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Effective Organizational Culture Strategies for a Firm Operating in Foreign Countries

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2018

Abstract

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by

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MS, Walden University, 2009

BS, Cairo University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Organizational culture is a significant driver of success for firms, especially for those considering expansion to foreign countries. The purpose of this single case study was to explore effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders use to align the organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to improve organizational performance in foreign countries. The target population was 8 current and former senior managers of a firm operating in 16 countries. Data were collected via a mix of videoconference and face-to-face interviews and the firm's archival documents, the financial statements, the HR policy, and the internal control policy. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Perlmutter and Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, including the ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric model. Data analysis was conducted using Yin's 5-step model, and 5 themes emerged from the data: general characteristics of the chosen organization culture, communication, adjustment to foreign environments, organizational and national cultures, and issues with employees. The implications for positive social change include the potential to enhance a firm's social responsibility and social acceptance in international markets for the benefit of the firm, its employees, and the local societies.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my beloved parents who supported me, inspired me, and encouraged me through the doctoral study journey. They have taught me how to pursue my passion and to continue working hard to achieve my goals. Thank you for all your support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the study

Background of the Problem

One of the most important factors affecting the performance of many organizations, both on a local and international level, is its organizational culture (Tutar, Altinoz & Cakiroglu, 2014). Organizational culture includes factors such as an organization's vision, norms, centricity, beliefs, systems, symbols, assumptions, habits, language, values, attitudes, education, politics, and legislations (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014). Therefore, setting an adequate organizational culture is critical for business success, especially for firms operating in foreign environments.

The establishment and operation of a business in a foreign country requires a strategic approach towards the critical decisions. Organizations face a challenge in deciding whether to operate like the locals or adopting the culture of their home country in the operation of the business within the foreign country (Tharp, 2014). Considering the importance of organizational culture on performance, in this study, I explored the above-mentioned strategies within foreign environments. According to Eaton and Kilby (2015), the establishment of an appropriate organizational culture helps in the creation of behaviors, attitudes, and values that make organizations operate effectively within foreign environments.

Problem Statement

In business environments, poor organizational culture has a significant effect on the performance of the organization and can lead to financial losses (Idris, Wahab, & Jaapar, 2015). In a July 2014 survey conducted by Korn Ferry on more than 500 participants worldwide, 72% of the participants considered organizational culture very important to organizational performance (as cited in Eaton & Kilby, 2015). The general business problem is that the misalignment of an organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures could lead to declines in the organizational performance. The specific business problem was that some senior business leaders lack effective cultural-oriented strategies to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance. The targeted population consisted of eight current and previous senior business leaders of an Egyptian company who developed and deployed effective organizational culture strategies for operating in foreign environments that increased organizational performance for their firm. The implications for positive social change may include the potential to enhance a firm's social responsibility and social acceptance in international markets for the benefit of the firm, its employees, and the local societies.

Nature of the Study

The principal three research methods that can be used by any researcher are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Jain, Sharma, & Jain, 2015). Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to discover what is occurring or has occurred (Yin, 2014). In contrast, quantitative researchers use closed ended questions to test hypotheses about variables' differences or relationships (Yin, 2014). Mixed-method research includes both a qualitative and a quantitative element (Green et al., 2014). As such, the study does not require the formulation of hypotheses as mandated in the quantitative research or the quantitative portion of a mixed-method study. Accordingly, the qualitative method was considered appropriate for this study to enable an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon using open-ended questions without being bounded by the formulation of the specific hypothesis.

I considered several research designs for this qualitative study on organizational culture: (a) narrative, (b) phenomenological, and (c) case study. A narrative design is based on stories, autobiographies, journals, and interviews as a way of sharing knowledge (Yin, 2014). I did not use the narrative design because one cannot build strategic decisions only on knowledge sharing of participants' stories, as described by Tsang (2014). Researchers use phenomenological designs to explore the shared experiences of a group of people about experiencing a certain phenomenon (Jain et al., 2015). I did not use the phenomenological design to avoid receiving potentially biased opinions based on personal experiences lived. A case study is an in-depth research on an organization at a specific time (Yin, 2014). I chose the case study design to gather data then conduct an in-depth analysis of the case. A single case study entails the exploration of one case while multiple cases involve the comparison of findings of two or more cases (Cronin, 2014). The single case study is appropriate because one can rely on the single case study to acquire an in-depth understanding and focus on one specific case based on the number of senior level participants from the chosen organization and the observations of the researcher to reach data saturation using the single case study.

Research Question

The central research question that guided this study was as follows: What effective cultural-oriented strategies do senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance?

Interview Questions

1. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you use when working in foreign countries?
2. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you find worked best for your organization?
3. What are the advantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?
4. What are the disadvantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?
5. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of the cultural-oriented strategies you have implemented?
6. What are the challenges that faced your organization in order to align your headquarters culture to each foreign branch's culture within your group?
7. How did you handle the challenges identified in the previous question in order to improve your organization's performance?

8. What additional information can you share with me to understand the effective strategies that your organization's senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with the cultures of foreign countries to achieve excellent organizational performance?

Conceptual Framework

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was based on his studies between 1967 and 1973 of IBM employees in 40 countries (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 1991) and Perlmutter's ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric (EPG) model (Perlmutter, 1969). I based the conceptual framework for this study on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Perlmutter's EPG model. Hofstede developed the cultural dimensions theory at the end of 1970s. In this theory, Hofstede presented conclusions from two perspectives: the national culture and the organizational culture (Hofstede et al., 1991). Researchers can use both theories to explore the strategies that business leaders use to align their company's organizational culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance.

Perlmutter developed the EPG model in 1969. The EPG model is an international business framework for exploring three different cultural directions (ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric). Companies use the EPG model to create an organizational strategic centricity profile (Perlmutter, 1969), which is a main constituent of organizational culture. The EPG model gained importance from success in building the understanding of organizations' awareness and focus on foreign markets. Basing an organization's strategy on one of the three dimensions of the EPG model can have significant effects on the costs, benefits, and social acceptance of the organization (Drachal, 2014). It is important for an organization to monitor carefully how it is culturally oriented and how it makes decisions.

Operational Definitions

Organizational culture: The term encompasses the shared beliefs, assumptions, and values among members of an organization (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014).

Organizational performance: The term refers to the extent of organizational goal achievement pertinent to its workforce, marketing, capital, and fiscal matters (Malik & Tariq, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Academic research should outline the uncontrollable factors that could influence the investigation as well as the weaknesses or impediments and boundaries of the investigation within the researcher's control.

Assumptions

Assumptions entail the unsubstantiated factors that a researcher considers true in the study and lie within the researcher's expectations (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Yin (2014) suggested that a proper case study has to rely on samples with appropriate knowledge. Accordingly, I assumed that the sample would have the requisite knowledge and experience pertinent to the topic. Second, I assumed that all the participants would understand the context of the interview questions. Third, I assumed that all the participants provide truthful answers based on their personal experiences at the organization.

Limitations

Limitations entail the potential impediments, weaknesses, and shortcomings associated with the accomplishment of an empirical investigation (Neuman, 2016). First, the study was limited to the willingness and flexibility of the participants in allocating time for the interviews. Second, the study had minor biases because the participants gave their opinions based on their experiences and interactions with the company.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the scope or the boundaries of a study (Bentivegna, 2014). First, the study was focused on participants from an Egyptian company. Second, I explored the role of organizational culture from the perspective of a single corporate group.

Significance of the Study

A study of effective organizational culture strategies on the performance of foreign companies may be significant for several reasons. First, business leaders could identify the most effective approaches to improve the overall performance of the companies operating in foreign countries. Second, results might indicate strategies that companies' leaders adopted in different geographic areas to increase profitability and social acceptance within these areas.

Contribution to Business Practice

Conducting this study might be significant to business because business owners may use the findings to understand effective organizational culture strategies adopted by a firm to enhance its performance. The outcomes of this study might enable improving similar firms' profitability and operations in their foreign subsidiaries.

Implications for Social Change

This study may be significant to social change if companies align their organizational culture with foreign countries' cultures, which could result in greater acceptance of these companies in the societies in which these companies operate. Therefore, successful implementation of these organizational culture strategies can improve the living standards of the companies' employees, the employees' families, and the communities in which these organizations operate by providing stable, well-paying jobs that enable employees to support their families, reduce unemployment, and contribute taxes that support infrastructure and social programs that benefit the entire community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this section, I review the relevant literature linked to the role of organizational culture on performance based on management practices. The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to identify the successful strategies that managers use in the establishment of an effective organizational culture with the aim of improving organizational performance. The review of the literature addressed the concept of organizational culture, the theory to use in the analysis of the organizational culture, the characteristics of effective organizational culture, the concept of organizational performance, and the link between organizational culture and organizational performance.

The search for literature was on different published sources related to the role of organizational culture on firm performance. In this study, I focused on journals, seminal books, conference papers, and periodicals, as well as other published professional materials. The sources were derived from various databases including Business Source Complete databases, the ProQuest ABI/INFORM, EBSCO Host, and Google Scholar. The main keywords used in the search for literature included *organizational culture, cross-culture management, corporate culture, organizational culture strategies, organizational performance, firm performance, centricity profile, foreign environment operations,* and *organizational excellence*. During my literature search process, I focused on materials published between 2014 and 2018. The 145 references that comprise this study include 124 scholarly peer-reviewed articles, representing 85.5% of the total, two nonpeer reviewed articles, representing 1.37%, and 18 books, representing 12.4%. The total references published within the past 5 years are 124, which is 85.5% of the total number. The literature review contains 85 references, with 73 references published within the past 5 years, representing 85.9%, and 74 from scholarly peer-reviewed sources, representing 87.1%.

Culture

According to Hofstede et al. (1991), culture entails mental programming that has an effect on individuals, society, or an organization. The word *culture* stems from a term used by the ancient Roman philosopher and orator Cicero around 45 BC in his series of books *Tusculanae Disputationes* (Beugelsdijk, Slangen, Maseland, & Onrust, 2014). Cicero wrote about what he calls “cultura animi,” which means the cultivation of the soul. The word “cultura” is derived from “colere,” which means to grow or to cultivate.

The current term culture appeared in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries to describe the cultivation process in agriculture or horticulture. Then, in the 19th century, the term started to be used to refer to the improvement in the human behavior, the cultivation of good manners within the human.

In 1871, Tylor, an English anthropologist and the founder of cultural anthropology, was one of the first scholars who used the term culture to define a social domain that consists of moral, knowledge, custom, belief, law, art, and any other abilities and traditions that a human being possess within a certain society (Serpa, 2016). Many scholars followed Tylor trying to define and understand the word culture. Culture entails the lifestyle, practices, principles, values, mindset, feelings, and reactions of a group of people that gives them their unique identity (Tharp, 2014). Culture could also refer to the growing store of experience, information, mentalities, hierarchies, implications, religion, characters, and spatial relations.

Culture is considered a cumulative phenomenon because it is passed from one generation to another. In its conceptualization, Hofstede accommodated the philosophical, historical, sociological, and anthropological clarifications through offering the cultural measurements of business-related values (Mazanec, Crotts, Gursoy, & Lu, 2015). In essence, this implies that culture has penetrated all aspects of communities, organizations, religious groups, ethnic groups, as well as social life.

Although the complexities of culture as a concept experienced increased debate in the mid-20th century (Manela & Moreira, 2017; Tharp, 2014), reviews based on different definitions identified three basic human activities represented in culture: what people do, what people think, and what people make (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015). Moreover, several characteristics associated with culture have emerged: culture is learned, shared, transferred cross-generationally, adaptive, symbolic, and integrated (Awad, 2014). The assigning of symbolic meanings to behaviors, ideas, and objectives is a distinguishing characteristic of human life (Namenwirth & Weber, 2016). Moreover, culture tends to evolve or adapt to the changes that occur within the society that shares it. Therefore, one can understand culture as the fabric of meaning through which human beings interpret their experiences or an ordered system of meanings and symbols that facilitate social interactions (Tharp, 2014).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is one of the dynamic elements of the organizational theory (Campbell & Göritz, 2014). Nevertheless, scholars have not found a consistent meaning or definition of organizational culture in the literature (Cao, Huo, Li, & Zhao, 2015), which has led to different definitions among various scholars (Nikpour, 2017). Earlier scholars, for example, Schein, defined organizational culture as the shared assumptions, values, and norms that distinguish a group from other groups (Hogan & Coote, 2014). The clear understanding of these basic definitions facilitates the resolution of many problems among the group members.

Essentially, there is no agreed definition of organizational culture in the literature. However, some researchers have clarified some of the aspects of culture, although the arrival at a globally specific definition remains elusive. The assumptions that organizational members develop facilitate the resolution of problems, external adaptation, and internal integration (Malik & Tariq, 2016). These assumptions are considered to have worked effectively, which leads to the organization imparting those assumptions on new organizational members. According to Tănase (2015), organizational culture shapes the symbols, values, working processes, methods, and principles that are often an invisible part of the organization. Similarly, Ferraro and Briody (2017) considered organizational culture as an ideology that includes values, norms and beliefs manifested through narration, language, symbols, and other activities. Therefore, organizational culture can be construed as the patterns of shared beliefs and values that develop over time, leading to the creation of behavioral norms for the adaptation and resolution of problems within the organization. The debate regarding the definition and formation of organizational culture reflects the importance of understanding organizational and national culture in the success of business operations.

Hofstede is considered the pioneer of the research on organizational culture (Kim, 2015). In conceptualizing organizational culture, Motilewa, Agboola, and Adeniji (2015) drew the themes associated with Hofstede's explication of culture. First, culture is considered as a learned entity, which also applies to organizational culture. Consequently, Hofstede considered organizational culture as a pattern developed over time and transferred to the members of the organization. Second, culture is considered a belief system. Consequently, the members of the organizations share diverse values and beliefs that offer them institutional meaning, as well as rules of behavior. Third, culture is considered as a strategy. As a strategy, Motilewa et al. illustrated that strategic decision-making in any organization is cultural activities. Finally, culture is considered as a mental programming that has an effect on individuals and organizations (Hofstede et al., 1991). As such, the organizational members go through collective programming of their minds, which results in the development of behaviors, attitudes, and values that differentiates them.

Perlmutter (1969) was concerned about organizations doing business around the world, and how their cultural profile was shaping their orientation in expanding in foreign countries. Multinational companies tend to implement their cultures across different regions through adaptation to the external environment to gain profit margins (Beugelsdijk et al., 2014). As illustrated earlier, some organizations will control their subsidiaries through the imposition of defined structures in their organizational cultures for easier talent management (Cerdin & Brewster, 2014). Regardless, organizations have to find the best strategies to adapt to the foreign environments' culture to maximize the benefits from the inputs of the environment (Tănase, 2015). Adapting to the foreign environment may require the organization to change its organizational culture (Iljins, Skvarciany, & Gaile-Sarkane, 2015). For instance, Royal Dutch Shell had to close its operations in Romania after only 10 years because it could not align its organizational culture with the Romanian national culture (Drachal, 2014). Therefore, the alignment of the organizational culture and the national culture may define the difference between organizational success and failure (Yeganeh, 2014). The transfer of the organizational culture into a foreign environment may not always translate to business success because of the possible cultural differences that may occur (Tănase, 2015).

Firms consider organizational culture as a strategic resource that affects a plethora of activities within the firm. Empirical evidence from marketing and management research shows that organizational culture has a significant effect on organizational performance (Wei, Samiee, & Lee, 2014). According to Chatman, Caldwell, O'Reilly, and Doerr (2014), the cultivation of a strong organizational culture has the potential of aligning the members of the organization with its strategic priorities, as well as the market in which it operates. The intensity and consensus about norms increase the efficiency of the members, as well as their concentration on nonroutine challenges (Biermann, 2015). Similarly, Wei et al. (2014) observed the need for adopting an appropriate organizational culture in environments with rapid changes and high levels of uncertainty. Flexible modes of control embedded in adhocracy and clan cultures are considered appropriate for such environments while hierarchy and market cultures are considered inappropriate for such volatile environments (Alvesson, 2016).

Evolution of Organizational Culture

Various authors have contributed towards the origin, evolution, and improvement, of the concept of organizational culture. According to Tharp (2014), organizational culture started emerging within the field of organizational behavior in the early 1930s. The Howthorne studies conducted at Western Electric Company marked the beginning of the systematic efforts in understanding the concept and the effects of the organizational culture on organizations. Nevertheless, most of the earlier investigations used quantitative sociological and psychological investigations in analyzing the concept within work environments. In the 50s and 60s, the field of organizational psychology experienced improvements as it continually started differentiating itself from industrial psychology through a focus on units larger than individuals (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2015). Nonetheless, the study of organizational culture did not penetrate the public until the 70s and 80s. Turner, an English sociologist, documented an extensive study regarding the concept of organizational culture within the field of public administration. Subsequently, the concept of organizational culture started attaining scientific and social visibility in the United States and the United Kingdom after a series of seminal papers (Serpa, 2016). Theorists, such as Hofstede, Perlmutter, Ouchi, Pascale, Deal, and Kennedy among others, started studying the concept across different countries (Serpa, 2016). Although the researchers attained significant milestones in the investigation of the concept, several issues polarized the debate. For instance, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) noted problems associated with the definition of the components of an organization’s culture and whether culture is something that a company has or something that a company is.

Tharp (2014) suggested that the increased interest in organizational culture studies emanated from the increased international competition among firms. For instance, the success of foreign companies such as Toyota sparked the interest on whether the different corporate attitudes, values, and behaviors influenced the superior performance. Corporate culture was considered a manageable asset that could improve the performance of a firm (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2014). Since the 80s, the applied and academic exploration of the concept has increased. Consequently, this increase has resulted in changes in work organization, data management, organizational values, lifestyles, and other social and economic factors aimed at improving the relationship among the workers, the organization, and the workplace for the sake of improving the performance (Alvesson, 2016; Hogan & Coote, 2014).

Much of the literature associated with the evolution of the concept relates to the fields of management, leadership, and administration, which illustrates the centrality of these fields (Serpa, 2016). Today, despite the increasing consolidation of the definitions, distinct positions exist pertinent to critical positions and perspectives towards organizational culture (Alvesson, 2016). The different methodological and theoretical perspectives adopted in different studies, as well as the differing purposes of the researchers, justify the diversity of the conceptualizations of organizational culture to date (Serpa, 2016). Nevertheless, two trends characterize the historical perspectives towards organizational culture. “Corporate culture” is a prescriptive approach towards an organizational culture that advocates the management by culture and interventions in the symbolic aspects that allow the development of identity and organizational effectiveness. Alternatively, an interpretative nature of organizational culture understands the symbolic and cultural manifestations based on differences, conflicts, interests that enhance culture within the workplace. Based on different conceptualizations of the concept since its emergence, Serpa (2016) identified the levels of organizational culture. The first level involves convictions and beliefs registered in the consciousness of the organizational members, although they remain unaware of those beliefs and convictions. The second level involves the attitudes and values that employees within an organization choose, portray, and pass along to new members. The third level involves the individuals and the group behavior in the organization identifiable via systematic and spontaneous observations.

Models of Organizational Culture

Different models have emerged to explain the development of organizational culture. Denison's model of culture is one of the general models used to explain four cultural traits based on two points of reference: internal (involvement and consistency) and external (adaptability and mission) (Denison, Nieminen, & Kotrba, 2014; Shehadeh, Al-Zu'bi, Abdallah, & Maqableh, 2016). The internal point of reference relates largely to the internal affairs of the organization (Momeni, Marjani, & Saadat, 2012). For instance, the involvement trait entails the level to which organizational members portray their engagement in the pursuit of the organizational mission through collaboration (Mujeeb, Masood, & Ahmad, 2011). The consistency trait entails the internal systems and values that support efficiency, effectiveness, and problem, solving across the organizational boundaries (Denison et al., 2014; Kokina & Ostrovska, 2014; Shehadeh et al., 2016).

The external point of reference can apply to the international operations of businesses (Kokina & Ostrovska, 2014; Momeni et al., 2012; Mujeeb et al., 2011). The adaptability trait requires the assessment of the external environment and response to the changes to satisfy the needs of the stakeholders and customers. Adaptability in a foreign environment can enable a firm in meeting the demands of their clientele in that environment. Essentially, adaptability implies that an organization has to learn from its mistakes and create changes (Mujeeb et al., 2011). However, an organization operating in a foreign environment has to balance organizational learning, creation of change, and customer focus (Denison et al., 2014). An emphasis on organizational learning and creation of change without a customer focus indicates an organization recognizes the best practices in the industry but has difficulties in applying the lessons to their clientele (Mujeeb et al., 2011; Shehadeh et al., 2016).

The mission trait entails the degree to which the organization and its members understand their direction and intentions (Momeni et al., 2012; Mujeeb et al., 2011; Shehadeh et al., 2016). The success of organizations hinges on the clarity of their sense of direction and purpose, which define strategic objectives and organizational goals, as well as offer stability (Denison et al., 2014). An organization has to balance its strategic direction, vision, and intent with the goals and objectives to help in accomplishing its mission (Ali & Zhang, 2015, Cheng, Lee, & Shevlin, 2016). According to Zakari, Poku, and Owusu-Ansah (2013), involvement and adaptability indicate the openness, responsiveness, and flexibility of an organization, which could predict business success. Figure 1 shows Denison’s model of culture.

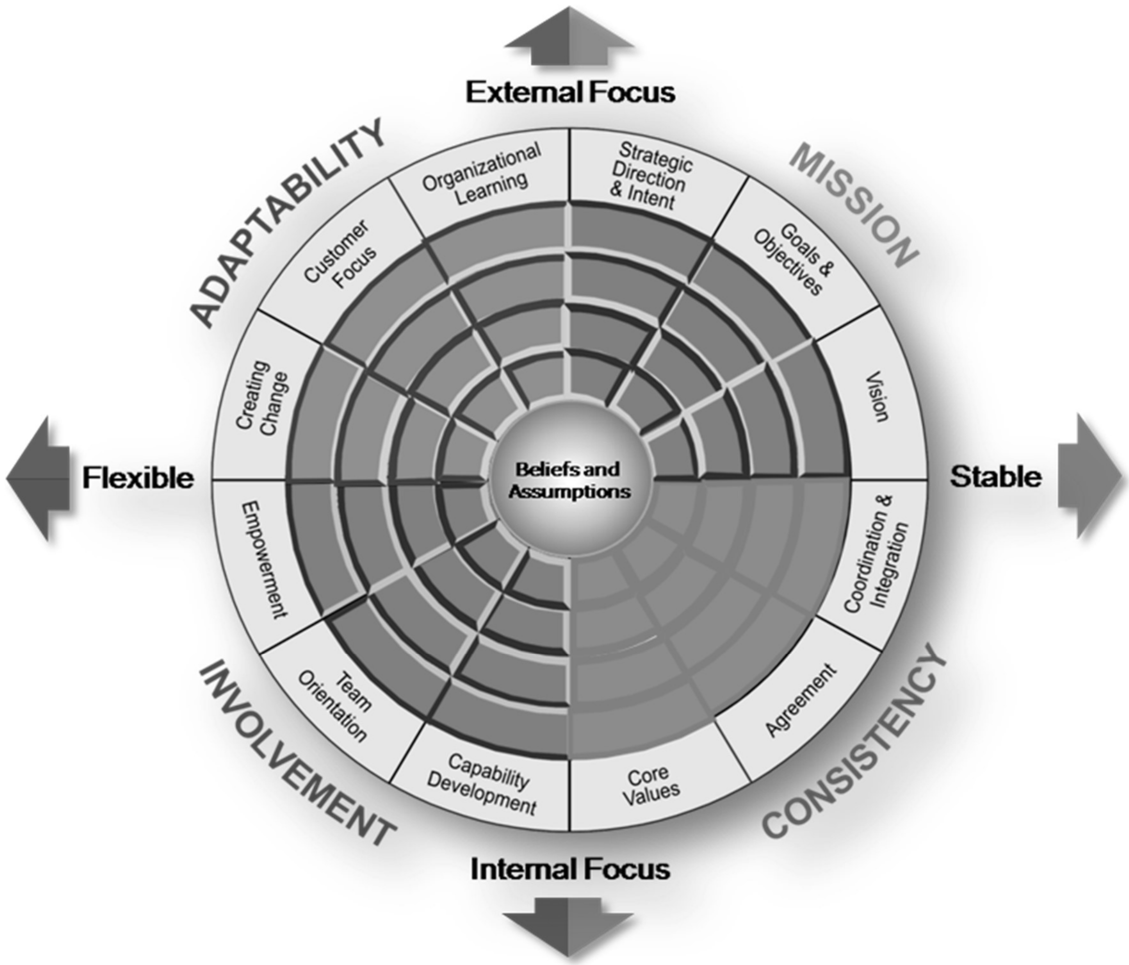

Figure 1. Denison's model of culture. Adapted from "The analysis of organizational culture with the Denison model (The case study of Latvian municipality)" by I. Kokina, and I. Ostrovska, 2014, *European Scientific Journal, ESJ,* 9, p. 364. Reprinted with permission.

Zakari et al. (2013) analyzed the split of the profile (horizontal and vertical splits) of Denison's model (see Figure 1) to help in contextualizing the relationship of an organization with the environment in which it operates. The horizontal split distinguishes the external focus and the internal focus. The internal organizational dynamics characterize involvement and consistency (Denison et al., 2014). However, the dimensions do not account for the interaction between the organization and the external environment (Zakari et al., 2013). Conversely, the external organizational dynamics characterize mission and adaptability. The vertical axis differentiates flexible organizations from stable organizations. Adaptability and involvement accentuate organizational capacity in the adoption of changes. Conversely, mission and consistency emphasize the capacity of the organization to maintain direction and stability (Mujeeb et al., 2011). Consequently, organizations with a cultural orientation towards mission and consistency tend to reduce the variability and consider stability and control as crucial. In contrast, organizations with a culture oriented towards involvement and adaptability introduce variability in operations to acquire diverse solutions as compared to organizations with a culture oriented towards mission and consistency (Kokina & Ostrovska, 2014; Zakari et al., 2013).

The Schein model considers organizational culture as a multidimensional concept that required a multi-layered analysis (Hogan & Coote, 2014). According to Schein's model, values underlie culture artifacts and norms that determine the observed behaviors and patterns (Abdullah, Shamsuddin, Wahab, & Hamid, 2014). Norms entail the expectations of the acceptable behaviors that organizational members hold (Hogan & Coote, 2014). According to Hogan and Coote (2014), innovative behaviors could originate from norms that support the exchange of information about new ways of working within an organization. In turn, norms emanate from the values of the organizational members and manifest in the artifacts. While values are considered the least visible layer of the organizational culture, artifacts represent the most visible layer of the organizational culture.

Most important to this study are the EPG model and Hofstede model. Hofstede developed the cultural model comprising four dimensions: power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism/collectivism (Hofstede et al., 1991). Later, Hofstede added a fifth and sixth dimension (long-term/short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint) within the model (Hofstede et al., 1991). Perlmutter (1969) developed the EPG model in the investigation of international business models. The EPG (extended to EPRG) includes ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric, and geocentric dimensions. In the model, Perlmutter explained the focus of organizations when operating in specific markets. Perlmutter has found significant application in the field of marketing, although it has significance in understanding organizational culture.

The two authors have found significant attention and application in organizational behavior research. For instance, Zhang, de Pablos, and Xu (2014) investigated the effects of organizational culture on knowledge sharing using the Hofstede cultural dimensions model. In their study, Zhang et al. showed that collectivism influenced knowledge sharing while the other dimensions had a significant correlation with motivations for knowledge sharing. In a similar study, Tong, Tak, and Wong (2015) found the interactive effects of Hofstede cultural dimensions on information sharing, which influenced the performance of the multinational firms. Moreover, Bortolotti, Boscari, and Danese (2015) revealed the importance of using Hofstede cultural dimensions model in the analysis of organizational culture and its impact on different aspects of organizations because of its simplicity and broad coverage. While many scholars have used the Hofstede cultural dimensions model, the level of understanding regarding its implications for organizations operating in foreign environments remains vague. Therefore, this justifies the use of the model because it can provide unique understanding regarding the effect of different dimensions on the performance of a firm in a foreign environment.

Similarly, researchers have found some attention in recent investigations in the EPRG model that focus on multinational companies or companies operating in foreign environments. Most of the studies using the EPRG model reveal the importance of using the model based on the rapid internationalization of businesses. For instance, several scholars have investigated in their studies the strategic orientation of businesses using the EPRG model (Daszkiewicz & Wach, 2014; Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014). Those studies found the implications of the different orientations underlying the model in the internationalization of Polish businesses and the subsequent performance based on those orientations. Similarly, Belniak (2015) used the EPRG model for investigating internationalization of firms. Based on the findings from the study, one can suggest that the EPRG model provides an efficient way of analyzing the framework factors, conditioning factors, and the general environmental factors that could influence the cultural orientation of a firm in a foreign country. The limited number of studies that have used the EPRG model in the investigation of firms operating in foreign countries provide an appropriate basis for this study because it can expand the body of literature on this model.

The EPG Cultural Model

The EPG or EPRG model has become a crucial component in the study of international business operations. The model suggests that organizational strategy characterizes four dimensions: ethnocentrism, polycentrism, regiocentrism, and geocentrism (E → P → R → G model path; Perlmutter, 1969). Perlmutter explained the ways through which organizations generate profitability and improve performance based on the interaction of their strategies and the business environment (Drachal, 2014). Unlike Hofstede's cultural dimensions that focus largely on the national culture, the EPRG model focuses on the international organizational culture and its interaction with the business environment.

According to Perlmutter (1969), ethnocentrism emerges when one culture dominates another in some ways, for instance, cultural sphere or manual, technical, ethical, moral, or mental skills. Ethnocentrism reflects the sense of superiority a person or an organization holds for the firm's homeland (Drachal, 2014). Wach and Wojciechowski (2014) found that the early stages of internationalization are marked with the ethnocentric orientation. Researchers have found that firms that continually use the ethnocentric orientation do not benefit from a global, standardization strategy, or from the local activities (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014). Moreover, ethnocentric firms may experience slow growth because of their inability to adjust their operations to the specific market considering that they aim at replicating the competitive advantage gained at home in a foreign market.

Drachal (2014) attempted to link the ethnocentric orientation with some of the elements that affect organizational performance. In the ethnocentric orientation, organizations consider the domestic (home) strategies as superior to international strategies. As such, the organizations tend to follow a hierarchy and high levels of centralization in which the organizations' headquarters subordinate the foreign company directly (Aksoy, Apak, Eren, & Korkmaz, 2014). However, this leads to the generation of various costs that undermine the performance of the firm. For instance, such organizations tend to train their managers in the home country. Consequently, they have to add compensations costs for work in another country. Moreover, a company could face resistance in the foreign market, which would reflect its poor performance in that market (Vetráková & Smerek, 2016). For instance, the Japanese carmaker Nissan faced resistance in the U.S. market after the introduction of their cars under the assumption that the customers would cover their cars during winters (Drachal, 2014). Therefore, organizations have to change their orientation from the ethnocentric orientation to benefit from the global strategy within the foreign markets.

Polycentrism or the polycentric orientation allows firms to account the features of the local and national markets (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014). According to Drachal (2014), the polycentric orientation means that an organization adapts its strategy to the specific foreign market, for instance, through accounting for factors such as customer preferences, expectations, and marketing strategy. In essence, this implies that an organization with a polycentric orientation focuses on decentralization through the formation of joint ventures or overseas subsidiaries to account for the local or host markets (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014). The polycentric orientation aims at ensuring success in different regional markets in which an organization has subsidiaries. The orientation has gained importance because of the rise of multinational enterprises (MNES) that focus their strategic activities across different host markets (Casey, 2017). While the polycentric orientation does not involve an extremely high degree of standardization in the marketing strategy, the level of differentiation across the markets remains high (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014**).**

While polycentrism has found a significant application, Drachal (2014) considers polycentrism as ineffective pertinent to the flow and exchange of knowledge. In polycentrism, organizations assume that only the local managers understand the local market, which hinders knowledge exchange. Moreover, the lack of strict control from the headquarters allows excessive freedom, which could lead to the escalation of disorder and lack of coordination between the different branches (Boussebaa, 2015). The local managers may also show reluctance in their adoption of the headquarters' recommendations. Therefore, Drachal (2014) suggested that extreme polycentrism could reduce the organization's economy of scale and impede efficient performance.

Regiocentrism or the regiocentric orientation entails the combination of various foreign markets into a single market (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014). As observed by Drachal (2014), the regiocentric orientation accounts for the different characteristics of the individual local markets, as well as the similarities among them. The regiocentric orientation appeared because of trade liberation and creation of free trade areas such as the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Fundamentally, organizations with the regiocentric orientation use a strategy that allows the subsidiaries to address the regional and local market dynamics for maximum benefits (Yap & Webber, 2015). According to Drachal (2014), the regiocentric orientation allows better economy of scale as compared to polycentrism because of its consideration of countries within a region as a single market.

Geocentrism entails the consideration of all foreign markets as a single market (Perlmutter, 1969). The orientation entails the use of standardized strategies and low levels of differentiation at all levels of the organization (Drachal, 2014). According to Wach and Wojciechowski (2014), organizations using the strategy seek global competitive advantage through the minimization of the unit costs of production. Moreover, the geocentric orientation seeks the improvement of performance through international competitiveness. Drachal (2014) found that the geocentric orientation improves the quality of services and products, as well as the efficiency in the utilization of global resources, which have a significant effect on the organizations' financial performance. While the organizations may face high costs of communication, transportation, and training, the current technological advancements have improved the rate of information exchange across the globe. The geocentric orientation has found significant approval because it allows organizations to base their strategies on a variety of opportunities. In essence, this ensures that the organization benefits from the resources from all the countries (Lakshman, Lakshman, & Estay, 2017).

The forces of globalization have led to a consistent evolution in organizations' adoption of each of the orientation as illustrated in the model path (Lakshman et al., 2017). Ethnocentrism emerged from global standardization while polycentrism and regiocentrism reflect the emergence of adaptive processes. Consequently, the adoption of the geocentric orientation requires the development of efficient standards. Studies have shown that a company may move along the path and reach geocentrism but revert to regiocentrism because of operational problems faced (Drachal, 2014; Wach & Wojciechowski, 2014).

The orientations have their individual advantages and disadvantages pertinent to organizational performance. For instance, the ethnocentric orientation allows the adoption of simple organizational structures, as well as easy flow of information and maintenance of internal control. Conversely, the development of innovations results in low flexibility and inefficient planning in responding to changes in the market (Drachal, 2014). The polycentric orientation emphasizes on the penetration in the foreign market pertinent to the locality with the aim of improving sales performance. According to Drachal (2014), the transfer of business through the geocentric orientation could lead to various cultural problems with significant effects on performance. The control process involves the implementation of both local and global factors (Chou, 2014). Managers experience pressure because of the global pressure on the organization to achieve positive results. The geocentric orientation also promotes the mobility of labor across the subsidiaries, which could create challenges to the human resource department if the new employees continue holding on to the cultures of their home countries (Lakshman et al., 2017).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

As stated earlier, Hofstede is considered the pioneer of the literature on cultural dimensions and, to some extent, organizational culture. Hofstede characterized culture into national culture and organizational culture. According to Podrug, Pavičić, and Bratić (2006), managers should understand the cultural environment of their companies and that of the countries where they are operating to avoid undesirable consequences of their strategies on the company. The initial study by Hofstede involved data from several multinational companies and their subsidiaries across 64 countries. In the cultural dimensions study, Hofstede included uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity, and individualism/collectivism (Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016).

Power distance entails the distribution of power or the acceptance and expectations of the power distribution as perceived by the less powerful organizational members or institutions (Hofstede, 2011; Kim, 2015; Podrug et al., 2006). Wu (2006) and Ferraro and Briody (2017) characterized power distance as the perceptions towards power inequality between subordinates and superiors. Cultures with a high-power distance expect the subordinates to respect their superiors (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). The hierarchy of the organization is revealed in cultures portraying a high-power distance. Chen, Liao, and Wen (2014) found that organizations with complex structures tended to portray high power distance because of the challenges associated with the acquisition and dissemination of information. In the study by Podrug et al. (2006), the researchers found that countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, and France had high power distance while the United States Denmark, Austria, and Scandinavian countries had low power distance. In such a context, this implies that individuals in the former accept the power inequalities in organizations while the latter will question such distances. In the comparison of South Korea and the USA, Kim (2015) generalized the finding that Eastern countries such as South Korea tend to have high power distances while Western countries such as the United States tend to have low power distance. The observation supports the findings by Hofstede (2011) that Latin, East European, African, and Asian countries have high power distance while most English-speaking Western countries tend to have low power distance.

Uncertainty avoidance involves the degree to which uncertain, ambiguous, or unknown situations create perceptions of threat among people of a specific culture (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016; Kim, 2015; Podrug et al., 2006; Vasile & Nicolescu, 2014). It can also be understood as the extent to which a society attempts to avoid ambiguous situations through the adoption of strict codes of behaviors, establishment of formal rules, believing in absolute truths, and intolerance to different actions and ideas (Kim, 2015; Podrug et al. 2006). Researchers have revealed that high scores of uncertainty avoidance lead to the development of anxiety towards unstructured, unpredictable, or unclear situations (Chen et al., 2014). Alternatively, low scores in the uncertainty avoidance dimension are associated with cultures that are unemotional, relatively tolerant, reflective, and less aggressive (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). Podrug et al. (2006) revealed that countries such as Greece and Portugal have high uncertainty avoidance, which makes lifetime employment a common phenomenon. Conversely, countries such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States have low uncertainty avoidance. Kim (2015) linked uncertainty avoidance to power distance by suggesting that societies that exhibit high uncertainty avoidance tend to adopt controlling systems to limit abnormal or deviant behaviors. Societies that exhibit low uncertainty avoidance engender risk-taking, innovativeness, and creativity. Moreover, societies with high uncertainty avoidance seek loyalty and strong relationship in their quest for stability, and they believe in growing commitment, responsibility and trust based on the time spent in the relationship (Garrett, Hoitash, & Prawitt, 2014). Conversely, societies with low uncertainty avoidance are willing to change and choose the events and ideas that could alter the future, despite the associated risks (Kim, 2015). In Hofstede (2011) study of 76 countries, Hofstede found high uncertainty avoidance in Japan, German-speaking countries, Latin America, and East and Central European countries. Alternatively, Nordic countries, countries practicing Chinese cultures, and English-speaking countries score low on uncertainty avoidance. Additionally, Vasile and Nicolescu (2016) contextualized the uncertainty avoidance dimension within the organizational context. According to Vasile and Nicolescu, organizations operating in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance will have few written rules while the vice versa is true.

Individualism and collectivism entail the magnitude of membership and belongingness to the society as a group (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). Individualistic cultures engross loose ties between the individuals and the society while collectivist cultures engross the integration of people into strong and cohesive groups (Podrug et al., 2006).

Vasile and Nicolescu (2016) conceptualized individualism/collectivism as the extent of responsibility for the actions of the groups or the individuals. Essentially, individualistic cultures tend to value individual expression, personal time, and independence while collectivist cultures value a sense of belonging, reciprocation, and respect for tradition (Kim, 2015). From an organizational perspective, Wu (2006) stated that cultures portraying individualism show concern for career progression and self-actualization within the organization while cultures portraying collectivism value the organization more than they do for their individual interests. In their study, Podrug et al. (2006) found Western societies such as Canada, Australia, USA, and the UK to have high levels of individualism while societies such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Chile and other Eastern countries have a high degree of collectivism. Fundamentally, individualistic cultures tend to control their members through internal pressure (guilt) while collectivist cultures control their members via external pressure (shame). In a study by Thien, Thurasamy, and Razak (2014), the study found that individualistic culture-based organizations have employees who work independently for their interests. Alternatively, collectivist culture-based organizations entail high levels of teamwork for the benefit of the entire organization. Lee, Scandura, and Sharif (2014) suggested that an organization could determine the levels of the dimension through the comparison of competition versus cooperation or independence versus interdependence (Kim, 2015).

Masculinity entails a situation in which the dominant societal values focus on success and money while femininity entails a situation where the dominant societal values focus on caring and quality of life (Kim, 2015). Masculinity/femininity refers to the allocation of emotional and social traits between the two genders (Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016). From an organizational perspective, the dimension can be understood to the extent of the role that each gender plays in the organization (Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016). According to Enkh-Amgalan (2016), dominant values in the masculinity-oriented cultures include assertiveness, ambition, and competition. Conversely, dominant values in femininity-oriented cultures include physical security, position security, and friendly atmosphere. According to Karin Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff, and Rutigliano (2014), women have limited opportunities for highly paying jobs within organizations scoring high on MAS (masculinity) while they acquire equal status in organizations with low MAS (femininity).

In addition to the previous dimensions, in the cultural dimension theory has Hofstede included the Confucian Work Dynamic to account for the unique features of the non-Western Chinese values, which involves thrift, persistence, ordering relationships, and sense of shame (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). In reporting the Chinese Value Survey, Wu (2006) observes that three of the factors correlated to the work-related cultural dimensions by Hofstede while Confucian Work Dynamic differed significantly from all the other factors.

While the previous dimensions illustrate the individual national cultures, several studies have shown that increased trends in globalization have led to cultural exchanges. Consequently, some country cultures have shifted from their initial rankings across the dimensions. In the cultural convergence theory, Enkh-Amgalan (2016) suggested that the interactions between cultures over time will increase their similarity. Enkh-Amgalan suggested that cultures are subject to outside influence and external exchanges.

In the comparison of Taiwan and the US, Wu (2006) made similar observations regarding cultural convergence. Wu demonstrated the role of the external environment in shaping cultures. For instance, Wu observed that the economic, social, and political changes in the US have led to a shift from low uncertainty avoidance to medium-high uncertainty avoidance. According to Wu, the sample of university employees from the US and Taiwan scored high levels on avoidance of uncertainty revealed in their inclination towards clear job descriptions and work procedures. While Hofstede characterized the United States as a highly *masculine* culture, Wu found that changes in the workforce have led to the embracement of the increased role of women in the labor force. Nevertheless, the levels of collectivism remain high in the Western cultures as compared to the Eastern cultures, despite the increased interactions (Wu, 2006). Khuong and Nhu (2015) concluded that cultural changes take a long-term orientation and require longitudinal investigation.

Organizational Cultural Effectiveness

As highlighted earlier, an organizational culture emerges from the accumulation of beliefs, values, and norms that shape the practices of the members of the organization. Sok, Blommel, and Tromp (2014) have linked organizational culture and effectiveness. The organizational leadership plays a critical role in establishing an effective organizational culture (Eisenbeib & Brodbeck, 2014; Mierke & Williamson, 2017). Managers aim at establishing effective organizational cultures to improve the performance and productivity of the organization**.** According to Engelen, Flatten, Thalmann, and Brettel (2014), business managers attain organizational effectiveness through the exhibition of employee-focused leadership, proper decision-making procedures, and decent social relationship. Eaton and Kilby (2015) have investigated the importance of establishing an effective organizational culture through the motivation and retention of the employees.

Ahmed and Shafiq (2014) have tested the factors that constitute the relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness. The authors investigated the influence of cultural domain, cultural balance, and employees' attitudes on organizational effectiveness. The authors found that *group cultural domain* had a positive relationship with satisfaction, which would imply organizational effectiveness. Moreover, the authors revealed that a balanced culture mediated satisfaction and organizational efficiency related to expenses. The authors also found a path-dependent culture-effectiveness relationship. Essentially, they found that the attitudes of the employees affected the individual effectiveness, which, in turn, affected the effectiveness of the organization (Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014). Likewise, other scholars have observed a significant relationship between culture and organizational effectiveness (O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, & Doerr, 2014). Those scholars also associated cultural effectiveness with enhanced organizational performance.

The creation of an effective organizational culture depends on the leadership (Nam Nguyen & Mohamed, 2011; Wilderom, van den Berg, & Wiersma, 2012). Senaji et al. (2014) revealed a strong relationship between the organizational culture, leadership effectiveness, and personal effectiveness. Moreover, the aspects of organizational culture that improve employee satisfaction and fulfillment were positively associated with personal and leadership effectiveness (Wilderom et al., 2012). However, Senaji et al. (2014) reported a stronger relationship between organizational culture and leadership effectiveness as compared to organizational culture and personal effectiveness.

Veiseh, Mohammadi, Pirzadian, and Sharafi (2014) found transformational leadership style has a strong effect on the organizational cultural effectiveness. Similarly, Wiewiora, Murphy, Trigunarsyah, and Brown (2014) mentioned that transformational leadership have a positive effect on the teamwork and the collaboration. Engelen et al. (2014) found that business managers in organizations with effective organizational cultures empowered employee-focused interpersonal relationships. Similarly, in their quantitative investigation, Veiseh et al. (2014) reported a positive relationship between interpersonal relationships and organizational culture. In their qualitative investigation, O’Reilly et al. (2014) support the finding that interpersonal relationships affect employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

Mousavi, Hosseini, and Hassanpour (2015) found employees’ involvement as a distinguishable factor of organizational cultural effectiveness. According to the researchers, this involvement entails unambiguous communication, strong interpersonal relationships, and employee-centered guidance within the organization (Engelen et al., 2014). Several scholars agree with the observation that business managers in organizations with effective cultures encourage employees’ involvement and contribution to the organizational activities (for example, O’Reilly et al., 2014). Mousavi et al.

associated organizational cultural effectiveness with the adaptability of the managers or leaders and the involvement of the employees. The two aspects determined consistency and adaptability during changes within the business environment.

Organizational Performance

O'Reilly et al. (2014) considered organizational performance as a measure of an organization's accomplishment of its objectives. However, other researchers regarded the view as narrow and concerns mainly with the effectiveness of an organization. Increased complexity of the business environment increases the criteria used in the measurement of performance. Hogan and Coote (2014) highlighted the importance of the financial and the market performance of an organization. Financial performance entails the degree to which an organization attains positive economic outcomes (Danquah, 2015; Hofstetter & Harpaz, 2015). Market performance entails the extent to which a firm attracts and retains customers. The illustrative forms of the two forms of performance include achievement of client satisfaction and overall firm profitability. Other scholars categorized performance into financial and non-financial performance; financial performance includes achievement of positive economic outcomes while non-financial performance includes work-related outcomes, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Davidson, Dey, & Smith, 2015).

Organizational performance is an outcome of a multiplicity of individual and firm-level factors. Leadership styles have also been associated with different aspects of organizational performance (Wilderom et al., 2012). Alif (2014) found features of transformational leadership such as communication, coordination, and exemplification as strong determinants of organizational performance. Fundamentally, this implies that leadership styles may have different effects on organizational performance. Jha (2014) investigated the effect of transformational leadership and psychological empowerment on organizational citizenship behavior, which is a component of organizational performance. The researcher revealed that transformational leaders had a significant influence on organizational culture profile under the moderating effects of psychological empowerment. Moreover, the researcher revealed that the positive effects of the organizational culture profile led to positive employee outcomes, which had a spillover effect on organizational performance. The effectiveness of a leader acts as motivation for followers, who reward the leaders or the organization through increased loyalty and trust. Akinbowale, Lourens, and Jinabhai (2014) found a path-dependent relationship between leader-member exchanges, employee engagement, and organizational performance (Ibrahim, Amin, & Salleh, 2014). Essentially, while the scholars revealed a variety of factors that influenced the organizational performance, I will focus in this study on the effect of organizational culture on organizational performance.

Organizational Culture and Performance

Many authors agree that organizational culture has a significant effect on the long-term effectiveness and performance of an organization (O’Reilly et al., 2014). Mousavi et al. (2015) offered several views regarding the relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance. First, the researchers used the strong-culture thesis to explain the relationship. The researchers suggested that organizational culture influences employees, commitment, which, in turn, determines performance (Liu & Almor, 2016). The establishment of a culture that portrays the same set of beliefs, norms, and values leads to positive results such as increased profits.

The establishment of a common culture motivates organizational members, increases organizational belongingness (identity), as well as the responsibility to the employer (Mousavi et al., 2015). Further, the authors found a significant correlation between a strong culture and short-term financial performance.

The ability of an organizational culture to improve the employees' adaptability to the change could lead to increased long-term performance. Strong organizational cultures are linked to clear focus, homogeneity of effort, and high-performance environments. Moreover, Mousavi et al. agreed that organizational culture is one of the strongest determinants of organizational excellence.

O'Reilly et al. (2014) reported significant correlations between a company's culture and employee and/or job satisfaction. Other researchers documented positive relationship between individual aspects of performance including productivity, quality, and financial indices (Motilewa et al., 2015).

The relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance depends on the outcome variable studied (O'Reilly et al., 2014). For example, a people-friendly organizational culture is an important factor in improving the performance through the employees' positive attitudes.

Even though, some of the positive employee attitudes have no or little relationship with the financial performance of the organization (Hock, Clauss, & Schulz, 2016) but aspects of an organizational culture emphasizing financial performance, e.g, focus on delivery of results, have little or no relationship with employee attitudes. As such, O'Reilly et al. (2014) concluded that the determination of the relationship between culture and organizational performance remains challenging.

Nevertheless, various scholars in the existent literature suggest that specific cultural dimensions play significant roles in the firm performance (short-term financial performance and strategy development). For instance, Chatman et al. (2014) found that adaptability promoted firm performance significantly. Similarly, results-oriented organizational culture has relevance to the organization, despite the strategy the firm adopts. Moreover, companies whose cultures focus on details tend to portray higher levels of performance than those that are not (O'Reilly et al., 2014).

Measuring Effect of Culture on Organizational Performance

Scholars have used different criteria to determine the effect of culture on the organizational performance. Senaji et al. (2014) investigated this relationship with a focus on managerial effectiveness. The authors used a survey strategy based on the Organizational Culture Scale consisting of eight dimensions (helping behavior, ability utilization, low stress, growth/innovation, bureaucracy, personalized relationship, shared outlook, and goal achievement). The dependent variable (managerial effectiveness) was measured against interpersonal effectiveness, functional effectiveness, and personal effectiveness).

O'Reilly et al. (2014) used the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) to identify the effect of different thematic dimensions on performance. The refined tool used in the collection of data for correlational analysis includes six factors: results-oriented, adaptability, integrity, customer oriented, collaborative, and detail oriented. The researchers focused on the effect of those factors on the financial performance, the corporate reputation, the stock recommendations, as well as Glassdoor ratings. Valmohammadi and Roshanzamir (2015) used the four classifications of culture (clan, hierarchy, market, and adhocracy) in the investigation of the relationship between culture and performance. Six criteria were used as measures of organizational performance (planning/customer, leadership/strategic, focus/measurement, and knowledge management/analysis/workforce focus/operations focus.

Although multiple researchers have suggested different ways of measuring the effect of organizational culture on performance, none of those has used the EPG cultural model. Therefore, this study differs from previous investigations in the sense that the researcher tries to establish the link between cultural aspects based on organizational strategy and aspects of performance in foreign environments. While previous researchers have investigated the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions deeply, the current research differs because the researcher combines the Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions model with the EPG model and aims at linking each aspect of these models to the organizational performance.

Transition

The concept of culture and its implications for organizations has received significant scholarly attention as illustrated in the review of the literature. While organizational culture is considered crucial for the success and survival of organizations, its definition remains unclear. However, most scholars agree that organizational culture entails the shared assumptions, values, and norms among organizational members. Through the organizational culture, the leaders shape the symbols, values, processes, principles, and methods of working within an organization. In this section, I have presented the concept of organizational culture and its evolution through the years. Although the evolution does not yield a specific definition, it reveals the importance of the shared values in driving the achievement of the organizational objectives. I have also outlined some of the models of organizational culture including Denison's model, Schein model, EPG, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions model. EPG and Hofstede are the core of this investigation, hence the in-depth review. From a general perspective, the two models were considered suitable for understanding the operation of organizations in different environments. In section 2, I outlined the methodological approaches used in the data collection and the analysis of the data. Moreover, I discussed the ethical concerns that could affect the study, as well as the data collection, organization, analysis techniques, and the strategies considered appropriate in ensuring the findings are reliable and valid. In section 3, I included the research findings, applications to professional practice and social change, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I restate the purpose of this study then I describe the role of the researcher in the data collection process. In addition, I describe the eligibility criteria for the participants and how I accessed them, and then I identify the research method, design, population, and sampling. I also discuss the informed consent, the criteria of an ethical research, and the various instruments for data collection. Finally, I describe the technique used to collect the data and identify how I addressed the reliability and validity of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders used to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance. The targeted population consisted of eight current and previous senior business leaders of an Egyptian company who developed and deployed effective organizational culture strategies for operating in foreign countries that increased organizational performance for their firm. The implications for positive social change include the potential to enhance a firm's social responsibility and social acceptance in international markets for the benefit of the firm, its employees, and the local societies.

Role of the Researcher

The disclosure of the role of a researcher in empirical research helps in increasing the credibility of the findings (Robinson, 2014). As the researcher, I have the responsibility for the selection of the appropriate methodological techniques suitable for the investigation. The process involved the selection of the appropriate case for analysis, picking the right participants, conducting interviews, collecting the data, as well as analyzing and presenting the data. The chosen methodological considerations are based on previous experience. Yin (2014) suggested that researchers should be keen on the selection of the appropriate methods to ensure reaching accurate findings. In addition to choosing the adequate techniques suitable for the study, I acted as the primary data collection instrument because I was in direct contact with the participants.

I have worked in a corporate setting for the past 12 years, of which 6 years have been in a managerial position. I have been engaged in foreign operations for the past 12 years, through expanding my company's business to foreign territories. Therefore, I deeply understand the implications of organizational culture on organizational performance for organizations operating in foreign markets. The experience acquired aided in assessing whether the organizational culture of organizations operating in foreign countries affects them differently from organizations operating in their domestic or home countries and the strategies used by them to reflect this effect.

In addition, my corporate experience, as well as my international exposure, allowed me to pick the right organization and to determine the adequate candidates for this case study. The selection of the case is supported by the previous relationship developed with the chairman of the chosen Egyptian company. Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained the importance of the researcher's relationship with a key person inside the research site. While the previous relationship with the chairman could lead to loss of objectivity in the data collection process, observation of ethical requirements ensured that such biases are not introduced in the study.

The ethical research concept comprises of the determination of the procedures implemented to mitigate the ethical problems and personal biases in empirical studies (Brewis, 2014). This study encompassed various stages of revisions, credibility, and checks to prevent any ethical biases and personal opinions in order to make the readers confident with the outcomes of the study as well as with the process. I am going to keep all materials required for this study in a secured area while preserving the confidentiality of the participants and the company that was used in my case study. Yin (2014) stated that an approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) needs to be obtained by all researchers in order to gather data from humans. Accordingly, I applied for the Walden University IRB approval and obtained it. The Walden IRB approval number is 06-14-18-0090321. The *Belmont Report* protocol consists of the ethical guidelines that cover dealing with the human subjects, selecting them, and expressing consent regarding the process of the research (Newman & Glass, 2014). I strictly abided by all these ethical guidelines throughout this research.

Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey (2014) highlighted the importance of the potential personal bias and its effect on the research findings as well as what methods can be applied to minimize its effect. In order to avoid the personal bias issue in this research, I adopted specific strategies to mitigate this bias, like using a structured protocol for the interviews, reviewing, and validating the transcripts. I was also comfortable with my ability to add more participants if needed in order to achieve data saturation. In addition, I spent time constructing the questions for the interview which was followed by the *Belmont Report* protocol.

The interview protocol is an important tool to regulate the process of questioning the study participants in order to avoid personal bias (Patton, 2015). Castillo-Montoya (2016) set a 4-phase process to refine the interview protocol. This process starts with confirming that the interview questions align with research questions. The second phase is to build an inquiry-based interview. The third phase is to receive feedback on interview protocols, then finally to piloting the interview protocol. My rationale for the interview protocol is to strictly follow this 4-phase process, which I did.

Participants

In a study, researchers should establish clear eligibility criteria for the selection of the population that possesses the desired characteristics for accurate data collection (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014). Similarly, Robinson (2014) opined that researchers should seek the persons best informed about the topic or issue being researched. Consequently, in this study, I sought the participation of senior level managers from an Egyptian company operating in 16 countries. In the study, I included those managers who have worked in the company for more than 5 years in managerial positions and who have implemented successful strategies that led to excellent performance. Researchers can rely on senior managers to share reliable data regarding the company of study (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Essentially, this population was considered because of their experience, roles in the management, and their influence on the overall performance, which align with the research question of this study.

Meeting the personal needs of the selected population throughout the whole selection process and respecting the ethical requirements during the selection is important. I strictly met the personal needs of the participants and respected the ethical requirements during the selection process. Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2014) explained how the *Belmont Report* is essential in choosing eligible population for the research; the Report also explains clearly the importance of selecting the population based on a voluntary decision (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015). I worked according to the recommendations of *Belmont Report* regarding the eligibility of participants.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2011), access to participants has implications on the selection of a representative sample. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), it could be difficult to gain access to participants, especially when the intended data collection methods requires more than one session for data collection. Gaining access to participants is challenging, especially when the researcher is not known to the organization or does not have a prime contact within the organization (Saunders et al., 2011). Therefore, a researcher requires a prime contact, broker, or gatekeeper to control the research access and make the final decision on whether to allow the researcher to conduct the research within the organization. A prime contact should be senior enough to facilitate the identification of the appropriate participants and to support the researcher during the data collection process (Robinson, 2014; Stochkendahl, Myburgh, Young, & Hartvigsen, 2015). I relied on my relationship with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the human resource manager (HRM) in the company to gain access to the participants because of the professional and friendly relationship developed with the CEO and the HRM earlier. The initial step involved getting written approval from the CEO to study the company and emailing the CEO and the HRM requesting assistance in the identification of potential participants for the study. The following step involved setting up a meeting or a video call to outline to them the aspects of the research. The meeting articulated the characteristics desired among the participants and the time each of the participants would have to dedicate to the data collection process. Continued engagement facilitated a working relationship with the prime contacts. After the identification of the participants, personal contact with the individuals helped in establishing a working relationship before the start of data collection. Moreover, the participants received an email referencing the research requirements and objectives to understand the nature of the research and to prepare adequately before the start of data collection. Additionally, I provided the participants with the consent form, as it was very beneficial for them to have it at this time.

Unluer (2012) stated that it is important to contact the research participants in a friendly way through the whole research process. One of the factors that helps the participants to express their opinions and views freely is to feel that they are surrounded by an environment of trust (Patton, 2015). Previous connections and lasting relationships with the participants are important tools that motivate the participants to share their experience with the researchers (Brewis, 2014) and help in establishing a working relationship with the participants. Accordingly, I established a friendly working relationship with the participants throughout the research period.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Empirical research could involve three main methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Jain et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2011). Quantitative research entails the collection of numerical evidence based on closed-ended questions (Yin, 2014). The method is largely associated with the deductive approach (Greener, 2008) in which the researcher collects data to test specific hypotheses (Yin, 2014). Conversely, qualitative research involves the collection of data that reflects the opinions, beliefs, or attitudes of the participants towards the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2011). According to Yin (2014), the method involves the use of open-ended questions that help a researcher in discovering what is occurring or what has occurred. Mixed-method research involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the collection and analysis of data (Green et al., 2014; Greene, 2014).

Consequently, I relied on a qualitative method in this study. This method was selected over quantitative and mixed methods because I did not require the formulation of hypotheses as mandated in quantitative research and the quantitative part of the mixed-method research. Ahmed and Ahmed (2014) mentioned that the qualitative method is preferable when assessing strategies.

The quantitative method was not suitable for this study because the objective of this study was not to investigate a relationship between variables nor to have a comparison between two groups. Flick (2014) defined quantitative research as a method that involves the explanation of phenomena through the collection of numerical data and analysis of the data through mathematically based techniques.

I did not choose the mixed method for this study because applying the procedures of both methods together, the qualitative and the quantitative, is not easy, and this method would not have contributed to answering the research question. Yin (2014) mentioned that the usage of the mixed method involves a lot of time and significant efforts to reach an outcome.

Research Design

The choice of an appropriate research design should consider the research approach being used (Yin, 2014). The choice of the design depends on the approach the researcher takes whether it is explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive (Saunders et al., 2011). Researchers in descriptive studies aim at providing an accurate profile of an individual, situation, or event (Robson, 2002). While a descriptive approach may help in the evaluation and synthesis of data and ideas, the approach is rarely used because it lacks adequate empirical strengths. Researchers in exploratory research seek to generate valuable and new insights about a phenomenon (Robson, 2002). In exploratory research, researchers involve a search of the relevant literature, interviews with experts (participants), and they may consider triangulation of the different data sources to reach consistency among these sources (Saunders et al., 2011). Lastly, researchers in the explanatory studies focus on the explanation of the relationships that exist between variables (Saunders et al., 2011). Fundamentally, this implies that the researchers in an exploratory study would rely on an inductive approach while in an explanatory study they would rely on a deductive approach. I applied an exploratory inductive approach in this study. I selected this approach because through this approach I had a platform for an in-depth evaluation of the effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders used to align their organizational culture with foreign countries' cultures for the achievement of excellent organizational performance.

The nature of the study dictates the strategy a researcher uses in the accomplishment of the research. According to Saunders et al. (2011) and Badke (2017), research could use seven different strategies: experiment, survey, case study, action research, ethnography, and archival research. In an appropriate research strategy, researchers depend on the research objectives and questions, the philosophical underpinnings, the extent of existing knowledge, and the recency of the study. Other than experiments and archival research, other researchers focus on recent phenomena. Based on the seven strategies, Yin (2014) classified qualitative designs appropriate for organizational studies in narrative, phenomenological, and case study designs. A narrative design entails the use of stories, journals, autobiographies, and interviews as a way of sharing knowledge. I did not select the narrative design because of the inability to provide an appropriate platform for strategic decision-making in organization considering its focus on knowledge sharing of participants' stories (Tsang, 2014). The phenomenological design entails the search of opinion from a group of people regarding experiencing a phenomenon (Jain et al., 2015). While many researchers have relied on phenomenological design to accomplish their studies, I did not choose the design because it could have led to potentially biased opinions based on the personal experience of the respondents. Moreover, organizational culture cannot be considered as a static phenomenon that could be understood based on the opinions of a random group of people.

The case study was considered appropriate for the study based on several reasons. Several studies consider case studies as the preferred strategy when asking *how* and *what* questions (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Robson (2002) defines the design as a strategy in which the researcher conducts the empirical investigation within a real-life context based on multiple sources of evidence. The design was considered appropriate for the study because of providing a way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the context of the research. Moreover, the identification of operational links among events over time is suitable for the case studies (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Hyett et al., 2014). Yin (2003) distinguished case studies into single case versus multiple case. A single case entails the exploration of one critical or unique case while multiple cases involve the comparison of findings of two or more cases. I will rely on a single case study design. I considered the single case study as appropriate because one can have an in-depth understanding of the case through the single case study.

The number of individuals used will depend on the point at which researchers achieve data saturation (Fugard & Potts, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hussein, 2009). Consequently, the number of participants could increase after the start of data collection to ensure data saturation. The data saturation concept in qualitative studies is similar to the concept of the statistically valid sample in quantitative researches (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Both concepts ensure the validity of the whole research. I conducted eight interviews with current and previous senior business leaders of an Egyptian company who developed and deployed effective organizational culture strategies for operating in foreign countries that increased organizational performance for their firm. Because of the relationship between the previously mentioned key contacts in the Egyptian company and me, I was confident of adding more participants if needed in order to reach data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The eligible population for this study encompassed 20 employees in senior leadership positions within the selected organization in Egypt who meet the participant criteria mentioned earlier in this study. The chosen Egyptian company is one of the leading companies in Egypt. The selected company has operations in 16 African countries, which is one of the biggest companies in the continent in terms of geographical expansion.

However, empirical research requires a sample drawn from the population because of the impracticability of involving the entire population, budget constraints, and time constraints (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Saunders et al., 2011). Sampling techniques include probability (representative) sampling and non-probability (judgmental) sampling. Probability sampling involves the selection of a representative sample by chance. I did not use the probability sampling in the study because it involves the selection of samples for quantitative research. Non-probability sampling techniques include quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowballing, self-selection, and convenience sampling (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014).

I used purposive sampling in the selection of the appropriate sample. The technique was considered appropriate for the study based on several reasons. According to Saunders et al. (2011), although purposive sampling has low representativeness of the population and depends on researcher's choice, the technique suits the study because of its usefulness when working with small samples with adequate information regarding the issue under investigation (Etikan et al., 2016). The use of the technique leads to the selection of a sample that reveals key themes and offers in-depth information about the phenomenon (Neuman & Robson, 2014).

According to Tongco (2007), preparation is required for the identification of the sample that is knowledgeable in the subject area. Consequently, asking for help from one contact could help in the identification of key informants for the study who meet the participant's criteria mentioned earlier in this study. As such, the chief executive officer and the human resource manager helped in the identification of the individuals that meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Showing the list of characteristics and qualifications to the resource persons reduced the effort used in selecting the participants. In this exploratory case study, the CEO and the HRM (gatekeepers) aided in the identification of eight informants who can participate in the interviews.

According to Yin (2014), case studies can rely on small samples as long as the researcher prompts the participants for in-depth insights about each question. As such, prolonged engagement with the interviewees helped in reaching data saturation. Fundamentally, case studies depend on the richness of data rather than the quantity of data generated (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, having a small sample with which the researcher engages with deeply would help in generating rich data (Fugard & Potts, 2015).

In this case study, I interviewed eight study participants with the possibility of adding more participants for the goal of achieving data saturation. The number of participants in a qualitative research is in important factor in determining the adequate sample size to fulfil the study objectives (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Lee, 2014). Eukeria and Favourate (2014) mentioned that the study participants should have the adequate knowledge and the required experience about the research topic.

Moreover, I used methodological triangulation in this study to ensure data saturation. Methodological triangulation is an approach through which the investigator mixes different data sources to ensure consistency among these sources (Balzacq, 2014). In many cases, researchers use data triangulation to involve the comparison of responses from the different respondents to the point that no additional codes, themes, or information emerge after the completion of data collection (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Hampshire (2014) suggested that interview questions in qualitative research should be structured in a way that facilitates asking multiple participants the same questions. Appendix A lists the interview questions to be used in the collection of data. Albuquerque, de Lucena, and de Freitas Lins Neto (2014) caution that the selection of individuals with specialized information could overshadow the data accidentally or intentionally. Moreover, the reliance on gatekeepers, which is based on well-established relationship, helps to avoid restrictions on key informants (Kornbluh, 2015). Consequently**,** the factors implied the need to establish a working relationship with the gatekeepers, e.g., the CEO and the HRM, to ensure that all the key informants are included in the interview for the acquisition of rich data.

Ethical Research

The accomplishment of empirical research requires the observation of several ethical considerations. These common ethical considerations include informed consent, the ability of withdrawal from the research, participants' protection, and confidentiality of the information provided (Sarma, 2015). In this study, I worked hard to achieve the highest ethical standards throughout this study. I successfully completed the Protecting Human Research Participant (PHRP) training course in May 2015 which increased my awareness towards meeting the ethical standards.

After the identification of the participants, I sent an informed consent form to each individual. In this informed consent, I explained to the participants that participation does not harm them. Obtaining an informed consent from the study participants is an obligation of the ethical research (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014). The participants were also informed about the incentives acquirable from their participation. The researcher did not reimburse the participants and relied only on their goodwill to participate in the interviews. The informed consent entailed the assurance that the informants will participate voluntarily without coercion and without any monetary incentives. McLaughlin and Alfaro-Velcamp (2015) mentioned the importance of voluntary participation in the research and how this improves the credibility of the findings. Flick (2014) suggested that the ethical quality of an interview depends on whether the participant suffers during the process. Consequently, I used the informed consent form to articulate the procedure for interviewing to illustrate that the process does not cause any harm to the participants.

Moreover, the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at their will. The participants were requested to make a formal withdrawal request by sending an email to me. Elo et al. (2014) clarified the importance of giving the participants the absolute right to withdraw from the research any time and for any reason.

To ensure the alignment with the ethical principles of protecting the research participants, I fully disclosed the requirements and objectives of the research and the amount of the expected intervention from them then gave the participants enough time to review all aspects of the research and to ask any questions before expressing their willingness to participate. I required the participants to send a signed copy of the informed consent form indicating that they have read and understood the requirements. Each participant received a summary of the findings after the analysis of the data. This summary of findings is in an audience-appropriate format through retaining the key points of the study and summarizing the essential information for the participants.

Another issue addressed in ethical research entails the revealing personally identifying information in the final report (Elo et al., 2014). In many cases, individuals decline being interviewed because they feared that personally identifying information will be shared. As such, I did not use any personal information that reveals the identity of the respondents in the final report. Indeed, in the informed consent form, I assured the participants that their personally identifying information was excluded from the study. I relied on codes in referring to the participants (RES1, RES2, RES3…RES8). I also withheld some details regarding the demographics and the site that might allow the audience to guess the identity of the participants or the organization. I selectively chose the demographic descriptors to be shared with the audience in order to protect the identity of the participants.

Empirical research should ensure the confidentiality of information that the interviewees provide (Saunders et al., 2011). Some of the information that the interviewees provided may have negative implications for their careers when misplaced or when accessed by unauthorized individuals. Consequently, the recorded interviews were destroyed after transcription. As stated in the informed consent form, the transcribed data is stored on my password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected hard drive for a minimum of 5 years. After the 5 years, I will permanently destroy and delete the data from the computer and from the hard drive. Khan (2014) highlighted the importance of keeping the confidentiality of the research findings by completely destroying the research data after some time. Individuals will not have access to the information unless under my authorization. The final doctoral manuscript carries the Walden IRB approval number 06-14-18-0090321.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary data collection instrument because the researcher has the responsibility to hear, see, and interpret the information (Cleary et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I was the primary data collection instrument in the interview process. I used semistructured interviews in the collection of information from the key informants.

Interviews can be unstructured, semistructured, or structured. According to Rabionet (2011), the use of unstructured interviews could lead to a topic or themes that deviate from the focus of the study. According to Brinkmann (2014), semistructured interviews involve standardized wording and sequence of questions for each respondent to minimize differences in the answers. Unlike structured interviews, semistructured interviews allow the researcher to change the wording of the question without altering the meaning (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). Consequently, this ensures flexibility when approaching the participants, especially when a respondent does not understand a question. Moreover, probing through semistructured interviews maximizes the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent, which reduces the risk of socially desirable answers and increases the sense of rapport. Brinkmann (2014) argued that semistructured interviews allowed researchers to focus on detail in the exploration of business-related activities. Consequently, this makes semistructured interviews appropriate for the collection of data in order to explore the effective cultural-oriented strategies that business leaders can use to achieve excellent organizational performance. In addition to the use of semistructured interviews with open-ended questions, I used the company's annual reports, and the company's website as the secondary data sources.

Researchers traditionally have relied on face-to-face interviews because of the high response rate (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). However, the emergence of modern technologies facilitates "face-to-face" interaction through online platforms (Brinkmann, 2014; Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). In this study, I benefitted from the modern technological facilities and relied on web-based techniques including videoconferencing, Skype, Facetime, etc. During the interview sessions, I recorded the information and took notes of the responses that enabled the organization of the data according to the selected themes.

According to Carcone, Tokarz, and Ruocco (2015), qualitative research relying on semistructured interviews may suffer from methodological issues that reduce the quality of the data collected. For instance, internalized attitudes may lead to an unconscious attempt to limit the information a respondent provides. However, researchers struggle that increasing the number of interviews could minimize the negative effects of *unconscious bias* through understanding the phenomenon from multiple sources. As such, I ensured that the informants included provided in-depth unbiased information through prolonged engagement and probing in case the answer does not satisfy the expected outcome. Other methods used in empirical research to enhance reliability and validity in qualitative studies include panel review of interview questions, member checking, triangulation, pilot testing, and transcript reviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hussein, 2009). In this study, I relied on panel review of interview questions, member checking, and methodological triangulation to enhance the reliability and the validity of the semistructured interviews and to ensure that it reflects the actual opinions of the respondents. Before interviewing the respondents, I consulted the faculty research study committee members to ensure that the questions included in the interview questions capture the intended measures. In the member checking process, I returned my interpretations of the participants' responses to the participants to check the accuracy of my interpretations and the conformability with their experience. Methodological triangulation involves the comparison of "first reality" with "second reality" (Modell, 2015). In the study, I compared the extent to which the statements from the interviewees (first reality) mirror opinions and perceptions (second reality) from conventional literature, archives, and company annual reports.

Data Collection Technique

Interviews can be conducted through face-to-face interaction (site visit), telephone, or through web-based techniques, for instance, videoconferencing (Janghorban et al., 2014; Nielsen, 2011; Robinson, 2014). I used a mix of face-to-face and videoconference interview techniques.

Each of these techniques has its uniqueness, as well as advantages and disadvantages. Based on cost considerations, some researchers prefer web-based interviews (videoconferencing). Videoconferencing reduces the costs associated with the completion of the study because the researcher does not have to travel to the site (Robinson, 2014). Additionally, web-based interviews reduce the spatial and geographical distance between the respondents, which could complicate the data collection process (Nielsen, 2011). Unlike web-based surveys, web-based interviews do not suffer from a low response rate because the respondent and the interviewer interact at a personal level. Nevertheless, the technique requires the presence of technologies that can facilitate the interaction. I used face-to-face interviews to capture the verbal cues, non-verbal cues, emotions, and behavior, but it is costlier for the researcher to go to the site (Mojtahed et al., 2014).

The initial step of the interview process was to get the approval of the CEO to study the company then to email the CEO and the HRM requesting assistance in the identification of the potential participants for the study. The following step was to email the consent form to the prospective study participants and to outline to them the aspects of the research prior to obtaining their approval in order to participate in this study. For the participants who agreed to participate in this study, I sent them another email to explain the nature of the research and to prepare adequately before the start of the data collection process. Accordingly, I asked them to get involved in an interview via a meeting or a call that will last 45 to 60 minutes. After their permission, the interview was recorded using a digital recording device. Their name was not mentioned during the recording. The interview consisted of 8 questions. When needed, an interview with additional participants took place to make sure that data saturation is reached. The initial plan was to interview from three to five participants, but I extended the number of participants to eight to fulfil the data saturation requirement. The interview questions were centered on their business and the strategies they adopted in the company.

Data Organization Technique

All the interview sessions were recorded for transcription during the data analysis process. Moreover, I maintained a reflective journal containing notes about the changes that occurred to the methodology. A reflective journal helps a researcher to maintain methodological rigor and consistency in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Applebaum, 2014; Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014; Ortlipp, 2008). Notes of the interview sessions will be stored in hard-copy format for future reference. Consequently, this allowed me to analyze the data systematically based on the first-hand information acquired.

It is mandatory to protect the privacy of the research participants (Brewis, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014). As stated earlier in this study and as mentioned in the informed consent form, I will store the collected data on my password-protected computer and will create a backup on a password-protected hard drive for a minimum of 5 years to protect the privacy of the participants.

Data Analysis

Various qualitative research designs involve different data analysis methods (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Many case studies rely on methodological triangulation in the analysis of the data because of the reliance on mixed-methods research (qualitative and quantitative data) (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Derobertmasure & Robertson, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). In this study, I analyzed the data through Yin's 5-step process and methodological triangulation through which the interview data was triangulated with the company's annual reports and archives. The benefits of this method to the research were confirming the findings, providing comprehensive data, and enhancing the validity and reliability of the study.

I used a semistructured interview with eight questions to collect data that relates to the organizational culture strategies adopted by the participants. During the interview, I noticed and recorded the participants' reactions and behaviors along with recording their words in order to analyze the data effectively. After finalizing the analysis, I was able to determine some effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders used to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance. Data analysis comprises of discoursing the assessment(s), which one can use in order to answer the interview questions and confirm the selection (Derobertmasure & Robertson, 2014; Humble, 2015; Pierre, 2014). I used Yin's 5-step process to confirm the accuracy of the data to enhance the validity of the study.

In qualitative studies, the analysis of data starts with the transcription of the interviews on word processing computer software or through a classic data analysis method (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Pierre, 2014; Welsh, 2002). In both cases, researchers construct themes based on the previous literature to facilitate effective organization of data prior to the systematic analysis. According to Welsh (2002), the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) helps researchers in acquiring a transparent and accurate picture of the data and provides an audit of the entire data analysis process. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2011) discuss different methods through which a researcher could apply NVivo in CAQDAS. In this study, I relied on classical content analysis.

Classical content analysis involves the counting of themes based on whether they are produced priori or posteriori (Schabenberger & Gotway, 2017). Classical content analysis will help in understanding the concepts that the respondents discussed most (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Kuckartz, 2014). I put all the ideas and different concepts on separate cards and categorized them by theme. Essentially, this helped in the identification of the themes, which helped in questioning the reoccurring concepts and ideas. Schabenberger & Gotway (2017) clarified the importance of classifying the different themes. I then analyzed the data using a large board on the wall (mind map). Fusch & Ness (2015) pointed out that the usage of mind maps helps researchers throughout the classic data analysis process. Consequently, I compared the themes drawn from the codes with the theories discussed in the literature review. In essence, this helped in verifying the theories discussed in the review of the literature and their relationship with the findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

In qualitative studies, reliability addresses the dependability of the data. The notion of dependability in qualitative research emphasizes the need to account for the changing context within which the research takes place (Darawsheh, 2014; Leung, 2015). As such, I had the responsibility for describing the changes that occur in the research setting and the effect of the changes on the research. Several methods have been suggested in previous research for the improvement of dependability including member checking, expert validation of the interview questions, transcript review, pilot testing, interview protocol, focus group protocol, as well as participant or direct observations (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Appendix B lists the interview protocol used in this study. In this study, I relied on member checking to improve the dependability of the findings. After finishing the interview, I restated a summary of the answers to give the participants the opportunity to review my interpretations and comment on them if there was any discrepancy between what they meant and what was interpreted.

Validity

The idea of validity in qualitative research refers to credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings (Cope, 2014). Credibility requires that establishing the results of the research have to be credible from the participants' perspective (Cope, 2014, Darawsheh, 2014; Leung, 2015). Consequently, the purpose of the research involves describing or understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective. Researchers can enhance credibility through member checking of the interpretation, triangulation, participant transcript review, interview protocol, focus group protocol, as well as direct or participant observations (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I relied on member checking, methodological triangulation, participant observations, and checking the company's annual reports and archives to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Qualitative research assumes that every researcher has a unique perspective when conducting research (Cope, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The interviewers should be excellent viewers who focus on the interviewee words and expressions, document them in a descriptive manner, and triangulate their observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Confirmability entails the degree to which the results from one study coincide with findings from other studies. Several studies can be used in ensuring confirmability including checking and rechecking the data collected throughout the study, questioning the respondents from different perspectives, member checking of the interviews, triangulation, and prolonged engagement with the interviews (Anney, 2014). I relied on methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement, checking the company's annual reports and archival records, and probing the interviewees from different perspectives to ensure confirmability of data. Essentially, I used these techniques to acquire rich data that can be supported by other studies.

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the extent to which researchers can generalize the findings or use them in other settings or contexts (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2015). In this study, I enhanced transferability through a thorough description of the research context and the underlying assumptions considered in the research process. The description of the methods to be used in the accomplishment of this study ensured methodological rigor, which would enhance transferability of the findings.

The concept of data saturation in qualitative studies is the same as the statistically valid sample concept in the quantitative research (Fugard & Potts, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hussein, 2009). Data saturation represents the stage where after conducting multiple interviews, no new information is offered by subsequent participants, to that already provided by the several preceding interviewee's. At this stage of data saturation, conducting further interviews yields diminishing to no returns in quality data, and redundancy in the data is an indicator that the process can be halted. Fusch and Ness (2015) synthesized the literature to identify some key characteristics of reaching data saturation which include no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and ability to replicate the study (providing one asks the same participants the same questions in the same timeframe). After the initial set of interviews, data saturation was not achieved. I selected, recruited, and interviewed additional participants until data saturation was achieved.

Transition and Summary

In this section, I restated the purpose of the study, which is to explore effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders used to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance. As the researcher, I have the role of choosing participants that meet the established criteria, then collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data. I included a description of the methods and techniques used in the accomplishment of the study. I chose a qualitative method for the study because of the need for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon based on a single organization and used a single case study design. I, also, discussed the ethical concerns that could affect the study, as well as the data collection, organization, and analysis techniques. Lastly, I addressed issues of reliability and validity and the strategies considered appropriate in ensuring the findings are reliable and valid. In section 3, I will discuss the research findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective cultural-oriented strategies that senior business leaders used to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance. The data were collected during the interviews with senior business leaders of an Egyptian company that operates in 16 countries. Six themes emerged from the data, including general characteristics of the chosen organization culture, communication, system of values, adjustment to foreign environments, organizational and national cultures, and issues with employees. The findings provided detailed information about the strategies that managers used in shaping and maintaining organizational structures at the firm's subsidiaries, the nature of these organizational structures, and their effect on various dimensions of the company's operations as well as on its performance. I found that the company uses a masculine and collectivist organizational culture with a low level of uncertainty. In foreign expansions, the company's management prefers employing the ethnocentric approach. In this study, I illustrated the importance of communication for maximizing organizational performance and found that limited communication between employees and managers of the firm could be one of the main reasons behind the company's disappointing financial performance in five countries.

Presentation of Findings

The main research question of this study was as follows: What effective cultural-oriented strategies do senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance? This research question was answered via eight interview questions. In this study, I interviewed eight individuals from the same company. A sample size of eight respondents was enough to meet the data saturation requirement. Because of ethical considerations, I decided not to reveal the information about this firm. Therefore, I refer to the study site as "company," "firm," or "enterprise" in the text. Six interviewees still work at the enterprise (RES1, RES 2, RES 4, RES5, RES6, and RES8), and two others resigned 1 and 2 years ago, respectively. All the eight respondents possessed extensive knowledge on the problem under investigation as they had been working at the company for at least 5 years, taking an active part in the planning and implementation of its foreign expansion strategies.

Five themes emerged from the data. In turn, each of these themes contains at least three subthemes. A total of 24 subthemes relevant to the research problem emerged from the data. I have entered the themes and subthemes into Table 1.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
General characteristics of the chosen organization culture	Hierarchy, significance of the middle management, encouragement of initiatives from employees, compliance with the policies, and formal and informal relationships between units
Communication	Formal and informal communication, interpersonal communication between managers and subordinates, online communication, information protection
Adjustment to foreign environments	General adjustment approach, mergers and acquisitions, adaptation strategies in Arab countries, the case of Saudi Arabia, usage of local workforce, usage of consultancy firms
Organizational and national cultures	General characteristics of problems in this sphere, customers' behavior, employees' behavior, interaction with the government, insufficient interpersonal communication, insufficient value system in the organizational structure, focus on achieving results, hard-working employees, controllability
Issues with employees	Tangible motivation, intangible motivation, training, local employment programs, differences between the employment specifics in different countries

Based on the information in Table 1, I present the study's findings in accordance with the five themes. A significant part of interviewees' responses was dedicated to the general characterization of the chosen organizational culture. All the eight interviewees agreed that the organizational structure used in their company has a strict hierarchy. Most relationships between units are vertical. In accordance with Hofstede's (1991) theory of cultural dimensions, this may imply a high-power distance indicator. Interestingly, all eight interviewees expressed similar thoughts on this issue even though they all operated in different countries. This leads to an assumption that the company's international strategy in this field harmonizes with the ethnocentric model designed by Perlmutter (1969). Regardless of the local specifics, the company's corporate culture keeps a strict hierarchy and the prevalence of vertical over horizontal relationships.

The importance of middle management was a disputable question since respondents did not agree on its significance. Five respondents, RES1, RES2, RES4, RES6, RES7, determined middle management as a crucial component of the organizational structure. As they explained, middle managers enable connection between high and low layers of the organization. Two other respondents, RES3 and RES5, concurred with this opinion, adding that their subsidiary sometimes experienced the lack of competent middle managers. Simultaneously, the last respondent, RES8, expressed the opposite point of view and stated that middle management was inflated as the number of middle managers was bigger than required. Interestingly, all eight interviewees mentioned this matter even though they were not directly asked about it. It appeared that the organizational culture of the firm does not specify the role of the middle management in the enterprise. The fact that interviewees had varied opinions on this matter illustrates the problems of the firm's organizational culture in light of Tănase's (2015) arguments. If one accepts an understanding of the organizational culture as a global concept that should involve everything "that is invisible at the organization," then it becomes evident that the firm failed to include the role of middle management in its corporate culture, which could have led to negative consequences.

Six interviewees (RES1, RES2, RES3, RES5, RES7, and RES8) mentioned that the firm did not put enough effort into encouraging initiatives and creativity from its employees, even at middle levels. Two others claimed that the company tries to succeed in this sphere, but there is still much space for improvement. The same groups of respondents had a disagreement on the matter of formal and informal relationships. The former argued that informal relationships are very rare, and the latter pointed out that it is not true, even though most interactions between organizational units really occur on the basis of formal procedures. Compliance with the organizational policies was identified as one of the most important requirements to employees by five interviewees whilst three others agreed on the significance of this aspect but presumed that achieving the eventual result is more important than adhering to some unessential organizational policies.

These responses allow making some preliminary conclusions about the organizational culture of the company. In accordance with the Hofstede's (1991) model, the enterprise apparently has a significant power distance between managers and subordinates. It is also masculine since achievement of results and compliance with the policies are more important than the values of cooperation and caring. Managers prefer operating with a low level of uncertainty, which is demonstrated by the limited focus on employees' initiatives and creativity. The lack of initiative may be also a sign of the collectivist nature of the organizational culture. Unfortunately, these responses do not provide enough information to comment on the other two dimensions of the model.

In the area of communication, interviewees demonstrated the same views on most subtopics. All the eight individuals asserted that informal communication is a widespread phenomenon in their subsidiary, although three of them added that such communication usually takes place outside of work. In a similar unanimous manner, all of them agreed that interpersonal communication between managers and their subordinates occurs only in rare cases. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that this aspect significantly differs from the one that describes formal and informal relationships. RES4 stated,

> I said earlier that informal relationships between employees are frequent, but it doesn't mean that they exist between managers and regular workers. Employees can talk to each other about their personal lives, but they won't raise this topic with their manager.

All eight senior managers pointed out that online communication is an important aspect of the firm's internal communication processes. It mainly occurs via e-mails and the Internet. Employees do not use video tools and focus on text messaging. In accordance with the interviewees, online communication occurs exclusively in a formal manner. Seven interviewees (RES1, RES3, RES4, RES5, RES6, RES7, and RES8) emphasized that the issue of information protection is crucial for the success of their organization, but only two of them, RES4 and RES6, argued that their firm put enough effort to ensure effective protection of the critical information assets.

Interviewees' responses relevant to the theme of communication show that the firm's corporate culture is very clear and consistent in this aspect. Communication between managers and subordinates occurs in a formal manner. Unfortunately, interviewees did not provide any comments on the quality of information and knowledge sharing. However, Zhang, Pablos, and Xu (2014) provided a premise to assume that these processes could have been positively influenced by the collectivist nature of the organizational culture. The fact that managers rarely engage in informal communication with employees might be considered disturbing based on the findings of Veiseh et al. (2014) and Mousavi et al. (2015). In accordance with the conclusions of these scholars, organizational performance largely depends on the variables of managers' involvement and interpersonal communication. Both of these aspects are apparently neglected in the firm.

As it was illustrated in the literature review, organizational culture should involve a system of values. An effective organizational culture is simultaneously a belief system and an instrument of mental programming (Hofstede, 1991). However, none of the interviewees portrayed the firm's organizational structure as a holistic framework of values that involves a consistent belief system. Interviewees mostly mentioned common issues that can be found in corporate cultures of most modern enterprises. RES2 said, "We don't have any unique rules. Be responsible. Respect your colleagues. Listen to your managers. Work hard and get paid. I think that's the essence."

A connection between significant efforts and tangible rewards was mentioned by four interviewees. This issue is seemingly one of the essential components of the organizational culture. While it is communicated to employees in a rather implicit than explicit way, most employees apparently recognize this principle and understand that they will be rewarded for working hard. At the same time, interviewees did not specify what intangible rewards can be provided for hard-working efforts. This is another argument in favor of determining the firm's organizational culture as a collectivist one

(Hofstede, 1991). Along with other pieces of evidence, this factor can be also employed to presume that managers of the enterprise prefer using a transactional leadership style. In accordance with Wiewiora et al. (2014), this regularity might be disturbing from the perspective of organizational performance. Mousavi et al. (2015) recommended using the transformational leadership style and argued that it has a more significant positive impact on the organizational performance than other approaches.

All eight interviewees pointed out that the organizational culture in their subsidiaries was similar to the one of the homeland company. RES1 stated, "There was no sense in making any changes, you know. The cultures of Tunisia and Egypt are very similar, and we didn't need to revolutionize our corporate culture."

Similar arguments were used by three other respondents, RES3, RES4, and RES7. They reported significant changes in the business strategies in order to adapt to foreign environments, but they did not recognize the importance of adjusting the corporate culture to local specifics. The firm did not use consultancy firms to help perfect their expansion and adaptation strategies. It mainly relied on hired middle managers and partners in achieving this goal. The firm often used the instrument of acquisitions, and this mechanism apparently was considered the main adaptation tool. Simultaneously, the acquisition process implied absorbing the corporate cultures of new partners. This is another factor that allows putting forward an assumption about the polycentric nature of the firm's corporate culture (Pelmutter, 1969). However, more information is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Six interviewees, (RES1, RES2, RES4, RES5, RES6, and RES8), evaluated the expansion strategies of their firms as successful ones. RES4 admitted that the firm experienced significant problems in Saudi Arabia, and RES8 mentioned that he had heard about this matter. At certain point, the firm's subsidiary entered a challenging period. In addition to miscalculating some aspects of the Saudis' customer behavior, the enterprise faced criticism from local stakeholders because of neglecting the Saudization policy. As a result, the subsidiary was forced to introduce rapid changes in its human resource management policies and hire more Saudi employees. Interestingly, the firm did not experience such problem in other Arab countries, even though many other Gulf countries have similar programs, such as Emiratization or Omanization. The firm actively uses local workforce; however, in Saudi Arabia, requirements to foreign companies in this sphere were much higher than in other Arab countries. In particular, the company was supposed to have at least 75% of locals in its staff.

None of the managers reported on significant problems with employees from the perspective of the organizational culture. More than a half of them briefly mentioned that newcomers had quickly integrated in the firm. Unfortunately, there is no information about employees' job satisfaction, which imposes certain limitations on this study. Nevertheless, the fact that none of the eight senior managers commented on these problems provides a premise to believe that such problems were insignificant. The behavior of customers created much more challenges for the firm. Interviewees mentioned the following problems in this sphere: miscalculation of customers' incomes, religious factors, online behavior, targeting of women, and language issues. In accordance with the Hofstede's (1991) model, some of these issues can be easily explained with the help of analyzing the organizational and national cultures. For example, unsuccessful targeting of women in some countries is apparently a sign of the differences between the masculinity and feminity indices of the homeland and local cultures. Nonetheless, the available evidence provides a premise to believe that most problems in this sphere are rather results of the insufficient market research and ineffective planning than consequences of the cultural issues.

It can be inferred from the interviewees' responses that the firm implemented the same approach in all new countries. In the domain of organizational culture, all the subsidiaries were similar. They implied adhering to a strict hierarchy, making employees comply with the organizational policies, setting formal communication modes, and encouraging employees to work hard in order to obtain tangible rewards. At the same time, it seems strange that respondents paid little attention to the intangible incentives. In accordance with Mousavi et al. (2015), an effective organizational culture affects the employees' sense of belonging, motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

The company did not experience any problems in the sphere of interaction with the government. Except for the case of Saudization, the firm successfully complied with the government regulations. This subtheme is barely relevant to the problem under investigation; nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the firm did not face obstacles in the area of interacting with government authorities.

The sphere of human resource management is crucial for the organizational culture. Ahmed and Shafiq (2014) argue that an effective organizational culture influences organizational effectiveness through the intermediary of employees' attitude. However, interviewees did not describe how the organizational cultures at their firm influenced employees' attitudes. Unfortunately, the existing data does not provide sufficient evidence to comment on the reasons behind this regularity.

As stated above, the interviewees did not pay enough attention to the matter of intangible motivation. They emphasized the importance of tangible factors, primarily financial bonuses, but they did not even mention such aspects of this phenomenon as recognition and job satisfaction. Along with the focus on achieving results, this trend illustrates that managers of the firm did not employ a transformational leadership style. Even though many scholars found this approach to be the most effective one in terms of boosting employees' performance (Veiseh et al., 2014), none of the interviewees implemented this leadership style. This decision could have led to significant implications for the organizational performance.

The interviewees reported that local workforce did not differ significantly from Egyptian employees. Some of them observed higher or lower educational levels among local job seekers, and RES6 complained that local employees were relatively unexperienced. However, there were no global differences between employees' cultural backgrounds; thus, in the opinion of respondents, their firms did not need to adjust their HR strategies to the requirements of local specifics. Unfortunately, this fact does not provide enough evidence to make an eventual conclusion about the firm's organizational culture approach in accordance with the Perlmutter's (1969) theory. The company definitely does not use the polycentric and geocentric paradigms. However, it is not clear whether it utilizes the ethnocentric or regiocentric approach. On one hand, it seems to have the same corporate culture strategy for each new country. On the other hand, all these countries are in the MENA region, which predetermines a significant number of similarities between their national cultures. RES5 commented, "Both countries are in the MENA region… and we assumed that there will be no new crucial cultural factors that we didn't know about."

It is possible that the company employed a geocentric approach, considering all the Arabic countries as nations with similar cultures. The available evidence provides a premise to believe that there are more arguments in favor of determining the company's strategy as the polycentric approach. The only adjustments that it made in each country were connected with the varied levels of incomes in each country and some local government policies, such as Saudization.

Interviewees did not reveal much information regarding the possible negative implications of their firms' organizational cultures. It is important to point out that five out of the eight respondents, RES2, RES3, RES5, RES7, and RES8, admitted that their subsidiaries faced certain problems with financial performance. In particular, the revenue growth was slower while an increase in liabilities was faster than expected. This pattern was observed only in five subsidiaries while the other three demonstrated promising results. Eventually, three out of these five subsidiaries managed to ensure sufficient financial performance. Nonetheless, two subsidiaries continued demonstrating low performance in 2018.

Interviewees tend to believe that these difficulties occurred because of problems in marketing and insufficient research. In particular, the RES8 argued that they did not perceive some unique features of the local customers' online behavior, which imposed a negative impact on performance. In other words, none of the respondents who reported on the problems with financial performance mentioned mistakes in the sphere of the organizational culture as possible reasons behind low revenues. At the same time, when being directly asked about possible managerial mistakes in this field, some interviewees revealed scarce information about the possible negative sides of the organizational culture. In particular, they mentioned such aspects as insufficient interpersonal communication between managers and subordinates and the underdeveloped value system.

Both these factors illustrate that problems with financial performance experienced by the company could be partially caused by the managerial mistakes in adjusting the organizational culture to local specifics. In accordance with Ferraro and Briody (2017), organizational culture is an ideology manifested through language, beliefs, and norms. Accordingly, if beliefs are underdeveloped and language is limited to the exclusively formal domain, organizational culture cannot be effectively transferred. This phenomenon functions on the basis of learning (Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, limited interpersonal communication may be considered a significant obstacle to its development. Some scholars directly confirmed the existence of a strong positive correlation between interpersonal communication and the organizational culture's effectiveness (Veiseh et al., 2014). Thus, it seems strange that the company failed to recognize the importance of interpersonal communication.

The insufficient value system also might be a disturbing factor. As stated above, an effective organizational culture is a system of beliefs (Hofstede, 1991). Some small firm may overlook this phenomenon in the beginning of its history, but a large enterprise operating in 16 countries is supposed to pay more attention to the development of its organizational culture. Unfortunately, interviewees' responses illustrate that the company did not create a consistent system of values. It has some set of principles or rather policies, which are automatically transferred to the enterprise's subsidiaries, but they cannot be considered signs of a consistent value system. Furthermore, it seems that most of these policies are static, which is also a bad sign. The studies carried out by Chatman et al. (2014) and Mousavi et al. (2015) showed that adaptivity in the sphere of organizational culture helps firms improve financial performance. However, the company whose employees participated in the study did not introduce substantial adjustments to its organizational structure when opening subsidies in foreign environments. This may be one of the reasons behind insufficient financial performance in five countries.

The organizational culture employed by the company is characterized by a strict hierarchy, the prevalence of formal policies over informal ones, limited interpersonal communication, a requirement to comply with the organizational policies, little attention to the areas of creativity and innovation, and the introduction of a clear connection between the hard-working variable and tangible rewards. In accordance with the Hofstede's (1991) model, this culture is masculine and collectivist. It has a high-power distance index and implies operating with a low level of uncertainty. Application of the EPG model shows that this organizational culture is ethnocentric, although it also has some signs of the regiocentric paradigm. The available evidence provides a premise that insufficient attention to the human domain and intangible factors became important factors that contributed to the problems with the company's financial performance in some countries. At the same time, the fact that all these countries had similar cultural backgrounds helped the firm avoid many disturbing consequences in this area.

The study findings conform to the literature review's findings in many spheres. In particular, the fact that five subsidiaries of the firm experienced significant problems with revenue generation in the beginning of their operations in new countries harmonizes with the conclusions made by Mousavi et al. (2015). The research carried out by these scholars found a positive correlation between a strong organizational culture and short-term financial performance. It may be speculated that the introduction of a strong organizational culture with the holistic system of values would have helped the company from this study improve the revenues of its divisions in new countries in the short-term perspective.

The findings indicated some evident shortcomings of the organizational culture employed by the firm. Many studies, such as the ones conducted by Hofstede (2011), O'Reiiley et al. (2014), and Chatman et al. (2014), found that the lack of a consistent system of beliefs in an organizational culture and its insufficient adaptivity may impose a negative impact on financial performance of a firm. Problems faced by the company indicate that this correlation really exists. A failure to meet the aforementioned criteria could have been one of the main reasons why the firm's expansions were not as successful as expected.

The study's findings also conform to the results of recent peer-reviewed investigations on the effect of a corporate culture on organizational performance. Nazarian, Atkinson, and Foroudi (2017) found that organizational culture is an intermediary between the national culture and organizational performance. By adjusting corporate cultures, managers can ensure that unique features of national cultures lead to positive implications for various organizational performance indicators. It can be inferred from the findings that the ethnocentric model of an organizational culture is barely suitable. The corporate culture of any firm is affected by national cultures in some way. Though if managers decide to maintain an ethnocentric model, a firm loses control over this process, which might be dangerous from the perspective of profitability. Disappointing financial performance of the firm's five divisions may be explained with the help of this argument.

The importance of communication for organizational effectiveness, which was discussed in this research, conforms to the findings of many recent studies. For example, Gochhayat, Giri, and Suar (2017) determined a strong positive impact of organizational culture on organizational performance and added that effective organizational communication is an intermediary between these two variables. They also deduced that deep-rooted organizational cultures are more effective than those that operate on the surface level. A similar conclusion can be also inferred from the findings of this study.

The findings indicated that encouraging the focus on achieving results and eliminating the sources of possible confusion among employees, which are apparently the two crucial goals of the company's organizational culture, is likely to have a positive impact on organizational performance. Many scholars share the same opinion. For example, the research carried out by Napitupulu (2018) found that such corporate culture improves the quality of the management accounting information system, which, in turn, may positively influence organizational performance.

An effective organizational culture should include more elements than strict formal policies and a strong connection between employees' hard-working efforts and tangible rewards. The investigation conducted by Mazur and Zaborek (2016) aligned with the findings in this study regarding the importance of customizing an organizational culture in dependence on country-specific and industry-specific aspects. Mazur and Zaborek illustrated in the case of the Polish SMEs how fostering innovativeness through an organizational culture may contribute to the innovative and financial performance of firms. Mazur and Zaborek also deduced the crucial importance of communication between employees from this perspective, which was also discussed in this study.

The findings also supported the concerns of many specialists regarding the complex nature of causal relationships between organizational culture and organizational performance. In a similar manner with the investigations conducted by Leithy (2017) and Idowu (2017), this study's findings indicated that the influence of a corporate culture on organizational performance is indirect. This process apparently has some intermediaries, such as work attitudes or commitment suggested by Leithy (2017), which influence the correlation between the variables by adding a number of intermediary factors associated with the national culture. Therefore, while an effective deep-rooted organizational culture has a certain impact on performance, this influence can be slight in some cases. For example, if national cultures of the company's home country and the new country to which this firm expands are similar, the significance of such influence may be limited. The company whose employees participated in the interviews exemplifies this pattern.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study presented several useful implications that can be used by business leaders. It is important to emphasize that none of these outcomes illustrate confirmed trends, since this study has an exploratory research design. Therefore, business leaders should consider these findings rather as recommendations that should be regarded along with other sources of data than as completed guidelines to action.

First, business leaders should consider possible consequences of maintaining an underdeveloped value system at a firm. The findings in this study indicated that a company that pays a limited amount of attention to this issue experiences risks that may damage its financial performance. This study's findings indicated that this factor may negatively influence intangible factors. In turn, the lack of organizational commitment, creativity, imitativeness, and job satisfaction among employees may lead to a decrease in financial performance.

Second, business leaders might focus their attention on the area of interpersonal communication. The company under study ensured that communication between managers and employees would occur only on the formal level. This may be one of the reasons why some interviewees reported problems with financial performance in the beginning of the company's operations in new countries. If the firm had used the insights of local employees, it may have avoided at least some of these problems.

Third, the study's findings illustrated the importance of selecting suitable countries for expansion. The findings also illustrated that the enterprise had problems with adjusting its organizational culture strategies. Its managers also made some mistakes in marketing, particularly in market research. Nonetheless, its subsidiaries eventually improved their performance in three out of the five "problematic" countries. In general, six expansion strategies out of the eight cases included in the study may be considered successful. The data provide a premise to believe that this occurred because many countries in the MENA region have similar cultural backgrounds. Therefore, business leaders should realize that if a company expands to a state that is culturally similar to the homeland, then the significance of mistakes made in the area of the corporate culture may be relatively low. If the firm from this study had expanded to Japan, the United States, or a European country, its organizational culture strategy would have been more likely to fail because of its low adaptivity, leading to depressing performance.

The fourth possible area in which this study's findings can be applied to professional practice is the management of intangible incentives. None of the interviewees reported significant problems with employees, such as a high turnover or their insufficient motivation. It seems justified to assume that companies whose organizational cultures pay little attention to the phenomenon of intangible motivation still can achieve successful results. However, they must implement consistent policies.

This statement harmonizes with the conclusions made by Denison et al. (2014) in regard to the internal reference.

Implications for Social Change

The results provided some insights into the possible ways of boosting social change. One such path was connected with the importance of informal communication between managers and subordinates. The company leaders insisted on maintaining exclusively formal relationships, but the literature and even the opinions of some interviewees did not confirm that this point of view is justified. Encouraging informal communication in modern enterprises may encourage positive social change. Closer interaction with managers could show subordinates the managerial point of view and improve their performance. Employees could obtain additional motivation this way. Talking to someone in a higher level at the company could help some individuals find their path to success. As a result, people would acquire more chances to get promotion and succeed in other endeavors.

Another possible scenario derives from the usage of locals' experience in adjusting organizational culture strategies. The firm from this study did not utilize the local employees' advice in this area, even though the local employees apparently had sufficient knowledge on this matter. Choosing a different approach could help minimize the number of managerial mistakes. In particular, it could help avoid many mistakes associated with the organizational culture, such as insufficient intangible motivation. This approach also might contribute to positive social change. If companies consider local employees' opinions and regard their point of view in decision making much more than companies do now, firms will probably also pay more attention to the matters of inclusive growth and corporate social responsibility. Ensuring a more adaptive organizational culture in large corporations that have subsidiaries in foreign environments could help them contribute to positive social processes in new countries by participating in social projects and even launching their own initiatives, such as charity or educational programs. In turn, implementation of such strategies can improve firms' social acceptance in international markets, imposing a positive impact on their revenues and for the benefit of the firms, its employees, and the local societies.

Recommendations for Action

All the interviewees who took part in the study should pay more attention to the human dimension of the organizational culture. They may benefit from getting acquainted with the studies carried out by Namenwirth and Weber (2016), Tănase (2015), Hofstede (1991), Denison et al. (2014), Veiseh et al. (2014), Wiewiora et al. (2014), Nazarian et al. (2017), Gochhayat et al. (2017), and Leithy (2017).

All these researchers provided valuable insights into the importance of such factors as employees' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, values, beliefs, and interpersonal communication. An understanding of the importance of these factors may help managers realize problems associated with an organizational culture and initiate appropriate changes in this sphere. Therefore, I recommend the company launch training sessions for managers where the training department personnel could communicate the findings of these studies to the audience. This measure has a potential to boost employees' motivation, which, in turn, can have a positive impact on the firm's financial performance both at home and abroad.

It may be also beneficial to launch cross-cultural training sessions for the staff. This mechanism can improve employees' awareness of the differences between various national cultures and their possible implications for business operations. Managers should consider using the theory designed by Hofstede (2011) as the framework for these sessions since understanding of the dimensions introduced by this scholar may help improve employees' communication with representatives of different cultures. For example, this concept might be very useful for negotiating favorable deals with companies' representatives from those cultures that have a high uncertainty avoidance index. In particular, a manager willing to discuss an acquisition of a company from such a culture should describe how employees of the acquired firms will be integrated into the new organization, providing comprehensive details about each aspects of this process.

Other important recommendations to the firm are to improve its market research and to use the expertise of locals in adjusting the organizational culture. The findings suggest that the company's market research is often insufficient, which leads to the inability to adjust the firm's business strategy. The firm currently uses the instrument of acquisitions to expand to new countries, but it barely benefits from this mechanism from the cultural perspective since the organizational culture of the company essentially absorbs the organizational culture of acquired enterprises. As a result, the firm finds itself in a difficult situation since its organizational culture is not adjusted to local specifics. One of possible ways to change this issue is to use the expertise of local employees. The company can do this in two different ways. First, the company could use the services of consultancy agencies that specialize in international expansions in some specific countries. Even though this approach is expensive, it would significantly increase the firm's chances to adapt its organizational culture to the requirements of local external environments. Second, the enterprise may also pay more attention to the local workforce, especially to senior managers from acquired firms. If these individuals secure high-management positions in the company, their contributions to decision making might help adjust the organizational culture.

Hiring a consultancy agency also may be an effective instrument in this sphere. In addition to investigating the behavior of local customers and collecting information on the current and upcoming government regulations, the company also needs recent data on employees' skills, education, behavior, and expectations. Senior managers in subsidiaries should possess detailed information on the unique qualifications of local employees. This recommendation harmonizes with the findings of many studies, such as the one carried out by Leithy (2017). The firm should contact local consultancy agencies in new countries in order to collect such information. Implementation of cross-cultural training among the staff could also help managers understand the needs and expectations of their new employees. Therefore, it might be beneficial to use the services of consultancy agencies and cross-cultural training simultaneously.

Limited attention to intangible incentives demonstrated by interviewees seems strange from the perspective of the literature review's findings. However, it is barely justified to consider the introduction of intangible motivation as a high priority. Many studies, such as the ones conducted by Hofstede (1991) and Veiseh et al. (2014), deduced the significance of intangible incentives both from the position of employees' perceptions and from the perspective of organizational performance. The implementation of such incentives should occur carefully and in dependence on the national culture. National culture is an important intermediary in relationships between the organizational culture and organizational performance (Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014). Therefore, this firm should pay sufficient attention to the national culture when considering the implementation of intangible incentives for employees. In this situation it does not seem justified to recommend implementing intangible incentives right away. The firm should definitely organize a series of surveys for employees in all the subsidiaries in order to determine whether they are satisfied with the current incentives.

If the data collected in these surveys indicate that employees are not satisfied with this aspect, managers should consider introducing more intangible incentives. Their examples might include recognition as the best employee of the month, thank-you letters, announcement of the employees' contributions during some public events, training sessions, and private lunches with the CEO. Depending on the survey's results, HR managers could design some new incentives that would be effective in specific countries.

The company also must not disrupt its existing direction of the organizational culture strategy. The leaders of the firm currently focus on achieving results and encourage employees to work hard. Despite possible shortcomings of this strategy, the findings showed that this approach is relatively effective. Therefore, the company does not need to revolutionize its organizational culture approach and reject its current strategy. The focus on achieving results and the prevalence of tangible motivation can be valuable tools for ensuring superior financial performance. In accordance with the Hofstede's (1991) model, these tools are very effective in masculine corporate cultures, such as the one reviewed in this study. Even if surveys show that employees in some countries are not satisfied with the existing motivation system, subsidiaries should introduce appropriate changes gradually rather than radically.

A similar approach may be taken in the case of communication. The literature suggests that informal communication between managers and employees can positively affect organizational performance (Veiseh et al., 2014). This change may negatively impact the results of the firm. Interviewees mentioned control as one of the main advantages of the existing organizational culture. A significant power distance apparently was one of the key reasons behind this phenomenon. There is a chance that extension of informal communication between managers and subordinates might negatively affect the firm's control mechanisms. Thus, I do not recommend the company implement any communication changes now. Company managers should collect information with the help of a consultancy agency and internal surveys, and then decide on the best way to make changes in this area. Introducing more corporate events where managers and subordinates could engage in informal communication with each other could be one of possible ways to achieve this goal. At the same time, there are some changes that managers can implement now. For instance, they may introduce private lunches with the best employees on an occasional basis as a form of intangible motivation. This way, the firm will get an opportunity to simultaneously address two problems identified in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

As described in the first section of this study, this research had several limitations that could have influenced its results. Researchers who are interested in exploring the problem under investigation in further research should consider addressing these limitations. In particular, the researchers may consider analyzing the cases of several firms instead of only one corporation. Focusing on organizations from countries with fundamentally different cultural backgrounds could help ensure a higher external validity of results. In addition, researchers also could investigate from the employees' point of view. In this study, I conducted interviews only with managers. It is possible that the managers' biases could have influenced their responses, generating overly optimistic views on the firm's organizational culture. Conducting interviews with employees could help eliminate this limitation. Finally, researchers should also consider utilizing a quantitative methodology and trying to measure the influence of organizational culture on various parameters of organizational performance.

This study had an exploratory research purpose. Therefore, the results indicated several promising directions for further research. First, I recommend researchers explore the differences among MENA countries in regard to the preferred organizational culture. This study's findings provide a premise to assume that these differences are usually slight, but they still may be relevant for firms operating in foreign environments. Second, I believe it would be interesting to investigate whether a company with significant tangible motivation but without essential intangible incentives can have an effective organizational culture. Researchers can focus either on exploring the possible influence of such organizational culture on organizational performance or on the perceived effectiveness of such organizational culture. In case of the perceived effectiveness, they should probably carry out a survey or interviews with employees. The third direction for further research lies in the communication area. Researchers might focus on many associated topics mentioned in this study, such as the impact of informal communication between managers and employees on various dimensions of organizational performance and employees' job satisfaction, or the optimal balance between formal and informal communication.

In addition to discovering promising research areas, the investigation can be also valuable for researchers who are working on the designs of their investigations. The findings of this study illustrated that researchers wishing to explore the effectiveness of organizational cultures in foreign environments should not select those companies that operate in countries with similar cultural backgrounds. A focus on the MENA region became an essential limitation of the study. If the firm whose managers participated in the interviews had also operated in countries with fundamentally different cultural backgrounds, such as Japan or the United States, it may have been much easier to analyze the organizational cultures of its subsidiaries and determined their advantages and disadvantages. It also may have been clearer what organizational culture model the company exploited. The findings suggest that the company uses an ethnocentric model, but the exclusive focus on the MENA region does not allow rejecting the possibility that the enterprise employs a regiocentric strategy.

Reflections

This study turned out to be very challenging for me. I experienced significant problems on many stages of the research and had to accumulate all my strengths to find proper solutions to various problems. The empirical part was definitely the most complicated one. I had to contact the organization and ask some of the company's managers to help me with my research. All these managers had their own personal traits, and I had to adjust to them in order to collect sufficient data. It is also worth mentioning that the first potential respondent said that he did not have time to participate in my research. This moment demotivated me and even made me believe for some time that I would not be able to find any interviewees. Fortunately, the situation changed.

I believe that the study made me more confident in myself. Communication with the interviewees also helped me see some issues from the managerial point of view. I believe respondents did not mention many aspects that are critical from the employee's point of view because some had problems with understanding the employees' perspective. Apparently they rely on middle managers and prefer focusing on providing general guidelines instead of monitoring in detail the processes that occur within the organization.

The study's findings may have been partially affected by my personal beliefs and my opinion on the importance of implementing the geocentric approach. Such problems often occur in exploratory investigations since an exploratory research design allows researchers to make assumptions based on their personal judgement. The literature analyzed in this study indicated that the geocentric approach is an important part of the organizational culture at any modern firm, and a failure to address this issue by the company under study befuddled me. Therefore, it is possible that some of my assumptions could have been influenced by my opinion on the importance of the implementation of a geocentric organization culture profile. At the same time, I have put a significant effort into ensuring that this would not happen. Therefore, the influence of my possible biases on the eventual findings should not have been significant.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the firm whose employees participated in the interviews employs an ethnocentric organizational culture approach in accordance with the EPG model. The Hofstede's (1991) concept implies that this culture is masculine and collectivist. It also operates under a low level of uncertainty and maintains a significant power distance. The study results indicated that there is no single rule that could help design an effective organizational culture strategy. The effectiveness of this concept depends on the variety of organizational issues as well as on industry-specific and country-specific factors.

Results of this study conformed to my review of the literature from the perspective of causal relationships between organizational culture and organizational performance of firms operating in foreign environments. This study's findings aligned with the literature (Leithy, 2017) in that maintaining a corporate culture that eliminates the sources of possible confusion among employees, and establishes a close connection between their hard-working efforts and tangible rewards positively influences organizational performance. The absence of a holistic system of values also may reduce short-term financial performance, which was observed in the case of the five subsidiaries of the firm.

The findings of this study also aligned with the conclusions of many researchers, such as Hofstede (2011), O'Reiiley et al. (2014), and Chatman et al. (2014), who asserted that communication patterns embedded in the organizational structure strongly influence organizational performance. In particular, informal communication between employees and communication between managers and subordinates, especially if the latter occurs within the framework of the transformational leadership style, have a strong potential to boost firms' revenues. It was also found that the causal relationship between organizational culture and performance is complex. A number of intermediaries, such as employees' job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation, should be considered in order to comprehend this phenomenon.

For companies operating in foreign environments, organizational culture becomes a crucial instrument of adjusting to the requirements of the new external environment. Regardless of the specific strategy chosen by firm leaders, I recommend the leaders make an organizational structure adaptive and consider the unique features of the national culture that influence its employees in a new country. In order to facilitate the expansion process, the leaders may launch cross-sectional training sessions for employees that are dedicated to the nature of communication across different cultures and the main differences between national cultures. This training may help employees improve their communication skills and ensure a higher level of productivity when working in foreign environments. Such enhancement has potential to improve interaction among team members and simplify the process of integrating new employees into the organization. This is especially relevant to organizations entering foreign environments since they may benefit from the usage of this instrument during mergers and acquisitions that often accompany expansion.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you use when working in foreign countries?
2. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you find worked best for your organization?
3. What are the advantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?
4. What are the disadvantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?
5. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of the cultural-oriented strategies you have implemented?
6. What are the challenges that faced your organization in order to align your headquarters culture to each foreign branch's culture within your group?
7. How did you handle the challenges identified in the previous question in order to improve your organization's performance?
8. What additional information can you share with me to understand the effective strategies that your organization's senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with the cultures of foreign countries to achieve excellent organizational performance?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Participant Unique ID Code:

Part I: The Interview Process

1. Receive and welcome the participant.

2. Show appreciation to the participant for accepting to participate in the interview.

3. Share more details about the study with the participants that include but not limited to the goal of the study and the interview duration.

4. Check the informed consent form

5. Make sure that the participants know that the interview will be recorded to ensure the accuracy of data.

6. Inform all participants that all the shared and recorded information is highly confidential.

7. Let the participants know that they will get a copy of the outcome of the research.

8. Go through the interview questions with the participants.

12. Write some notes and remarks during the interview as per the need.

13. At the end of the interview, express gratitude for the participants for voluntary sharing in this interview.

Part II: Post-Interview

1. Transcribe the interview remarks and notes

2. Express gratitude for the participants for voluntary sharing in this interview

3. Transcribe the recording

4. If needed, more interviews with additional participants might take place to make sure that data saturation is reached.

6. Send a thank you note to all participants

Part III: Research Question

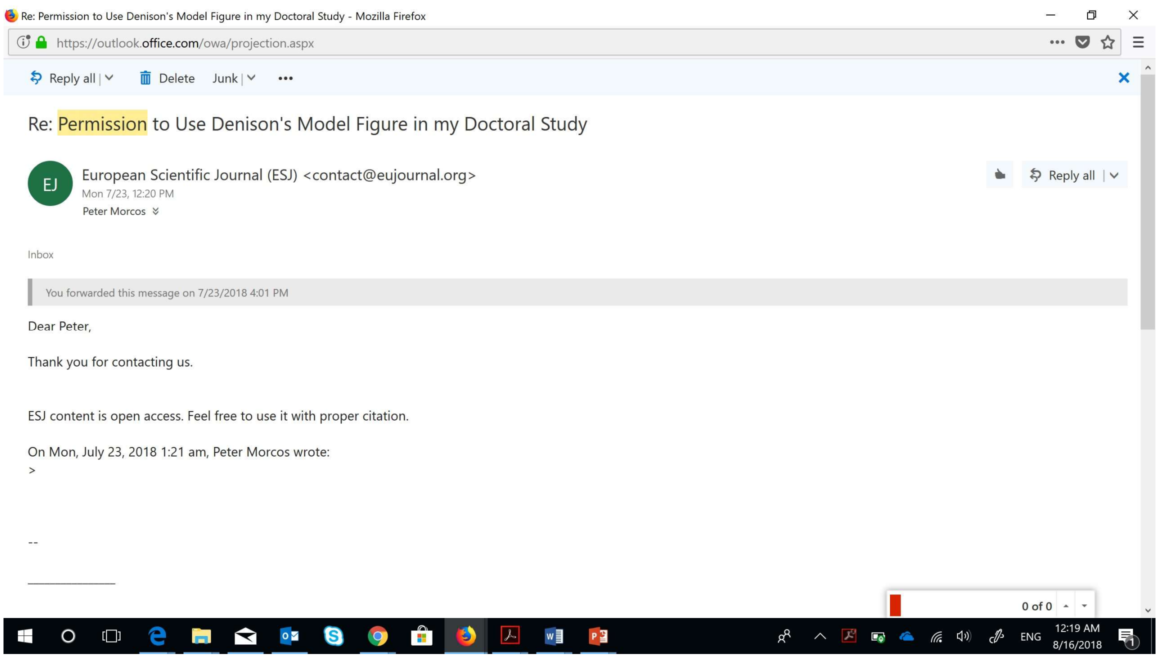
What effective cultural-oriented strategies do senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with foreign countries' cultures to achieve excellent organizational performance?

Part IV: Interview Questions

1. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you use when working in foreign countries?
2. What cultural-oriented organizational strategies did you find worked best for your organization?
3. What are the advantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?

4. What are the disadvantages of the cultural-oriented organizational strategies that you implemented?
5. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of the cultural-oriented strategies you have implemented?
6. What are the challenges that faced your organization in order to align your headquarters culture to each foreign branch's culture within your group?
7. How did you handle the challenges identified in the previous question in order to improve your organization's performance?
8. What additional information can you share with me to understand the effective strategies that your organization's senior business leaders use to align their organization's culture with the cultures of foreign countries to achieve excellent organizational performance?

Appendix C: Copy of the Permission to use Figure.1



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