AGILE ORGANISATIONS AS PART OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATE CULTURE AND AGILITY IN TURKISH CONTEXT

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Abstract

In today's business world, digital transformation has become inevitable for companies. In order to meet the demands of digitalization, companies need to act agile. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the role of organizational culture in supporting organizational agility in order to adapt to digital transformation and to reveal how culture affects organizational agility. Within the scope of the study, the data collected from the employees in managerial positions in private sector organizations operating in Turkey are analysed and the effects of four types of organizational culture - "clan culture", "adhocracy culture", "market culture" and "hierarchy culture" - on agility are investigated. The results show that clan culture has a significant effect on organizational agility in the Turkish context, while other culture types do not contribute significantly to agility.

Keywords: *Agility, Culture, Digitalisation, Change, Digital transformation.*

DİJİTAL DÖNÜŞÜMÜN BİR PARÇASI OLARAK ÇEVİK ORGANİZASYONLAR: TÜRKİYE BAĞLAMINDA KURUM KÜLTÜRÜ İLE ÇEVİKLİK ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

Öz

Günümüz iş dünyasında dijital dönüşüm şirketler için kaçınılmaz hale gelmiştir. Dijitalleşmenin taleplerini karşılayabilmek adına şirketlerin çevik davranabilmeleri gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı, dijital dönüşüme adapte olabilmek için örgütsel çevikliği desteklemede örgüt kültürünün rolünü incelemek ve kültürün örgütsel çevikliği nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma kapsamında Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren özel sektör kuruluşlarında yönetici pozisyonundaki çalışanlardan anket yöntemiyle toplanan veriler incelenmekte ve dört tip örgüt kültürünün- "klan kültürü", "adhokrasi kültürü", "pazar kültürü" ve "hiyerarşi kültürü"- çeviklik üzerindeki etkileri araştırılmaktadır. Sonuçlar, Türkiye bağlamında klan kültürünün örgütsel çeviklik üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olduğunu, diğer kültür tiplerinin ise çevikliğe anlamlı bir katkı sağlamadığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çeviklik, Kültür, Dijitalleşme, Değişim, Dijital dönüşüm.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the growing effect of digital transformation in the business world, the organizations need to develop their adaptive skills and be flexible in order to adapt themselves to the changing environment. Being prepared for the challenges in this environment, providing fast solutions and reacting immediately can give businesses a competitive advantage. In this context, organisational agility has become one of the major concepts that should be on the agenda of businesses. Organisational agility is a concept that was developed in the early 1990s as an alternative method for dealing with a constantly changing, highly mobile environment (Stekelenburg, 2012:12). But agility does not only encompass immediate reaction, it also requires a firm "to anticipate and seize opportunities, especially through innovation and learning" (Felipe et al. 2017: 4) and this can only be achieved in a culture that facilitates and supports dynamism. Despite this, agility has generally been addressed from a technological perspective. But one of the overlooked issues that may have an impact on agility is organizational culture (Ashrafi et al., 2005).

Though there is no common definition for the concept of corporate culture, it can be verbalised as the rules, norms, behaviours, values, beliefs and common meanings that determine the attitude of employees. Aramina et al. (2015:771) states that there is a direct relationship between the effectiveness and performance of the organisation and corporate culture and that a strong corporate culture will support the effectiveness of the organisation. It is stated that the organisations that will be the winners of the competition in the future will be the ones that manage to create a culture that has an established ability for agility (Rick, 2018:1).

The aim of this study is to uncover the relationship between corporate culture and organisational agility that have gained importance in recent years with the tremendous effect of digital transformation and to present a framework that shows which cultural factors are mostly effective in supporting organisational agility.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Every society needs a number of institutions to meet its needs, to develop itself and to solve its problems. Organisations are the units that fulfil the founding goals of these social institutions, which are formed according to the types of needs and problems. Organisations that were created to solve the tasks that humans cannot do alone and the problems they cannot deal with are the basic tools that determine the functioning of society (Terzi, 2000:1).

An organisation can be defined as the coordination of the activities of a human community for the realisation of a common and explicit purpose in a sequence of power and responsibility as a result of the division of labour (Schein, 1992:11).

Organisations are in constant interaction with their environment. Because of this, the structure and characteristics of the environment in which organisations are located become more important. The organisation that is connected to its environment and seen as an open system has to make changes in its structures in order to adapt to environmental changes, and those who cannot do this are seen as unsuccessful (Büyükuslu, 1998:76).

With the advancing development in digitalisation, the rapid advances in automation and robotics and the increasing use of artificial intelligence, the fourth industrial revolution has a significant impact on the organisation and the business world. This affects both the future design of organisations and the types and forms of work. In addition, this leads to changes in the organisational structure and culture of the company. These changes require a more flexible way of moving and advancing and less adherence to tightly defined structures and processes. Agile organisational development is becoming more and more important (Hasenbein, 2020:12).

The basic principles behind agile organisations are flexibility and self-organisation. This enables easier and more flexible adaptation to the market and to customer needs. Instead of hierarchies, there are independent teams in which a clear vision and an organisational strategy indicate the necessary direction rather than an external supervisor (Hasenbein, 2020:18).

The most widespread and statistically valid model in classifications of organisational culture is the Competing Values Framework (CVF) developed by Cameron and Quinn (Laubengaier, Hahn and Wagner, 2019:5502; Maximini, 2015:16). The work "A spatial model of effectiveness criteria: toward a competing values approach to organisational analysis", written by Robert E. Quinn and John Rohrbaug in 1983, based on the research of John Campbell et al. in 1974, forms the basis of this model (Maximini, 2015:6). The model was revised in 1999 by Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn and in their published work "Diagnosing and changing organisational culture: Based on the competing values framework", they created a tool for evaluating organisational culture (OCAI) based on this model.

Competing Values Framework (CVF) is based on four fundamental value processes called flexibility, stability, differentiation (external) and integration (internal). The most important aspect of these four basic processes is that they represent opposing or competing assumptions (stability versus flexibility, internal focus versus external focus). Each process emphasizes the main value, which is the opposite of the value in the other process (Cameron and Quinn, 2011:40).

Cameron and Quinn discovered that the four-fold distinction (clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, market) that emerges from these analyses is exactly consistent with the basic organisational methods that have evolved in economics. It also agrees with basic management theories about organisational success, organisational quality approaches, leadership roles and management skills (Cameron and Quinn, 2011:40 as cited in Maximini, 2015:16; Cameron and Quinn, 2006:31-36).

In the CVF model, the organisational culture arises when the horizontal axis of integration (internal focus) and differentiation (external focus) intersects the vertical axis on which there is flexibility and freedom as well as stability and control. Together, these two-sided dimensions form four quadrants; the clan culture (internal, flexible), the adhocracy culture (external, flexible), the hierarchy culture (internal, stable), the market culture (external, stable), each representing a different indicator of organisational activity.

2. 1. Corporate culture as a challenge for digital transformation

The company has to change its culture in the following situations: (Deal and Kennedy, 1982:159-161 as cited in Kozlu, 2014:103-104; Carnall 1999:113)

• If the market in which it is located changes rapidly, although it attaches importance to the corporate culture,

• If the competition in the business area is intense,

• If, despite its strong culture, it achieves below average results,

• When the company is growing too fast.

Certain types of culture are formed when certain values, assumptions and priorities dominate, when the organisation faces challenges and adapts to change. Culture helps to ensure that the organisation remains coherent as well as adaptable and flexible when required. While corporate cultures often change in predictable ways over time (Cameron and Whetten, 1981; Cameron and Quinn, 1983), companies face the need to change cultures due to environmental shocks, mergers and acquisitions or new market opportunities.

Deficiencies in organisational culture are one of the biggest obstacles to business success in the digital age. According to McKinsey's recent survey on global executives, 33% of the respondents stated that cultural and behavioural challenges were the most significant obstacles against meeting digital priorities (Goran, LaBerge and Srinivasan 2017). Not surprisingly, the second biggest challenge that emerged was the lacking understanding of digital trends with a 25% followed by lacking digital talent with a 24%. When the culture is not facilitating digitalisation and do not match the requirements of the new age, then it becomes more and more difficult to create a pool of relevant skills and abilities within the organisation.

Each obstacle is a longstanding challenge that has become more expensive in the digital age. Slow reactions can be given when risk aversion prevails, strategic opportunities are underinvested and customer needs and

market dynamics are changing rapidly. Managers who expect organizational culture to change organically will move very slowly as circumstances change, competition intensifies and will be left out the game. Managers need to proactively shape and measure culture in a way that ensures the survival of the organization through altering the structural and tactical elements which may impede the cultural change they want to activate in an organization (Goran et al., 2017).

2.2.Organisational agility

Organizational agility refers to the firm's capability to sense environmental changes and respond to them quickly by adjusting its resources, processes and strategies (Overby et al., 2006). It is also defined as agile production that is accepted as a reaction to changes and converts these changes into opportunities (Banihashemi and Dahmardeh, 2010:179).

Organisational agility, which is claimed to have different dimensions such as responsiveness, flexibility, competence and quickness is crucial for determining new dimensions of competition (Lin et al, 2006; Sharifi et al, 2001). Companies that become aware of organisational agility acquire the habit of agility and achieve the ability to advance their strategies through agility (Araza and Aslan, 2016:6-10).

Since companies have to work in a more dynamic environment, they have to integrate new knowledge that ensures the continuity of organisational learning and performance development (Gregar et al., 2017:323-324). Agility, defined as an organisational competitive advantage, arises when an organisation quickly recognizes changes and absorbs them at the same time. Therefore, effective knowledge management and the ability to learn are crucial for an agile organisation. Agility therefore includes all aspects of the organisational architecture such as technology, business processes, employees, information and strategy (Molla et al., 2012:171). Agility is a response to the competition that arises in the face of changes and uncertainties in the business environment. When examining the literature, it was found that the agility of the organisation is closely related to the success of the organisation (Nejatian et al., 2018:4).

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

One of the most overlooked variables that can influence organisational agility is corporate culture (Ashrafi et al., 2005 as cited in Felipe et al., 2017:2). This study suggests that the four corporate culture typologies that cover the CVF model may have different effects on organisational agility.

Clan culture can be a good indicator of organisational agility as it can help strengthen collaborative relationships and disseminate knowledge (Boothby et al., 2010). Managing adaptation, creation and knowledge distribution are stated as basic features of agile companies (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012). Clan culture, in a way, is expected to facilitate this dissemination of know-how through flatter organisational structures based on autonomous individuals and teams. In clan cultures, managers do not micro-manage but they rather take the role of mentors and supporters (Matzler et al., 2013), which can, in return, increase organisational agility. Hence, a positive relationship between clan culture and agility is expected.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The clan culture contributes positively to organisational agility.

Agile organisations must be able to plan and find innovative answers to possible scenarios quickly (van Oosterheout et al., 2006). Given the highly uncertain, changing, and complex business contexts in which companies compete today, an adhocracy culture that proactively stresses the importance of improvement and innovation can be a powerful facilitator of organisational agility (Felipe et al., 2017). Accordingly, Araza and Aslan (2016:6-10) claim that organisational agility is often associated with adaptability and flexibility, that is, with the ability of an organisation to adapt to changes in the environment, which implies external focus and changes. Because of the norms it holds, the Adhocracy culture represents the type of culture that is best suited to steer an organisation towards agility. Hence, it is believed that the adhocracy culture is positively associated with organisational agility.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The adhocracy culture contributes positively to organisational agility.

Organisational agility often uses a business context that highlights the values associated with productivity and goal achievement. Market culture can have positive consequences for organisational agility. Anticipating, understanding and responding to external focus on market needs, trends and changes in competition can provide access to a comprehensive set of valuable external information. This provides the company with valuable information for decision-making and prepares the company to accurately identify and react to unexpected environmental changes (Cameron and Quinn, 2006:40). The market culture also decisively supports management processes such as strategic planning, control and goal setting in order to act and be able to react in a planned manner. This proactive planning and intolerance for uncertainty can also bring about higher levels of organisational agility. It is therefore assumed that the market culture has a positive effect on organisational agility.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The market culture contributes positively to organisational agility.

Hierarchy culture is viewed as a type of culture that is mainly based control and aims efficiency. Therefore, this culture is intrinsically focused and places value on maintaining a stagnant and rigid hierarchical structure instead of looking for market opportunities. This type of culture hinders information management due to its high level of formalisation and strict rules and regulations (Becerra-Fernandez and Leidner, 2008). Though this extreme standardization contributes to efficient, it does not coincide with the agile concept. It's hard for supervisors working in bureaucratic systems to get used to the customs of volatile market conditions of high competition constant restructuring is required in order to meet environmental demands (Crocitto and Youssef, 2003). Hierarchy culture seems to be the opposite of what should be incorporated in an agile organisation. Therefore, it is expected that the hierarchy culture leads to a lower organisational agility.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The hierarchy culture contributes negatively to organisational agility.

4. RESEARCH

4. 1. Methodology

Data was collected using an online questionnaire between May, 2021 and September, 2021. A total of 101 participants took part in the study. Employees who had managerial roles within the companies were selected in the sense that a higher level employee may have an integrative and broad insight about the culture of the organisation. The data collection process was based on snowball sampling method in which employees from companies invited their alike positioned colleagues to the research.

The first part of the questionnaire form consists of demographic questions. The second part contains questions about corporate culture. The Organisational Culture Rating Scale (OCAI) developed by Cameron and Quinn in 1999 was used for this section. This section consists of a total of 16 questions, comprising of 4 questions for each sub-dimension: clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture and hierarchy culture. Karakılıç (2019) have tested the reliability and validity of the scale in Turkish context and have concluded that the scale's 4 dimensional structure was appropriate. In the third part, the scale developed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and adapted by Nafei (2016) was used for assessing organisational agility. Nafei (2016) found that all items yielded alpha scores higher than 0.70 and the overall reliability of the scale was calculated as 0.8914. Also, Basri and Zorlu (2020) have adopted this scale in their study regarding the impact of organizational culture on organizational agility and found out that the scale was reliable and valid.

5-point Likert scale was used to rate all questionnaire questions (strongly disagree: 1, disagree: 2, neither agree nor disagree: 3, agree: 4, fully agree: 5) and IBM SPSS statistics program was used to analyse the survey data.

4.2.Sample

The sample group participating in the study consists of 101 participants. 49.5% of the respondents are women and 50.5% of the respondents are men. The gender distribution of the sample is homogeneously distributed. 51.5% of the respondents are single and 48.5% are married. When participants are grouped in terms of their level

of education, 75 of them have undergraduate degrees (74.3%) whereas 22 have masters of PhD. Accordingly, it may be asserted that the sample consists mostly of highly-educated professionals. 32.7% of the participants have 2-5 years of the tenure in work life whereas participants with 20 years of experience or more come next with a 30.7%. 67.3% of the respondents work in the service sector, while 32.7% work in the manufacturing sector.

4. 3. Analyses

The assumption of normal distribution was checked before analysing the data. For this purpose, the skewness and kurtosis values of the scores obtained from the scales were calculated. To speak of a normal distribution, it is accepted as sufficient to have these values in the range of ± 2 (George and Mallery, 2010). It was observed that the values obtained were within ± 2 intervals and the scale values showed a normal distribution (see Table 1). Therefore, the analysis was continued with the parametric analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	x̄	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Clan-Culture	101	1,00	5,00	3,795	1,046	-0,664	0,24	-0,154	0,476
Adhocracy-Culture	101	1,00	5,00	3,594	1,098	-0,627	0,24	-0,479	0,476
Market-Culture	101	1,50	5,00	3,493	0,859	-0,107	0,24	-0,622	0,476
Hierarchy-Culture	101	1,00	5,00	3,475	0,909	-0,322	0,24	-0,388	0,476
Agility	101	1,40	5,00	3,832	0,927	-0,736	0,24	-0,275	0,476

The reliability analyses of the scales are shown in Table 2. The results show that the scales used in the study can be considered as reliable with Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Clan-Culture	0,911
Adhocracy-Culture	0,897
Market-Culture	0,808
Hierarchy-Culture	0,748
Agility	0,961

Afterwards correlation analyses were conducted. According to the results of the correlation analyses, a statistically significant relationship between clan culture and organisational agility (r = 0.709**), a statistically significant relationship between adhocracy culture and organisational agility (r = 0.592**), a statistically significant relationship between hierarchy culture and organisational agility (r = 0.251*) and a statistically significant relationship between overall culture and organisational agility (r = 0.592**) were observed.

Table 3: Correlations

	Clan Culture	Adhocracy Culture	Market Culture	Hierarchy Culture	Culture	Agility
Clan Culture	1					
Adhocracy Culture	0,771**	1				
Market Culture	0,103	0,325**	1			
Hierarchy Culture	0,252*	0,330**	0,384**	1		
Culture	0,773**	0,869**	0,585**	0,652**	1	
Agility	0,709**	0,592**	0,083	0,251*	0,592**	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Lastly, regression analyses were carried out in a multiple regression model to see the impact of clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture and hierarchy culture on agility.

Table 4: Regression Analyses

	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta		
(Constant)		3,623	0,00
Clan-Culture	0,606	5,242	0,00
Adhocracy-Culture	0,115	0,941	0,349
Market-Culture	-0,047	-0,578	0,564
Hierarchy-Culture	0,079	0,987	0,326
F= 25,328; R^2=0,513; Sig. 0,00			
Dependent Variable: Agility			

The model was found to be significant as a result of the regression analysis performed to understand the effect of culture types on agility (F = 25.328, p <0.01). 51.3% of the change in organisational agility was explained by corporate culture factors. According to the significance values of the standardized beta coefficients, the clan culture (ß = 0.606; p <0.01) was found to have a positive and significant effect on organisational agility providing support for H1. The other hypotheses were not supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to examine how corporate culture affects the agility of the organisation. In the research model created in line with literature, organisational agility is selected as the dependent variable, while the independent variables are determined as clan culture, adhocracy culture, hierarchy culture and market culture.

The results show that clan culture has a positive and statistically significant influence on agility. On the other hand, it is observed that the other types of corporate culture such as market, hierarchical and adhocracy culture have no significant influence on agility. It can be asserted that the reason for this can be the fact that Turkish society is a collectivist society. When people perceive that they belong to a group or a "clan", then they may be feeling more supported against change and they may think that, they acquire the means to be more adaptive. Felipe et al. (2017) state that the clan culture focuses mainly on internal factors such as loyalty and teamwork and this may lead to a more embracing approach towards environmental shifts because the members of the organisation feel more relaxed due to the shared values and goals. They may feel that they are not the only ones who are responsible of bearing the costs of change and may act together with their colleagues in a collaborative, responsibility sharing manner, which, in a way, enables the transformation towards becoming agile.

Contrary to expectations, it is seen that the hierarchy culture has no significant effect on agility in Turkish context. As a part of the GLOBE study, Kabasakal and Bodur (1998) have emphasized that the most prominent features of the Turkish culture are in-group collectivism and power distance. In this respect, as a paternalistic country in which most of the local institutions are mainly ruled through high power distance mechanisms, hierarchy can be accepted as a default feature of organisational culture, and therefore, can be taken for granted.

It is noticeable that the adhocracy culture has no significant influence on agility. In the theoretical part, the characteristics of the adhocracy culture are explained in detail, and it can be clearly said that it has characteristics that ensure agility. This may be because the survey is applied to people who work in different sectors. For future studies in this area, it may be suggested to apply the survey to a specific sector or department. Since the rigidity and flexibility of each sector and department will be different, it is believed that if a survey is carried out for a specific sector and department, it can be expected to provide clearer and more precise results.

Finally, it is also a surprising result that market culture has no significant contribution to the agility of the organization. Previous studies with similar findings state that the emphasis on control and stability may have hindered the possible flexibility of the market culture (Felipe et al., 2017:17). Market culture is also found to have no direct effect on the innovation within the organization (Sanz-Valle et al., 2011). Also, due to the rigid cultural inclinations of firms operating in Turkey, though the managers believe that they are market-culture oriented, they may be lacking the necessary skills to be reactive and, when required, proactive towards change. One of the essential features of market culture is based on the capability to make strategic planning. Turkish culture is a more short-term oriented culture when compared to western countries. Due to the volatile and instable economic environment, it is also not easy to do long-term strategic planning and therefore, although the culture can be perceived as market-oriented, the extent to which it can be depends on the current situation of the business dynamics.

6. CONCLUSION

With the advancing development of digitisation and the use of artificial intelligence, the fourth industrial revolution has a significant impact on the organisations and the business world. In addition, this leads to changes in the organisational structures and cultures of the companies. Organisational culture must embrace this change at the appropriate time so that it can adapt to the dynamics and complexity of markets and technologies. These changes require a more flexible path of movement and progress and less adherence to narrowly defined structures and processes.

The basic ideas behind agile organisations are flexibility and self-organisation. This enables easier and more flexible adaptation to the market and customer needs. Instead of hierarchies, there are independent teams in which a clear vision and an organisational strategy point the necessary direction. For this reason, it is important to shape the culture accordingly, taking into consideration the effects of both national and corporate factors.

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