

Exploring Organizational Culture Dynamics in Public Administration: A Case Study of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Abstract

This paper conducts a scientific exploration into the organizational culture within public administration, with a specific focus on a case study of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In today's landscape marked by persistent mega-crises, effective public administration entails not only crisis management but also proactive anticipation and planning. Understanding organizational culture is crucial as it shapes responses to changes, trends, and risks within public organizations and among their personnel. Public sector entities operate in a dynamic and complex environment similar to private enterprises, though often characterized by greater bureaucracy and less adaptability due to size and resource constraints. Consequently, organizational culture plays a pivotal role in enabling public sector entities to effectively address multifaceted challenges such as globalization, digitization, and geopolitical tensions. By employing Cameron and Quinn's Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), this study examines the existing and desired organizational cultures among ministry personnel. The results reveal a prevalent hierarchy culture, while employees express a preference for transitioning towards a clan culture. Furthermore, age and educational background emerge as significant determinants influencing perceptions of future culture, with older employees favoring goal-oriented cultures and those with higher education prioritizing entrepreneurial cultures. These findings are pertinent for policymakers as they provide insights into addressing contemporary challenges including sustainability, globalization, and administrative development. Through this analysis, the paper aims to shed light on how organizational culture influences the ability of public administration to effectively navigate both present and future challenges.

Keywords

Organizational Culture, OCAI, Public Sector, Greece

1. Introduction

Modern states are frequently confronted with unforeseen crises, necessitating responses to increasingly intricate societal challenges with profound ramifications for individuals and communities. These challenges, ranging from economic globalization and technological advancements to demographic shifts, climate change, and socio-political interdependencies, demand ongoing governmental vigilance and adaptive measures. In recent years, crises have become ubiquitous, manifesting in various forms such as terrorist attacks (e.g. September 11, 2001), natural disasters (e.g. the 2004 Indonesian tsunami, hurricanes Rita and Katrina in 2005), and public health emergencies (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic). Noteworthy among Greece's recent crises are the refugee influx (2013-2020), environmental disasters like the Mandra floods (2018) and the Mati fire (2019), geopolitical tensions in the Evros region and the Eastern Mediterranean (2020), and pandemic-related challenges like Project ELPIS (2022).

Crises serve as moments of discontinuity, compelling actors to reassess decisions and alter courses of action (Alink et al., 2001; Keeler, 1993). Recognizing that existing policies may prove inadequate, scholars such as Kingdon (2003) argue for substantive policy revisions rather than mere adjustments. Consequently, crises disrupt established patterns of thought and behavior while fostering opportunities for novel approaches and solutions. They redefine problem parameters, prompting institutional changes with enduring repercussions. Amid crisis-induced urgency, a window for innovative policymaking and significant change emerges temporarily (Spanou, 2021).

Moreover, considering the interconnectedness, scale, and pace of change, it becomes evident that addressing crises transcends national boundaries, often exceeding states' individual capacities (Heywood, 2013). Within this context of economic pressures, evolving political agendas, and escalating social complexities (Karkatsoulis, 2004), organizational adaptation assumes paramount importance. Nonetheless, organizational change, though imperative, entails multifaceted consequences.

The study of organizational change emerged in business management during the 1950s (Bamford & Forrester, 2003) as the stability of the post-war era yielded to the dynamic demands of the emerging post-industrial landscape. Over time, conceptualizations of change evolved, with the 1980s witnessing the predominance of the "linear model" (Anderson & Stiegelbauer, 1994), wherein organizations and governments responded reactively to change stimuli. However, this approach has gradually given way to a more proactive stance, acknowledging

change as an integral aspect of organizational evolution (Drucker, 1992).

Recent scholarship has emphasized the significance of “conjuncture” as a pivotal factor (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007) in creating “windows of opportunity” (Kingdon, 2003) essential for implementing ambitious reform agendas (Keeler, 1993). The prevailing uncertainty amplifies the chronic dysfunctions within public administration, presenting an opportune moment for paradigmatic shifts (Hall, 1993). As early as the early 2010s, the OECD redefined state “fragility” or “vulnerability” as a confluence of heightened external risks and the inadequacy of administrative adaptive capacities to address these risks and their underlying causes (Mitchell, 2013). This redefinition precipitated the emergence of resilience as a focal concept, shifting theoretical emphasis from transitional to resilient states (Pospisil & Kühn, 2016). Notably, both the European Union and the United States have developed strategies aimed at fostering resilience in fragile contexts. International organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations have devised novel assessment tools, strategic frameworks, and financial instruments tailored to bolster resilient state structures.

Within the realm of Greek public administration, pervasive centralization, bureaucratic rigidity, mismanagement, inefficiency, and operational deficiencies are evident (Makrydimitris & Pravita, 2012; Sotiropoulos & Christopoulos, 2017). Moreover, the administration’s entrenched subordination to political directives fosters a culture of low organizational agility, hampering institutional memory and impeding effective policy formulation (Spanou, 2021). To weather these challenges and enhance societal service provision, the public sector must bolster efficiency, accountability, and transparency, necessitating a transformative shift in organizational culture (Boyne & Meier, 2009). Nevertheless, despite the pivotal role of organizational culture within the public sector, empirical inquiries predominantly focus on its manifestations and impacts within the private sphere (Hood, 1991). This dearth of research stems partly from the intricate and elusive nature of assessing organizational culture within public entities (Rukh & Qadeer, 2018). Furthermore, effecting cultural change within the public sector proves inherently arduous, given the absence of established organizational and professional norms that typically facilitate such transformations (Brunetto, 2001).

In the current climate of perpetual crises (natural, health, geopolitical, energy, financial), public administration is being asked to reinvent itself, first and foremost, to become capable of preventing, planning, and scheduling its operations in order to successfully carry out its multifaceted mission. The capacity to adjust to the unusual situations brought about by crises is the most essential instrument available to governments for effectively addressing these issues. The public sector needs to strengthen its efficiency, accountability, and transparency to adapt effectively and continue serving society or even improving the quality of its ser-

vices. This can only be achieved through organizational culture changes (Boyne & Meier, 2009). Organizational culture is a critical element towards meeting this target, for both private and public entities. Modern public organizations operate in the same fast-paced, complex, and volatile environment as private companies, while at the same time, they are generally more bureaucratic and less adaptable due to their size and resources. Due in large part to the difficulty and complexity of evaluating organizational culture in public organizations, there are comparatively few empirical studies on the subject (Hood, 1991; Rukh & Qadeer, 2018). Furthermore, because there is no widely accepted organizational or professional culture in the public sector (which, according to Brunetto, 2001, is a facilitating factor for change) culture change is more difficult there. Greece has been experiencing a series of crises since 2008, including the financial crisis, the pandemic crisis, the energy crisis, etc., which has made the need for public sector reform even more pressing.

The aim of the present paper is to diagnose the Organizational Culture that exists today in the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to compare it with a desired future culture that the employees of the organization would like to prevail in five years from today. For this reason, the research focuses on the personnel of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the results that we will extract will be food for reflection by the management for a strategy to deal with the phenomena with structural measures to improve or not the organizational function.

Consequently, the following segment of this paper undertakes a comprehensive literature review aimed at establishing the theoretical framework underpinning the research endeavor. This review encompasses an examination of prior studies, synthesizing empirical findings that substantiate the premises of our investigation. After this, the third section of the paper delineates our methodology, incorporating a comparative analysis utilizing the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) within the context of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the fourth section, a critical discussion of our findings ensues, wherein we compare the observed outcomes with those of the most recent similar studies, while also proposing strategies for effectuating the requisite organizational cultural transformation and delineating potential avenues for future research. Finally, the concluding section of the paper encapsulates a succinct summary of our findings and a reflection on the inherent limitations of our research.

2. Literature Review

Organizational culture, stemming from the field of “cultural anthropology”, is recognized within various contexts such as the creation of written or oral works, efforts towards better organization, and marketing research (Hogan & Coote, 2014). Its roots can be traced back to around 1947 in the United States, gaining significant traction in the 1980s (Kapetaneas et al., 2015). During this period, it

began to exert a profound influence, notably impacting management literature and subsequently shaping the transmission of ideas linking it to employee productivity, financial performance, and overall organizational success. A series of studies were conducted using Hofstede's approach, even in recent years (indicatively for Greece, Kritikou et al, 2021; Boufounou & Argyrou, 2022).

Emerging as a field of study in the late 1970s, organizational culture garnered attention due to the need to elucidate the factors behind the increased productivity of Japanese companies compared to those in the West (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). Since the 1980s, it has been regarded as a key variable influencing organizational performance (Pettigrew, 1979; Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014).

Beyond its theoretical underpinnings, organizational culture plays a pivotal role in managing and coordinating organizational activities (Day, 1994), shaping internal processes (Jarnagin & Slocum, 2007), offering solutions to organizational challenges (Schein, 1984), and either hindering or facilitating the achievement of long-term organizational goals (Denison, 1990). Moreover, more recent studies confirm culture's vital role for innovation competitiveness capacities (Kostis et al., 2018; Petrakis et al., 2015).

The most prevalent definition of organizational culture was formulated by Schein (2004), according to which it constitutes a well-structured system of fundamental values and basic assumptions conceived and developed by the members of an organization, enabling them to address internal integration barriers and solve problems of external adaptation. For many researchers, organizational structure is the most significant factor in organizational behavior, with a significant direct impact on the overall performance of the organization (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). Organizations, composed of a set of individuals, have their own personality, their own culture, which reflects the thoughts, beliefs, and convictions of the members of an organization. Culture is not the "property" of individuals but of the groups to which they belong in an organization, whether in the public or private sector. Culture can manifest in various ways.

Organizational culture plays a pivotal role in the public (non-profit) sector, given its direct impact on employee satisfaction and, consequently, organizational performance. When employees harbor a positive attitude towards their work environment, shaped by organizational culture, and find their significant needs met, their morale and motivation soar, ultimately enhancing organizational productivity. Conversely, when employees experience dissatisfaction with their work environment, morale plummets, leading to decreased organizational performance (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013). This assertion finds resonance in the Greek context too, as evidenced by the findings of Ragazou et al. (2021).

Organizational culture is considered to have two main components (Papalexandri & Bourantas, 2003). One results in autonomy and constant adaptability, depending on the circumstances, while the other highlights the trends within and outside the organization. For example, some organizations are efficient if they are flexible and adaptable, while others are efficient because they do not undergo

any changes, remain inflexible, and remain in the same conditions. Similarly, these services can be defined as thriving when they achieve progress and their quality is connected to a unified and cohesive whole, while others collide and interact with their surroundings. These two components are further divided into four categories, where each represents a different type of organizational efficiency. These types represent how individuals evaluate an organization's effectiveness (Massaras et al., 2014). These categories are:

- “Clan”: Concerns organizations that care for their employees and simultaneously for their progress. The organization is internally focused, allowing its employees to express their opinions without fear of provocation or annoyance. Key characteristics of the clan organization include mutual trust, friendliness, support, interest in colleagues, informal communication, team cohesion, and the belief and dedication of employees.
- “Adhocracy”: This index is the type of culture that takes risks and innovates among employees, focusing the organization's interest through pioneering development. Particular emphasis is placed on the “external environment, changes, competitiveness, experimentation, and new and unique products”.
- “Hierarchy”: This index of culture emphasizes organization, prediction, and immutability, and these are achieved through complex rules and guidelines.
- “Market”: This type of culture distinguishes itself based on specific goals and their achievement, in the spirit of competition and in difficult and adverse leadership conditions.

Currently, organizational development occurs within an environment characterized by rapid organizational changes, technological advancements, and competition. The prevailing instability in the external environment underscores the necessity for diagnosing and leveraging organizational culture for the benefit of the organization. To this end, various quantitative assessment tools of organizational culture have been developed. Researchers choose and utilize models that facilitate correlating values and structures within an organization to drive cultural change. In this endeavor, the research of Cameron and Quinn (1999), leading scholars in organizational culture, is notable, leading to the development of the Competing Values Model. This model, as described by Tsiamanta (2012), provides a simple, valid, and reliable tool enabling researchers to capture the type of culture within a given organization.

Tools for recording and measuring organizational culture have been developed by researchers in this field to understand and systematize it within private or public organizations. Some researchers advocate qualitative methods, while others favor quantitative methods, the latter deemed more suitable for studying and measuring organizational culture. After extensive research encompassing over 1700 articles, 13 instruments satisfying evaluation criteria for organizational culture have been identified. Each tool focuses on different parameters of organizational culture, selected by the researcher based on their definition of organizational culture, research objectives, and the intended use of results.

Among these tools is the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), developed by [Cameron and Quinn \(1999\)](#), a quantitative measurement model that gauges the variance between existing and desired culture. The OCAI has been tested in numerous studies and healthcare services, proving to be a comprehensible tool requiring only ten minutes for completion. It provides insight into the current organizational culture and members' preferences for future development.

The majority of research utilizing the OCAI questionnaire method in Greece has predominantly focused on organizations characterized by operational features, particularly banks and private enterprises. Notable exceptions within the realm of public administration include investigations into entities such as the Independent Public Revenue Authority and the Air Force Service. However, to date, comparable research examining the organizational culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains notably absent from scholarly discourse. Research endeavors within the public sector have primarily scrutinized organizations with operational proclivities, including the AADE and EFKA, alongside financial institutions ([Tsegou, 2018](#); [Akouri, 2022](#)).

A notable antecedent study by [Belias and Koustelios \(2013\)](#) scrutinized the organizational culture of Greek banking institutions. This investigation illuminated a prevalent bureaucratic culture within Greek banks, with a prevailing preference for a supportive culture in future organizational aspirations.

Subsequent research endeavors by [Lampos \(2016\)](#) on the subject of “Organizational Culture of Greek Banks” revealed consistent ratings for supportive and entrepreneurial cultures across present and future orientations. However, discernible trends in goal-oriented culture scores suggested an upward trajectory in recent years, indicative of heightened emphasis on productivity and market dominance amidst industry consolidation. Notably, employee aspirations for a supportive culture have yet to materialize fully.

[Tsegou \(2018\)](#) studies the organizational culture of the Greek Public Administration, particularly focusing on the case study of AADE, highlighted a dominant hierarchy culture entrenched within the organization. Despite this prevailing culture, employees expressed a preference for supportive/clan and adhocracy cultures, indicative of a desire for more collaborative and innovative organizational dynamics. This misalignment between existing and desired cultures underscores a significant discrepancy warranting attention within public administration reform efforts.

Moreover, an illuminative study by [Apostolaki \(2020\)](#) delved into the impact of organizational culture on change implementation within public organizations, specifically examining the Decentralized Administration of Thessaly—Central Greece. In this context, hierarchical culture predominated, accompanied by elements of intimacy culture, underscoring the nuanced interplay between organizational culture and change dynamics within public administration contexts.

Furthermore, [Boufounou and Argyrou \(2022\)](#) conducted an assessment of

organizational culture in both private (such as banking and telecoms) and public sectors (such as social security, public revenues authority, and hospitals) in Greece. Their comparative analysis, utilizing the OCAI questionnaire, revealed a notable disparity between public and private sectors, with the former characterized by a predominant “hierarchy culture” and the latter by a prevalent “market culture”. Interestingly, regardless of sector or industry, the desired future organizational culture was consistently identified as “clan culture”, underscoring the need for transformative strategies to cultivate a more agile, adaptive, and innovative culture.

3. Methods and Materials

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) and the OCAI represent significant contributions to the field of organizational culture assessment. The CVF furnishes a theoretical framework for comprehending organizational culture, while the OCAI offers a practical means for quantifying and aligning organizational culture with strategic imperatives. The integration of these tools enables organizations to delve into the intricacies of their cultural milieu and enact targeted interventions to foster cultural evolution.

Developed by Cameron and Quinn (1999), the OCAI serves as a quantitative instrument aimed at gauging the disparity between prevailing and desired organizational cultures. Leveraging a Likert scale questionnaire, participants can complete the assessment in approximately ten minutes. The OCAI facilitates organizations in evaluating their current cultural landscape and harmonizing it with future aspirations, thereby facilitating strategic cultural metamorphoses.

This research endeavors to diagnose the extant organizational culture within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and juxtapose it with the envisioned future culture desired by its employees five years hence. Accordingly, the study focuses on the personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the resultant insights will serve as fodder for strategic deliberations by management, informing structural measures aimed at enhancing organizational efficacy.

Given the nature of the inquiry into organizational culture phenomena, a quantitative methodology was deemed most apt for its systematic exploration, employing statistical techniques and numerical data to predict and govern reality. Data collection proceeded via a questionnaire comprising structured queries characterized by completeness, clarity, coherence, and an appropriate structure conducive to coding and computer processing. Respondents were instructed to provide written responses in a specific order. The methodological approach aligns directly with the theoretical framework, reflective processes, and research hypotheses of this study. Maximizing sample size to draw generalized conclusions, the technique of isolating relevant variables was employed.

Quantitative data collected from the survey underwent numerical conversion, and through weighted measurements, variables were derived for examination of their accuracy, subsequently correlating with research questions emanating from

the literature review. Conclusions were drawn via statistical analyses encompassing mean values and standard deviations, elucidating the effects of research variables and yielding comprehensive insights into the subject matter.

To assess organizational culture, the OCAI developed by **Cameron and Quinn (1999)** was employed, employing a fixed-sum scale measurement model to gauge the divergence between existing and desired cultures within the framework of Competitive Values. The questionnaire encompassed four types of organizational culture across six dimensions, namely: Supporting/Clan culture, Market-oriented/Market culture, Adaptive/Open System Culture (Adhocracy culture), and Hierarchy Culture. Each dimension was assessed through 24 questions, each offering four possible responses corresponding to the degree to which respondents perceived their organizational culture, totaling 100 points per dimension. Similar assessment was conducted for an assumed-desirable culture five years hence, emphasizing Flexibility and Entrepreneurship vis-à-vis Control and Stability.

To ensure the reliability of the culture measurement tool utilized in the study, a reliability analysis of the collected data was conducted, employing Cronbach's coefficient. The obtained α values indicated high reliability ($\alpha > 0.6$) for both present and future culture types, affirming the accuracy and consistency of the culture measurements.

The survey was administered to employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, randomly sampled from all ranks and branches belonging to the Central Service. Questionnaires were disseminated via email link, and efforts were made to collect 150 fully completed responses, out of 180 questionnaires distributed over a two-month period. Confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the research process, and the collected data, comprising personal opinions and general considerations, remains strictly confidential. Ultimately, the study sample comprised 148 employees from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It's worth noting that two questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to invalid responses, specifically instances of double choices in single-choice questions. This exclusion was necessary to uphold the accuracy and validity of the data.

Among them, 45.9% identified as male, while 54.1% identified as female. Age distribution revealed that 4.7% fell within the 20 - 30 age bracket, 57.4% were aged 30 - 40, 30.4% fell within the 40 - 50 age range, 6.8% were between 50 - 60 years old, and a mere 0.007% represented individuals aged 60 - 70. In terms of educational background, 4.7% held high school diplomas (secondary education), 29.7% were graduates of universities or Technical Educational Institutes (TEIs) (post-secondary education), 45.9% possessed undergraduate degrees (graduate), and 19.6% held either master's or doctoral degrees (post-graduate/Ph.D.). Regarding occupational status, 66.2% held junior positions, 23% served as seniors, and 10.8% were managers. Additionally, 73% of the participants worked within the central ministry, while the remaining 27% operated within foreign authorities. Tenure within the ministry ranged from 0 to over 20 years, with 10.8% having

served 0 - 5 years, 36.5% between 5 - 10 years, 16.2% between 10 - 15 years, 19.6% between 15 - 20 years, and 16.9% with over 20 years of service. The main characteristics of the sample are presented in **Figure 1**.

4. Results

The study explored employees' perceptions of the prevailing organizational culture and their aspirations for the future cultural landscape.

Our results support that the predominant culture within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs currently aligns with bureaucratic principles (Hierarchy culture),

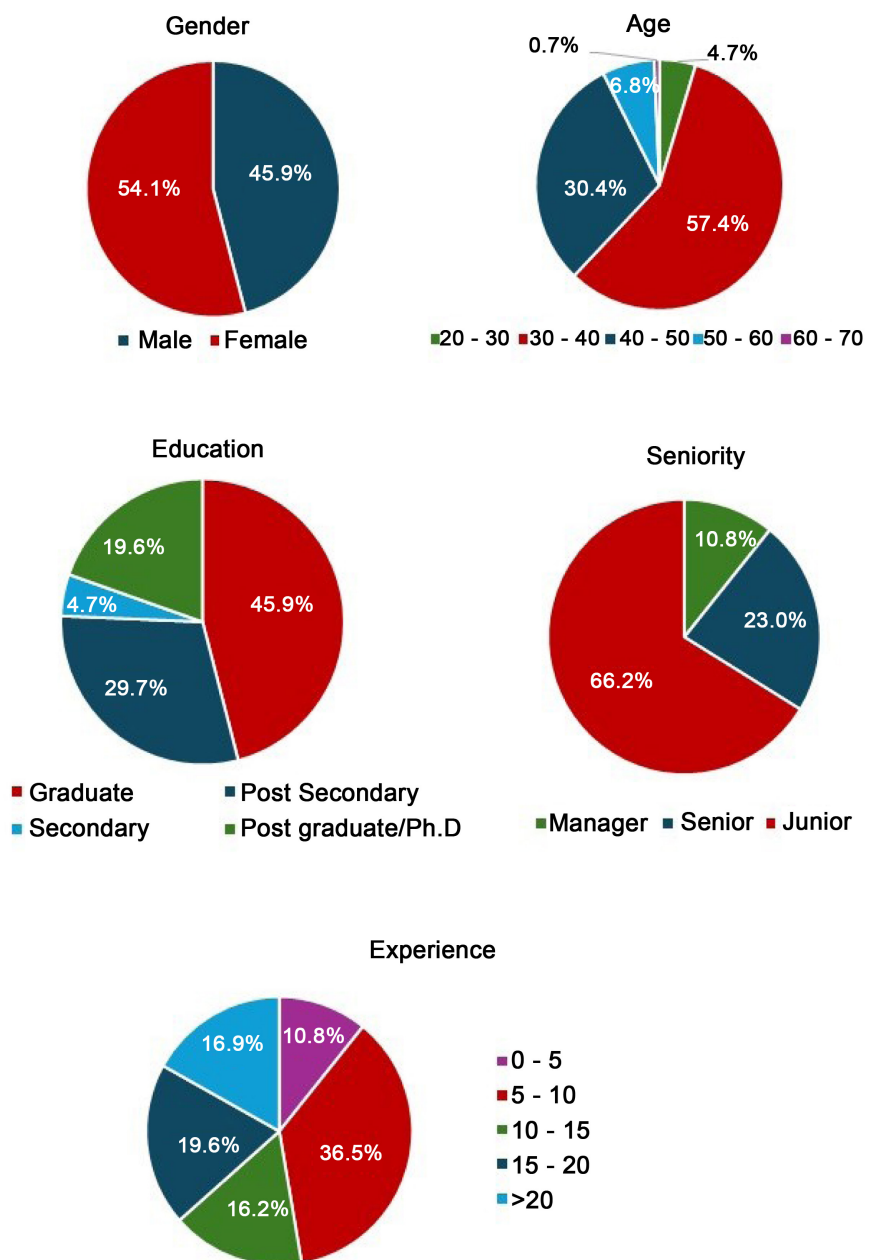


Figure 1. Sample characteristics.

closely followed by goal-oriented tendencies (Market culture). Conversely, employees express a desire for a shift towards a clan culture in the future, with adhocracy also ranking prominently. This can be schematically represented as shown in **Figure 2**.

We conducted a paired-samples t-test to assess the statistical significance of changes in respondents' cultural preferences from the present to the future. The results yielded statistical significance (p -value < 0.05) across all four cultural dimensions. Consequently, we rejected the null hypothesis positing equality between the means of culture types at the two different time points, thereby concluding that discernible differences exist, as outlined in **Table 1**.

In particular, our paired-samples t-test showed significant shifts in respondents' cultural preferences from the present to the future across all dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Notably, traditional values such as clannow and adhnw decreased significantly (mean difference: -9.84 and -11.40 , respectively, $p < 0.05$), while modern values like marnow and hienow increased significantly (mean difference: 9.37 and 11.91 , respectively, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest a dynamic evolution of

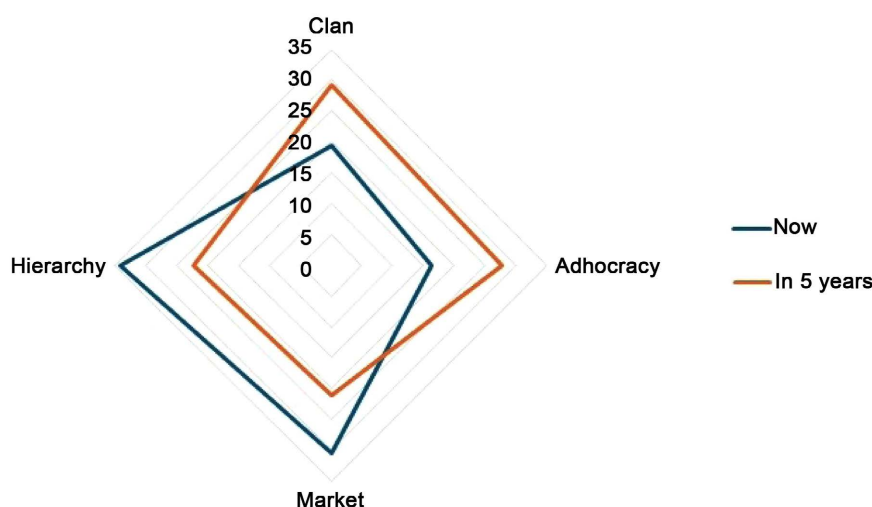


Figure 2. Current and desired organizational culture in the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Table 1. Paired samples test.

	Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1 clannow - clan5	-9.84	13.68	1.12	-12.06	-7.62	-8.75	147	0.00	
Pair 2 adhnw - adh5	-11.40	11.31	0.93	-13.24	-9.56	-12.27	147	0.00	
Pair 3 marnow - mar5	9.37	9.25	0.76	7.87	10.88	12.33	147	0.00	
Pair 4 hienow - hie5	11.91	16.05	1.32	9.30	14.51	9.02	147	0.00	

cultural identity over time, with respondents increasingly aligning with modern cultural norms.

Subsequently, we investigated the correlation between respondents' current and future cultural preferences and various qualitative characteristics, including gender, age, education, position, workplace, and tenure. We employed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for most variables, except for gender and place of work, which have two categories. For these variables, we applied a t-test for independent samples to evaluate the association with cultural preferences.

Analysis of the association between current and future culture types with employee ages revealed a positive correlation with the preference for market culture. Specifically, older employees exhibited a stronger inclination towards selecting market-oriented culture as desirable for the future (Table 2), indicating a greater acceptance of results-driven approaches over time.

Regarding the correlation between current and future culture types and the educational level of employees, initial findings suggested that individuals holding a master's degree or doctorate expressed a lower preference for the clan culture in the future compared to university graduates, as well as, graduates of secondary and post-secondary institutions (Table 3). This observation suggests that highly educated individuals perceive a less favorable view towards fostering a congenial atmosphere within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, possibly considering it incongruent with the organization's objectives.

Furthermore, our analysis revealed that individuals with lower educational attainment, such as secondary and post-secondary graduates, expressed a lower preference for the culture of adhocracy in the future compared to university graduates and those holding master's or PhD degrees (Table 4). This finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of education place greater importance on innovation as a fundamental element of the Ministry's operations.

Additionally, correlation testing between workplace and culture types, both presently and in the future, demonstrated that senior employees exhibited a stronger inclination towards the clan culture (Table 5). This indicates that as

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by age group—the preferred culture in 5 years “Market”.

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
20 - 30	7	18.88	6.91	2.61	12.49	25.27	3.33	23.33
30 - 40	85	19.57	7.61	0.83	17.93	21.21	3.33	44.17
40 - 50	45	22.94	8.15	1.21	20.49	25.38	11.67	43.33
50 - 60	10	25.83	3.54	1.12	23.30	28.36	21.67	35.00
60 - 70	1	20.00	-	-	-	-	20.00	20.00
Total	148	20.99	7.73	0.64	19.73	22.24	3.33	44.17

Table 3. Descriptive statistics by education level—the preferred culture in 5 years is “Clan”.

Education Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Secondary	7		
Post-Secondary	44	32.46	15.38	2.32	27.79	37.14	7.50	76.67
Graduate	68	29.78	9.07	1.10	27.59	31.98	14.17	76.67
Post-Graduate/Ph.D.	29	22.63	8.45	1.57	19.41	25.84	6.67	38.33
Total	148	29.10	11.60	0.95	27.21	30.98	6.67	76.67

Table 4. Descriptive statistics by education level—the preferred culture in 5 years is “Adhocracy”.

Education Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Secondary	7		
Post-Secondary	44	23.82	8.04	1.21	21.37	26.26	6.17	43.33
Graduate	68	29.22	6.81	0.83	27.57	30.86	15.83	60.83
Post-Graduate/Ph.D.	29	30.14	14.20	2.64	24.74	35.54	11.67	70
Total	148	27.69	9.26	0.76	26.19	29.20	6.17	70

Table 5. Descriptive statistics by seniority—the preferred culture now is “Clan”.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Junior	98		
Senior	34	22.88	5.95	1.02	20.80	24.95	6.67	32.50
Manager	16	24.81	4.96	1.24	22.17	27.45	15.83	30.83
Total	148	19.26	7.20	0.59	18.09	20.43	3.33	32.50

employees ascend the hierarchical ladder within the Ministry, they tend to prioritize collaborative environments, emphasizing mutual assistance and teamwork in their current organizational culture.

Our analysis further revealed that junior employees exhibited a higher preference for the culture of hierarchy compared to seniors and managers (Table 6). Conversely, senior employees expressed a stronger preference for the market culture as desirable for the future, compared to managers and junior employees (Table 7).

Moreover, when examining the relationship between years of experience in the Ministry and the types of culture both presently and in the future, it was observed that employees who have worked in the Ministry for 0 - 5 years showed a

Table 6. Descriptive statistics by seniority—the preferred culture now is “Hierarchy”.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Junior	98		
Senior	34	30.72	8.33	1.43	27.81	33.62	21.67	46.67
Manager	16	26.44	3.10	0.78	24.78	28.09	22.50	31.67
Total	148	34.11	12.06	0.99	32.15	36.07	20.83	71.67

Table 7. Descriptive statistics by seniority—the preferred culture in 5 years is “Market”.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Junior	98		
Senior	34	24.36	7.62	1.31	21.71	27.02	5.00	44.17
Manager	16	19.58	5.31	1.33	16.76	22.41	11.67	26.67
Total	148	20.99	7.73	0.64	19.73	22.24	3.33	44.17

Table 8. Descriptive statistics by experience—the preferred culture in 5 years is “Adhocracy”.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					0 - 5	16		
5 - 10	54	26.01	7.89	1.07	23.85	28.16	6.17	43.33
10 - 15	24	27.57	7.57	1.55	24.37	30.77	11.67	36.67
15 - 20	29	25.40	5.94	1.10	23.14	27.66	11.67	34.17
>20	25	27.73	5.72	1.14	25.37	30.09	18.33	38.33
Total	148	27.69	9.26	0.76	26.19	29.20	6.17	70.00

greater inclination towards the adhocracy culture as desirable for the future (Table 8). This suggests that newcomers to the Ministry are more eager to introduce an innovative spirit into the organization compared to their more tenured counterparts, who may be accustomed to the prevailing organizational norms.

5. Discussion

The analysis of questionnaire data revealed that the prevailing organizational culture within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is characterized by principles of tradition, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. Employees perceive limited scope for in-

initiative within the organization, with a conservative climate resistant to significant structural changes. Notably, while the current culture reflects bureaucratic tendencies, employees express a desire for a shift towards a culture of support and entrepreneurship in the future.

The study found significant associations between employee age and desired future culture types. Older employees exhibited a preference for goal-oriented cultures, suggesting a greater acceptance of results-driven approaches over time. Furthermore, educational attainment influenced perceptions of future culture, with higher-educated individuals prioritizing entrepreneurial cultures, highlighting the importance of innovation within the organization.

Analysis of workplace hierarchies revealed distinct preferences for organizational culture types. Senior employees tended to favor supportive cultures, emphasizing collaborative environments, while managers leaned towards goal-oriented cultures, underscoring the importance of results-driven approaches within leadership roles.

Comparative analysis with previous research on organizational culture within both public and private sectors elucidated distinct trends and shifts over time. While prior studies have predominantly focused on operational organizations such as banks, findings from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlight unique cultural dynamics within governmental bodies. Variances in cultural preferences across sectors underscore the need for tailored approaches to cultural transformation within diverse organizational contexts.

These findings underscore the pressing need for organizational reform within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to align with evolving employee expectations and promote a culture conducive to innovation and adaptability. The discrepancy between current and desired culture types highlights areas for intervention, necessitating strategic initiatives to foster cultural change.

Our findings are in line with those of previous studies regarding organizational culture in Greece (Belias & Koustelios, 2013; Lampos, 2016; Tsegou, 2018; Apostolaki, 2020; Akouri, 2022; Boufounou & Argyrou, 2022), according to which there is an obvious difference between the dominant and the preferred type of Organizational Culture in Public Administration. The results are of particular importance for policy makers towards meeting the critical political, economic and social challenges of today and tomorrow, such as sustainability, globalization, digitization, administrative development and geopolitical tensions (Lovell, 1995; Stewart & Kimber, 1996; Rukh & Qadeer, 2018).

However, the journey to this swift is considered challenging based on previous research. Effecting cultural change in the public sector poses particular challenges due to the absence of well-established organizational and professional cultures, which, as noted by Brunetto (2001), typically facilitate such transitions. Notably, research within the French public sector highlights that continual change often induces feelings of chaos and anomia among individuals, stemming from the shift in organizational norms and behaviors. Consequently, resistance to change

is common, often misconstrued by senior managers as irrational and anti-progressive (Fronza & Moriceau, 2008). To address these challenges, a “training and leading by example” approach is recommended, fostering cultural awareness, and facilitating smoother cultural transformations within public organizations (Schraeder et al., 2005). Such an approach holds promise, particularly in countries with limited experience in managing organizational transitions, such as Greece.

Future research endeavors should delve deeper into the complexities of organizational culture within the public sector, examining its impact on organizational performance and service delivery. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the implementation and outcomes of cultural transformation initiatives can provide valuable insights into the efficacy of reform efforts over time. Collaborative endeavors with international partners and organizations can further enrich understanding and inform evidence-based policy interventions aimed at building resilient and adaptive public sector institutions.

6. Conclusion

Amidst Greece’s string of crises since 2008, including financial turmoil, pandemics, and energy shortages, the imperative for public sector reform has become increasingly urgent. This study employs Cameron and Quinn’s (1999) OCAI to examine the organizational culture within the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Analyzing questionnaire data from public servants reveals a prevailing culture characterized by tradition, hierarchy, and bureaucracy, fostering limited employee initiative and resistance to structural changes.

However, notable disparities emerge between the current culture and employees’ desired future culture. While the present culture leans towards bureaucracy, employees express aspirations for a shift towards a culture of support and entrepreneurship. Age and educational attainment emerge as significant factors influencing perceptions of future culture, with older employees favoring goal-oriented cultures and higher-educated individuals prioritizing entrepreneurial cultures.

Furthermore, analysis of workplace hierarchies reveals distinct preferences for organizational culture types, with senior employees leaning towards supportive cultures and managers towards goal-oriented cultures. Comparative analysis with previous research underscores the unique cultural dynamics within governmental bodies, necessitating tailored approaches to cultural transformation.

These findings underscore the urgent need for organizational reform within the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to align with evolving employee expectations and foster a culture conducive to innovation and adaptability. Addressing the discrepancy between current and desired culture types requires strategic interventions aimed at fostering cultural change.

The findings presented here align with previous research on organizational culture internationally, as well as in Greece, underscoring the importance of ongoing efforts to understand and address cultural dynamics within public organiza-

tions.

Conducting a comparative analysis between the results and conclusions of our study and those of [Marreiros et al. \(2023\)](#) reveals identical conclusions regarding the prevalence of a bureaucratic culture in Public Administration. Simultaneously, it underscores the urgent necessity for “change and innovation to respond to current demands, in order to provide quality and flexible services”.

Regarding the Greek case, [Boufounou and Argyrou \(2022\)](#) in their study focus on both public and private sectors, highlighting striking differences in organizational culture dynamics between the two spheres. They indicate a prevalent trend towards market culture, emphasizing competitiveness and results-driven approaches in both sectors. Employees express a desire for a shift towards clan culture, characterized by collaboration and communication, aligning with national cultural characteristics and contemporary societal needs. Conversely, our study, which examines a public sector organization exclusively (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), reveals a predominant bureaucratic culture, reflecting a hierarchical and rule-bound environment. While employees aspire towards a clan culture emphasizing support and entrepreneurship, the hierarchical nature of governmental bodies poses challenges to cultural transformation. These findings underscore fundamental disparities between the public and private sectors in Greece, with governmental organizations exhibiting entrenched bureaucratic norms that diverge from the market-oriented cultures prevalent in private enterprises. The contrasting cultural dynamics underscore the need for tailored approaches to organizational reform and cultural change within public institutions to address evolving employee expectations and foster innovation and adaptability.

However, it is essential to acknowledge several significant limitations inherent in our study. Primarily, our research is based solely on data collected from a single public organization, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This narrow focus may limit the generalizability of our findings to the broader public sector. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by its very nature, operates with a higher degree of international exposure compared to other public organizations and services. Additionally, as one of the country’s key ministries, its staff may possess higher levels of skill and expertise compared to employees in other public sectors. Consequently, the attitudes and perspectives captured in our study may not fully reflect those prevalent in less internationally oriented or less specialized government departments. Therefore, while our findings provide valuable insights into the organizational culture within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, caution must be exercised when extrapolating these results to the entire public sector.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers grappling with critical political, economic, and social challenges, such as sustainability, globalization, digitization, administrative development, and geopolitical tensions. By recognizing the pivotal role of organizational culture and implementing targeted reform initiatives, public sector institutions can enhance their resilience and effectiveness in navigating today’s complex landscape.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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