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RESEARCH BRIEF

Measuring Normative Beliefs and Shared Behavioral Expectations in Organizations

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ARTICLE SUMMARY

Measuring Normative Beliefs and Shared Behavioral Expectations in Organizations: The Reliability and Validity of the *Organizational Culture Inventory*®

Robert A. Cooke and Janet L. Szumal (1993)

INSTRUMENT USED: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE INVENTORY®
(OCI®)

The Study:

An organization's culture consists of assumptions, values, and beliefs that are shared by members and that persist over time. The OCI assesses 12 specific sets of normative beliefs associated with Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive cultures within organizations. Reliability and validity results are critical to consider in choosing a survey—they confirm whether the survey actually measures what it is being used to measure (validity) and the extent to which it does so in a consistent manner. This study examined the reliability and validity of three versions of the OCI based on different sources of data.

Findings:

Internal consistency reliability was confirmed with four different samples of respondents using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated appropriate levels of consistency in how the items within each of the 12 scales are answered.

Evidence of *interrater reliability* between respondents describing the same organization or subunit was provided by F and eta^2 statistics, which showed a significant amount of variance in the OCI scale scores was explained by organizational or subunit membership. The variance explained was greatest for the most recent form of the OCI and for samples in which respondents were relatively homogenous in terms of demographic and positional factors.

Test-retest reliability was confirmed by the OCI profiles from two organizations over a two-year period which showed consistency over time.

Construct validity was demonstrated with three different samples, each of which confirmed that the 12 OCI scales are associated Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive cultures in the manner expected.

Criterion-related validity was demonstrated in two ways with multiple samples. First, the OCI scales—and especially the Constructive scales—were found to be significantly correlated in the expected direction with respondent reports of norm-related stress, overall satisfaction, intention to stay, and the likelihood of recommending organization. Second, the correlations between the OCI scales and outcomes measured via supervisor interviews showed that across different forms and data sets:

a) Achievement and Self-Actualizing norms are positively related to innovativeness,
b) all four Constructive norms are negatively related to work avoidance;
c) expectations for Avoidance detract from mutual assistance; and
d) Conventional and Oppositional are associated with higher levels of employee turnover.

In addition, correlations based on the most recent form of the OCI showed that Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance are positively related to work avoidance; Dependent and Power are positively related to turnover; and Achievement is negatively related to turnover.

Implications:

The OCI can reliably be used to identify the extent to which members of an organization believe they are encouraged or pressured to behave in Constructive and Defensive ways. The normative beliefs measured by the inventory are related to outcomes at the individual and subunit levels and can be used to understand why certain units and organizations are more effective than others. The strong psychometric properties demonstrated by the OCI overcome some of the limitations and weaknesses inherent in qualitative and customized measurement approaches, making it an appropriate complement to the use of such approaches. In addition to creating a culture profile for the whole organization, profiles should be created for subunits and for groups of employees who are similar in terms of demographics, level and position. This enables distinct subcultures to be identified and to determine whether unique norms within certain units should be either minimized or adopted elsewhere by the organization.

ARTICLE ABSTRACT

The *Organizational Culture Inventory* measures 12 sets of normative beliefs or shared behavioral expectations associated with three general types of cultures, Constructive, Passive-Defensive, and Aggressive-Defensive These cultural norms are hypothesized to influence the thinking and behavior of organizational members, their motivation and performance, and their satisfaction and stress. As components of organizational culture, behavioral expectations are considered to be shared and enduring in nature. Tests of three types of reliability—internal consistency, interrater, and test-retest—and two types of validity—construct and criterion-related—on data provided by 4,890 respondents indicate that the inventory is a dependable instrument for assessing the normative aspects of culture.

Obtained alpha coefficients support the internal consistency of the scales; tests for interrater agreement show that significant variance in individuals' responses is explained by their organizational membership; and tests for differences across time show the temporal consistency of scale scores. Factor analysis results provide general support for the construct validity of the scales, most of which were related to both individual and organizational criteria as predicted.

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