Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

East African Journal of Business and Economics
eajbe.eanso.org
Volume 8, Issue 2, 2025
Print ISSN: 2707-4250 | Online ISSN: 2707-4269
Title DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-4269

EAST AFRICAN NATURE & SCIENCE ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

Date Published:

21 August 2025

Keywords:

Organisational Culture, Artefact, Espoused Beliefs and Values, Basic Underlying Assumptions.

ABSTRACT

The present study validated the measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture (TOC) within the context of full-time academic staff at Kyambogo University. Drawing on Schein's (1980) conceptual framework, organisational culture was operationalised in terms of three core dimensions: artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. This cross-sectional study employed a sample of 192 full-time academic staff from Kyambogo University. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling (SEM), specifically partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software, were employed to examine the presence and structure of the three constructs outlined in Schein's TOC. Descriptive results indicated that artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions were prominently exhibited among the academic staff. Furthermore, the PLS-SEM analysis confirmed that the indicators used to measure these constructs were valid and reliable representations of the underlying theoretical dimensions. The study concluded that the indicators utilised to measure the three constructs of organisational culture, as theorised by Schein, are both valid and reliable within the context examined. It is recommended that future researchers adopt these indicators when operationalising the constructs of TOC in similar academic or organisational settings.

APA CITATION

Atuhaire, S., Kato, J. K. & Mugizi, W. (2025). Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University. *East African Journal of Business and Economics*, *8*(1), 291-302. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

CHICAGO CITATION

Atuhaire, Shallon, Joshua Kimata Kato and Wilson Mugizi. 2025. "Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University" *East African Journal of Business and Economics* 8 (2), 291-302. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528.

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

HARVARD CITATION

Atuhaire, S., Kato, J. K. & Mugizi, W. (2025), "Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University", *East African Journal of Business and Economics*, 8(2), pp. 291-302. doi: 10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528.

IEEE CITATION

S., Atuhaire, J. K., Kato & W., Mugizi "Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University", *EAJBE*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 291-302, Aug. 2025.

MLA CITATION

Atuhaire, Shallon, Joshua Kimata Kato & Wilson Mugizi. "Validating the Measures of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture in the Context of Lecturers at Kyambogo University". *East African Journal of Business and Economics*, Vol. 8, no. 2, Aug. 2025, pp. 291-302, doi:10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

INTRODUCTION

Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture (TOC) was advanced by Schein (1980). Schein (2010) asserts that organisational culture is a set of beliefs that are primary to and learned by a group of people to address their problems through adaption from outside the group and integration within the group after the beliefs have been adequately ascertained to be regarded valid hence can be taken up by new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel. According to Schein, organisational culture is dynamic and multi-faceted; it resists simplistic evaluation as good or bad, strong or weak, or effective or ineffective. Culture is inherently contextual, existing both within individuals and collectively within groups. While leaders play a critical role in the creation and management of culture, it also evolves organically through a process of group learning and may, over time, develop an autonomous character. Schein's conceptualisation of culture encompasses several core tenets, which he elaborates throughout his work (Schein, 2004). The foundational principles of Schein's organisational culture and leadership conceptualise culture and leadership as two interdependent elements, asserting that a defining characteristic of effective leadership lies in the creation and management of organisational culture. To Schein, although leaders help to create and manage culture, culture evolves through a group learning process and may take on a life of its own. Schein's definition of culture includes several key tenets that he explains throughout his work.

Schein's TOC suggests that organisational culture is composed of artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and the basic underlying assumptions (Schein & Schein, 2020). Artefacts refer to tangible and are visible in the physical spaces of the organisations. They include technologies and products, ceremonies, dress code of employees, language practices and stories, the employee's sense of humour, work organisation and processes (Weber & Martensen, 2021). On the other hand, espoused beliefs and values include the vision statement, policies, agenda, mission, philosophies, values, goals and overall strategies for ensuring quality, such as monitoring, training and mentorship. While the basic underlying assumptions in an organisation represent the deeply entrenched and unconscious thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the people within the organisation and they critically influence their decision-making and overall employee behaviour. In other words, the basic underlying assumptions embody the unstated, interpretative personal schemes and invisible dimension of thoughts, perceptions and feelings that impact decision-making and employee behaviour. They develop over time as members strategise to overcome organisational problems (Jayachandran & Chandrasenan, 2021).

However, organisational culture among academic staff at Kyambogo University leaves a lot to be desired. For instance, in terms of artefacts, several academic staff are not committed to excellent service delivery as they fail to accurately and timely mark students in course and end-of-semester examinations (Kasule et al., 2022). Further, in a

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

study conducted by Kato et al. (2023a) at Kyambogo University reported that some academic staff fake marks and cheat examinations for students, and those involved in supervising post-graduate research show low commitment by failing to supervise students and graduate on time, with the average completion rates of master's students standing at less than 30%. In addition, Kakulu (2016) indicated that, 78% of the academic staff could not teach all their lectures assigned to them, 67% of them could not adequately prepare their teaching before delivering in most of the lectures to students, 56% of them did not timely evaluate students course works and tests during the semester revealing low levels of organisational culture. Worse still, Tumuhimbise (2017) indicated that some academic staff fail to set examinations in time, delay starting lectures, and fail to carry out timely marking and release of examination results. With regard to research productivity, the effectiveness of academic staff in Ugandan universities is also low, with limited academic research publications and an inability to attract and win research projects (Rwothumio et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the academic staff show less commitment to innovation in teaching, and fail to supervise students and engage in community outreach (Nabunya et al., 2018). On the other hand, academic staff waste much time in salary increment squabbles and complaints over unsatisfactory human resource practices, such as promotion. Regarding espoused beliefs and values, there is an absence of a shared vision between academic staff and managers of the university (Kato et al., 2023b). As far as the underlying assumption is concerned, the quality of teaching and research is low (Neema-Abooki, 2016), with academic staff not committed to quality teaching and giving limited time to research, while others scarcely take part in community engagements. The above contextual and empirical evidence seems to suggest that the organisational culture of academic staff at Kyambogo University does not seem to be pleasing on the scores for Schein's TOC. Therefore, this study aimed to validate the measures of Schein's TOC and proffer the indicators that can be used to measure artefacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions in the context of academic staff at Kyambogo University. The study specifically tested whether academic staff at Kyambogo University exhibit (i) artefacts, (ii) espoused beliefs and values and (iii) basic underlying assumptions. It also proffered indicators that can measure the three dimensions of organisational culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schein's TOC proposes three dimensions of organisational culture, namely artefacts, espoused beliefs and values and underlying assumptions. The artefacts are tangible and measurable structures and facilities within the university, for example, the scientific equipment, sets of archival or scientific data, communication and computing networks, technical services, as well as the social and physical environment that facilitate teaching and learning. In other words, artefacts encompass the elements that can be directly perceived through sight, sound, and touch within a given environment. Thus, the definition of artifacts includes observable features such as dress codes, physical space, and technology, as well as more nuanced aspects, including how status is expressed among members, decision-making processes, modes of communication, expressions of disagreement and conflict, and the balance maintained between work and family life (Fecher et al., 2021). Espoused beliefs and values refer to the intangible aspects of the institution, for example, the mission statement, vision, goals, objectives, policies and guidelines. These greatly influence all the functions and activities of the institution (Turyahikayo et al., 2024). Basic underlying assumptions, on the other hand, entail the unconscious thoughts and perceptions of the people in the organisation (Tadesse, 2019).

Scholars (Bonavia, 2006; Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013; O'Donnell & Boyle, 2003) have developed measures of artefacts in different contexts. For

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instance, Bonavia (2006) proposed a measurement scale for organisational artefacts, encompassing indicators such as strategic orientation, human relations, personnel selection and promotion practices, training, motivation and incentive systems, absenteeism and turnover, communication and conflict resolution, organisational structure and technology, as well as organisational climate and environment. Further, Bakar and Mustaffa (2013) developed a scale for assessing organisational artefacts, highlighting indicators such as cooperation, consensus, employee wellbeing, merit-based promotions, creativity, innovation, centralised structure, and ongoing technological advancement. In addition, O'Donnell and Boyle (2003) proposed that assessing organisational artefacts involves employee engagement, dress codes, behaviour norms, space and time use, emotional tone, and reward systems. These studies show that researchers use a variety of indicators to assess the artefact, though these approaches differ considerably. This underscores the need for a standardised tool to measure the construct, which led to the development of this measurement scale.

Espoused beliefs and values can be observed in the organisation's stated vision, mission, goals and objectives, not excluding individual ideals, principles and personal aspirations (Daniel et al., 2024). Researchers (Nielsen, 2014; Khandelwal & Mohendra, 2010; Coetzee & Veldsman, 2013) have tried to develop measures of espoused belief and values. For instance, Nielsen (2014) identified key indicators of espoused values in safety culture, including structural conditions, accident registration, integration of safety into organisational agendas, attitudes toward safety, shared responsibility for safety, the economic prioritisation of safety, and the involvement of external health and safety advisors. On the other hand, Khandelwal and Mohendra (2010) proposed indicators of espoused values such as customer obsession, speed and flexibility, innovation and creativity, networking and partnership, and a commitment to openness and continuous learning. In addition, Coetzee and Veldsman (2013) measured espoused beliefs and values with indicators that include performance excellence, teamwork, accountability, commitment, distinctive performance, dedicated partnerships, client focus, integrity, pride, respect, accountability, innovation, shareholder focus, and customer service excellence. While these studies illustrate efforts to measure espoused beliefs and values, the variation in indicators used suggests the absence of a standardised measurement tool. This emphasises the need to validate the indicators included in the current measurement scale.

The basic underlying assumptions are the base level of OC representing the deeply embedded, unconscious, taken for granted, unstated thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that influence decision-making actions and employee behaviour (Lehman, 2017). Scholars (Dent & Umpleby, 1998; Dimitrov, 2013; Samaraweera et al., 2018) have developed measures of underlying assumptions. For instance, Dent and Umpleby (1998) proposed a framework for understanding the underlying organisational assumptions through a systemic and constructivist lens. They identified indicators such as observation, circular causality, reflexivity, indeterminism, environmental embeddedness, self-organisation, relational dynamics, and holism, highlighting the complex and interdependent nature of organisational systems and the foundational assumptions that influence organisational cognition and behaviour. Further, Dimitrov (2013) measured underlying assumptions with indicators that relationship to the environment, nature of reality, time and space, nature of human nature, nature of human activity, nature of human relationship. Additionally, Samaraweera et al. (2018) operationalised fundamental underlying beliefs and values using indicators that reflect an organisation's orientation toward its external environment, conceptions of human activity, epistemological assumptions concerning reality and truth, temporal orientation, views on human nature, patterns of interpersonal relationships, attitudes toward homogeneity and diversity, and propensity for

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innovation. These studies reveal that scholars use diverse indicators to assess basic underlying beliefs and values, with most differing significantly. This points to the need for a standardised tool to measure the construct, leading to the development of this measurement scale.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sample

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, allowing data collection from participants at a single point in time to capture a snapshot of the current state of the variable under investigation (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Data was initially gathered from a sample of 200 full-time academic staff at Kyambogo University, drawn from a total population of 405, using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. However, it was based on data from 192 participants. Simple random sampling was utilised to ensure each academic staff member had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

Instrument

The data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire developed based on an earlier instrument developed by Schein (1980), which operationalised organisational culture in terms of artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and the basic underlying assumptions. The indicators were adopted from the comprehensive indicators developed by Gunilla and Matte (2021) and Ghosh and Srivastava (2014). The indicators for artefacts include modern infrastructure, well-equipped laboratories and digital libraries, access to laptops/computers and software, organised repository systems, and up-to-date technology. They also reflect clear management structures and a culture that values staff creativity and innovation. The indicators of espoused beliefs and values include a focus on customer service, openness, teamwork, adherence to rules, staff satisfaction, and continuous growth and learning. Underlying assumptions are reflected in mutual responsibility, shared and communicated objectives, inclusive decision-making, open idea-sharing, and strong supervisor-subordinate relationships. The indicators across various dimensions were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented the lowest (worst-case scenario) and 5 the highest (best-case scenario). The scale points were defined as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Not Sure (NS), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA).

Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to all relevant ethical standards in the conduct of the study, ensuring compliance with principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and academic integrity. Informed consent was obtained by clearly communicating the purpose and significance of the study to potential participants, thereby encouraging voluntary engagement. To reinforce the non-coercive nature of participation, the academic staff were explicitly informed that declining to participate would not result in any form of penalty or disadvantage. Anonymity was maintained by ensuring that participants' identities were not associated with their responses; this was achieved by avoiding the collection of names or other personally identifiable information on the questionnaires. Confidentiality was safeguarded by allowing participants the discretion to withhold any personal information they did not wish to disclose, and by assuring them that any information provided would not be shared with third parties without their explicit consent. To further respect participants' privacy, individuals were allowed to determine the extent, timing, and context under which they would disclose private information. Additionally, the researchers ensured academic honesty by properly acknowledging all sources used and presenting findings with transparency and integrity. By clearly explaining the study's relevance and potential benefits, the

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researchers fostered a supportive environment that encouraged voluntary and informed participation.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), utilising SmartPLS 3 software, which is well-suited for estimating complex models involving multiple latent constructs and higher-order constructs (Magno et al., 2024). PLS-SEM was employed to construct a model that identifies and validates appropriate indicators corresponding to the various dimensions of the TOC. Further, structural equation modelling was preferred as it provided the opportunity to measure unobserved variables with indicators (latent variables) to be described.

RESULTS

Background Characteristics of the Lecturers

The demographic characteristics of the study participants encompassed sex, age, educational attainment, academic designation, and duration of university teaching experience. With regard to sex, the majority of respondents were male (54.7%), while females constituted 45.3%. In terms of age, most lecturers were within the 40–49 age bracket (42.2%), followed by those aged 30–39 (26.0%), 50 years and above (24.5%), and those aged 29 or below (7.3%). Concerning educational qualifications, the highest proportion of respondents held a PhD (60.9%), followed by those with a Master's degree (33.9%) and a Bachelor's degree (5.2%). Regarding academic designation, the largest group identified as lecturers (54.7%), with assistant lecturers comprising 33.9%, teaching assistants 5.2%, associate professors 3.6%, senior lecturers 2.1%, and professors 0.5%. In terms of teaching experience, 39.1% had been teaching for 6–10 years, 27.6% for 3–5 years, 25.5% for more than 10 years, and 7.8% for less than three years. These findings suggest a relatively balanced distribution across various levels of teaching experience, thereby indicating a representative sample of university teaching staff.

Measurement Models

The measurement models comprised descriptive statistics (means), assessments of validity including average variance extracted (AVE) for convergent validity and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) for discriminant validity, as well as reliability indicators, specifically composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. In addition, collinearity diagnostics were conducted using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The detailed results of these analyses are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Results, AVE and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Discriminant Validity Assessment

Measures	Mean	AVE	ATE	BAU	EBV
ATE	3.01	0.542			
BUA	2.93	0.565	0.573		
EBV	3.27	0.525	0.732	0.693	

Key: *AVE = Average Variance Extracted, ATE= Artifacts, BUA = Basic Underlying Assumptions, EBV = Espoused Beliefs and Values*

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 demonstrate relatively high mean scores for the dimensions of Schein's TOC, with artefacts (M = 3.01) and espoused values and beliefs (M = 3.27) being high, except basic underlying assumptions (M = 2.93), which were low. Convergent validity was established through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs yielding values above the recommended threshold of 0.50, as per Alarcón et al. (2015). Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, which confirmed the distinctiveness of the constructs. All HTMT values were below the critical threshold of 0.90, thereby satisfying the

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajbe.8.2.3528

criterion for discriminant validity (Hair Jr et al., 2020). These findings indicate that the three dimensions' artefacts, basic underlying assumptions, and espoused values and beliefs function as independent constructs in the measurement of Schein's TOC.

Table 2: Reliability and Collinearity

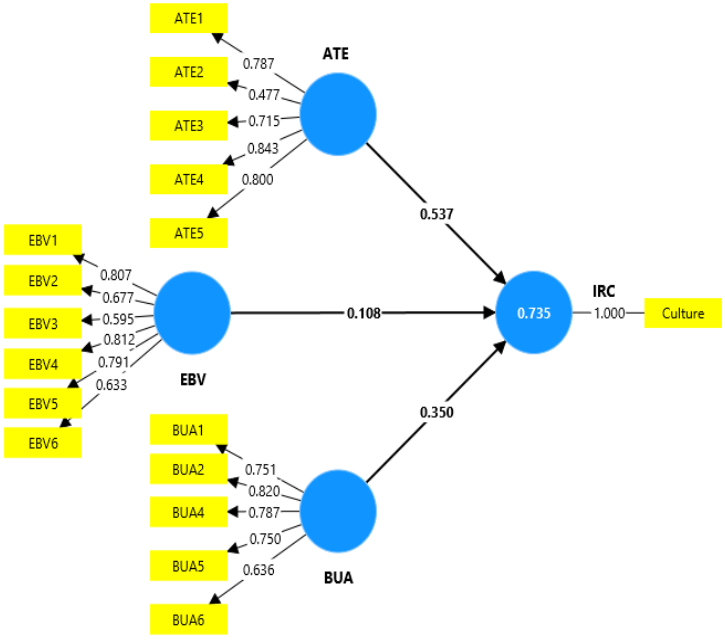
Measures	α	CR	VIF
ATE	0.778	0.851	2.148
BUA	0.807	0.866	1.416
EBV	0.816	0.867	1.975

The reliability analysis presented in Table 2 indicates that both Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, suggesting that the measurement indicators demonstrated adequate internal consistency. While both metrics were considered, composite reliability was favoured due to the inherent limitations of Cronbach's alpha, which assumes tau-equivalence among indicators, a condition often unmet in empirical research, thereby potentially underestimating reliability (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is known to be sensitive to the number of items in a scale, further affecting its accuracy. In contrast, composite reliability accounts for the varying loadings of indicators, making it a more robust and flexible measure of internal consistency (Fu et al., 2022). Additionally, collinearity diagnostics using the variance inflation factor (VIF) revealed no multicollinearity issues among the constructs, as all VIF values were below the recommended maximum threshold of 5 (Kyriazos & Poga, 2023). This finding supports the conclusion that the constructs assessing Schein's TOC were sufficiently distinct and independently measured.

Structural Model for Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture

The structural equation modelling was done to determine the measures of Schein's TOC. The results are indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structural Model for Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture



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The results presented in Figure 1 indicate that organisational culture is conceptualised as a tri-dimensional construct comprising artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. Factor analysis revealed that five out of six indicators for artefacts (ATE1 to ATE5) exceeded the minimum acceptable factor loading threshold of 0.50, while one indicator (ATE6) fell below this threshold and was consequently excluded from the model. For the dimension of espoused beliefs and values, six indicators (EBV1 to EBV6) demonstrated acceptable factor loadings, whereas three indicators (EBV7 to EBV9) did not meet the threshold and were removed. Similarly, within the dimension of basic underlying assumptions, five indicators (BUA1, BUA2, BUA4, BUA5, BUA6) were retained based on their adequate factor loadings, while two (BUA3 & BUA7) were excluded due to insufficient loading. All retained indicators met the minimum factor loading criterion of 0.50, consistent with the standard established by Cheung et al. (2024), thereby supporting the validity of the retained items as appropriate measures for the three dimensions of organisational culture.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the three constructs of artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions are appropriate measures of Schein's TOC within the context of academic staff at Kyambogo University. For example, the artefact construct was found to be well-represented by its indicators, aligning with those used by previous scholars. The analysis revealed that academic staff were actively engaged in areas such as strategic orientation, human relations, personnel selection and promotion practices, motivation and incentive systems, conflict resolution, organisational structure, and technology, consistent with the findings of Bonavia (2006). Additionally, elements such as cooperation, consensus, employee wellbeing, merit-based promotions, creativity, innovation, a centralised structure, and ongoing technological advancement were emphasised, echoing the work of Bakar and Mustaffa (2013). Further, academic staff demonstrated engagement through various observable elements such as dress codes, behavioural norms, use of space and time, emotional tone, and reward systems. Given that the findings of the current study align with previously established measurement scales, it can be concluded that the indicators used are valid measures of the artefact construct in the context of academic staff at Kyambogo University.

Additionally, regarding espoused beliefs and values, it was found that the items used to assess this construct aligned with those identified in prior research. These items included an emphasis on customer service, transparency, collaboration, rule compliance, employee satisfaction, and ongoing development and learning (Ghosh & Srivastava, 2014). These values were expressed through mutual accountability, clearly communicated goals, participatory decision-making, open exchange of ideas, and strong relationships between supervisors and subordinates (Coetzee & Veldsman, 2013). The consistency of these findings with earlier measurement scales supports the validity of the indicators as effective measures of espoused beliefs and values.

With regard to the construct of basic underlying assumptions, the study confirmed that the indicators employed aligned with those identified in prior research. Specifically, the findings showed that academic staff exhibited traits such as circular causality, reflexivity, indeterminism, environmental embeddedness, self-organisation, relational dynamics, and holism. These characteristics highlight the complexity and interdependence inherent in organisational systems, as well as the core assumptions that influence organisational cognition and behaviour (Nielsen, 2014). They also reflect foundational beliefs about the organisation's relationship with the environment, the nature of reality, concepts of time and space, human nature, human activity, and interpersonal relationships

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(Samaraweera et al., 2018). Since the findings of this study are consistent with previously conventional measurement scales, it can be concluded that the indicators used are valid representations of the basic underlying assumptions construct within the context of academic staff at Kyambogo University.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the indicators used to assess the three components of Schein's Theory of Organisational Culture, namely, artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions, were both valid and reliable. In terms of artefacts, the measures included active involvement in areas such as strategic orientation, human relations, personnel selection and promotion practices, motivation and incentive systems, conflict resolution, organisational structure, and the application of technology. Furthermore, key cultural attributes were highlighted, such as cooperation, consensus, employee well-being, merit-based advancement, creativity, innovation, centralised structures, and ongoing technological development. Engagement among academic staff was also evident through observable elements like dress codes, behavioural norms, use of space and time, emotional tone, and systems of recognition and reward. For espoused beliefs and values, the measures emphasised customer service, transparency, collaboration, adherence to rules, employee satisfaction, and continuous development and learning. These values were demonstrated through mutual accountability, clearly articulated goals, participatory decision-making, open exchange of ideas, and strong relationships between supervisors and subordinates. For the basic underlying assumption, the measures included circular causality, reflexivity, indeterminism, environmental embeddedness, self-organisation, relational dynamics, and the inherent complexity, holism, and interdependence of organisational systems. These dimensions also encompass core assumptions that shape organisational cognition and behaviour. They reflect foundational beliefs about the organisation's relationship with its environment, the nature of reality, concepts of time and space, human nature, human activity, and interpersonal relationships.

Recommendations

The study recommends that researchers use the indicators assessed in this article to measure the three Schein's TOC, namely artefact, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions. These indicators have been tested and validated, providing a robust framework for scholars to investigate Schein's TOC in various contexts. For artefacts, relevant indicators include active engagement in areas such as strategic orientation, human relations, personnel selection and promotion practices, motivation and incentive systems, conflict resolution, organisational structure, and technological implementation. Additional indicators encompass cooperation, consensus, employee well-being, merit-based advancement, creativity, innovation, centralised structures, and continuous technological development. Observable elements such as dress codes, behavioural norms, use of space and time, emotional tone, and recognition and reward systems also serve as key indicators. For espoused beliefs and values, the indicators include a focus on customer service, transparency, collaboration, rule adherence, employee satisfaction, and ongoing development and learning. These values are reflected through practices such as mutual accountability, clearly defined goals, participatory decision-making, open communication, and strong relationships between supervisors and subordinates. For basic assumptions and underlying beliefs, the indicators include circular causality, reflexivity, indeterminism, environmental embeddedness, self-organisation, relational dynamics, and the inherent complexity, holism, and interdependence of organisational systems. These dimensions also capture the core assumptions that influence organisational cognition and behaviour. They

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reflect fundamental beliefs about the organisation's relationship with its environment, the nature of reality, concepts of time and space, human nature, human activity, and interpersonal relationships.

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