

# Organizational Culture Trends in Light of Turbulent Times

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## Abstract

**Purpose – The objective of the paper is** to provide an overview and examine how economic disruptions and rapid digitalization have influenced organizational cultures, and to identify emerging trends and successful cultural strategies during periods of crises.

**Design/methodology/approach – The article** employs the **PRISMA method** to conduct a systematic literature review of Scopus-indexed articles that have applied Cameron and Quinn's Competing Values Framework since 2019, the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Special attention is given to studies linking organizational culture dynamics to resilience, stability, Covid-19, and innovation within organizations.

**Findings – The review** indicates that periods of crisis significantly increase the importance of internal integration within organizations. This shift toward internal focus is reflected in heightened values of Hierarchy culture, which supports control through structure and planning. Simultaneously, Clan culture gains prominence by fostering security through collaboration and a sense of belonging. Adhocracy culture tends to emerge in response to innovation-driven strategies during crises. Measurements of desired cultures suggest that post-crisis, organizations often express a desire to revert to their pre-crisis culture types. Market culture contributes to resilience by supporting strong supply chain integration.

**Originality – This study** provides a comprehensive synthesis of empirical findings on cultural shifts in organizations facing crisis situations. It emphasizes the strategic applications of the Competing Values Framework in navigating organizational responses to disruption.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, CVF, competing values framework, OCAI, Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument, resilience

## 1. Introduction

The events of recent years, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have posed continuous and wide-ranging challenges for businesses and the broader economy. Shifts in consumer behaviour and preferences, declining consumption, the additional costs associated with health and safety measures, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and rising energy prices have compelled companies across all sectors to revise their strategies. Large multinational corporations, due to their scale and market position, were generally more resilient and better equipped to withstand the crisis. In contrast, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) proved highly vulnerable, with many experiencing financial distress, requiring government support, or going out of business. Nonetheless, a significant number of businesses managed to successfully transform their operations, adapt to the new environment, and emerge stronger despite the difficult conditions. The public sector also faced substantial challenges. Although not directly reliant on consumer demand, its traditionally stable and predictable operations were disrupted, necessitating the adoption of new working methods. Remote work, digital communication tools, and flexible workflows were rapidly introduced across sectors, changing the way organizations interact internally and externally. These rapid and sometimes forced transformations raised important questions about the cultural foundations that shape an organization's characteristics, ways of working, and adaptability.

Organizational culture, considered the invisible yet powerful force behind collective behavior, came under examination during the pandemic. While strategy and structure provide formal guidance, culture defines how people actually behave and collaborate during times of uncertainty. During crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or economic downturns, organizational flexibility becomes essential for maintaining operations, responding to stakeholder needs, and leveraging new opportunities. Understanding how organizational culture has shifted in response to external shocks is essential for assessing organizational resilience and change-readiness. Culture may either facilitate or limit necessary adaptations. As such factor, identifying which cultural attributes foster stability and which enable flexibility and innovation becomes a key consideration. Organizational culture is a crucial determinant of how effectively an organization can mobilize resources, make rapid decisions, and implement structural or procedural changes (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). In addition to promoting structural flexibility, organizational culture also influences how organizations learn from crises and integrate new knowledge into their practices. Cultures that support continuous learning, encourage feedback, and within limits allow risk-taking are better equipped to innovate and stably operate during and after a crisis. This learning orientation enables organizations not only to adapt reactively but also to develop forward-looking strategies that build long-term resilience (Garvin, 1993).

The question arises: Have the above-mentioned factors shaped and changed organizational culture? Is there a useful, shareable "recipe" for operating successfully in similar crisis situations? Is it true that the office exodus caused by the coronavirus pandemic risks diminishing company culture unless leaders actively support it? (Howard-Grenville, 2020). In this literature review, we analyze and summarize the findings of recent studies focusing on the relationship between organizational culture and resilience, as well as organizational culture and unexpected change. Doing so, we aim to provide insights into how organizations can better prepare culturally for future disruptions, drawing on empirical evidence and the application of the Competing Values Framework in post-2019 academic literature.

## 2. Concept of organizational culture

The concept of organizational culture, introduced by Jaques in 1951, began gaining significant attention in the 1980s from both researchers and business leaders. Initially regarded as a key factor for success, organizational culture is now considered a cornerstone of corporate life, influencing how companies operate and perform (Benedek, 2014). It touches numerous areas of organizational functioning and can improve team dynamics, enhance employee engagement, promote collaboration, and increase productivity and overall performance.

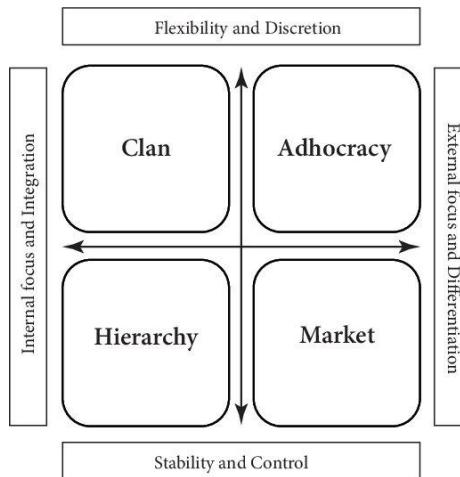
Jaques (1951) defined organizational culture as "the culture of the factory is its customary and traditional way of thinking and doing of things, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all its members, and which new members must learn, and at least partially accept, in order to be accepted into service in the firm". Building on this idea, scholars like Griffin (1990) and Armstrong (1996) further elaborated the concept. Griffin describes culture as a value system that helps employees understand the organization's identity, while Armstrong defines it as a set of shared beliefs, norms, and behaviors that shape interactions and outcomes.

The central issue concerning organizational culture is its relationship with organizational performance. Several studies have demonstrated a strong link between culture and business outcomes, confirming that companies that prioritize customers, stakeholders, employees, and leadership tend to outperform those lacking such cultural attributes (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Wagner & Spencer, 1996).

### 3. Cameron and Quinn competing values framework

#### 3.1 Culture types according to the Competing Values Framework

Organizational culture evolves continuously through social learning, external influences, internal dynamics, and the organization's history. Models such as Cameron and Quinn's Competing Values Framework (CVF) help define, analyze, and develop organizational culture to ensure its alignment with strategy, objectives and desired outcomes. Introduced in 2006, the CVF categorises four types of organizational cultures based on two core dimensions: (a) flexibility and discretion versus stability and control; and (b) internal focus and integration versus external focus and differentiation. The framework has been widely adopted in organisational research and management practice as a tool to assess, understand, and shape corporate culture. By mapping cultural traits along these axes, the CVF offers valuable insights into how organizations function and respond to change. The model identifies four culture types: Clan, Market, Hierarchy, and Adhocracy.



**Figure 1.** The competing values framework (Cameron, Quinn, 2006)

In the Hierarchy culture, stability and internal focus are emphasized. This culture relies on formal structures, strict processes, and operational efficiency. Organizations with a hierarchical culture prioritize consistent performance, predictability, and error-free operations. Success is recognized through effective planning and cost control. Managers ensure rules are followed and value expertise and logical problem-solving. While effective in stable environments, this culture is less adaptable to change.

In contrast, the Market culture also values stability but takes an external focus, emphasizing results and competition. Organizations with a market-driven culture aim to lead their industry, maximize market share by satisfying customers, offer high-quality or mass-consumable products, and build strong brand recognition. This culture is typically found in dynamic markets and is common among large retail and service companies.

The Clan culture focuses on flexibility and internal relationships, fostering a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. This culture values loyalty, tradition, and teamwork. Leaders act as mentors, emphasizing long-term development and open communication. Known for encouraging collaboration and people-centered values, Clan culture promotes strong interpersonal relationships and a shared knowledge base.

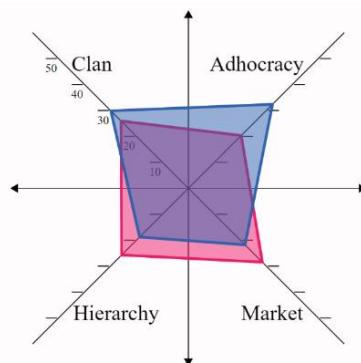
Adhocracy culture combines flexibility with an external focus, encouraging innovation and adaptability. Dynamic and forward-thinking, adhocratic organizations support risk-taking, collaboration, and individual initiative. Leaders champion creativity and empowerment. Success in this culture depends on the organization's

ability to innovate and respond quickly to change, making it common in technology-driven industries, start-ups, consulting firms, and project-based organizations.

It's important to note that organizations rarely exhibit just one culture type; instead, they are typically a blend of these cultures. While each culture has its own strengths, there is no single "best" culture. Effective organizations can leverage the advantages of all four culture types as needed and adapt their organizational culture to align with their strategy, goals, and external environment.

### 3.2 The Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument

The OCAI tool, developed by Cameron and Quinn alongside their CVF culture framework, helps organizations define and profile their organizational culture. Widely used by researchers, managers, and consulting firms, this tool uses a questionnaire where participants distribute 100 points among statements related to the four CVF culture types, reflecting both their organization's current and desired culture. Key areas assessed include organizational traits, management style, cohesion, strategic focus, and success criteria. Results are aggregated and visualized within the CVF model.



**Figure 2.** Visualization of as-is and to-be organizational culture blends in the Competing Values Framework  
([www.ocai-online.com](http://www.ocai-online.com))

The questionnaire offers insights into both the organization as a whole and its subgroups, addressing several key aspects:

- a) Identifying the dominant organizational culture type within the organization or its units.
- b) Assessing the strength of the dominant culture.
- c) Examining the consistency of the organizational culture across the organization, including potential differences among sub-units.
- d) Comparing the current and desired organizational cultures, indicating areas of change.
- e) Comparing the organization's culture with industry norms
- f) Monitoring changes in organizational culture over time.

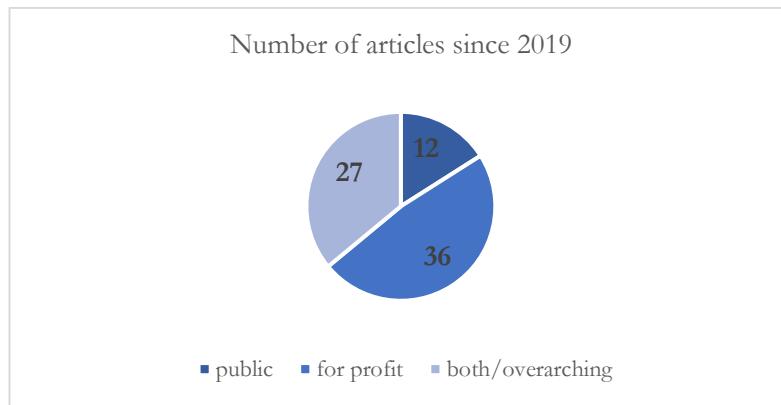
These insights help organizations diagnose, assess change needs, and develop actionable plans, while also providing industry comparisons and tracking progress over time.

#### 4. Methodology

For the literature review, the PRISMA systematic review method was applied to a selection of articles filtered from the Scopus database. Search terms included “Competing Values Framework,” “CVF,” “Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument,” and “OCAI,” appearing in the title, abstract, or keywords. The search focused on peer-reviewed articles published in English since the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019, within the subject areas of business, management and accounting, social sciences, economics, econometrics and finance, and decision sciences. Out of 85 articles initially identified, 8 used the abbreviation CVF to refer to unrelated academic disciplines, and two were written in languages other than English. As a result, 75 articles were considered relevant for this review. The dominant fields among these studies included Strategy and Management, which appeared in 28 articles with an average journal quartile ranking (Q) of 2.4; Business, Management and Accounting, with 16 articles and an average Q of 2.6; Business and International Management, with 18 articles and an average Q of 2.0; and Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management, which appeared in 10 articles with an average Q of 2.7.

#### 5. Results

The articles included in the review were categorized based on whether the research was conducted in the for-profit sector, the public sector, or encompassed both through broader empirical studies. Of the total, 48% of the published research focused on the private sector, 16% on the public sector, and 36% represented overarching empirical studies that included organizations from both sectors. Articles in this latter category typically concentrated on a single industry while disregarding ownership structure.



**Figure 3.** Number of articles categorized by sector where the research was conducted

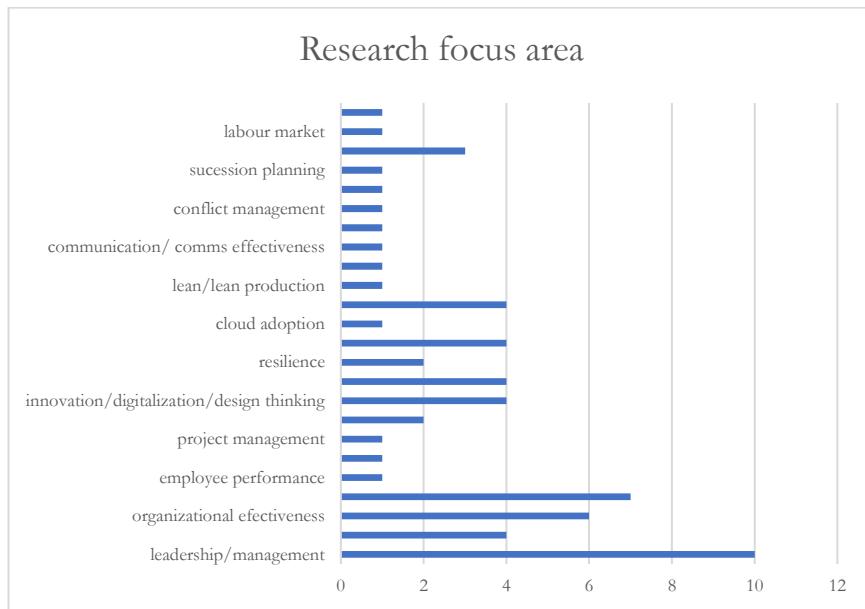
In the sector overview, education has the strongest representation, accounting for 24% of the articles, with research conducted across both private and public institutions regardless of ownership structure. This is followed by cross-industry research, which appears in 14.7% of the articles.

**Table 1** Number of articles by industry where the research was conducted

	NGOs	2
public	governmental institutions	6
	social economy organizations	1
	general	3
both	education	18
	healthcare	5
	general/cross industry	4
	prduction	5
for profit	IT	3
	construction	2
	telecom	1
	SMEs	2
	energy	1
	hospitality	4
	real estate	1
	food	1
	logistics	2
	banking	2
	cross industry	11
	project management	1

Source: own compilation

Further analysis of the article base revealed that 12 articles used the CVF solely for diagnosing the "as-is" and "to-be" states of a specific organization, offering recommendations based on that analysis without linking organizational culture to any other variable or impact factor (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic or organizational resilience). After excluding these 12 articles, the remaining 63 studies examined organizational culture in relation to another variable or external factor, which can be categorized as follows:



**Figure 4.** Number of articles in the literature review categorized by research focus area

In this literature review, we examine the findings of 11 selected articles in detail, analyzing the relationship between organizational culture and factors such as COVID-19, stability, resilience, innovation, and digital

transformation. A limitation of the review lies in the fact that several articles focus their research on a single industry or organization; therefore, broader general trends cannot be reliably inferred from the literature.

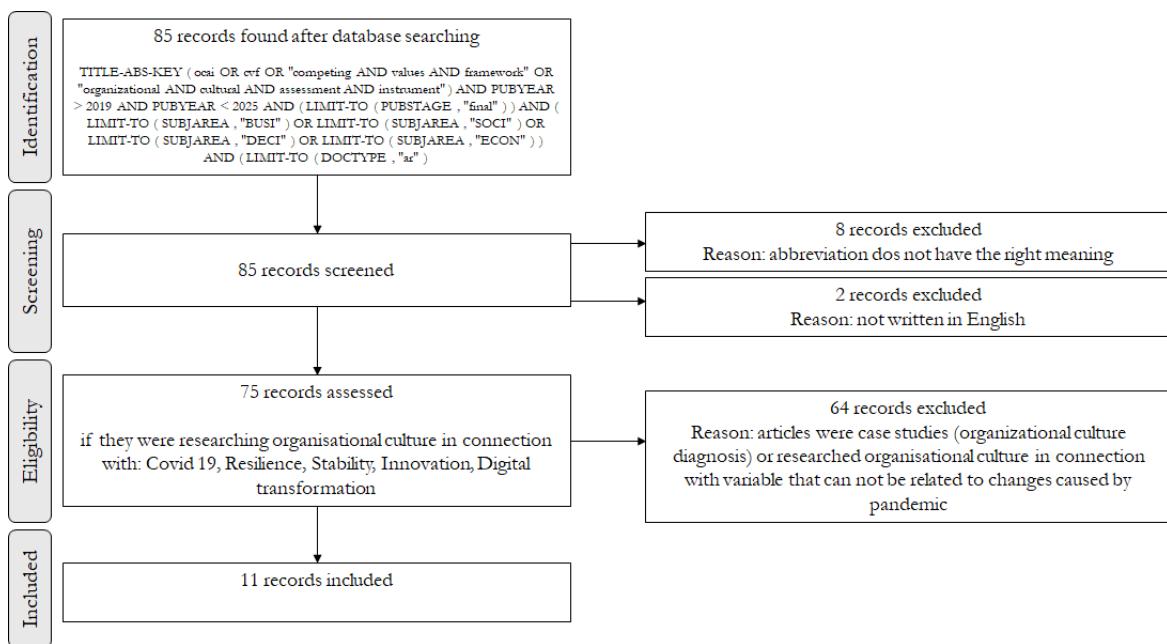


Figure 5. Number of articles in the literature review categorized by research focus area

### 5.1 Effects of COVID-19 on Organizational Culture

The most significant recent shock to organizations has been the COVID-19 pandemic, although its impact varied across sectors and industries. The pandemic began in December 2019, with lockdowns imposed in both the United States and Europe until July 2020. During this period, EU countries adapted to the new circumstances by shifting to remote work and adopting contact-minimizing operational methods. The proportion of EU enterprises integrating advanced digital technologies into their operations increased significantly, from 58% in 2019 to 63% in 2020 (European Investment Bank, 2022). While the official end date of the COVID-19 pandemic was declared as May 2023, the end of a pandemic is not always clearly defined in practice.

The impact of the pandemic extended beyond business processes to organizational culture as well. Researchers observed an increased internal focus, greater control, the dissemination of best practices, and efforts to foster a sense of belonging. In healthcare, the sector most affected by the pandemic, the critical role of transformational leadership in shaping organizational culture was emphasized by Gomes et al. (2024).

Their findings also indicated that the influence of different cultural types varied, particularly in terms of work-life balance. Organizations with a Clan-dominant culture showed a positive relationship with employee well-being, helping to prevent burnout during this overwhelming period. (Gomes, Tontini, Krause, Bernardes, 2024)

In the case of non-governmental organizations, a transition occurred from a predominantly Hierarchical culture, defined by rigid rules, formal procedures, and internal competition, toward a more Clan-oriented culture. While achievement remained a key value in the sector, formal rules and bureaucracy were largely replaced by an emphasis on knowledge-sharing and collective experience. Interestingly, respondents did not view the more relaxed environment as desirable in the long term. Instead, they expressed a preference for

returning to a previous level of structural clarity, but within a more supportive atmosphere. The willingness to compete internally and to take risks also declined (Mikušová, Rydvalová, Klabusayová, & Konečný, 2023).

The education sector was significantly affected by the pandemic, which disrupted regular school operations through temporary closures and the suspension of in-person classes (Sa & Serpa, 2020). In public education, a shift from the previously dominant Hierarchy culture as a result of the pandemic can also be observed. A study involving public high school teachers found that the structured yet collaborative pre-pandemic environment, shaped by formal rules and a mix of Hierarchy and Clan cultures, was replaced by a focus on innovation and adaptability, characteristic of the Adhocracy culture type, in response to the impact of COVID-19. The crisis pushed schools to adopt new approaches and encouraged more dynamic ways of working. (Mikušová, Klabusayová, & Meier, 2023). A common finding in both studies is a strong desire to return to a Hierarchy-based culture, suggesting that a return to structure and smooth operations guided by clear rules is preferred at pre-pandemic levels.

In the private sector, changes have shown a slightly different character. In the IT industry, the previously dominant Clan culture lost some of its significance, giving way to a blend of increased Hierarchy and Adhocracy values. While an internal focus remained central to operations, the culture during COVID-19 became characterized by a more formalized and structured work environment with top-down management. This shift between culture types reflects the changing environment driven by organizational ‘survival’ needs (Petrova, Konecna, & Hornungova, 2023).

Surprisingly, similar changes were observed in public administration. The previously predominant Clan culture lost its notable lead and, during the pandemic, was equally replaced by Hierarchy culture within the culture mix. Adhocracy and Market values remained nearly unchanged, so the shift was primarily from Clan toward Hierarchy. Interestingly, the desired culture points back to Clan, with an even stronger preference than before the pandemic (Mikušová, Raguž, Krestová, Klabušayová, 2023).

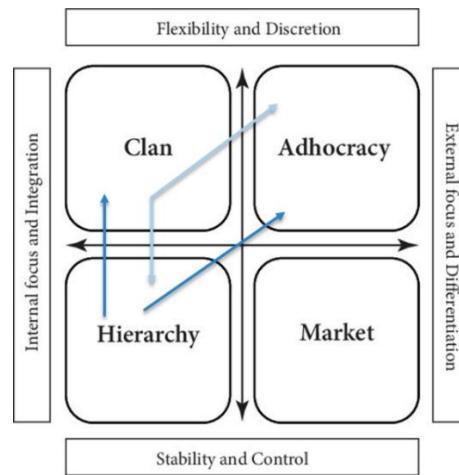


Figure 6. Shifts in the organizational culture as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

While these findings have limitations, since much of the research on COVID-19’s impact on organizational culture was conducted mainly in the non-profit sector of Central Europe, it is evident that Clan and Adhocracy cultures became more dominant within organizations during and after the pandemic. Organizations increasingly prioritize flexibility, employee well-being, and inclusivity characteristic of the Clan culture. As they shifted toward supportive work environments to manage stress and uncertainty, this culture type fostered stronger

internal relationships, empathy, and a people-centered approach. This shift was especially notable in NGOs and public administration, where cohesion, adaptability, and employee support became key priorities. Simultaneously, the need for innovation, adaptability, and rapid responses to changing conditions led to a rise in Adhocracy culture. Companies placed greater emphasis on flexibility, creative problem-solving, and digital transformation, with leaders encouraging experimentation and decentralized decision-making. The IT sector and other industries that adapted well to remote work embraced this culture, fostering autonomy and a focus on innovation. These shifts suggest that organizations moved away from rigid Hierarchical structures toward models allowing greater agility, collaboration, and responsiveness.

## 5.2 *Resilience and organizational culture*

The relationship between organizational culture and resilience has been of interest to researchers even before the pandemic. One area of focus is supply chain integration (SCI), highlighting that strong integration builds resilience. By considering how their organization's culture influences relationships with supply chain partners, organizations can enhance their resilience.

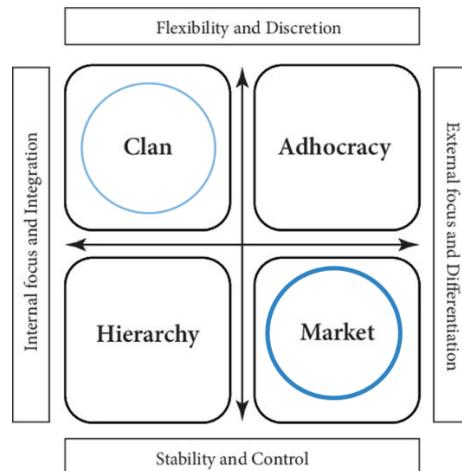
It was found that successful SCI (supply chain integration) is more often implemented by companies with low Hierarchy culture, i.e., those dominated by Adhocracy, Clan, or Market cultures with minimal hierarchy values. The importance of collaboration, teamwork, communication, and long-term development, typical of Clan and Adhocracy cultures, was emphasized in creating high levels of integration (Cao, Huo, Zhao, 2015).

Research among hotels shows that Market culture clearly promotes both internal and external supply chain integration simultaneously. Companies with a dominant Market culture were more successful in integration at all three levels: internal integration (processes, coordination, joint decision-making), supplier integration, and customer integration. Additionally, research indicates that Hierarchical culture has no significant effect on SCI (Gebril, Espino-Rodríguez, Gil-Padilla, 2022).

A study of governmental organizations showed that Hierarchy culture is dominant, but Clan culture is preferred due to its strong orientation toward people. Resilient cultures emphasize unity and belonging, which help reduce shocks and enable better responses to challenges. These cultures promote a bottom-up approach among policymakers, thereby increasing their ability to respond to stressors (Andrianu, 2020).

Research in the banking sector reveals that banks with Hierarchy cultures focused on consistency, monitoring, and control exhibit higher stability. While banks dominated by Hierarchy culture tend to have higher asset quality and lower risk, those dominated by Market culture also show higher asset quality and better financial performance. However, the impact of culture on bank stability is more significant during “non-crisis” periods and is more pronounced for smaller banks (Luu, Nguyen, Vu, Nguyen, 2023).

In the healthcare sector, Mandal (2017) found that Adhocracy, Clan, and Market cultures positively influence healthcare supply chain resilience, while Hierarchy culture has a negative effect. Additionally, technological orientation was shown to enhance the positive impact of Adhocracy, Clan, and Market cultures.



**Figure 7.** Organizational cultures supporting resilience

### 5.3 Supporting innovation via organizational culture

Adaptation and innovation are widely regarded as crucial components of organizational resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses that swiftly adjusted to environmental disruptions and identified new operational approaches were better positioned to endure the crisis. Given the challenges posed by the pandemic, the ability to rapidly transform and innovate became essential across various sectors, emphasizing the need to foster a culture that supports and encourages innovation.

A study by Zeb et al. (2021) in the energy sector provides evidence of the relationship between organizational culture and innovation, confirming earlier research that highlighted the positive effect of Adhocracy culture on organizational innovativeness. In contrast, Hierarchy culture, with its rigid structures, high levels of formalization, and centralized decision-making, was found to negatively impact an organization's capacity for innovation (Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2016). The influence of Market and Clan cultures on innovation capabilities, however, was not found to be significant. Adhocracy culture emerged as a key driver of innovation, as it promotes risk-taking, creativity, and flexibility—factors that lead to increased innovative practices. The findings suggest that organizations with a strong Adhocracy culture not only foster innovation but also achieve better performance outcomes, underlining the interconnection between cultural attributes and organizational effectiveness.

Bendak et al. build on the earlier studies by Naranjo-Valencia et al., not only reaffirming the connection between culture type and innovation capability but also extending the analysis. They integrate the Competing Values Framework with an assessment of various forms of organizational innovation, developing and validating a comprehensive framework across multiple companies. Their findings suggest that systematically transforming organizational culture can significantly enhance specific types of innovation among employees (Bendak, Shikhli, Abdel-Razek, 2020).

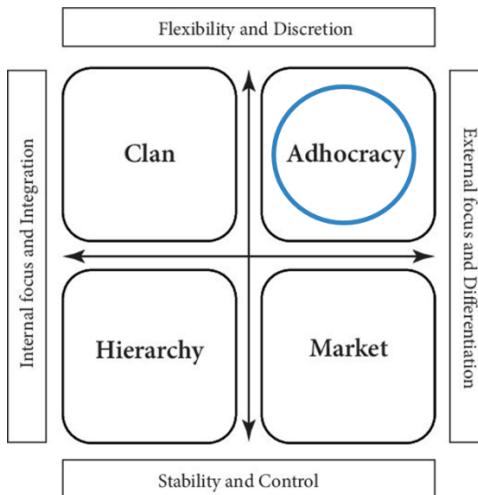


Figure 8. Organizational cultures supporting innovation

As the findings vary across sectors and industries, a summary table was created to provide a clearer overview of the conclusions presented above:

Table 2 Summary of findings organized by country, sector and industry

Country of research	Sector	Industry	
Czech Republic	Public	NGOs	pre-dominant Hierarchy and internal competition, knowledge and expertise
Czech Republic	Public	Education	pre-dominant Hierarchy, adaptability of the culture
Czech Republic	Private	IT	pre-pandemic Clan culture, blend of increased hierarchy and market
Czech Republic	Public	Governmental Organizations	The predominant culture has been equally replaced with market culture
Romania	Public	Governmental Organizations	Hierarchy remains dominant, Resilient cultures are strengthened, sense of belonging, by the organization
Egypt	Private	Hospitality	Companies with a market culture, on all three levels: internal, external, with customers.
Pakistan	Private and Public	Energy	Adhocracy culture, Hierarchy culture, centralized decision-making, organization's capacity
United Arab Emirates	Private	IT, construction/design, media	Systematically changing the desired types of culture

Source: own compilation

## 6. Conclusion

Our review concluded that in crisis situations such as COVID-19, internal integration becomes a priority. Hierarchical culture traits, such as structured processes, top-down decision-making, and planned execution,

ensure greater control. Meanwhile, the sense of belonging, people-orientation, and collaboration associated with Clan culture foster security, knowledge sharing, and coordinated operations. Characteristics of Adhocracy culture enhance innovation capabilities and organizational resilience, even in non-crisis periods. Measuring an organization's cultural orientation and intentionally adjusting it can improve its capacity for innovation. In nearly all cases, the desired post-crisis culture reflects the pre-crisis dominant culture, indicating that organizations tend to return to a familiar equilibrium after navigating survival mode. In several instances, resilience and stability are developed through full supply chain integration—an outcome more efficiently supported by Market culture. Furthermore, technological orientation can amplify the positive effects of organizational culture on supply chain integration.

#### Conflict of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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