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**Developing a Framework to Create an Organisational Culture that Facilitates
Continuous Improvement in the Service Sector: The Case of Saudi Arabia**

PhD THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia has become important since the country's government introduced the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to transform the existing business, economic, and social environment so that it can facilitate diversification. For the service sector, this means significant changes as organisations seek to maintain quality, meet rising demands for accountability, and demonstrate their social and economic role. The increase in accreditation and quality audits required of the service sector by government bodies and external entities is a manifestation of the push for quality management and quality assurance. For the Saudi service sector to transform and meet the expectations of the Saudi Vision 2030 and other standards, it is vital to study how organisational culture can be leveraged to promote continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's service sector. This exploratory and interpretive study seeks to fill the existing gap in research relating to the influence of organisational culture, specifically on the Saudi Arabian service sector, using the qualitative grounded theory approach. The study employed two main data collection methods: in-person open-ended interviews and focus group discussions. It identified a number of themes that influence the implementation of CI in the Saudi service sector and develops a framework of interventions that will assist in leveraging the organisational cultures of Saudi Arabian service sector organisations to facilitate continuous improvement.

Keywords: *organisational cultures, continuous improvement, service sector organisations, grounded theory*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
UK	United Kingdom
SS	Service sector
OC	Organisational culture
NC	National culture
CI	Continuous improvement
OCA	Organisation culture aspects
TQM	Total Quality Management
MBNQA	Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
CH	Cultural hegemony
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
OSR	Organisation's social responsibility
GT	Grounded theory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis presents the findings from a study based on the grounded theory focusing on the facets of organisational culture that either inhibit or enable ongoing improvements in the Saudi Arabian service sector. This introductory chapter consists of several sub-topics: the study background, the research problem statement, the research gap, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the thesis outline.

1.2 Background to the Research Area

In the complex and unpredictable business environment prevailing today, organisations are left with no choice but to get themselves ahead of the competition. With the proliferation of technology and globalisation, organisations are no longer primarily competing based traditional factors like the number of employees, location, or assets but rather on their products (Lee & Yoo, 2019). Thus, it has been on this basis that organisations in all sectors of the economy, including the service sector, have been forced to provide a rationale as to why they exist and clarify their contribution to society. Within this context, such organisations have been making efforts to embrace management practices that are in line with the changing times. One of these practices is the introduction of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement denotes the ongoing initiatives that seek to reduce the chances of failure and boost those of success (McDermott et al., 2023; Yurkofsky et al., 2020; Baghel & Bhuiyan, 2005; Bessant et al., 2001; Juergensen, 2000). The ideas central to continuous improvement emanate from the Japanese Kaizen philosophy, which aims to facilitate a continuous change of practices and factors related to improvements (Berhe, 2022; Bessant et al., 2001; Imai, 1986).

The increased emphasis on policy reforms guided by the need to adhere to specific standards and quality, efficiency, accountability, global competitiveness, and market forces can be attributed to the impact of perspectives grounded on neoliberalism on the service sector (Nash, 2019; Zajda & Rust, 2016). Added to this, organisations in the service sector find themselves operating in an international environment that goes beyond local contexts. Operating within such an environment forces organisations in the service sector to observe global quality

benchmarks and embrace continuous quality improvements so that they can live up to the dictates of international standards (Almazroa & Al-Al-Shamrani, 2015). When organisations in the service sector embrace CI strategies, they begin to focus on the customer. They also value return on investment (Khanom, 2023; Temponi, 2005). It has also been concluded that there is a strong connection between the ability of an entity to gain sustainable competitive advantage and that organisation's engagement in excellence strategies, including continuous improvement.

It is generally accepted that continuous improvement is impacted by context and culture. This means that practices that may produce favourable results in one cultural context may fail in another. For example, countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, have different cultural contexts when compared to those that follow Western culture. In Western countries, the notion of continuous improvement has become well-established, while in the Middle East, these ideas are only beginning to gain traction (Edghein & Alkhalifah, 2023; Hamdan, 2014; Yang, 2011; Mitki & Shani, 1995). Taking this into consideration, Hamdan (2014) has emphasised that the service sector in Saudi Arabia should provide culturally relevant services, particularly in instances where the culture of the servers is different from that of those served. This is also illustrated in the work of Yang (2011), who focused on the challenges faced in China during attempts to integrate Eastern and Western service cultures. The same author mentions that the main objective of modern service companies in China has been to amalgamate the Eastern and Western elements at all levels, an arrangement that brings together facets of Western and Chinese philosophical heritages. However, Yang (2011) believes that these attempts have not succeeded. From the above insights, it can be posited that cultural contexts can lead to tensions affecting the manner in which service organisations are perceived as cultural organisations. In reference to this view, Yang (2011) posits that it is vital for researchers to start by interrogating their own cultural conditioning so that they do not ignore the dissimilar mental frameworks of those they are researching and deal with questions relating to their attitudes and beliefs using the right lenses.

Based on the views expressed above, it can be noted that the national cultural context – including religious practices, values, and beliefs – plays a crucial role in the way companies in the service sector operate. From this perspective, the characteristics of national culture would have an instrumental effect that needs to be examined.

Organisational culture, on the one hand, is located within the context of a national culture, which could impose limitations on companies attempting to adjust to their local settings. On the other hand, there has been a proliferation of research in organisational culture associating the idea of continuous improvement with desirable organisational outcomes (Tang et al., 2020; Bendermacher et al., 2017; McLean et al., 2017; Brajer-Marczak, 2014). This view was earlier acknowledged by Gerhart (2009), who adds that these associations could lead to inconsistencies between units of the same organisations located in different countries. This means that companies operating across different countries need to take measures to make sure that their cultures do not clash with the contexts of the countries that host them.

One of the seminal scholars who have noted the connection between organisational and national culture is Hofstede (1983). He posits that managing an organisation is influenced by culture, and organisations that succeed are those willing to align their international ideas with local culture. In agreement, several scholars, including Rym et al. (2020) and House et al. (2004), emphasised that organisational culture is influenced by national culture. This is also a perspective supported by Joseph and Kibera (2019) and Gelfand et al. (2007), who posit that where there is a correlation between national culture and organisational culture, there are positive results.

It has been noted that organisational change and development are shaped by a society's values and beliefs (Willis et al., 2016; Amis et al., 2004). In Saudi Arabia, the national culture is excessively influenced by Islam (Alrubaishi et al., 2021). This influence can also be noted in the cultures of organisations, especially those in the service sector (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014; Ezzi et al., 2014). Consequently, attitudes relating to change in Saudi Arabia are influenced by religion, which makes entities shy away from long-term planning because Islamic beliefs stipulate that the future is in the hands of Insh Allah (God's willingness). Based on the categories of Hofstede (1983), the kingdom's culture can be perceived as group and male-oriented, having high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance (Rees & Althakhri, 2008).

It has been noted that in Arabic settings, the intention of an action is more important than its practice. The significance placed on the role of actions means that when changes are incorporated to trigger continuous improvement, such changes have to correspond with the action and intention. Thus, it can be deduced that both action and intention emanating from ongoing improvement in the service sector context would be impacted by the characteristics of religious and cultural behaviours. It is on this basis that Ben Saad and Abbas (2018) believe that more studies are required to determine how Arabic culture affects the implementation of change in organisations in the Arab world. The same recommendation was earlier made by Rees and Althakhri (2008), who said that studies in both private and public service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia are needed to observe how employee performance is affected by organisational culture. Therefore, the present study is located within a set of these religious and cultural influences on organisational culture and continuous improvement. Within this background, the present study attempts to determine the factors establishing organisational culture that facilitates continuous improvement.

1.3 Research Problem Statement

The service sector plays an important role in the success of countries, organisations, and individuals. This is where the significance of continuous improvement lies. Important as they are, organisations in the service sector are constantly being challenged to become more efficient, effective, and responsive (Mergel et al., 2020; Sony & Naik, 2020; Cullen et al., 2003; Downey, 2000; Alexander, 2000). The expansion of work opportunities across the world, characterised by people working across borders, has led to some concerns for some service companies. In Saudi Arabia, some service sector organisations and public organisations are often slow to change. However, Alzhrani et al. (2016) posit that these organisations have been forced to apply modern management styles, including Total Quality Management (RQM), to achieve continuous improvement. This is especially the case in the context of the Saudi Vision 2030, which seeks to develop a more sustainable and diverse economy with the aim of strengthening the country's position on the international front (Alemahu, 2023).

In Saudi Arabia, continuous improvement efforts have faced numerous challenges, including the sustainability of the reforms (Albach & Mazi, 2014). Some scholars have argued that the entire Saudi Arabian service system needs to transform if outputs are to be improved in line

with the Saudi Vision 2030 and other changes taking place across the world. This view is supported by Al-Essa (2016), who explains that the Saudi Arabian service sector system is too weak to face its challenges, and this can only be corrected by establishing a capable service sector system that takes the aspirations of future generations into consideration. Alharbi (2016) agrees and notes that the challenges faced by the Saudi service sector include quality improvement.

To deal with some of the challenges noted, some service sector companies in Saudi Arabia have been steering in the direction of TQM in the last few years. Alzhrani et al. (2016) note that the service sector companies are doing this so that they can benchmark themselves against the best international practices. It is within this movement that an increased focus on quality management in Arabic countries' service sector companies has been noted (Papanthymou & Darra, 2017). On the other hand, TQM directly implies the need for continuous improvement, which is better applied in a cultural setting that has the propensity to embrace change (Halvorson, 2013).

Scholars have concluded that even continuous improvement has been embraced by many service sector companies in Saudi Arabia, there remain problems related to implementation (Alzhrani et al., 2016). To deal with such challenges, scholars like Alzhrani et al. (2016) have suggested a model that would enhance TQM practices. These scholars implore service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia to create departments specifically focusing on development and quality. However, in relation to the present study, these scholars remain silent regarding the interaction between organisational culture and management processes.

Efforts have been made to introduce sustainable TQM in organisations in other countries with cultural contexts similar to Saudi Arabia's. For example, Khoja (2016) refers to efforts to implement the system in Libya's service sector. Nonetheless, it is noted that among the identified factors in studies focusing on the implementation of TQM in Libya, organisational culture and continuous improvement were missing. In the same vein, when Alholiby (2018) developed a framework with seven primary areas for boosting quality assurance in Saudi Arabian service sector companies, organisational culture was not part of the outcomes.

From the discussion above, it is clear that the literature fails to deliver an explicit comprehension of the connection between organisational culture and continuous improvement. It can be noted that there is a dearth of reference to the connection between organisational culture and continuous improvement in service sector companies located in Saudi Arabia. This is a problematic situation if one considers that the companies in the region where Saudi Arabia is located have a distinct culture compared to the Western countries, where the idea of continuous improvement started. Therefore, the situation is exacerbated by the reality that the methodologies and models employed in continuous improvement have their roots in organisational and national cultures that differ from those of the majority of Saudi Arabia's service sector companies (Hess & Benjamin, 2015).

1.4 Research Gap

Even though culture plays an important role in continuous improvement implementation, this researcher did not find any studies focusing on the link between the two concepts in the setting of service sector companies in Saudi Arabia. The researcher searched major databases, including Scopus, JSTOR, and the Directory of Open Access Journals. In all these databases, no study was found specifically focused on how culture affects continuous improvement in the Saudi Arabian service sector. In an attempt to link culture and continuous improvement, Halvorson (2013) proposes that continuous improvement is both an operational variable and a crucial cultural element. On this basis, it is posited that the present study fills the identified gap by assimilating both the organisational culture and the continuous improvement facets when it examines the influence of the former on the latter in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia.

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to determine the role of organisational culture aspects in boosting the implementation of continuous improvement in the service sector in Saudi Arabia. It explores the connection between continuous improvement in the service sector and organisational culture.

1.6 Research Objectives

- Identify the organisational culture inhibitors and enablers of continuous improvement through a wide-ranging review of relevant literature.

- Identify organisational culture inhibitors and enablers of continuous improvement in service sector organisations using open-ended interviews and focus group discussions involving participants from a sample of Saudi Arabian organisations.
- Determine how inhibitors can be eliminated and enablers encouraged in organisational culture to create a more conducive atmosphere for continuous improvement in service sector organisations.
- Create a structure of interventions that will assist in leveraging the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvements in service sector organisations.
- Confirm the intervention framework of organisational culture through judgements of experts from the service sector organisations.

1.7 Research Questions

Within the context described above, the research question has been developed:

- How can organisational culture be used to boost continuous improvement in the Saudi Arabian service sector?

This research question is supported by two sub-questions:

- i) What cultural aspects facilitate continuous improvement in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia?
- ii) What interventions are required to support these cultural aspects?

1.8 Significance of the Study

The last 20 years have experienced substantial changes in the service sector, putting pressure on organisations to demonstrate their social and economic role, meet the increasing demand for accountability, and sustain quality (Zajda & Rust, 2016; Nash, 2019). This has been made even more urgent by the introduction of the Saudi Vision 2030. Evidence of the increasing need for quality assurance and quality management can be noted in the proliferation of quality and accreditation audits needed by external and internal bodies, including the government, from service sector companies (Zuhal, 2022; Wilder et al., 2021; Harvey, 2005; McKay & Kember, 1999). Many organisations in Saudi Arabia embrace quality assurance systems. Therefore, it is prudent to examine the inhibitors and enablers of continuous improvement in

the service sector in the kingdom by investigating the characteristics of organisational culture that either deter or enhance the process of continuous improvement.

The present study examines the issues presented above in the setting where the service sector has been referred to as playing a role in being a catalyst for national economic development. In this role, the service sector companies are on the frontline of innovation in a country that is progressively looking to play a more influential role on the international front. Therefore, service sector organisations need to embrace internationally accepted processes and best practices (Dickson et al., 2014; Ehlers & Schnackenberg, 2010; Becket & Brookes, 2008). Added to this, one of the main aims of the Saudi government in relation to Vision 2030 is to transform the prevailing environment in the service sector by introducing several measures, including getting some of the skilled Saudi Arabians across the world to return home, ensuring that they are well taken care of, and reforming and improving regulations to create a pathway for the more private investors to participate in the service sector (Council of Economic and Development Affairs, 2016). Consequently, this study will assist role-players such as the government, services sector companies, and others with an interest in the sector in determining the cultural factors impacting continuous improvement in the sector.

1.9 Thesis Outline

This chapter introduces the present study by presenting the theoretical background, purpose, problem statement, research questions, significance, definition of terms, scope, and limitations. The second chapter focuses on the review of relevant literature related to continuous improvement, organisational culture, and national culture. In its conclusion, it identifies the gaps in the literature before presenting the conceptual framework of the study. Details regarding the methodology and methods employed to meet the objectives of the study are presented in Chapter 3. In that chapter, the onion framework (Saunders et al., 2012) is used to connect the social constructivism standpoint with the grounded theory for both the collection and analysis of data. In its conclusion, Chapter 3 focuses on ethics and the mechanisms employed to ensure quality. In the fourth chapter, the findings of the study are presented using five sections that focus on gathering data, the process of analysing the data, presenting the results, analysing the results, and presenting the conclusion based on the obtained results. In Chapter 5, the interventions that may facilitate continuous improvement in the service in Saudi Arabia – on the basis of data collected from the participants in the study

– are presented. Bringing together the interventions identified from the collected data and those obtained from the literature review, the chapter ends by suggesting interventions with the greatest potential to close the gap between the current practices of SS companies in Saudi Arabia and the ideal conditions for continuous improvement. On the basis of Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture as consisting of three connected levels, Chapter 6 will focus on the facets of organisational culture identified by participants as important for establishing a setting where continuous improvement thrives. The same chapter suggests a framework focusing on intervention related to an organisational culture that can ensure that when continuous improvement is adopted, it will be successful. The chapter then goes on to present an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 7 presents a conclusion for the study by summarising the main findings, contributions, and limitations. The chapter then identifies areas of possible future research.

1.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has provided the background for the present study, showing why, in the context of the Saudi Vision 2030 and other changes across the globe, it is vital for service sector organisations to determine how culture can influence continuous improvement. It has been noted that in the absence of studies specifically targeting the services sector from a Saudi Arabian context, a study such as this one is important. The chapter has also presented the research questions that will guide the collection of data, together with the aims and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the last few years, there has been a proliferation of studies focusing on organisational culture and its connection with outcomes like continuous improvement, productivity, entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, job satisfaction, commitment, retention, and employee motivation (Howe & Kreiser, 2019; Hight & Wood, 2018; Matinaro & Liu, 2017; Park & Lunt, 2017; Ramdhani et al., 2017; Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Milne, 2007; Millar et al., 2018). All these studies have shown that organisational culture plays a critical role in continuous improvement (Evans & Dobrosielska, 2019). This chapter will review the literature connected to organisational culture and how it influences continuous improvement in entities operating in the services sector. The chapter will begin by focusing on defining the concept of organisational culture. It will then bring to the fore the leading models employed by scholars interrogating the concept of organisational culture and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each model. The chapter will then go on to focus on the understanding of organisational culture from a Saudi Arabian perspective.

2.2 National Culture vs. Organisational Culture

The idea of culture is complex. Thus, many definitions have been advanced relating to it. Shweder and Haidt (2000) use the terms interpretative schemes, conceptions, and meaning making among a specific group of people. For Brown (2007), culture denotes the norms and values passed across generations through socialisation. From this perspective, culture is defined as the things that human beings learn so that they can live successfully within a specific society. These concepts include skills, knowledge, roles, diet, dress, customs, norms, values, beliefs, and language. Some scholars look at culture from the perspective of national and organisational cultures. One of the seminal scholars in this field is Hofstede (1980). From his ground-breaking studies, he concludes that the differences in national cultures can mainly be noted at the ritual, practice, and symbol levels. His studies used the subsidiaries of an international business company as case studies, and he concluded that even though individuals may be working for the same organisation, there are differences between the cultures of such employees when they work in different countries. This national culture is perceived to be the

collective national programming of the mind from a countrywide context (Hofstede, 2001). Schein (1992: p. 12) defines organisational culture (OC) as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members of the organisation as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

The same view is shared by Castro and Martins (2010), who added that the foundation of organisational culture is built on the assumptions, principles, and beliefs of the employers. In the same vein, Cameron and Quinn (2003) posit that OC is an implied group of values and beliefs that members of an organisation mutually share. OC differs from national culture, whose basis is entrenched values, in that it primarily relates to mutually shared beliefs in organisational practices and processes (Sirmon & Lane, 2004). Thus, OC differentiates organisations operating within the same national culture (Hofstede et al., 1990).

2.3 National Culture and Organisational Culture: Mutual Inferences and Constraints

Within a dynamic of shared constraints and influences, organisational culture and national culture constitute two notions that are attached. If looked at from one angle, organisational culture is located within the national culture. This is based on the understanding that any organisational culture, like that prevailing in entities operating within the service sector, is developed and operated inside the national cultural setting. Thus, it is anticipated that such organisations are impacted and limited by the facets constituting national culture. This view is acknowledged by Hofstede (2001), who points out that organisational culture differs from national culture in the sense that if organisational culture differentiates an employee of one company from that of another, so does national culture in differentiating individuals from different countries. It is the view of Hofstede et al. (2010) that national culture constitutes a central part of the process by which an individual is socialised and introduced to the fundamental beliefs and values of the society into which they are born. The same outlook is shared by Iorgulescu and Marcu (2015), who affirm that the cultures found in an organisation form parts of the national culture in which they are found. This means that the cultures of organisations operate within elements of a culture whose foundation is the assumptions within the national culture. However, organisations reserve the right to pick and choose the parts of national culture they want to emphasise and those they want to overlook. Therefore, anyone

looking at the prevailing culture within an organisation will see some aspects of national culture. This can be done by observing the myths, behaviours, symbols, and language forming the palpable displays of organisational culture, illustrating the marks obtained from the values of national culture.

Notwithstanding the views above, it is possible to have organisations that operate within a foreign culture. For example, there are many multinational organisations with operations in different parts of the world. In contexts like that, national culture constitutes part of the context of organisational culture. Some scholars have posited that there are connections between the two cultures. For instance, Gelfand et al. (2007), Ergashev and Forxodjonova (2020), and Arif et al. (2019) advance the view that where the two are interconnected, a substantial effect can be noted. These scholars note that entities with operations in different countries need to carefully scrutinise their practices with the aim of determining how they can fit within the host country's cultural context. They add that these kinds of organisations also need to take into account the impact of differences in culture between the headquarters and the areas where their subsidiaries are located (Drogendijk & Holm, 2015; Yildiz, 2014). Some of the differences that can be noted in relation to organisational contexts include market conditions, labour regulations, type of organisation, and regulatory frameworks. Such differences introduce limitations on entities as they try to adapt to local settings. This could lead to differences between organisations operating in different countries (Gerhart, 2009).

Based on the view that managers of entities operating in foreign countries are influenced by the local culture, Hofstede (1983) advances the opinion that organisations that succeed often borrow ideas from foreign management into their local settings. However, Hofstede (2001) notes that this is often challenging, and the best results are usually obtained from multinational management practices that aim to align with the local culture.

The primary role played by the national culture has been noted. For example, the GLOBE Project (2020) emphasised that the connection between organisational culture and national culture mirrors the countries in which they are located. The same view was earlier noted by Iorgulescu and Marcu (2015), who explain that there is a connection between organisational culture and national culture. The same scholars note that the relationship between these cultures is characterised by including the former in the country where the organisations

conduct business. They note that a robust organisational culture will seize and embrace what is valuable and lasting in national cultures.

In an attempt to explain the relationship between organisational culture and national culture, Hoque et al. (2013) propose that an organisational culture shaped by Islamic values represents the process of sharing skills, knowledge, norms, beliefs, values, mission, vision, and philosophies among the members of an organisation based on the teachings of the Sunnah and Quran with the goal of achieving the aspirations of the organisation efficiently and smoothly, which results in Allah being satisfied. For this reason, it can be anticipated that entities working within Islamic culture will be impacted by the distinct characteristics of Islamic culture that inform how they perform as an organisation.

2.4 Organisational Culture

If one considers the fact that there are numerous definitions of the phrase organisational culture, it becomes clear that there is no agreement on what the concept means. For instance, numerous scholars, including Spicer (2020), Martinez-Caro et al. (2020), and Schein (1992), posit that organisational culture represents an arrangement of primary conventions learned by a group in the process of solving their internal problems and adapting to their environment, helping them to integrate internally. Those solutions that have produced desirable results are then considered valid enough to be taught to those joining the organisation. Based on a view that sees organisational culture as representing a culmination of attitudes, norms, values, and assumptions, Janićijević (2011) believes that culture denotes those elements represented by symbols that those belonging to an organisation have established and embraced through shared experiences and which assist them when they are determining what the world around them means and how they should behave within it.

Other scholars who have attempted to define the concept of culture are Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013). These scholars introduce three perspectives that can be followed when looking at organisational culture:

- i) **Culture as integrationist:** This perspective denotes the view that each organisation has a single culture shared by all those that belong to it. An analysis of this view shows that it is deficient in that it is based on the assumption that the people within a group are homogenous.

- ii) **Culture as a disjointed, and thus not shared:** This view appreciates that it is improbable that individuals within an organisation share the same experiences and views.
- iii) **Culture as differentiated:** In this view, organisational culture is seen as a culmination of the cultures of the people that form the organisation.

From the three perspectives introduced above, it can be posited that organisational culture impacts future organisational results because it influences the way that entity performs, public perceptions about that entity, and provides the company and those working for it the motivation and directing that make it possible to meet goals (Spicer, 2020; Cunliffe, 2008). Due to the proliferation of globalisation, many scholars have attempted to compare organisational culture to national culture. Within this attempt to compare the two, the assumption has been that the way an organisation performs is linked to the conduct of employees being aligned to the values of the employees and the strategy of the organisation they work for, and also the impact of leadership's attempts to manipulate the culture of the organisation with the aim of achieving the desired objectives (Carvalho, 2019; Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010). Thus, there have been attempts to link organisational culture to numerous facets of the activities and results of an organisation, as exemplified by quality culture in many organisations (Bendermacher, 2017), continuous improvement initiatives (McLean et al., 2017; Brajer-Marczak, 2014), management control, motivation and employee performance (Owoyemi & Ekwoaba, 2014), high school teacher's job satisfaction (Arifin, 2015), innovation performance (Laforet, 2016).

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that organisational culture is always evolving, resulting in it becoming an involuntary way of conduct for members of an organisation. When looked at from this perspective, organisations are able to keep their employees for longer and establish strong cultures. This is a view acknowledged by Ushakov and Shatila (2021), Adeoye and Hope (2020), and Deal and Kennedy (1982), who posit that this has a positive effect on the performance of the organisation. On the other hand, companies that see a lot of employees coming and leaving tend to have a weak culture and suffer a loss of cultural identity.

2.5 Organisational Culture Models

Numerous studies have been commissioned with the aim of understanding organisational culture, including Mikušová et al. (2023), Cameron and Quinn (2011), Johnson et al. (2008), Hatch (1993), Johnson and Scholes (1992), Hofstede (1991), Schein (1985). This has led to several models explaining organisational culture. This sub-section will focus on these models. It will present a summary of the main characteristics of these models and their differences.

2.5.1 Hofstede's Model of Organisational Culture

Hofstede (2011) attempts to define organisational culture using the analogue of an onion and its rings (as presented in Figure 2.1). Each ring represents a segment, including symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. This model is based on perceiving an organisation from six dimensions, as described below.

- i) **Process or results-oriented:** Cultures in this category are more focused on the means to an end and how risks can be circumvented to reduce uncertainty. They are also result-oriented, placing most of their focus on the end and recognising that necessary risks should be taken.
- ii) **Job or employee-oriented:** Such cultures are linked to being more concerned about how a task can be accomplished and less about employee welfare.
- iii) **Professional or parochial:** Professional cultures clearly distinguish between the person as an employee and the individual as a private person outside the work setting. On the other hand, parochial cultures believe that an individual's job is an extension of that person's life.
- iv) **Open or closed systems:** The former is more accepting of external influences and individuals, while the latter tends to be hostile to those perceived as coming from the outside.
- v) **Tightly or loosely controlled systems:** Characteristically, the latter involves organised tasks, and there is often little or no space for innovation, and the former encourages innovation because it tends to be more flexible.
- vi) **Pragmatic or normative:** The first is more customer-centred, while the second follows rigid priorities and rules when dealing with the needs of customers.

Hofstede (1980) posits that organisational culture manifests the social norms and values of the place where the organisation operates. His model illustrates that the manifestations of

organisational culture serve numerous roles at both the social and organisational levels. This model may be adequate for researching societal culture, where the main emphasis is cultural values. However, it may not be sufficient to study organisational culture, where the emphasis is on the practices of the organisation.

2.5.2. Schein's Model of Organisational Culture

A number of scholars have embraced Schein's (1985) model of organisational culture, including Alkhoraif and McLaughlin (2017), Dimitrov (2013), and Smerek (2010). The model is based on the assumption that an organisation's culture primarily consists of an arrangement of primary mutual assumptions, shaping how members of a culture reason and behave. Considering that these assumptions may be unconsciously held by the participants, they are not always easy to explain. Schein (1985) uses an example of a company known as the Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) to test his assumptions. He notes that in this company, he observed extensive confrontation, interruption, and debate during a meeting involving senior managers. This led the meetings to turn hostile and inconclusive. He would later learn that the managers in this organisation operated from the assumption that the value of an idea could only be legitimised by testing through robust debate. When Schein (1985) made the DEC managers aware of their mutual assumptions, he was able to assist them in changing the manner in which they responded to interruptions, leading to them focusing on the ideas as opposed to the interruptions.

Schein's (2009) model for cultural analysis is founded on three levels of culture in an organisation. Broadly, these levels can be categorised into visible elements in the form of artefacts and invisible elements represented by underlying assumptions, guiding philosophies, and espoused values. Their purpose is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

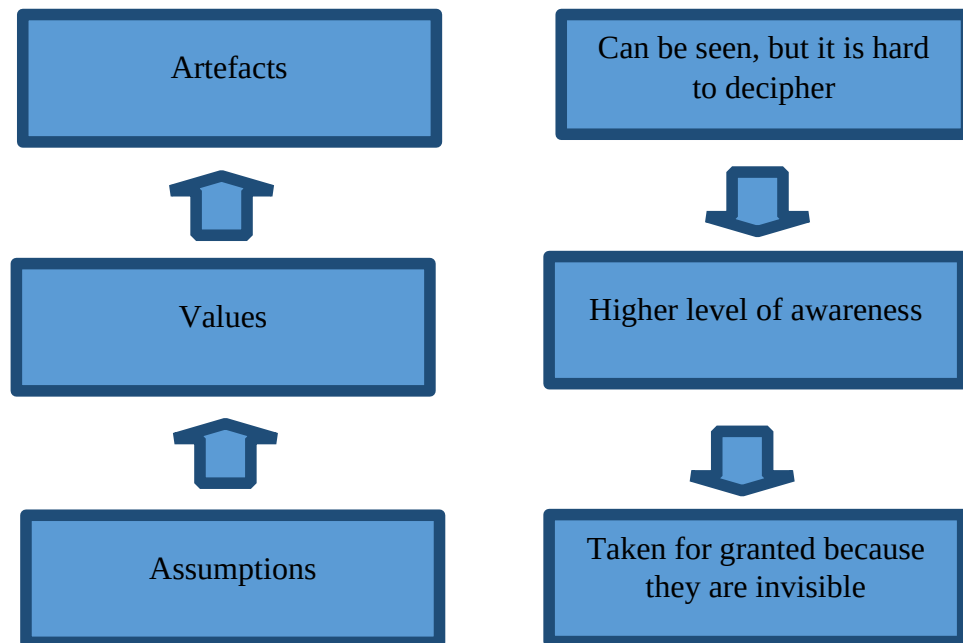


Figure 2.1: The levels of organisational culture

In Figure 2.1, artefacts represent the phenomenon that can be seen, felt, and heard by observers when they interact with a group that has a culture different from their own. Examples of things that could indicate that the groups are different include observable elements like the group's physical environment, products, rituals, technology, style of dressing, and language. The idea of artefacts could also encompass an organisation's climate, which emanates from observed behaviour and mutual assumptions. Even though artefacts can be easily observed, they can be challenging to decode. Some of the perceptible and visible types of artefacts found in organisations are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Types of artefacts found in an organisation (Source Dandridge et al., 1980)

Category	Examples
Objects	Art/design/logo Architecture/décor/furnishings Dress/appearance/costume/uniform Products/equipment/tools Displays of posters/photos/memorabilia/cartoons Signage
Verbal expressions	Jargon/names/nicknames Explanations/theories Stories/myths/legends and their heroes and villains Superstitions/rumors Humor/jokes Metaphors/proverbs/slogans Speeches/rhetoric/oratory
Activities	Ceremonies/rituals/rites of passage Meetings/retreats/parties Communication patterns Traditions/customs/social routines Gestures Play/recreation/games Rewards/punishments

In Schein's (2009) framework, primary assumptions can pervade the next level, which is that of embraced values and beliefs. The same scholar sees these as the aspirations, values, goals, and ideals held by members of the group. These beliefs can also be noted in the philosophy or ideology of an organisation. Where values provide a glimpse of what the organisation cares about, norms provide an idea of the expected behaviour from members of the group in certain instances. Embraced values and beliefs could play the role of expected behaviour as opposed to observed conduct. Using an example based on a division of a technology company, Schein (2009) advances the view that care should be observed when analysing embraced values and beliefs by differentiating among those that are in keeping with the unconscious assumption impacting performance, part of the organisational philosophy and ideology, consist of rationalisations or future aspirations.

The following level in Schein's (1985) framework consists of basic underlying assumptions. The theorist posits that these assumptions define the areas that members need to pay attention to, what meaning should be attributed to certain things, suitable emotional responses to conditions, and what actions should be embraced. The foundation of basic assumptions is the unanimity reached after continuous success from the use and maintenance of certain beliefs.

2.5.3 Cultural Dynamics Model

In the same manner as Schein's (2009) theories about culture, Hatch (1993) had earlier suggested the Cultural Dynamics Model. The model specifies the dynamic of a cultural organisation through the form of process (i.e. *manifestation*, *realisation*, *symbolisation*, and *interpretation*) and procedures that make it possible to comprehend the conduct of a cultural group. For example, the main focus of the model is on the *organising processes*, which link artefacts, values, and assumptions. Considering that assumptions could be unconscious and subjective, they can be observed through an organisation's values. Therefore, it is posited that the *manifestation* process represents the way in which members of a culture can manifest values based on unconscious, subjective assumptions.

A similar approach can be embraced when rationalising the *realisation* process, where, from values, it is possible to *realise* an artefact, which is represented by activities, verbal expressions, and objects. Artefacts produced in this manner turn into symbols that are provided with a meaning (i.e., tacit sign + significant). Members belonging to a particular culture can then decode such symbols through the 'interpretation' process. Thus, members of a culture interpret these symbols in the same way. The dynamics of organisational culture are illustrated in Figure 2.2 below.

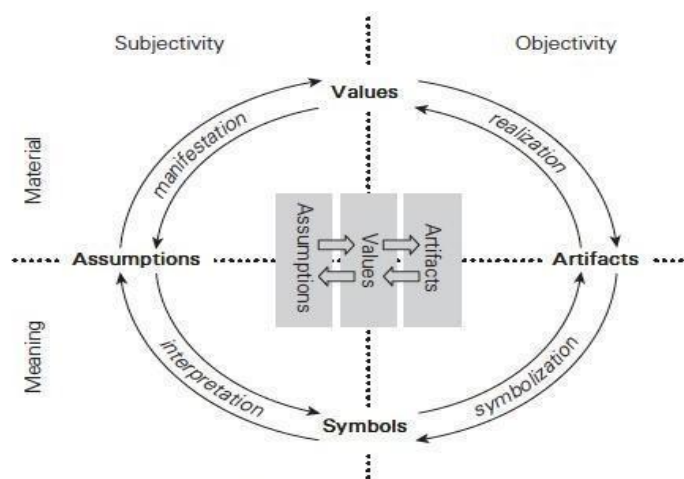


Figure 2.2: The dynamics of organisational culture

The upper half of the model presented in Figure 2.2 shows the manner in which the artefacts permit culture to take the material form. These artefacts are themselves a product of behaviours infused by more dormant values and assumptions. In the model's bottom half, it can be noted that the process of making meaning based on culture alters the artefacts and turns

them into symbols that challenge or corroborate assumptions. It needs to be taken into account that the figure's dotted line, separating the right side from the left, places artefacts into the domain of objectivity, and in the subjectivity domain, it places assumptions. Between the domains, values and symbols are located, showing that they share characteristics from each domain.

Hatch (1993) uses the following example to illustrate these processes. An organisation that operates based on the assumption that human beings are lazy will have laziness considered undesirable. Consequently, that organisation will try to find ways of controlling the laziness of employees (Value for Control) while downplaying any assumptions based on the view that employees are able to work even when not controlled or monitored (Value of Autonomy). Thus, in keeping with the belief that human beings are lazy, a corresponding assumption could be that the efforts of employees have a considerable impact on success. In this instance, even though effort will be perceived to be attuned to the Value of Autonomy, the assumption that employees are lazy will be an obstruction, leading to the prevalence of the Value of Control.

From the discussion above, it can be posited that these values are manifested in cultural artefacts through realisation. In an organisation, these artefacts can be represented by easily visible offices, daily activity reports, or time clocks. The artefacts are then available for interpretation and symbolisation. Even though an organisation may have its own reasons for using time clocks and open-plan offices, it is possible that employees may interpret this to mean that the company does not trust them. These feelings could result in exclusion and resentment on the part of the employees. This could lead to symbols opposing those of management. Such symbols are the foundation of the establishment of significance and meaning in day-to-day organisational life. As time goes on, the interface between these four processes begins to have an influence on what individuals value and assume about their culture, in the process establishing, stabilising, and altering the symbols and artefacts that manifest in meaning.

Even though the Hatch (1993) model has several strengths, it is not suitable for this study because it overemphasises the provision of a better comprehension of the linkages between the domains identified by Schein. To a degree, the high degree of obstruction in the framework limits it. This results in a restriction of the explanatory power of linkage between organisational culture and operations, strategy, and structure (Dauber et al., 2012).

2.5.4 The Competing Values Framework

Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1981, 1983) Competing Value Framework (CVF) is encored on two views: whether an organisation's focus is internal or external or whether an entity leans in the direction of individuality and flexibility instead of control and stability. The model assumes that where these aspects meet, four types of organisational cultures are established: hierarchy, market, clam, and adhocracy. The model itself is founded on an earlier model that distinguished between 39 organisational effectiveness factors (Campbell, 1977). Using that earlier model, the CVF identifies a wide array of phenomena, including management skills, leadership, effects, and the responsibility of human resources managers, lifecycle development stages, quality, and organisational design.

When Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981, 1983) statistically analysed 39 factors, they arrived at four main clusters, from which they distinguished three value dimensions:

- a) Organisational focus
- b) Organisational structure
- c) Organisational means and ends

The identified dimensions denote values influencing the standard employed when assessing the effectiveness of the organisation. Each standard within the organisational effectiveness structure is a reflection of a diverse culmination of these values. When the initial two values are amalgamated (organisational focus and organisational structure), four quadrants are established, exhibiting the leading theoretical models of organisational effectiveness: the open systems model, human relations, internal process, and rational goal. The connection between the effectiveness criteria and the values is presented in Figure 2.3.

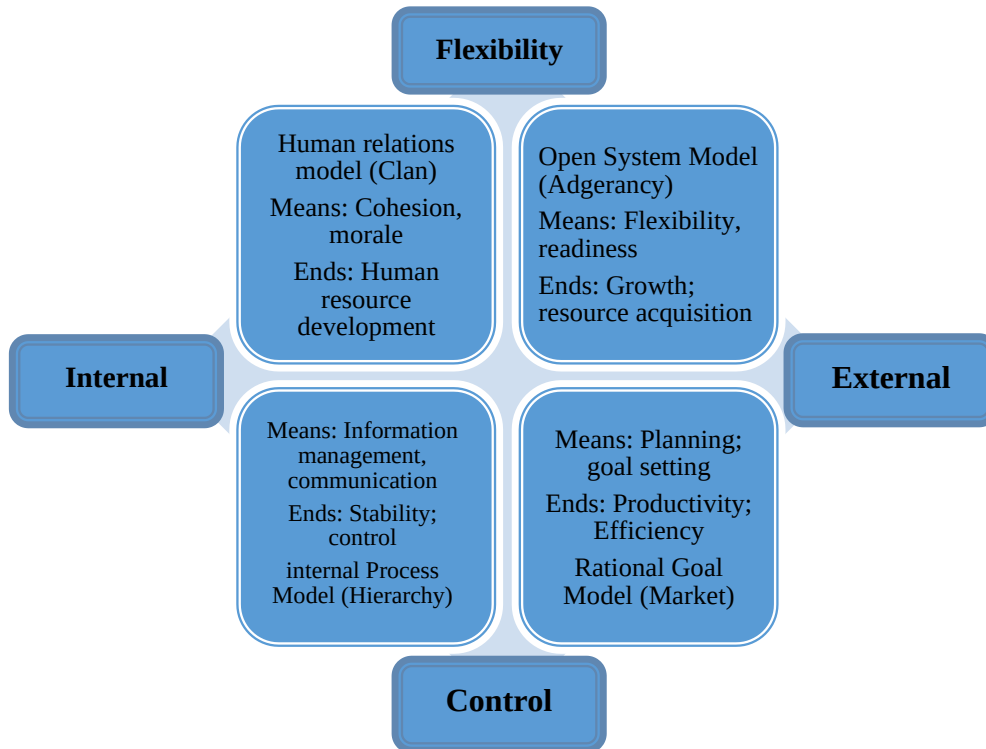


Figure 2.3: The connection between the effectiveness criteria and the values

The main strength of the CVF model is that it allows for the investigation and comprehension of the four kinds of organisational culture (Berrio, 2003):

- **Adhocracy:** Emphasis is on the readiness and flexibility to start and react to opportunities.
- **Hierarchy:** The main highlight is sustaining internal stability.
- **Clan:** Where the main concern is the welfare of the people.
- **Market:** Reacting to the outside demands with regard to efficiency and productivity.

2.5.5 The Cultural Web Model

The Cultural Web Model by Johnson (1992) represents the physical, symbolic, and behavioural cultural manifestations moulded by the implicit beliefs and assumptions (referred to as paradigms) held by those belonging to a certain organisation. The model perceives a paradigm as consisting of an organisation's values, mission, and purpose. This is what is called the organisation's "collective experience" by Johnson et al. (2008). Routines provide a glimpse of the manner in which an organisation conducts itself on a day-to-day basis. On the other hand, the rituals underpin that which the organisation values. Such rituals could be represented by procedures, training, or other less formal activities like casual chit-chat and socialising after work. The stories represent the chronicles in the organisation, portraying the

failures and successes of an organisation, together with its nonconformists, anti-heroes, and heroes. Symbols stand for acts, events, and objects infused with a deeper meaning in comparison to those that can be easily observed, like an organisation's language, the titles of its members, or the way its offices are laid out. Figure 2.4 presents an illustration of the Cultural Web Model.

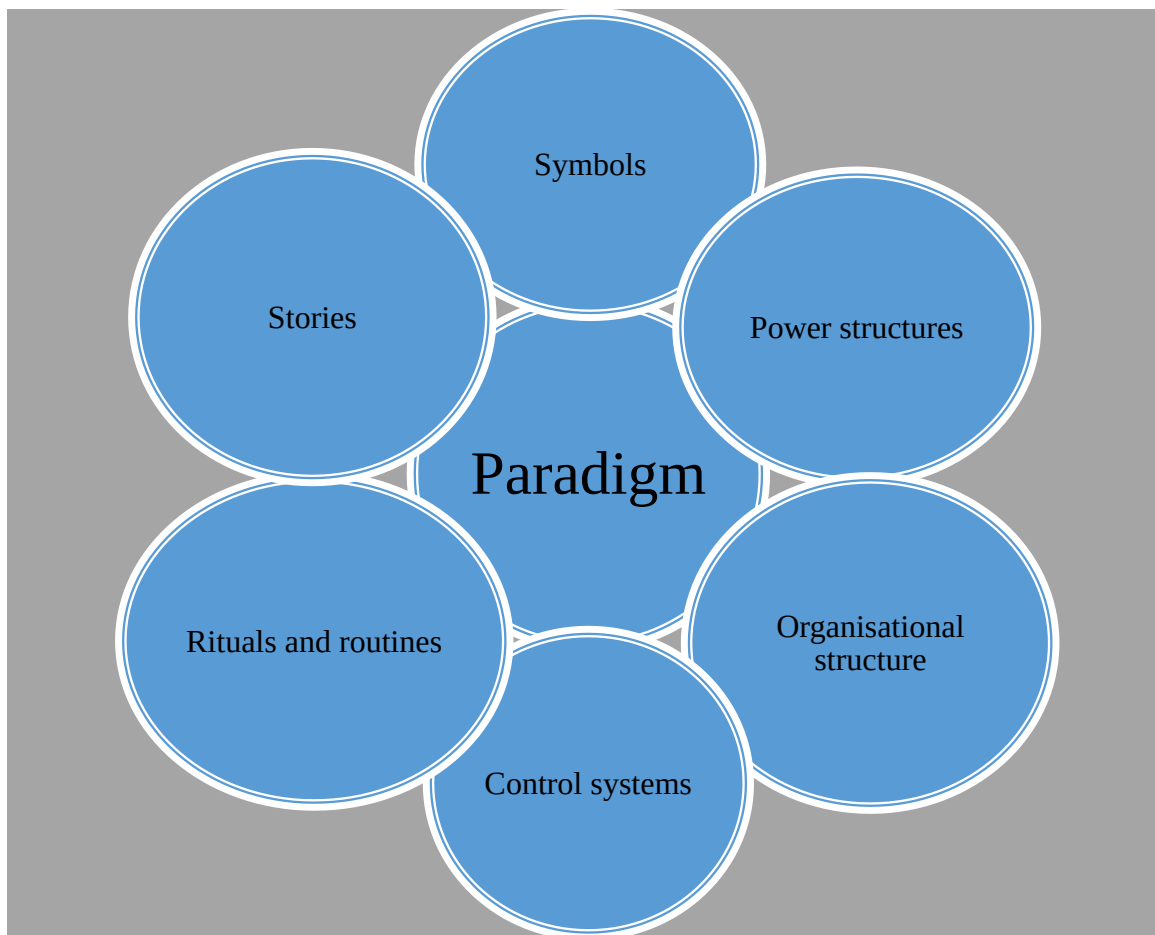


Figure 2.4: Illustration of the Cultural Web Model

The distribution of power across the organisation is represented by the power structures together with who is responsible for making decisions. The structures of the organisation reflect the hierarchies and define the roles of employees in the manner in which the work is done. For instance, in structures that are mechanistic and hierarchical, managers are responsible for crafting strategy, and everyone else is expected to do as they are told. Reward systems and measurements constitute control frameworks in such environments. Regarding measurement, some organisations in the public service sector have a tendency to pay most of their attention to the stewardship of funds as opposed to competitiveness. On the other hand,

with regard to systems for reward, individually-based bonus schemes could be a reflection of the fact that the company emphasises internal competition as opposed to teamwork.

The Cultural Web Model has been a subject of criticism in some quarters where it has been noted that the identification of the culture separating an organisation from others is not adequate to provide a wide-ranging comprehension of the connections in the organisation's internal processes (Sun, 2008). Therefore, although the model depicts a crucial idea regarding the primary components of culture, it fails when it comes to providing pertinent details needed to implement changes in the culture of the organisation.

2.6 Summary of the Models

A comparison of the different models presented above is provided in Table 2.2, and the similarities and differences are in the paragraph below the table.

Table 2.2: Models of organisational culture

Models of Organisational Culture	Definitions of Organisational Culture Models
Model of organisational culture (Hofstede 1991, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifestation/reflection of the social norms and values of the place where the organisation operates. • Organisational culture manifestations play varying roles both at the societal and organisational levels. • Emphasise cultural values as opposed to the practices of the organisation.
Model of Organisational Culture (Schein, 1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily, comprises patterns of mutual common assumptions. • The way members of a culture reason and behave is shaped by assumptions. • Assumptions operate unconsciously. • It can be challenging to identify and articulate assumptions.
Cultural Dynamics Model (Hatch, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded on the theorisation of culture by Schein. • Emphasises organising processes (manifestation, realisation, symbolisation, and interpretation), linking artefacts, values, and assumptions.
Competing Values Framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981, 1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is based on whether an organisation focuses externally or internally and whether the organisation is inclined towards control and stability as opposed to individuality and flexibility. • From its assumption, it established four types of organisational culture: hierarchy, market, clan, and adhocracy. • It is founded on an earlier model, which identified 39 factors of organisational effectiveness (Campbell, 1977).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the elements identified by the CVF include the impact of leadership and management skills, the responsibility of human resources managers, lifecycle development stages, quality, and organisational design. • It also identified three value dimensions: organisational focus, organisational structure, and organisational means and ends.
Cultural Web Model (Johnson & Scholes, 1992; Johnson et al., 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents the physical, symbolic, and behavioural manifestations of a culture shaped by the implicit beliefs and assumptions (known as paradigms) held by members of an organisation.

In terms of similarities between the models above, notwithstanding the fact that each model has its own terms used to define its elements or components, certain basic assumptions can be identified, including heroes, philosophy, symbols, and values. It can be posited that all these models share these elements. In terms of how they differ, when describing their strategies, processes, and components, the different models use different terminology. For some models, the emphasis is on components of the cultural organisation, like the model advanced by Hofstede (1991). Others, such as Hatch's (1993) and Schein's (1985) models, emphasise a component and its relationships.

From Table 2.2, it can be noted that all the presented models are founded on the three levels of Schein's model in one way or another. For instance, an analysis of the Cultural Web Model shows that it has adopted Schein's invisible components constituting part of the paradigm, while the others, including organisational structure, power structures, control systems, symbols, stories, rituals, and routines, constitute the other visible elements, the artefacts. The Cultural Dynamics Model by Hatch (1993) is also inspired by Schein's three levels, even though it adds the element of symbolism. However, considering that symbols are visible elements, they can be perceived as artefacts. Regarding the CVF, it can be noted that the organisation leans in the direction of Schein's invisible elements of culture, values, and assumptions idea, where the means and ends mirror the visible elements introduced by Schein. Looking at this perspective, it can be said that the CVF is underpinned by the conceptualisation of organisational culture as resulting from a centre of mutual assumptions, as proposed by Schein.

The presentation of Hofstede with regard to organisational culture is premised on the analogue of an onion ring. In this ring, the inner parts represent symbols, heroes, and rituals. This presentation differs from Schein's ideas in that the latter has shared assumptions at the core. Nonetheless, there are still a number of common elements between Schein's models and shared values in Hofstede's symbols, heroes, and rituals, which are represented in Schein's model as artefacts, the palpable elements of culture. The six dimensions framework of organisational cultures presented by Hofstede et al. (1990) elucidates a result of the "onion ring" process because that which gives an idea of an organisation's orientation is located within its values, and the orientation begins to form part of its symbols and rituals.

Considering that the model by Schein has, to a degree, been included in all the other models, it will be selected to guide this study in an attempt to determine the manner in which organisational culture can be leveraged as a technique for supporting continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's service sector.

2.7 Rational for Using Schein Model as a Study Conceptual Framework

From a study of the models of organisational culture in literature, it can be noted that the different models overlap. It has also been noted that the model advanced by Schein (1985) brings together the elements of intersection between the different models. Undoubtedly, by perceiving the organisation as a purposive social ecosystem, this study will embrace the model of culture as suggested by Schein (1985). It is posited that while the model is holistic, it is also broad and takes into account many elements forming the cultural organisation. The model is presented in Figure 2.5 below.

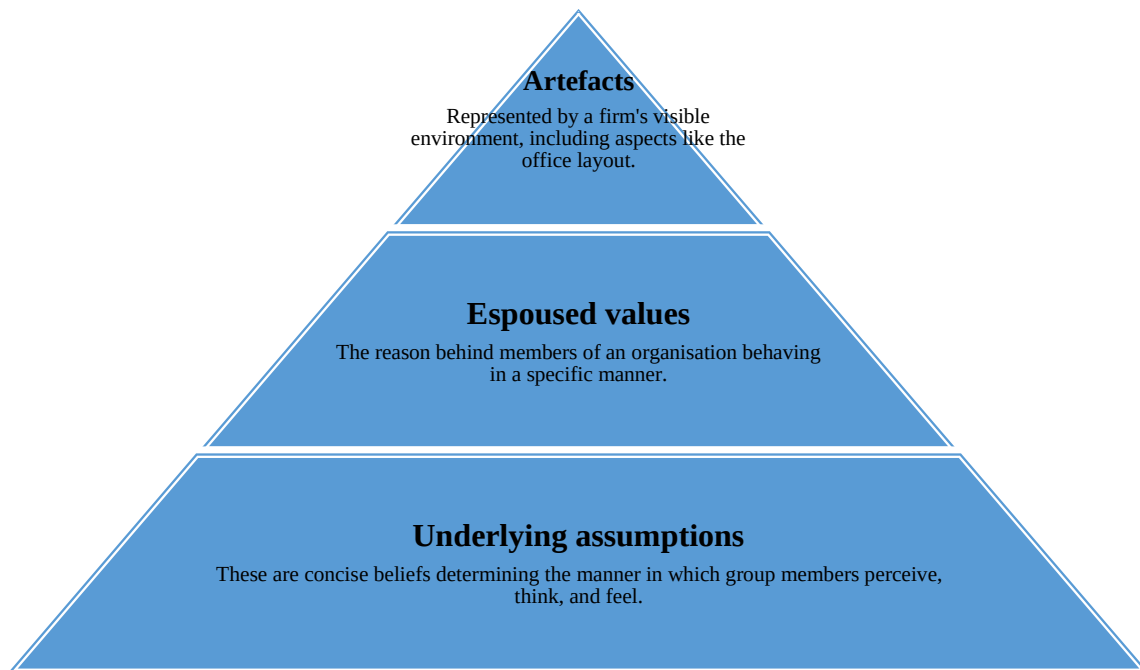


Figure 2.5: Schein's organisational model (Adopted from Somers, 2023)

In the present study, the researcher's intention is to employ the Schein model as the lens through which the cultural organisation of the Saudi Arabian service sector is structured. This will be done with the awareness that organisations in the Saudi Arabian services sector have unique characteristics associated with Arabian culture. Undoubtedly, the 'underlying assumptions' in Schein's model are the best when studying a strong culture such as the one

prevailing in the Saudi Arabian services sector. It is applicable to this setting where Islam has created mutually established beliefs and values that have, over time, become so deep-seated that many see them as unquestionable (Saada, 2023; Bamford et al., 2018). Moreover, it is posited that Schein's model will lead to an enhanced comprehension of the Arabian cultural organisation within the service sector companies selected for this study.

Other researchers have noted the value of Schein's model of organisational culture when focusing on the process of encouraging innovation. Therefore, it can be anticipated that the model by Schein delivers valuable leans for those intending to comprehend the connection between organisational culture and continuous improvement. This can be attributed to the fact that continuous improvement forms one of the palpable elements of culture. This is a view acknowledged by Ghinea and Brătianu (2012), who mention that Schein outlines the slow, but not inexistent, process of continuous transformation that this organisational culture undergoes. Undoubtedly, among those elements that are visible, one can infer continuous improvement with practices, goals, strategies, and processes, which constitute the visible facets of a certain organisational culture and that are specifically required to obtain the preferred motivation/improvement. Accordingly, Schein's model suggests three levels: fundamental assumptions, values, and artefacts, perceived to present a broader lens for comprehending organisational culture.

Even though it is clear that numerous instruments are employed when attempting to understand culture, Schein's argument that these instruments do not measure culture but instead reveal its *artefacts* is noted to be poignant. Based on the insights obtained from the literature on culture, the present study seeks to explore the link between organisational culture and continuous improvement in the Saudi Arabian services sector. This will be achieved by applying the three levels of the culture model presented by Schein. The section that follows provides a definition of the idea of continuous improvement, locates and discusses its measurable dimensions and brings to the fore its connection to organisational culture.

2.8 Continuous Improvement

The idea of continuous improvement gained traction in the 19th and 20th centuries, a time known as the scientific management period. The proliferation in the popularity of the concept is often attributed to the Total Management (TQM) ingenuities linked to the Japanese automaker Toyota. The company introduced TQM into its lean tools (Permana et al., 2021;

Hussain & Khan, 2020; Liker & Morgan, 2006; Bhuiyan & Baghel, 2005). For Ehie and Sheu (2005), continuous improvement denotes a comprehensive idea for methods and contrivances like the TQM, Six Sigma, Lean, and Kaizen that are employed when the aim is to improve manufacturing performance.

Continuous improvement is an ethos based on ongoing improvement targeted at removing waste in every system and process of an organisation (Prayuda, 2020; Henrique & Filho, 2018; Bhuiyan & Baghel, 2005). To accomplish ongoing improvement, there needs to be change leading to the use of the least amount of resources. It is a system that should gain the buy-in of every member of the organisation. Even though the scholars cited above define continuous improvement as an evolutionary process, they also add that it can be transformational when a new technology or innovation is involved.

The proliferation in the importance of continuous improvement can be attributed to the corresponding increase in global competition in almost every sector (Zighan & Ruel, 2023; Singh & Singh, 2015). Entities that want to develop their continuous improvement capabilities often do so through ongoing evaluation of past conduct and achievements, current actions, and planned future activities with the aim of identifying areas that could be improved (Pambreni et al., 2019; Almehareb & Graham-Jones, 2010; Schweitzer & Aurich, 2010). From this perspective, it can be posited that continuous improvement comprises all activities in the whole business network, including services, products, and processes, as shown in Figure 2.6.

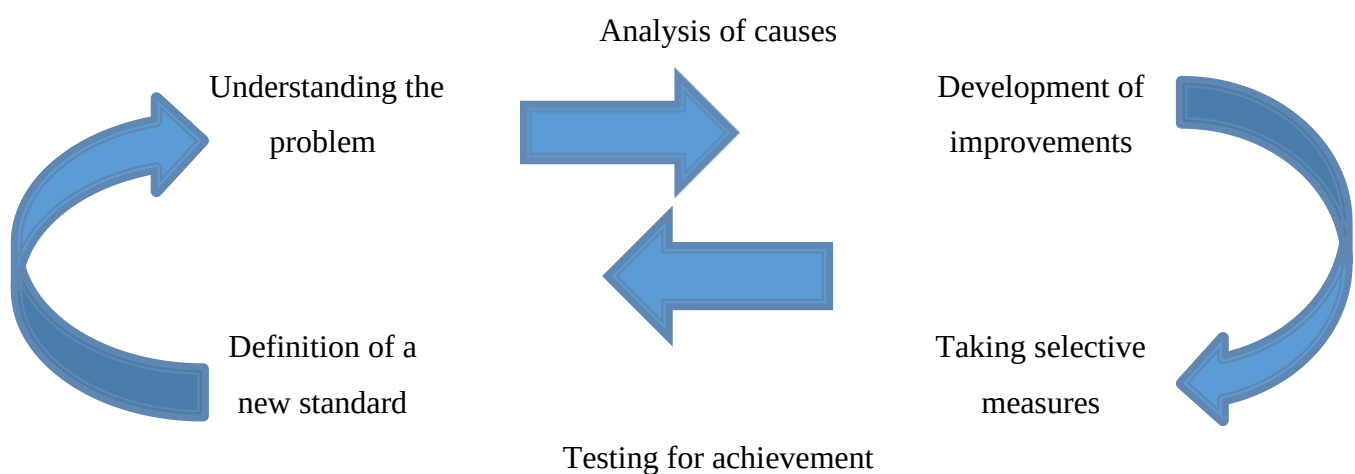


Figure 2.6: Activities in the business process.

Continuous improvement is incremental. This means that it happens over time or could be a leap forward where changes happen simultaneously (Little, 2014; Norman & Verganti, 2012). With continuous improvement, the idea is always about increasing the potential for success and lowering that of failure (Al-Saffar & Obeidat, 2020; Baghel & Bhuiyan, 2005; Juergensen, 2000). Aiming to bring to the fore the wide-ranging character of continuous improvement, the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI) (2015) summarised the process as follows:

... a type of change that is focused on increasing the effectiveness and/or efficiency of an organisation to fulfil its policy and objectives. It is not limited to quality initiatives. Improvement in business strategy, business results and customer, employee and supplier relationships can be subject to continual improvement. Put simply, it means getting better all the time.

If one considers the CQI definition above, presenting ‘continual improvement’ as the starting point, it is crucial to focus on the existing continuous improvement techniques, tools, and models in research. These have also been extensively employed in studies involving the service sector setting. Notwithstanding these techniques, tools, and models’ usefulness, several scholars have also drawn attention to their weaknesses, noting that the culture in the services sector is not always friendly to TQM. For example, Koch (2003) argues that although TQM has shown impressive results in other contexts, it has not been so successful in most parts of the service sector. The same scholar argues that TQM overlooks the most important questions facing these organisations, paying more attention to the manufacturing sector.

2.8.1 Continuous Improvement Models

In the service sector, a number of continuous improvement models have been applied. Some of the models applicable to this analysis include benchmarking, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 2010), and the Baldrige Quality Award Criteria (NIST, 2011; Thompson & Blazey, 2017). The following sections go deeper into each of these models.

2.8.1.1 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) (NIST, 2011) is a leading model embraced across the world by organisations seeking continuous improvement. It has

a Performance Excellence Framework consisting of two main components: process and results. The MBNQA standard has been employed by many organisations to evaluate their standards. The government of the United States introduced the model criteria and award in the later part of the 1980s. The US government was attempting to deal with issues related to the poor quality of goods manufactured in the United States. The criterion of the model is appropriate specifically for industries like the service sector. Anastasiadou et al. (2023) and Goetsch and Davis (2010) describe the tool as an appropriate contrivance for organisations attempting to embrace acceptable managerial practices.

In the services sector, the criteria were contextualised so that they reflected the activities in the sector. Another model that is comparable to the MBNQA is the Michigan Quality Leadership Award (MQLA) (Special Tree, 2015). The emphasis of both models is on business results, management of the process, the existence of supportive human resources management practices, knowledge analysis and management, customers, and the market (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2015; Special Tree, 2015). The MQLA and Baldrige standards comprise organisation-wide best practices and a continuous improvement cycle.

Even though some have charged that the MQLA can be purchased, it is still based on a judgment system that includes site inspections where employees answer interview questions. This makes it more probable that the judges awarding the certification will get insights into the real situation prevailing in an organisation (Goetsch & Davis, 2010). Some of the leading traits emphasised in the Malcolm Baldrige Awards include training, organisational culture transformation, focus, systematic leadership, integration, and understanding of processes and systems since all these are interconnected (Wagner, 2015).

2.8.1.2 European Foundation for Quality Management

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model was established as a non-perspective framework based on the acknowledgement of the reality that applying certain methods could result in excellence (Bukvic, 2023; Calvo-Mora et al., 2005). The model proposes that the satisfaction of customers and employees can be achieved through leadership, which motivates and sets organisational strategies and the management of processes and resources, as shown in Figure 2.7 below. It shares some similarities with the MBNQA in terms of two primary elements: enablers and results. Examples of enablers

include services, products, processes, resources, partnerships, strategy, human resources, and leadership. Results, on the other hand, are represented by business results, society at large, customers, and human resources (Citti et al., 2011). One of the processes considered valuable by the WFQM model is that of organisational learning, as it plays a crucial role in augmenting performance and driving future development. Generally, better performance is linked to a suitable culture inspired by effective leadership, properly articulated strategies, a service orientation, and a clear vision.

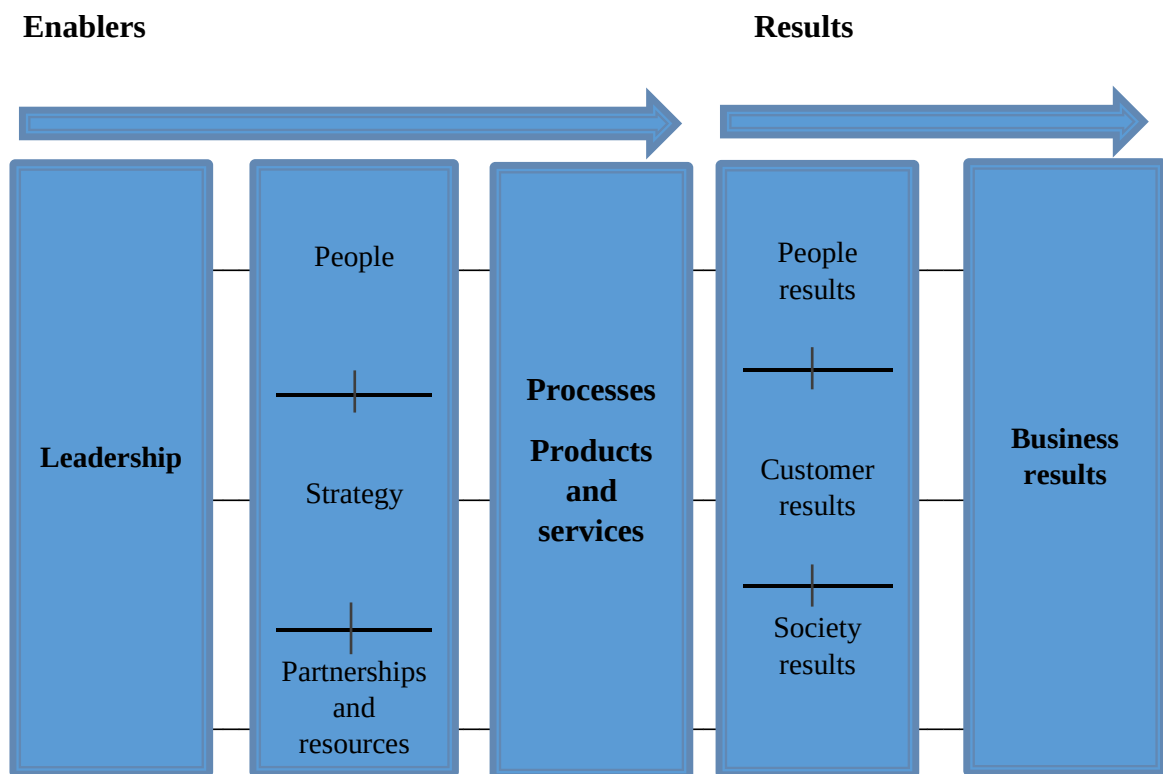


Figure 2.7: The relationship between leadership and customer satisfaction.

Generally, the EFQM Excellence Model has mostly been associated with the manufacturing industry. This is the reason why its adoption in the service sector has been slow (Liu et al., 2021; Amaral & Rosa, 2007). However, concerns regarding quality and accountability and other external market forces in which the service sector operates have put pressure on the sector. This has left the sector with no choice but to agree to quality assessments (Cartmell et al., 2013). This is the setting within which some organisations in the service sector have started implementing the EFQM (Maquieira et al., 2020; Citti et al., 2011; Saraiva et al., 2003; Farrar, 2000). For such organisations, the model delivers a

unique framework that can be used by organisations wanting to be involved in continuous improvement (Citti et al., 2011).

Like all other models, the EFQM has its limitations. For example, the model is based on the assumption that the leadership in organisations is capable and has the mandate to motivate and set organisational strategies. In reality, this is not always the case. Moreover, it also assumes the presence of a specific kind of organisational culture but overlooks the manner in which a culture like that would be relevant in cultural contexts different from those in the West.

2.8.1.3 Benchmarking

The process of benchmarking involves measuring and comparing the operations of an organisation or its internal processes against those of the best-performing organisations, either within or outside a specific industry (Blanchard, 2021; George et al., 2020; Goetsch & Davis, 1997). There are four steps in the process: planning, research, analysis, and adaptation of findings, as depicted in Figure 2.8 (Alstete, 1995).

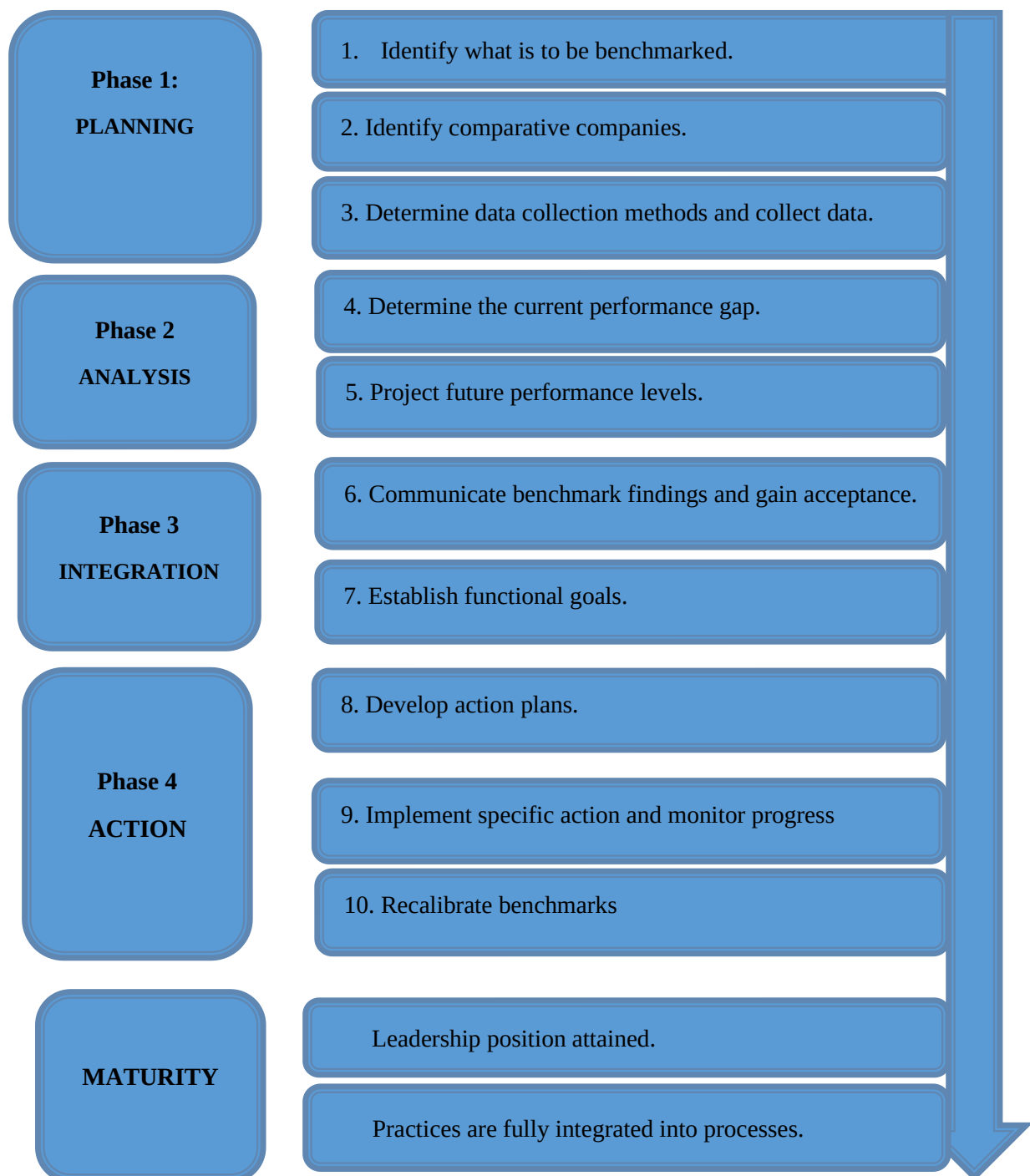


Figure 2.8: The benchmarking process (Source: OEC, 2011)

From a casual look, it could be said that the benchmarking model is more suitable for companies that want to consider continuous improvement in the service sector when compared to other models that are more business-oriented (Caeiro et al., 2021; Alstete, 1995). If considered deeper, this view discounts the potential implications of differences in culture between highly rated entities and those seeking to improve. For the purpose of the present study, the model lacks precise features that could connect with cultural

elements. Therefore, it can be posited that this is a continuous improvement methodology that could be applied to many of the frameworks introduced in this chapter.

Of all the models presented, the one perceived to be suitable for making sense of concepts regarding how organisational culture can be leveraged to improve continuous improvement in the service sector in Saudi Arabia is the EFQM. This model has been selected because it presents a clear and organised approach to exploring facets of continuous improvement. It also integrates elements from the other two correspondingly convincing models: MBNQA and MQLA. It has also been noted that the EFQM has been used previously in studies specifically focusing on the service sector (Pupius & Steed, 2003; Pupius & Brusoni, 2000). This can partly be attributed to the reality that it has enabler criteria specifically associated with the service sector, as shown in Table 2.3 below. Even though, generally, the employment of existing models and literature reviews is not encouraged in grounded theory-based studies (Glaser, 1998), the present study has made it possible for the researcher to contextualise the study while remaining thoughtful relating to the primary concepts that will make available theoretical sensitivity during the research process (Dunne, 2011).

Table 2.3: Enabler criteria and applicability to the service sector (Inspired by Pupius & Steed (2003) and Ferreira (2003))

Enabler criteria	Applicability to the service sector
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the organisation's vision, mission, and values • Comprehending the needs of all stakeholders • Establishing helpful partnerships
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building commitment and motivation • Communication • Continuous learning • Development • Human resources planning • Performance appraisal
Policy and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking • Faculty plans • Objectives and processes • Stakeholder input • Strategy allied policies • Surveys and forecasts
Partnerships and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Balancing existing and future needs • Benchmarking • Buildings • Continuous improvement • Cooperation with allied entities • Facilities and equipment – library, ICT • Intellectual property

Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality systems • Re-engineering processes • Standards • Support services • Teaching and learning
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Based on the EFQM model, for the process of continuous improvement to succeed, the role of leadership is important. The leaders are responsible for articulating the organisation's mission, values, and vision. The leaders also ensure that the structures of the organisation are designed in a manner that facilitates the establishment of an environment where quality is an inevitable result.

To attain improvements using quality management models, continuous improvement uses numerous methodologies (Zighan & Ruel, 2023; Bhuiyan & Baghel, 2005; Näslund, 2008). Some of these methodologies include Lean Six Sigma, the Balanced Scorecard, Six Sigma, and Lean Manufacturing. The following section will focus on methodologies found to be applicable to the service sector specifically.

2.8.2 Continuous Improvement Methodologies

In the 19th century, scholars and academics focused their attention on a more structured and organised way of managing. To achieve this, organisations have to solve challenges linked to production by continuously improving their systems. One way of encouraging this involves rewarding employees who show a propensity to improve. This ensures that employees align their conduct, performance, and activities with the development of the companies they work for. The main goal is to improve production and reach better standards of labour without the need to employ more people or use more resources (Khan et al., 2019; Jimoh, 2019; Bhuiyan & Baghe, 2005).

Even though the Baldrige and EFQM models mentioned above are undoubtedly continuous improvement frameworks, it still needs to be noted that the concept of methodology merely denotes a culmination of actions or techniques followed with the aim of attaining a specific goal. In the meantime, a model like EFQM represents the preferred

social reality in a specific organisation (Nenadal, 2020; Mattessich, 2003). A model presents the climate within an organisation, a precise management-employee dynamic, a model definition/concepts, or a philosophical background. Moreover, a model delivers a perspective or vision of the corporate setting. On the other hand, methods/methodologies make available a pathway for putting theory into practice so that organisations can reach their goals.

Numerous continuous improvement methodologies were established as a response to continuous organisational improvement on a large scale (Sahno & Shevtshenko, 2014; Sanchez & Blanco, 2014; Bhuiyan & Baghel, 2005). The foundation of the methodologies is the process or quality improvement with the aim of making the production process simpler, waste as few resources as possible, and improve quality as much as possible. Some of these models can be traced back to World War 2 when programs were put in place to improve industrial production by making relations between employees and managers stronger. Since then, the idea of continuous improvement has grown, being embraced both in the public and private sectors (Lu et al., 2023; Milner & Savage, 2016; Bhuiyan & Baghel, 2005). In this vein, Lu et al. (2023) posit that even though the continuous improvement initiatives of the past revealed the employment of numerous principles connected to work improvement, contemporary continuous improvement initiatives are connected with comprehensive and structured methodologies. Such continuous improvement programs, where the entire organisation or a large part of it is involved in change, are also more commonly connected to the introduction of the TQM movement. The discussion relating to the present study focuses on methods applied in the service sector. These include Lean Six Sigma (O'Reilly et al., 2017; Svensson et al., 2015), Lean Manufacturing (Douglas et al., 2015), and Six Sigma (Antony et al., 2012).

2.8.2.1 *Lean Manufacturing*

Lean Manufacturing (LM) is one of the methodologies that grew out of World War 2. It was introduced in industries in Japan that needed to find a solution to challenges posed by the shortage of capital for reconstructing industries destroyed by the war (Bhamu & Sangwan, 2014). LM can be defined as both a philosophy and a practice. The philosophy part is related to the fact that it is a way of thinking that makes available guiding rules and principles. It becomes a practice when it presents tools and management practices (Bhamu

& Sangwan, 2014). Bhanu and Sangwan (2014) add that LM is a framework of techniques whose aim is to respond to customer needs by reducing waste by getting rid of any activity that does not add value. Using these techniques results in a faster process that is cost-effective while also being flexible and efficient (Ding et al., 2021; Palange & Dhattrack, 2021; Tague, 1995; Shah & Ward, 2003). Womack and Jones (1996) described LM as the antithesis of waste.

Lean thinking has the objective of meeting the demands of customers through high-quality products produced at the highest level of efficiency and lowest costs possible. This type of thinking seeks to minimise the incidence of mistakes in an organisation because it is these mistakes that result in waste. Therefore, when implementing the lean methodology, the focus is on ensuring that mistakes are as few as possible (Jaiswal et al., 2020; Elkhairi et al., 2019; Robinson, 1990). Therefore, LM can be defined as a way of meeting the demands of customers by ensuring that production has as little waste as possible.

Even though LM was initially seen as a method generally suitable for manufacturing, it has now permeated other service sectors (Aadithya et al., 2023; Narayanamurthy et al., 2017), software engineering (Steele, 2019), the public sector (Teeuwen, 2018), and healthcare (Cross & Maghazei, 2019). Notwithstanding that it is a broadly accepted practice, there are several elements that need to be in place before LM can be implemented with success. Some of these common factors include changing the culture of the organisation and implementing the methodology across every part of the organisation (Debnath et al., 2023; Jaiswal et al., 2020; Bhasin & Burcher, 2006). Therefore, implementing the lean methodology may require the organisation to change completely. This is because disjointed implementation driven by short-term objectives is not always sustainable.

Specifically referring to the implementation of the lean methodology in the service sector, Gupta et al. (2016) concluded that implementing the method successfully calls for practices in the organisation that are based on respect for all stakeholders and where employee engagement levels were very high. The same scholars highlight the fact that LM touches different divisions in the organisation and add that there is a need to create consistent definitions, tools, and principles and also establish clear guidelines for implementation. In agreement with this observation, Elkhairi et al. (2019) and Bhasin and Burcher (2006) add

that the lean methodology calls for long-term thinking supported by embracing changes in both cultural and technical practices.

2.8.2.2 Six Sigma

Six Sigma is a tool whose origins are in manufacturing. It is distinctly associated with the technology company Motorola, which employed the methodology when transforming its systems for managing quality in the 1980s (Antony et al., 2023; Akpolat, 2017). The aim of the Six Sigma methodology is to lower the number of defects in a process by getting rid of the potential causes of defects. To achieve this, systematic statistical tools are employed, and a precise methodology is adopted (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2018; Raisinghani et al., 2005). Therefore, the method depends on the gathering and analysis of data so that the potential for mistakes can be reduced to roughly three in one million opportunities (Webber & Wallace, 2011). This is a systematic technique used across the organisation, making it possible for firms to attain desirable outcomes by accomplishing breakthrough developments (Kumar et al., 2022; Aboelmaged, 2010).

According to Antony (2006), Six Sigma is a business strategy suitable for attaining excellence. This definition is supported by Aslinger (2014), who says that it is the organisation's structure for continuous improvement, illustrating that it can be applied across the company. For this reason, the success of the methodology has been linked to major changes in the culture of the organisation. Some of the crucial factors identified as important in the successful implementation of Six Sigma include rigorous employment of statistical implements, connecting the success of the method to financial benefits, changing the culture of the organisation, providing applicable education and training, and committed and involved management (Ismyrlis & Moschidis, 2013). In the same way as the Lean method, Six Sigma was originally perceived as a method for the manufacturing industry. However, the services sector has adopted it over the years (Patel, 2017). Specific industries in the services sector that now widely use the method include the services sector (Aldaihani et al., 2017), financial services (Antony, 2015), and the health industry (Sabry, 2014). Other organisations have amalgamated Lean and Six Sigma with the aim of taking advantage of the strengths of each while mitigating their weaknesses.

2.8.2.3 Lean Six Sigma – Integrated Continuous Improvement Methods

As the name suggests, Lean Six Sigma is a methodology that resulted from the amalgamation of Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing (Narottam, 2019; Webber & Wallace, 2011). This amalgamation made it possible to create a tool that can focus on both statistical analysis and reduce the potential for errors while ensuring that processes eliminate the waste of resources and time (Nascimento, 2020; Basu, 2009). Consequently, Lean Six Sigma is an integrated method whose emphasis is on the measurement and elimination of waste. This view is acknowledged by Minh (2019), Salah et al. (2010) and Pepper and Spedding (2010), who note that Lean Six Sigma makes available the technical know-how and tools for dealing with the challenges recognised in the Lean process.

In the years since it was created, Lean Six Sigma has inspired numerous continuous improvement methods, and some have been embraced by the services sector (Pirasteh & Kannappan, 2013; Antony et al., 2012; Pepper & Spedding, 2010; Salah et al., 2010). For example, a Lean Six Sigma framework was developed by Kumar et al. (2006), who used it in small to medium enterprises in India. The main findings of these scholars show that there was an obvious lack of:

- a) A standard framework for Lean Six Sigma
- b) Comprehension of the employment of tools in the framework
- c) A precisely desired strategy, particularly in the initial phases of implementation

From their study, Pepper and Spedding (2010) propose that the framework must be underpinned by Lean thinking. This can be read to mean that Lean thinking should constitute part of the communal values and assumptions of an organisation. It has been shown to educate and empower all stakeholders in an organisation to determine and get rid of all activities that do not add value (Higgins, 2005, cited in Pepper & Spedding, 2010). The inexistence of a standard framework implies that implementing LSS is context-specific. This idea is discussed in greater detail below.

2.8.2.4 Lean Sigma in the Context of the Services Sector

Numerous scholars have done research focusing on applying Lean Six Sigma in the service sector. One of these researchers is Antony et al. (2012), who identified the challenges that need to be dealt with and the factors, tools, and techniques involved. Some of the challenges identified include:

- Terminologies, tools, and methods associated with the manufacturing industry are difficult to understand. They attempt to improve specific processes while overlooking the rest of the system.
- There is a general lack of awareness regarding the advantages of implementing the system, which could lead to a dearth of support from senior management.
- Expecting the process to fix problems in a quick way.
- The creation of silos is attributable to a lack of communication across and within the organisation.
- Limited resources are associated with constraints in the budget.
- Weak or absence of alignment between continuous improvement initiatives and the organisation's strategic plan.

In their study, Antony et al. (2012) identified some crucial success factors for Lean Six Sigma within the services sector. These success factors include:

- Commitment and support from top management.
- Communicating effectively across all departments and levels of the organisation, both vertically and horizontally.
- Visionary and strategic leadership.
- Nurturing organisational readiness.
- Availability of skills and resources to facilitate implementation.
- Supportive culture within the organisation.

The organisational culture aspect comprises introducing changes in processes while also training people to use the new processes and ways of dealing with challenges (Antony et al., 2012). The outlook and behaviour of the leaders in an organisation impact organisational culture. Continuous improvement, which leaders pay most attention to with regard to what is important to the quality and related measurements, is what ultimately

becomes the culture of the organisation (Vashishth, 2017; Ionescu, 2014). In the services sector, organisational culture focuses on making a top-notch experience available to customers and other stakeholders, both external and internal to the organisation (Antony et al., 2012).

In their research, Hess and Benjamin (2015) conducted a review of Lean Six Sigma development with the objective of identifying opportunities for applying it in the services sector. These scholars concluded that the methodology enhances service delivery and other administrative activities, leading to noticeable cultural changes and improvement. Services sector organisations included in the study maintained that the advantages resulting from applying the methodology were worthwhile, both in processes and culture. Hess and Benjamin (2015) also conclude that LSS could encourage changes in the culture of the organisation, implying that, even though continuous improvement is part of organisational culture, it still has an impact on culture in a way that changes it. However, it is important to note that even though Hess and Benjamin (2015) provide some pointers on how LSS can be applied in the service sector, their study is not supported by empirical proof. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a need for more studies based on the application of practical testing to the observations they made. Observing the interface between culture and LSS is of particular interest because both are enablers and directly result from implementing LSS.

A study by Lu et al. (2017) evaluated whether a model of leadership created using LSS could be employed to deal with issues relating to effectiveness and efficiency in companies operating in the services sector. The same scholars conducted a systematic review of the literature, leading to the development of a theoretical model of LSS leadership that can be applied and which delivers a foundation for evaluating LSS leadership representations in organisations operating in the services sector. The study's results provide an outline of the LSS leadership characteristics that companies in the services sector can adopt. The foundation of the framework is continuous change and improvement, statistical thinking, and leadership. Lu et al. (2017) also emphasise elements of LSS that, even though mostly applied in manufacturing industries, do not apply in the services sector. Such differences provide proof that there is a need for an LSS application that is consistent with the services sector.

Cudney et al. (2018) and Balzer conducted a systematic review of the literature and concluded that the LSS approach might be employed in boosting operations in service sector organisations. Based on the results of their study, the researchers conclude that extant literature has made the foundation for the development of conceptual frameworks for implementing LSS in the service sectors available. The same scholars note that there are long-term strategic benefits that can be observed from implementing LSS in the services sector. In the same vein, Cudney et al. (2018) emphasised how wide-ranging research is required to gain an in-depth comprehension of the implementation and benefits of LSS and the related problems in organisations operating in the services sector.

Another literature-based review was done by Nadeau (2017), focusing on lean manufacturing, Six Sigma, and LSS in the global services sector. Specifically focusing on services sector organisations, they concluded that such organisations are complicated and present challenges with regard to interpreting some concepts derived from manufacturing, such as the definition of the client, what the idea of added value encompasses, and how research is connected to some of the activities in the services sector. If one considers how complicated the services sector is, the challenges linked to integrating the technology, critical issue factors, and the impediments associated with the application, it becomes clear that attempting to apply the method comes with substantial challenges. However, the potential for comprehending and improving the dynamic of the cultural organisation of the services sector organisations is of superior importance than the obstacles identified here.

To deal with some of the noted challenges, Simons (2013) introduced a business case study for applying LSS to services sector organisations. The scholar indicated that their case study will have several advantages, including making it possible for organisations to meet requirements for accreditation, making available a template for dealing with challenges, supporting full involvement, assisting in establishing measures, ensuring visible processes, making it possible for all stakeholders to air their views, and determining and lowering hidden costs. In keeping with some of the advantages identified by Simon (2013), Haerizadeh and Sunder (2019, p. 983) used an Iranian-based study to validate the appropriateness of the “*define-measure-analyse-improve- control*” LSS framework when attempting continuous improvement in the context of the services sector.

When looked at as a whole, it can be noted that the literature shows that, while there are numerous studies conducted at a theoretical level, there is still a shortage of studies involving the application of LSS in the services sector. Also, the reviewed studies reveal that, at the level of implementation, there are complexities specific to the services sector for which solutions need to be identified. This can be attributed to the fact that there are variances not just in the concepts like the connection between research and the activities of the services sector, value addition, and customers (Nadeau, 2017), but the differences are based on the reality that cultures in service sector organisations differ when compared to those in the manufacturing sector, the birthplace of continuous improvement concepts (Lu et al., 2017).

Notwithstanding the insights above, organisations in every sector meet challenges when it comes to maintaining continuous improvement initiatives (Trenkner, 2019). If one considers that continuous improvement is not a one-off activity, this situation can be problematic. Consequently, there are aspects of settings that facilitate continuous improvement and some that constrain it no matter which methodology or model has been employed. The section below presents the numerous aspects that either facilitate or impede it.

2.9 Continuous Improvement Enablers

García-Sabater et al. (2012) reviewed extant literature and identified several enablers of continuous improvement, including relevant culture and training, selecting continuous improvement projects, adopting techniques for growing continuous improvement, establishing the required new structures, making the required resources available, the participation and involvement of all employees, setting objectives and determining methods of measurement. Several other studies have validated the enablers identified by García-Sabater et al. (2012). For example, Trenkner (2019) identified effective communication, employee engagement, organisational leadership, and organisational culture as the enablers of continuous improvement. For Dennis (2003), the leading enablers of continuous improvement include management support and strong leadership, regular involvement of employees on the shop floor, application of formal policy, adhering to standards of quality like ISO, applicable maintenance, and an effective organisational structure.

The study by Gamme and Lodgaard (2019) focused on the potential threats to continuous improvement in a manufacturing environment. Their study distinguished numerous enablers, including clearly defining the process and product in keeping with the needs of the customer, having an accurate mechanism for measuring, being able to determine where non-conformance comes from and being conscious that non-conformance can be eradicated. In keeping with this view, Sanchez-Ruiz, Blanco and Gómez-López (2019) suggest that continuous improvement enablers should be viewed from a holistic perspective. Following this reasoning, these scholars recognised primary continuous improvement enablers as the establishment of precise goals, recognising achievement, providing motivation, and extracting lessons from the process. Koval et al. (2019) conducted a study focusing on organisations in the services sector, which led them to agree that recognising and rewarding employees, embracing a culture of quality, setting positive goals and ensuring that employees are appropriately trained had an impact on the relationship between cost reduction and continuous improvement.

With a specific emphasis on Six Sigma, a study by Antony and Banuelas (2002) identifies several key enablers, including managers who are willing to be involved and committed to changing culture, determining which aspects of an organisation's culture should be altered, the infrastructure of the organisation, employee training, skills held by the managers, selecting and prioritising improvement projects, and the involvement of staff members together with performance evaluations founded on standards that promote quality. Inspired by Banuelas (2002), Ismyrlis and Moschidis (2013) link financial benefits and the strategy of the organisation and add that emphasis should also be placed on the use of statistical instruments.

In the services sector, Antony (2014) identified factors influencing the successful implementation of LSS, including continuous improvement in culture, management, leadership, and employees. The employee factor is connected to the reality that they should be motivated to work towards helping the company achieve its goals, mission, and vision. The employees should give their buy-in to the envisaged improvements and have a positive attitude towards them. With regards to the leadership, it is vital that the organisation is willing to take the required risks involving prioritising LSS as part of the continuous improvement strategy, establishing an environment that encourages change, ensuring that

employees understand the reason for the change and the problems that can be envisaged, making sure that both big and small achievements relate to the envisaged change, and providing enough resources to drive the change. The factor relating to management incorporates senior executives being able to understand the critical business processes and link metrics, ensuring that every decision is based on facts, recording the primary business processes and ensuring that everyone knows the criteria that will be used for determining accountability, making sure that the LSS goals can be measured, are appropriate, and in keeping with the goals of the organisation. The other main factor related to management involves making sure that the organisation has the required process performance metrics that all the employees understand and are able to use. The culture factor is linked to the organisation's culture, including a gathering of pertinent data relating to performance and the ability to allocate the best talent to strategic projects that deliver results that can be easily measured and quantified. In such projects, champions are given the responsibility for reviewing projects and also making sure that the projects are aligned with strategic goals. Table 2.4 presents a summary of the enablers and inhibitors.

Table 2.4: Summarising enablers

Authority	Enablers
Antony and Banuelas (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management commitments and involvement • Staff training • organisational infrastructure • Changing culture • Project selection • Prioritisation • Selection skills
García-Sabater et al. (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management involvement and strategy • Culture • Relevant training • Selecting continuous improvement projects • Embracing methods for growing continuous improvement, putting suitable new structures in

	<p>place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating the required resources • Involvement of employees • Setting objectives and methods of measurement • Leadership
Ismyrlis and Moschidis (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management commitment and involvement • Making suitable training and education available • Altering the culture of the organisation • Connecting continuous improvement success to financial benefits • Connecting continuous improvement to organisational strategy • Extensive employment of statistical tools
Antony (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees • Leadership • Management • Culture
O'Reilly, Healy, Murphy and O'Dubhghaill (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of LSS expertise in-house • Ability to access external consultants • Using training to build capacity • Integrating projects and training into operations and plans • Ensuring that the strategic plan permeates all parts of the organisation • Providing sufficient resources • Putting suitable new structures in place • Active unit levels of leadership
García- Sabater et al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management involvement and strategy finding ways of growing continuous improvement • Choosing CI projects

(2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Applicable training, putting suitable new structures in place • Ensuring the availability of resources • Involving employees • Setting objectives and measurement
Trenkner (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication • Employee engagement • Organisational leadership • Organisational culture
Gamme and Lodgaard (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defining the product and the process in keeping with the demands of the customer. • The precise mechanism for measurement • Identifying where non-conformance originates from • Consciousness that non-conformance can be eradicated
Sánchez-Ruiz, Blanco and Gómez-López (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that there is motivation • Learning from the process • Recognising achievements • Training • Setting clear goals
Koval et al. (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising and rewarding employees • Embracing a quality culture • Employee training • Setting goals

2.10 Continuous Improvement Inhibitors

Dennis (2003) reviewed the manufacturing industry in Australia and concluded that there was a dearth of management and leadership support, coupled with an emphasis on price over long-term value. The same scholars also noted that the allocation of inadequate resources for the

continuous improvement project and an unwillingness to invest in improvement-linked training impeded the process of continuous improvement. From their study, Wu and Chen (2006) identify negligent worker participation as one of the continuous improvement inhibitors.

Regarding training, Anand et al. (2009) suggest that on their own, training employees in new initiatives is not adequate. They argue that for the training to work, it will need to be coupled with continuous improvement maintenance mechanisms applicable to all facets of continuous improvement infrastructure. Based on the EFQM Excellence Model, such infrastructure would involve leadership as a driver and people, processes, resources, partnerships, strategy, services, and products operating in an appropriate culture. A situation like that could be an indication that there is no coordination. Past studies have noted that in instances where continuous improvement initiatives lack coordination and support from all parts of the organisation, the inevitable result is that they become ineffective because they lose traction (Choo et al., 2007; Wruck & Jensen, 1998; Anand et al., 2009).

In terms of Six Sigma, some of the quality culture inhibitors include challenges related to altering an organisation's control process, difficulties in conducting business processes, and challenges related to data collection (Martins, 2006). Assarlind and Aaboen (2014) add other inhibitors, including lack of direction and motivation among workers, not knowing how to share ideas with managers, and misdirected management behaviour, which results in confusion.

When referring to the services sector specifically, some of the impediments to continuous improvement include differences in culture between the service industry and other sectors where quality criteria have been used for a long time, poor mechanisms for data collection, relying more on individual-based work and overlooking teamwork, inability to clearly define customers and quality, failure to link continuous improvement with reward systems, staff resistance, and lack of administrative support, which itself is an indication of leadership support. Table 2.5 below provides a summary of the inhibitors.

Table 2.5: Inhibitors of CI

Authority	Inhibitors
Temponi (2005)	The culture of organisations in the services sector is not keeping up with continuous improvement. Elements involved include poor mechanisms for collecting data, failure to encourage teamwork, inability to define the customer, failure to link improvement with reward systems, staff resistance, lack of leadership support, and absence of administrative support.
Thaler (2005)	Poor mechanisms for collecting data, encouragement of individual-based work, failure to define quality and customers, failure to link improvement with rewards, and failure to provide leadership support.
Martins, Mergulao and Junior (2006)	Challenges related to data collection, difficulties linked to altering the control process, and lack of information relating to old processes.
Wu and Chen (2006).	Minimum worker participation.
Anand et al. (2009).	Lack of coordination and organisation-wide support.
García- Sabater et al. (2012)	Absence of strategy, inadequate focus on improvement in favour of directly insistent problems.
Assarlind and Aaboen (2014)	Misdirected management behaviour, deficiency of knowledge, dearth of employee motivation.

The above summaries demonstrate that inhibitors are not always the opposite of enablers. Additionally, it appears that among the quality standards and continuous improvement approaches, leadership, a supportive organisational culture, strategy, and organisational-wide adjustments are the most frequently mentioned prerequisites for continuous improvement. Through the expression of an organisation's vision and values, leadership is accountable for the culture of that organisation (Jaakson, 2010; Mohelska & Sokolova, 2015). Leadership is also in charge of ensuring that the organisation as a whole is aligned with the strategy, as well as creating an enabling culture based on agreed-upon premises, upheld values, and declared objectives. Some people have described continuous improvement as being both an expression and a reflection of an organisation's culture. Other scholars, however, contend that an organisation's leadership is in charge of fostering an enabling environment, which is its culture as seen through organisational artefacts and as based on shared beliefs and values relating to, among other things, the necessity for continuous improvement (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This appears to imply that continuous improvement is a product or reflection of an organisation's shared beliefs and values. If this is the case, it may differ in how certain elements of a service sector organisation's culture affect or are themselves affected by continuous improvement, particularly with regard to Saudi Arabia.

The relationship between continuous improvement and organisational culture is discussed in the section that follows, with an emphasis on continuous improvement facilitators and barriers. LSS has thus been discovered to be the most appealing among the continuous improvement techniques that have been studied for the goal of investigating the Saudi Arabian setting. By using the national cultural dimensions, as described by Hofstede, to understand the broader implications of Six Sigma adoption in this setting, Pisani et al. (2009) evaluated the effects of applying Six Sigma in other cultures. Their findings imply that because Six Sigma was founded in the USA, a country with low power distance, individuality, and masculinity, as well as low uncertainty avoidance and short-term orientation, the first stage of problem definition in that nation is carried out by participants involved in the process. Higher-level managers, on the other hand, determine the issues and the appropriate approaches to solving the identified problems in cultures with a high power distance. However, Six Sigma functions best in an environment where floor staff can spot problems that can be fixed to decrease the potential for faults (Cacciattolo, 2014). It has been discovered that implementing a Six Sigma management program helps an organisation foster a culture of

quality (Davison & Al-Shaghana, 2007). It is clear from the examined literature that continuous improvement has been perceived as a culture that needs an enabling organisational environment to thrive. Popular continuous improvement approaches are mostly a product of Western society. The next chapter reviews the existing literature on continuous improvement in the Saudi Arabian cultural setting in light of the unique aspects of Saudi culture.

2.11 Conclusion

The relevant literature on organisational culture and its influence on continuous improvement were evaluated in this chapter. The various definitions of culture and the methods that have been employed to try to comprehend it were explored. According to Hofstede's (2010) metaphor, culture may be understood as an onion that can be scraped to reveal its hidden elements, which are the principles and values. It was discovered that it corresponded with Schein's (2010) depiction of culture as operating at three levels, with shared assumptions serving as the base, professed vision, values, and goals serving as the middle point, and the visible elements or artefacts, serving as the apex.

From this chapter, it has been determined that leadership techniques inside an organisation, especially those related to continuous improvement, have an impact on cultural elements. To understand their contributions to the discovery of continuous improvement drivers and inhibitors, the chapter examined continuous improvement via the lenses of Lean, Six Sigma, and the incorporated LSS methodologies. It was discovered that the use of LSS, initially restricted to the manufacturing industry, is now widespread in the services sector. However, it was noticed that the majority of the studies concentrated on reviewing the body of literature and developing theoretical models for the application of LSS. There is limited research that concentrates on gathering information to develop fundamental data-driven models to explain the successful deployment of CI within services sector organisations. In order to better understand how organisational culture can be used to improve continuous improvement in Saudi services sector organisations, it was suggested that the EFQM Excellence model, which places a strong emphasis on leadership as a cornerstone of quality excellence outcomes, be integrated with the LSS methodology of continuous improvement and Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture.

This chapter has shown that to understand the impact of organisational culture on CI, it is vital to begin by understanding the influence of culture on the broader organisation. The literature shows that in Saudi Arabia, the country that this study focuses on, organisational culture is shaped by Islamic values, which represent the sharing of skills, knowledge, norms, beliefs, mission, vision, and philosophies. From the analysis of the literature reviewed in this chapter, it has also been noted that entities working within the Islamic culture are impacted by the distinct characteristics of the religion. Therefore, it can be concluded that the employee values within service sector organisations, impacted by the culture of the country, influence continuous improvement in the kingdom. In the present study, this influence is understood based on Schein's model, which highlights the importance of underlying assumptions in shaping organisational learning and knowledge management practices. The following chapter describes the situation in Saudi Arabia with regard to service sector organisations as places where the Saudi national culture is influenced by Islamic culture, as well as the enablers and inhibitors of service sector companies' ongoing improvement.

CHAPTER THREE

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA'S SERVICE SECTOR

3.1 Introduction

The reality of the services sector in Saudi Arabia as an industry impacted by the local culture is presented in this chapter. The characteristics of the nation will be discussed as background information to present the basics of the setting, culture, and customs. To clarify the extent of its effect, the Islamic culture and its place in Saudi national and day-to-day living will also be discussed. Also covered will be the CI advancements and prior implementations for companies in the Saudi services sector.

3.2 Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia at the Regional, Ethnic, and Religious Levels

According to The World Factbook, Saudi Arabia is one of the largest Arab nations due to its physical size. The country covers 2,149,690 km². To put this in context, the country is twice as large as France and Germany put together (see Figure 3.1). It is the guardian of the site where Islam was first practised, a significant oil producer — holding 25 per cent of the world's proven reserves— and an influential OPEC member (Haider, 2020; PWC, 2016).



Figure 3.1: Map of Saudi Arabia

In 2024, Saudi Arabia is estimated to have 37,222,239 people, according to the website Worldometer.com (2024). The same source estimates that 83.5 % of the country's residents live in cities. According to other estimates, 37% of the population of the country is made up of immigrants (The World Factbook, 2024). High levels of urbanisation and a sizable immigrant population suggest that the Saudi national culture will mostly reflect the cultures of urban dwellers and Saudi immigrants.

3.3 The Culture of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia ranks well in the categories of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity in Hofstede's (1983) assessment of national cultures. The nation receives low marks for its long-term outlook and individuality against collectivism. The comparison of the national cultures of Arabia and the United Kingdom (for illustrative reasons) reveals differences that make it easier to comprehend cultural diversity. The profile of Saudi Arabia is presented in Table 3.1, including the country's characteristics, culture, and Hofstede index results (Source: Hofstede, 2016).

Table 3.1: The profile of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The national culture, features and the scores on the Hofstede index (Source: Hofstede, 2016)

National culture dimension	Saudi Arabia	United Kingdom
Power Distance	95	35
Individualism vs. Collectivism	25	89
Masculinity vs. Femininity	60	66
Uncertainty Avoidance	80	35
Long Term Orientation	36	51

High power distance, which Hofstede (1983) refers to as adhering to a hierarchical system—a structure where laws or orders don't need to be justified but are instead obeyed—characterises the Saudi culture. Second, Saudi Arabia does not rank well on Hofstede's

individuality vs. collectivism scale since it is thought to be a collectivistic country with highly integrated citizens. This is exemplified by loyalty and sustained dedication to a royal family.

Saudi Arabia receives a high score (60) on the masculinity vs. femininity scale, indicating that it has a very male culture. Male employees and bosses are typically anticipated to be in higher managerial positions. Decision-making by managers is perceived as being firm and decisive. High performance is required, and disagreements are used to resolve issues. Uncertainty avoidance is shown by the country's score of 80 in this area. Saudi Arabia is a nation that values consistency and strong beliefs above uncertainty. People in such cultures appear to favour the unvarnished truth, respect established roles and behaviours, and adhere to them. On the other hand, nations with low ratings in this area, like the UK (35), are a sign of a society that is less aggressive and more supportive of personal risks. The long-term orientation component demonstrates how cultures deal with current and upcoming challenges while still managing to preserve a piece of their past. Saudi Arabia receives a low score (36) in the table, which places it in the category of normative societies. These civilisations cling tenaciously to their traditions and conventions, rarely embrace change, and frequently treat change with scepticism. They are also not concerned with the future or making preparations for it.

While Ali's (1998) typology shows that there is significant variability among individual Arab nationals, Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions provide insight into the shared elements of Arab national culture. Both Ali (1998) and Hofstede (1983) provide unique perspectives on how to analyse Arab national culture in all of its conceivable forms. Table 3.2 provides an overview of these particular traits.

Table 3.2: Arab population typology (Source: Ali, 1998)

Traditionalists	Require directive leadership, tend to be risk-averse, conservative and inflexible, and demand that others adopt their own opinions. Are wealthy but exhibit little sympathy for others outside of their group. A subgroup of them is sandwiched between Arab and Islamic modernism and tradition.
Idealists	Tend to lack practicality and are passionate, speculative, and politically immature.
Spectators	Have trouble adjusting to change, adhering to routines, and resisting change.
Illusionists	They frequently fantasise, exaggerate, and seek attention by blaming the outside world for the problems in the Arab world.
Manipulators	Oftentimes, they are opportunists and con artists or pragmatists who are driven by wanting money and wealth.
Revivalists	Muslims who are self-conscious and socio-centric demonstrate an understanding of the global community.
Existentialists	Outstanding people who have the capacity to influence change and help in the development of others.

3.4 Islam in National Culture or Islamic Culture

The Saudi Arabian culture is categorised as collectivist in Hofstede's (1983) index because of its deep religious connections and monotheistic set of beliefs. In this vein, Kalliny and Gentry (2007) point out that Islam is one of the most important cultural influences in the Arab world, having a profound effect on social organisation, language, and trade. In fact, the Arabian Peninsula (modern-day Saudi Arabia), where Islam, the second-largest religion in the world, originated, is now a major destination for Muslim pilgrims from all over the world. Islam is the official religion of Saudi Arabia, and the Quran and the Sunnah (deeds) of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) serve as the primary sources of Islamic law (Obeidat et al., 2012).

Therefore, it is plausible to believe that Islam is a *way of life* inside the Arab national culture and that the Islamic faith's principles serve as the Arabs' national cultural value system (Chandran & Alammari, 2020; Anastos et al., 1980). In fact, it has been recognised that many characteristics of Arab cultures, such as loyalty, honesty, trust and flexibility, are actually reinforced by Islam (Najm, 2015; Obeidat et al., 2012).

Islamic management concepts promote effective leadership that is justified by relational reciprocity and the contribution to common objectives (Kesi, 2022; Ali, 2011), from which the Islamic tradition of consultative decision-making, or *shoura*, is emphasised. Islam gives what Rice (1999) refers to as a "practical life program," or a precise blueprint for developing, carrying out, managing, and regulating socio-economic activity. It also has a positive perspective on work (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008; Yousef, 2001). As a result, Islam views business activity as serving a socially good purpose that takes into account the interests of various stakeholders in the workplace (Hashim & Hamzah, 2014; Rafiki & Wahab, 2014; Rice, 1999; Wahab et al., 2016). It is also important to note how strongly Wahhabism has influenced Islamic culture. Wahhabism is a more rigid and largely exclusive branch of Islam that adheres to a more puritanical interpretation of the religion (Commins, 2023; Richter, 2014).

Saudi organisational culture will be discussed in the following section. The Saudi interpretation of Islam, which favours traditionalism and a strong aversion to change, should be borne in mind when analysing the impact of Islamic culture on organisational culture in the Saudi services sector.

3.5 Islamic Constraints over Saudi National and Organisational Cultures

Islam significantly influences Saudi Arabia's national culture and, as a result, organisational culture (Alrubaishi, 2021; Rafiki & Wahab, 2014; Ezzi et al., 2014). Although Islam has had a significant impact on Arab culture, it is crucial to recognise that while there are some aspects of commonality (such as the value of family and social ties), there are also significant differences in terms of organisational environments and career aspirations (Sidani & Thornberry, 2010). The values and beliefs fundamental to the society in which both occur have an impact on organisational change and development, highlighting the significance of context (Willis et al., 2016; Amis et al., 2004). In this regard, it is noticeable that early Islamic developments contributed to the dominance of the *Jabria* principles in the Arabian Peninsula,

with the reiteration of innate trust in leadership and the acknowledgement of the leader as the originator of organisational change (Ali, 1996), as well as regard for age diversity (Whiteoak et al., 2006).

Strong leadership and maturity are, as a result, highly regarded in Saudi organisations today. Rees and Althakhri (2008) claim that Saudi organisations also exhibit a distinctively Saudi character in their approach to change (by emphasising continuous improvement), which is influenced by elements like religion. Long-term planning is discouraged by these factors because it is thought to be the domain of *Insh Allah* (God's willingness). According to Ali (1996), change in Arab organisations reveals a non-linear trend and is impacted by high uncertainty avoidance, group and male orientation, and high power distance, whereas the change in Western organisations tends to be linear.

There have been calls for additional research on the impact of Arab culture on implementing change in regional organisations in this context (Al Mahameed et al., 2023; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). In particular, it is crucial to investigate change and, by extension, continuous improvement methodologies appropriate to Arab culture in light of Ali's (1996) claim that, in the Arab setting, the goal of an action rather than the practice is more important.

The idiosyncrasies of Saudi Arabian culture (national culture), including the Islamic influence, are covered in the following section. It has been noticed that Islam both influences and actually strengthens some distinguishing characteristics of Arab cultures, such as flexibility, trust, honesty, and loyalty. The national culture of Saudi Arabia and how it affects organisational culture in the country's service sector is also examined. When it comes to Saudi Arabia, the impact of Islam on national culture creates complications that extend to organisational cultures, including culture in companies operating in the services sector.

3.6 Permanent Development in Saudi Arabia

The non-profit sector, construction, and education have all been the subject of recent studies on continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia (Almaiman & McLaughlin, 2018a; Almaiman & McLaughlin, 2018b; Alrebish et al., 2017). Almaiman and McLaughlin (2016) identified nine factors in their study that were successful in fostering a culture within the non-profit sector in Saudi Arabia, including communication, customer management, employee empowerment, strong leadership, long-term focus, a proactive team, consistency of purpose,

communication, teamwork, and continuous assessment and monitoring. They came to the conclusion that the idiosyncrasies of the national culture made the setting unique and proposed that CI elements are influenced by cultural context after noting that some of the components identified were not present in the literature. In a later study examining the function of organisational culture in supporting the constant development of Saudi non-profit organisations, Almainan and McLaughlin (2018a) concluded that it is crucial for organisations to establish a climate that supports sustained CI. Such a climate must exhibit specific traits. It must:

- Be values-driven.
- Maintain a creative environment.
- Support people.
- Engage with the outside world.
- Be dedicated to operations management.
- Evaluate areas for improvement.

Lean Six Sigma adoption was examined by Albliwi et al. (2017) using a sample of 400 Saudi organisations from various industries, and they came to the conclusion that the process was still in its early phases.

Although organisational culture has been linked to CI, which is a component of LSS implementation, Albliwi et al.'s (2017) research indicated that this culture did not stand out as being essential for the adoption of LSS among Saudi Arabian organisations. Despite this, Zain et al. (2017) discovered that CI significantly impacted a business's performance and ability to compete. Additionally, they draw the conclusion that organisational traits and culture impact company competitiveness. As part of the TQM activities, CI has been looked into within Saudi Arabian service sector organisations (Alzhrani et al., 2016). Two of the biggest obstacles facing organisations in Saudi Arabia's service sector have been identified as quality issues and the requirement for international accreditation (Alharbi, 2016).

3.7 Quality Control and Ongoing Improvement in Saudi Arabia's Services Sector

Some sections of the services sector have trailed behind when compared to the application of continuous improvement as a quality maintenance strategy in sectors like health care, manufacturing, and heavy industry (Park et al., 2013). Despite this, continuous improvement applies to all facets of the services sector. In the latter, formal methods are utilised to combine

labour in the form of staff and administrators with capital in both financial and non-financial forms to create outputs from certain activities. These activities take place in a community that fosters relationships among its members, provides tools for fostering social cohesiveness within the group, and attaches values to its endeavours, some of which extend beyond the immediate neighbourhood (Lockwood, 1985).

Becket and Brookes (2008) note that these forces have created a need to ensure that the quality assurance processes are robust and clear, in addition to the quality-improvement efforts being deeply lodged in any program of quality management. They make this observation in their commentary on the role of the services sector in catalysing national economic development. However, managing quality in the services sector has proven challenging because of the complexity of the sector's product, which can be tangible, intangible, or added-value, as well as the fact that quality in the services sector is an ambiguous and contentious term (Pounder, 1999; Cheng & Tam, 1997) due to the perceptions of various stakeholders who imbue the concept with different meanings (Becket & Brookes, 2008). For instance, Johnson et al. (2008) discovered that service sector organisations relied more on concepts and procedures known as continuous process improvement (CPI) as demands for these organisations' leadership to demonstrate accountability and openness increased. Tar and Dick (2016) and Becket and Brookes (2008) found that service sector organisations appeared to rely heavily on industry quality models that were adapted for usage within their organisations when they reviewed the literature on quality management in the services sector.

In the current discourse on best practices for contemporary colleges, quality assurance and continuous improvement are closely interwoven. Understanding the difficulties faced by services sector companies can assist in explaining the types of demands that these organisations are under (Ruben et al., 2018; Chapleo, 2015; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Over the past two decades, there have been significant changes in the services sector, partly as a result of neoliberalism and the need to uphold quality standards to attract more business, all of which have an impact on a company's ability to attract new customers (Bamberger et al., 2019). The capacity of service sector systems to maintain quality, satisfy rising accountability demands and demonstrate their economic and social role has been put under pressure as a result (Nash, 2019; Zajda & Rust, 2016; Watson, 2006). Thus, it is predicted

that the modern service sector organisation will occasionally need to strike a compromise between competing objectives, as seen below:

- Conservatism vs. radicalism
- Critical vs. supportive
- Competitive vs. collegial
- Autonomous vs. accountable
- Private vs. public
- Excellent vs. equal
- Certain vs. provisional
- Traditional vs. innovative
- Ceremonial vs. iconoclastic
- Local vs. international

According to Brookes and Becket (2008), who elaborated on the difficulties faced by organisations in the services sector, the world's service sector companies are marked by turbulence and dynamism, with global and national forces driving organisational and national change. As a result, the issue of quality management has been firmly placed on national, governmental, and academic agendas.

Implementing quality management, quality management models, strategies, instruments, and parameters of quality management dimensions are major issues discussed in the modern services sector settings (Tar & Dick, 2016). The goal of accountability and quality assurance is compatible with this. This has been seen in the adoption of quality models by services sector companies (Kuwornu et al., 2023; Laurett & Mendes, 2019) and a rise in the demand for accreditation and quality audits from external organisations and governmental agencies as a means of ensuring the quality of service sectors. Most of these requirements for efficiency are underlined by the quest for accountability (Harvey, 2005).

3.8 Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Saudi Arabia

Quality is now recognised as a significant indicator of the worth of services offered by service sector companies. In fact, quality has been utilised as an indication to influence the value of the service received in a particular company, according to NCAAA (2016). Over the past few years, significant financial support has been developed in an effort to enhance and

internationalise the quality of Saudi service sector companies. Given that there is a limited number of companies that have received accreditation, the results of these efforts, however, have been less than anticipated. The status of quality assurance activities in the Saudi services sector should, therefore, be investigated by looking at the difficulties and hindrances caused by organisational culture. By doing this, it will be easier to comprehend how CI did or did not occur in the context being investigated.

The earlier debate indicated that Saudi service sector organisations face the same CI requirements as other contemporary entities. Companies that aim to compete on a worldwide scale are more susceptible to societal discord. Dickson et al. (2014) point out that in this situation, international rivalry forces the adoption of best practices and procedures. As a result, organisations start to encounter similar economic and industrial restrictions and prospects, which inevitably causes a wider disconnection from their unique societal surroundings and a type of mimetic isomorphism. Organisations that do not participate in the global marketplace, however, are not subject to these imperatives and exhibit a far stronger connection between society and organisational cultures (Dickson et al., 2014). Saudi service sector companies are forced to compete on a worldwide scale as a result of industry reforms and government policy, making them susceptible to the danger of societal and cultural incompatibility.

In relation to this, Schneider et al. (1996) have emphasised the importance of organisations as the forces behind organisational change by arguing that people are what organisations actually constitute. As a result, if people's psychology fails to change, other adjustments like those in the communication networks, organisational hierarchy, and technology will not have the desired impact. According to Jones and Harris (2014), in order to create organisational change, there has to be a willingness to foster interpersonal interdependence in professional learning. Fralinger (2007) claims that the services sector culture is shaped by a combination of attitudes and behaviours of both internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, Ehlers and Schneckenberg (2010) argued that service sector organisations must encourage change and innovation as an essential part of their culture if they wish to be at the forefront of the knowledge economy. This understanding of the significance of change and innovation as a continuous process has sparked interest in continuous quality improvement as a means of ensuring the sustainability of reforms and assisting in the realisation of the goal of successful participation in the global economy (Ehlers & Schneckenberg, 2010).

3.9 Culture of Saudi Arabia and Continuous Improvement

CI in the services sector has long been a standard element. The neoliberal effect, which has increased the emphasis on policy reforms, quality and standards-driven policy changes, market forces, accountability, growing global competitiveness, efficiency, and stratification, also contributes to the environment in which services sector companies operate (Zajda & Rust, 2016). Temponi (2005) stated that service sector organisations might transition with the aim of becoming more customer- and return-on-investment-focused entities through CI. Al Shobakir and Abu Naser (2017) discovered a significant link between a company's effectiveness in achieving a sustained competitive advantage and the degree to which it engaged in excellence initiatives (CI being one of these). Barzansky et al. (2015) found that a crucial aspect of an organisation is continual quality improvement, which raises the quality and outcomes of service sectors. Their study focused on medical schools in Saudi Arabia meeting international standards (Almazroa & Al-Shamrani, 2015). By doing so, these companies can entice foreign talent, establish international collaborations, and gain knowledge sharing and exchange (Khorsheed & Al-Fawzan, 2014; Almansour, 2015; Hasan et al., 2016). Other advantages of this kind include advancing technologically (Alqarni, 2015), improving one's worldwide standing (Almansour, 2015), and receiving better accreditations (Alzhrani et al., 2016).

It has been discovered that culture affects CI projects within service sector organisations (Antony, 2014; Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017; Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009). The culture of the services sector differs significantly from that of the purely corporate sector, which is where the CI philosophy was first developed. Since the models and approaches utilised in CI derive from both national and organisational cultures that are notably different from those of Saudi Arabia, the problem of culture in the Saudi Arabian services sector is exacerbated by divisions already present between the services sector and other business sectors. The way that Islamic teachings are interpreted has a significant impact on Saudi Arabian society (Idris, 2007; Alamri et al., 2014). These characteristics take many different forms and are sure to have an impact on how open people are to CI approaches that have their roots in other countries.

The motivating factors of increased pay and job satisfaction that operate under most Western settings do not always function as motivating factors in the Saudi organisational structure because Saudis are primarily motivated by status and power (Fallatah & Syed, 2018). This is why Saudi nationals typically favour government positions, which are thought to produce more influence. In keeping with these cultural traditions, the Saudi government also helps locals find these professions by giving them preference in a procedure known as Saudisation, in which managerial posts are awarded to locals preferentially, regardless of their managerial calibre (Al-Asfour & Khan, 2014; Ahmed, 2016). This explains why residents so readily reject employment that is morally repugnant (De Bel-Air, 2015).

The value of collectivism has a significant role in defining Saudi society and culture. It has been highlighted that giving performance feedback to the appropriate person cannot be done so directly; rather, an intermediary must be used (Harbi et al., 2017). The process of continuous improvement is impeded by this cultural trait (Alharbi et al., 2016). Employee participation and feedback on improvements in performance as needed are key components of an open and honest communication framework, which is the foundation of continuous improvement. As a result, in this regard, the Saudi culture tends to hinder the creation of a continuous improvement process because neither management nor employees provide the fundamental cultural support that is required. Few suggestions for improvement will surface without an open feedback system since employees' mind-sets will not change. The implementation of a continuous improvement plan will be a temporary endeavour in such a circumstance (Idris, 2007).

Employee attitudes and beliefs are significantly influenced by OC, and these beliefs and attitudes are then carried over into behaviours that tend to enhance organisational performance (Carlos et al., 2014). As a result, OC has an impact on how organisations function, how their personnel behave, and how they make decisions, which has an impact on how well those organisations succeed (Wu et al., 2011). Collectivism is one such cultural feature that has an impact on how a continuous improvement mindset is applied (Torres et al., 2023; Harbi et al., 2017; Cho & Payne, 2016). According to collectivism, groups are more valuable than individuals in a society, and belonging to a group has greater worth than being an individual. Power distance, which is quite high in Saudi Arabia, goes hand in hand with the collectivist trait. A group culture where the performance of a group is evaluated as a whole emerges when

these two traits are contrasted. High achievers have their performances minimised, and those who perform poorly have their criticisms softened. High achievers who are not recognised or rewarded for their work are put in a demotivating work atmosphere, which results in a high turnover rate and a lack of drive for ongoing growth (Jurburg et al., 2017).

The dominance of collectivism in Saudi organisational culture is another cultural factor that influences the embracing of continuous improvement. Relationships are prioritised over commercial interactions, which neglects operational efficiency and advancements (Harbi et al., 2017). Managers prioritise honouring and preserving relationships with long-term employees over maximising productivity (Idris, 2007). A barrier to the adoption of a continuous improvement mentality in Saudi organisations is the absence of a merit-based recognition system (Alharbi et al., 2016; Iqbal, 2010). National culture, however, has less of an impact on organisational culture for Saudi enterprises with worldwide exposure and a workforce. Therefore, it is predicted that the adoption of continuous improvement will be a possibility for those.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the influence of culture, specifically on the Saudi Arabian services sector, and how they manage continuous improvement. The chapter has shown how the Islamic setting, culture, and customs can promote or hinder effective leadership, which is important for the success of continuous improvement. For example, an analysis of the literature shows that scholars agree that based on the Islamic culture in Saudi Arabia, managers tend to prioritise honouring and preserving relationships with long-term employees over maximising productivity. Nonetheless, it has also been noted that with worldwide exposure and a workforce that is becoming progressively diverse, the impact of national culture on Saudi Arabian service sector organisations' CI efforts will be weaker.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study has drawn attention to the paucity of research on organisational culture and how to enhance it in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the limited information that was available prompted this researcher to investigate how service sector role players in the country understood the CI process. This study seeks to clarify the viewpoints of persons working in the services sector on CI in order to develop a claim that is supported by their values, beliefs, and ideas. In this view, the study's ultimate goal is to support this claim, i.e., to create a framework that strengthens enablers, encourages practices of CI within the services sector of a cultural organisation, and restricts the impact of inhibitors of the movement.

This chapter will provide details relating to the research design of the study, including the methodologies and why the researcher made the decisions that he did. It is divided into four sections: research philosophy, research methodologies, justification for the methodology of choice, and methods for gathering and analysing data. It demonstrates how the study managed quality control. This study employs Saunders et al.'s (2012) terminologies to describe the various research terminology because researchers use diverse terms to describe research methodologies and tactics, as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

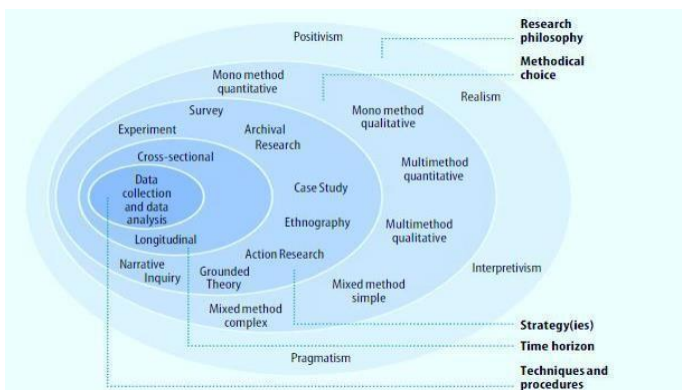


Figure 4.1: Research methodology - the research 'Onion' (Source: Saunders et al., 2012 p.45)

4.2 Research Philosophy

The paradigm from which a researcher would approach a specific topic is referred to as research philosophy. A paradigm might be thought of as a frame of reference between the researcher and the subject they are interested in researching. It is, in essence, a set of

presumptions and ideas about how knowledge develops (Saunders et al., 2012). The philosophy selected must align with the study strategy and the goals of the researcher (Salvador, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Holden & Lynch, 2004).

Four research paradigms—positivist, phenomenological-interpretive, socio-critical, and participatory—have been put forth by numerous authors, including Guba and Lincoln (2005) and Saunders et al. (2012). Each of these paradigms is predicated on four premises: methodological, epistemological, axiological, and ontological. The character of the social phenomena that the researcher is researching is referred to as the ontological presupposition. The nature of the knowable and what are the characteristics of the social situation the researcher wants to explore are some issues that could be explored in this context. Previously, ontology's concerns centred on the nature of reality as it is (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Saunders et al., 2012).

The ontological stances of subjectivism and objectivism are both important. Objectivism is a view based on the assumption that there is a genuine social reality that exists outside of and separates from the researcher (Tyson, 2023; Schuh & Barab, 2007; Gallagher, 2008). The same stance proposes that all reality has properties, is made up of entities, and is connected by relationships at specific points in time (Lakoff, 1987). On the other hand, subjectivism supposes that social reality is created by people interacting with one another and drawing meaning from that interaction (Alexandre, 2023). The researcher can discover the truth through a careful process of interpretation (Salvador, 2016; Bryne-Armstrong et al., 2001).

The epistemological assumption also directs the researcher to consider the nature of the interaction between the knower and the known. Epistemology describes the connection between the researcher and the world being examined and deals with how truth is known (Carson et al., 2001). According to Creswell (2007), it is critical that the researcher provides a thorough explanation of their own experience in cases when it may have an impact on the study.

The epistemic stances of positivism and interpretivism are both common. Positivist thinking is predicated on the idea that human behaviour is guided by laws and that there are concrete facts that can be measured or observed in the pursuit of concrete knowledge (Silverman, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007). Positivist thinking is not without its drawbacks, either, as not all problems

can be assessed or observed (Cohen et al., 2007). Contrarily, interpretivism is founded on the assumption that people's socially formed understandings and meanings are the results of their social and experiential development (Johnson, 2006).

According to interpretivism, it is challenging to dissociate oneself from what one has learned, and as a result, how one sees the world – and who they are – plays a vital role in how one comprehends it, other people, and oneself (Johnson, 2006). The interpretive paradigm is supported by natural data-gathering techniques, including focus groups, interviews, direct/participative observation, and content analysis of previously acquired knowledge. The interpretation is predicated on a certain circumstance or context occurring at a specific time (Johnson, 2006).

The researcher's attitudes and opinions, such as their research interests, are taken into account in the axiological assumption. To comprehend the participants' performances and activities and to study the meanings they assign to their endeavours while attempting to create appropriate CI practices, the axiological assumption attempted to provide relevance to their voices. Translating their descriptions can help in grasping what they are saying, so it is vital to check for the participants and their stories (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba, 1981).

The methodological premise also takes into account how knowledge is obtained. This speaks to how it is discovered. To a greater or lesser degree, the processes of data gathering and analysis were influenced by the researcher's ideas and values or their partiality. Thus, the epistemological and ontological links are selected in order to develop new knowledge in accordance with the intentionality of each researcher. In the present study, the researcher intended to speak with the participants in their homes, where they go about their everyday routines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

4.2.1 The Paradigmatic Position Assumed By This Research

The framework for this study should be constructed and supported by earlier explanations of the primary research paradigms. An important question ought to be asked in this regard: What should be the preferred paradigm for research on social reality? Such a question especially refers to the onto-epistemological viewpoint that should be taken by the researcher as they examine and comprehend the professional practices in service sector companies. In this

regard, the interpretative paradigm, also known as the constructivist paradigm, is selected as the paradigm that benefited the study the most. The nature of the knowable in this situation (i.e., the service sector companies in Saudi Arabia) entails investigating the concepts, opinions, and values held by stakeholders and role players in relation to practices of ongoing improvement inside their organisations.

It is supposed that this environment is created by a complicated web of subjectivities, each of which, including the researcher, has its own set of experiences. From an ontological perspective, the relationship between the researcher and the real stakeholders and role players is the nexus between reality and research that has been established. It should be highlighted that the current study took the researcher's values, beliefs, and subjectivity, as well as their experiences, into account and noted their influences (Creswell, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

The present study is founded on the premise that people live within a context and establish a culture that is transmitted via their, thoughts, words, and deeds (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Research using the interpretative paradigm aims to comprehend people's motivations in their lived context. As a result, this understanding must come from participants' own narratives of their own lived experiences.

This study aims to investigate and comprehend how organisational culture could be altered or utilised to support or increase the process of continuous improvement in the services sector in Saudi Arabia. Constructivism was used in this context to support the researcher's belief that reality is multifaceted and can best be comprehended by engaging with the participants and co-constructing the phenomena under investigation. Applying such a paradigm offers valuable insights into what drives the phenomenon and ways for changing organisational culture to encourage continuous development (Park, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln, 1995).

From an epistemological perspective, the results of the current study were derived from the interactions between the participant group and the researcher. It has been acknowledged that subjectivities from all the participants would affect the outcomes, co-constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer. In this way, the analysis was influenced by the researcher's personal subjectivity as well as their values and opinions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba, 1998; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since it is challenging to distinguish between

what social actors know and practice and organisational culture itself, interpretivism was applied in the present study. By employing this paradigm, the researcher was able to show how the interaction of numerous variables affects organisational culture and reveal connections between organisational culture and continuous improvement.

The goal of this study is to examine and comprehend the various concepts, notions, values, behaviours, and practices that service sector companies generate when they create CI practices. Because of this, a connection has been made to enable this kind of engagement and approach to be connected with people's opinions and real-life experiences (Guba, 1981).

This study respected the individual ownership of views and beliefs that were socially formed but represented a lived-life reality that could only be recounted by the main characters: the subjects who participated in this study. Therefore, the researcher appreciates the awareness that participants have of the organisational culture's catalysts and inhibitors with regard to the upkeep of ongoing improvement. Thus, it was assumed philosophically that people's perceptions might influence both their beliefs and value systems as well as how they understood the key factors affecting continuous development.

4.3 Research Methodology

A means of reasoning about and studying social phenomena is called research methodology (Pandey & Pandey, 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Bryman (1984), the research methodology is the epistemological attitude and a justification for choosing one approach over another. It is referred to as the research process itself by Creswell (2014). Data gathering techniques for research could be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of the two.

4.3.1 Quantitative Method

The mathematical representation of measured and observed data that can be utilised to describe a specific occurrence is known as quantitative research (Remenyi, 2014; Creswell, 2014). The method involves examining the relationships between the variables to evaluate the theory (Creswell, 2014). For quantitative investigations, experiments and surveys are common data collection techniques. Correlational, developmental, descriptive, ex post facto, experimental, and quasi-experimental quantitative research are the main categories (Bernard, 2013).

It is common that qualitative and quantitative methods are utilised in a complimentary manner to answer separate issues that do not easily come together to produce a unified, well-integrated image of the situation (Timans, 2019; Patton, 1999). This justification backs the usage of the questionnaire, a qualitative tool used to determine the actual and ideal positions of the participants' ongoing improvement. These findings serve as a helpful resource to aid in the creation of future interventions in the area under research. Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies simultaneously enables a researcher to accomplish triangulation and, as a result, confirm the data analysis.

4.3.2 The Qualitative Method

Based on people's interpretations and the meanings they give to phenomena, the qualitative research approach attempts to make sense of a phenomenon in its natural environment (Ngenye & Kreps, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To try to comprehend a specific situation or event from the perspective of those who are really involved in the occurrence is the aim of qualitative research, which is occasionally alluded to as interpretive research (Leedy, 2010). The methodology enables the researcher to capture events as they take place and then interpret them dynamically (Yin, 2014). It maintains the complexity of human behaviour by taking a holistic approach (Black, 1994).

4.3.3 Justification of the Research Technique Used

This study aims to comprehend organisational culture elements that hinder or promote practices of continuous improvement in Saudi Arabian service sector companies. To achieve this aim, the following goals have been established:

- i) Using a thorough analysis of the pertinent literature, identify organisational culture enablers and obstacles of continuous improvement.
- ii) Identify the Saudi Arabian service sector organisational cultures that support and hinder continual development.
- iii) Decide how the organisational culture of Saudi Arabia's service sector companies can be improved by encouraging enablers and removing inhibitors.
- iv) Create a framework for interventions that will help the service sector companies in Saudi Arabia utilise their organisational cultures to promote continuous improvement.

- v) Validate the organisational culture intervention framework through the opinions of specialists from Saudi Arabian service sector organisations.

The study concentrated on the participants' perceptions of the CI procedure in Saudi Arabia. This is why the researcher in the current study thought that a qualitative methodology in line with an interpretivist viewpoint would be most suitable. It is necessary to provide social actors with the opportunity to reflect on their lived experiences, allowing them to speak openly and share their thoughts through interviews, in order to better understand such issues because they cannot be grasped by only observing them. Insights are elevated to a new level through the qualitative approach's emphasis on the portrayal of real lives and authentic voices based on lived experiences (both at the micro and macro levels) interpretation (van Teijlingen & Parrish, 2023) Interviews help researchers gain a broader comprehension of a social phenomenon because the voices of participants help them identify the distinctiveness of particular occurrences (Ali & Yusof, 2011; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Therefore, this type of inquiry fits well within the parameters of qualitative research (Khan, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Janesick, 1994). Other studies of culture conducted within the framework of service sector organisations have utilised a qualitative technique with great success (Giles & Yates, 2014).

4.4 Research Strategy

A logical plan for getting from the initial research questions to a set of findings is the research strategy (Moody & Bekkers, 2023; Badke, 2021; Yin, 2003). The constructivist paradigm used in the present study makes grounded theory, case studies (Yin, 2009; 2012), phenomenology (Neubauer, 2019; Moustakas, 1994), ethnography (Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott, 2008), and narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) suitable research methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In phenomenology, which has philosophical and psychological roots, the researcher relies on the subject's account of their first-hand encounters with a phenomenon as they are described in interviews (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenology aims to provide both the structural description of participants' actions and the textural environment around their lived experiences. This phenomenological view does not support the need to investigate how the service sector organisation functions in a manner that influences the constant development

required in Saudi service sector companies. The phenomenological account's descriptive nature and textural ambience do not give adequate details about the phenomenon.

Additionally, narrative research relies on the researcher learning about people's lives through the stories they have to tell and then retelling them in a chronological narrative (Creswell, 2014; Riessman, 2008). Similar to this, ethnography, which derives from sociology and anthropology, entails employing observation and interviews to examine a group's common behaviours and linguistic patterns in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). The case study is an additional intriguing tactic that entails the in-depth examination of a particular event or incident, employing a variety of data-gathering techniques (Yin, 2009; 2012). Since this study does not investigate and analyse the procedures of other countries' service sector companies, this research strategy is not the most suitable for addressing the problems of the present study. Because each of the participating companies has its own organisational framework, substructures, and administration, they are not all the same in their methods or organisational design.

Given that the goal of this study is to gain a thorough understanding of the participants' ideas, beliefs, and comprehension of the CI process within Saudi Arabia's services sector, it is necessary to use a less descriptive and more conceptually-focused approach to get strong explanations of CI processes in this setting. For these reasons, the present study employed grounded theory (GT) in this situation, despite the designs indicated above and taking the present study's goals into account. Sociology-based GT entails a number of data-gathering phases that result in a comprehensive and well-informed explanation of a phenomenon that is based on the perspectives of participants (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007).

4.4.1 Grounded Theory

When Glaser and Strauss founded the grounded theory (GT) in the 1960s, it was mostly used in qualitative research, which focuses on examining social processes that may have an impact on behaviour (Birks, 2019; Goulding, 1998). The first application of GT is in the inferential creation of a novel theory from specific data. Due to changes throughout time, GT has evolved through three primary perspectives, with the Glaser post-positivistic perspective—which is based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) methodology—standing out as the most prominent. The theory's main goal is to be grounded in the data, in the participants' words that have been analysed, and to be able to identify a typical pattern of behaviour to deal with the phenomenon.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), finding data, giving it codes, and making methodical comparisons constitute the manner in which reality is found. The researcher should approach their social reality without a prior understanding of what is happening in the data or the manner in which the phenomenon has been portrayed in other situations (Glaser, 2002). By including later-complemented facts, the substantive conceptual theory first established can be made more general.

The other main viewpoint is that of Strauss and Corbin (1998), which is an interpretative approach with a focus on methodical analytical techniques. This method is less post-positivistic and more oriented toward the interpretation of the motivations and causes that influence people's behaviour in relation to a troubling social occurrence or circumstance. These writers claim that prior knowledge is acceptable and does not affect the researcher's data-gathering and analysis efforts. This alternative viewpoint provides an intriguing set of steps that work together to direct the continuous comparison of movement between data gathering and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The idea that a coherent conceptual relational system was eventually discovered or created, one that is strong enough to elucidate what is happening in the data or how people interact with the topic under research, is frequently held in common with Glaser's perspective. Due to its ties to the context in which it was created, the substantive conceptual theory produced cannot be generalised.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), reality can be reached by posing analytical questions, developing reasoned justifications, and employing certain methodological applications. Through the processes of ongoing comparison, coding, and analysis of both interview and observed data, a theory based on the data arises. According to Strauss and Corbin's (1994) conception of a theory, the theory is a collection of conceptual connections that provides a tenable explanation for the phenomenon under study.

Charmaz's (2006) constructivist method posits that researchers should come up with ideas that are closely related to the experiences of the people taking part in the research. This shows that, with the researcher as a guide, the interviewees' final building of a solid theory is based on their common and shared beliefs, which create their reality. In this regard, it may be argued that Charmaz's perspective enables participants to engage hard in the data gathering and analysis, resulting in a substantive theory that is not generalisable in a sense posited by Glaser since it is rooted in the time and place in which it was formed. There are more developed

variants of GT, such as Clarke's (2003) situational analysis, which uses symbolic interactionism as its primary theoretical framework for data interpretation. The two primary perspectives—Glaser's and Strauss's—are shared by the three major variants of GT, as shown in Table 4.1 (Onions, 2006).

Table 4.1: Comparisons of the two schools of grounded theory (Adapted from Onions, 2016)

Glaserian	Straussian
Starting with an empty mind – no review of the literature.	Having a general idea as to the starting point.
Allowing theory to emerge through neutral questioning.	Using structured questions to extract theory.
Conceptual theory development.	Description of the studied situation.
Get theoretical sensitivity from immersion in the collected data.	Get theoretical sensitivity from methods, tools and extant literature.
The theory is derived from the data.	The theory is derived from the observer's interpretation.
No prior research and without reading any material.	Theory credibility is based on the method's rigour.
Need to identify a basic social process.	No need to identify basic social processes.
The researcher is passive and restrained.	The researcher is an active participant.
The theory is revealed by the data.	The researcher structures the data to reveal the theory.
Coding is not rigorous; comparisons are conducted incident by incident, identifying key points.	Coding is rigorous, with codes derived from word-by-word analysis of data.
Two phases of coding – simple and substantive, lead to categories and their properties.	Three phases of coding – open, axial and selective.
Considered to be the only 'true' Grounded Theory method.	Considered to be a form of qualitative data analysis

When there is a lack of information about the subject matter, which could be because the topic of interest has not been explored or has only been briefly touched upon, grounded theory is typically utilised to develop a substantive theory (Rosenbaum & Russell-Bennett, 2019; Goulding, 1998). Additionally, Birks and Mills (2011) contend that GT is the most popular research method when a new theory needs to be developed in order to comprehend and explain occurrences. Fernandez (2004) highlights the promise of GT as a foundation that is appropriate for the study of novel social-contextual phenomena.

Using GT enables the researcher to do an organised study on human interactions, which includes the relationships between acts, the settings that have an impact on the actions, and the outcomes of taking the activities (Goulding, 1998). Nursing, management, business, and education have all incorporated grounded theory (Parry, 1999a), as have management knowledge (Peter et al., 2004), corporate turnaround (Pandit, 1996), analysis of management action (Partington, 2000), and leadership (Parry, 1999).

The goal of the present study is to examine organisational culture in relation to continuous development in Saudi Arabian service sector companies. In order to understand the components of services sector cultural practices that have an impact on ongoing improvement, this field of study incorporates social interaction among diverse organisational entities. Using grounded theory, a researcher can identify the symbolic meanings of people's words, gestures, and artefacts as they engage with one another in a social setting or within an organisation (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019; Cutcliffe, 2000). GT focuses on the relationships between behaviours, the circumstances that affect those actions, and the repercussions of taking them because it enables the researcher to analyse human interaction in a methodical manner (Goulding, 1998). The Strauss-Corbin perspective was used in this study in light of the researcher's interests and study goals. A cultural and organisational perspective enabled the researcher to pinpoint the enablers and inhibitors of continuous improvement in the Saudi services sector.

4.4.2 Grounded Theory Criticisms

Popular as it is, grounded theory has been criticised for having unclear definitions. For instance, it has been referred to as a methodology (Glaser, 2009; Goulding, 1998), a set of principles and practices (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1994), and a method (Atkinson et al., 2003). Despite differences between the versions of different scholars, all of

them ultimately elaborate a substantive theory based on data using iterative procedures that simultaneously collect, code, and analyse data, as well as theoretical sampling, ongoing comparison, category development using characteristics and dimensions, methodical coding, and sorting (Jones & Noble, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1994;1990). This study applies Strauss-Corbin's perspective to data analysis in order to better understand organisational culture and continuous improvement in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia.

4.5 Methods and Techniques

The collection of sufficient and pertinent data is necessary in order to respond to the study questions. Methods are approaches and procedures used to collect pertinent data and analyse it (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Methods are the processes and actions used in the selection, collection, organisation, and analysis of data (Blaikie, 2009). Blaikie's (2009) definition was used for this study since it covers important components of research, such as sampling, data collection, post-interview activities, and data processing. The sections that follow provide descriptions of these elements.

4.5.1 Participants

The participants from eight public and private service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia were purposively sampled to determine whether public and private organisations had the same lack of CI progress to capture the different cultural perspectives. In order to ensure that the research findings were presented in their context and were based on their viewpoints and experiences, it should be stated that the researcher obtained participant profiles. Participants include all managerial levels. All participants have between five and thirty-three years of service sector experience.

The companies from which the participants were selected are presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Participants

No.	Organisation name	City	Type	No. of participants
1	Elm	Riyadh	Public	6
2	Ministry of Energy	Riyadh	Public	6
3	The National Centre For Performance Measurement (Aada)	Riyadh	Public	6
4	General Authority Civil of Civil Aviation (GACA)	Riyadh	Public	6
5	Mobily	Riyadh	Private	4
6	Saudi Telecom Company (STC)	Riyadh	Private	4
7	Saudi Electricity Company (SEC)	Riyadh	Private	4
8	National Housing Company (NHC)	Riyadh	Public	2

Due to the need for information-rich data to promote participant recruitment, the categories of participants in qualitative research are often smaller than those in studies based on quantitative analysis (Parry, 2003). The recruitment process is driven by the need to communicate with staff who have personal knowledge of the issue being studied, namely the ongoing advancement from a cultural and organisational standpoint. The depth of each participant's unique experiences and continual comparison of the data and analysis allowed the researcher to raise the participant number as required. The present study uses a purposive sample because more participants were added to the initial set of participants while the ongoing data collection-analysis method was carried out.

For the purpose of performing this study, purposeful or intentional sampling is deemed appropriate. Carefully choosing participants who are likely to offer data with the required depth and variance, in terms of both degree and breadth, to solve a specific topic is known as purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). It is founded on preconceived notions (Glaser, 1978, cited in Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). Furthermore, participants in this study are expected to discover additional valuable sources of data, including creating referral networks in

purposeful sampling called snowball sampling, which is used in this study (Robinson, 2014). Although this kind of sample is predisposed to bias, prejudice is intentional.

There are no recommendations for the optimum number of participants for qualitative investigations with regard to GT. The sample processes are guided by emergent analysis and continual comparison (Gentles et al., 2015; Charmaz, 2006). In fact, the small sample sizes and variable participant numbers in GT research are typical of qualitative investigations. Sizes up to 28 (Glacken et al., 2003), 55 (Rogan et al., 1997), and as few as four (Clegg, 2003) have all been demonstrated.

Additionally, studies routinely refer to the point at which a researcher can stop sampling as the theoretical saturation of a category (Morse, 2007; Guest et al., 2006). According to O'Reilly and Parker (2013) and Gentles et al. (2015), who cited Glaser and Strauss (1967), saturation is the point at which specified basic theoretical categories are addressed as thoroughly as feasible. Category saturation is said to occur when the GT researcher is certain that they have a complete knowledge of what they see, are able to recognise it in a variety of ways, and feel it is congruent with the culture (Morse, 2007; Morse et al., 2016). Chain referral sampling was utilised to choose 38 interview subjects in the present study. Although there was a feeling of saturation after the 33rd interview, the researcher persisted for five interviews, three of which were focus group interviews, in an effort to elicit newer explanations. Morse (2007) and Morse et al. (2016) stated that saturation was assumed to have been reached when this did not take place.

4.5.2 Representativeness of the Sample

Considering that this study is qualitative, purposive sampling is used, and there is no attempt to ensure that the sample is representative of all service sectors companies in Saudi Arabia. In the present study, the subjective experiences of participants are more crucial than generalising the findings to all service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia. Also, considering that the main aim is to go deeper into the experiences of the individuals rather than generalise the findings, the sample was kept relatively small (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). This is the reason why only eight companies and 38 participants were selected. This decision was also based on the realisation that the sample must not be too small that the researcher is unable to reach saturation. In the same vein, it should not be too large that it becomes too challenging

to work with a massive amount of data and come up with a meaningful and deep analysis (Punch, 2014).

4.7 Data Collecting Tools

The data for this study was gathered through a variety of methods, including in-person interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and field notes. The next section presents each instrument in more detail.

4.7.1 Open-Ended Interviews

This study used an open-ended, issue-focused interviewing technique. This method can help bring to the fore the cultural features of an organisation. It ensures that the interviewer can ask questions from the general to the specific about a particular phenomenon. This technique allows for the collection of data pertaining to culture and entails coming up with hypotheses, concepts, and beliefs that make up the implicit elements of organisational culture (Seidu, 2022; Al Issa, 2019; Sackmann, 1991).

Numerous organisational culture studies have used open-ended, issue-focused interviews (Alkhoraif & McLaughlin, 2018; Al Shehri, 2017; Taylor & Goates, 2017; Almainan & McLaughlin, 2016). Sackmann (1991) asserts that a focused interview can use a variety of issues as a manner of revealing cultural presumptions and attitudes; nevertheless, in this study, the aim was to discover the cultural drivers of CI in Saudi Arabia's services sector. The researcher was able to get participants' interpretive perceptions of the influence of the cultural organisation on CI inside their organisations by involving participants who are really experiencing the problem under investigation.

4.7.1.1 Context of the Interview

To ensure the freedom of these conversations, all face-to-face interviews with male participants were done in their offices at their organisations (a calm and peaceful setting). The face-to-face interviews with female participants, however, were done in a public setting due to cultural and religious considerations. Nonetheless, the researcher still ensured that the participants were comfortable and the area selected presented the fewest distractions possible. Finally, it should be mentioned that anonymity and secrecy were guaranteed for both male and female participants.

4.7.1.2 Interview Technique

The researcher employed a structured interview guide to make sure that the pre-interview problems recognised as critical issues were consistently covered during the interview. According to McNamara (2009), there are several guidelines to follow during the interview preparation stage, including outlining the interview's goals, resolving confidentiality concerns, outlining the interview's structure, and responding to any pre-interview queries informants may have. There are differing viewpoints on whether or not to employ structure during interviews. A guide should be employed, according to McNamara (2009) and Creswell (2009), as it makes it easier to provide data that is more narrowly focused. Others advise against using a guide and suggest that interviews in GT do not follow a predetermined framework in order to preserve the interviewees' freedom of expression (Corr & Davidson, 2023; Goulding, 1999). The interviewees were only asked two questions because the interviewer had to deal with the reality in a short amount of time.

The questions are:

1. Could you provide an instance of a time when continuous improvement has been successful?
2. Could you provide an instance where continuous improvement failed, or something went wrong?

The interviews began with an introduction of the researcher, a brief explanation of the study's goals, a promise of secrecy, an explanation of the interview process, and any pre-interview queries that the informants may have. In order to clarify some of the respondents' responses, follow-up questions were asked after the two major questions.

All the interviews were conducted in Arabic to encourage free speech. Since the researcher did not intervene while participants were answering questions, they had plenty of opportunity to respond. Participants should be allowed to speak freely about concerns without the researcher interjecting, but the researcher should also encourage participants to expound on their responses (Winwood, 2019; Patton, 2002). Additionally, topics not related to the research questions were not pursued. Periodically, the researcher refocused the conversation

in accordance with the broad question at hand and the information learned from the literature review (Winwood, 2019; Pidgeon, 1996; Strauss, 1987).

Each interview ended with a period of open discussion and time for the interviewee to ask questions. This is in line with Yin's (2009) and Siedlecki's (2022) recommendations that interviews should be less restricted by structured questioning and more conversational. The interviews lasted an hour on average. All the participants signed an informed consent form to give permission to record the interviews. Where participants refused to have the interview recorded, the researcher took notes of their responses. Audio-recording interviews are a way for the researcher to make sure they have recorded all of the important points made during the interview (de Villiers et al., 2021; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher's observation of the interview setting, which was recorded in writing, was taken into account during the analysis stage and served as an additional supplement to both the recordings and the notes.

Each interview was quickly followed by a transcription while the details were still clear in the researcher's mind. Additionally, this gave the researcher a chance to address concerns while the interviewee could still recall the events of the interview. Summaries of the interview transcripts were written and sent to the interview subjects in order for the facts and interpretations to be confirmed.

The triangulation strategy, which aims to ensure the confirmability and validity of this study, includes returning to the participants with the results of the transcript or the records of the interviews. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2012) state that taking into account the participants' suggestions is a strategy that helps control potential researcher bias or misunderstanding with the aim of ensuring the data gathered is accurate.

4.7.2 Field Notes and Observations

Alongside the interviews, the researcher made observations and took field notes, which were then recorded in his field diary. Keeping meticulous field notes is in accordance with the principles of grounded theory, as stated by Clarke (2003) and Corbin and Strauss (1990). The researcher's ideas and observations, elements of the study's environment, participant facial expressions and gestures, and any decisions made during data collection or data processing are all included in the field notes. The field journal was given full access to the facts and factors that contributed to the new judgment. This is an additional tactic to increase the

accuracy of the results. The arguments made by Cho and Lee (2014) regarding how field notes enhance and supplement primary data are in favour of this tactic. Additionally, Guba and Lincoln (2005) agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2000; 1994) in stating that this ensures the validity of the data analysis and interpretations.

4.7.3 Focus Group

The focus group discussion is a strategy for gathering data in which a group of participants express their opinions on a particular subject, discuss them, and come to certain conclusions while also interacting with the researcher, who serves simply as the exercise's facilitator (Sim & Waterfield, 2019; Hamilton & Finley, 2019; Vaughn et al., 1996; Kitzinger, 1995). In this study, the focus group participants were presented with the initial lower-level codes that emerged from the analysis of the 38 face-to-face interviews conducted in eight service sector organisations. This was done to ensure their acceptance and to compel their participation in order to lead these initial lower-level codes to a higher and denser level (i.e., a central theme). Participants were able to create seven high-level codes or themes after the focus group discussion.

It should be emphasised that the focus group provides the researcher with an equal opportunity to reduce prejudices and beliefs because the initial elements were changed in response to each participant's thoughts and beliefs. The ultimate study findings were as objective as feasible, thanks to a triangulation method.

Returning to the focus group strategy's creation, it should be noted that the seven elements were investigated in the literature to determine the optimal level of each theme and the direction that Saudi service sector organisations should take in order to create the best possible CI culture.

4.8 Stages of the Research Design

The summary of the research design presented in Table 4.3 below shows the sequential stages of the present study.

Table 4.3: Research design phases

Stage	Task	Activities
Philosophical stance	Determining the philosophical stance	From a selection of identified designs, the present study employed grounded theory (GT) and followed the interpretivism philosophy and qualitative methodology.
Population and sampling	Identifying the target population and sampling	The participants from eight public and private service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia were sampled using purposeful or intentional sampling to determine whether public and private organisations had the same lack of CI progress to capture the different cultural perspectives.
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended interviews • Observation and field notes • Focus group discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended interviews made it possible to come up with hypotheses, concepts, and beliefs that make up the implicit elements of organisational culture. • The researcher's ideas and observations, elements of the study's environment, participant facial expressions and gestures, and any decisions made during data collection or data processing are all included in the field notes. • The focus group discussion was used to gather data in which a group of participants expressed their opinions on a particular subject, discussed them, and came to certain conclusions while also interacting with the researcher, who serves simply as the exercise's facilitator.
Data analysis	Analysing data	This study applied Strauss and Corbin's thematic analysis in order to better understand organisational culture and continuous improvement in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia.
Conclusion	Draw conclusions from data and generate the report.	The conclusions of the collected data were summarised into a report.

4.8 Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, objectivity, dependability, external validity, and internal validity are the indicators of rigour (Dabengwa et al., 2023; Riazi et al., 2023; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is evident in the results, which have characteristics of confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell (1988) both established a specific approach to bolster the reliability of qualitative findings.

On the one hand, Creswell (2009) outlined eight distinct methods, at least two of which he thought were essential for every qualitative study to be legitimate. Peer review, triangulation, negative case analysis, participant validation, reflexivity (declaring researcher bias), thick description, and external audits are a few examples of these procedures. However, Angen (2000) has pointed out problems when using four of these particular criteria. Member checking has been criticised for the possibility that respondents' opinions have changed and for the possibility that they disagree with the researcher's interpretation, which raises the issue of whose interpretation is correct. Reflexivity has been criticised on the grounds that it is an attempt to achieve objectivism, on the grounds that separation from the self and the task is being sought (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019; Angen, 2000). Triangulation presents difficulties for qualitative researchers since it presumes the convergence of some objective truth. Peer review is likewise not advised because peers can never engage with the information in the same way that the principal investigator did (Angen, 2000).

Despite these objections, credibility is required to make significant contributions to create knowledge, especially when employing the Grounded Theory technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, using Creswell's (2008) methodologies can help qualitative researchers conduct rigorous research. Generalizability and dependability are not concerns in this study because the goal is to build a substantive theory; instead, the emphasis is on providing a thorough knowledge of the unique situation of CI in the services sector from a cultural organisation perspective in the KSA. Table 4.4 below lists the specific steps the researcher took to ensure reliability.

Table 4.4: Actions taken to ensure quality and reliability

Technique	Definition	Action in this research
Credibility Triangulation	The comparison of data with data from other sources (Patton, 1999; Denzin, 1978)	Interviewing three different types of services industry stakeholders to assess the data from various perspectives was one of the methods used to triangulate the data.
Participants' validation	Returning to interview subjects to confirm the veracity of the transcripts or the researcher's assessment of what was said (Seale, 1999)	Each participant received a copy of their transcript back so they could check its accuracy. After the participant verified the transcripts, the researcher gave them a list of the elements noted in the transcripts and asked for feedback on how the participant's remarks should be interpreted.
Peer review	Inviting impartial colleagues to evaluate the research's many components (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	The researcher asked a colleague in the same field to analyse some of the data that they had provided.
Transferability Thick description	Detailed data description to assess the transferability of the drawn conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	Using the participants' own words, the researcher explicitly outlined the individuals' roles inside services sector organisations and described in depth the procedure used and the interpretation of the results.
Dependability audit trail	A thorough description of the research improves the reporting of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	Inter-rater reliability analysis should be used, clear methods for data collection should be followed consistently, and all materials used for data collection and analysis should be documented.
Confirmability Audit trail	Focuses on outcomes	Providing enough information about the social contexts to let the reader judge how much they resemble other social contexts.

The researcher's methods for guaranteeing the study's validity and reliability are listed in Table 4.4 above. The researcher asked a research associate to replicate the data analysis procedure in order to lessen personal biases. By comparing the results of the two data analysis processes, the researcher ensures that his subjectivity, beliefs, and values are minimised. In this comparison, the second analysis provided support to some of the researcher's observations. To get to a consensus, however, the elements that are different between the two assessments were revisited. These agreed-upon conclusions were taken into account and accepted. Similarly, because the initial codes were made available for the focus group participants to analyse, the initial researcher's subjectivity was mitigated.

4.9 Conclusion

The study's methodology and methods were presented and discussed in this chapter. The research approach employed is constructivist. Grounded theory methods were used for data collection and analysis. The research design was guided by Saunders et al.'s (2012) onion framework. The research's target demographic, as well as the proposed purposive sampling techniques, were described and discussed. An in-depth discussion was had regarding the methods that were used in data collecting. The procedures utilised to assure reliability in the qualitative investigation were presented as the chapter came to a close. The results of the study are detailed in Chapter 5, along with the data analysis.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The results of the study's two successive primary data-gathering methods—interviews and focus group discussions—are presented in this chapter. The chapter is organized into two sections: data gathering and analysis based on focus groups and interviews. It also discusses findings in light of prior research into the Saudi Arabian services sector.

5.2 Collection of Data

The eight participating service sector companies that were specifically chosen to ensure representation provided the data for the study, which was based on the answers to the following two questions (described in more depth in Chapter 4, Section 4.7):

- i) Could you provide an instance of continual improvement that has been successful?
- ii) Could you provide an instance where continuous improvement failed, or something went wrong?

The companies from which the present study's participants were selected are presented in Table 5.1 below, together with the number of participants from each company.

Table 5.1: Participants

No.	Organisation name	City	Type	No. of participants
1	Elm	Riyadh	Public	6
2	Ministry of Energy	Riyadh	Public	6
3	The National Centre For Performance Measurement (Adaa)	Riyadh	Public	6
4	General Authority Civil of Civil Aviation (GACA)	Riyadh	Public	6
5	Mobily	Riyadh	Private	4
6	Saudi Telecom Company (STC)	Riyadh	Private	4
7	Saudi Electricity Company (SEC)	Riyadh	Private	4
8	National Housing Company (NHC)	Riyadh	Public	2

5.2.1 Qualitative Interview

Information was gathered using a technique based on qualitative interviews. Four phases of participant interviews were conducted. Phase I involved conducting interviews with eight people who were chosen from a list provided by the management at the concerned company, and individuals were picked because of their positions. This phase's goals were to evaluate the efficiency of the interview format and gain a basic understanding of cultural presumptions and beliefs and how they affect the use of CI.

Eight participants were chosen for Phase II based on the suggestions of those participants who took part in Phase I. The phase attempted to unearth more OC enablers and CI inhibitors by disclosing more success and failure stories; participants were asked to suggest individuals for the study's Phase III.

With ten individuals, Phase III was undertaken once more to study success stories and subsequently pinpoint additional enablers and inhibitors of CI. These participants were asked to suggest persons for Phase IV of this investigation. With the intention of identifying further facilitators and inhibitors and determining whether or not saturation had been reached, the final phase involved twelve individuals.

5.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory begins once the first piece of data is gathered (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It includes concept generation—a category comprising related codes grouped by attributes and dimensions—development and verification. The study has been directed by the five GT analysis concepts of coding, theoretical sampling, continual comparison, categorisation, category saturation, and theoretical sensitivity (Belgrave & Seide, 2019; Tan, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The process included familiarizing oneself with the material by having to listen to the voice recordings and reading the transcripts again, creating initial codes, and developing, reviewing, and labelling themes. This analysis went through a five-stage process, as shown in Figure 5.1.

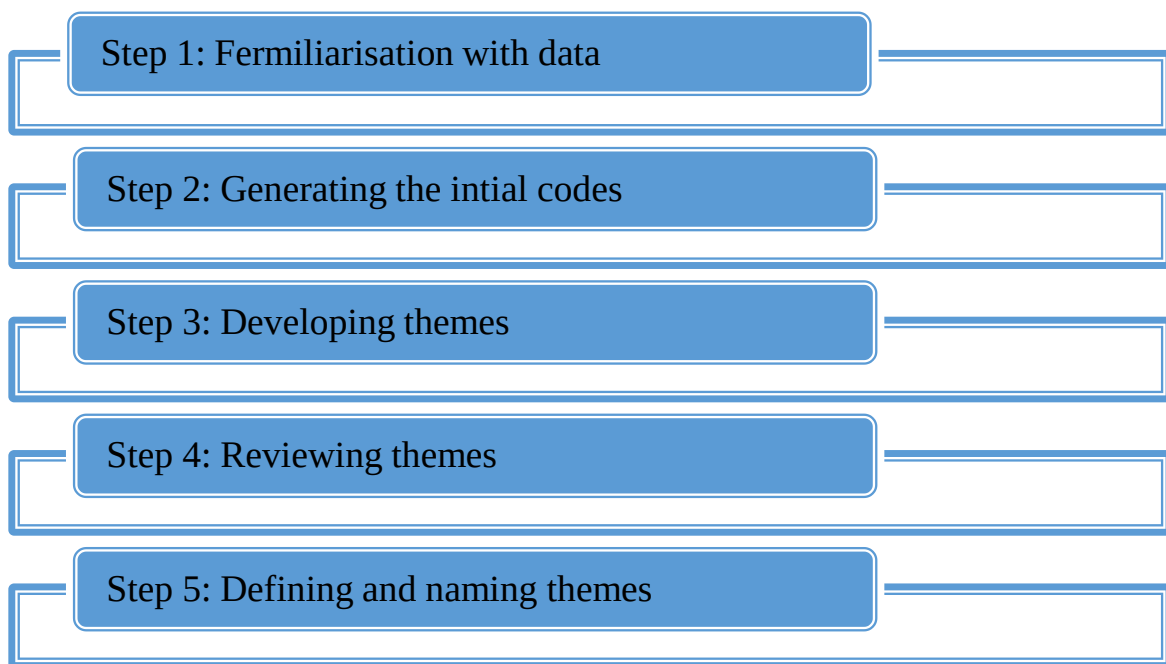


Figure 5.1: Process of data analysis

5.3.1 Familiarisation with the Data

The researcher first familiarized himself with the data by reading the field notes and listening to the voice recordings. By rereading the transcripts after transcribing the recordings, the researcher was able to become more acquainted with the data. Stuckey (2014) notes that as the initial phase in data analysis, the transcription of interviews offers the researcher a useful opportunity to become familiar with the data. Such a transcribing procedure, according to Bird (2005), could be viewed as a fundamental phase of data processing within the qualitative interpretative technique. It is generally accepted that the transcribing process should not only be a mechanical way of writing down spoken words; rather, it should be seen as a part of the translation process, where interpretations are genuinely created (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). The researcher categorized potentially relevant topics, discovered and organised meaning patterns and their connections, and collected ample notes to be utilised to produce code ideas during the familiarisation step.

5.3.2 Development of Codes and Themes

After becoming familiar with the data, the researcher used the research questions as a starting point to create an initial list of ideas about the data's content and what would be regarded as intriguing. The creation of initial data-based codes, which served as labels for portions of the data from the transcripts and field notes, was the second stage of this procedure (Vaismoradi

& Snelgrove, 2019; Neuman, 2011; Henning et al., 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; 1990). Because the researcher organised his data into meaningful units at the coding step of the study (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Miles & Huberman, 1994), this is an essential part of the process (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Tuckett, 2005). The transcribed text was grouped into appropriate categories using the NVivo program. Open, axial, and selective coding were used throughout the entire data analysis process, in accordance with Strauss and Corbin (1994; 1990), Neuman (2011), and Thiétart (2007). Themes were then created, examined, given names, and defined. The five-stage procedure, as shown in Figure 5.1, made sure that the primary data (unstructured interviews and observations), which were arranged thematically to produce research data that represented logical patterns of meanings, as shown in Table 5.2, was systematized.

Table 5.2: Aspects [codes] responsible for CI performance in the service sector.

No.	Aspects	Description	Related Literature	Example Participant Quotes	Frequency
1	Technology utilisation	The effective use of technology and its ongoing updating as a component of daily operations in service sector organisations.	Jones and Harris (2014), Schneckenberg (2010)	Participating administrator: <i>We've recently become more reliant on technology, which has not only increased our reliance on technology but also increased our boosted efficiency while also enhancing work performance."</i>	31
2	Motivation	Financial and non-financial rewards are used to encourage employees to perform successfully.	Sánchez-Ruiz, Blanco and Gómez-López (2019)	Head of the department: <i>Sometimes we do our work outside the company premises, such as in coffee shops or hotels, so that we can break down the silos creating a barrier between the employees and us.</i>	28
3	Fairness	Equal treatment for all employees, regardless of closeness to decision-makers or based on their inherent qualities, such as whether they are tribal or not, expatriates or nationals.	Beer and Walton (1990), Mitra et al. (2011), Sailer (2017)	Participating administrator: <i>Every employee knows that promoted got the promotion because they have some kind of relationship with someone who has the power to make the appointment or because it was for the mutual benefit of the person making the promotion and the individual being promoted.</i>	27

4	Inter-organisational partnerships	Coordination of activities to accomplish a specific goal, either inside an organisation or with other organisations.	Choo et al. (2007), Wruck & Jensen, (1998), Anand et al. (2009)	Departmental manager: <i>We always need sophisticated and effective technological equipment and services; we enter into partnerships with companies like Cisco and Oracle.</i>	26
5	Strategic planning	To help service sector companies rise in global rankings and provide the greatest services possible, the creation of their policies and procedures has been guided by those of other service sectors' indicators globally.	Mayo and Lank, (1994), Simmons, (1997), Wong (2001), Holten & Brenner (2015), Herrmann & Nadkarni (2014)	Departmental manager: <i>Our company is one of the best– if not the best – in this kingdom, and we are making efforts to be the best around the world. I can attribute our achievements to the fact that we clearly articulated our strategic vision, which includes excellence in employee skills, excellence in members of our staff and product quality, and a financially sustainable company.</i>	26
6	Talent development	Increasing the efficiency with which personnel can perform their duties by giving them the necessary training and tools.	Saeed and Shabir (2013), Seekr (2011)	Departmental manager: <i>One of our company strategies is to find qualified professionals and artisans from different parts of the world so that we can establish a diverse workplace and boost production. We did attempt to establish a comfortable environment for our employees.</i>	24
7	Exchange of knowledge	Enabling managers to communicate with experts in the field to guarantee the applicability of the service	Gamble et al. (2010), Wilton	<i>In general, I prefer learning skills from the senior staff's practical expertise since, in addition to following the company's policies, he also shares</i>	22

		result. Managers and employees both gain from one another because the former analyses such problems and offers potential answers, while the latter offers real-life experience insights. Real-world problems must be studied and taught by the former, while the latter outlines potential fixes for these problems.	(2012)	<i>real-world examples of how the skills I am learning are used.</i>	
8	Vertical motivation	Where senior management creates an environment that is inspiring for its team by taking an interest in them as individuals, praising and recognizing their efforts, and giving them feedback and direction when required.	Gibson et al. (2007)	<i>Company Vice President: From personal experience, I became aware of the fact that when the direct manager individually encourages employees in their department, even when productivity is not where it should be, productivity can increase within a short period</i>	18
9	Striving for distinction	Certification from reputable international organisations is used by service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia as a competitive strategy for greater recognition.	Nda and Fard (2013), Nishtha and Amit (2010)	<i>Mobily2: We presently rank among the top companies in Saudi Arabia, if not the best, and we strive to rank among the top internationally. We are clear about our objectives: excellence in graduate skills, excellence in faculty members and research outputs, and a financially stable organisation are all</i>	18

				<i>part of the strategic objective</i>	
10	Influential leadership	The ability of leaders to influence others depends on their ability to see the future of their organisations through a strategic vision of what those organisations should look like when the vision targets are met, and resources and people are mobilized to follow those leaders. Their value rests in their capacity to not only drive the vision's course but also persuade the necessary parties of its viability and inspire them to succeed.	Day (2001), Collins and Holton (2004), Yukl (2006), Rothwell (2002), Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015), Ardichvili et al. (2016)	NHC1: <i>Since his appointment as our CEO, we have observed a shift in attitudes toward the development of the organisation. In the organisation, questions like, 'What is each department's vision, and how far have they worked to realise such a vision, what has been the output of each department in terms of outcomes, and what, if any, development measures departments have made were once awkward to ask.</i>	18
11	Struggles to accept change	Initiatives to bring about change are met with denial and opposition because of the fear of change. Workers in services sector companies worry that transformation initiatives may have an impact on their cultural and personal work experiences and moral principles.	Bareil (2013), Bateh, Castaneda and Farah (2013), Dent and Goldberg (1999)	MOE2: <i>The organisation's leaders, who have an outdated mindset and do not understand the advantages and necessity of change, are one of the obstacles preventing the organisation from achieving its desired change. They are concerned that the proposed change may jeopardize their job security and financial benefits</i>	17

12	Cultural influence	Cultural values have a major influence on the concepts, beliefs, conventions, and even expectations of service sector companies, which in turn dominates how these organisations function.	Fitzsimmons and Stamper (2014), Hight and Wood (2018)	Participant from a department: <i>In our department, some clients need services that have foreign aspects, and those clients tend to receive better service when they are served by people who share a language and culture with them</i>	16
13	Bureaucracy as a hurdle	One person or entity is responsible for all processes and decision-making, and they must always agree before any other actions can be taken.	Beetham (1996), Cunningham (2017), Daymon (2000)	Mobily3: <i>When we, as department members, suggest a change, it must first be approved by the sub-department board, followed by a department board, the company's management board, and finally, the specialist committee. This bureaucratic process stifles not only the department members' spirit of innovation but also the company's efforts to improve continuously.</i>	16
14	Strategic planning	The service sector organisation's long-term vision, objectives, and performance are scheduled.	Goldman and Salem (2015), Day (2001), Collins and Holton (2004), Yukl (2006), Rothwell (2002), Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015), Ardichvili et al. (2016)	Participant in a focus group discussion: <i>We are clear about our objectives: excellence in graduate skills, excellence in faculty members and research outputs, and a financially stable organisation are all part of the strategic objective.</i>	16

15	Talent acquisition	Securing candidates with exceptional credentials to promote development.	Khorsheed and Al-Fawzan (2014), Almansour (2015), Hasan et al. (2016)	Participating departmental manager: <i>Among the various steps we took to achieve the company's strategic plan, we began looking for and recruiting experienced professionals from outside Saudi Arabia.</i>	16
16	Conducive environment	Keeping the climate conducive for all parties involved in the organisation to accomplish their objectives.	Husni (2018), Alcudia (2015), Bakker (2008), Bakker and Demerouti (2008)	<i>We occasionally suffer as managers from the lack of an environment that supports enthusiasm, with the employees being constrained by a daily work routine and lacking the authority to indulge their creativity.</i>	16
17	Continual observations	Service sector organisations often reflect to assess the organisation's most recent performance in order to improve.	Holton et al. (2007), Bratton and Gold (2012), Ranganathan & Benson (2016)	Participant from company department: <i>Our staff who work in administration are assessed every quarter based on how many tasks they have completed and the quality and time taken to complete the tasks.</i>	15
18	Social responsibility	The service sector company assumes, plans strategically, and executes its duties in order to address some societal concerns.	Reiser (2007), Vallaey's (2013), Wymer and Rundle-Thiele (2017)	Participant ELM5: <i>"One of our company's social obligations is to provide evening concentrated skills courses for anyone looking to improve their skills. These courses have hosted a variety of people from our community, including the military, retirees, and unemployed individuals."</i>	14

19	Shared decisions	Before any choice or idea for a change initiative is executed, it is processed and debated with the workforce as opposed to being made by one person in a position of power. This encourages people to engage in decision-making processes.	Al-Yahya (2009), Argote et al. (2000)	Departmental manager: <i>Every time I delegate some tasks to my subordinates and show I believe they have the judgement and skills to accomplish them, I discover that employees become more innovative and enjoy their work, which leads to enhanced performance.</i>	14
20	Work facilities	Service sector organisations are required to offer the facilities and tools deemed necessary to create a suitable environment for their customers and other stakeholders to perform their duties effectively.	Ehiametalor (2001), Musa and Ahmad (2012), Odeku and Odeku (2015)	Departmental manager: <i>We always need sophisticated and effective technological equipment and services; we enter into partnerships with companies like Cisco and Oracle. These entities make available the technology we need while also providing ongoing maintenance of that technology.</i>	13
21	Management approachability	Employees and customers can readily get in touch with managers, both formally and informally.	Papanthymou & Darra (2017), Smith (1994)	ADAA4: <i>"It has become usual that you don't find the departmental manager, and you encounter their secretary, who would convey your question to the departmental manager when he arrives to work,"</i>	13
22	Ignorance of company policies and employee rights	Service sector company stakeholders' ignorance of their obligations and rights inside the organisations leaves them open to exploitation and	Trang and Lap (2016)	STC3: <i>"I, along with every other employee I know, don't have enough awareness of what employee counselling comprises or what to expect from our employee advisors."</i>	12

		manipulation.			
23	Supportive environment	Providing employees with the resources they need to conduct their work successfully, such as training and utilities.	Joyce et al. (1999), Kirschner (2012), Louvel (2013), Fahey (2012)	NHC4: <i>“We continuously train our workers by sending a few of them annually for short courses, most of which are outside the KSA, to ensure that their abilities are in line with international standards.”</i>	12
24	Leadership support	By making the required logistical, administrative, and/or financial support more easily accessible, company managers give both staff and customers the help they need to carry out their duties and/or accomplish their goals.	Dennis (2003), Temponi (2005), Thalner (2005)	NHC1: <i>“Since his [CEO] appointment two years ago, I can attest that the organisation's production has increased, and there has been an increase in departmental cooperation to preserve the organisation's overall progress vision.”</i>	11
25	Supportive services	Providing a resource for assisting employees and customers facing problems.	Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2015), Special Tree (2015)	Participating employee: <i>It is my view that the organisation should have marketing professionals who understand the use of marketing to promote the company's goods and services in an effective manner. This way, the company would be able to construct a desirable image and be more competitive. Consequently, it will be able to reach more customers.</i>	11

26	International training	Sending their employees to acquire knowledge from an internationally known training provider as part of their training progression.	Khorsheed & Al-Fawzan (2014), Almansour (2015), Hasan et al. (2016)	MOE2: <i>"...in our department, employees' productivity has been rewarded with training courses outside the KSA. This has served as both a method for improving employees' skills and a means for them to compete for these incentives and boost their performances."</i>	10
27	Reliability	The service sector organisation staff members have a strong feeling of community that motivates them to act in the company's best interests.	Patton (1999), Denzin (1978)	DU1: <i>"Our department's staff cooperation has been our key motivation in contending and winning top-quality departments inside our organisation."</i>	10
28	Trust in employees' abilities to perform their job	Employee empowerment is giving them the right amount of independence to carry out their responsibilities.	Husni (2018), Alcudia, (2015), Bakker (2008), Bakker and Demerouti (2008)	Working in a team <i>"enhances employees' knowledge"</i> and <i>"complements employees' skills"</i> (SEC1, STC2) in addition to <i>"saving team members' time and effort"</i> (ELM5).	10
29	Work performance	Instead of working effectively at the company, staff members socialize there.	Sirota & Klein (2013), Smith (1994)	STC1: <i>"I don't like working in a team since there are usually team members that over-depend on other members and don't take their job seriously because they know the job will be done anyhow."</i>	10
30	Employee welfare	Providing welfare facilities that help enhance the welfare of employees.	Odeku & Odeku (2015)	MOE1: <i>"I, along with every other employee I know, don't have enough awareness of what employee counselling comprises or what to expect"</i>	10

				<i>from our employee advisors."</i>	
31	Collaboration	Fostering a culture of teamwork in which a group of workers or customers collaborates to accomplish/fulfil their respective tasks.	Khorsheed & Al-Fawzan (2014), Almansour (2015), Hasan et al. (2016)	DU1: <i>"Our department's staff cooperation has been our key motivation in contending and winning top quality department inside our organisation."</i>	10
32	Eagerness	Employees are so enthusiastic about their jobs that they go above and beyond what is legally required to produce the desired results.	Amabile (1993). Sirota and Klein (2013), Sirota and Klein (2013)	MOE2: <i>Some of our staff put in extra hours, sometimes without pay, out of respect for our manager, who, in addition to rewarding them financially when possible, also encourages them to reach their full potential by sending them to crucial training sessions.</i>	10
33	Review and liability	Ensuring that ongoing activities are fulfilling the set goals and performance benchmarks and holding people accountable when those benchmarks are not successfully met.	Tasopoulou and Tsiotras (2017), Almazroa and Al-Shamrani (2015)	Mobily1: <i>All employees who did not achieve their tasks satisfactorily are asking what went wrong, and because we are not told what went wrong, we might be making the same mistakes in the future.</i>	10
34	Offering additional time toward tasks	Encouraging company stakeholders to take part in an unpaid activity.	Sirota and Klein (2013)	MOE2: <i>"Some of our staff put in extra hours, sometimes without pay, out of respect for our manager, who, in addition to rewarding them financially when possible, also encourages them to reach their full potential by sending them to crucial training sessions."</i>	10

35	Wrongfully assigning roles	Performance-based	Ardichvili et al. (2016), Chaimongkonrojna & Steane(2015), Yukl (2006), Collins & Holton (2004), Rothwell (2002), Day (2001)	NHC1: <i>A graduate in Islamic Studies who recently oversaw one of the departments was, with all due respect to his field of study, unqualified for the role and lacked the necessary expertise to adequately direct the department or develop it</i>	9
36	Performance based on mutual respect	Mutual regard between employees and managers motivates good performance.	Belias and Koustelios (2014), Hartnell and Walumbwa (2011), Hardman et al. (2007), Schein (2010)	MOE2: <i>Some of our staff put in extra hours, sometimes without pay, out of respect for our manager, who, in addition to rewarding them financially when possible, also encourages them to reach their full potential by sending them to crucial training sessions.</i>	9
37	Reliable relationships	The presence of a trusting environment both between employees and employers as well as among them.	Latif et al. (2015); Griffeth et al. (2000)	SEC1: <i>My company's collaboration deal with various Saudi-based organisations to make employees less available for training is one constructive step it has taken.</i>	8
38	Maladministration	When workers abuse their authority to further their own interests, this is known as power abuse.	Al-Yahya (2009)	GACA1: <i>All of the employees who received promotions did so either as a result of their friendship with the officials or because it was in their best interests to do so. Promotions were not merit-based. They weren't determined by the workers' abilities or effectiveness on the job.</i>	7

39	Effective communication	Efficiency in communication within the workplace leads to better task execution.	Trenkner (2019)	Administrator: <i>The CEO's monthly meeting with the various managers of the organisation's departments has led to a connected organisation.</i>	6
40	Intra-disciplinary collaboration	When workers with various job backgrounds cooperate with one another to carry out a task effectively, there are benefits to intra-employment interaction.	Howes & Ainscow (2006)	Head of the department: <i>When we competed for and won the title of the best quality department within our company, the main driver was staff cooperation.</i>	6
41	Intra-company competitions	High-achieving employees are given the opportunity to compete in competitions to help them improve and boost their confidence and interact with colleagues from other companies.	Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016), Singh and Singh (2015)	Head of the department: <i>When we competed for and won the title of the best quality department within our company, the main driver was staff cooperation. When we embarked on the endeavour, everyone in the department had one commitment and goal. This made us feel motivated, and I can say, thankfully, we were able to get the best quality department award.</i>	5
42	Prestige-driven improvements	The company's goal is to preserve its reputation for exemplary accomplishments.	Hackman and Oldham (1980), Algashaam (2015)	Participating employee: <i>It is vital that the role of the public relations unit goes beyond just communicating the vision and messages of the organisation through the service sector organisation's social media accounts and websites. This will assist the</i>	5

				<i>organisation in actively promoting its goods and services.</i>	
43	Laborious procedures inhibiting progress	Intricate procedural requirements as a hindrance frequently cause delays in the completion of tasks.	Daymon (2000), Al-Yahya (2009)	<i>MOBILY3: When we, as department members, suggest a change, it must first be approved by the sub-department board, followed by a department board, the company's management board, and finally, the specialist committee. This bureaucratic process stifles not only the department members' spirit of innovation but also the company's efforts to improve continuously.</i>	5
44	Beliefs	The influence of religious principles on service sector companies functions by profoundly impacting the ideas, attitudes, norms, and even expectations of such organisations.	Almaiman (2017), Willis et al. (2016), Amis et al. (2004)	<i>ADAA2: However, it is still considered culturally undesirable and is still common practice in many companies that male employees are not permitted to deal and deal with female customers face-to-face; instead, they must do so via a connected projector because they will not be in the same room.</i>	4
45	Resourcefulness	Effective resource management refers to the strategic utilisation of the company's resources, including its finances, staff, facilities, and other assets. The effective use of the company's other assets,	Bukvic (2023), Calvo-Mora et al. (2005)	<i>ADAA1: Our transformation from paper-reliant work procedures into a digitalized system has assisted in solving the time-consuming procedural necessity of the physical turning over of paperwork, as well as the saving and retrieval of paper files.</i>	4

		including the administration of its finances, investments in its staff and facilities, and targets.			
46	Global partnerships	Local Saudi service sector organisations are collaborating with respected international companies.	Park (2023), Vallaeys (2013)	Departmental manager: <i>We always need sophisticated and effective technological equipment and services; we enter into partnerships with companies like Cisco and Oracle. These entities make available the technology we need while also providing ongoing maintenance of that technology.</i>	3
47	Constructive feedback	Utilizing feedback from staff and customers about their experiences within the company as a tool for reflection in order to enhance working environments is known as a feedback-driven improvement.	Sadler (2010), Black and Wiliam (1998), Price et al. (2010)	Assistant manager: <i>I began to have an idea of my areas of weakness when I started getting customer feedback. I took advantage of this feedback to improve my performance. With this improvement, I started noticing more customers referring others to us.</i>	3
48	Justice	Equity is the making decisions about employees that are based on an objective standard rather than ones that are motivated by bias or the desire to benefit one individual at the	Nowakowski and Conlon (2005), Buttner and Lowe (2017)	GACA1: <i>It is well-known at this company that those connected to certain departments are generally treated better than their counterparts in other departments and have an advantage in terms of opportunities for advancement, professional</i>	3

		expense of others.		<i>development, and decision-making at the company as a whole.</i>	
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In order to understand the motivation and logic behind the study participants' responses, thematically arranging the responses made it possible for the researcher to compare and explain the data (rather than just summarizing it) in a systematized, sequential, and logical manner (Thiétart, 2007).

5.3.3 Interview Findings

In the first stage of open coding, meaning units formed from field notes and interview transcripts were identified and given names. Open coding emphasizes words, phrase consistency, context breadth, comment frequency, and comment specificity. Transcripts and field notes were used to extract 97 meaning units, which were then highlighted and given descriptive labels. Axial coding was the second phase, which required going over and looking at the codes that had already been identified, spotting patterns and categories, and organizing them based on context, causation, and coherence. The last phase involved selectively scanning each code that had been found, making parallels and connections to the study question, and then creating key categories. Forty-eight codes were produced after the coding process. In this study, these codes are referred to as factors that affected how well CI performed in Saudi Arabian service sector companies. The identified factors may either facilitate CI or impede it.

The identified aspects are shown in Table 13, which lists them in the first column in order of importance based on how often they were mentioned, with a brief description in the second column and the number of interviewees who cited that specific aspect as a factor in CI implementation in the third column. To give an overview of the current knowledge gap in the Saudi context, the elements in Table 5.3 have been compared to the body of literature. The researcher has looked through the literature to see if any previous studies on Saudi service sector organisations have addressed these developed characteristics. The researcher used a four-stage exhaustive research methodology, first searching exhaustively for these aspects in Saudi literature related to service sector companies. If not found, the researcher then tried to find them in other Saudi-related literature. If still not found, the researcher broadened the search to include literature related to service sector companies around the world. Finally, if all of the previous stages were unsuccessful in this regard, the researcher then attempted to find them in other Saudi literature.

Despite the fact that the mentioned literature typically does not discuss the particular elements in connection with CI, it does discuss their significance within the cited contexts, which indirectly reflects its significance to CI. For instance, Ben Mansur (2013) discusses variables that impact business interactions in Saudi Arabian enterprises. Al-amoudi (2017) discusses Saudi Arabian health professionals' ignorance of Saudi Ministry of Health norms and health rules while discussing the country's health rights. Waite and Allen (2003) address the corruption and abuse of power in the services sector administration in various countries for those aspects in international service sector-related literature. From these studies, it is evident that these factors are crucial parts of CI efforts in any organisation, including those in the services sector.

5.4 Discussion in Focus Groups and Development of Themes

The 56 codes identified from the coding procedure needed to be organized into higher-level codes in order to analyse and validate the major study findings (themes) further. Focus groups are defined as specified groups of people who are brought together to discuss a predetermined, specific, and limited topic in a structured interview or conversation under the guidance of a facilitator or moderator (Blackburn, 2000; Robinson, 1999). The list of identified elements was sent to a focus group, which included some of the primary study participants, with instructions to critically discuss it and organize it into significant themes. The process involves organizing all of the necessary obtained codes within the prepared themes as well as grouping other codes into potential themes. In this exercise, the researcher's only function was that of a facilitator.

5.4.1 Theme Extraction

Three days before the focus group meeting, the 48 aspects derived from the primary data were emailed to the focus group participants together with the text that reflected the context from which the aspects were collected. The participants were able to learn more about the highlighted cultural features as a result. In Riyadh, the meeting took place in a private conference room. The researcher welcomed the participants to the meeting with the focus group before presenting them with an A4-sized explanation of the organisational culture features. They were then asked to group the characteristics that were the most comparable. Some participants had trouble getting started, but after being encouraged to talk about their ideas with other participants, they began organizing the aspects into groups. Within an hour,

all factors were sorted into seven categories of related factors, which served as prospective themes. These categories are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Grouping of aspects to produce themes and participant description of themes.

Category	Grouped Aspects	Participant's Descriptions	Link to Literature	Participant Quotes
Commitment to Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive contribution to society - Strengthening of cultural identity 	Aspects that are most closely tied to interaction with organisations outside of the realm of the services sector make up this theme. Since they deal with the service sector organisations' impact on society, the parts of this issue are external to the organisation, and the opposite is true.	Iorgulescu and Marcu (2015), Singh (2007), Ramaley (2014), Guerrero (2016), Audretsch (2014)	<p>Participant ELM5 gives the following as an illustration of his organisation's social responsibility.</p> <p><i>"One of our company's social obligations is to provide evening concentrated skills courses for anyone looking to improve their skills. These courses have hosted a variety of people from our community, including the military, retirees, and unemployed individuals."</i></p>
Organisational Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership influence via organisational management and its importance. - Top-down motivation control accessibility encouraging volunteerism performance inspired by respect 	The leaders of an organisation's various initiatives and programs are managed under this subject to accomplish the organisation's main objectives. The elements covered by this theme demonstrate how successful organisational	Taylor et al. (2008), Anyamele (2005), Oliver (2009)	<p>NHC1 complimented his company's CEO and said:</p> <p><i>Since his appointment as our CEO, we have observed a shift in attitudes toward the development of the organisation. In the organisation, questions like, 'What is each department's vision, and how far have they worked to realise such a vision, what has been the output of each department in terms of outcomes, and</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowering employees through delegation - Teamwork - Observation and responsibility group decision-making - Motivation to employees - Relationship of trust - Leadership assistance is crucial to loyalty 	management should be and what methods are required to attain such effective organisational management.		<i>what, if any, development measures departments have made were once awkward to ask. In the first few months of his arrival, there was a pervasive sense of a lack of comfort between departmental heads and their employees as they had not been used to such expectations,</i>
Development of skills and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposure to the international scene improves employee guidance and establishes a favourable environment for providing services and skills development for employees' provisions for a welfare environment. 	This theme relates to the implementation of steps necessary to equip organisation employees with the necessary skills to augment their capacity to do their assigned jobs.	Saeed & Shabir (2013); Maruping and Magni (2012); Billet (2011); Clinton & Thomas (2011)	MOE2: <i>"...in our department, employees' productivity has been rewarded with training courses outside the KSA. This has served as both a method for improving employees' skills and a means for them to compete for these incentives and boost their performances."</i>
Organisational plans of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan to recruit strategically secure talented personnel - Improvements resulting from routine reflection - Environment-supporting research - Benefits of intra-employment contact - Collaboration with overseas organisations 	This speaks to a service organisation's capacity for establishing goals for what they want to become and developing both short- and long-term plans to get there. The elements in this theme cover several methods that are seen to	Keller (1983); Huang and Lee (2012); Jackson et al. (2009); Bratton & Gold (2017)	Focus group discussion: <i>"The services sector organisation's capacity to set a target of what they want to become and working on long- and short-term plans to attain their aims." The definition is "patterns of organisational action concerned with the formation and transformation of organisations, fields, and the rules and standards that control those structures in order to establish a</i>

	collaborating with private businesses - Initiatives for privatisation tendencies - Improvement motivated by feedback - Taking part in industry contests - Employees networking for self-evaluation - Efficient utilisation of resources	be crucial to the realisation of such goals.		<i>strategically favourable set of conditions.'</i>
Investment in internal and external growth	- Create policies that comply with global standards. - Competing for greater industry accreditation through the exchange of expertise and enthusiasm for the job - Improvements are driven by reputation. - Collaboration between regional and global organisations' use of technology effectiveness of communication	This theme relates to a service sector organisation's desire to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to growth and innovation. The theme is the need to develop experience and learn from sources both inside and beyond the purview of the service sector organisations, both of which are crucial components of such innovative ambitions. This goal is accomplished by providing the required	Joyce et al. (1999); Kirschner (2012); Louvel (2013); Fahey (2012)	<i>ADAA1: Our transformation from paper-reliant work procedures into a digitalized system has assisted in solving the time-consuming procedural necessity of the physical turning over of paperwork, as well as the saving and retrieval of paper files</i>

		tools and resources, as well as training professional individuals and facilities.		
Ethical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal treatment of workers - Equity - Identifying problems 	This theme alludes to the underlying moral problems that have a detrimental impact on the principles that underlie service sector organisations. These factors address the idea of justice in terms of due process and the effectiveness of disciplinary measures.	Yeo and Chien (2007), Caldwell et al. (2005), Kelley et al. (2006)	STC3: <i>Highly esteemed development courses, which are typically found outside the Kingdom, are exclusively for Saudi citizens, while foreign nationals may not even be able to enrol in development courses within the Kingdom unless they are self-sponsored or have strong connections within their department.</i>
Organisation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate output - Bureaucracy - Lack of knowledge of rules and procedures 	This theme is connected to infrastructure both physically and culturally. The enduring customs of numerous working generations that have been fundamental to a service sector organisation's operations make up its cultural infrastructure. In terms	Aldaihani, Alhussainan, and Terro (2017), Anifowose and Lawal (2013), Babatope (2010), Odeku and Odeku (2015)	MOBILY3 outlined the following while lamenting how bureaucracy undermines CI: <i>When we, as department members, suggest a change, it must first be approved by the sub-department board, followed by a department board, the company's management board, and finally, the specialist committee. This bureaucratic process stifles not only the department members' spirit of</i>

		of the physical infrastructure, these resources stand for those required for the creation and implementation of continuous improvement programs.		<p><i>innovation but also the company's efforts to improve continuously.</i></p> <p>Elm5 stated that, "<i>The company's work environment does not favour productivity, as there are social and legal hurdles to productive work.</i>"</p>
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5.4.2 Reviewing Themes

This stage entailed refining the topics that had been identified after the initial discovery of possible themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that while each topic must be unique from the others, facts within each theme should yet meaningfully cohere together. To guarantee the distinctness of the themes and their clarity, the researcher asked the focus group to re-evaluate the six main categories. He gave them the two-stage criteria for theme evaluation and refinement proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Participants first determined whether the extracts were organised according to a cohesive pattern during the stage of coded data. If so, the second stage assesses whether the candidate themes fit the coherent pattern.

At this point, the focus group was unable to reach a consensus since some members expressed disagreement with the conclusions, which were then made by the majority. The focus group used their interpretations and subjective comprehension of the data to arrange the themes and their underlying components. Seven different, clearly defined themes were produced after the focus group's refinement to represent the research data.

5.4.3 Identifying and Defining Themes

The established topics needed to be defined during the final analysis phase. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the definitions of themes involve figuring out what each theme's *essence* is as well as what portion of the data it addresses. Since the focus group created these themes, they were also tasked with developing these definitions. Before contemplating the appropriate definition, the researcher advised the focus group to review their understanding of each topic. To do this, the researcher suggested they go back over the data extracts for each theme that were presented to them prior to the initial theme generation process.

The 56 distinct organisational culture elements (OCA) were consequently grouped into overarching themes. Through a collaborative process of meaning-making, the chosen participants established the internal validity of these themes, which were then empirically acquired. The themes and their participant-developed definitions and the grouping of aspects are illustrated.

5.5 Analysis – Themes in Relation to Literature and Main Data

By comparing the data to the body of existing literature, this part aims to contextualise the developed themes. It will give the reader a critical interpretation of the data and show which developed topics have the greatest influence on CI in service sector companies. Each theme will be examined in relation to the body of material that has already been written, using participant quotes to support the interpretation. It will describe the level of significance participants assigned to each theme and compare features within each theme to highlight those believed to be key determinants of CI success as well as those that participants believe to be of less significance. The researcher won't go through every detail in every theme; instead, he will use a few details as illustrations of his points. According to the study's participants, the factors listed in Table 13 will be used by the researcher to describe the significance of each factor, and the theme's occurrence will be used to emphasize the themes' overall significance in the success of CI implementation in Saudi services sector organisations.

The elements that are most closely tied to involvement with organisations outside of the services sector make up the External Engagement Theme. Since they relate to the service sector organisation's influence on society and vice versa, the features of this theme are externally oriented from the service sector organisation.

Managing the various initiatives and programs that help an organisation accomplish its main objectives is referred to as organisational management. The elements covered by this theme represent how effective organisational administration should appear and what methods are required to achieve such effective organisational leadership.

- **Skills enhancement:** refers to taking the necessary steps to equip the organisation's staff with the necessary skills to ensure their capacity to do the tasks they were given.
- **Organisational strategies:** describe the organisations' capacity to identify their desired future state and develop both short- and long-term plans to get there. The aspects of this theme cover many methods seen to be crucial to the fulfilment of such schemes.
- **Development and growth:** mean the service sector company's desire to create an environment that is conducive to innovation and growth. This subject refers to the aim

to develop experience and learn from sources within and outside the purview of service sector organisations, both of which are crucial components for such innovative goals. This goal is accomplished by creating knowledgeable employees and making the equipment and facilities that are required.

- **Obstacles to Success:** denotes obstacles that can be found in the services sector environment. The elements that reflect these barriers, which are thought to be primarily direct or indirect and related to poor management, are included under this category.
- **Ethical concerns:** signify the underlying ethical problems that have a negative impact on the principles that underlie service sector companies. The idea of justice is covered by these factors in terms of due process and disciplinary measures that work.
- **Company facilities:** relate to the physical and cultural infrastructure. The organisational traditions of previous generations of workers that have been fundamental to a service sector company's operations make up its cultural infrastructure. Resources required for development are referred to as the physical infrastructure.

5.5.1 Themes in Relation to the Main Data and Literature

By comparing the data to the body of existing literature, this part aims to contextualize the developed themes. It will give the reader a critical interpretation of the data and show which developed topics have the greatest influence on CI in service sector companies. Each theme will be examined in relation to the body of material that has already been written, using participant quotes to support the interpretation. It will describe the level of significance participants assigned to each theme and compare features within each theme to highlight those believed to be key determinants of CI success as well as those that participants believe to be of less significance. The researcher will go through every detail in every theme; instead, he will use a few details as illustrations of his points. According to the study's participants, the factors listed in Table 5.3 will be used by the researcher to describe the significance of each factor, and the theme's occurrence will be used to emphasize the themes' overall significance in the success of CI implementation in Saudi Arabian service sector companies.

The themes' occurrence shows each theme's frequency in the 38 interviews after the formulation of seven unique themes and the focus group's definition of each topic. This example shows how certain themes are perceived as being more important to CI in service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia.

5.5.2 Theme of External Engagement

The organisation's interaction with the outside world is crucial to its efforts to achieve CI because it affects its connection with one of its primary stakeholders. The idea of socially engaged service sector companies, according to Singh (2007), pertains to initiatives to appropriate or assign entities to socially driven ends. The service sector company's responsibility extends beyond the creation, sharing, and application of information (Ramaley, 2014; Guerrero, 2016; Audretsch, 2014), and they are expected to embody these principles in their interactions with the general public (Singh, 2007).

In this study, the external involvement theme was mentioned by 55% of the interviewees. This was the least-discussed theme, which may be because the participants were unaware of the outside activities their organisation was involved in. However, given that it has the fewest features compared to other themes, this topic may be the least frequently listed. Two characteristics that are primarily concerned with interaction with society make up the external engagement theme. These two factors are cultural hegemony (CH) and a service sector organisation's social responsibility (OSR), which determines how the company contributes to society and deals with how societal values and ingrained practices affect how the company operates.

The opposite approach involves prioritizing the organisation's own interests at the expense of the interests of the larger society. Social responsibility involves actions taken by an organisation to further the social good beyond legal compliance and the integration of both societal and organisational interests in the decision-making process (McWilliams et al., 2006). Service sector companies exercise the OSR through efficient management of human resources, learning resources, and environmental implications in a joint conversation with the government, communities within the organisation, and society at large (Vallaey, 2013; Reiser, 2007; Esfijani et al., 2012). In light of this, OSR stands for the voluntarily adopted procedures of an assumed duty guiding an organisation's significant contributions to the society in which it operates.

It is obvious that there is still a dearth of OSR methods that have been successfully applied at Saudi service sector organisations. Participant ELM5 shares the following view as an illustration of his organisation's social responsibility: *"One of our company's social obligations is to provide evening concentrated skills courses for anyone looking to improve their skills. These courses have hosted a variety of people from our community, including the military, retirees, and unemployed individuals."*

Although this appears to be a beneficial practice for the organisation's social responsibility, MOE3 disproves this assumption by noting that:

Evening courses, which are frequently offered by organisations throughout the kingdom, were intended to play a significant role in enhancing employees' skills in their respective fields. However, the results of these courses have not been satisfactory, and they have primarily been taken by members of the armed forces for promotion rather than for the improvement of their skills.

Therefore, despite efforts to be socially responsible, Saudi service sector organisations still struggle to understand and apply OSR in a way that would be recognised as having a positive social influence.

The second element of the external interaction topic is cultural hegemony. It alludes to the substantial sway or control often attained through irrational means (Min, 2023; Cole, 2017). It could be interpreted as society's innately significant influence over service sector companies, whereby society prescribes how organisations operate through enduring customs that are occasionally codified as legislative requirements. Usually developed from cultural ideology, cultural hegemony entails organisationalisation, the creation of standards, and social regulations regarding what is right and wrong (Alenda & Arce-Riffo, 2023; Lears, 1985). According to ADAA2, within the Saudi service sector setting, one cultural practice that has been overcome was with respect to girls studying, which, before the 1970s, was considered inappropriate; nevertheless, currently, females outnumber boys in Saudi Arabian schools. He continues:

However, it is still considered culturally undesirable and is still common practice in many companies that male employees are not permitted to deal with female customers

face-to-face; instead, they must do so via a connected projector because they will not be in the same room.

GACA4 affirmed that

The lack of direct communication between an employee and the customer will have an effect on the customer's quality of service received since the customer will not be able to comfortably ask their questions, and the employee may not effectively answer them.

This view is in line with Adler's (2008) conclusion. He notes that organisations that have supported integration and open channels to cultural diversity exhibit indicators of having achieved the ongoing improvement of their internal environment. The services sector organisation is, therefore, thought to be driving cultural output, taking on the function of moderator and being a positive influence instead of being on the receiving end of society's culturally archaic habits.

Numerous academics have examined continuous improvement in the past and have concluded that it is more than just a collection of methods or instruments utilised by an organisation (Lapina et al., 2012; Powell, 1995; Cameron, 1991). The results of several studies show that the hegemonic culture of the organisation, which is society's input into the entity, and the organisation's social responsibility activities, which are the organisation's output in society, both influence the success of CI implementation (Cameron a& Quinn, 2011; Zgaga, 2009).

Therefore, the organisation's outward involvement with the larger society and the degree to which it is influenced by it are key components of CI activities. Participants in this study did not hold these factors in high regard as determinants of the success of CI implementation. For instance, just 42% of respondents said CH was a factor that affected how successfully CI was implemented in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations, while the other 58% gave it little weight. Due to the absence of cultural diversity in Saudi Arabia, this may be the result of an implied bias in favour of the culture that is practised in service sector organisations. Furthermore, just 37% of participants believe that OSR is crucial to the success of CI activities in Saudi Arabia, while the remaining 63% do not. This may be due to the participants' ignorance about OSR's effectiveness and the advantages that may follow from its use. This view was supported by a study conducted by Informa Middle East (2015) that showed a lack of understanding of CSR. Therefore, it is not unexpected that the participants in the study,

who are not CSR specialists, do not view CSR as a significant aspect of CI projects if those who specialize in CSR do not completely comprehend what the term means or how CSR is carried out.

5.5.3 The Theme of Organisational Management

Every entity's foundation and organisational management ensure the efficient execution of tasks and the accomplishment of goals. It has been described as the organisation leaders' ability to manage the different activities and programmes to meet the organisation's key goals by the study's participant focus group. Every organisation's effectiveness depends heavily on good leadership, which entails making sure that there are rules, regulations, and infrastructure that support effective role performance inside the organisation (Baporikar, 2016). Since it is the organisation's leaders who motivate employees to carry out their work in an efficient manner, their leadership can help the organisation achieve greatness (Wong, 2001; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Kok & McDonald, 2017). This argument demonstrates how leadership has a big impact on the success of organisational CI efforts.

Strategic changes in service sector organisations are dependent on leadership practices relating to organisational decision-making, communication, and evaluation (Stensaker et al., 2014). This corroborates the notion that organisation-wide change requires leaders to be more strategic in their approach (Simmons, 1997). A culture of innovation and continuous improvement is enabled by effective leadership, which also encourages everyone inside the organisation to offer their best work (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Studies have shown that the development of change depends significantly on leadership (Collins, 2014; Mayo & Lank, 1994). In addition, leadership has a big impact on the culture of an organisation (Ali et al., 2015). In light of this, it is evident that leaders play a crucial role in the development and execution of CI in service sector organisations.

The results of this empirical research confirmed the significance of organisational management to the effectiveness of CI in services sector organisations. The 14 various facets of the theme help to illuminate how broad and varied organisational management is as a whole. This issue was mentioned in 90% of the interviews, making it the second-most-mentioned theme, which shows that there is broad agreement on how important it is. Several of these 14 factors received significant attention from responders as being essential. The use of incentives for those involved in organisational affairs was one crucial feature that was

mentioned by 38 interviewees, showing that this is one of the most important factors in the implementation of CI. It was shown that service sector organisation employees' poor performance and occasionally their decision to leave the organisation were significantly influenced by their lack of incentives. For instance, ELM2 reported, *"a considerable number of qualified employees left the organisation to hunt for better chances in other companies."* On the other side, MOE2 noted the following when describing how incentives have aided CI: *"...in our department, employees' productivity has been rewarded with training courses outside the KSA. This has served as both a method for improving employees' skills and a means for them to compete for these incentives and boost their performances."*

The research on powerful enablers for the success of CI deployment also took into account the significance of incentives. In relation to this, Alfandi and Alkawsaneh (2014) state that the facilitation of incentives is regarded as a key element in the motivation of employees and the effectiveness of their work because the reward system or the provision of incentives directs employees' abilities in their work more effectively, especially as they aspire to accomplish the organisation's goals (Gana & Bababe, 2011). Additionally, a lack of suitable incentives at work might negatively affect the performance of diligent workers and decrease labour productivity, limiting the likelihood that organisational goals will be reached (Palmer, 2012).

According to Pasaribu (2008), financial incentives are a crucial motivator for worker loyalty and diligence since they encourage people to meet their employer's expectations. Ronald (2015) and Anthony and Bueno (1993) make additional arguments in favour of incentives for boosting employee loyalty and self-confidence. The value that employees place on incentives depends on two factors: whether they believe that good performance results in the desired reward and whether they believe their efforts could reach this level. According to Locke and Braver (2008), incentive systems play a crucial role in increasing employees' internal motivation, which encourages them to work harder and more productively. Employees' own skills alone are insufficient to sustain a culture of highly productive work.

There were other facets of this theme that respondents also cited. For instance, 47.5% of participants said that the importance of leadership influence and top-down support were motivating elements for the implementation of CI. As an illustration, NHC1 complimented his company's CEO and said:

Since his appointment as our CEO, we have observed a shift in attitudes toward the development of the organisation. In the organisation, questions like, 'What is each department's vision, and how far have they worked to realise such a vision, what has been the output of each department in terms of outcomes, and what, if any, development measures departments have made were once awkward to ask. In the first few months of his arrival, there was a pervasive sense of a lack of comfort between departmental heads and their employees as they had not been used to such expectations.' He said this describing how the new CEO's productivity-seeking behaviour was clear.

NHC1 goes on: *"Since his appointment two years ago, I can attest that the organisation's production has increased, and there has been an increase in departmental cooperation to preserve the organisation's overall progress vision."*

On the other hand, ADAA4 stated, *"It has become usual that you don't find the departmental manager, and you encounter their secretary, who would convey your question to the departmental manager when he arrives to work,"* which exemplified the detrimental impact of weak leaders. The information provided by MOE1 supports this.

Our departmental manager typically arrives at work after 11 a.m., picks up some of the inquiries his secretariat has prepared for him, and spends a few hours by himself in his office concluding some of the inquiries. Several of our department managers also arrive late for work; they may miss two to three days a week, and when they do show up, they frequently spend the majority of the day socialising.

On the other hand, ELM5 affirms the significance of management encouragement by saying:

...through my experience, I discovered that, even if productivity is low, individual encouragement from the direct manager will enhance staff productivity within a few months. ... " I discovered that there are two main components with ongoing personal encouragement for employees gained: The productivity and work commitment of the staff have substantially contributed to the success of the department.

The literature supports the ideas of managerial influence and encouragement importance. Oliver (2009), for instance, used empirical research to examine the effects of quality management methods and discovered that many respondents reported getting management-driven encouragement to work more efficiently rather than more diligently in order to enhance

performance. Other research supported the findings of this study about the significance of ambitious leadership visioning in the strategic planning and successful implementation of CI initiatives (Mayo & Lank, 1994; Simmons, 1997; Wong, 2001; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014).

In the case of CI in service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia, respondents just briefly mentioned the last category of factors. Only 26% of respondents said it was important that manager-driven initiatives were in place to provide workers with the right amount of independence. According to ADAA2,

One of the issues we have in our department is the individualisation of decision-making, where nearly every action my co-workers and I take, no matter how major or minor, requires our manager's prior approval. We must postpone making decisions until our manager returns to work since we lack the confidence to do so when he is not around.

ADAA2's assertion is confirmed by GACA1, who articulated his displeasure with the personnel in his department as follows: *"My staff sometimes reminds me of school boys since they come to me with every problem they encounter despite my repeated requests that they make an effort to resolve the issue before approaching me."* It is considered that giving employees more responsibility through task delegation not only improves their skills but also gives management a platform to foster good attitudes, which encourages improvement, confidence, and organisational loyalty among workers (Andish et al., 2013). This suggests that more empowerment fosters favourable sentiments toward one's employment.

Furthermore, just 26% of respondents said that teamwork was a crucial element of organisational management that may affect how successfully CI initiatives were implemented in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations. Different viewpoints on teamwork and how it can influence efforts to implement CI were shared by the participants. According to STC1, for instance, *"I don't like working in a team since there are usually team members that over-depend on other members and don't take their job seriously because they know the job will be done anyhow."* Others think that working in a team *"enhances employees' knowledge"* and *"complements employees' skills"* (SEC1, STC2) in addition to *"saving team members' time and effort"* (ELM5). A further point made by DU1 was that *"our department's staff cooperation has been our key motivation in contending and winning top quality department*

inside our organisation." Teamwork is therefore seen as being crucial to the success of CI. Numerous research studies show a beneficial relationship between teamwork and an organisation's services, hence supporting this assumption (Gibson et al., 2007).

The value of team-based work, according to Rico et al. (2011), lies in the combined application of a variety of knowledge, skills, experiences, and attitudes. By incorporating these elements, organisations can offer creative, adaptable, and quick solutions to issues and problems, as well as promote high performance and boost team member satisfaction. The interactions among team members boost their capacity to succeed in various performance scenarios (Salas et al., 2009). The advantages of teamwork are numerous: stimulating innovation and creativity, encouraging expression and involvement in the workplace culture, improving overall work productivity and quality, as well as the improvement of team members' abilities and autonomy (Parker et al., 2015; Geary & Dobbins, 2006; Reed, 1992). As a result, organisational success and the general generation of knowledge, according to Wuchty et al. (2007), depend greatly on the efficiency of the team as a whole.

5.5.4 The theme of skill development

The development of employees' skills is thought to be one of the key factors that makes CI projects in service sector organisations successful. This subject of skill development is described by the focus group as *"the adoption of measures that are needed to enhance the organisation's personnel and employees with the relevant "skills to assure their capacity to execute their assigned jobs."* By addressing identified skill and competency gaps and continuously providing the necessary training and development, skills can be improved (Saeed & Shabir, 2013). According to Maruping and Magni (2012), skill development should take place in a setting that supports both individual and group learning. Given its importance in developing skills, the lack of CI initiatives represents a gap in the quest for organisational excellence. The CI process becomes more dynamic and inspirational as a result of ongoing skill development, which has a substantial beneficial impact on outcomes (Seekr, 2011).

Work-integrated learning (WIL), which involves exposing staff to real-world work in addition to academic study, is crucial in the eyes of the employees since it improves their employability (Jackson, 2015). WIL boosts employees' self-assurance in their capacity to do duties in the workplace (Billet, 2011; Clinton & Thomas, 2011), gives employees a better knowledge of the abilities needed by the sector, and increases their appreciation of the workplace (Gamble

et al., 2010; Wilton, 2012). Studies have indicated that WIL graduates have more employability skills than those who receive standard education. Problem-solving, teamwork, professionalism, communication, and information literacy are some examples of these abilities (Freudenberg et al., 2011; Coll et al., 2009). These abilities are thought to play a significant role in a graduate's capacity to perform well in the modern job.

The relevance of employee skills inside service sector organisations has been further supported by the empirical findings of this study. The overall citation rate for the theme was 74%, which indicates that more than two-thirds of the participants think it is essential to the success of CI at Saudi service sector companies. Although different parts of the topic are regarded to be of variable relevance, the overall majority agreement shows the theme's overall value. Four elements that make up the skills enhancement theme have been recognised by the study's participants, and they are categorised as having limited importance or considerable importance based on how frequently they are mentioned. "*Exposure to working conditions*," mentioned by 10 participants, and "*improving employee counselling*," mentioned by 11, are the characteristics of limited importance. As a result, only a small number of participants mentioned both. "*Provide an acceptable work environment*," which was mentioned by 16 participants, or about half of the study's participants, and "*employee skills development*," which was frequently mentioned by participants and was mentioned 24 times in total, are the characteristics of reasonable relevance - making up more than half of the participants in the study. Seventy-four per cent of interviewees acknowledged the theme as a whole, indicating its critical role in the success of CI activities.

Only 29% of participants said that improving employee counselling was important in influencing CI, so it is not of major importance in Saudi Arabian service sector companies. The remaining 71% did not think it was particularly significant. This can be a result of the Saudi company culture, in which most companies lack an employee advisor, and most employees are unaware of their right to request academic counselling from organisation staff (Almuharib, 2009). Several of the participants in this study agree with this point of view. For example, MOE1 claims that "*I, along with every other employee I know, don't have enough awareness of what employee counselling comprises, or what to expect from our employee advisors.*" Adds STC3:

I only learned about counselling by accident when I went to one of my managers to see him and started moaning to him about my study problems. He then informed me about the employee advising services, which I found to be quite useful. I don't think many employees are aware of their access to employee advising.

In contrast, SEC2 explains: *“Less than 5% of employees actually visit me for advice, despite the fact that I have repeatedly reminded them to do so since I started managing them, whether they need assistance with a personal issue or general career advice.”*

Therefore, it is evident that employee counselling is not well-known in sampled Saudi Arabian service sector companies.

Despite this, employee counselling is still seen as being crucial to employee success since it enhances their learning and development by mentoring their work performance and offering them the right tools and professional guidance (Pargett, 2011). Employee counselling, according to Campbell and Nutt (2008), can operate as an efficient tool that links employees to career enhancement opportunities that encourage and support their progress and the achievement of key job outcomes (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Hale et al., 2009). In light of this, employee counselling can play a significant role in the success of CI programs in service sector companies.

The most frequently mentioned component of skill development is employee skill development, which is an example of a feature with reasonable importance. Approximately 63% of the individuals who were interviewed thought it was essential. For instance, according to NHC4, *“We continuously train our workers by sending a few of them annually for short courses, most of which are outside the KSA, to ensure that their abilities are in line with international standards.”* In order to upgrade their skills and ensure successful usage of new technologies, he gives the example that before they buy modern IT products, they send their IT workers to training sessions in developed nations like the United States or Japan. Additionally, STC1 clarifies that employees in their division can apply for any course they believe is required to improve their job-related abilities. The workers can then *“prioritise the skills we think are crucial to our career development, helping us effectively carry out work because no one knows our skill limitations better than we do.”* As a result, the success of

these workers and service sector organisations, in general, depends on the growth of employee capabilities.

Nda and Fard (2013), who contend that a workforce with these qualities is essential to an organisation's success, support this finding. As a result, organisations must continually invest in staff training and skill development if they want to remain sustainable. At all levels, development and training are essential since abilities deteriorate and, over time, become outdated and require replacement (Nishtha & Amit, 2010). In order to illustrate the value of staff training and development, Paradise (2007) uses the statistic that US businesses spend more than \$126 billion annually on this process. Such significant expenditures are indicative of how crucial employee development is to the success of organisations.

5.5.5 Theme of Organisational Strategies

Another important factor in the success of CI initiatives is the organisational strategy theme. The focus group gave this definition: *"The services sector organisation's capacity to set a target of what they want to become and working on long- and short-term plans to attain their aims."* The definition *"patterns of organisational action concerned with the formation and transformation of organisations, fields, and the rules and standards that control those structures in order to establish a strategically favourable set of conditions"* was used by Lawrence (1999) to provide a detailed definition of organisational strategy.

According to Keller (1983), organisations should examine their internal and external environments, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and then take significant steps to support their strategic viability. The economic, technological, cultural, social, and political advancement of society are examples of elements that make up the external environment of companies in the services sector. Along with competing with other service sector organisations, it also has to deal with community expectations, employee expectations, and new industry innovations. In order to establish a competitive advantage, companies providing services, according to Huang and Lee (2012), should adapt their internal resources to the external industry environment. Insights and understanding to identify possibilities and strengths can be produced by combining external and internal analysis of service sector organisations, which can aid in gaining competitive advantage but also recognising the hazards and vulnerabilities that must be avoided, if not remedied, and obtaining organisational

performance superiority. In light of this, the success of CI projects depends on an organisational strategy that is well thought out and implemented.

The empirical results of this research have shown the significance of having an organisational strategy. A unanimous opinion about its influence as a factor for successful CI implementation in the sampled Saudi service sector organisations was expressed by 87% of participants who highlighted the organisational strategy theme. This theme has 12 components that speak to the organisation's development ambitions and the strategies used—or intended to be used—to meet these strategic goals. Depending on the number of participants who cite them, the elements included in this subject can be categorised as either having reasonable or limited importance to CI in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations. Strategic planning by service sector organisations and their hiring practices, which were mentioned by more than a third of participants, are two factors of reasonable relevance. Partnerships with businesses and feedback-driven improvement are factors that are not very important. No more than 15% of the study participants mentioned these factors.

Strategic planning and attracting qualified candidates were two elements under the organisational strategy subject that were frequently mentioned by research participants. Thirty-eight responders mentioned both elements, indicating their considerable prominence to CI at sampled Saudi service sector organisations. Participants in the study outlined the significance of both elements for the successful execution of CI initiatives. Mobily2, for instance, emphasises the long-term strategy of his organisation by saying,

We presently rank among the top companies in Saudi Arabia, if not the best, and we strive to rank among the top internationally. We are clear about our objectives: excellence in graduate skills, excellence in faculty members and research outputs, and a financially stable organisation are all part of the strategic objective. We have already started mobilising our resources to carry out this long-term goal.

He continues,

Among the several measures we took to realise the organisation's strategic goal, we started to look for and attract competent employees from both within and beyond the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Our company hired qualified personnel from different

nations to build a varied workplace and to increase knowledge creation by learning from different experiences.

ELM5 also emphasised this approach to hiring talented workers.

Strategic planning and the recruitment of skilled workers are thus crucial foundations of CI initiatives in Saudi service sector organisations. Their significance to the entire organisational approach is further supported by research. Additionally, programs and policies to entice qualified workers must be established if CI is to succeed. According to Adudark (2014), employers must be able to advocate for and put into practice the recruitment and selection of personnel in a strategic manner for an organisation to flourish, survive, or effectively compete on a global scale. To achieve the organisation's goals and carry out its strategic plans, such recruitment strategies must be devised (Jackson et al., 2009). According to Montgomery (1996), the recruitment and selection process should be centred on aligning a potential employee's skills to the requirements and benefits of the position. In this context, businesses are implementing hiring procedures that let them evaluate an applicant's suitability (Bratton & Gold, 2017).

Other factors were mentioned only sporadically, showing that the participants don't place much weight on them. Partnerships with for-profit companies and improvement driven by feedback are some of these components. Only 8% of study participants mentioned their organisations' collaborations with foreign companies, which, in their opinion, shows how little significance these collaborations have in Saudi Arabia's service sector organisations' CI processes. Though not frequently mentioned, both of these features were emphasised for their significance and advantages by those who did mention them. SEC1 clarified:

My company's collaboration deal with various Saudi-based organisations to make employees less available for training is one constructive step it has taken. The 'work experience' job barrier—where employers seek relevant work experience for open positions, but recently, employees typically lack such experience—has been eliminated because of this alliance.

Such relationships are crucial, as stated by STC2:

One advantage of these contracts that I have personally witnessed and that our department has noted is that, in contrast to prior employees, recently, employees taking

part in these initiatives find jobs much more easily, and many of them wind up working for the company where they did their internship.

Ahmad and Junaid (2008) contend that the organisation-industry partnership is viewed as a primary cooperative effort between the disparate entities of industry and academia, utilising their resources effectively and efficiently to gain shared objectives of enhancing global competitiveness and technological innovation and acting as an engine for economic growth. Service sector organisations' capacity to perform appropriate, high-quality services is significantly boosted by their partnerships with organisations, which also help businesses improve their ability to compete globally. These partnerships are typically seen as tools for achieving such goals as well as fostering highly competitive and innovative environments (Liyanage & Mitchell, 1994; Al-Agtash & Al-Fahoum, 2008; Othman, 2011).

Similarly, only 8% of participants mentioned the feedback-driven improvement element, indicating that it is not given much weight. Feedback is considered to be a crucial component of CI for service sector workers as well as employees. The study's participants noted that a significant barrier to the CI of service sector companies from the viewpoint of the employee was the absence of feedback. Mobily1 clarifies:

All employees who did not achieve their tasks satisfactorily are asking what went wrong, and because we are not told what went wrong, we might be making the same mistakes in the future. I have no right to contest my assessment by a manager, and I am not permitted to view my mistakes, if any.

It is evident that employees believe that feedback is crucial to their performance and that Saudi service sector organisations should incorporate it into their programs. Additionally, based on Mobily1's second referenced statement, it is clear that a lack of evaluation feedback could cause employees to question the accuracy of the assessment feedback they get from their managers.

The literature suggests that assessment feedback may be a potent instrument for boosting employee learning and supports the idea that it is a necessary component of efficient and successful learning (Sadler, 2010; Black & Wiliam, 1998). The most important aspect of assessment, according to Price et al. (2010), is feedback since it promotes learning by giving information that can be used to enhance performance in the future. According to a number of

studies, feedback is a powerful tool for improving organisational outcomes since it offers information that can be used to eliminate performance gaps (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As a result, providing feedback is a crucial component of the CI of employee training. An effective feedback system is considered to be a crucial component of an organisation's development from an organisational standpoint.

According to ELM5, *"One of the initiatives we took to boost the output and calibre of our staff's work was by giving them regular performance feedback."* As an illustration, he says, *"... the quantity, calibre, and duration of the jobs that our administrative personnel completes are evaluated every three months."* He goes on to say that *"one of the ways we gauge employee performance is by providing feedback at the conclusion of each task or project."* According to ADAA4, it details the advantages that employees derive from feedback.

I began to recognise my areas of weakness based on feedback. I used this feedback to plan my work, and I soon noticed that my performance increased greatly. Feedback enables organisations to comprehend their existing situation, which supports the significance of feedback in the CI of service sector organisations. Ferguson (2011) emphasises that an integral part of the organisational strategy is feedback. If managed properly, regular feedback can also improve employee abilities and performance (Morrison, 2002; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Finally, the organisation can create social support networks that sustain enthusiasm for its programs and courses by proactively soliciting feedback (Collewaert et al., 2016). Feedback can, therefore, be seen as being crucial to the ongoing success of employees and their organisations.

5.5.6 Development and Growth Theme

The organisational plan for development and growth (D&G) is a significant factor in CI in service sector companies. The focus group's definition of D&G is as follows:

Services sector organisations' eagerness to promote an atmosphere that is conducive to innovation and progress, which is related to the desire to acquire information and expertise from sources both inside and beyond the purview of services sector organisations, which are crucial components for such innovation goals.

The necessity of service sector companies' ongoing participation in reform initiatives, which helps them retain their status as useful social organisations, has been emphasised in the literature. Research has supported the idea that service sector organisations must be open to experimentation and change (Joyce et al., 1999; Kirschner, 2012; Louvel, 2013; Fahey, 2012) and participate in CI by re-examining current methods and adopting evidence-based innovation (Carneiro et al., 2015).

Service sector organisations should continuously review their situation based on available data to assess the level of success or failure of their projects and to spot potential problems with specific stakeholders (Barth et al., 1999). Another element that has been proven to be significant in enhancing service sector organisations is external support (Stoll & Myers, 1998; Potter et al., 2002; Thomson & Stoll, 2017). By establishing external networks that aid in the creation of innovations and the promotion of best practices, services sector organisations should build external ties of support. According to Howes and Ainscow (2006), a collaboration between and within services sector companies not only shares existing information but also, and perhaps more importantly, generates new knowledge of contextual specificity, which may be especially helpful for service-sector companies dealing with difficult conditions.

The empirical results of this study provide more evidence for the value of D&G in service sector organisations, particularly for CI projects in Saudi companies. The created D&G theme from the focus group was mentioned by 92% of participants' citations in this study, making it the most important theme in terms of the efficacy of CI efforts. Nine different characteristics make up this subject, and the prominence of each one varies depending on how many people mentioned it. The significance of each of these factors could be used to divide them. More than two-thirds of the study participants highlighted the use of technology as an example of how CI in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations has been successful. More than a third of the participants mentioned those that were of reasonable importance, such as the sharing of skills. Less than a third of participants mentioned the less significant factors, such as employees' passion for their jobs. Eighty-one per cent of research participants named the efficient use of technology as one of the factors that were highly significant to the success of CI in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations, demonstrating the relevance of this factor in CI activities. *“We’ve recently become more reliant on technology, which has not only*

increased our reliance on technology but also increased our boosted efficiency while also enhancing work performance," explained ADAA1. He adds, *"Our transformation from paper-reliant work procedures into a digitalised system has assisted in solving the time-consuming procedural necessity of the physical turning over of paperwork, as well as the saving and retrieval of paper files."* MOE1 agrees that using technology effectively is essential for the delivery of materials related to the job. Additionally, according to STC3, this fosters communication between managers and subordinates, which enhances their comprehension of the tasks and requirements.

Numerous studies have shown how crucial it is for employees, customers, and management to use technology. Technology use, according to Zhang et al. (2004), boosts employees' independence and enables them to develop into knowledgeable researchers and members of their organisations. According to Mayer (2005), technology improves learning because people retain information far more effectively when it is combined with images and words than when it is just words. On the level of employment, Dasgupta et al. (2011) contend that the deployment of IT systems has improved organisational effectiveness because it offers clients high-quality services and has a considerably favourable effect on staff productivity. IT use has been shown to speed up work, improve work procedures, save operational expenses, and improve overall productivity (Jahromi 2005; Kirkwood & Price, 2014).

The study found that the second category of D&G-related aspects, which includes the exchange of expertise, is reasonably important to the development of CI at Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. This factor was mentioned by 58% of the interview participants, which indicates that over 50% of them thought it contributed to the success of CI. For instance, GACA4 contents from the standpoint of research:

The fact that our employees are engaged with the practical realities of the kingdom benefits us as an organisation because when cooperation or governmental bodies encounter problems, they transfer them to us for analysis and solution-proposal. This increases the organisation's understanding of the real issues and variables at play and provides its employees with relevant problems to study and teach about.

On the other hand, ELM3 claims that from the viewpoint of the employee: *"In general, I prefer learning skills from the senior staff's practical expertise since, in addition to following*

the company's policies, he also shares real-world examples of how the skills I am learning are used in the real world."

Mobily3 agrees, *"We observed, in our department, employee attendance and more people wanting to move to our department."*

Employee engagement at work is a representation of factors in services sector organisations that are only marginally important to CI. Only 26% of participants mentioned this element, which suggests that not many people believe it to be essential to the success of CI. It is thought that without employees' excitement for their work, tasks will not be carried out efficiently, lowering the quality of the work. This assumption is backed by Smith (1994), who contends that an organisation's ability to survive depends on its committed staff. Amabile (1993) adds that it is crucial for employers to guarantee that their staff members are enthusiastic about their work because disinterested workers are less likely to put substantial effort into their work, resulting in them producing subpar work, avoiding the office whenever possible, and may even quit their jobs.

Sirota and Klein (2013) further underline the enthusiasm of the workforce and note that it is thought that a motivated workforce is a key component in the development and expansion of a service sector organisation. Numerous participants in this study agree with this thinking. For instance, NHC2 describes how a lack of workplace passion affects an employee's productivity and efficiency. He says, *"We occasionally suffer as managers from the lack of an environment that supports enthusiasm, with the employees being constrained by a daily work routine and lacking the authority to indulge their creativity."* MOE2, who describes their experience of work passion, argues in favour of this by saying:

Some of our staff put in extra hours, sometimes without pay, out of respect for our manager, who, in addition to rewarding them financially when possible, also encourages them to reach their full potential by sending them to crucial training sessions.

Despite being encouraged by financial and non-financial incentives, ELM2 notes that *"a number of employees, after attaining a certain level of promotion, start losing interest in pursuing further learning and self-development."*

5.5.7 The Theme of Obstacles to Success

An organisation's ability to succeed in its CI activities is determined by the obstacles it encounters and how it overcomes them. The focus group identified the "*success hurdles that exist inside the services sector environment*" as the Obstacle to Success Theme. Fundamentally, the success of services sector organisations is realised through the achievement of their employees. As a result, it is thought that employee achievement is a crucial organisational value in advancing the service sector organisations' goals. According to Groves (2014), leaders of services sector organisations and their stakeholders prioritise employee success as one of their top goals and effectively spread this message throughout their organisations. As a result, some scholars have noted that high-performing service sector companies share a culture of employee achievement at the organisational level (Kuh et al., 2005; Carey, 2005; O'Brien & Engle, 2007; Bradley & Blanco, 2010).

When employing their staff, service sector organisations also give importance to commitment to organisational achievement in general and employee success in particular. They support staff commitment by praising and recognising individuals who contribute to the success of the company (Tinto, 1993; Kuh et al., 2005; Carey, 2005; Terpstra & Honoree, 2009; Benton & Radziwill, 2016). Organisations may, however, encounter many difficulties as they strive for success.

As evidence of the importance of this subject in the implementation of CI in service sector organisations, 71% of participants in this study highlighted the theme Obstacles to Success. Eleven different characteristics make up this topic and highlight the numerous obstacles to achievement that Saudi Arabian services sector organisations face. Depending on how frequently they were cited, the participants classified the parts that make up this theme into those that they thought had considerable importance and those that they thought had limited value. These factors, other than the "change resistance component," have little bearing on the adoption of CI in service sector organisations, as evidenced by the fact that less than a third of the participants mentioned them.

Only one factor, *employee resistance to change*, was rated by 45% of participants as being of moderate importance. The participants provided a variety of justifications for change resistance. MOE2, for instance, states:

The organisation's leaders, who have an outdated mindset and do not understand the advantages and necessity of change, are one of the obstacles preventing the organisation from achieving its desired change. They are concerned that the proposed change may jeopardise their job security and financial benefits.

MOBILY3 makes the following argument in favour of change: *“The management is often older; we younger employees are enthusiastic about integrating technology into our organisation, but they are unable to do so. As a result, they prefer the traditional methods of working.”*

Another justification was provided by NHC1, who stated:

Given that they lack the necessary skills to handle such technical systems, we have seen that staff are not enthusiastic about our most recent technical modifications. Although I believe that the company's technology moderation is crucial to its operation, I do not believe that our company's environment is prepared for such technical implementations.

It is obvious that one of the main factors contributing to employees' shift toward resistance is a lack of qualifications. The culture of change resistance among employees is influenced by the company. For instance, MOE2 says:

Unfortunately, some employees work for up to nine years in the same position without getting promoted or having the opportunity to enrol in courses to advance their skills. This results in indirect opposition to the company's proposed development because these employees would rather avoid any challenges associated with the development and instead take pleasure in their mundane jobs.

In order to minimise later resistance to their suggested adjustments, services sector organisations should always seek the frequent and current development of their personnel, according to GACA4. The literature lists a number of them, including risks to job security, comfort, status, salary loss, outdated knowledge and competence gaps. These are only a few of the reasons people oppose change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Val & Fuentes, 2003; Bateh et al., 2013; Aslam et al., 2016; Bareil, 2013).

Employee resistance to change has been linked to failure to implement it (Haslam et al., 2004; Egan & Fjermestad, 2005). Organisations suffer from employee reluctance to change, which can slow down changes that are required, resulting in rising expenses, declining productivity, and, in the worst circumstances, organisational failure (Bryant, 2006; Mathews & Linski, 2016).

Mismanagement of human resources is another instance of a collection of service sector organisations' employee-related issues that are of marginal consequence. Only 23% of individuals mentioned these factors, which highlights how important they are in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. The panellists discussed many types of human resource mismanagement as well as some of the causes of such mismanagement. NHC1 described how an unqualified person was appointed to a position of leadership. He claims:

A graduate in Islamic Studies who recently oversaw one of the departments was, with all due respect to his field of study, unqualified for the role and lacked the necessary expertise to adequately direct the department or develop it. ... A freshly qualified person is now in charge of one of the most important departments after it became evident that it was falling behind other departments. He has been working to address many of the problems his predecessor created.

According to GACA1, the issue might have started at the outset of the hiring process. The majority of the time, she claims, "... the job has already been snatched by persons who are fortunate enough to have connections in the company", and despite the fact that job openings are frequently advertised. GACA1 described her own employment experience, saying,

If it wasn't for my file accidentally being sent to the head of the company, along with the other files, I wouldn't have gotten this job if it weren't for people with connections at the organisation. "I was astonished to find that most company employees had relatives at the organisation when I started there as if it was a family company.

While lamenting the individualised treatment of problems and how it can harm careers, GACA1 gives an illustration. She stated that "An administrative manager with 20 years' experience was reassigned to become a correspondence officer because she voiced an opinion of what is right and incorrect." It is obvious that she intended to emphasise that the correspondence officer post is far lower on the company's administrative ladder and that the

manager with 20 years of experience deserves a better position. As a result, it is obvious that some Saudi service sector organisations have mismanaged their human resources.

One major barrier to any CI project is the poorly managed human capital of the company. According to Sharabati et al. (2010), human capital includes the organisation's human factor as well as the skills, knowledge, and experience that collectively give the organisation its unique personality. The ineffective management of human resources has a negative impact on workplace productivity and may result in the hiring of people who are underqualified or incompetent, which lowers organisational effectiveness (Syverson, 2011).

5.5.8 Theme of Ethical Concerns

The success of CI projects is said to be seriously hampered by ethical difficulties within Saudi Arabian service sector organisations. The focus group's definition of ethical issues was given as *"the underlying ethical issues negatively influencing the principles upon which the services sector organisations are established, which cover the notion of justice in terms of procedural fairness and the efficacy of disciplinary measures."* The concept of ethical concerns is comprised of elements that are thought to undercut Saudi services sector organisations for purportedly moral reasons. The service sector is anticipated to have a significant role in the dissemination and upbringing of morals and values (Reimer et al., 1983). When there are ethical transgressions, service sector organisations' reputation is damaged, leading to the growth of a bad reputation and a loss of credibility (Yeo & Chien, 2007; Caldwell et al., 2005; Kelley et al., 2006).

Damage to reputation and credibility weakens organisational legitimacy, which has a serious negative impact on organisations' ability to govern themselves effectively (Eckel, 2000; Caldwell et al., 2005). Organisational policies and behaviour that are inconsistent undermine public confidence in those organisations (Caldwell et al., 2005). The organisational culture of unethical behaviour is much more pernicious since it fosters the development of bad role models and encourages bad behaviour among other members. In service sector organisations, it has been discovered that employees are more prone to imitate their managers' behaviour than to adhere to norms of conduct (Kelley et al., 2006). Therefore, according to Kelley and Chang (2007), ethical behaviour in service sector organisations must be sufficient to achieve a healthy organisational system.

The empirical results of the present study further support the notion that service sector companies' ethics must be upheld and that any transgression of these standards may have negative effects on CI in Saudi Arabian service sector companies. Seventy-nine per cent of interviewees mentioned the ethical issue theme, indicating a general agreement that it is crucial to the success or failure of CI activities. There are five different components to this topic, and they are classified into two categories: those with great relevance, like employee equality, and those with low value, like equity. Despite the fact that the terms are interchangeable, it is thought that each has unique qualities of its own.

According to Nowakowski and Conlon (2005), equality refers to everyone having the same opportunity with respect to an outcome, whereas equity refers to the fairness of an outcome based on the link between inputs and outputs. Equity in the workplace refers to the process of giving workers fair chances to experience just outcomes. The only feature of this theme that received significant attention was equality between employees, which was noted by 71% of study participants, indicating how significant they thought it was for the implementation of CI in service sector organisations. The panellists described a few different types of equality problems that are present in Saudi service sector organisations. For instance, GACA1 declares:

It is well-known at this company that those connected to certain departments are generally treated better than their counterparts in other departments and have an advantage in terms of opportunities for advancement, professional development, and decision-making at the company as a whole.

GACA3 argued, "We always have more work than our Saudi colleagues, especially during the summertime", in response to complaints about the unfair treatment of foreign workers in comparison to workers who are Saudi citizens. "I myself wouldn't mind having to work more hours if I were compensated like my Saudi colleagues," he continues, "but our incomes are lower by a great deal," STC3 complains about the inequality in treatment and asserts:

Highly esteemed development courses, which are typically found outside the Kingdom, are exclusively for Saudi citizens, while foreign nationals may not even be able to enrol in development courses within the Kingdom unless they are self-sponsored or have strong connections within their department.

This inequality among employees is seen to be a key reason why CI programs fail. A number of academics have argued that emphasising equality is necessary since it has a negative impact on employees' productivity (Brief, 1998), job satisfaction (Brown, 1996), teamwork, and job effectiveness (Hu & Liden, 2015). Employee turnover is detrimental to relationships between workers and their managers (Latif et al., 2015; Griffeth et al., 2000). As a result, it can be thought that for CI projects to be successful, employees must be treated fairly.

Equality was viewed as having little significance. Only 8% of the study's participants believed that equality played a significant role in the success of CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. For example, GACA1 said:

All of the employees who received promotions did so either as a result of their friendship with the officials or because it was in their best interests to do so. Promotions were not merit-based. They weren't determined by the workers' abilities or effectiveness on the job.

Elm5 argues,

"Bias can not only be identified but is very deeply ingrained in the academic environment, which is a key hurdle to building a fair and effective organisation." However, I personally do not expect such a thing to happen because I have not met anyone who has been discriminated against.

On the other hand, NHC1 complimented the easier accessibility to his company's management and said, "Of course, we hear, and it is commonly talked about - the racist and discriminatory treatment of employees." He tempered his earlier comment, saying that "such discriminatory treatment might happen at different departments, as I don't entirely deny it, but I have not personally experienced such treatment of employees," but he did not openly refute this lack of equality and equity in the company.

Although equity is sometimes confused with equality, which makes it less frequently mentioned by participants, equity is just as significant as equality. Low job performance, high intended turnover rates, and high actual turnover rates have all been linked to employers' failure to establish obvious connections between the rewards system and employees' performance (Buttner & Lowe, 2017). In light of this, equity would seem to be a crucial pillar for the effective use of CI.

5.5.9 Organisation Infrastructure Theme

One of the most important criteria for integrating CI in Saudi service sector organisations was infrastructure. When identifying this issue, the focus group made a distinction between its cultural and physical dimensions. They described the physical infrastructure as *"those resources necessary to the development and delivery of the company's products"* and the cultural infrastructure as *"the long-standing habits of successive working generations that have formed an integral part of how a company runs."* The physical infrastructure consists of a variety of structures and tools for both work and recreation areas, farms, landscapes, gardens, forests, roads, and other activities (Subedi, 2003). Anifowose and Lawal (2013) contend that a services sector organisation needs the right infrastructure in order to have a perfect working environment.

The empirical results of this study emphasise once more how crucial a company's physical infrastructure and culture are to the CI of service sector organisations. Despite being the second-least reported issue in this study, company infrastructure was nonetheless regarded by more than half of the participants as having an impact on CI within services sector organisations because it was mentioned by 65% of interviewees. Four of the five elements that make up the subject have to do with the organisation's cultural infrastructure, reflecting the various functions that it plays in CI efforts. More than a third of participants mentioned bureaucracy within services sector organisations as an example, while less than a third of participants mentioned less significant issues such as staff's low productivity. In Saudi services sector organisations, the bureaucratic environment has been identified by 42% of respondents as a crucial influencing element for the success of CI. This is an example of an aspect with reasonable importance. It is evident that the study's participants are aware of how such a factor might negatively impact CI initiatives. MOBILY3 outlined the following while lamenting how bureaucracy undermines CI:

When we, as department members, suggest a change, it must first be approved by the sub-department board, followed by a department board, the company's management board, and finally, the specialist committee. This bureaucratic process stifles not only the department members' spirit of innovation but also the company's efforts to improve continuously.

Additionally, GACA2 discloses that *"this bureaucratic process of requesting clearance from many boards hinders the continuous improvement initiatives, as every board needs enough time to evaluate the proposed change."*

In support of the participants' contention, Beetham (1996) claimed that adherence to bureaucratic norms could hinder efficiency, and Cunningham (2017) noted the difficulties connected with bureaucratic processes within organisations. Employees' morale is negatively impacted, and their creativity is stifled by the bureaucratic desire of management to control people's actions and restrict their liberty (du Gay, 2000). The tension between bureaucracy and creativity is caused by the desire of bureaucracies to foster systemised knowledge and to encourage predictability, which undermines the demands of originality's creative and critical thinking requirements (Daymon, 2000). This stifles innovation, which is crucial to the existence of today's organisations. As a result, service sector organisations should operate with a more participatory philosophy. Such participatory behaviours, according to Al-Yahya (2009), are important predictors of the successful use of competence in addition to having an impact on perceptions of work-related results (knowledge, skill, and ability)

Only 26% of study participants highlighted the fact that employees' low productivity was one of the factors that they thought played a little role in the effectiveness of CI in Saudi services sector organisations. Elm5 stated that *"the company's work environment does not favour productivity, as there are social and legal hurdles to productive work,"* which is one explanation for why productivity in some services sector organisations is low. He gave the following illustration:

A significant portion of our staff's productivity is lost while they are away from the company because they have to drive their kids to and from school, transport sick family members, commute from other cities, or scramble their schedules so they can spend the rest of the day with their families, who may live up to 300 kilometres away from the company.

He continues by criticising how the law is assisting those underproductive employees, citing:

One of our staff member's productivity is extremely low, and she frequently requests vacation and sick time. We tried to get her to stop by reporting her to management, but

the law prevented us from firing her or moving her to another department because it protects her.

In addition, GACA1 described how this lack of production spread across society:

When I was first hired, I requested to see the staff performance report, but I soon learned that there wasn't one. What's worse, if I had to sum up the staff's daily activities, I'd say they largely consist of social gatherings rather than regular work. Since the average output of organisation personnel is only one hour, I would concur with the labour minister's statement; nevertheless, I would not generalise such a statement.

She was making reference to a statement made by the former labour minister, who asserted that "research by the Economic and Planning Ministry shows that the output of the Saudi employee does not surpass one hour" (Alkhalisi, 2016).

Employee productivity is regarded as the foundation for every organisation's survival. According to Singh et al. (2000), productivity is the main factor that determines any organisational output actions. Additionally, it was suggested that one of the most important elements determining an organisation's competitiveness is productivity. Pritchard (1995) asserts that an organisation's production, which in turn heavily depends on employee productivity, is essential to its existence. Furthermore, according to Pritchard (1995), increasing organisational productivity will remain crucial. This claim is supported by other studies (Caniels & Veld, 2016; Katou & Budhwar, 2015; Isabirye, 2007), with the largest untapped potential for doing so being through the effective use of employees. In light of this, it is thought that any services sector organisation without a productive workforce will be unable to carry out its CI objectives successfully. On the other hand, a third of participants said that physical infrastructure was crucial to the success of CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations.

5.6 Best Placement for the Themes

For each of the seven categories, an ideal position is shown to exist by the research findings and literature review. The next subsections will discuss these optimum placements.

5.6.1 External Engagement Ideal Position

The ideal scenario for external engagement is when the organisation interacts with the larger community, goes above and beyond the requirements of the law, and incorporates societal

concerns into its decision-making processes, so assuring its long-term survival (Pinheiro et al., 2016; Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014; Duke & Hinzen, 2014; Gibbons et al., 1994). These contributions include supporting sustainable human development, providing services, and facilitating scholarships (Nicolescu, 2018; McCowan, 2016). It also entails participating in shaping a society's culture rather than simply being subjected to archaic customs.

5.6.2 Organisational Management Ideal Position

The ideal setting for organisational management is one where the company's administrators support achievement and foster a welcoming atmosphere by coordinating a variety of projects and initiatives to accomplish the main objectives of the organisation (Taylor et al., 2008; Anyamele, 2005). By respecting, inspiring, and enabling their team members, these leaders have developed cordial relationships with them that have ultimately resulted in their loyalty (Interview ELM5; Oliver, 2009). They promote teamwork among their staff and encourage participatory decision-making, which ensures the effectiveness of work execution.

5.6.3 Skills Enhancement Ideal Position

To make sure that its employees have the necessary skills to complete their jobs, the organisation continually takes steps to improve and refresh their talents. Such steps for improving abilities include sending staff members to study abroad or work in renowned organisations throughout the world (Maruping & Magni, 2012; Seekr, 2011). Such methods for skill development should improve the knowledge, experience, and productive job results of the company's personnel.

5.6.4 Organisational Strategies Ideal Position

Through the establishment of strategic goals and subsequent efficient planning to attain them, the organisation maintains its sustainability. It looks at the external environment, evaluates its own internal capabilities and flaws, and then identifies significant activities that support its organisational strategic viability (Goldman & Salem, 2015). It must effectively use its resources, form strategic alliances, and create a setting that encourages the accomplishment of its objectives. It also conducts routine reflections to assess the situation and subsequently make improvements.

5.6.5 Development and Growth Ideal Position

To thrive in the cutthroat service sector economy, the company keeps working to innovate and grow. It makes the innovations available to update its resources while making fair attempts to develop its employees. Establishing external networks also creates external ties that are supportive of the creation of innovations and ideas as well as the dissemination of best practices (Muijset al., 2010; Howes & Ainscow, 2006). Such development initiatives include the development of modern skill-improving curricula, collaborations to ensure the relevance and applicability of research, and the use of technology to enhance and provide higher-quality services (Guan & Zhao, 2013; Interview ELM3; Interview MOE1).

5.6.6 Ethical Issues Ideal Position

The organisation is aware of its crucial role in the transmission of morals and values and that its credibility and reputation depend on how well it fulfils and communicates this function (Wymer & Rundle-Thiele, 2017; Ehrich et al., 2012). As a result, the organisation makes sure that all of its employees receive equal treatment and that the authority granted to it is used properly. Additionally, it keeps its ethical validity by developing proper, honest reporting channels (Caldwell et al., 2005). To ensure their productivity and the long-term viability of the organisation, the company develops cultural norms that uphold the autonomy of staff, foster their critical thinking and creativity, and provide them with the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Additionally, it offers the necessary tools, spaces, and other resources so they may both effectively do their task, exercise their creative abilities, and bolster their commitment to their jobs (Anifowose & Lawal, 2013).

5.6.7 Obstacles to Ideal Success Position

The services sector organisations face various challenges in order to perform at their best. The social element that influences the atmosphere in such organisations is one of these challenges. One of these factors that impede or limit the organisation's proper development and performance is the insufficient use of the community's social capital. It should be mentioned that social capital is viewed as the connections that can be made between the various company role-players. In fact, there may be problems as a result of the insufficient development of social capital among the organisation's members as well as the connections the organisation can make with outside parties when using its OSR. In essence, the possible impact of social

issues became one of these challenges that needed to be monitored (Evangelinos & Jones, 2009).

High levels of work stress, which are brought on by the ineffective relationship building among staff members and the effects this has on their job satisfaction, involvement, and engagement, are another barrier to the effectiveness of CI in service sector organisations. Ineffective performance management, an absence of training and development opportunities, a lack of support for research outputs, the presence of discriminatory practices, the lack of job security, and advancement in working conditions and equipment are some of the factors contributing to job stress (Pienaar & Bester, 2009).

5.6.8 Organisation Infrastructure Ideal Position

The organisation develops cultural norms that enhance the independence of staff and foster their creativity and critical thinking. Employees can take part in decision-making using these procedures, safeguarding their productivity and the long-term viability of the organisation (Van de Vrande et al., 2009; West & Bogers, 2014). Additionally, it gives them access to the necessary tools, facilities, and other resources so that they can not only complete their work efficiently but also exercise creativity and innovation and boost their work ethic and loyalty (Koruna, 2004; Cassiman & Valentini, 2016). Companies also need to make substantial progress in data management (Wilson & Jeffreys, 2013).

5.7 Summary of Findings

Based on the data presented, certain key components for the development of a framework to create an organisational culture that facilitates continuous improvement in the service sector in Saudi Arabia can be identified. It was concluded that the degree to which an organisation is involved in the activities of the larger society and the extent to which it is impacted by it are the main components of CI activities. Notwithstanding the influence of the organisation's involvement in the activities of the larger society in which it operates, this study has shown that the effectiveness of an organisation depends on its leadership. Added to leadership, it has also been found that team-based work also forms an important component in the development of a framework for establishing an organisational culture that supports continuous improvement. Without skills, employees would not be able to accomplish the tasks required for continuous improvement. Where employees do not have the skills, the organisation needs to continuously provide the necessary training and development. To bring together the

elements of social involvement, organisational leadership, and team-based work into the framework to create an organisational culture supporting continuous improvement, it will be vital to develop organisational strategies that will spell out how to attract talent, gain a competitive advantage, and work in partnership with other organisations. It has also been concluded from the analysis of data in this chapter that within the organisational strategy, development and growth constitute two crucial elements. Development and growth support the reform initiatives needed for continuous improvement. The results of this study also show that it is important to be clear about the obstacles to success so that when a strategy is developed, the organisation is clear about how they will be dealt with. For example, it can be concluded that the success of CI is hampered by ethical challenges within the Saudi service sector organisations. The data collected has also shown that to bring all the factors that impact continuous improvement together, the organisation needs to have the infrastructure, both physical and cultural. The elements that come together to create a framework for an organisational culture that facilitates continuous improvement are graphically presented in Figure 5.2 below.

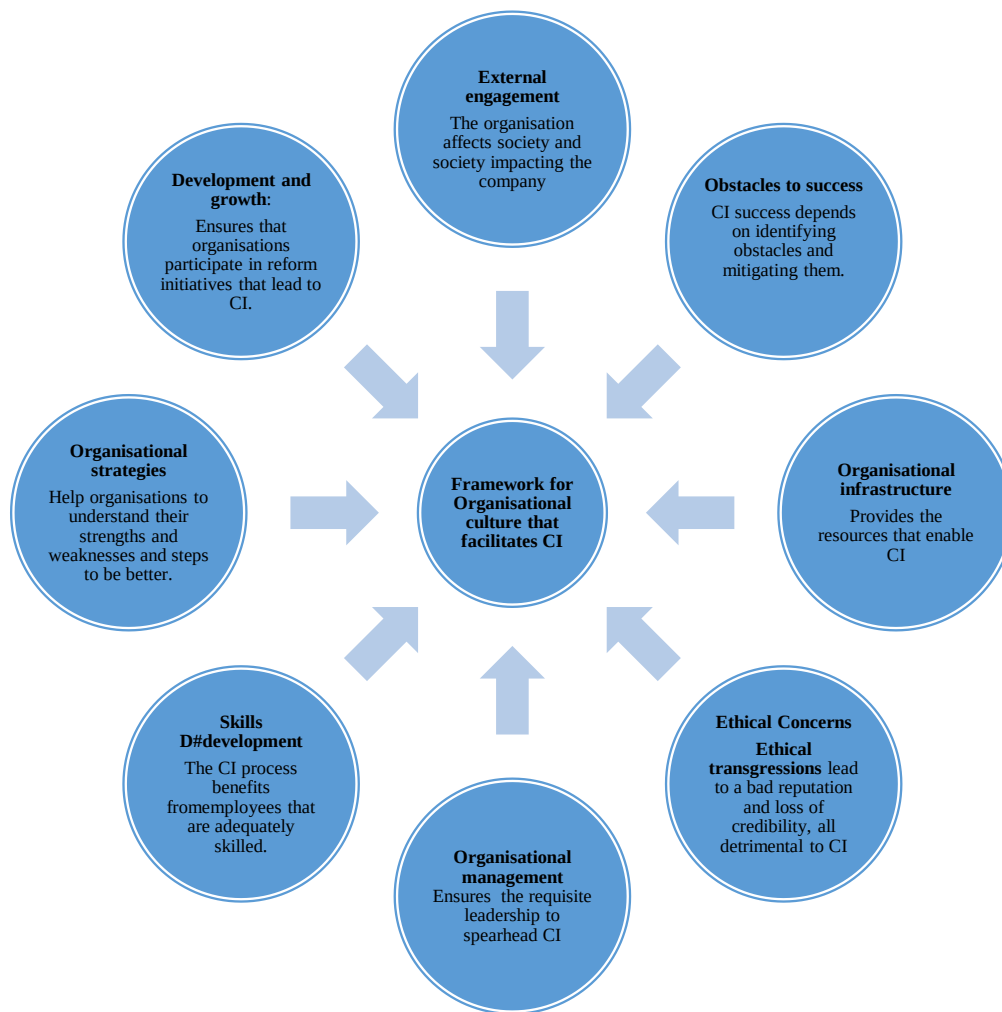


Figure 5.2: Key components for the development of a framework to create an organisational culture that facilitates CI in the Saudi service sector.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a thorough explanation of the key data-gathering procedures and the actions used to analyse the data in this chapter. Data gathering, data analysis steps, results presentation, results analysis, and the ideal position generated from the results were the chapter's five divisions. The chosen technique of data collection, as well as the setting and logistics of the interviews, were discussed. The types and geographic locations of service sector organisations selected for the research were described. The responsibilities they played and the organisations in which they worked were detailed for the study participants. The data analysis techniques were discussed, and the findings were presented as 48 developed features that were narrowed down into seven themes based on focus group discussions. The developed themes and their impact on CI initiatives inside services sector organisations were addressed

in light of the body of prior research. Observations from the arguments developed from the facts and literature were supplemented by the participants. The ideal position of each theme is developed and compared to current practices in the final stage to ensure successful CI adoption in service sector organisations. The next chapter covers pertinent strategies that research participants believed could help foster a CI culture in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations.

CHAPTER 6

INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on identifying the interventions that may facilitate continuous improvement (CI) in the Saudi Arabian services sector. It will identify the leading interventions as indicated in the participant contributions and other sources of applicable information, and the interventions contained in the literature that may be utilised to close the gap between the optimal situation and what is currently the case in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia. The interventions suggested will play the role of enablers in applying CI in Saudi service sector organisations.

To present the intervention framework, this chapter will use tables as a way of demonstrating the stages followed in the development of the intervention proposed. The tables will also be used to present the themes relating to the ideal position and applicable intervention from the collected data and literature and the desirable effects of the interventions proposed in relation to the targeted themes. The connections between the proposed interventions are also presented in this chapter. In the concluding section, the chapter presents findings based on the opinions of three experts. These conclusions evaluate and validate the development framework.

6.2 Interventions from Primary Data

In attempting to determine the interventions that could be employed to close the identified gaps between the prevailing practices and the themes identified in this study in relation to the Saudi services sector, the researcher evaluated primary data. A total of 16 applicable interventions were identified. In these interventions, the study participants explicitly, or through implication, showed the role these interventions played in facilitating CI culture within the services sector of Saudi Arabia. By implication, the indication is not based on what the participants have explicitly said but on what can be inferred from the statements they make. The interventions inferred by the participants are summarised, together with sources of relevant evidence. The section that follows deals with these issues in greater detail.

6.2.1 Development of Interventions

From both the literature review, open-ended interviews, and the focus groups, the elements and challenges impacting CI have been identified. The next logical step is to determine the interventions that need to be applied to build an organisational culture that facilitates CI. To develop these interventions, this study followed a six-step model proposed by Wight et al. (2016), known as the Steps for Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID), presented in Table 6.1 below. Although this model was developed for public health interventions, it has been applied in various other fields. Even though all six steps have been presented in the table below, the present study only focused on the initial four steps.

Table 6.1: Steps for the development of interventions.

Step	Task	Link to present study
1	Defining and understanding the problem and its causes	The problem was identified in the literature review, the data collected from open-ended interviews and focus group discussions, and the themes produced.
2	Identifying the mouldable contextual and causal factors	Key components for the development of a framework to create an organisational culture that facilitates CI in the Saudi service sector were identified in Chapter 5, Figure 5.2.
3	Deciding the mechanisms of change	Using insights from the literature and applicable evidence from the collected data to decide on the mechanisms for change.
4	Clarifying how these will be delivered	Chapter 6 provides details on how the identified modifiable factors and mechanisms will be implemented.

5	Testing and adapting the intervention	This is done partly by requesting for the views of three experts on the developed framework.
6	Collecting adequate evidence of intervention effectiveness to proceed to rigorous intervention.	Not applicable.

6.2.2 Establish Company Mutual Values and Grasp of Societal Engagement

Establishing mutual values, a grasp of societal engagement, and constructing societal-engagement-specific roles for the organisation's members of staff were pointed out among the leading interventions. These could be attained through facilitating platforms for community engagement and encouraging staff members to use proportions and other means such as promotion. This could assist the organisation's employees in boosting their relationships with the general public, creating a collaboration between the staff and community, fostering an environment where relevant issues can be discussed, and ensuring that knowledge is transferred between the community and the organisation for their mutual benefit.

6.2.2.1 Applicable evidence

One of the participants, a manager in an organisation, elucidates on the important role played by an organisation's engagement in public affairs and the steps the organisation should take to sustain effective public engagement policies. The manager says:

Suppose our company is to establish a good relationship with society and encourage collaboration between the community and us (employees) in relation to our social-related activities. It is my view that our organisation should embrace practical steps to encourage staff members to participate in issues affecting the public. For instance, the service sector organisation needs to establish a unit specifically focused on community engagement, consisting of professionals from the organisation. It is also prudent that the service sector organisation creates opportunities for community engagement to encourage discussion of issues affecting the community and provide guidance for

employees keen on participating in activities involving the community. The organisation should also motivate us to participate in public issues by making incentives available. These could be in the form of cash payments or promotions.

One of the departmental heads in a service sector organisation emphasised the importance of awareness and understanding of the role of community engagement. He said:

Our employees should understand the reason they need to engage in community issues and see it as part of who they are as employees of an organisation that provides services to the community for them to effectively engage with community issues.

The same head of the department also highlights the significant role of organisationalising activities related to public engagement and the benefits of doing so. He continues: "*When an organisation participates in an official manner in community issues, it becomes involved in the process of learning from the community while the community also takes advantage of the knowledge the company holds.*"

6.2.3 PC2 Reward System Targeting Employee Performance

Another potential intervention relates to establishing a rewards framework targeting employee performance. Such a system will assess the performance of employees by putting in place certain objective criteria representing the ideal work performance. Such criteria will measure the performance of employees against these objective criteria. The employees determined to have performed well will be promoted or have their employees increased. Based on the views expressed by the participants cited above, this should boost employee productivity and enhance their work performance. It will encourage employees to want to develop their skills and competitiveness at work, leading to the talented staff wanting to stay longer in the organisation.

6.2.3.1 Relevant Evidence

An administrator who participated in this study started by complaining about poor relations between employees, skills, performance, and productivity before recommending that her organisation establish a rewards framework encouraging employees to embrace a certain performance ethos. She said:

It is vital for all of us to encourage employees to perform better by establishing incentives that drive better performance. For instance, we need to establish objective criteria for employees in our department that represent what we are looking for in an idea of employee performance. In my view, the ideal work performance should involve meeting the targets of the job, ongoing skills improvement as a way of boosting performance, continuous self-assessment of our own work environment, making suggestions to management regarding how the work environment can be improved, and having a good relationship with colleagues. If we are able to establish these objective criteria, coupled with job promotions and salary increases, I think we will create a more productive workforce within a competitive work environment, which encourages employees to develop their skills.

6.2.4 PC3 Monitoring Framework Able To Continuously Assess Organisational Projects Progress

A monitoring framework able to continuously assess the progress of the organisation's projects through ongoing meetings between the organisation's head and managers. These managers use such meetings to evaluate their individual departmental visions and progress with regard to implementation. Some of the specific issues the departmental managers focus on are the efficient utilisation of resources and whether there is a need for more resources. Such meetings will also evaluate the collaboration between the various departments and the issues impacting this kind of corporation.

It is important that the monitoring of work progress should begin at the departmental level, where the various departments come together to deliberate on their individual visions, the challenges they grapple with, and how they propose to deal with them. The managers of each department should deal with the issues affecting the departments at these meetings. Such endeavours will guide the service sector organisation in the direction of achieving its goals and making sure that there are timely, effective interventions to deal with the matters faced by organisations as they attempt to meet their goals. These efforts will also foster corporation between the various departments within the organisation and establish a decision-making process that is coordinated.

6.2.4.1 Relevant Evidence

An organisation management participant highlighted the role played by managers in the monitoring of progress within the company, ensuring cooperation between the various functions of the organisation and showing commitment to the achievement of the organisation's goals. He said:

... since he became our company's CEO, we began to notice a different attitude towards the development of the company. He changed the place by asking questions that we had viewed as uncomfortable for a very long time. For instance, he would ask the managers to say what the vision of their department is, how far they were willing to go to see these visions achieved, what the output of each department has been with regards to the company's core business, and the development steps that the departments had taken, if any.

The participant continued:

It's been two years since he was appointed, but I can confidently say that during that period, our productivity has increased drastically. We have started to see departments collaborating more. There has been a realisation that if our departments work together, we will be able to achieve more than would be the case if we worked in silos.

An administrator participant focuses on the important role played by effective communication between the staff of the organisation and its top management in establishing integrated decision-making processes that increase opportunities for organisational success. He says:

The CEO's monthly meeting with the various managers of the organisation's departments has led to a connected organisation. Considering that the company's board meetings deliberate on the issues affecting the departments and evaluate their efficient utilisation of resources and whether they need more resources, we can communicate the urgent issues affecting us. This ensures that the managers can quickly access the resources they require. Managers are also able to make suggestions to the board. For instance, we used to have resources that were not fully utilised. During our monthly faculty meeting, our department addressed this issue with the manager so that he could

communicate it to the board of the service sector organisation. Based on the recommendations we made as a department, the service sector organisation board found a way of making these resources available to the community were possible, such as the use of empty rooms for employees from low-income families who did not have adequate space to study at home.

6.2.5 PC4 Ongoing Verbal Motivation of Employees

The ongoing verbal motivation of employees, such as providing them with feedback on how they are performing, plays an important role in CI. More positive feedback can be given in front of colleagues, and sensitive feedback could be given in private. If done well, this has the potential to increase employee productivity and work loyalty.

Applicable Evidence

A participating company vice-president elucidated on his experience of how he encouraged his employees by ensuring they received positive feedback and comments. He also talks about how this benefited his team. He said:

From personal experience, I became aware of the fact that when the direct manager individually encourages employees in their department, even when productivity is not where it should be, productivity can increase within a short period. I also discovered that with ongoing personal encouragement for employees, there were two main factors gained. These factors relate to the employees' work loyalty and productivity levels. These have been greatly reflected in the department's success. I praise employees both in private and in front of others because I have come to the realisation that it makes their performance better.

A participating supervisor in one of the organisations elucidates how the performance of employees can be boosted through verbal encouragement. He says:

Because we are human, we love praise. Thus, I always provide my employees with verbal comments praising their good work and how they can improve it. I have noted that by doing this, their work performance improves. They would rather have this than written feedback.

6.2.6 PC5 Delegate Decision-Making to Suitable Employees

Ensuring that work is delegated to suitable employees was identified as a pertinent intervention. This could include ensuring that employees have articulate guidelines for the requirements of the role and the expectations of their organisations. This ensures that they have the authority to act and make decisions autonomously within the confines of their roles and trust them to effectively do their work, and when not sure, they can seek assistance. This will boost the confidence in employees' skills and increase their productivity.

6.2.6.1 Relevant Evidence

A participant who is an administrator highlights the significance of making decisions and delegating work and how, when this is not available, employee confidence and work productivity can be negatively impacted. He says that:

One of the main challenges faced by our department is individualisation decision-making, where each decision taken by my colleagues and me – big or small - has to be approved by our manager. For this reason, when our manager is not at work, we don't have the confidence to make decisions, and we have to delay decisions until the manager is back at work.

He adds:

Where our managers make available specific guidelines concerning the requirements of the task that needs to be done and the performance needed for that job to be deemed successful, then if they permit and trust us to make decisions within the confines of such guidelines, it is easier for us to complete the daily tasks more quickly. We possess both the experience and academic qualifications required to successfully complete complex tasks, not just the routine jobs we do daily. Where we struggle with tasks, we always have our managers to assist us with advice. Based on this philosophy, we are more confident and productive when executing our tasks.

One of the departmental managers explained why work delegation is important. He said: “Every time I delegate some tasks to my subordinates and show I believe they have the

judgement and skills to accomplish them, I discover that employees become more innovative and enjoy their work, which leads to enhanced performance.”

6.2.7 PC6 Establish an Environment that Supports Teamwork

Establishing an environment that fosters teamwork through creating and committing to a mutual goal, encouraging collaboration among employees to achieve goals, and facilitating social activities where employees meet outside the work environment so as to encourage team-based rewards and motivation structures were some of the leading interventions named. This fosters internal communication between employees and improves the way they relate to each other, which also encourages unity in the organisation. Moreover, it allows employees to be more creative, efficient, and productive while also being flexible.

6.2.7.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating head of department elucidates the different steps taken in his section to boost and improve relationships between managers and employees. He says:

Every month, we take our employees to the beach for social gatherings with the aim of fostering better relations with the employees and between the employees themselves. Sometimes we do our work outside the company premises, such as in coffee shops or hotels, so that we can break down the silos creating a barrier between the employees and us. We have come to realise that such activities create excellent relationships. Actually, this has made many employees agree to urgent work-related meetings done outside their working hours. Considering that such activities challenge the strict working conditions and formalities, we have come to realise that our employees tend to be more creative and come up with novel ideas when we meet in these less formal places outside the company's premises.

An assistant manager participant explained how the dearth of teamwork in their department had impacted the department's overall performance. He said:

Even though the goal of the company to gain industry accreditation is clear to everyone, the company's professionals have not been pulling in the same direction to achieve this goal. It looks like everyone is looking after themselves and only doing work that helps

them stand out. This has had a negative effect on our general departmental achievements and the quality of our work. It is vital for us to work together if our aim is to enhance our company's accreditation.

Other participants agree that when employees work in teams, they complement each other's skills and save time and effort while also enhancing their knowledge.

A participating head of the department highlighted the significant role of establishing a team-driven goal and commitment towards the team's success. He said:

When we competed for and won the title of the best quality department within our company, the main driver was staff cooperation. When we embarked on the endeavour, everyone in the department had one commitment and goal. This made us feel motivated, and I can say, thankfully, we were able to get the best quality department award.

6.2.8 PC7 Establish and Objective Skills Assessment Procedure

Putting in place an effective procedure able to objectively assess employee skills against the required competencies required by their roles is another primary intervention identified in the present study. Members of staff unable to meet this crucial competence will be asked to attend company training programmes that support their skills. Staff job security, salary increases, and promotions should be based on the employee's willingness to attend the training courses and take advantage of its development content. This will play the role of an inducement for employees to actively participate in continuous skills development and make it possible for the organisation to build a skilled labour force. This will further enhance their skills for self-assessment, boost their self-confidence, and work loyalty while also improving their relationship with management.

6.2.8.1 Relevant Evidence

One of the participant service sector professionals complained that there are times when employees do not have the basic skills to do their work. He noted that sometimes, the performance and knowledge of employees have not adequately developed, which negatively impacts the department's overall performance and image. The same professional recommended that employees should undergo compulsory training courses. He said:

I know some employees for whom training should be compulsory. It is vital that our organisation has general standards for the qualifications of people who want to work in different departments. So, each department needs to establish specific qualification standards for its employees. From these standards, the minimum competencies for each of the employment roles should be clear. If any employees are determined, through regular assessments, not to be able to meet the minimum standards, they should be requested to attend training to develop the skills in which they lack. The company should make arrangements to ensure that these training courses are available. If these members of staff are unwilling to attend these courses or fail to benefit from their content, I believe that their contracts should be terminated or they should not be promoted until they show signs of improvement. If this suggestion is followed, employees will be encouraged to develop their skills, and the company will reap the benefits of having skilled employees.

6.2.9 PC8 Establish Training and Development Platforms for Company Employees

Training and development platforms for company employees who have the willingness to develop and broaden their competencies and connecting this to promotions and pay systems will encourage all the staff in an organisation to take advantage of development opportunities. This will boost the self-assessment of employees with regard to their skills and enhance work loyalty and self-confidence while also enhancing their relationship with the organisation's managers.

6.2.9.1 Relevant Evidence

One of the participants, who is an administrator, explained that in their department:

Any employee is able to apply for any course they believe will support their work skills. The idea of making us able to choose the training programs we want allows us to prioritise the skills we believe are crucial for our career development, which assists us in carrying out our jobs more effectively because we clearly know our skills and deficiencies.

From the perspective of management, a participating head of the department elucidated the benefits he noted from making it possible for employees to decide their own priorities with regard to training. He said:

We came to discover that when the choice of training is left to the employees, they begin to self-assess their skills. This makes employees more confident even when carrying out challenging tasks. Most importantly, I noticed that this program improved the relationship between our employees and us.

Another departmental manager explained how his company could make use of financial incentives to encourage employees to develop their skills. He said:

It is my view that we can encourage employees to develop the skills they need to perform their jobs if we offer salary increases to those employees willing to gain new qualifications or attend precise training courses. This way, employees become more willing to continuously evaluate their qualifications and aptitudes and seek more development opportunities with the aim of achieving the salary increases they desire.

Another administrator who participated in the present study talked about how failing to ensure the ongoing development of employees; skills can become a hindrance to the development of an organisation. He said:

It is unfortunate that there are employees who can spend up to a decade in the same position without getting any promotion as a way of encouraging them to increase their skills. If you consider that employees need to see that they can grow, you can see that this is not an ideal situation. If this is not corrected, employees soon begin to resist training interventions suggested by the service sector organisation. I think that this can be corrected if the organisation is willing to make use of career promotions to inspire employees to better their performance or develop their skills because employees enjoy their work when they believe that they can grow in their places of work. In this way, the organisation will have loyal employees and a skilled labour force.

6.2.10 PC9 Attract Global Talent

Ensuring a company's recruitment process can attract global talent through proactively looking for qualified professionals and motivating them to join the organisation, which will boost organisational competitiveness and production and ensure a more diverse workplace able to facilitate various methods of teaching and learning. Policies involving recruitment must ensure that potential employees perceive the organisation as availing chances for career development, a supportive work culture, and fair compensation.

6.2.10.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating departmental manager highlighted the role played by the effective recruitment of talent in the success of any organisation. He explained that an organisation needs to proactively search for talented employees as part of its strategy. He said:

We have a strategic vision that includes ensuring excellence in all the products and services we provide to the market and excellence of the employees who provide these goods and services. This ensures the financial sustainability of the organisation. Currently, we are putting together our resources to achieve this long-term plan. Among the various steps we took to achieve the company's strategic plan, we began looking for and recruiting experienced professionals from outside Saudi Arabia.

Another departmental manager who participated in the present study explained why his company looks to the global stage when seeking talent. He said:

One of our company strategies is to find qualified professionals and artisans from different parts of the world so that we can establish a diverse workplace and boost production. We did attempt to establish a comfortable environment for our employees. We ensure that they are provided with high salaries to entice them to accept our job offers. Added to this, we give them different development programs to make sure that they can continually develop their skills and grow in their careers. We also try to create a work culture that is supportive and boosts job satisfaction and performance. For instance, employees who come up with new ideas are encouraged and rewarded. We also do everything in our power to organise social events as a way of enhancing the relationships between our employees. The environment we create in the organisation is

a flexible one, depending on the individual roles of employees. We have found that this boosts employee satisfaction and performance and makes our department more competitive.

A participant from a department in a services sector company elucidated how the recruitment of foreign specialists has benefited clients. He said:

In our department, some clients need services that have foreign aspects, and those clients tend to receive better service when they are served by people who share a language and culture with them. These foreign employees often understand the dynamics of the countries from which a lot of our foreign clients come. These employees introduce a different way of thinking in our company.

6.2.11 PC10 Policies in Alignment with Organisational Interest

The role of effective policies in alignment with the interests of organisations related to a specific company is another intervention mentioned in the present study. This role is related to the building of effective communication channels and involving aligned organisations in the strategic plans of a specific company. This has the effect of increasing a company's prospects of attracting the resources it needs, like capital and creating an environment where the organisation may prosper.

6.2.11.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating manager explained how working together with aligned entities should be taken advantage of in a strategic way and recommended what the company needs to do to make sure that such a partnership is sustainable and its outcomes are effective. He said:

Even though we are working in partnership with aligned entities, I don't think that these partnerships are as strategic as we want them to be. This is because there are many instances when our interests are not as aligned as we thought they were. If we are to build a strategic relationship with aligned organisations, we must amalgamate the interests of our company with the missions of the organisations we want to partner with. For example, the entities that we want to partner with will need to participate in our strategic planning process so that their interests are taken into account when we craft

our final strategies. Also, if our products are to be of benefit to other entities we partner with, we need to build channels of communication with them so that we are regularly informed about their interests.

6.2.12 PC11 Establish Feedback Channels

The establishment of channels for feedback is another critical intervention. This implies the building of a broad-ranging process for feedback that makes available ongoing self-reflective and formative assessments for the organisation and its employees. Inspiring participants by making performance-linked rewards available will boost employee productivity and organisational success by assessing staff members regularly, making an objective appraisal of completed tasks available, and increasing job satisfaction by showing stakeholders that they are being listened to.

6.2.12.1 Relevant Evidence

A department in one of the companies that participated in the present study explained how the performance of employees could benefit from ongoing feedback. He notes: *"One of the measures we embraced to boost employee productivity and quality of products and services was by providing them with periodic performance feedback."* The same departmental manager also provided an outline as to how regularly they are involved in such assessments. In this regard, he says: *"Our staff who work in administration are assessed every quarter, based on how many tasks they completed and the quality and time taken to complete the tasks."* He adds: *"One of the ways we assess employees is through feedback from customers, which is used to assess the overall product produced by the organisation's employees."*

An assistant manager who participated in the present study explained that the professionals in his organisation benefited from customer feedback. He said: *"I began to have an idea of my areas of weakness when I started getting customer feedback. I took advantage of this feedback to improve my performance. With this improvement, I started noticing more customers referring others to us."*

In the same vein, a participating departmental head explained the techniques they employed to encourage customers to provide them with feedback about their experience with the company's products and services. He said:

Customers are tired of filling in feedback forms every time when they interact with our company. So, we decided customers to talk to us by offering prizes. As soon as we did this, the improvement in the willingness to participate in providing feedback was realised.

A participating vice president explained how in his company, employees are encouraged to self-assess their performance. He said:

We take measures to encourage self-assessment by creating reflective feedback right across the company. This involves every employee being requested to reflect on their performance. This encourages the self-critique practice within the employees so that they are able to continuously monitor their own development and performance. We also do this at the level of the organisation, where each department is requested to reflect on its annual performance and is asked to come up with explicit plans of how they intend to improve their performance in the period that follows.

6.2.13 PC12 Provide the Organisation with Applicable Technology

If employees are expected to provide their best quality products and services, it will be vital to provide them with advanced, sophisticated, and effective techniques that will ensure they can accomplish their jobs. This can be achieved by establishing partnerships with technology entities to provide what is needed and training for employees. This approach should boost work performance and efficiency by increasing the speed of work execution while permitting work flexibility. It makes available a platform for communicating and sharing ideas and planning how to execute tasks.

6.2.13.1 Relevant Evidence

A departmental manager who participated in the present study explained his company's need for technological services and the significant role played by establishing partnerships with technology companies. He said:

We always need sophisticated and effective technological equipment and services; we enter into partnerships with companies like Cisco and Oracle. These entities make available the technology we need while also providing ongoing maintenance of that

technology. Added to this, they provide our staff with continuous training on how to use the technology.

Another professional working in a services sector organisation highlighted the importance of ensuring that staff members are trained in the technology they use. He said:

When buying sophisticated information technology products, we ensure that our staff receive training in the countries where the technology is made, such as Japan and the US. This helps develop their skills, ensuring they can effectively utilise the products once installed.

Finally, a participating departmental head supports the view that technology is important for CI within his organisation by saying, *"We recently began relying on technology, and its use will increase going into the future. It has not just improved efficiency but performance and quality, too."*

In the same vein, an employee involved in an internship who participated in the present study explained how he benefited from technological services. He said: *"I don't quite understand a great deal of the things I learn while working for this organisation. However, when I watch videos during my free time and take some notes, the concepts become easier to understand."*

One company trainer who participated in the present study said: *"This [technology] assists employees on internship interact among themselves and with their trainers, which helps them better understand the material they are being taught."* This view is supported by another employee who says:

Actually, there is a resource where I interact with other interns, and we ask each other questions about issues we are struggling to understand. We could also use that facility to ask the trainer to clarify certain issues. We also utilise the Blackboard section to share applicable training material like notes and other resources.

6.2.14 PC13 Active Promotion of Organisational Products and Services

The active promotion of the goods and services offered by one's organisation through the establishment of a public communication office with skilled communication and marketing officers will assist in establishing a broad portfolio of customers while also increasing the

organisation's opportunities for attracting the resources it like capital and improving their competitiveness and image.

6.2.14.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating employee who works in a services sector company's administration department indicated why his company needs to market its goods and services in a professional way and how this needs to be done. He said:

It is vital that the role of the public relations unit goes beyond just communicating the vision and messages of the organisation through the service sector organisation's social media accounts and websites. This will assist the organisation in actively promoting its goods and services. It is my view that the organisation should have marketing professionals who understand the use of marketing to promote the company's goods and services in an effective manner. This way, the company would be able to construct a desirable image and be more competitive. Consequently, it will be able to reach more customers. In turn, this will boost the opportunities to achieve the desired results.

6.2.15 PC14 Pathways for Work Promotion

Among the critical interventions for ensuring continuous improvement in Saudi Arabia's services sector organisations is the establishment of explicit pathways for career development and work promotion. Pathways for workers looking for incentives related to career advancement need to be available. These pathways ensure that work promotions are founded on qualifications. This will ensure that the self-development needs of employees are addressed. This will lead to a qualified workforce and improve the feeling of fairness and trust in the organisation, in turn resulting in higher loyalty.

6.2.15.1 Relevant Evidence

One administrator who participated in the present study brought to the fore issues relating to how a dearth of development chances for employees regarding position and skills can become an obstacle to improvement. He said:

It is rather unfortunate that some employees can work for the organisation for up to nine years and still remain in the same position. Often, these employees languish in

their positions with no opportunities for promotion or registering for development courses to uplift their skills. Eventually, when the company attempts to introduce courses for these employees to register for, these attempts are often met with resistance. This is because the employees would have gotten used to their routine work. It's my belief that this could be alleviated by the service sector organisation utilising career promotions as a way of encouraging employees to boost their performance or develop their skills, as employees always want to have the idea that they are growing within the workplace.

Another participating administrator showed her frustration and perception of injustice when she referred to unfair practices in relation to work promotion. She said:

Every employee knows that promoted got the promotion because they have some kind of relationship with someone who has the power to make the appointment or because it was for the mutual benefit of the person making the promotion and the individual being promoted. So, the promotions were unfair as their basis was not on the employee's effectiveness on the job or their qualifications.

6.2.16 PC15 Strategic Thinking and Long-Term Planning

When an organisation has employees who are able to think in a strategic manner and plan for the long term, such an organisation usually has a clear direction. This also helps the organisation to have a shared sense of commitment. This is often coupled with the ability to develop short-term goals that will assist in attaining long-term goals. In a company, this provides the guidelines for enhanced performance and takes the role of a self-assessment tool that pushes the organisation towards the achievement of objectives. It also reduces the risk of unforeseen obstacles.

6.2.16.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating departmental manager highlighted his company's long-term plan and the steps they were embracing to attain their goals. He said:

Our company is one of the best— if not the best – in this kingdom, and we are making efforts to be the best around the world. I can attribute our achievements to the fact that

we clearly articulated our strategic vision, which includes excellence in employee skills, excellence in members of our staff and product quality, and a financially sustainable company. At the moment, we are putting together the resources that will help us achieve these long-term aims. For us to achieve our long-term aim of only recruiting employees with the best qualifications, we have started to make our recruitment process more rigorous. Our company's strategic vision has been acting as our point of reference in whatever we do.

In agreement with the view above, a participating head of department indicated that the dearth of strategic thinking in the organisation's planning could lead to unforeseen obstacles, making it more challenging for a company to achieve its aims. The head of the department said:

We have faced numerous challenges impacting our work performance. These challenges include resistance to change, skills shortages, and financial difficulties. Things would have been different if we had anticipated these obstacles when we were setting out our transformation plans. Had we expected these issues and deliberated on their solutions in the plans we made, we would have been better prepared to deal with them. I will give you an example: we did not expect that the government would cut funding for training employees. This left us with many projects that did not have any funding, which we were forced to suspend or cancel completely. This is because we had set out our training plans based on the assumption that the government would be generous. We should have prioritised the training of our young employees before wasting funds on other things that were not that useful; we would never have found ourselves in a situation where we suspended important training programs because of lack of funding.

In relation to the issues expressed by the participating head of department above, a deputy departmental head elucidated how an effective organisational vision can impact its performance. He said: "*We make use of the organisation's vision to evaluate our department's performance to make sure that we are working towards achieving the goals of the organisation.*"

6.2.17 PC16 Annual Performance Reports

The establishment of an annual report on departments and their employees makes comprehensive feedback on performance available with regard to organisational accountability and transparency and allows the organisation to comprehend what its strengths and weaknesses are.

6.2.17.1 Relevant Evidence

A participating administration employee started by complaining about the dearth of performance reports in her department before explaining why they are important. She says:

The importance of performance reports is not just for the employees but for their departments, too. Otherwise, what other method would we use to know about departments that are either performing well or badly? When these reports are not available, productivity suffers because when there is no transparency reporting, low-performing employees and their departments will never be held accountable.

Table 6.2: The main interventions developed from participant contributions

No	Intervention
PC1.	Establish mutual organisation values and comprehension of societal engagement.
PC2.	Reward framework targeting the performance of employees.
PC3.	System for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress made in the organisation's projects.
	The regular motivation of employees.
PC5.	Delegate decision-making and tasks to employees with applicable qualifications.
PC6.	Establish an environment that supports teamwork.

PC7.	Put in place an unbiased procedure for assessing employee competencies.
PC8.	Ensure the availability of training and development platforms for the organisation's employees.
PC9.	Look outside Saudi Arabia for scarce skills.
PC10.	Enact effective policies aligning the interests of private and public entities.
PC11.	Ensure the availability of pathways for feedback.
PC12.	Provide applicable technology to the organisations.
PC13.	Actively seek talent globally.
PC14.	Create clear work promotion paths.
PC15.	Strategic thinking and long-term planning.
PC16.	Use yearly performance reports to determine progress on goals.

6.3 Intervention from the Literature

Part of this study reviewed the literature on organisational culture interventions that could be employed in maintaining CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. The results scrutinised the degree to which a theme's ideal position is in keeping with the prevailing practices in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations (Section 5.7) as he was searching for applicable interventions. The researcher searched for interventions with the potential to close the gap between the current practice in service sector organisations and the ideal position so that Saudi services sector companies can build an organisational culture supportive of CI. The present study found 12 applicable interventions, as presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.3: Interventions drawn from the literature

No	Intervention	Reference
L111	<p>Effective leadership development: The organisation can send senior management to strategic training courses. It can also facilitate skills and knowledge-building workshops and include an array of topics relating to leadership development. This will boost the organisation's competencies in relation to leadership and ensure that the skills of its leaders are aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation. Moreover, it will also make the organisation's precise leadership capabilities better and increase the management's comprehension of its leadership roles, the needs of employees, and how to behave ethically.</p>	<p>Day (2001), Collins and Holton (2004), Yukl (2006), Rothwell (2002), Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015), Ardichvili et al. (2016)</p>
LI12	<p>Equip employees with the essential skills they need for their jobs: This can be accomplished by ensuring the availability of basic training for untrained or underqualified staff. The training must be subject-specific, paying specific attention to information and communication technology (ICT) or broader training programs whose main aim is to ensure staff are conscious of the changes relating to the objectives of their jobs. This will have a positive impact on the quality of outcomes.</p>	<p>Orr et al. (2013)</p>

LI13	Diversify the sources of income for the organisation so as to reduce the financial barriers to the organisation's projects. In the process, this has positive ramifications for competitiveness and sustainability.	Skrbinjek and Lesjak (2014), Nagy, Kováts and Németh (2014) Hewitt-Dundas (2012)
LI14	Encourage employees to participate in the decision-making process by requesting them to develop initiatives associated with change and supporting them to believe in their ability to apply such initiatives. This will have the impact of increasing employee performance and work engagement, making it possible for the organisation to gain loyal employees.	Bakker and Demerouti (2008), Naruse et al. (2015)
LI15	Implement name-blind requirement processes so as to lower the possibility of unconscious bias against applications from minority groups. This ensures that an organisation's recruitment process is based on qualification-based employment. It will also assist in establishing a qualified workforce while ensuring that the recruitment process can be trusted because it is based on fairness.	Watt (2015)
LI16	Put in place organised processes that can assist in auditing the specific amalgamation of attitudes, skills, and knowledge for high performance in a particular job. This will involve having a process to measure these job requirements in employees to continuously determine the right match for the job. Having adequate insights will make it possible to determine the training required by employees in areas where gaps have been noted. The ability to identify the gaps will assist the organisation in recruiting and	Anisha (2012)

	promoting the right candidates based on their competencies. When employees are trained in the right areas, their competencies will be enhanced, leading to increased engagement and productivity and the development of situational leadership skills, with the ultimate result being a highly skilled workforce.	
LI17	Give teams or individuals responsibility for an entire task, from the planning phase to the resultant outcomes. This has the potential to motivate them and boost their sense of independence, which will lead to improvements in productivity and quality of output.	Hackman & Oldham (1980), Algashaam (2015)
LI18	Create ad hoc teams consisting of members from different departments and levels of hierarchy. These must be coordinated to provide combined decision-making. In such teams, employees will be accountable to both their functional superiors and team leaders. Such a situation establishes an efficient and inclusive decision-making mechanism and permits effective coordination between various organisational departments.	Gombolay et al. (2015), Woolley, Aggarwal and Malone (2015), Pakarinen and Virtanen (2017)
LI19	Develop collaborative pathways with external advisory groups, providing guidance and insights for the organisation in its various structural and regulatory concerns and providing assistance in its development initiatives. The advisers will make expert opinions available to the organisation, ensuring that it is always up-to-date with worldwide best practices.	Kezar (2009)

LI20	Pay rewards to employees directly based on their achievement in their tasks. This boosts not just staff morale but also motivation, leading to enhanced work performance.	Seldin (1990), Glewwe et al. (2008).
LI21	Monitor the recruitment procedure using an independent team that provides a report on the fairness of such a process. This will establish a more transparent process for recruitment, help in the establishment of equal employment opportunities, and, where applicable, boost accountability.	Beer, M. and Walton, E. R. (1990), Mitra et al. (2011) and Sailer (2017)
LI22	Create relationships involving coaching. Whether these programs are formal or informal, they can be between managers and the most promising employees working under them. Such an arrangement will encourage employees to grow professionally while the organisation benefits from the development of high-potential managers. For employees, the arrangement will have positive ramifications on their self-esteem, empowering them and boosting relationships with their managers.	Kotter (2001), Yukl (2006), Cappelli et al. (2015)

6.4 Development of Interventions

The interventions presented above, from both the literature and the primary data, have been suggested to play the role of enabling the effective implementation of CI. There are certain commonalities between the two intervention types, and they serve the same purposes. For instance, both the primary data and the literature interventions propose that employees can be encouraged to improve their work performance and produce better quality by providing incentives. Moreover, both the intervention channels propose that employee training and delegation of decision-making to employees are effective approaches to empowerment and establishing loyalty. For the purposes of the present study, the interventions from both literature and the primary data that share commonalities and play the same role have been amalgamated. From this, 12 interventions emerged to facilitate a culture of CI in the Saudi Arabian services sector. The outcomes of these interventions should close the gap between the current practices of the different themes and the ideal positions. These interventions that serve different purposes play the role of interacting channels for CI culture in service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia.

Table 6.3 below illustrates the phases through which the proposed interventions have been developed. The table shows the ideal position, the applicable intervention contributing to the achievement of the ideal position according to the literature (LI), the applicable intervention from the primary data (PC) that contributes to achieving the ideal position, and the proposed intervention (PI), integrating similar interventions from literature and the primary data that serve the same purposes into a single possible intervention. Table 6.4 provides a list of the suggested interventions, the effect they are anticipated to have, and the targeted themes. Each intervention proposed has made a contribution to the attainment of the ideal position for no less than two themes, as can be noted in Table 6.4. The manner in which the proposed themes relate to each other is illustrated in Table 6.5. Out of the proposed themes, nine have supporting evidence from both the primary data and the literature, while the other four are independently validated by either the primary data or the literature.

Table 6.4: Ideal position, relevant intervention from literature (LI) and main data (PC), proposed interventions (PI)

No	Theme's Ideal Position	L1	PC	P1
1	External engagement: The organisation is engaging more broadly with the community as a way of ensuring that it will be sustainable going into the future. Apart from this, the organisation does not restrict itself to legal compliance when contributing to social good but integrates social interests when making choices. These contributions could include making services available to the local communities together with other benefits such as scholarships and internship opportunities for talented, underprivileged youths. Such contribution is a clear indication that the company is aware of the crucial and desirable value of its accountability to the broader community, which is mandatory as opposed to optional.	L1 11 9	PC1 PC15 PC11	<p>Facilitate training pathways for the leaders of the organisation so as to equip them with precise leadership characteristics needed to accomplish their roles so they can effectively manage their work.</p> <p>Come up with policies that support public engagement through the development of partnerships with allied organisations while also encouraging staff members to participate in community initiatives.</p> <p>Put in place an explicit direction for the organisation and create long- and short-term goals.</p> <p>To encourage employees to take part in the organisation's initiatives, establish pathways for feedback.</p>
2	Organisational management: The leaders of the organisation facilitate an atmosphere that invigorates	LI1	PC4	Facilitate pathways for training for the leaders of the organisation so that they can be equipped with the precise leadership characteristics

	success by focusing on the various programmes and activities that encourage the achievement of the goals it sets. These leaders should build a pleasant relationship with those who work under them based on empowerment, motivation, respect, and loyalty. The leaders should facilitate participatory decision-making and encourage employees to function as teams, which could result in better efficiency when executing their jobs.	LI1 0	PC5 PC6 PC14	they need to accomplish their specific roles so that they can effectively work. Delegate work execution and decision-making. Provide rewards and motivation and make sure that these are targeted at qualifications and performance. Create a shared commitment and common goal for employees, encouraging them to work in a collaborative manner.
3	Management of skills: The organisation continuously implements measures for boosting and updating its employees' skills so that they have the relevant skills needed for them to successfully complete their tasks. To accomplish this, practical measures are employed to evaluate the training required. This could involve comparing the job objectives with the individual's output or through an analysis of the job requirements. When employees are unable to meet the requirements, they become earmarked for training. Following the	LI1 2 LI6 LI1 2 LI1 3	PC7 PC8 PC1 2	In an organised manner, study the skills needs of the organisation and its employees. Based on the obtained insights, make available a broad array of training opportunities and supporting resources and encourage all stakeholders to participate. Provide rewards and motivation and make sure that these rewards and motivation target qualifications and performance.

	<p>identification of the training needs in a precise department, the department starts the applicable training, which can sometimes be done on the job. Such training is carried out with the aim of getting experienced individuals to transfer knowledge to the less experienced ones. To achieve this, a specialised training provider or professional trainers conduct the training within the department. Sometimes, such training can be off-the-job, where employees get an opportunity to train with the actual equipment in a practical job setting within a specific training department.</p>			
4	<p>Organisational strategies: The organisation has effective functions and plans to attain its strategic aims. There is an alignment between its strategy and its management system and structure. The employees in the organisation are aware and motivated towards the attainment of the stipulated strategic goals. There is clarity in relation to the strategic goals, and they can be realistically achieved. The central objectives initiated by</p>	<p>LI1 LI4 LI8</p>	<p>PC1 5 PC3 PC5 PC1 6.</p>	<p>Facilitate pathways for training the leaders of the organisation so as to equip them with the precise leadership characteristics needed to accomplish roles so that they are able to manage their work effectively.</p> <p>Create a precise definition for the organisation and generate medium- and short-term targets that will assist in the achievement of long-term goals.</p>

	the organisation can be recognised with clarity, and the leaders are clear with regard to where changes should be made. The strategy considers the impediments that could be met when attempting to fulfil the strategy of the organisation. There are planned efforts regarding how the identified barriers will be overcome if they arise.			Put in place ad hoc teams consisting of employees from different departments and levels within the hierarchy of the company. Coordinate these teams with the aim of providing cohesive decision-making and encouraging participation from employees as a way of empowering them to develop their own initiatives. The performance of both the organisation and its employees should be monitored on a regular basis.
5	Development and growth: The organisation continuously and systematically takes actions that help develop its internal ability to increase efficiency in its mission to sustain itself within the competitive services sector space. It constitutes select committees that will continuously evaluate the organisation's current position and come up with plans and ideas on how it could be improved. It makes sure that there is cooperation between the various organisation stakeholders and establishes external support connections that facilitate the creation of ideas and innovations and the embracing of good practices. On an ongoing basis, it promotes the	LI1 LI3 LI8	PC3 PC8 PC1 3 PC1 0 PC2 PC1 2 PC1 0 PC1 6	Facilitate pathways for training the organisation's leaders that provide them with the skills they require to accomplish their roles so that they are able to manage their time effectively. Create a precise definition for the organisation and generate medium- and short-term targets that will assist in the achievement of long-term goals. Launch external resource, finance, and knowledge-supporting channels. Put in place ad hoc teams consisting of employees from different departments and levels within the hierarchy of the company.

	<p>knowledge in those departments recognised to be doing well and takes measures to assist the weaker ones. It plays a moderating role and integrates novel technologies into the day-to-day functions to help boost their working efficiency. It comes up with strategies, diversifies and directs its efforts towards increasing funding to support the organisation's strategic programmes and initiatives. It dedicates appropriate effort to the development of employees and ensures that the required innovations are in place to establish up-to-date resources.</p>			<p>Coordinate these teams with the aim of providing cohesive decision-making and encouraging participation from employees as a way of empowering them to develop their own initiatives. The performance of both the organisation and its employees should be monitored on a regular basis.</p> <p>Having a system for studying the employee and organisation's skill needs makes available a broad array of training opportunities and supporting resources and encourages employees to take part.</p>
6	<p>Obstacles to success: The leaders of the organisation plan strategically and patiently embrace the applicable measures, based on a system of prioritisation, to deal with any barriers arising in attempting to fulfil their organisational strategy. Before making any substantial changes that are crucial to the success the organisation hopes for, the organisation ensures that its members have adequate information about the desired changes, receive training and are efficiently provided with the crucial</p>	<p>LI1 LI9</p>	<p>PC1 PC6 PC1 1</p>	<p>Have a clear direction for the organisation and develop medium- and short-term targets for achieving long-term goals.</p> <p>Establish external resource, finance, and knowledge-supporting pathways.</p> <p>Put in place ad hoc teams consisting of employees from different departments and levels within the hierarchy of the company. Coordinate these teams with the aim of providing cohesive decision-making and encouraging participation from employees as a way of</p>

	<p>skills for such changes. It also institutes goals and rewards acknowledgement frameworks that ensure its members are not adversely impacted by and believe in the suggested changes. It established mechanisms supporting a shared organisational culture, where what is similar between the employees is highlighted, leading to a feeling of being united. These mechanisms include developing ethical standards and codes of behaviour. The organisation ensures various sources of income to make sure that funding does not turn into a barrier. It also puts in place mechanisms to guarantee that employees are effectively managed. This starts with the recruitment of qualified employees, ensuring that the positions they occupy are appropriate for their skills, stating the roles of employees and what they are expected to do, the results expected from their actions, and making sure that the tasks assigned to employees are realistically achievable.</p>		<p>empowering them to develop their own initiatives. The performance of both the organisation and its employees should be monitored on a regular basis.</p> <p>Develop a system for recruitment where the name of the applicant is not revealed during the recruitment so as to allow for fairness and encourage people to be selected based on their skills, experience, and qualifications.</p> <p>Put in place an organised system for studying the skills required by the organisation and its employees, make available a broad array of training opportunities and supporting resources, and encourage all stakeholders to participate.</p> <p>Monitor the performance of employees and the organisation on an ongoing basis.</p>
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7	<p>Ethical issues: The organisation is clear about its primary role in the community and that its reputation depends on its ability to execute that role appropriately. The organisation obeys ethical policies and regulations to sustain its ethical legitimacy by establishing suitable and transparent reporting pathways. It embraces official codes of ethics that recognise ethical standards, which are related to the crucial role of employees mutually respecting each other, tolerating diversity, and bringing to the fore the well-being of all people concerned, particularly those who are vulnerable. It encourages those who work for it to participate in the company's ethics programs and those of the broader community. The management of the company is clear about its ethical leadership role and conducts itself as a role model.</p>			<p>Facilitate pathways for training the organisation's leaders that provide them with the skills they require to successfully accomplish their roles so that they are able to manage their time effectively.</p> <p>Establish external resource, finance, and knowledge-supporting pathways.</p> <p>Put in place policies that support public engagement through the development of partnerships with aligned organisations and encourage employees to engage in public matters.</p> <p>Create shared commitment and goals for employees and encourage them to work in a collaborative manner.</p> <p>Regularly monitor the performance of the organisation and its employees.</p> <p>Develop a system for recruitment where the name of the applicant is not revealed during the recruitment so as to allow for fairness and encourage people to be selected based on their skills, experience, and qualifications as opposed to who they are.</p>
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8	<p>Organisational infrastructure: The organisation establishes an articulate arrangement of effective practices for the management of human resources practices. Such practices aim to support employee independence, creativity, and critical thinking, making it easier for them to participate in decision-making. Such an arrangement boosts productivity through accountability, monitoring, training, and incentives. It ensures that they have the facilities, equipment, and other resources they require to play their roles effectively and to increase their loyalty and work spirit.</p>			<p>Put in place ad hoc teams consisting of employees from different departments and levels within the hierarchy of the company. Coordinate these teams with the aim of providing cohesive decision-making and encouraging participation from employees as a way of empowering them to develop their own initiatives.</p> <p>Delegate work execution and decision-making.</p> <p>Provide rewards and motivation and make sure these target qualifications and performance.</p> <p>Create pathways for external resources, finance, and knowledge.</p> <p>Put in place a system for studying the employee and organisation skills needs and make available a wide array of opportunities and encourage employees to take part.</p> <p>Monitor the performance of both the employees and the organisation.</p>
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6.5 Proposed Interventions

The new interventions proposed below were established based on Wight et al.'s (2016) 6 Steps for Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID). The 12 proposed interventions are linked to the following themes:

- Establishing a name-blind recruitment framework
- Facilitating leadership training
- Developing external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels
- Establishing public engagement-supporting policies
- Developing common commitments and goals
- Developing an explicit direction for the organisation
- Putting in place systems for monitoring employee performance
- Delegating the making of decisions
- Putting feedback channels in place
- Utilising rewards and encouragement
- Establishing ad hoc interdepartmental teams
- Providing training resources and opportunities

6.5.1 Establishing a Name-Blind Recruitment Framework

Putting in place a name-blind recruitment system and making incentives available for qualified employees to join the organisation lowers the chance of unconscious bias against applicants from certain ethical backgrounds and cultures while boosting employment opportunities based on qualifications. This ensures the establishment of a qualified workforce and boosts fairness and the credibility of the recruitment process (Watt, 2015). It also has positive ramifications for an organisation, making the workplace more diverse, which facilitates a diverse manner of doing things. A name-blind recruitment framework deals with the ideal position in relation to the themes of obstacles to success and ethical issues.

6.5.2 Facilitating Leadership Training

Ensuring the availability of training channels for leaders provides them with the precise leadership qualities needed to perform their roles successfully. For the organisation, it boosts leadership competencies and ensures leaders' skills are aligned with the strategic goals of the

organisation, shapes the organisation's precise leadership abilities, and improves the manager's comprehension of the leadership and ethical roles and the needs of those who work under them (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Chaimongkonrojna & Steane, 2015; Yukl, 2006; Collins & Holton, 2004; Rothwell, 2002; Day, 2001). Facilitating the training of leaders contributes towards the ideal positions in connection with the organisation's obstacles to success, organisational management, ethical issues, organisational strategies, external engagement, and development and growth.

6.5.3 Developing External Knowledge, Finance and Resource-Supporting Channels

The development of channels for external knowledge, finance, and resources boosts the opportunities for funding, the applicability of research, and providing employment to young and inexperienced graduates. This can lower an organisation's financial burden while ensuring competitiveness and sustainability (Hewitt-Dundas, 2012; Nagy, 2014; Skrbinjek & Lesjak, 2014). The organisation gains access to professional advice, gets an idea of best practices across the world, boosts its public image and organisational competitiveness, and establishes a global portfolio of clients. The themes furthered by resource-supporting, finance, and external knowledge channels are mitigating obstacles to success, ethical issues, organisational infrastructure, and development and growth.

6.5.4 Establishing Public Engagement-Supporting Policies

Establishing policies that support public engagement through the development of partnerships with organisations that support the public and encouraging employees to be involved in public issues is one of the themes noted to enhance quality improvement. This can support the organisation in improving the way it relates with society, a collaboration between the company and those who work for it and the communities in which it operates, and spurs the discussion of patient public matters (Hogan et al., 2017; Osman et al., 2016; McDonald & Dominguez, 2015). Moreover, this process has positive ramifications for the transfer of expertise and knowledge between both the organisation and the community, which contributes to creating the ideal position for public engagement and dealing with ethical issues.

6.5.5 Developing Shared Commitments and Goals

Developing shared commitment and goals for employees boosts collaboration and teamwork (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). When an organisation encourages employees to communicate outside its boundaries, it boosts relationships, and this has positive ramifications for unity in the workplace. When employees learn to relate outside their jobs, they also tend to become more creative, efficient, and productive because they are permitted to be flexible. Shared commitments and common goals make the ideal position stronger for organisational management and ethical issues (Dalton & Crosby, 2011).

6.5.6 Developing an Explicit Direction for the Organisation

When the direction to be taken by an organisation is clear because the long- and short-term goals are clearly established, and guidance on how to achieve them is provided, the organisation has a self-assessment implement of performance regarding the achievement of its objectives (Al-Sarmi & Al-Hemyari, 2014; Hladchenko, 2015). This lowers the opportunities for unforeseen hurdles and contributes towards the ideal position for obstacles to success, growth, development, and engagement.

6.5.7 Putting In Place Systems for Monitoring Employee Performance

The monitoring of both employee and organisational performance on an ongoing basis provides a guideline for the service sector organisation to achieve its goals. It also ensures that the right intervention is instituted at the opportune time so that achievement is not negatively affected. Organisational accountability and transparency are also boosted, making it possible for the organisation to understand its weaknesses and strengths. Performance monitoring can facilitate cooperation between departments and different companies, creating coordination in the process of decision-making. With effective monitoring, the procedures employed in recruitment create a more transparent process with regard to recruitment and ensure that the organisation is capable of creating equal employment opportunities and better accountability (Tackey et al., 2006; Fenwick, 2015). When performance is monitored, organisational strategies are enhanced while also dealing with ethical issues and obstacles to success (Salmi, 2015).

6.5.8 Delegating the Making of Decisions

The two main elements that benefit from the delegation of decision-making are motivation and self-confidence. When employees are involved in the decision-making process, they are motivated, and their sense of independence is enhanced, which leads to improved productivity and work quality (Alcudia, 2015; Husni, 2018). Delegation contributes to the attainment of the ideal position in organisational management and the organisation's infrastructure.

6.5.9 Putting Feedback Channels in Place

When an organisation encourages participation and puts feedback channels in place, employee productivity benefits from ongoing assessment of their work. Consequently, the success of the organisation is enhanced by the availability of an objective assessment of completed tasks. The availability of feedback channels also boosts the satisfaction of not just the employees but all other stakeholders. It lets everyone involved know that they are being listened to, which furthers the ideal position for the engagement and organisational strategies themes (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Dugguh & Dennis, 2014).

6.5.10 Utilising Rewards and Encouragement

The provision of rewards and encouragement targeting qualifications and performance boosts employee productivity and work performance. When employees are encouraged to enhance their skills and work competitiveness, the qualified and hard-working ones are likely to remain loyal to the organisation. From this, work satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty increase, and the employees are motivated to make their skills broader (Aji et al., 2017; Glińska-Neweś & Szostek, 2018). Rewards and encouragement lead to the ideal position for skills enhancement, organisational management, and organisational infrastructure.

6.5.11 Establishing Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Teams

Synchronised ad hoc teams constitute members from different departments and levels of the hierarchy, providing incorporated decision-making and emboldening employees who want to participate in the organisation's decision-making processes. It also provides them with the power to make suggestions because it establishes an efficient and inclusive mechanism for making decisions and permits effective coordination between the various departments in the organisation (Pakarinen & Virtanen, 2017; Woolley, 2015; Gombolay et al., 2015). The

ability to participate in ad hoc interdepartmental teams that make decisions enhances the employee's sense of autonomy, which leads to improvements in productivity and work quality (Algashaam, 2015; Tripp et al., 2016). Synchronised ad hoc interdepartmental teams further the idea in several themes, including obstacles to success, organisational infrastructure, and organisational strategies.

6.5.12 Providing Training Resources and Opportunities

To determine supporting resources and training opportunities that need to be put in place, it is important to conduct an organised study of the needs of a company's employees and managers. This boosts employee participation, which in turn enhances employee performance. This performance enhancement can be accredited to the fact that a systematic study of the organisation's skill needs ensures that employees are trained in the right areas, which leads to increased motivation, engagement, and productivity. These opportunities also develop situational leadership skills (Orr et al., 2013; Anisha, 2012). Informed training initiatives provide employees with skills for self-assessment, in turn increasing their performance, efficiency, work loyalty, and self-confidence. This makes available platforms where employees and management can share ideas and make plans for their work, establishing the ideal position for the Obstacle to Success and Organisational Infrastructure, Development and Growth, and Skills Enhancement aspects.

A summary of the proposed interventions, their anticipated outcomes, and the themes whose ideal positions the interventions intend to accomplish is presented below. Every one of the interventions proposed must make a contribution to the attainment of the ideal position in no more than two themes.

6.6 The Relationship between the Interventions Proposed

The connection between the proposed interventions is presented in Table 6.5 below. An analysis of the information in this table shows that most of these relationships are supported by both the primary data and the literature.

Table 6.5: Relationship between the proposed interventions and the targeted themes

No	List of proposed interventions	Intervention from literature	Intervention from data
1	Provide leaders in the organisation with the training they need to develop the specific leadership traits needed for their responsibilities so they can manage their work well.	√	√
2	Create policies that support public participation by collaborating with organisations that serve the public and encouraging employees to become involved in public problems.		√
3	Establish a defined course of action for your organisation and create short- and medium-term objectives to realise your long-term objectives.		√
4	Delegate decision-making and work execution.	√	√
5	Encouragement and rewards should be given, and performance and qualifications should be the focus.	√	√
6	Leaders and staff at the organisation should be skilfully assessed and should offer a variety of training opportunities and accompanying materials to encourage participation.	√	√
7	Create ad hoc teams that work together across departments and levels of the hierarchy to deliver integrated decision-making - empowering workers to create their own projects by allowing and encouraging them to participate in the organisation's decision-making procedures.	√	
8	Create pathways for feedback and promote participation.		√

9	Keep a regular eye on both organisation and employee performance.	√	√
10	Establish a shared commitment and clear objective for employees, and foster teamwork.	√	√
11	Create pathways that can support external knowledge, finance, and resources.	√	√
12	Establish a name-blind hiring procedure that offers rewards to qualified candidates who join the organisation.	√	√

6.7 Expert Validation

To validate and evaluate the framework, the present study included the judgements of three industry experts. According to Schuwirth and van der Vleuten (2011), the most optimal way of considering validation is by perceiving it as a qualitative, subjective judgement, typically done by an expert in the field being tested. For this reason, in the present study, the researcher met with three experts in CI to ask them to provide feedback relating to the applicability and validity of the framework developed. The experience and expertise in CI of the participants are presented in Table 6.6 below.

Table 6.6: Participant's expertise and related experience in CI

Expert	Position	Years of experience	Country
A	Executive in the Ministry of Energy	22	Saudi Arabia
B	Dean of Business Administration	16	Saudi Arabia
C	Service sector consultant	15	Saudi Arabia

The views of the experts with regard to the proposed framework are crucial to the validation of its dependability and applicability with Saudi Arabian service sector organisations. After reading the framework, all three indicated that they expected it to make an impact on the culture of services sector organisations and, therefore, enable CI in them. Notwithstanding the fact that the experts believe that the framework is sound, they also made some suggestions for steps that could be incorporated into the framework to boost its reliability and broaden its applicability in other Arab nations. The views of the experts regarding the proposed framework are summarised below.

Expert A

Your work goes deep into many issues faced by many services sector organisations. A lot of these issues have generally been ignored. So, even though some parts of your framework tend to be idealistic, it still deals with those issues. In fact, in the past three years, we have been employing numerous elements of your framework within the development initiatives of our services sector organisations.

Expert B

The framework you suggest will add to the body of literature connected to the management of services sector organisations, not just in Saudi Arabia but also in the greater GCC and other Arab countries that have the same, to a large extent, cultural traits.

Expert C

Your framework makes available a wide-ranging view of the understanding and application of CI. Analysing it shows that it suggests a revolutionary transformation of the manner in which services sector companies are currently being run. For this reason, I foresee challenges in the applicability of this framework in the present environment. Also, a lot of the aspects of this framework can benefit a lot of organisations that are not operating in the services sector. I would suggest that you use more indicative diagrams to improve the clarity of the framework.

After doing an analysis of the views of the experts on the proposed framework, it is also crucial to take their suggestions on how it could be improved into account so that it becomes more effective when implemented. Undoubtedly, both experts, A and C, support the idea that service sector organisations must put in place periodical and continuous reflections following each milestone targeted before the organisation's desired goals are reached. This suggestion seeks to ensure that such targets build on each other's failures and successes before achieving the framework's ultimate outcome. Expert B indicated his excitement with the framework and said that it could be applied in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. Expert B suggested that the framework be applied in organisations outside the services sector. However, he noted that the framework would need to be applied to a specific niche within the sector before expanding it to other areas. Particularly, he suggested that smaller private sector organisations should be the initial focus as decisions in such organisations often do not take as much time to implement as they do in bigger entities. Both these suggestions have been included in the framework, as can be seen in Table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7: Expert's suggested amendments

A and C	There is a need for continuous and periodic reflections following each targeted milestone before reaching the organisation's desired goal.
B	The implementation of this proposed framework should target a few smaller private sector companies before expanding to the bigger ones.

6.7.1 Validation and discussion of the framework

The experts who were requested to validate the framework came from different countries and organisations. This diverse range of nationalities and expertise enabled the author to make some crucial observations. Notwithstanding the reality that the experts highlighted the significant role of this process framework in the services sector in general, they were also clear about the importance of contextualising the framework so that it could respond to the needs of different countries. This was particularly apparent in the experts' continuous reference to their company's dominant OC that, in a number of instances, was different from that in Saudi Arabia. It can, therefore, be said that such a proposed framework may be applicable in the service sectors of most countries, provided that the national culture, OC, and other impacting factors are taken into consideration. Such contextualisation will make it possible for each country to apply the main elements of the framework and prioritise them in a manner that will benefit CI in their service sector organisations.

6.8 The Proposed Framework

The present study suggested a framework that would make the required improvements possible and solve the problems faced by services sector organisations in their CI efforts. This framework will deal with the elements that are a culmination of several OC aspects that have shaped the prevailing Saudi services sector's OC and encourage an OC that supports CI. The framework's interventions were developed from the themes that emerged in the study, as discussed in Chapter 5 and presented in Table 5.3. The 12 interventions proposed are presented in Table 6.4, and the expert comments with regard to relevance and applicability are presented in Table 6.6. The interventions proposed are in keeping with the conceptualisation of Schein (1992), who proposed that OC has three aspects: underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artefacts.

The manner in which the interventions suggested in this study are consistent with Schein's conceptualisation of organisational culture (1992) is illustrated in Figure 6.1. In the same figure, the proposed interventions are categorised into three divisions, each connected to one of Schein's (1992) organisational culture conceptualising aspects. It also brings to the fore the connections among the three levels of culture presented by Schein, showing that CI is a result of OC, where the shared artefacts, espoused values, and assumptions are presented in Figure 6.1 below.

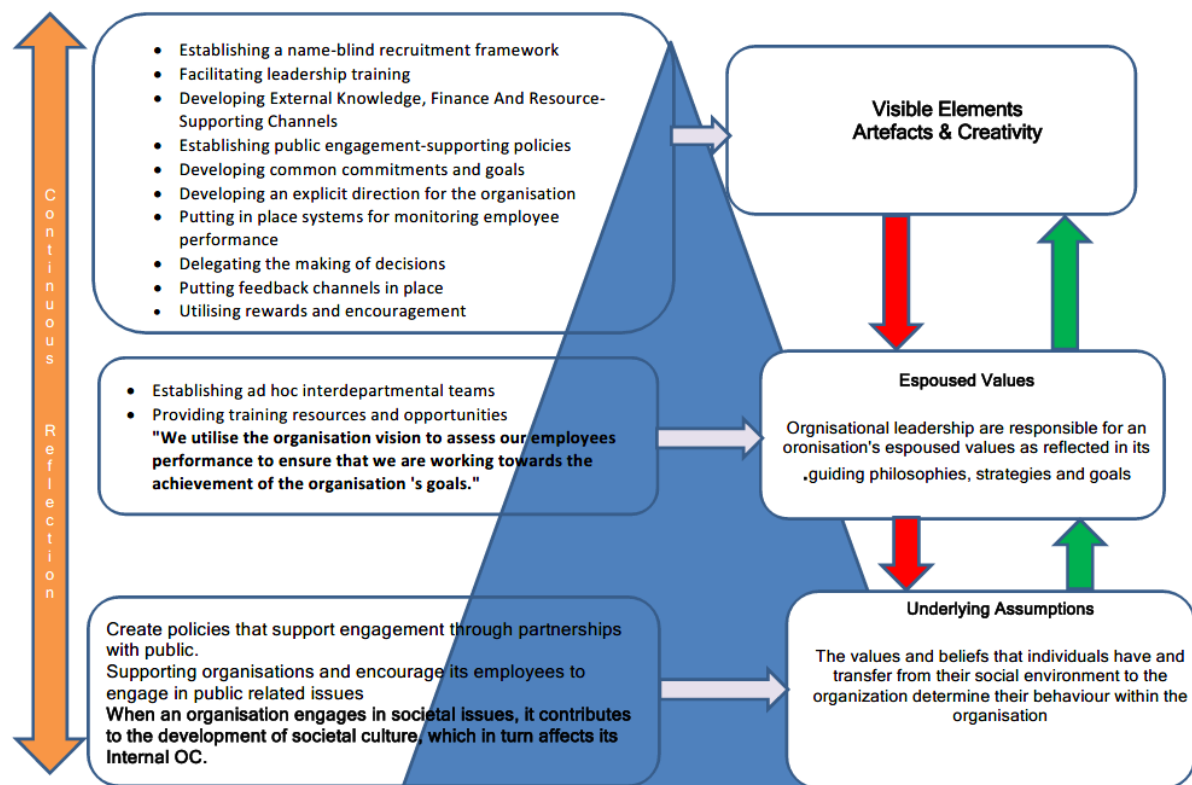


Figure 6.1: The influence of organisational culture on CI (Source: own creation)

6.9 Conclusion

Using the primary data collected from participants in the present study, this chapter has identified interventions that may facilitate CI in Saudi Arabia's services sector. The findings drawn from the primary data were amalgamated with the insights obtained from the literature to create interventions considered able to close the gap between the ideal CI conditions and prevailing practices in Saudi Arabian services sector companies. The interventions identified are the facilitators of the effective application of CI. Following this is a demonstration, using tables, of the phases involved in the development of the proposed interventions, outlining their

preferred impacts and showing the CI themes they would deal with. This resulted in the creation of a framework that brings to the fore the connection between the interventions proposed. Then, the preliminary framework was evaluated and validated using the views of experts. These views were integrated into the framework presented in this chapter. One of the experts suggested that the framework may benefit from being made clear by the use of more indicative diagrams. Consequently, the framework was presented as a diagram. The following chapter focuses on the presented findings and suggested framework of OC factors that have played the role of either inhibitors or enablers of the success of Saudi Arabian service sector organisations' CI efforts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

This study was set out with the aim of establishing the manner in which organisational culture can be taken advantage of so as to support continuous improvement in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. To accomplish this, the main objectives of the study were to identify the organisational culture enablers and inhibitors of CI through a broad literature review. The study also sought to provide clarity on how enablers can be boosted while averting the inhibitors. To do this, an important objective of the study was to develop a framework of interventions that will assist in leveraging the organisational cultures of services sector companies operating in Saudi Arabia in their continuous improvement efforts. The proposed intervention framework was then evaluated using the views of experts in the area of continuous improvement. This chapter will focus on the study's outline of suggested interventions, as is shown in Table 6.4 in Chapter 6. The structure of the discussion is as follows: basic assumptions and supported values with an influence on OC and affect CI efforts. In conclusion, this chapter evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the framework proposed.

7.2 Discussion of the Suggested Framework

To deal with the factors mentioned above, constituting a consolidation of numerous OC elements that have shaped the prevailing OC in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations and encourage OC supporting CI, this section presents a discussion of the suggested framework for facilitating the required improvements and dealing with the problems in the CI efforts of service sector organisations. It also focuses on the experts' suggestions on the applicability and execution of the suggested intervention. Framing this discussion will be the conceptualisation of organisational culture by Schein (1992), which is founded on three features: underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artefacts.

7.2.1 Underlying Assumptions

The idea of underlying assumptions denotes the feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs that, even though not explicitly apparent, are taken for granted and can be seen by someone carefully observing a specific culture (Almaiman, 2017). In the present study, underlying assumptions were acknowledged with regard to the role played by society in influencing services sector companies' OC. This aspect is also acknowledged by Babnik (2011), who notes that the implied social culture directly determines organisational culture. In the same vein,

Vajpayee and Chakraborty (2017) advance the view that the culture of a society is central to the culture of the organisation. Several other scholars, including Zakaria (1997), Tayeb (1994), Hofstede (1991), and Aldrich and Marsden (1988), support this view and add that no organisation operates in a vacuum but rather within specific cultures. The culture of a society signifies the state of the relationship between workers and employers and the values and norms of workers in organisations. Eventually, this has an influence on collective relationships between workers and employers and the place where the work is done. It also has an impact on the shared relations between trade unions and employers, and to a certain degree, the state regulates how these entities relate.

The effect of a society's values differs in the extent to which there is a principal set of beliefs and values influencing the culture within an organisation (Brodbeck et al., 2004). The beliefs and values held by people are a reflection of the environment from which they come and are transferred to the organisation. Therefore, it is possible to forecast the behaviour of the employees or an organisation by knowing the culture of the society from which they come (Kopelman et al., 1990; Fitzsimmons & Stamper, 2014). It has also been discovered that societal culture has an influence on the establishment and sustenance of the CI process (Pakdil & Leonard, 2017). Consequently, the framework of this study regarding OC factors proposes that service sector organisations establish policies supporting engagement through collaborations with other public and private organisations. Also, these organisations should encourage their employees to participate in public initiatives as a way of influencing social culture. Thus, when a service sector organisation participates in issues linked to the community, it impacts the development of societal culture, which in turn has an effect on that organisation's internal OC. The degree to which a company's participation in public issues can meaningfully impact societal culture – to a point where it instils mutual assumptions that are an advantage to CI – is a contested matter, at least in the short to medium term.

Regarding Saudi Arabia, a country dominated by religion in all elements of its residents' lives, the change that could be introduced by any organisation's influence has better potential to be embraced only if it is in keeping with the predominant religious conventions, particularly in service sector companies where the state has a substantial shareholding. This means that private organisations are in a better place to apply changes because the leadership reserves more authority to make decisions, as one of the experts explained.

7.2.2 Espoused Values as Observed from Leadership

The present study acknowledges the role played by the leaders of an organisation in facilitating an organisational culture that nurtures CI. This is because they are responsible for the values espoused by an organisation, as can be observed in the guiding goals, strategies, and philosophies. It suggests that the leaders of an organisation should have the primary abilities associated with their fields so they can execute their functions effectively. Scholars have concluded that when the managers of an organisation get regular training in strategic planning and precise management and leadership areas, the organisation's leadership capabilities are enhanced, and the skills of its leaders are aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation (Griffith et al., 2018; Santos, 2015; Collins, 2004; Day, 2001). It is also based on the precise leadership capabilities of an organisation and boosts the managers' comprehension of their leadership and ethical roles, as well as the needs of their employees (Bedi, 2016; Yukl, 2006; Rothwell, 2002).

The present study suggests that a clear direction for the service actor organisation should be established via the development of short- and long-term goals. Such goals will play the role of a guiding tool for the development and growth of the service sector organisation, assisting it in predicting the challenges it is likely to face. Based on the views of Yildi (2014), the short-term goals of an organisation and the way it performs have an impact on whether the same organisation will survive in the long term. An expert interviewed when collecting data for the present study emphasised the significant role of pacing goals. The same expert brought to the fore the need for periodic and continuous reflection after the achievement of every milestone. In a similar manner, Meng (2014) advances the view that analysing an organisation's culture provides a reflection of its strategic objective, which is achieved through conducting operational and behavioural improvements. The participants noted that the operationalisation of the commitment occurs through the establishment of long- and short-term goals that provide an instrument for measuring the performance of services sector organisations and lessen the potential to face unforeseen obstacles. For instance, a participant in the study advanced the view that when an effective long-term strategy does not exist, unanticipated obstacles will impact the organisation.

The framework proposed for the influence of OC on CI is based on the assumption that leadership is responsible for the organisation's vision and espoused values and for making sure that these are mirrored in the guiding goals, strategies, and philosophies. However, this view

has its own limitations. For instance, its basis is the assumption that leaders are in control of such elements, an assumption that has been debunked by the results of several other studies. Moreover, the link between organisational values and leadership cannot be said to be unidirectional in that as much as the organisation's values are shaped by the leadership, the organisation's leadership practices are conversely shaped by the values of the organisation. Also, when it comes to public organisations, it looks like leadership has a narrow influence over issues related to goals and strategy, as was suggested by a participant who said that funding from the government was reduced at a time when they did not expect it. Therefore, in those service sector organisations receiving substantial funding from the government, it may be a huge challenge to implement the suggested framework as is. This perspective is validated by one of the experts.

7.2.3 Visible Elements (Artefacts)

Schein's levels of organisational culture artefacts aspect summarise the perceptible structure of the organisation and process and seem to convey numerous meanings. Regarding the implementation of CI, the visible elements form part of the setting that could either drive or slow down the process. Sheldon et al. (2008) call this the implementation climate. In the present study, the elements observed include:

- Establishing a name-blind recruitment system.
- Creating external finance and resource-supporting channels.
- Monitoring the organisation and employee performance, putting in place channels for feedback and motivating employees to participate.
- Providing rewards and encouragement based on qualifications and performance.
- Delegating work execution and decision-making.
- Establishing policies for public engagement.
- Facilitating channels for training for the leaders of organisations.

7.2.3.1 Delegating Work Execution and Decision-Making

The present study suggests that work execution and decision-making should be delegated to employees. This is a view also supported by the participants, who indicated that such delegation would nurture an OC where productivity, self-confidence, and innovation would thrive.

This view is also validated by several studies that have concluded that when staff members are encouraged to take part in the decision-making processes of an organisation and have the support they require from management, their motivation, self-confidence, and loyalty increase because such an environment fosters motivation, and in the process creates organisational value (Husni, 2018; Alcludia, 2015; Bakker, 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

When tasks and decision-making are delegated, the presupposition is that the people to whom those decisions and tasks are being delegated have the required competencies and skills to share a similar vision. When looked at from this perspective, delegation is more effective when applied in tandem with mutual goals and the delivery of the required training.

7.2.3.2 Enable Needs-Based Training Channels

In the present study, the other primary proposal is that companies in the services sector should have an organised way of studying their employees' training needs so that they can make available a broad array of training opportunities and resources to support it while also motivating employees to participate. Included in this proposal is that training facilities should also be made available for the leaders of the organisation. When skills are continuously developed, the result will be an OC whose focus is ongoing assessment of competencies and skills at both the organisational and human levels, something that could assist the CI efforts.

Other researchers have concluded that training has a crucial role in improving the productivity of employees and in communicating the objectives of the organisation to employees (Ekaterini & Constantinou-Vasilios, 2009). This view is also acknowledged by Rohan and Madhumita (2012), who explain that when employees are trained in interpersonal relations, effective decision-making, problem-solving, and teamwork, the organisation benefits in a number of ways, including performance and level of growth. This has been attributed to the fact that training has a crucial role in the establishment and changing of the culture of an organisation and can assist employees in embracing new values and structure (Jreisat, 1997; Gil & Mataveli, 2016; Ali & Patnaik, 2014). When employees are trained and developed effectively, organisational culture can be positively impacted (Pevkur, 2007; Gourova, 2014).

7.2.3.3 Create a Shared Objective, Common Commitment, and Foster Collaborative Work

After becoming conscious that skills alone will not help in contributing effectively to CI if there is no shared aim, the present study suggests that companies in the services sector need to come up with shared goals and common commitments among their employees and foster collaboration among them so that such goals can be achieved. This common commitment will have positive ramifications for how employees relate, boost unity within the workplace, inspire creativity among employees, and boost their productivity and work efficiency. From such findings, it can be noted that teamwork has to work across and within departments for it to be effective in altering the OC.

7.2.3.4 Creating Multi-Department Ad Hoc Teams That Are Coordinated

It was noted that internal cooperation between the various functions of the company is critical to establishing a shared goals-based OC. In relation to this, the present study suggested that coordinated ad hoc teams should be established. Such teams need to consist of individuals from different departments and levels of the hierarchy. This will ensure that decisions made by these committees will be integrated while also encouraging staff members to take part in the decision-making processes of the organisation. This will assist the services sector companies in planning and implementing their strategy and constructing a cultural framework that reduces bureaucracy and fosters a coordinated way of arriving at decisions.

Several researchers have demonstrated how creating ad hoc teams results in an efficient and inclusive decision-making contrivance and permits coordination to effectively happen between the various arms of an organisation (Pakarinen & Virtanen, 2017; Woolley, 2015; Gombolay et al., 2015). Moreover, such teams inspire employees and boost their sense of independence, which leads to improved productivity and quality of work (Algashaam, 2015; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). These ad hoc teams could also boost loyalty and engagement among employees (Naruse et al., 2015; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

7.2.3.5 Rewards and Motivation Based on Qualifications and Performance

Rewards and encouragement are suggested as crucial interventions that service sector companies can employ in boosting the relationship between employees and management, creating a cultural framework of growth and productivity, and building the kind of momentum that will encourage employees to broaden their skills. Encouraging employees can be done in different ways, including personal encouragement by the manager, work promotions, or

financial payments. This view is in keeping with the conclusions from a study conducted by Glewwe et al. (2008), which concluded that when staff members are provided with direct payment rewards when they have achieved at work, work motivation and satisfaction increase, together with their general performance on the job (Mitra et al., 2011; Sailer, 2017). A participant in the present study elucidated the reality that providing rewards to employees with work promotions and increases in their salaries could boost their productivity and inspire them to get involved in activities that would broaden their skills and boost their performance at work.

One of the present study's main findings relates to the use of promotion as a way of encouraging employees to broaden their skills. When managers are willing to verbally encourage employees, they can help increase their loyalty and productivity. This is a view acknowledged by some of the participants. They noted that making rewards and encouragement based on qualifications and performance is based on the assumption that performance monitoring and contrivances for directing performance feedback exist.

7.2.3.6 Regular Monitoring of Organisation and Employee Performance

When top management monitors performance, it effectively provides guidance to the organisation in achieving its goals and makes sure that there is timely intervention when issues need to be dealt with in terms of achieving its goals. Monitoring also ensures that the various departments of the organisation can work together smoothly so as to establish coordinated making of decisions. The present study also acknowledges the important role played by the regular monitoring of the organisation and employee performance in the success of the service sector organisation's strategy with regard to implementing it, growth and development.

7.2.3.7 Nurture Participation and Create Feedback Channels

An important element that should be connected to monitoring is providing employees with feedback with the aim of facilitating improvement. Consequently, the present study proposes that feedback channels should be available throughout an organisation. This view is acknowledged by Holton et al. (2007) and Bratton and Gold (2012), who proposed that when feedback is provided, employees see, in an objective way, how their performance is seen by others. They also get to obtain input in areas like vision, work habits, accountability, contributions, management, interpersonal communication and interaction, leadership, and teamwork. This is in keeping with the findings of the present study that when feedback channels

are facilitated, an OC of employee satisfaction and productivity is established. This is an indication that performance feedback is implemented and used to deconstruct employee strengths and weaknesses. The present study found that feedback encouraged employees to assess themselves.

7.2.3.8 Institute a Name-Blind System for Recruiting Staff

A transparent and fair recruitment system is integral to the success of an organisation. Consequently, the present study proposes that concealing the names of people looking for jobs will be a suitable way of ensuring that qualified professionals can be given an opportunity to become part of the organisation. This view is validated by Watt (2015), who says that concealing the names of candidates applying for jobs lowers the possibility for unconscious bias in relation to applicants from different ethnicities and cultures while positively impacting employment based on qualifications. Organisations that embrace this system get the opportunity to attract qualified individuals because they make their processes as fair as possible, which encourages trust in the recruitment process. When an organisation embraces a recruitment process based on merit, it promotes the recruitment and promotion of the right candidates mainly on the basis of how competent they are likely to be in performing the job that the company is recruiting for. Tackey et al. (2006) advanced the view that one way of ensuring a recruitment system that is more transparent is through the monitoring of the recruitment process. The same scholars argue that this allows companies to create a transparent process for recruitment and, if it is employed, can boost credibility.

7.2.3.9 Create External Knowledge Finance and Resource-Supporting Channels

The present study also proposes that external knowledge, finance and resource-supporting channels should be created. This suggestion is based on the views of the participants, who noted that when organisation's funding is cut, projects are negatively impacted. This view is in keeping with numerous studies that have concluded that when an organisation diversifies its sources of income, its financial barriers will be lowered, which boosts the organisation's competitiveness and sustainability (Hewitt-Dundas, 2012; Nagy, 2014; Skrbinjek & Lesjak, 2014). Moreover, an organisation's partnership with other businesses permits it to grow and develop, avert unforeseen obstacles, learn from the best across the world, and establish a culture of CI. One of the participants explained how his company benefited from collaborating with a

technology company. Also, participants noted that partnerships with other businesses have a significant role to play.

Kezar (2009) believes that when organisations work in partnership, they are able to access the type of expert advice that gives them an idea of the best worldwide practices. Several other scholars have supported the assumption that working in partnership with other organisations has its advantages. For instance, David (2017) concluded that organisations might need to change their structures, too, if they want to manage change and stability successfully. Thus, partnerships are perceived to be a main cooperative effort that makes it possible to make use of their resources efficiently and effectively to attain their mutual objectives of boosting their international competitiveness, attaining innovation and playing the role of economic growth (Garousi, 2017; Ankrah & Omar, 2015).

7.3 Evaluating the OC-CI Framework

To successfully embrace CI, services sector organisations need to revamp their cultures and the commitment of senior managers. Regarding the senior managers, the main aim is to encourage them to support the objectives for adopting CI better. In this regard, culture has often been presented as an impediment to quality improvement. The main focus of the proposed framework is on the interventions linked to an organisational culture that can be embraced so that CI is successfully embraced. The proposed framework's main advantages are linked to dealing with the factors associated with dealing with elements that have been recognised in the literature as being either enablers or impediments (Sheldon et al., 2008; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012). Including the aspect of ongoing reflection within the framework results in a constant reassessment of intervention connections within the culture's three levels. This leads to the alignment of the level of the artefact with espoused values, vision, and strategies level as the CI goals are achieved. Another robust element of the framework is that, although its basis is data connected to services sector organisations, as was noted by one of the experts, it contains numerous elements also applicable to non-services sector organisations.

Nonetheless, the proposed framework has its shortcomings. For instance, even though it recommends or emphasises what must be done, it fails to sufficiently deal with issues relating to how exogenous factors, particularly societal or national culture, influence OC and, in turn, affect CI initiatives. This is especially crucial if one considers the degree to which, in the Saudi

Arabian context, religion infuses all aspects of life, making it hard to separate it from the state and organisations. The proposal that services sector organisations can impact societal culture (at Schein's shared assumptions level) to the point where a different and "new" culture that is responsive to CI requirements is established seems outlandish. What could be more practical and thus implementable is:

- Putting in place a name-blind recruitment system.
- Establishing policies that nurture public engagement.
- Creating channels that support external knowledge, finance, and resources.
- Regularly monitor the performance of the organisation and its employees.
- Nurturing participation and feedback by creating feedback channels.
- Putting in place interdepartmental ad hoc teams.
- Motivating employees through qualification and performance-based rewards and verbal feedback.
- Facilitating channels for training employees and the leaders of the organisation.
- Addressing the perceptible elements and level of espoused values in the form of delegation of work execution and decision-making.

Notwithstanding the reality that multiple interventions are offered in the framework, there may be challenges with attempting to implement all of them simultaneously. This is a view acknowledged by one of the experts, who noted that it might be more practical to couple the implementation process with an evaluation when each stage has been completed. This is in keeping with the general recommendations with regard to the steady application of organisational improvement. Also, the numerous interventions encompassed in the framework are based on the assumption that certain assumptions prevail, which may not always be true. For instance, the interventions linked to training are made on the assumption that resources will be available and employees will be willing to participate. Also, the interventions linked to leadership, like the shared making of decisions, are based on the assumption that the leaders of the organisation will be comfortable sharing their authority and power, which is not always the case in a culture such as the one prevailing in the high power-distance Saudi Arabia.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on elements of OC identified by the participants in the study as crucial for establishing a CI-conducive environment. The chapter discussed the OC aspects identified based on Schein's (1984) model of culture as three connected levels: the basic assumptions that are often embraced without question and impact the pronounced values that, in turn, impact the artefacts. At the level of the underlying assumptions, it has been concluded that services sector organisations need to establish policies supporting engagement. This could be achieved through partnerships with aligned organisations and through employees participating in societal issues, contributing to societal culture development, which over the extended period would impact the organisation's internal OC. Considering the returns over the long term from these interventions, the requirement for ongoing reflection and reviews was acknowledged. At the espoused values level, the role of the leadership in the establishment of a clear direction for the organisation by establishing a shared goal and commitment and nurturing collaboration and delegation of decision-making was brought to the fore. It was proposed that, since the proposal embodies a drastic revolution in the way services sector organisations work, there is potential for challenges and should thus be applied in a few services sector organisations first before spreading it out to others.

The majority of the identified OC elements with an impact on CI can be categorised under Schein's artefacts and creations level. The OC elements impacting CI, as offered in the framework, are discussed in the chapter, and after organising them based on Schein's levels, the researcher constructed a framework that includes interventions that could facilitate the application of improvements that make it possible for services sector organisations to deal with the challenges to their CI efforts. In the following chapter, the conclusions of the study are presented together with suggestions on the opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This grounded theory-based study started with the aim of establishing how organisational culture can be taken advantage of to boost continuous improvement in the services sector companies in Saudi Arabia, especially within the context of the Saudi Vision 2030. The study's aim is to determine the role of organisational culture aspects in boosting the implementation of continuous improvement in the service sector in Saudi Arabia. It explored the connection between continuous improvement in the service sector and organisational culture. The study also aimed to close the gap in the lack of studies focusing specifically on Saudi Arabia in relation to the effect of organisational culture on continuous improvement. It accomplished this by creating a framework – based on factors identified in the literature review and data collected – for creating an organisational environment conducive to continuous improvement. Following an analysis of the data collected through the interviews, synthesising and consolidating it into primary, properly defined themes and validating it through focus group discussions, the findings of the present study exposed three levels of culture that, as perceived by Schein (1984) could either be deterrents or enablers of CI initiatives in the services sector.

8.2 Research Overview

This study's first chapter presented the research problem, which relates to the dearth of reference in literature to the connection between organisational culture and continuous improvement in service sector companies located in Saudi Arabia. The second chapter presented the literature review connected to organisational culture and how it impacts continuous improvement in service sector organisations. The chapter brought to the fore the leading models used by scholars who have studied the realm of organisational culture, with the strengths and weaknesses of each model identified. It also presented an understanding of organisational culture from the Saudi Arabian point of view. Chapter 3 presented the organisational culture and continuous improvement of the service sector in Saudi Arabia. The chapter also covered the continuous improvement advancements and prior implementations for companies in the Saudi services sector. Chapter 4 presented the details related to the study's research design, including the methodologies and explanations regarding why the researcher made certain decisions. The chapter provided details regarding the research philosophy, research methodologies, justification for the methodology of choice, and methods for gathering

and analysing data. In Chapter 5, the results of the study were presented, together with findings from previous studies in Saudi Arabia. Chapter 6 focused on identifying the interventions that may facilitate CI in the Saudi Arabian services sector. It identified the leading interventions as indicated in the participants' contributions and other sources of applicable information and the interventions contained in the literature that may be utilised to close the gap between the optimal situation and what is currently the case in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia. The results are discussed in Chapter 7. That chapter focuses on the basic assumptions and supported values, which have an influence on OC and affect CI efforts. In conclusion, this chapter evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the framework proposed. Chapter 8 concludes the study, determines if the study's goals have been met, and presents a summary of the key findings, the contribution of the study, research implications, its limitations and recommendations for future researchers.

8.3 Meeting the Aim and Objectives of the Study

The present study, based on grounded theory, started with the aim of establishing how OC can be taken advantage of to boost CI in service sector companies in Saudi Arabia. Included in this aim was to determine the cultural aspects that facilitate continuous improvement and the interventions needed to support these cultural aspects. The aim of the present study was met as the cultural elements that facilitate continuous improvement were identified both from the review of the literature and the data collected from the open-ended interviews and focus group discussions. This aim was largely achieved, as discussed in Chapter 5, where the key components for the development of a framework to create an organisational culture that facilitates CI in the Saudi service sector have been identified and summarised in Figure 5.2.

The main components identified are external engagement, obstacles to success, organisational infrastructure, ethical concerns, organisational management, skills development, organisational strategies, and development and growth. From the discussion in this report, it can be noted that organisations that succeed in continuous improvement are those that view themselves as part of the wider society in which they belong. However, such organisations need suitable infrastructure, both physically and culturally, to facilitate continuous improvement. Organisational infrastructure provides the resources that make continuous improvement possible. Effective leadership is one of the elements impacting continuous improvement that the managers of an organisation determine the direction in which it takes. Participants in this study talked about how some managers generally lack concern, arriving at

work just before midday and often being absent for a few days in the week. One participant also spoke about how the arrival of a new CEO changed the mood in the organisation and resulted in improved employee morale. Ethical concerns have been identified as an important element because when an organisation is accused of ethical transgressions, it can become a huge challenge for it to be trusted by the society in which it belongs. This may also make it a challenge to attract the right employees and customers. This is an issue that was identified by participants in the focus group discussions and interviews when they spoke about how promotion in their companies is based on who the promoted individual knows. It has also been noted that skills development is an important element of continuous improvement as the process benefits from employees with adequate and current knowledge. The element of organisational strategies is concerned with how an organisation understands its own strengths and weaknesses. It is from this understanding of strengths and weaknesses that an organisation that wants to implement continuous improvement determines strategies to mitigate its weaknesses. The development and growth aspect ensures that the organisation participates in reform initiatives that lead to continuous improvement.

The extent to which the present study has met its objectives is summarised in Table 8.1 below:

Table 8.1: Extent to which the objectives of the study were met.

Objective	The extent to which objectives were met
Identify the organisational culture inhibitors and enablers of continuous improvement through a wide-ranging review of relevant literature.	Chapter 2 of this report, representing the literature review, identified three main elements that can inhibit or enable continuous improvement (Figure 2.6). These include people, strategy, partnerships and resources. Other elements identified in the literature include leadership, policy and strategy, and processes (Table 2.3). Other enablers, identified by several other scholars, include management commitment and involvement and effective communication (Table 2.4).
Identify organisational culture inhibitors and enablers of continuous improvement in services sector organisations.	Fifty-six elements related to CI performance in Saudi Arabian service sector organisations were identified from the data. The data was synthesised to come up with seven themes representing continuous improvement inhibitors and enablers, including engagement with society, organisational management commitment and involvement, the existence of LSS expertise in-house staff skills enhancement, organisational strategies, strategies for development and growth, obstacles to success, matters related to ethics, and company infrastructure (Chapter 2, Table 2.4). The identified inhibitors include poor mechanisms for collecting data, poor teamwork, inability to define the customer, failure to link improvement with reward systems, staff resistance, lack of leadership support, absence of administrative support, and lack of coordination and organisation-wide support (Chapter 2, Table 2.5).

Determine how inhibitors can be eliminated and enablers encouraged in organisational culture to create a more conducive atmosphere for continuous improvement in services sector organisations.	In Chapter 5, the present study presented the views of participants based on the open-ended interviews and focus group discussions; this study identified what needs to be done to mitigate the effect of the inhibitors on continuous improvement in Saudi service sector organisations. This culminated in the presentation of the intervention framework in Chapter 6.
Create a structure of interventions that will assist in leveraging the organisational culture to facilitate continuous improvements in services sector organisations.	The insights based on the reviewed literature, open-ended interviews, and focus group discussions resulted in the themes used to develop the interventions presented in this report. A total of 12 interventions were identified and presented in Section 6.5 of Chapter 6. These interventions relate to creating fair processes for recruitment, facilitating training, having policies for public engagement, monitoring employees and systems, putting feedback channels in place, and utilising rewards and encouragement.
Confirm the intervention framework of organisational culture through judgements of experts from the services sector organisations.	The proposed intervention framework was presented to three experts for validation. While the experts highlighted the significant role of this process in the services sector in general, they also indicated that the framework needs to be conceptualised so that it could respond to the needs of different countries. This conceptualisation will make it possible for each country to apply the main elements of the framework and prioritise them in a way that will benefit their organisations operating in the services sector.

8.4 Key Findings of this Thesis

In the present study, 48 elements related to CI performance in the Saudi Arabian service sector organisations were identified. These elements were validated through focus group discussions. Following a synthesis, labelling, and defining of the data, eight themes linked to CI were created:

- i) Engagement with society
- ii) Organisational management
- iii) Staff skills enhancement
- iv) Organisational strategies
- v) Strategies for development and growth
- vi) Obstacles to success
- vii) Matters related to ethics
- viii) Company infrastructure

The participants in the present study suggested 16 interventions applicable to facilitating CI. When considered in terms of the interventions noted from the literature, these interventions were consolidated into the ten interventions listed below:

- i) Leadership training facilitation
- ii) Establishing public engagement-supporting policies
- iii) Creating a precise direction for the organisation
- iv) Decision-making delegation
- v) Putting in place a mechanism for rewards and encouragement
- vi) Providing resources and training opportunities
- vii) Putting in place channels for feedback
- viii) Monitoring the performance of employees
- ix) Establishing shared goals and common commitments
- x) Putting in place channels to support external resources, finance, and knowledge.

8.4.1 Encouraging Enablers and Lessening Inhibitors

Considering the inhibitors and enablers identified, the present study created and validated a framework listing specific activities that could be embraced to encourage CI enablers while mitigating or getting rid of inhibitors. According to the framework, it is better to facilitate CI when issues linked to context are considered by making sure that OC and CI strengthen each

other. The framework suggests that in keeping with the views of Schein (1984), enablers of CI can be encouraged by cross-reinforcement and alignment of espoused values, shared visions, and shared organisational assumptions and the resulting organisational practices, which are the perceptible elements of its culture.

8.4.1.1 Underlying Assumptions

With regard to underlying assumptions guiding OC, the proposal made by the framework is that services sector organisations need to establish policies supporting engagement through partnering with organisations whose main objective is to support the public. It also adds that these organisations would encourage employees to participate in public-associated initiatives as a way through which they influence societal culture. It was noted that the strong dominance of religion in every aspect of society in Saudi Arabia could make it a substantial challenge for service sector companies' engagement in public issues to have a notable effect on societal culture to the degree that shared assumptions would be instilled to the advantage of CI. Any change that will emanate from the influence of service sector organisations will possibly only be accepted or applied if it is in keeping with the all-encompassing religious assumptions if one considers that Islam significantly affects the national culture in Saudi Arabia, which also has an impact on organisational cultures (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014), especially in those organisations linked to the state. This view is in keeping with the conclusions of Fralinger (2007), who proposed that the culture of services sector organisations is shaped by both external and internal stakeholder practices and beliefs. The experts that assessed the framework created in this study suggested that it is better to implement changes first in a few service sector companies and that any changes should be gradually implemented, accompanied by evaluations. This is an approach in keeping with Willis et al.'s (2016) conclusion, which says that organisational development and change – both central to CI – are moulded by societal beliefs and values.

8.4.1.2 Espoused Values

The influence of the leaders of an organisation in facilitating OC that boosts CI is recognised by the present study. Leaders take responsibility for the espoused values of an organisation as mirrored in the goals, strategies and guiding philosophies of the organisation. Also, leaders have a substantial influence in pronouncing the vision that employees should rally around. It was found that the relationship between organisational values and leadership was not unidirectional in as much as leadership influences the leadership and values of an organisation.

Also, it was noted that in public organisations, leadership has limited influence over the organisation's goals, strategy, and vision. This is a view that was brought to the fore by a participant who said when funding sources become fewer, organisations find themselves forced to cancel planned projects. This kind of situation can be read to mean that there are differences in what is seen as important at a specific moment, especially between varying stakeholders, such as when the government funds the service sector organisations. This is the place from which participants propose that the suggested CI framework should be implemented, originally, in companies fully operating in the private sector, where it is assumed that leadership has a bigger say in the vision of the organisation.

8.4.1.3 Visible Elements

With regard to the implementation of CI, it was noted that the visible elements constitute the context that either facilitates or hinders the process. Several visible elements were observed in the present study, including:

- Putting in place a name-blind recruitment system.
- Establishing policies that nurture public engagement.
- Creating channels that support external knowledge, finance, and resources.
- Regularly monitoring the performance of the organisation and its employees.
- Nurturing participation and feedback by creating feedback channels.
- Putting in place interdepartmental ad hoc teams.
- Motivating employees through qualification and performance-based rewards and verbal feedback.
- Facilitating channels for training employees and the leaders of the organisation.
- Addressing the perceptible elements and level of espoused values in the form of delegation of work execution and decision-making.

8.5 Research Contribution and Novelty

The implication of the present study's contribution can be noted at three levels: academic, practical, and policy. From the academic perspective, the present study's outcomes have highlighted the generally accepted challenge of the dearth of information regarding the link between OC and CI. Undoubtedly, such findings close the gap noted in the literature in relation to research investigating this nexus within the national culture noted for being different when compared to that in Western countries.

From this research, it has been noted that CI, forming part of the OC, needs to be promoted and encouraged. Consequently, after considering the Saudi Arabian and Islamic culture, the contribution of this study is that it offers a pathway to encourage employees to sustain continuous improvement in service sector organisations in Saudi Arabia. The eventual objective is to ensure that Saudi Arabian service sector companies get to a level where they operate based on international best practices.

The present study has elucidated the target interventions (i.e., the suggested strategies) that will be at the forefront of CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. The proposed interventions can be applied to other sectors outside the services sector and outside the kingdom, dealing with the same challenges.

From a policy perspective, the present study's main contribution lies in bringing to the fore the need to come up with policies facilitating the development of an OC whose basis is properly defined visions, mutual assumptions, and values nurturing CI. From the practice perspective, the main contribution of the present study lies in suggesting a framework guiding organisations on how they can take advantage of the impact of the OC enablers that permit CI while alleviating the influence of OC in terms of sustaining CI.

8.6 Research Implications

This research has implications for theory and practice. The sections below indicate how the findings can be used in academic settings and practically implemented to benefit service sector organisations looking at ways of leveraging organisational culture to implement continuous improvement initiatives.

8.6.1 Implications to Theory

Generally, as a management system, CI has become popular in Western countries. To be implemented, it is vital that there is an enabling OC. However, such an OC is based on Western organisational values and practices. When the literature is analysed, it becomes clear that there is a gap where the implementation of CI has been done within a setting that is not founded on the Western cultures assumed by established CI frameworks. The academic contribution of the present study is related to exploring the connection between OC and CI in Saudi Arabia's services sector organisations. Such a contribution is original in that it acknowledges the elements of Saudi OC that could be taken advantage of and used as enablers of CI. It has also

acknowledged facets of culture that impede IC. From this, the present study suggested ways through which their potential negative impact could be mitigated.

From the literature review and the perceptions of participants, it has been noted that OC can have a positive influence on CI in the services sector, particularly in environments with mutually and reciprocally supporting relationships among the basic assumptions within the organisation, organisational practices, goals and values, and articulated vision (Branswon, 2007). Taking into account that CI models have Western origins, approaches, and methods, the framework proposed in this study suggests that for CI to be successful in the Saudi Arabian services sector companies, there is a need to change the models so that they relate to the OC existing in places where they are to be implemented. This means that these models should speak to the existing national culture. It also brings to the fore the need to alter OCs with the aim of making them better adapt to change and, therefore, CI.

The framework proposed in the present study suggests that CI will only succeed in the services sector companies of Saudi Arabia if implemented gradually and focused on three elements: shared assumptions, shared long-term goals obtained from strategic planning, values, and vision that are explicitly explained, participating in organisational practices based on, and are in keeping with and supported at two levels. Therefore, even though the idea that CI is influenced by OC is well accepted, one contribution of this study is that in cultures that are not Western, the connection between the two is bidirectional. This means that while OC established a nurturing environment for CI, CI also has an impact on OC and could even result in it changing. This is exemplified by the potential effects of staff members' participation in societal and public matters. Even though such a view seems to be in agreement with those of Halvorson (2013), who professes that CI should not just be perceived as an operational variable but also an important cultural element that introduces the dimension that CI can also alter the culture of an organisation even as it relies on some of its features.

8.6.2 Implications to Practice Managers

Many services sector organisations in Saudi Arabia aim to benchmark themselves against international best practices. They are using CI to attain that goal. Even though many of these companies have been known to follow Total Quality Management principles, these attempts have not been maintained because interventions have a tendency to be short-term. With regard to this challenge, the present study has some practical implications. Its contribution to practice has been through focusing on the role of organisational and national culture in either disabling

or enabling CI. Through this, the present study has come up with a utilitarian theory relating to how services sector organisations in Saudi Arabia can make sure that their practices are all aligned and nurture an environment where CI can prosper. The basis for the proposed theory is the experiences of employees from different service sector organisations. In the proposed theory, the main elements incorporated include addressing the requirement for the sustainability of the improvement programs through monitoring, evaluation, and taking corrective steps. Nonetheless, the present study's practical implications go further than services sector organisations because the theory that has been developed can be useful in other sectors.

From the policy level, the main contribution of the present study is that it suggests that services sector organisations should come up with policies that make them the drivers of change in culture through community engagement. The role of the services sector companies goes beyond providing specific services; it is also expected that part of their core values should be related to engaging in the issues of the greater society (Singh, 2007; Ramaley, 2014; Guerrero, 2016; Audretsch, 2014). This, as was suggested by some of the present study's participants, could involve policies relating to the general participation of employees working within the services sector in societal and public matters. Such participation would form part of an organisation's long-term strategic goals of altering the mutual assumptions brought by individuals to organisations. With regards to Saudi Arabia, changing mutual assumptions denotes coming up with ways of amalgamating CI as a mutual value from the societal level. Doing this has the possibility of instilling change and, in the process, sustaining CI as part of the shared goals, values, vision, and assumptions.

8.7 Research Limitations

The main limitation of this study is related to the methodology and methods. For example, this grounded theory-based research relies on the opinions of the participants to create grounded interpretations of the manner in which OC could be taken advantage of to boost CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations. Consequently, the study was exploratory. As is generally accepted, exploratory studies do not provide conclusive results but rather a subjective comprehension of the CI-OC interface. The exploratory approach excluded a thorough follow-up of developing issues.

8.8 Future Recommendations

The present study presents opportunities for future research in several areas. The first is that the study's conclusions present a foundation for future studies in that they provide a theory on a topic that has generally not been a subject of Saudi Arabian research. Secondly, the findings of the study reveal a mutually supporting relationship between different CI and OC aspects. From the findings, it can be inferred that even though OC is a crucial element in determining how ready an organisation is in relation to CI, the CI process itself has the potential to alter OC. From this perspective, it is posited that future studies that use the quantitative methodology are required to endorse this suggested relationship so as to determine which of the two impacts has the most influence on the other. This can assist in guiding organisations to focus their resources on its enhancement. The third element is linked to the fact that the study concluded that based on Schein's (1984) model of culture, the three levels of OC in the services sector organisations of Saudi Arabia seem to be mutually reinforcing, and if one considers the excessive influence of Islam on organisational culture, it is vital to have future studies determine the levels of OC (visible artefacts; vision and goals, espoused values, and shared assumptions) that have the most impact on CI in Muslim nations like Saudi Arabia in general. A study like that could use social network analysis (Hollstein, 2014) to chart the direction taken by CI practices in Saudi Arabia's service sector companies and buttress the link between CI and culture. Fourthly, it is suggested that scholars studying this area in the future focus on companies in the private sector and their practices, especially if one considers that the government of Saudi Arabia, through Vision 2030, wants to privatise more entities. Thus, there is a need for specialised research to benefit interested entities, including government and businesses.

The final suggestion is that the collection of more quantitative and qualitative data from a bigger sample with the aim of determining how applicable the proposed framework is may help in making the theory for leveraging OC to boost CI in Saudi Arabian services sector organisations more formal. Such a proposal is in keeping with Glaser and Strauss's (2017) suggestion that a theory emanating from research that uses grounded theory can be best tested using a mixed methods approach.

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Appendix 1: Data Gathering Letter

Date: Thursday, 15 July 2021

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that (Meshari Mazyad M Alshammari) is a PhD researcher in the UK sponsored by the government of Saudi Arabia.

The Elm Company is proud of supporting his research with all relevant resources within the area of our profession.

He carries with him our best wishes for his future success.

Yours Sincerely,

Yasser Alshammari



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Appendix 2: Ethical Approval



15 January 2021

Dear Mr Alshammari ,

Reference: CURES/12579/2021

Title: Develop a framework to facilitate an organizational culture that aspects continues improvement in the service sector-- A Case of Saudi Arabia

Thank you for your application to the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

We are pleased to inform you your CURES application, reference CURES/12579/2021 has been reviewed. You may now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

If you have any queries, please contact CURES Support.

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards,

CURES Team