



Organisational Culture and Strategic Agility in Child Protection Non-Governmental Organisations in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of organisational culture on strategic agility in Child Protection NGOs in Kenya, specifically focusing on shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts. A descriptive correlational research design was employed in this study, and a total of 180 staff in the top and middle management levels from 36 Child Protection NGOs formed the target population. Correlation analysis showed medium and positive correlation for shared values ($r=0.571$, $p<0.05$) and artefacts ($r=0.556$, $p<0.05$), and weak and positive correlation for shared beliefs ($r=0.371$, $p<0.05$). Further, multiple linear regression analysis revealed that shared values were responsible for 22% of strategic agility ($R^2=0.220$), shared beliefs were responsible for 13.8% of strategic agility ($R^2=0.138$), while artefacts were responsible for 30.9% of NGOs' strategic agility ($R^2=0.309$). Hence, culture is crucial in enhancing organisational agility and supporting organisation responsiveness in strategy orientation in Child Protection NGOs in Kenya. As a result, organisational leaders need to exhibit emotional moral intelligence and integrate spiritual beliefs while ensuring a physical workspace that supports agility by fostering flexibility, collaboration, and efficient communication.

Introduction

Strategic agility is the capacity of an organisation to lead or respond to change promptly and appropriately while preserving focus and flexibility (Muchoki, 2022). Strategic agility is essential for success in a rapidly changing company environment, as it enables one to adapt to sudden shifts and seize market opportunities (Seyadi & Elali, 2021). It has emerged as a crucial capability, allowing organisations to pivot and adjust their strategies effectively. For strategic agility to thrive, the organisational culture must encourage openness to change, risk-taking, and experimentation, and its success is often rooted in the organisation's culture (Kiilu et al., 2023). A strong and adaptive organisational culture can be a catalyst for strategic agility by fostering an environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning (Elali, 2021).

An organisation can self-align its operations with appropriate strategic emphasis and responsiveness based on the expectations of its business environment through the application of strategic agility. Arokodare and Asikhia (2020) opine that there is a relationship between strategic agility and an organisation's ability to foresee and anticipate the possibilities and risks associated with new endeavours in the environment. Strategic agility is thus characterised by timely awareness, decision-making, and reflection on implementation. According to Wong (2020), organisational culture serves as the framework for firms' operations, strategies and interactions. It encompasses the shared beliefs,



norms and practices that influence how people perform and make decisions within an organisation. By actively managing culture, organisations can create a positive and cohesive work environment that supports their strategic goals and enhances overall effectiveness (Radu, 2023). Organisations with a culture that supports risk-taking and experimentation are better equipped to explore new ideas and adapt their strategies in response to market shifts (Naveed et al., 2022).

Ejoh and Omoile (2024) state that shared values serve as the moral and ethical compass that guides the behaviour of individuals and teams within the organisation. They act as the glue that binds employees, creating a cohesive, unified work environment (Akpa et al., 2021). At the same time, shared beliefs are collective convictions or assumptions that are widely held by members of the organisation (Lunenburg, 2019) and are integral to the formation and maintenance of organisational culture (Akpa et al., 2021). These are complemented by artefacts, which are the visible and tangible manifestations of an organisation's culture and play a crucial role in shaping and communicating this culture to employees and external stakeholders (Gagliardi, 2020). These artefacts include everything from physical objects and symbols to rituals, language, and organisational structures and also serve as a reflection of an organisation's underlying values and beliefs.

Generally, poor strategic response to environmental dynamics and weak organisational culture have run down the performance of most firms in Africa. In Kenya, Mwaura (2017) asserts that common values and beliefs serve as the cornerstone of strategy. According to Carvalho et al. (2023) an excellence-oriented culture, once established, aids in the pursuit of long-term operational success by looking for innovative approaches to deal with change and adapt. One category of organisations that should embrace a culture of flexibility and adaptability is child protection organisations, whose role is to ensure children are safe both in school and at home (Frost et al., 2018). Unfortunately, this has not been the case for most of Kenya's NGOs engaged in Child Protection work, as they have shown strong resistance to change (Chege & Ucembe, 2020). Therefore, this study focused on investigating the effects of organisational culture on strategic agility among Child Protection non-governmental organisations in Kenya.

Theoretical Review

The study is anchored in the adaptation of three levels of culture, as depicted in Schein's three layers of organisational culture (Schein, 2010). Organisational culture theory explains how organisational elements of its culture, including shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, shape its identity and generally influence employee behaviour and performance. Specifically, Schein's three-layer model explains how evolution occurs from visible artefacts to espoused values, and finally to basic beliefs and assumptions about how organisational business is conducted. The study also adopted a strategic agility framework that includes key variables such as sensemaking and innovation, leadership capability, strategic response and adaptability, and resource fluidity (Christofi et al., 2024; Bassey et al., 2023; Atieno & Senayi, 2017). The operational framework is given in Figure 1.

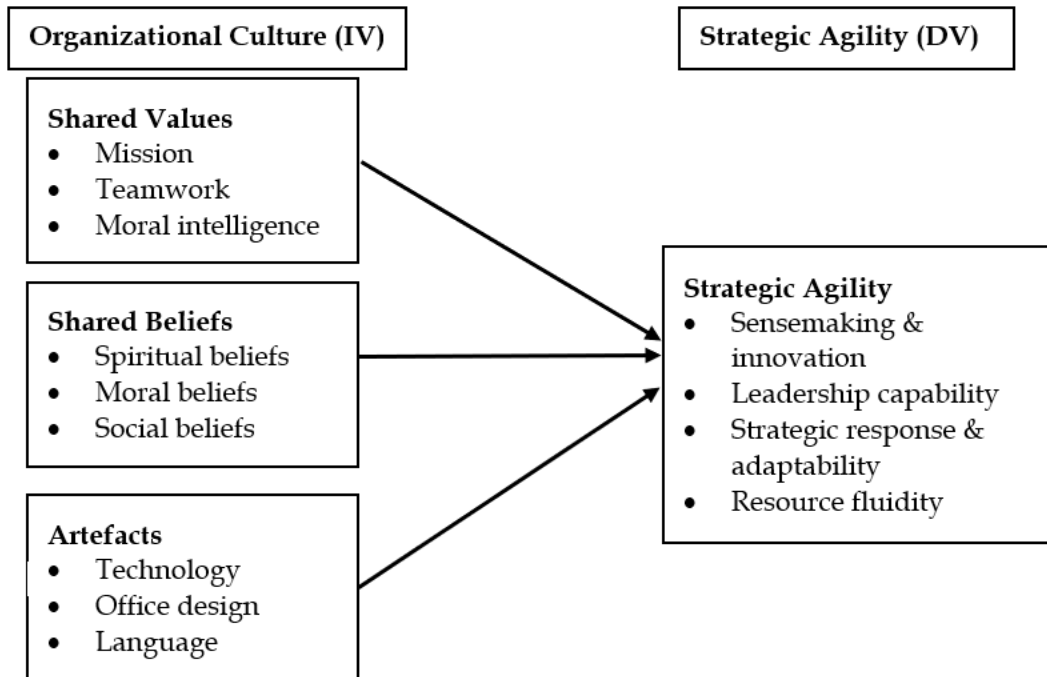


Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Organizational culture and strategic agility

Empirical Review

Shared Values and Effects on Strategic Agility

Shared values within an organisation play a pivotal role in enhancing strategic agility, which is the ability to rapidly adapt to changing environments and seize emerging opportunities (Okumu, 2023). When an organisation's members are aligned around common values, it fosters a unified approach to decision-making and problem-solving. This alignment enables quicker, more coordinated responses to challenges, as employees are guided by a shared understanding of the organisation's priorities and goals. Moreover, shared values promote a culture of trust, collaboration, and innovation. In such environments, employees are more likely to take initiative and embrace change, knowing that their actions align with the organisation's core principles. In essence, shared values act as a catalyst for strategic agility, and strategies that resonate with them are more likely to be embraced and championed by the workforce, leading to greater buy-in and commitment (Maleka, 2023).

An organisation's mission serves as a foundational element that significantly influences its strategic agility (Muchoki, 2022). A clear and compelling mission provides a sense of purpose and direction, aligning all members of the organisation toward common goals. This alignment is crucial for strategic agility, as it ensures the organisation can swiftly and cohesively adapt to environmental changes while staying true to its core objectives (Evans, 2020). Organisations that consistently align their strategies with their mission are better positioned to adapt and thrive, regardless of external pressures (Ahmady et al., 2019). Employees are more likely to make decisions and take actions that support strategy execution when they have a clear grasp of the organisation's mission. A clear and compelling mission provides alignment, guides decision-making, fosters innovation, empowers employees, builds resilience, and enhances stakeholder trust, all of which are essential components of strategic agility (Muchoki, 2022).



Importantly, when teams collaborate effectively, they bring together diverse skills, knowledge, and perspectives, enabling the organisation to respond more quickly and flexibly to changes in the environment (Vrontis et al., 2023). Strong teamwork fosters a culture of open communication, trust, and shared responsibility, thereby accelerating decision-making and problem-solving (Bourgault & Goforth, 2021). In a team-oriented environment, employees are more likely to share information and ideas freely, leading to innovative solutions that align with the organisation's strategic goals. This collective approach enables the organisation to anticipate challenges, adapt strategies promptly, and seize emerging opportunities with confidence (Zhenjing et al., 2022). In essence, cultivating robust teamwork not only enhances operational efficiency but also empowers the organisation to be more dynamic and responsive in its strategic orientation, ultimately leading to sustained competitive advantage in a rapidly changing world (Radu, 2023).

Al-Azzam et al. (2021) allude that moral intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing an organisation's strategic agility. When leaders and teams operate with high moral intelligence, they are better equipped to make tough decisions quickly, without compromising on ethics. This ethical clarity reduces internal conflicts and promotes a unified approach to navigating uncertainty (Malik et al., 2023). Moreover, moral intelligence fosters a culture of integrity, where employees feel empowered to take initiative and innovate, knowing their actions will support the organisation's long-term mission (Hess & Broughton, 2019).

Shared Beliefs and Effects on Strategic Agility

Shared beliefs of an organisation are also important aspects of its culture (Halim et al., 2019). Shared beliefs within an organisation significantly enhance its strategic agility by creating a unified, cohesive environment in which employees are aligned in their understanding of the organisation's purpose and goals (Goncalves et al., 2020). When everyone shares the same core beliefs, decision-making becomes more efficient, as there is a common foundation guiding actions and responses. This unity reduces resistance to change and facilitates quicker adaptation to new opportunities or challenges (Okumu, 2023).

Spiritual beliefs are a critical component of spirituality. When spiritual beliefs are embraced within an organisation, they often lead to a culture of integrity, compassion, and mindfulness, which can positively influence how the organisation responds to change. These beliefs can foster a strong sense of community and shared values among employees, leading to greater cohesion and trust (Gümüşay, 2019). This unity allows for more effective collaboration, faster decision-making, and a collective willingness to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Additionally, spiritual beliefs can foster a long-term perspective, enabling organisations to remain grounded and focused on their core mission even amid rapid change (Rumun, 2019).

Cooper (2023) opines that spiritual beliefs can profoundly influence strategic decision-making by providing a moral and ethical framework that guides leaders and employees in aligning their choices with the organisation's deeper purpose. Incorporating spiritual beliefs into strategic decisions encourages long-term thinking, emphasising sustainability and the well-being of all stakeholders over short-term gains. Ultimately, the influence of spiritual beliefs on strategic decision-making helps create a strong, ethically grounded organisational culture (Cooper, 2023).

Moral beliefs refer to principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour (Ahmed, 2021). By embedding moral beliefs into the fabric of the organisation, leaders and employees are better equipped to navigate uncertainty with confidence and clarity. Ethical leaders play a critical role in guiding change, focusing on ethical practices and transparency. By embedding ethical principles into the change management process, these leaders ensure that transformations are



executed with honesty, fairness, and respect for all stakeholders (Tushar, 2020). Ethical leaders advocate transparent communication throughout the change process, fostering a culture of openness and accountability. This transparency not only helps to mitigate resistance and build trust but also ensures that changes are implemented in a manner that aligns with the organisation's core values and ethical standards (Guo, 2022).

Social beliefs refer to the collective values, norms, and attitudes shared by individuals within a society or community (Day & Fiske, 2019). These beliefs, encompassing societal values and expectations, guide the organisation's approach to change, innovation, and decision-making. When social beliefs align with the organisation's goals and values, they foster a cohesive environment that supports quick adaptation and responsiveness (Goncalves et al., 2020). Conversely, misalignment between social beliefs and organisational values can lead to friction, decreased morale, and reduced effectiveness. Furthermore, integrating social beliefs into strategic planning helps organisations anticipate and respond to societal trends and expectations, ensuring that their strategies remain relevant and ethically grounded (Guillemain & Nicholas, 2022). Adopting social beliefs shapes the way decision-makers perceive opportunities, risks, and ethical considerations, guiding the formulation of strategies that align with societal expectations and cultural norms (Korkmaz et al., 2022).

Artefacts and Effects on Strategic Agility

Strategists use artefacts throughout the strategy process to achieve a common understanding (Friis & Mathiasen, 2025). Artefacts contain information and are instrumental in embodying meaning and in conveying meaning among strategists. Alcácer and Cruz-Machado (2019) defined technology as the integration of the physical objects or artefacts, the processes of making the objects, and the meanings associated with the objects. Technology empowers organisations to be more agile and responsive by providing critical tools and insights that support fast decision-making and efficient execution (Pawar & Dhumal, 2024). Strategic agility is closely linked to targeted technological improvements within an organisation, as technological advancements enable and accelerate adaptive responses to market changes and evolving business needs (Christofi et al., 2024).

Workspaces shape human interaction and influence behaviour and job satisfaction, often in ways unintended by the designers and even contrary to their expectations. Smollan and Morrison (2019) classified the underlying features of office space as aesthetic, instrumental and symbolic. A well-designed workspace can enhance communication, encourage innovation, and facilitate swift decision-making, all of which are essential for agility. By integrating elements such as open layouts, adaptable furniture, and technology that supports remote work, organisations can create spaces that respond quickly to shifting demands and empower employees to work efficiently in dynamic conditions (Radu, 2023). Research on employee reactions, however, has been equivocal, with most empirical studies revealing that open-plan offices are widely disliked. This is due to a lack of privacy distraction, both acoustic and visual, increased proximity of other workers, depersonalisation, low status and self-reported ill-health (Morrison & Macky, 2017).

Language pervades every aspect of organisational life. Choosing a common language can dramatically improve how employees collaborate across borders – even though it also introduces new challenges. Effective use of language ensures that strategic goals are communicated consistently and persuasively, fostering alignment and coherence across the organisation. Moreover, language shapes organisational culture and can influence decision-making, engagement, and the overall success of strategic initiatives (Tipurić, 2022). In formal contexts, precise and intentional use of language ensures that strategic objectives, policies, and directives are conveyed clearly and accurately, minimising misunderstandings and aligning stakeholders with the organisation's goals (Musheke & Phiri, 2021).



Hutton et al. (2024) aver that language can be a powerful enabler for strategic agility by facilitating clear, effective, and adaptive communication within an organisation.

Method

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design because it examines the relationship between independent and dependent variables without any manipulation. In this case, the study was designed to determine the effect of organisational culture on strategic agility in Child Protection NGOs in Kenya, without investigating the reasons.

Target Population

Child Protection NGOs undertake crucial development work to ensure children's safety at school and home (Chege & Ucembe, 2020), but face challenges in adapting to funding dynamics that should support their sustainability (Aurino & Giunti, 2022). As such, they served as the target of the study, and the list of Child Protection organisations was obtained from the NGOs coordination board. Among the 36 Child Protection NGOs headquartered and operating in Nairobi City County, there are a total of 180 staff in top and middle management. These formed the target population as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Population Distribution

Management Level	Number	Percentage (%)
Top Management	36	20
Middle Management	144	80
Total	180	100

Sampling Frame and Technique

The study sampling frame was obtained from the Human Resource departments of 36 Child Protection NGOs operating in Nairobi County, Kenya. The organisations comprised both local and international organisations. The sampling technique adopted was a census.

Sample Size

Since the study employed a census, the sample size was 180 respondents, as indicated in Table 1. A census is important for small populations; a population is considered small if it has fewer than 200 people (Saunders & Townsend, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions using a Likert scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree to rate respondents' responses. The questionnaire was divided into sections consisting of statements regarding the independent variables: shared values, shared beliefs and artefacts, as well as strategic agility as the dependent variable.

Research Procedures

The data collection process began with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at USIU-Africa and, subsequently, a research authorisation from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). A pilot study was conducted to check the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Using Cronbach's alpha, the instrument's appropriateness was evaluated, and the questionnaire's reliability was 0.75. Given a recommended threshold of 0.7, the instrument was deemed appropriate for the study. In addition, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test



yielded values above 0.70, indicating that the measures were acceptable for the validity of the variables.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed of the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time and of the voluntary nature of their participation. The questionnaires included an attachment about informed consent. Both concepts required participants to be informed about the study’s goals and procedures. The confidentiality of the information submitted by the respondents was guaranteed.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, inferential analysis included correlation and multiple linear regression. The regression model was illustrated as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y is strategic agility; X₁ is shared values; X₂ is shared beliefs; X₃ is artefacts

α₀ is the constant and β₁, β₂, β₃ are the coefficient to be estimated

ε is the error term

Results

Correlation Analysis between Organisational Culture Factors and Strategic Agility

The significance of organisational culture factors (shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts) and their effect on strategic agility was examined using the correlation analysis, as shown in Table 2. Correlation analysis showed a medium, positive correlation for shared values (r=0.571, p<0.05) and artefacts (r=0.556, p<0.05), and a weak, positive correlation for shared beliefs (r=0.371, p<0.05). Generally, these imply that organisational culture factors (shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts) were significant in facilitating strategic agility among Child Protection NGOs in Kenya.

Table 2: Correlations Analysis between Organisational Culture Factors and Strategic Agility

	Strategic Agility	Shared Values	Shared Beliefs	Artefacts
Strategic Agility	1			
Shared Values	.469** .000	1		
Shared Beliefs	.371** .000	.479** .000	1	
Artefacts	.556** .000	.605** .000	.642** .000	1

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

Regression Analysis between Organisational Culture Factors and Strategic Agility

Model Summary

The results shown in Table 3 provide an overview of the regression model’s summary of the relationship between organisational culture factors (shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts) and strategic agility. The outcome reveals that organisational culture factors (shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts) account for 33.7% of the variance in strategic agility (R² = 0.337), leaving 66.3% unaccounted for by other factors not covered by this study.

Table 3: Model Summary between Organisational Culture Factors and Strategic Agility

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.581 ^a	.337	.319	.56568

a. Predictors: (Constant), Shared Values, Shared Beliefs, and Artefacts

b. Dependent Variable: Strategic Agility



Regression Coefficients

Table 4 presents regression coefficients between NGOs’ strategic agility (dependent variable) and organisational culture factors - shared values, shared beliefs, and artefacts - (independent variable). The findings showed that when combined, the NGOs’ strategic agility was positively and significantly affected by shared values ($\beta = 0.237, = 2.152, p < .05$) and by artefacts ($\beta = 0.541, = 3.884, p < .05$). On the other hand, the findings indicated that when combined, the NGOs’ strategic agility was negatively and insignificantly affected by shared beliefs ($\beta = -0.009, = -0.086, p > .05$).

Table 4: Regression Coefficients between Organisational Culture Factors and Strategic Agility

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 Constant	.664	.468		1.418	.159
Shared Values	.237	.110	.210	2.152	.034
Shared Beliefs	-.009	.109	-.009	-.086	.932
Artefacts	.541	.139	.435	3.884	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic Agility

Discussion

Shared Values and Their Effect on Strategic Agility

The study's results demonstrated that achieving the mission requires organisations to be agile. These findings are consistent with Evans's (2020) argument that a clear and compelling mission provides a sense of purpose and direction, aligning all members of the organisation toward common goals. Similarly, Ng’andu (2022) note that when an organisation’s mission is well-defined and widely embraced, it acts as a guiding framework for decision-making, enabling quick and consistent responses to emerging challenges and opportunities. The study further demonstrates that strengthening teamwork supports organisations in being more responsive in their strategy orientation. These findings support Opute (2020), who argues that strengthening teamwork within an organisation is a powerful driver of enhanced responsiveness in strategy orientation. Vrontis et al. (2023) posit that when teams collaborate effectively, they bring together diverse skills, knowledge, and perspectives, enabling the organisation to respond more quickly and flexibly to environmental changes. In addition, moral intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing an organisation’s strategic agility. Greene et al. (2019) argue that embedding ethical principles into the decision-making process enables moral intelligence to ensure that an organisation’s actions are not only swift and adaptive but also aligned with its core values. Moreover, moral intelligence fosters a culture of integrity, where employees feel empowered to take initiative and innovate, knowing their actions will support the organisation’s long-term mission (Hess & Broughton, 2019).

Shared Beliefs and Effects on Strategic Agility

The study results showed that spiritual beliefs influence the strategic decision-making of NGOs, as spirituality is one possible way to address the psychological demands arising from rapid innovation and continual change in NGOs. Cooper (2023) contends that spiritual beliefs can profoundly influence strategic decision-making by providing a moral and ethical framework that guides leaders and employees in aligning their choices with the organisation’s deeper purpose. Moreover, Wang and Tang (2019) allude that incorporating spiritual beliefs into strategic decisions encourages long-term thinking, emphasising sustainability and the well-being of all stakeholders over short-term gains.



Where moral beliefs are concerned, Tushar (2020) argues that ethical leaders prioritise ensuring that organisational change is both ethical and transparent, recognising that integrity is crucial for sustaining trust and long-term success. Furthermore, social beliefs significantly define how people behave within an organisation by shaping their values, norms, and interactions (Luz & Kayode, 2024).

Artefacts and Effects on Strategic Agility

Based on the study's findings, technology helped organisations respond quickly to changes, consistent with the idea put forth by Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024). While information technologies enable managers to obtain faster, more accurate, and more comprehensive information, they also provide lower-level managers with more information about the organisation's general situation, the nature of current problems, and important organisational matters. The physical workplace plays a huge role in enabling agility, and a well-designed workspace can enhance communication, encourage innovation, and facilitate swift decision-making, all of which are essential for agility (Radu, 2023). By integrating elements such as open layouts, adaptable furniture, and technology that supports remote work, organisations can create spaces that respond quickly to shifting demands and empower employees to work efficiently in dynamic conditions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of organisational culture on strategic agility in Child Protection NGOs in Kenya, specifically focusing on shared values, shared beliefs and artefacts. The study concluded that organisational culture factors showed a positive correlation with strategic agility. As such, culture is crucial for enhancing organisational agility and supporting the organisation's responsiveness to strategy in Child Protection NGOs in Kenya.

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