

Gender-Based Typology of Organisational Culture: From Masculine and Feminine Models to Gender-Inclusive Organisations

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Abstract

The article considers organisational culture as an integrated part of the social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological structure of society. Proceeding from a gender-based analysis of organisational culture, the study describes characteristics and features of male and female organisational cultures, develops a theoretical-analytical model of organisational culture and examines its two extreme types: “Purely feminine” and “Purely masculine” organisational cultures, and gives examples of organisations that are closest to each of these extreme types. The study also highlights organisational cultures that fall between these two extremes and defines them. The gender-based analysis of organisational cultures allowed the authors to identify the following organisational cultures: Traditional or Patriarchal Organisational Culture, Stereotypical Organisational Culture, Gender Diversity Organisational Culture, Feminist Organisational Culture, and Gender-Inclusive Organisational Culture. The paper develops and presents the transformation model of gender-based types of organisational culture into the most effective and fair form, which is Gender-Inclusive Organisational Culture.

Keywords: organisational culture; gender; stereotypes; equality; inclusive organisational culture

Introduction

Today, organisational culture (OC) is considered a determining factor in the sustainable development of both the organisation and society as a whole. Organisational culture directly impacts a company's operational efficiency, its ability to adapt to external changes, and its competitiveness. Organisational culture is not an isolated substance, but rather a part of the social structure of society, which is directly related to social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological processes of society. Organisational culture, to a large extent, reflects society's challenges, and the success of the company's activities depends on how it responds to them.

Modern society faces various problems, one of which refers to the two largest groups of society - male and female, their place and role in society, and the employment sphere. It is well known that

there is a persistent gender disparity in the labour market, with men having higher-paying jobs and positions, better opportunities for career advancement, while women often continue to occupy low-paid jobs and face barriers to career advancement, despite often having a higher level of education (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Heilman, 2012).

Today, there is no doubt that gender equality in the private and public spheres enables gender-balanced decisions, which ultimately contribute to more effective socio-economic development.

It is to be noted that in recent years, some progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap. According to the Global Gender Gap Index, which benchmarks progress towards gender parity across four dimensions, such as economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership, which is derived from the comparison of the constant set of 145 economies included in both 2024 and 2025 editions, indicates that the global gender gap closed by +0.3% (Global Gender Gap Report 2025). But the Global Gender Gap Report also emphasises that there still is a combined global average gender gap of over 30%.

According to the latest (2025) “Women in the Workplace” report, women face less support for career advancement and fewer advancement opportunities than men because companies are less interested in developing women.

Scientists highlight the existence of a gender “substructure” and gender “subtext” in the culture of organisations (Acker, 1998; Ferguson, 1984; Mills, 2017) and argue that gender is a “foundational element” of organisational structure (Britton, 2000:419) and therefore “organisational analysis needs to take account of the relationship between gender and organisational life” (Mills, 2017). Recent research shows that organisational culture, its norms, values, and informal practices contribute to the reproduction or reduction of gender inequalities in the workplace and have a significant impact on the gender distribution of career opportunities and professional development.

A gender-based understanding of society and critical thinking skills regarding socially constructed gender narratives help to understand the gender characteristics of management, gender relations in organisational and managerial groups, the gender division of labour, gender features in leadership and decision-making, etc., i.e., everything that, in general, forms the organisational culture.

The formation and development of corporate culture is determined by various factors such as national and cultural aspects, mentality, legislation, societal ideology, the competitive environment, work style, etc.

A gender-balanced corporate culture means equal opportunities for employees, regardless of gender, equal participation in organisational life and the decision-making process, in matters of employment, and in career advancement. Many studies have shown that companies with higher levels of gender equality demonstrate stronger corporate culture, greater financial sustainability and innovation (Ferrary & Deo, 2019), higher levels of job satisfaction (Adams, 1963; Yiing et al., 2009), and more efficient solutions to complex problems (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Ultimately, such companies are more successful. Therefore, the organisational culture should encourage all employees to use their talents. However, some researchers drew attention to the absence of gender in organisational analysis, while the gender dimension is recognised as an important element of the organisational culture.

Moreover, as some very recent studies have shown (Krivkovich et al., 2025), only half of companies encourage women to advance and develop their careers, which has declined over several years in the gender diversity trend. More than that, the report argues, for the first time, women demonstrate less ambition and are less interested in being promoted than men.

All of the above emphasise the importance and timeliness of gender analysis of organisational cultures.

Literature Review

As a separate area of scientific research, organisational culture emerged from sociology and anthropology in the 1970th and since the 1980s, organisational culture theory has been developed by Edgar Schein, Geert Hofstede, and Clifford Geertz. In 1984, for the first time, the opinion was expressed that the effectiveness of leadership and the long-term success of organisations are associated with organisational culture. It was from this time that the systematic study of organisational culture began (Deal & Kennedy, 1984).

Scientists usually define organisational culture as a set of values, attitudes, beliefs, systems, norms that are common for the organisation members and reflect how employees, customers and society in general experience the organisation and its brand (Tiliuta& Diaconu, 2020; Ouellette, 2020; Yip et al, 2020; Linstead 2001).

Organisational culture predetermines employees' behaviour in an organisation (Rasak, 2022; Pavlova, 2023), providing or not the opportunities to demonstrate their professional skills and abilities, satisfy or not their professional ambitions, and ultimately motivate or not their work activities. Every organisation has its own individual culture. Organisational culture consists of the goals the organisation strives to achieve and the behaviour patterns it encourages (Malik & Salim, 2020).

Edgar Schein, who made significant contributions to the theory of organisational culture, considered it as a multi-level phenomenon and identified three levels in it: artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions (Schein, 1984). By the “artefacts” the scientist meant any visible and describable aspects of the organisation, such as branding, logos, office design, dress code, etc. The “underlying values” mean for Schein organisational goals, value statements, missions, social contracts, and so on. By the concept “basic assumptions“, Schein assumed the presence in the organisation of unconscious and unspoken elements of the organisation.

Scientific literature identifies different types of organisational culture, like Control Culture, Performance Culture, Relationship Culture, Response Culture (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003) or Power Culture, Role Culture, Task Culture, Person Culture (ACCA Study Text, 2004), Control Culture, Performance Culture, Relationship Culture, Response Culture (Malik& Salim, 2020), Toxic Culture (Sull, 2022; Sull,2023), Work Hard/Play Hard Culture, Tough Guy/Macho Culture, Process Culture, Bet-Your-Company Culture (Deal & Kennedy,1982) etc.

Among the varieties of ideas about the types of organisational culture, the following four are the most common: *Clan Culture* that is characterised by collaboration and a family-like atmosphere (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Hellriegel et.al., 1995); *Adhocracy Culture*, which prioritises innovation and risk-taking (Cameron & Quinn, 2011); *Market Culture*, which is focused on competition and results (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Schein, 2010) and *Hierarchy Culture*, which is based on the structure and control (Fey & Denison, 2003).

Researchers study different aspects of organisational culture and consider it as a tool for achieving stability and business success in a highly competitive environment (Ližbetinová et al., 2016; Dyck et al., 2017).

As it can be seen, there is no comprehensive definition of the concept of “organisational culture” and its types yet, which gave P. Frost the reason to call organisational culture a conceptually slippery notion (Frost,1983).

Nevertheless, despite the wide ambiguity of the concept of organisational culture and being an integrated part of the social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological structure of society, organisational culture is a key factor in the sustainable development of an organisation and society as a whole.

Following the general theory of culture, organisational culture becomes more problematic when it comes to gender issues.

The Role of Gender in Organisational Culture

The role of gender in organisational culture is one of the central themes in modern sociology and management, and scientists are increasingly paying attention to the study of women's influence on corporate processes. Research on gender aspects of management, leadership and employment has been conducted since the mid-20th century (Kanter, 1977). Initially, research focused on barriers women face, including labour market gender segregation, gender equality, “glass ceiling”, “sticky floor”, discrimination, gender stereotypes, etc. (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Heilman, 2012, etc.). More recently, the issues have been addressed by analysing the benefits of gender diversity in organisations (Hunt et al., 2020; Ciminelli et al., 2021).

Studies on how perceptions of organisational culture affect the decision to work in an organisation have shown that organisational culture interacts with gender factors, influences a company's attractiveness to job seekers, and influences their decision to work in an organisation (Catanzaro et al. 2010). Some authors (Mills, 2017) consider gender as a cultural phenomenon, and an organisation as a key aspect of a culture.

Many studies emphasise the existence of gender-stereotypical perceptions in organisational culture, according to which men are more likely than women to prefer to work in companies with competitive environments (Heilman, 2012; Eagly& Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Catanzaro et al., 2010, etc.).

Investigated of female management style, it was found (Heilman, 2012; Eagly& Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001) that women's collaborative and participative leadership style contributes to an inclusive corporate environment, that women leaders are more likely to make decisions based on collective discussion, which increases the level of trust in the organisation, that companies with significant numbers of women in leadership positions are more likely to be ethical and socially responsible (Hunt et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018).

Studying the rates of men and female in organisational management, scholars (Hofstede, 1998; Tiliuta& Diaconu, 2020; Kanter, 1977, Arnania-Kepuladze, 2012, etc.) have concluded that there are two types of organisations: organisations with a high rate of men and organisations with a high rate of female, or, in other words, male organisational culture and female organisational culture, and considered the “rate” of men and female and therefore male and female organisational cultures are estimated not from the viewpoint of male-female membership in decision-making and leadership, but from such informal institutions as gender stereotypes and gender-stereotypical perceptions.

Male Organisational Culture VS Female Organisational Culture

In general, male organisational culture is associated with a competitive work environment, while female organisational culture is estimated as supportive (Catanzaro et al., 2019).

In organisations with a high rate of males, there is a low number of women in the management of the organisation, a larger gender pay gap, and a preference for a higher salary. Organisations with a high rate of females are characterised by a greater number of women in the management of the organisation, a preference for a low number of working hours, and a lower gender pay gap.

Male corporate culture tends to be characterised by a pronounced hierarchy in which power is concentrated in the hands of a few key individuals (Kanter, 1977). This feature favours rapid decision-making but may limit management flexibility. Such organisations are dominated by a competitive spirit, which encourages productivity but can also create a tense team atmosphere (Hofstede, 1998). Leadership in male organisational culture is often based on authoritarian leadership (Bass, 1990) and follows the principle “Men are Natural Leaders”. Male organisational culture promotes effective crisis management but can limit employee initiative. Straightforward communication and the use of competitive conflict resolution strategies are common in male organisational culture (Tannen, 1994). This can lead to effective problem-solving, but it also creates the risk of a toxic work environment.

Male organisational culture is traditional for organisations. However, according to some opinions, in recent decades, there has been an increase in the number of organisations based on the principles of a female organisational culture (Eagly& Carli, 2007; Ely & Meyerson, 2010).

Female organisational culture promotes gender equality, inclusion, and equal career opportunities. Research shows that companies with a high proportion of women in management demonstrate better financial sustainability (Hunt et al., 2015), are focused on sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and employee well-being (Gilligan, 2003), on the participation of all employees in decision-making, and on creating a trusting work environment (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). However, scientists note some of the challenges and limitations of female organisational culture, such as a lack of recognition, perception as less effective in a competitive business environment, which gives rise to the feeling of weakness of this organisational culture (Eagly& Heilman, 2016).

General characteristics and features of male and female organisational culture, and, therefore, Masculine and Feminine models of organisational culture, are presented in the following table:

Table: Male and female organisational culture: characteristics and features

Types of organisational culture	Features	Characteristics
Male organisational culture	Hierarchy and Power Structure	The concentration of power in the hands of a few key individuals, which facilitates rapid decision-making but can limit management flexibility
	Competitiveness and Results Orientation	The dominance of a competitive spirit and the desire to achieve positive results, stimulation of productivity can also stimulate tension in a team.
	Leadership and Management Style	The leadership is often built on charismatic or authoritarian leadership, which facilitates effective crisis management but can limit employee initiative.
	Communication and Conflict Resolution	Directness in communication and the use of competitive conflict resolution strategies can lead to effective problem solving, but also create the risk of developing a toxic work environment.
Female organisational culture	A Humanistic Management	Focus on employee development, creating a supportive environment, and encouraging emotional intelligence leads to higher employee engagement and reduced stress levels.
	Collaboration	Existence of horizontal structures, participation of all employees in decision-making, and the creation of a trusting work environment reduce conflict, promote

		cooperation and team building.
	Emotional Engagement and Empathy	The leading role of emotional maturity and the ability to empathise contributes to mentoring and supporting employees, and contributes to high organisational loyalty.
	Diversity	Promotion of gender equality and equal career opportunities leads to greater financial stability.

Source: Authors' developed based on the following (Kanter, 1977; Hofstede, 1998; Bass, 1990; Tannen, 1994; Goleman, 2011; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Fletcher, 2004, etc.)

Recent studies are concentrated not only on the division of organisational culture into male and female, but on the level (rate) of male and female in organisations and characterise organisational culture with a high level of masculinity and a high level of femininity (Hofstede, 2001; Tiliuta & Diaconu, 2020). Organisational cultures with high levels of male describe large wage gaps, a preference for a higher salary, and a low number of women in the management of the organisation, while organisational cultures with high levels of female have a relatively low gender pay gap, a preference for a low number of working hours, and a greater number of women in the management of the organization.

Depending on the level of the organisation's masculinity or femininity, different gender-based types of organisational culture can be identified.

Gender-Based Types of Organisational Culture

Theoretically, proceeding from a gender perspective, organisational culture can fall into two extreme positions: an organisational culture could be "purely masculine" or "purely feminine". Other types of gender-based organisational culture vary in levels of masculinity and femininity, represented by male and female, and occupy an intermediate position between these extremes.

"Purely masculine" organisational culture fully corresponds to gender-stereotypical perceptions of male and female roles in society, private and public life. These organisations are developed by men and adapted to their values and assumptions. In these organisations is believed that the ideal employee works overtime, is always available for work, is confident, competitive, obstinate, independent, achievement-oriented, autonomous, dominant, etc. The ideal employee prefers high earnings, recognition, responsibility, promotion, and advancement. In such an organisational culture, men are assumed to be "natural leaders" while women are performers.

"Purely feminine" organisational culture also follows gender stereotypes, but in the other direction. According to these stereotypes, "typical" women are nurturant, affiliative, acquiescent, supple, and compliant. They are oriented on job security, stability, personal time, good relationships with immediate managers, cooperation, extra fringe benefits, and work environment.

Do such organisational cultures exist in reality?

"Purely feminine" organisational culture as well as "Purely masculine" organisational culture in their strict sense, we've defined, are almost nonexistent and can't be empirically observed. This is more related to "Purely feminine" organisational culture.

"Purely masculine" and "Purely feminine" organisational cultures are theoretical and analytical models that may be useful for analyses of the gender features of organisational culture and for identifying not a literal description of real organisations, but dominant cultural patterns.

The organisational culture that comes closest to a “Purely feminine” culture can be attributed to Women's and Feminist Organizations. The nearest approximation to a "purely feminine culture" can be non-governmental organisations, feminist research centres, crisis centres, advocacy organisations, women's cooperatives, social work, elderly care, etc.

But even in these organisations, the culture is not completely "pure" because the organisations must interact with external institutions such as different funds, the state, etc., which are embodied by masculine ideology.

After analysis of various types of organisational culture that have already been described in the scientific literature, their summarising was done in a gender-stereotypical context. Those types of gender-based organisational cultures fall between these two extreme types we've defined above. They include:

Traditional or Patriarchal Organisational Culture, which is characterised by a clear division of roles: there men are leaders, and women are performers; there is a high level of gender stereotypes influencing career paths and decision-making, the presence of a "glass ceiling" and "glass walls", and discrimination in promotion. This type of OC is closest to a “Purely masculine” one, but does not completely coincide with the analytical model.

Stereotypical Organisational Culture, which is characterised by an attempt to create equality, but at the same time, stereotypes retain their influence on the assessment of the competencies of employees of different genders, their work motivation and preferences, and their management methods.

Gender Diversity Organisational Culture, which recognises differences between “masculine” and “feminine” as differences between “competitive” and “cooperative”, and uses these differences to enrich the team, but doesn't completely abandon stereotypes.

Feminist Organisational Culture recognises structural gender imbalance and purposefully tries to overcome it, integrates feminist principles into management, personnel, and cultural practices, prioritises women's interests in employment and organisation and often acts against men's interests, actively fighting for women's rights and opposing any form of gender inequality and discrimination. Feminist organisational culture is focused on gender inequality and oriented on the correction of patriarchal structures, which puts her at risk of gender exclusion.

Feminist organisational culture is most close to “Purely feminine” OC, but is not identical to it. This type of organisational culture is characterised by ideological confrontation in favour of women.

Every one of the above-mentioned and defined types of gender-based OC.

Each of the above-mentioned and defined types of gender-based OC can be considered in the frame of either the “Purely masculine” or the “Purely feminine” type of OC. That, Traditional or Patriarchal, Stereotypical and Gender Diversity Organisational Cultures can be classified as the “Purely masculine” while Feminist Organisational Culture, as the “Purely feminine” type of OC.

Which kind of gender-based organisational culture can best contribute to achieving the goals that organisational culture is intended to achieve?

Modern researchers of organisational cultures recognise and support the importance and significance of an inclusive culture. Inclusive CO can be defined as a set of values, norms, organisational rules and practices that aim to ensure equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of all other differences and characteristics.

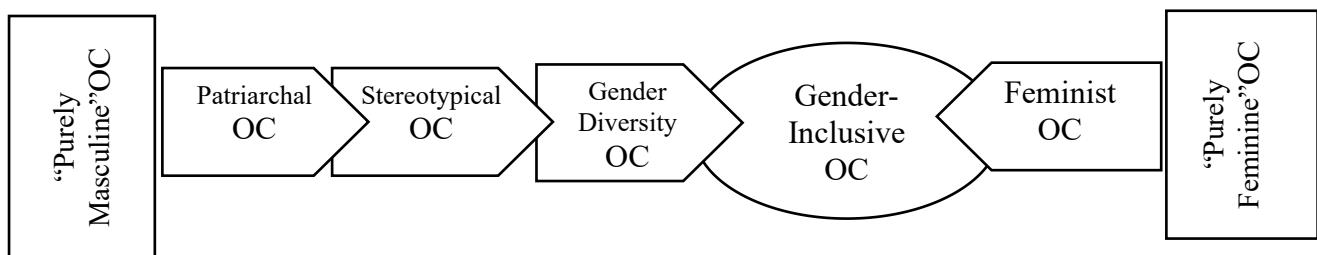
In our context, we consider an inclusive organisational culture in its gender context, and define and characterise Gender-Inclusive Organisational Culture.

Gender-Inclusive Organisational Culture. Proceeding from the general principles and aims of organisational culture, the Gender-Inclusive Organisational Culture is oriented towards the achievement of equal participation, recognition, and career opportunities for all people, regardless

of gender, taking into account all possible differences between them, including asymmetries of power and resources within the organisation, structural gender inequality, and differences in social roles and life trajectories. A gender-inclusive organisational culture is neither a "culture for women" nor a "culture for men," but a culture liberated from gender hierarchies and gender stereotypical biases.

The formation of a gender-inclusive organisational culture should be achieved through the transformation of both masculine and feminine OC, as it is shown in the following Figure.

Figure: Gender-Based Organisational Cultures’ System and its Transformation



Source: Authors’ own

Herewith, masculine cultures must rid themselves of discrimination, sexist, and stereotypical narratives, and reject the "masculine norm" of success and leadership, while women's cultures must reduce feminist pressure. In both cases, employees must be ensured a high level of psychological safety, including from a gender perspective.

What must happen is not the adaptation of women or men to the system, but rather a change in the system to accommodate human diversity. A gender-inclusive organisational culture is not “men against women” or “women against men”, but “men and women together”.

Conclusion

Modern researchers of organisational culture come to the consensus that this culture creates a specific environment in the organisation, influences its long-term plans and should lead the organisation to its vision and success.

In this context, the question arises: What should organisational culture be? This study examines organisational culture from a gender perspective and has found that gender-inclusive organisational culture is currently the most progressive type of organisational culture, it represents a new challenge in the evolution of organisational cultures, going beyond both traditional management and narrow gender approaches, that gender-inclusive corporate culture is not a “culture for women” or “culture for men” but a culture free from gender hierarchies which leads toward increasing the sustainability of organizations, reducing social costs and contributing to the formation of a more equitable climate in the organization and a healthy atmosphere in society.

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