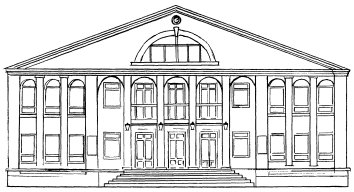
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ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION-RELATED OUTCOMES IN IT COMPANIES

This article examines organisational culture as a factor associated with employee/work engagement and retention-related outcomes in IT companies, developing a conceptual framework incorporating documented wartime practices of Ukrainian IT companies. It draws on culture models and empirical studies linking culture to these outcomes, plus material on SoftServe, Intellias, and MacPaw. Four relevant characteristics emerge: learning and development, communication transparency, managerial support, and autonomy; employee safety is wartime-specific, not validated. Learning-oriented culture is associated with engagement; culture is separately associated with intention to stay, and support/transparency with retention. No mediation chain from culture through engagement to retention is established; Ukrainian sources document practices without outcome measures. The framework is diagnostic, not predictive.

Keywords: *organisational culture, employee engagement, employee retention, staff turnover, human resource management, IT companies, human resources.*

У дослідженнях організаційної культури ІТ-компаній розглядаються різні аспекти трудової поведінки працівників, і тут важливо не змішувати показники, які мають різний зміст. Зокрема, залучення до роботи не є тим самим, що намір залишитися в компанії або утримання персоналу; окремими показниками залишаються також привабливість роботодавця та фактична плинність кадрів. У статті зосереджено увагу на тому, як організаційна культура пов'язана із залученням працівників та окремими результатами у сфері їх утримання в ІТ-компаніях. На основі опрацьованих досліджень запропоновано концептуальну рамку, у якій ці зв'язки розглядаються разом із задокументованими практиками українських ІТ-компаній в умовах війни. Для дослідження було опрацьовано теоретичні моделі організаційної культури та результати рецензованих емпіричних праць, у яких аналізувався її зв'язок із залученням до роботи або утриманням персоналу. Інші стосуються прозорості комунікації, управлінської підтримки, а також автономії та гнучкості в роботі. Саме в матеріалах про українські ІТ-компанії підтримка та безпека працівників помітно виходять на перший план у зв'язку з умовами війни. Не всі з перелічених характеристик мають однакову емпіричну основу. У дослідженнях, де культура представлена через конструкти, орієнтовані на навчання, підтверджено їхній зв'язок із залученням працівників до роботи. Організаційна культура в іншому дослідженні пов'язана із залученням, проте організаційне навчання вимірюється окремо і не включається до самого конструкту культури. Жодне з опрацьованих досліджень не перевіряє одночасно всі три складові запропонованого зв'язку. Тобто наявні результати не підтверджують, що залучення до роботи виконує роль посередника між організаційною культурою та результатами, які стосуються утримання працівників. Задокументовані воєнні практики SoftServe, Intellias та MacPaw розглядаються як окремі кейси на основі публічно доступних матеріалів; ці практики не супроводжуються відповідними показниками залучення чи утримання, тому не можуть вважатися доказом їхньої ефективності. Наукова новизна полягає в систематизації розрізнених напрямів досліджень, збереженні розмежування між залученням до роботи та результатами утримання й відокремленні прямих емпіричних зв'язків від концептуальних.

Ключові слова: *організаційна культура, залучення персоналу, утримання персоналу, плинність кадрів, управління персоналом, ІТ-компанії, людські ресурси.*

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Problem Statement. Employee and work engagement, intention to stay, employee retention, and employer attractiveness all appear in research on organisational culture in IT companies, and they get treated at times as though any one of them could stand in for the others. They cannot. Organisational culture is regularly credited with producing engagement or retention, and engagement is sometimes taken to be the mechanism through which culture affects whether people stay. Both claims go beyond what has actually been shown. A relationship observed between two variables says nothing on its own about which one, if either, is doing the causing, and still less about whether a third variable sits between them.

Wartime has pushed Ukrainian IT companies to introduce safety measures, psychological support, adjusted communication, flexible working, and emergency-response procedures for their staff.

Knowing that a company introduced such measures does not tell anyone whether engagement rose, whether people stayed longer, or whether anything changed at all. Practices and outcomes are not the same thing, and treating a documented practice as proof of its own effect skips the step where that effect would actually need to be measured. Separating organisational practices from engagement and retention-related outcomes, and withholding claims about effectiveness until outcome data exist, is what this article sets out to do.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. More than one theoretical account of organisational culture runs through the literature. Schein sets out three levels of increasing depth, moving from artefacts down to underlying assumptions that go unarticulated [1, p. 7]. Cameron and Quinn instead build a structural model, positioning culture along a flexibility-control axis and an internal-external axis to produce four culture types [3, pp. 233–235]. Depth and orientation are not the same concern, and one framework cannot substitute for the other. In work bearing more directly on IT settings, organisational culture has been linked to innovation capacity independently of firm size [1, pp. 11–12]. Adhocracy and Market orientations turn up as the most common among managers of dynamic organisations [3, p. 240], while autonomy, flexible arrangements, flat hierarchies, and collegial cooperation have been identified as attributes bearing on employer attractiveness among IT professionals [4, pp. 114, 122]. No shared classification of culture dimensions specific to IT has emerged from any of this.

Studies addressing engagement build on different operationalisations of culture. M.M. Naqshbandi, T.F. Hj Said and A. Hisa and P. Malik and P. Garg tested learning-oriented constructs against work engagement in manufacturing/services and IT-sector samples [6, 8], while H. Hasan linked culture to engagement in broader terms, keeping organisational learning as a separate measure [7]. Work on retention takes a different path: a Denison-based composite has been tested against intention to stay among India-origin IT services employees [2], and managerial support alongside communication transparency has been tested against employee retention in a technology-sector sample [5], with actual turnover left unaddressed in both cases.

For Ukrainian IT companies under wartime conditions, what exists is corporate and documentary material rather than peer-reviewed findings [9, 10, 11], company statements and journalistic accounts describing organisational practices. Across all three areas, culture is approached through different models and outcomes that overlap only partly; engagement and retention research proceed on separate tracks, and the Ukrainian material stands apart as its own category of evidence.

Identification of Previously Unresolved Aspects of the General Problem. The literature reviewed above leaves several issues unresolved. Employee engagement, intention to stay, employee retention and employer attractiveness are examined as separate outcomes, while the cultural characteristics associated with them differ across studies. As a result, there is still no integrated basis for explaining how these outcomes relate to organisational culture within the IT sector without treating distinct constructs as interchangeable. In particular, the available evidence does not establish whether employee engagement forms a link between organisational culture and retention-related outcomes.

A further gap concerns Ukrainian IT companies operating under wartime conditions. Organisational practices related to employee support and safety, communication, flexibility, and professional development are documented in this context, but their relationship with employee engagement and retention-related outcomes remains insufficiently examined. There is therefore a need for a conceptual synthesis that preserves the distinction between these outcomes, separates empirically established relationships from those that still require testing, and provides a basis for subsequent research in the Ukrainian IT context.

Formation of the Objectives of the Article (Task Statement). Organisational culture is examined here as a factor associated with employee/work engagement and retention-related outcomes in IT companies, with the article using that examination as grounds for an evidence-based conceptual framework that draws on organisational practices documented among Ukrainian IT companies under wartime conditions.

The study seeks to systematise theoretical approaches to organisational culture and identify characteristics relevant to IT companies; analyse empirical evidence concerning employee/work engagement and, separately, intention to stay and employee retention; examine documented wartime practices of selected Ukrainian IT companies without treating them as empirical evidence of engagement or retention effects; and integrate these findings into a conceptual framework that distinguishes directly supported relationships from supporting evidence and conceptual connections.

Presentation of the Main Research Material. Why organisational culture resists a single agreed definition becomes clearer once two influential accounts of it, Schein's and Cameron and Quinn's, are set against each other; each draws on a different strand among the sociological, anthropological and managerial perspectives that have shaped the concept [3, p. 229]. Schein treats culture as basic assumptions that emerge within a group as it works through external adaptation alongside internal integration, the two processes remaining distinct even as they unfold together [3, p. 230]. For Cameron and Quinn, by contrast, culture consists of values, assumptions, expectations and collective memories that members of an organisation simply take as given [3, p. 230]. Applied to the article's purposes, Schein's formulation opens up cultural depth, whereas Cameron and Quinn's opens up cultural orientation, and it is this difference in what each approach reveals that justifies treating them as complementary rather than as a single validated model.

Schein's model specifies three levels of increasing depth [1, pp. 7–8]: artefacts (presentation style, dress code, office layout, routines), espoused values (an organisation's stated beliefs and behavioural norms), and underlying assumptions (unconsciously shared, unstated codes of conduct). Artefacts and espoused values are continuously observable; underlying assumptions are disclosed only through prolonged membership, an interpretive distinction used here rather than an established causal relationship.

The Cameron and Quinn Competing Values Framework organises culture along flexibility-control and internal-external axes [3, p. 233], yielding four types: Clan (flexible, internal; loyalty and long-term employee development [3, p. 233]), Adhocracy (flexible, external; entrepreneurship and innovation-driven growth [3, p. 233]), Market (control-oriented, external; competitiveness and measurable goals [3, p. 234]), and Hierarchy (control-oriented, internal; formalised procedures and stability [3, p. 235]). Their relationship to engagement or retention is not something the source measures.

AlSaied and McLaughlin combine the two models by specifying, for each CVF quadrant, the corresponding artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions [1, p. 20], providing a more granular unit used later to ask whether a characteristic operates at the observable or the deeper level.

This complementarity, rather than either model alone, underlies the characteristics examined below.

Organisational culture has been reported as more strongly and persistently associated with innovation capacity than financial resources or company size [1, pp. 11–12]. This evidence concerns innovation capacity rather than employee engagement or retention and is therefore used here only to characterise the organisational relevance of culture in technology-oriented settings.

Adhocracy and Market cultures are the most frequently reported dominant types among managers of dynamic organisations [3, p. 240], both externally focused, Adhocracy through innovation, Market through measurable performance. Autonomy, flexible arrangements, flat hierarchies, and collegial cooperation are evaluated as employer-attractiveness attributes among 301 IT professionals [4, pp. 114, 120, 122], a construct distinct from engagement or retention. Knowledge management and digital transformation are identified as innovation-culture enablers [1, p. 17]; organisational structure and poor communication are identified as the most significant inhibitors [1, p. 18].

The attractiveness attributes correspond to the flexibility-oriented half of the CVF axis (Clan, Adhocracy), et A. Knap-Stefaniuk and B. Domańska-Szaruga find Adhocracy and Market, not Clan, most frequently dominant [3], and Market culture is defined by control rather than flexibility [3, p. 234]. A Market-dominant organisation could, in principle, coexist with a workforce preferring flexibility, a tension neither source examines directly.

Table 1 consolidates these characteristics; the following analysis turns to empirical evidence concerning engagement and retention-related outcomes.

Direct empirical evidence connecting organisational culture to employee or work engagement is available, though the three studies reviewed here operationalise culture differently. M.M. Naqshbandi, T.F. Hj Said and A. Hisa and P. Malik and P. Garg examine learning-oriented constructs directly [6, 8], whereas H. Hasan treats organisational culture and organisational learning as distinct variables [7].

Learning organisational culture was positively associated with organisational effectiveness in a sample of middle and top managers across manufacturing and services in India, with employee

Table 1

Key Characteristics of Organisational Culture in IT Companies

Cultural Characteristic	Evidence / IT Manifestation	Relevance to Framework
Innovation orientation / capacity	Organisational culture is associated with innovation capacity independently of firm size or resources	Innovation-culture evidence; not IT-outcome specific.
Adhocracy / Market orientation	Most frequently dominant CVF types among managers of dynamic, competitive organisations.	Externally focused IT-relevant orientation.
Autonomy / independent, creative working	Independent working evaluated as an attractive employer attribute among 301 IT professionals.	Autonomy supported through employer-attractiveness evidence.

Source: compiled by the author based on [1, 3, 4]

work engagement identified as a mediator in this relationship [6]. The study applied structural equation modelling combined with fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis.

Hasan [7] found an association between organisational culture and employee engagement, while organisational learning was modelled as a distinct variable. Both were examined within indirect relationships between organisational culture and employee performance in a sample of 215 banking employees in Indonesia using partial least squares structural equation modelling.

Work engagement has also been examined within an IT-sector population: Malik and Garg [8] analysed the relationship between learning organisation dimensions and engagement among 250 managerial employees at Indian IT companies, using the nine-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (vigour, dedication, absorption; Cronbach's α = 0.87), with stronger results reported for vigour and dedication than for absorption.

These three studies converge on a claim narrower than "organisational culture affects engagement" in general: earning-oriented constructs are associated with engagement according to M.M. Naqshbandi, T.F. Hj Said and A. Hisa and P. Malik and P. Garg [6, 8], while H. Hasan reports a broader association between organisational culture and employee engagement [7]. None tests engagement against the CVF quadrants or Schein's levels, and only Malik and Garg's study reports a validated, decomposed scale. The positive direction is consistent across the three studies, but differences in sector and operationalisation limit direct transfer of the findings to IT companies beyond the IT-specific evidence reported in [8].

The two studies considered here measure related but distinct outcomes: John and Kavatekar examine intention to stay, while Suherman, Arminarahmah and Martini examine employee retention. Neither outcome is equivalent to actual turnover or to employee engagement.

Across the five largest India-origin IT services companies in Bengaluru, 384 employees were surveyed by John and Kavatekar with reference to Denison's organisational culture model, covering involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission [2, pp. 590–591]. Organisational culture and intention to stay showed a positive, statistically significant association (β = 0.286; B = 0.486; t = 5.844; p < .001; R^2 = 0.082) [2, p. 593], direct evidence from within the IT sector whose explanatory power nonetheless stays modest.

Suherman, Arminarahmah and Martini surveyed 300 respondents across technology companies in Indonesia and found managerial support (β = 0.35) and communication transparency (β = 0.30) to be significant predictors of employee retention (R^2 = 0.62) [5, p. 523]. Both studies therefore point in the same general direction, although they examine different retention-related measures and differ considerably in explanatory power. Their cross-sectional designs also limit interpretation to associations observed within the respective samples rather than demonstrating a causal sequence or establishing that the findings apply more broadly.

Neither study [2, 5] includes employee engagement as a measured variable; the culture-engagement-retention sequence sometimes assumed in practitioner literature is, on the evidence reviewed here, a conceptual systematisation of two separately evidenced relationships rather than a tested mediation chain.

The theoretical and empirical evidence discussed above draws on studies outside Ukraine. Documented organisational practices of three Ukrainian IT companies since 24 February 2022 offer a way to examine whether the relationships and organisational characteristics identified in that literature find any correspondence in a wartime IT setting, as company-reported and journalistically documented practice, not as independent verification of engagement or retention effects.

SoftServe reports that 5,675 Ukrainian employees were relocated and/or received additional financial support, while more than 1,750 people in Ukraine and Poland used its psychological support hotline; these measures were coordinated through an

Table 2

Empirical Evidence on Organisational Culture, Employee Engagement and Retention-Related Outcomes

Study / Context	Culture-Related Factor and Outcome	Key Empirical Finding
Hasan, 2023. n=215, banking (Indonesia)	Organisational culture and employee engagement (organisational learning modelled as a distinct variable)	Organisational culture was associated with employee engagement, while organisational learning was modelled as a distinct variable; both were examined within indirect relationships between organisational culture and employee performance
Malik and Garg, 2017. n=250 managers, IT companies (India)	Learning organisation dimensions and work engagement (UWES-9: vigour, dedication, absorption)	Positive relationship found between learning organisation dimensions and work engagement, with stronger results reported for vigour and dedication than for absorption
John and Kavatekar, 2025. n=384, top-5 IT firms (Bengaluru)	Organisational culture (Denison composite) and intention to stay	β = 0.286 (B = 0.486), t = 5.844, p < .001, R^2 = 0.082

Source: compiled by the author based on [2, 6, 7, 8]

internal Emergency Response Team [9]. Intellias describes an Emergency Response team supported by IntelliAssistant, a 2022 digital tool registering emergency requests including those from air attacks; offices in Lviv and Kyiv have autonomous power supply and alternative internet, and staff have received first-aid training [10]. MacPaw reports that engineering work continued from bomb shelters through 237 hours without office electricity in 2022, while an internal Emergency Concierge Service coordinated evacuation, accommodation, and relocation abroad [11]. The recurrence of a dedicated emergency-response function across all three companies constitutes a documented pattern of employee-support practices rather than an isolated measure reported by a single firm.

Communication and monitoring evidence is markedly stronger for Intellias and SoftServe than for MacPaw. Intellias describes a monthly Pulse Survey, quarterly manager check-ins, and an annual Engagement Survey covering stress, well-being, and work-life balance [10]; SoftServe reports an internal Peakon survey and quarterly skills-needs checks [9]. Intellias's use of the term "Engagement Survey" corresponds terminologically to the engagement construct examined in the reviewed research, but the source discloses only that the survey exists, not its results. It therefore provides evidence of a monitoring practice, not of changed engagement.

Flexibility and autonomy are documented most explicitly for Intellias, where staff choose between home, office, or hybrid arrangements and set individual hours [10], corresponding structurally to the attractiveness attribute examined in [4].

SoftServe instead emphasises transparent promotion criteria and tailored career planning [9]. Learning and development orientation is documented for SoftServe (quarterly skill-needs review [9]) and MacPaw (ongoing learning initiatives and Security Journey cybersecurity training [12]), corresponding in direction to the learning-oriented construct examined through [6] and [8], though again without an accompanying engagement measure.

Across the three Ukrainian companies, documentation during the war years touches on employee safety, internal communication, flexible working, and professional development, though nothing unites these strands into a formal model of organisational culture. Corporate and documentary sources record what was introduced or maintained, and stop there. Missing entirely are engagement scores, retention rates, and turnover figures against which the practices might be assessed. No claim about their bearing on engagement or retention can therefore be supported by these materials. Read instead as contextual, documented evidence, the Ukrainian cases correspond to themes already raised in the literature, without amounting to independent confirmation of the relationships identified there.

The reviewed evidence does not provide the same level of empirical support for every relationship considered in the article. Bringing the findings together within one conceptual structure makes it possible to distinguish relationships examined directly in empirical studies from connections that remain conceptual because they have not themselves been tested. The framework therefore keeps these forms of evidence separate rather than assigning them the same evidentiary weight.

Five characteristics are retained in the framework. Learning and development orientation covers skills development and career planning, while communication transparency and feedback include surveys and regular manager check-ins. Managerial support is reflected in leadership accessibility. Autonomy and flexibility concern scheduling discretion and hybrid work arrangements. The fifth characteristic, employee support and safety, encompasses psychological support together with safety and emergency response mechanisms. The first four correspond to characteristics or constructs examined in the reviewed literature, although their empirical links to engagement and retention-related outcomes differ in strength and scope. Employee support and safety rests entirely on conceptual correspondence with the Ukrainian cases, without an accompanying outcome measure. Evidence strength differs across the relationships proposed. Learning-oriented constructs are directly evidenced in relation to engagement [6, 8]; [7] provides related but broader culture-engagement evidence, with organisational learning kept distinct. Communication transparency and managerial support are directly evidenced in relation to employee retention [5]; the Denison-based culture composite is directly evidenced in relation to intention to stay [2], represented as a separate pathway given its different operationalisation. Autonomy and flexibility have supporting rather than direct evidence for engagement, since [4] evidences employer attractiveness only.

The relationship between engagement and retention-related outcomes is therefore retained in the framework as a conceptual connection rather than an empirically supported mediation pathway.

Bringing together studies that treated engagement and retention-related outcomes separately, this framework offers a way of organising what those studies found without merging the two into a single measure. For managers and HR practitioners, its use lies mainly in diagnosis rather than prediction. Applying it means identifying which outcome would still need to be measured before any claim of effectiveness could be made. Ukrainian practices fit within the framework, yet no outcome data exist for them. This gap points to something left unmeasured, not to a practice that has failed.

Conclusions. This article examined organisational culture as a factor associated with employee and work engagement and with retention-related outcomes in IT companies, developing an evidence-based conceptual framework incorporating documented practices of Ukrainian IT companies under wartime conditions. Organisational culture cannot be reduced to a single, universally applicable set of practices: Schein's model and the Competing Values Framework conceptualise culture along different

dimensions, depth and orientation, distinguishing continuously observable cultural signals from those disclosed only through sustained membership. Four characteristics emerged as analytically relevant to IT companies: learning and development orientation, communication transparency and feedback, managerial support, and autonomy and flexibility. A fifth, employee support and safety, recurs as a documented Ukrainian wartime practice but is not established internationally as a separately validated dimension.

The findings show that the relationship between organisational culture and employee engagement cannot be interpreted uniformly. Learning-oriented cultural characteristics are associated with engagement, while broader organisational culture also demonstrates a relationship with employee engagement when organisational learning is treated separately.

Retention-related outcomes likewise require separate interpretation. Organisational culture is associated with intention to stay, while communication transparency and managerial support are associated with employee retention. These findings do not extend to actual turnover and do not establish a mediation chain from organisational culture through employee engagement to retention.

The materials concerning SoftServe, Intellias, and MacPaw reveal a number of practices that appear repeatedly in the Ukrainian wartime context. They concern employee support and safety, internal communication and monitoring, flexible working arrangements, as well as opportunities for continued learning and development. The sources describe these practices and their implementation, but do not provide corresponding measures of employee engagement or retention. Consequently, the available information does not show whether engagement increased, whether employees were more likely to remain with the companies, or whether staff turnover declined after such practices were introduced. In this article, the three cases are therefore used to illustrate organisational practices documented during wartime and not to provide independent empirical confirmation of their effectiveness.

Reviewed evidence gives the framework its shape, yet no empirical test has confirmed it, nor has it been validated, and predicting employee outcomes remains outside its reach for now. What it does instead is point towards particular organisational practices and employee outcomes that a company might need to look into. Knowing a practice exists is not the same as knowing it delivered the outcome expected.

Drawing firm conclusions here runs up against several limits. National settings, sectors, samples, and the way key constructs were operationalised all vary across the empirical studies involved. What is known about Ukrainian IT companies comes largely from corporate and documentary sources rather than data gathered directly from employees. None of the Ukrainian material reviewed offers outcome measures capable of showing whether engagement, retention, or turnover shifted alongside the documented practices. Establishing the effectiveness of those practices is accordingly not something the available materials allow.

No study reviewed in this article has examined organisational culture, engagement, and retention-related outcomes together within a Ukrainian IT sample, which is why empirical testing of the proposed framework among employees of such companies stands out as the most direct next step. Validated measures of organisational culture and work engagement would be needed for this, alongside intention to stay, employee retention, and, where feasible, actual turnover, each treated as its own construct.

A related question, still unresolved, is whether employee engagement mediates any relationship between organisational culture and retention-related outcomes in an IT-sector sample; testing it would mean designing a single study that measures culture, engagement, and a retention-related outcome at the same time.

Because the studies reviewed here are cross-sectional, any conclusions they support are limited to association, which points to longitudinal designs as more suitable where actual turnover, rather than intention, is what matters. The wartime-specific emphasis on employee support and safety raises a further question worth exploring: whether this emphasis persists once organisations settle into non-crisis conditions, and whether its relevance extends beyond the context documented in this article.

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