood & Ahmed, 2016; Chen, 2011).

Modification of organizations and its processes to become more environment friendly which increases non-renewable and renewable usage efficiency of resources, decreases pollution and conducts activities in sustainable manner is called greening (Francis, C., et al., 2007). Definition of sustainable development by Brundtland Commission (1987) is “meeting the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” While sustainability culture is defined as a culture in which shared assumptions and beliefs are held by organizational members about importance of balancing environmental accountability, economic efficiency and social equity.

3.2 Operationalization and Measurement of Green Organizational Culture

For measuring Green Organizational Culture scale is adapted from the study of Marshall et al. (2015). Which is a unidimensional scale consisting of five items e.g. it was used in the study of Mert Gürlek & Muharrem Tuna (2017). Moreover, the measurement of environmental organizational culture is also done by adapting scale of Denison and Mishra (1995), it includes six items. For example, it was used in a study by Küçükoğlu and Pınar (2016). So, mostly researchers use scale adapted from scales of organizational culture. Table 1. Provides further details in this regard.

| Author | Area of Study | Objective | Data Type | Key Findings |
|--------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Sroufe, R., Liebowitz, J., & Sivasubramaniam, N. (2010). | Employee Conservation, Environmental Protection, Conserving Materials, Sustainability Measurement | Identifying the role of HR function in implementation of sustainability practices, to identify the extent to which the firms have primary data creation and survey of data collection and executive of firms, to identify sustainable practices, to identify the extent to which the firms have | Primary Data-based Web based survey of the extent to which the firms have HR professional play vital role to build a sustainability culture. | HR function can facilitate in organization’s transformation to sustainability. |
| Francis, C., Elmore, R., Ikerd, J., & Duffy, M. (2007). | Environment friendly processes or organizational modification, reducing pollution, improving renewable and non-renewable resource-use efficiency, conducting activities in a sustainable manner. | Identified the relationship between green/eco-friendly activities and scale of business & farming and studying the influence of adopting a multiple bottom line on greening of agriculture and food systems. | Primary & Secondary Data-Interviews and Literature Business or agricultural farm who subscribes to a multiple bottom line is more likely to be environment friendly and sustain business regardless of size. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, C. (2011). | Environment friendly organizational assumptions, values, symbols, and artefacts. | Examining the greening level of organizational culture, teamwork, HRM practices, and learning. | Primary Data-Survey HR practices should be aligned for environmental management and green organizational culture is found to be most significant for improvement of environmental performance which reflects organizational culture. |
| Liebowitz, J. (2010). | Pollution reduction, waste reduction, | Examining that how a focus on every HR function can help organizations to build a sustainability culture. | Secondary Data-Survey Top management support, sufficient resources, an ability to obtain buy-in from employees, and sufficient collaboration among departments and persistence can lead to success in achieving sustainability. |
| Boley, B. B., & Uysal, M. (2013). | Examining the competitiveness and competitive synergy resulted from engaging in TBL sustainability | Studying competitive synergy attained through implementing triple bottom line sustainability practices. | Primary Data-Interviews & Case study | Multiple unanticipated benefit’s convergence results in competitive synergy related to social and environmental sustainability. Embracing tools of TBL sustainability also resulted in unanticipated benefits to economic bottom line. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Buckley, R. (2003). | Ecotourism: Geotourism with a positive TBL; environmental inputs & outputs | Identifying advantages of viewing ecotourism as geotourism with positive TBL. | Secondary Data | Ecotourism is combination of sustainability accounting and developing concepts of tourism market segmentation i.e. Geotourism with a positive triple bottom. |
| Dixon, S. E., & Clifford, A. (2007). | Ecopreneurship/ green entrepreneurship for managing TBL | To discover the economic sustainability of the ecological and social enterprise by symbiotic relationships with large corporate bodies, community and government. | Primary & Secondary data-Case study, semi-structured interviews, micro ethnography, document analysis. | Entrepreneurialism is strongly related to environmentalism. The study provides a framework for economic sustainability for social & green entrepreneurs. |
| Christen, E. W., Shepheard, M. L., Meyer, W. S., Jayawardane, N. S., & Fairweather, H. (2006) | TBL reporting to raise irrigation sustainability | Examining how irrigation companies can contribute to sustainable development of irrigation through TBL reporting on the relevant social, | Secondary Data | Irrigation Sustainability Assessment Framework was suggested for irrigation organizations for setting TBL objectives, developing management goals, performance reporting upon goal achievement. |
**Jamali, D. (2006)** TBL integration from a learning organization perspective

Exploring how management orientation can support continual adaptability and learning the pillars of sustainability including environmental, economic and social responsibility.

A higher propensity for learning ensure organizations to be well prepared to meet the challenge of TBL integration and sustainability innovations.

**Onat, N. C., Kucukvar, M., & Tatari, O. (2014)** Integrating lifecycle assessment framework with Triple Bottom Line input and output analysis

Identifying impact of environmental, economic, and social sustainability dimensions on commercial buildings and residential buildings construction, operation, and disposal phases.

Integration of TBL into Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment (LCSA) will help in analyzing sustainability impact of buildings from a holistic perspective.

**Gundlach, M. J., & Zivnuska, S. (2010)** An experiential learning approach towards teaching social entrepreneurship, TBL, and sustainability by modifying and extending practical organizational behavior education (PROBE)

Modifying and extending PROBE data for successful education of business students about sustainability, TBL concepts, and social entrepreneurship within a large, public university system.

PROBE effectively combines many techniques into one overarching pedagogical approach by increasing student engagement through active experiential learning which can help in teaching social entrepreneurship and sustainability.

**Fry, L. W., & Slocum Jr, J. W. (2008)** Relationship of spiritual leadership and TBL

Examining the role of spiritual leadership in maximizing TBL

Spiritual leadership positively influenced TBL including employee well-being, organizational
commitment, productivity, corporate social responsibility and profit and sales growth.

Marshall, D., sustainability culture, McCarthy, L., & McGrath, P., & Claudy, M. (2015) Examining the facilitative role of survey sustainability culture for adopting basic social sustainability supply chain practices & advanced social sustainability supply chain practices.

There is a positive relationship of sustainability culture with both practices i.e. basic supply chain practices for social sustainability & advanced supply chain practices for social sustainability.

Moreover, the relation of sustainability culture and advanced social sustainability supply chain practices is moderated by entrepreneurial orientation.

Fauzi, H., TBL as a sustainable corporate performance. (2010) Examining TBL as a secondary data sustainable corporate performance i.e. a shift in management practices, from being only business-oriented and partly social oriented, to also being planet-oriented.

TBL as sustainable corporate performance should be interpreted as dynamic rather than static. It is iterative and needs continuous monitoring and adaptation to changes that are evolving across contexts. TBL as SCP may be viewed as a function of time and context.

Heyd, T. (2005) Ecology, Culture and Ethics. Studying the inter-relationship of ecology, culture, and ethics by focusing on approaches yielding secondary data. Ethno-ecology tells the way in which humanity & their natural environment may sustainably integrate. Social ecology argues...
defending human communities and their natural spaces from external domination. Liberation/restorative ecology claims that humans & nature may flourish by restoring qualitatively different relation to each other. Cultural matrices are crucial sustainability conditions which are guiding everyday life and integrating nature & humans in a community.

**Gimenez, C., Sierra, V., & Rodon, J. (2012).** Analyzing the impact of environmental and social programmes on the triple bottom line. Internal environmental programmes positively impact three TBL components: Environmental, economic & social performance. Internal social programmes positively impact environmental & social performance. Manufacturing plants in assembling industry still need to attain positive financial gains (for reduced manufacturing costs) by this process.

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**Venkatesh, G. (2010).** Uncovering analogy between the data and global sustainability by Triple Bottom Line approach and holistic individual human materialism (body) is the start of human life but a right balance of
development 
(environmental, 
social & economic) 
as a sustainable 
advancement of 
humanity on the 
face of earth.

Kucukvar, M., Egilmez, G., & Tatari, O. (2014) Sustainability analysis of final consumption and investments by systems approach: Analysis of TBL of U.S. final demand data categories like export of goods and services, government purchases and investments, household consumption, and private fixed investments. Household consumption has comparatively more indirect TBL sustainability impacts than other final demand categories. Industrial sectors including agriculture, transportation, utilities, manufacturing, mining & construction have the highest impacts on environment. The economic and social indicators of sustainability are highly having the impact of service sectors. Utility, Manufacturing & agriculture sectors have relatively more environmental burdens than their GDP contributions, whereas service sectors contribute more to GDP than their environmental impact.
Mokhtar, N. M., Musa, N. D., & Hussin, A. (2016). Green organizational culture. Investigating the relationship of green organizational culture and organizational commitment and to identify existence of green organizational culture among employees.

Primary Data-survey

A strong relationship is found between Green organizational culture and organizational commitment. The level of awareness among employees was high and they supported the green organizational culture.

Chen, Y. S. (2011). Green organizational culture, green leadership, green organizational identity and green competitive advantage. Examining the relationship of green organizational culture and green leadership with green competitive advantage, mediated by green organizational identity.

Primary data

There is positive relationship between green organizational culture & green leadership with green organizational identity & green competitive advantage. Moreover, green organizational identity has a partial mediation effect on the relationship of two antecedents i.e. green organizational culture & green leadership with green competitive advantage. And it was found more in large enterprises than small and medium enterprises.

Gürlek, M., & Tuna, M. (2017). Examining the relationship of green innovation, organizational culture, & competitive advantage. Examining the relationship between green organizational culture, green innovation & competitive advantage.

Primary data

Green organizational culture has positive effect on competitive advantage and green innovation. Moreover, full mediation effect of green innovation was found on the relationship of
3.3 Green Organizational Culture and Other Variables

Sustainability culture is more than just accounting for social and environmental performance in corporate reporting. It involves managing TBL by taking in consideration the environmental, social and economic risks in decision-making. Beside creating economic value, sustainable businesses are resilient, strengthen communities and make ecosystems healthy (Bertels, Papania & Papania, 2010). Organizational culture and environmental management are studied to be highly associated since a green organizational culture supports environmental management mechanisms and a team of environmentally conscious employees makes a green organizational culture more powerful (Fernandez et al., 2003).

A study (Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, C., 2011) investigated environmental management and the involvement of organizational dimensions (organizational culture, teamwork, and organizational learning) and human resource management practices (Job analysis, job description, recruitment & selection, performance management, and rewards system). Organizations with effective environmental management and environment friendly organizational culture have the tendency to attract competent and motivated employees. Moreover, environment friendly organizational culture is pervasive and persistent when there is environment conscious team of workers (Umran, Ahmed & Memon, 2015; Fernandez et al., 2003).

Cultural matrices are crucial sustainability conditions which are guiding everyday life and integrating nature & humans in a community (Heyd, T., 2005). Mostly human resource management practices do not support environmental management in organization which creates an unbalance e.g. in employee selection, financial remuneration on environmental performance (Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, C., 2011). A comprehensive strategic HR approach and Perseverance leads to success when factors like absence of sufficient resources, lack of top management support, inability to have buy-in from employees and poor collaboration among departments which leads to temporary failure (Liebowitz, 2010).
For development and implementation of sustainability practices and strategies in organizations, human resource professionals play a key role. Sustainability begins with a strategic vision and a guiding philosophy of earning profits through people with minimal environmental burden on the planet. Engagement, commitment, and knowledge of human capital determine the success of sustainability implementation. HR function can facilitate by designing systems to build sustainability culture (Sroufe, Liebowitz & Sivasubramaniam, 2010).

Sustainability culture is found to be positively related to both type of supply chain practices i.e. basic supply chain practices for social sustainability and advanced supply chain practices for social sustainability. Entrepreneurial orientation is found to be moderating the relationship of sustainability culture and the advanced social sustainability supply chain practices (Marshall, McCarthy, McGrath & Claudy, 2015).

It was also found in another study that green leadership and green organizational culture are the antecedents of green competitive advantage and green organizational identity partially mediates this relationship. This relationship was significantly strong in large enterprises than small and medium enterprises of manufacturing industry in Taiwan (Chen, 2011). Moreover, Spiritual leadership positively effects TBL including employee well-being, organizational commitment, productivity, corporate social responsibility and profit and sales growth (Fry & Slocum, 2008).

### 3.4 Green Organizational Culture in different industries

The conceptual approach of green organizational culture is about being conscious for environmental risks. There is enough evidence of this paradigm shift in today’s business climate which is highly competitive and ever-changing. A holistic approach to hospitality and tourism business enterprises for a long-run strategic position is needed (Sloan et al., 2012). Regardless of size, shape, solutions and sustainable practices in business operations the lodging enterprises explicitly or implicitly embrace TBL sustainability tenets. With tangible programs or examples, the top management share and share the sustainability practice to be more acceptable by lower management and employees (Boley, B. B., & Uysal, M., 2013). Hotels should develop green organization culture and make investments on green innovation activities to gain competitive advantage (Gürlek, M., & Tuna, M. (2017). Hotels demonstrating TBL reporting have increased profit, higher return on assets, capital profitability, better cashflow and solvency ratio, customer satisfaction, cooperation with local residents, environmental NGOs cooperation, higher employee salaries, less solid waste, less water consumption, lower CO2 emission and quality of recycling waste etc. (Assaf, A. G., Josiassen, A., & Cvelbar, L. K., 2012).

In geo-tourism a sustainability culture can be incorporated as ecotourism with positive triple bottom line is a way of combining concepts of sustainability with concepts of tourism market segmentation. It is about environmental inputs and outputs (Buckley, R. (2003).

Ecopreneurs can also be economically viable like Green-Works, a UK-based ecopreneur organization, and can retain the core values that motivated for its formation (Dixon, S. E., & Clifford, A., 2007). Moreover, a study revealed that industrial sectors including agriculture, transportation, utilities, manufacturing, mining & construction have the highest impacts on environment. Service sectors have the highest impacts on the economic and social indicators of sustainability. Utility, Manufacturing & agriculture sectors have relatively more environmental burdens than their GDP contributions, whereas service sectors contribute more to GDP than their environmental impact (Kucukvar, M., Egilmez, G., & Tatari, O., 2014).

To examine sustainability culture in construction industry, a study assessed the sustainability impacts from a holistic perspective of the United States buildings. It was found that generally US building electricity consumptions has more environmental impacts, while construction activities are comparatively more effective in their economic and social impacts. However lower impacts of activities like petroleum and natural gas consumption, maintenance and repair, wastewater, and construction waste management should also be not neglected. Life cycle phase evaluation shows that use phase drives most of the sustainability impact categories. However, end-of-life phase has almost negligible impact in United States (Onat, N. C., Kucukvar, M., & Tatari, O. (2014). Studies lack on
analysing the sustainability impacts of policies including energy-efficient building retrofitting, and for electricity generation shifting to renewable energy resources using dynamic system approach.

A concentration of control and ownership has occurred in the last decades by consolidation of agricultural farms, agricultural inputs supply companies, and commodity businesses. It was found that businesses and farms measuring success in environmental, social and economic terms will be greener than those with single bottom line. Concern for environment is rising in societies which has led organizations to advertise products to be environment friendly even if they are not (i.e. greenwashing). Environmental, economic, and social issues all effect the greening of agriculture and food systems (Francis, C., Elmore, R., Ikerd, J., & Duffy, M., 2007). Irrigation Sustainability Assessment Framework was suggested for irrigation organizations for setting TBL objectives, developing management goals, performance reporting upon goal achievement (Ahmed, Mozammel & Ahmed, 2018; Christen, E. W., et al. (2006).

The implementation of sustainability and triple bottom line concepts is difficult as it is not clear in many settings and can be perceived differently by management. Teaching this concept to business students at university by using experiential learning approach can be effective, as it is important for students to learn and understand early in their career. A technique called Practical Organizational Behaviour Education (PROBE) can help if included in undergraduate courses like in organizational behavior. This experiential learning technique makes course content come alive for students in learning sustainability, triple bottom line concept and social entrepreneurship (Gundlach, M. J., & Zivnuska, S., 2010).

4. Methodology

A systematic review of literature is conducted by an archival method. This paper includes the articles cited on online databases including JSTOR, ScienceDirect Wiley Online Library, Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, SpringerLink and Emerald Insight with green organizational culture, Triple bottom line and sustainability culture as keywords. Therefore, this study turns out to be a desk research rather than any other mode of research.

5. Directions for Future Research

It might be of interest to examine either purely social entrepreneurs can have competitive advantage after inclusion of environmental factor to their offering and vice versa (Dixon, S. E., & Clifford, A., 2007). Future researches can also aim at empirically examining the connection of TBL or sustainability principles to factors like employee retention, competitiveness and change in market share, direct and induced effect on profit and cost savings, improvement in service quality, increase in sales and share price (Boley, 2011). It is suggested for future studies that system dynamics (SD) modelling should be tried for long term policy making, which can also give insights to management for mid and long-term policy making for sustainability of businesses (Kucukvar, M., Egilmez, G., & Tatari, O., 2014). This way future managers will have knowledge, orientation, and required skills to follow a holistic and sustainable approach to business practices.

Moreover, since organizational culture is embedded in national culture it can also be examined e.g. dimensions of national cultures identified by Geert Hofstede in his book Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind (1991). Moreover, work ethics also play vital role in predicting employee behaviour as it plays vital role in an organizational culture e.g. Islamic work ethics, protestant work ethics and catholic work ethics etc can be studied with green organizational culture. Since employees are the ones who do practical implementation of green practices at workplace so their behaviour and factors motivating them are also a critical area to be studied with environment friendly organizational culture. The psychological factors that help in motivating employees to behave environment friendly are important to be examined so that Human Resource Managers incorporate those factors in HRM practices.

TBL as a sustainable corporate performance is a function of context and time, so continuous monitoring and adaptation to contents of measurement elements is needed as changes occur across
contexts, market conditions, and societal changes occur (Fauzi, H., Svensson, G., & Rahman, A. A., 2010).

6. Conclusion

By having Green Organizational Culture, TBL reporting shows an organizational drive towards increased transparency which can alleviate stakeholder’s concern on hidden information by demonstrating that a company is taking accountability to a higher level. Adjusting environmental policies also lowers the public scrutiny risk. By having everyone involved in TBL process i.e. employees and stakeholders, increases organizational knowledge, expand relationships with stakeholders, increases organizational learning to meet sustainability goal. It improves efficiency and profit, initial difficulties could be overcome by stakeholder’s better sense of business identity and purpose. Reporting on sustainability can give a company the benchmark for future. However, organizations tend to be hesitant towards this change (Jackson, A., Boswell, K., & Davis, D., 2011). Progress in sustainability can be achieved by successful integration of learning organization characteristics into sustainability focused organizational learning (SFOL) process. This allows organizations to achieve benefits of accumulated experience and continuous learning (Jamali, D., 2006).

Triple bottom line is a measure of corporate performance which integrates sustainability into business agenda. It balances traditional economic goals with environmental and social goals. Other than focusing on bottom line new tools for sustainable design can change product development from aiming limiting the liabilities to creating safe and superior quality products. Triple top line growth is achieved by this new design perspective by making products who generate economic value by well-being of nature to flourish both nature and commerce (McDonough, W., & Braungart, M., 2002).

Green organizational culture is a way forward to a sustainable development which can only be achieved by incorporating pro-environmental values into the organizational culture. This can be done by Human Resource management as it is the keeper of the culture since it has essential skills and knowledge to reinforce and strengthen a values-driven organizational culture envisioned in organizational vision, mission and values.

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