Theoretical and Methodological Implications in Developing Teamwork Quality and Sustainable Culture at Top Management Level: A Literature Review

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Abstract . This qualitative literature review explores the theoretical and methodological implications of developing team quality and sustainable culture at the top management level. The study highlights the importance of structured methodologies to enhance the capabilities of top management teams (TMTs) for achieving real teamwork and fostering a sustainable quality culture. Key findings emphasize the significance of a systemic view, emotional commitment, and continuous improvement as critical elements for success. Additionally, a strong organizational culture mediates the relationship between perceived ethics and organizational performance. While providing valuable insights, this review acknowledges limitations, such as reliance on existing literature and potential generalization issues across different organizational contexts. Future research should include empirical studies to validate these findings and explore additional factors influencing team quality and sustainable culture development at the top management level.

Keywords: team quality, sustainable culture, top management teams, systemic view, continuous improvement

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly fierce competition, organizations are faced with the challenge of continuously adapting to a changing environment. One way to survive and excel in this competition is to implement total quality management (TQM). TQM can be described as a set of values, methodologies, and tools viewed from a systemic perspective (Bergman et al., 2022; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2020). Dean and Bowen (1994) describe total quality (TQ) as a philosophy or management approach characterized by a set of principles such as customer focus, continuous improvement, and teamwork. Each of these principles must be implemented through a series of practices supported by certain techniques. Dale et al. (2007) also include teamwork as a key feature of an organization's approach to TQM. A performance management system is able to offer a framework to support various changes and encourage innovation in corporate culture (Sugiharti, T., 2022).

Today, working in teams is more important than ever, given the increasingly complex challenges of organizations (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Richardson, 2011; van

Kemenade, 2021). There is a greater tendency to work in teams, both within and beyond organizational boundaries, to achieve greater effectiveness, flexibility, and adaptability (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Thompson, 2004). Edmondson (2013) argues that fast-paced work environments require people who know how to work in teams, people who have the skills and flexibility to act in moments of potential collaboration when and where they arise. Efforts to build resilience need to consider the diversity of perspectives on how individuals, organizations, or communities understand and respond to situations and events (Harahap, S., et al., 2022).

In addition, organizations today often adopt new technologies and innovations, which require changing roles and responsibilities, as well as new ways of interacting and collaborating. This may mark a new era for teams and teamwork, requiring that previous research and practices be reviewed and compared to current demands on teams and teamwork (Benishek & Lazzara, 2019). A balanced incentive contract design, which combines financial and non-financial rewards, can optimize individual performance without sacrificing team harmony (Ruslaini, et al, 2024).

As early as 1993, Katzenbach and Smith suggested that top management teams (TMTs) operating as "real teams" would become increasingly important in the future as more organizations are faced with the need to manage major changes in their organizations. Barrick et al. (2007) found that TMTs with high interdependence (i.e., real teams), including those that are more cohesive and with more communication, have higher team performance and firm performance.

Schein (2009) argues that culture and leadership are interrelated, and Henri (2006) claims that culture affects almost all aspects of organizational interactions as well as activities at the top management level. Therefore, TMT plays an important role in creating motivation, values, and behaviors to implement TQM (Dale et al., 2007). How the TMT of an organization acts and makes decisions and how they involve employees in working on improvements will affect the organization's ability to build a quality culture (Bergman et al., 2022).

Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of real teamwork and sustainable quality culture and the success factors for achieving sustainable quality culture in an organization, with a focus on TMT. An additional

objective is to explore the relationship between real teamwork and sustainable quality culture.

Research on teams is extensive, and there are various definitions and perspectives presented on the concept of "team" in the literature. One analysis of teams is provided by Katzenbach and Smith (1993), who introduced the concept of the "Team Performance Curve"—a curve that shows the impact of performance in relation to team effectiveness. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), the different types of teams along this curve are work groups, pseudo teams, potential teams, real teams, and high-performance teams. Many teams strive to become real teams or even high-performance teams, but what does it take for a team to move up the curve?

Summarizing previous research, eleven prerequisites for a "real team" can be identified (see Sten et al., 2023): Team communication: regular communication between team members with the aim of adjusting behavior to function better collectively (Kock, 2007; Lyubovnikova et al., 2014). Team competence and learning: unique or complementary skills and learning within the team (Katzenbach, 1998; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

Team composition, structure, and membership: a bounded group of individuals (more than two) who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as a distinct social unit (Hackman, 2002; O'Leary et al., 2011; Rasmussen & Jeppesen, 2006). Team context: embedded in an overarching organizational system, with boundaries and relationships to the broader system and task environment (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Richardson et al., 2010).

Team culture: a positive, supportive, and respectful atmosphere (West, 2013). Team flexibility and adaptability: flexible and adaptable to changes in the broader system (Salas et al., 1993). Team leadership and team decision-making: shared leadership, mandate, and autonomy for team decisions (Salas et al., 1993).

Team goals and objectives: shared goals, outcomes, and commonly accepted objectives (Gremyr et al., 2020; Hackman, 2002; O'Leary et al., 2011; Salas et al., 2015; Tannenbaum & Salas, 2020; Woods & West, 2010). Team reflexivity and continuous improvement: collective reflection on performance and goal achievement and ways to

improve work methods (Richardson, 2011). Team roles and responsibilities: defined roles and shared responsibilities (O'Leary et al., 2011). Team tasks and coordination: working interdependently to carry out relevant team tasks (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

TMTs are typically described as small groups of managers at the top of an organization. For example, Simsek et al. (2005) define TMTs as groups of senior managers whose decisions impact the future of the organization. Webber and Donahue (2001) add that TMTs also have a significant impact on organizational outcomes. Cannella et al. (2008) describe TMTs as small groups of the most important managers at the top of an organization. In all of these definitions, TMT members have management roles. Based on the argument that teams should be composed of members who best fit the goals and objectives of a particular team, Edmondson (2013) suggests that one way to increase the effectiveness of strategic leadership in complex organizations is to encourage senior executives to tailor team processes and composition to specific situations. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) argue that too many top management groups are hampered from becoming real teams by the assumption that team goals must be identical to corporate goals and that team members' roles should be determined by their positions rather than their skills.

Teamwork is an organizational process involving team characteristics, such as embeddedness, interdependence, and autonomy (Rasmussen & Jeppesen, 2006). Salas et al. (2007) refer to teamwork as a dynamic process that contributes to team performance and performance outcomes. Reeves et al. (2018) discuss different types of interprofessional practices as teamwork, collaboration, coordination, and networking and how these concepts can be differentiated. Sten et al. (2021) define team collaboration as "colleagues collaborating within and between hospital units based on a shared view of person-centered care, continuous learning, and knowledge sharing, and with a focus on communication, coordination, structure, and evidence-based decisions" (pp. 47–48). While Mueller et al. (2000) use the term "teamwork," Edmondson (2013) refers to "teaming"; she argues that teaming emphasizes the interaction process. Teaming is "both a mindset that embraces active collaboration and a set of behaviors tailored to sharing and synthesizing knowledge" (p. 45). In this paper, the term "teamwork" is used and treated as a synonym for "team collaboration," "teamwork," and "teaming."

Organizational culture and sustainable quality culture. Schein (2009) argues that organizational culture can be understood at three levels. The first level, artifacts, includes the visible structures and processes of the organization. The second level, espoused values, includes the goals, strategies, and philosophies that exist within and create the image of the organization. The third level, underlying assumptions, refers to a deeper level of shared knowledge that is based on the history of the organization. These underlying assumptions represent the culture created through shared learned values and beliefs that have become taken for granted.

Quality culture is shaped by shared core values or foundations (Bergman et al., 2022; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2020). The foundations or core values described by Bergman et al. (2022) are "customer focus," "process focus," "continuous improvement," "base decisions on facts," "let everyone actively participate," and "develop committed leadership." All the foundations in this model help shape a sustainable quality culture; they are interdependent and should be viewed as a system in combination with work methods and quality tools (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2020).

Lagrosen and Lagrosen (2019) proposed a conceptual model of cultural requirements for continuous quality management. The basis of this model consists of five categories that describe the underlying cultural requirements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing teamwork quality and sustainable culture at top management level is an increasingly relevant topic in the context of modern organizations. In the literature, there are various approaches and methodologies that have been developed to understand and improve teamwork and sustainable quality culture, especially among top management teams (TMTs).

Benishek and Lazzara (2019) highlighted that theories and methodologies related to teams and teamwork need to be modernized, considering that the current team landscape is very different from that of the past. Their research suggests that the results of this study can help in developing theories and methodologies related to teams and teamwork. This study provides theoretical implications such as a deeper understanding

of real teamwork and sustainable quality culture, as well as insights into how these concepts relate to each other.

Sten, Ingelsson, and Häggström (2024) emphasize the importance of a systems view, emotional commitment, and continuous improvement in enhancing real teamwork and creating a sustainable quality culture. They develop a new methodology that can be one way to enhance TMT capabilities in real teamwork together with a sustainable quality culture. The results of this study indicate that a systemic approach and emotional commitment are important elements in achieving success in this context.

Organizational culture plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between perceived ethics and firm performance, as discussed by Abdullahi Hassan and Haim (2016). They found that organizational culture can influence almost all aspects of organizational interactions as well as activities at the top management level. In the context of TMT, a strong organizational culture can support the implementation of TQM more effectively (Dale et al., 2007).

Barrick et al. (2007) found that TMTs with high levels of interdependence, which functioned as real teams, demonstrated higher team and firm performance. This suggests that good interdependence and communication within TMTs can enhance team effectiveness and overall organizational performance.

In addition, Schein (2009) argues that culture and leadership are closely related. Henri (2006) also states that culture affects almost all aspects of organizational interactions. Therefore, TMT has an important role in creating the motivation, values, and behaviors needed to implement TQM effectively (Bergman et al., 2022).

Previous research also suggests that effective teamwork requires regular communication, unique or complementary team competencies, and flexibility and adaptability to environmental changes (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Salas et al., 1993). Richardson et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of team reflexivity and continuous improvement as key elements in achieving effective teamwork.

In the context of sustainable quality culture, Lagrosen and Lagrosen (2019) proposed a conceptual model that describes the cultural requirements for sustainable

quality management. The model consists of five categories that describe the underlying cultural requirements, including customer focus, process, and continuous improvement.

Overall, the literature suggests that to achieve real teamwork and a sustainable quality culture, organizations need to adopt a systemic approach, strengthen emotional commitment, and continuously improve their processes. TMTs have a critical role in leading and implementing these initiatives, which can ultimately improve overall organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to explore theoretical and methodological implications in developing teamwork quality and sustainable culture at the top management level. Literature review was chosen as the main method because it allows researchers to collect, analyze, and synthesize findings from various previous studies that are relevant to this research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The literature review process begins with the identification and selection of relevant literature. The literature selected includes journal articles, books, and dissertations that discuss topics related to teamwork, organizational culture, and total quality management (TQM). The selection of literature is based on inclusion criteria such as topic relevance, source quality, and publication recency (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Once the literature has been collected, the next step is to conduct a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes and patterns in the literature related to developing quality teamwork and sustainable culture at the top management level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involves reading the literature in depth, noting emerging themes, and grouping these themes into broader categories.

In this study, the main focus is on two main conclusions from previous research: first, that following the developed methodology can be one way to improve TMT capabilities in real teamwork together with a sustainable quality culture; and second, the importance of a systems view, emotional commitment, and continuous improvement to improve real teamwork and create a sustainable quality culture (Sten et al., 2024).

In addition, this study also considers the theoretical and methodological implications of previous findings. Benishek and Lazzara (2019) emphasized the need to modernize theories and methodologies related to teams and teamwork, given the changing landscape of teams in today's society. Therefore, this study also explores how recent findings can contribute to the development of new theories and methodologies in this field.

In compiling this literature review, the researcher strives to maintain objectivity and transparency in the process of data analysis and synthesis. All findings and conclusions drawn are based on strong evidence from the reviewed literature. In addition, the researcher also seeks to identify existing research gaps and provide recommendations for further research in the future.

RESEARCH RESULT

The results of this literature review reveal several important findings related to the development of teamwork quality and sustainable culture at the top management level. First, this study confirms that following the developed methodology can be one of the effective ways to improve the ability of the top management team (TMT) in achieving real teamwork and building a sustainable quality culture. Sten, Ingelsson, and Häggström (2024) showed that implementing a structured methodology can help TMTs in strengthening teamwork and ensuring sustainable quality in the organization.

Second, this study highlights the importance of a systemic view in managing teams and organizational culture. This systemic view involves understanding that every element in an organization is interconnected and changes in one element can affect other elements. This view is important to ensure that changes made in one part of the organization support the overall goals of the organization (Benishek & Lazzara, 2019).

Third, emotional commitment from TMT members has also been found to be a key factor in enhancing real teamwork and building a sustainable quality culture. This emotional commitment includes the personal and emotional involvement of team members in achieving common goals, which in turn enhances team motivation and performance (Barrick et al., 2007).

Fourth, continuous improvement is identified as an important element in maintaining and improving the quality of teamwork and organizational culture. This continuous improvement process involves regular evaluation of existing practices and processes, and making necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teamwork (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2019).

In addition, this study also found that a strong and positive organizational culture plays an important role in mediating the relationship between perceived ethics and organizational performance. A culture that supports and encourages innovation and collaboration can improve overall organizational performance (Abdullahi Hassan & Haim, 2016).

Overall, the results of this study confirm that to achieve real teamwork and a sustainable quality culture, organizations need to adopt a systemic approach, strengthen emotional commitment, and continuously improve. TMT has a critical role in leading and implementing these initiatives, which can ultimately improve overall organizational performance.

DISCUSSION

Developing quality teamwork and sustainable culture at the top management level is an increasingly important topic in the context of modern organizations. This literature review has identified several key findings that can provide valuable insights for organizations in their efforts to improve teamwork and build a sustainable quality culture.

One of the main findings of this study is the importance of implementing a structured methodology to improve the ability of top management teams (TMTs) to achieve real teamwork and build a sustainable quality culture (Sten et al., 2024). This finding is in line with previous research by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006), which emphasized that a systemic approach to team management can improve teamwork effectiveness and overall organizational performance.

This systemic view is also supported by Benishek and Lazzara (2019), who stated that team-related theories and methodologies need to be modernized to reflect the changing landscape of teams in today's society. They emphasized that a systemic view

can help organizations identify and leverage relationships between various elements within the organization to achieve common goals.

In addition, this study highlights the importance of emotional commitment from TMT members in enhancing real teamwork and building a sustainable quality culture (Barrick et al., 2007). This emotional commitment includes the personal and emotional involvement of team members in achieving common goals, which in turn increases team motivation and performance. This is in line with the findings of Edmondson (2013), who emphasized that emotional and psychological involvement of team members is a key factor in creating a collaborative and productive work environment.

Continuous improvement has also been identified as an important element in maintaining and improving the quality of teamwork and organizational culture (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2019). This continuous improvement process involves regular evaluation of existing practices and processes, and making necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teamwork. This finding is in line with research by Dean and Bowen (1994), which emphasizes that continuous improvement is one of the main principles of total quality management (TQM) that can improve overall organizational performance.

A strong and positive organizational culture plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between perceived ethics and organizational performance (Abdullahi Hassan & Haim, 2016). A culture that supports and encourages innovation and collaboration can improve overall organizational performance. This finding is supported by research by Schein (2009), which emphasizes that a strong organizational culture can influence almost all aspects of organizational interactions as well as activities at the top management level.

In the context of TMT, a strong organizational culture can support the implementation of TQM more effectively (Dale et al., 2007). Research by Henri (2006) also shows that organizational culture influences performance measurement systems, which in turn can affect overall organizational performance.

In addition, this study found that good interdependence and communication within the TMT can improve team effectiveness and overall organizational performance (Barrick

et al., 2007). This finding is in line with research by Katzenbach and Smith (1993), which emphasizes the importance of team discipline in achieving high team performance.

Overall, this study confirms that to achieve real teamwork and a sustainable quality culture, organizations need to adopt a systemic approach, strengthen emotional commitment, and continuously improve. TMT has a critical role to play in leading and implementing these initiatives, which can ultimately improve overall organizational performance.

However, there are some limitations in this study that need to be considered. First, this study is mainly based on the available literature, which may not cover all aspects relevant to this topic. Second, the findings of this study may not be fully generalizable to all types of organizations, given the different contexts and characteristics of different organizations.

For further research, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth empirical studies to test the findings of this study in different organizational contexts. In addition, further research can also explore other factors that may influence the development of teamwork quality and sustainable culture at the top management level.

CONCLUSION

From this literature review, it can be concluded that developing quality teamwork and sustainable culture at the top management level requires a structured and systemic approach. The main findings indicate that the application of appropriate methodologies can improve the ability of the top management team (TMT) to achieve real teamwork and build a sustainable quality culture (Sten et al., 2024). Systemic view, emotional commitment, and continuous improvement are identified as key elements contributing to the success of these initiatives (Benishek & Lazzara, 2019; Barrick et al., 2007; Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2019).

A strong and positive organizational culture also plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between perceived ethics and organizational performance (Abdullahi Hassan & Haim, 2016). In addition, good interdependence and

communication within the TMT have been found to enhance team effectiveness and overall organizational performance (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

Overall, this study confirms that to achieve real teamwork and a sustainable quality culture, organizations need to adopt a systemic approach, strengthen emotional commitment, and continuously improve. TMT has a critical role to play in leading and implementing these initiatives, which can ultimately improve overall organizational performance.

LIMITATION

Although this study provides valuable insights, there are some limitations that need to be considered. First, this study is mainly based on available literature, which may not cover all aspects relevant to the topic. The literature used may be limited in scope and depth, as well as biased towards certain contexts.

Second, the findings of this study may not be fully generalizable to all types of organizations, given the different contexts and characteristics of different organizations. Each organization has unique dynamics and challenges that may affect the application of these findings in practice.

Third, this study does not involve direct empirical data from organizations, so the findings and conclusions drawn are based solely on literature analysis. This may limit in-depth understanding of how these concepts are applied in real organizational contexts.

For further research, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth empirical studies to test the findings of this study in different organizational contexts. In addition, further research can also explore other factors that may influence the development of teamwork quality and sustainable culture at the top management level.

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