

Cultural Perspectives in Corporate Culture Studies: Research Opportunities and Developments in Indonesia

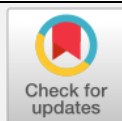
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ARTICLE INFO

Publication Info:
Research Article



How to cite:

Nugraheni, Y., & Puspa, R.
(2023). Cultural Perspectives in
Corporate Culture Studies:
Research Opportunities and
Developments in Indonesia.
Society, 11(2), 758-770.

DOI: [10.33019/society.v11i2.561](https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v11i2.561)

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Received: May 26, 2023;

Accepted: December 30, 2023;

Published: December 31, 2023;

ABSTRACT

This article examines how cultural perspectives have emerged and shifted the managerial perspective in studying corporate culture. There is no single approach to understanding organizational culture, as many factors influence its formation. The shift from functional to symbolic approaches is viewed as a form of resistance. A qualitative approach, employing literature review methods, is used in this study to view organizations as cultures and to see communication as a cultural performance. The study explores the opportunities and developments of corporate culture studies in Indonesia. By outlining these aspects, the article aims to contribute to the enrichment of organizational culture literature. This work is expected to enhance research and studies on organizational culture in Indonesia and provide a comprehensive view of the emergence of cultural perspectives in corporate culture studies. The author believes there are numerous opportunities for developing corporate culture studies in Indonesia, alongside the paradigm shift in evaluating corporate culture not only from a managerial perspective but also from a broader cultural perspective.

Keywords: Corporate Culture; Cultural Perspective;
Organizational Communication

1. Introduction

Which is more important: the company or its culture? Or both? Corporate culture is a key element in the success of an organization. One journal reference states that corporate culture determines behavior and influences organizational performance (Dayani & Kadang, 2020). In studying corporate culture, several perspectives, including the managerial perspective, can be used to analyze organizations.

This perspective is considered the most dominant. The managerial perspective emphasizes the role of management in creating and managing corporate culture. It views corporate culture as a tool to achieve company goals. Several important aspects of the managerial perspective include the role of management in designing corporate culture. Managers, as leaders, play a crucial role in shaping organizational culture and are often called cultural managers. Leadership is related to culture; good leadership results in a healthy culture (Fitri & Ramadhayanti, 2022).

The managerial perspective measures the success of corporate culture based on evaluation and measurement to achieve organizational goals. From this perspective, performance measurement is the primary tool management uses to ensure the organization can achieve its goals. Performance measurement helps management understand to what extent these goals are achieved and whether the corporate culture supports this achievement. From the managerial perspective, management determines relevant performance indicators for the organization. According to Aprilia, this indicates that performance measurement systems can facilitate organizations in implementing strategies and evaluation actions (Aprilia, 2020). It is important to note that relevant and accurate performance measurement is key to using the managerial perspective in managing corporate culture. The managerial perspective focuses on the roles and responsibilities of management in directing and controlling organizational resources and activities to achieve company goals. This perspective places management as key in decision-making, planning, coordination, and organizational supervision. This is reinforced by Susanti, who states that performance measurement is important because it reveals how quickly employees perform their functions, significantly impacting organizational performance success (Susanti, 2021).

Although the managerial perspective plays a significant role in managing corporate culture, it is important to remember that it can also be influenced by other factors, including the values and beliefs of organizational members, the organization's history, and the external environment (Alvesson & Berg, 2011). Hence, criticisms of the managerial perspective arise. When management holds full control over corporate culture, it can overlook the contributions of organizational members in shaping the culture. The culture created by members also has a significant impact. This is reinforced by Yuniarti et al., who states that a strong organizational culture supports cultural transformation to adapt and maintain organizational sustainability (Yuniarti et al., 2021). The managerial perspective often creates an oversimplified view of corporate culture, whereas culture is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to measure and identify. Measuring culture only through surveys or quantitative indicators can miss deeper, immeasurable aspects.

Another criticism is that the managerial perspective tends to emphasize business goal achievement as the sole focus of culture. This can neglect social, ethical, and sustainability values that are also important in corporate culture. The managerial perspective often relies on quantification and measurement in analyzing corporate culture. This can overlook qualitative and emotional aspects of culture that are difficult to measure. This is evidenced by findings that

most research on organizational culture in Indonesia uses a quantitative approach to measure important and managerial aspects (Ningsih & Setiawan, 2019).

It should be understood that there is no single perfect approach to understanding corporate culture. The most effective approach often involves multiple perspectives, including the managerial perspective, while also considering social, historical, psychological, and anthropological aspects in organizational culture analysis. These criticisms highlight the importance of a more holistic approach to understanding corporate culture that involves all organization members and recognizes the diversity and complexity of culture. Management should strive to engage more with employees and understand the broader cultural dynamics within their organizations.

Thus, this research examines how cultural perspectives emerge and shift the managerial perspective in studying corporate culture. This research is expected to enrich research and studies on organizational culture in Indonesia and provide a comprehensive overview of the emergence of cultural perspectives in corporate culture studies based on previous studies. This literature review specifically tries to observe the shift in perspectives in studying corporate culture. The research aims to provide an overview of the emergence of cultural perspectives in corporate culture studies. By outlining these aspects, this article can contribute to the enrichment of the corporate culture concept literature.

2. Literature Review

In the late 1970s to the early 1980s, Kuhn, as cited in Mumby, noted the emergence of the cultural or symbolic approach, representing what could be considered a paradigm shift in corporate communication. This new perspective offered a markedly different conceptual toolset for examining organizations, creating knowledge in stark contrast to the dominant functionalist or managerial perspectives (Mumby, 2013).

The functionalist or managerial perspective characterizes strong corporate culture as a system of unique ideas, values, and symbols organized and controlled by management to integrate organizational members into a shared meaning. Organizations can control employees by managing the culture in which they work. This perspective is functionalist because it views culture as something owned by the organization, serving as a tool to help achieve organizational goals. The functionalist approach to culture has faced significant criticism in various academic writings. These criticisms challenge the following assumptions: culture is a consistent pattern of values and practices; values, symbols, and cultural perspectives are shared by all organizational members; management can use culture to control employees; and cultural manifestations are unique to specific organizations. The emergence of the symbolic perspective counters the functionalist or instrumental perspective and its notion of culture as something the organization possesses. The concept of culture highlights the non-rational, subjective aspects of organizational life. From this viewpoint, known as the symbolic perspective, culture becomes a metaphor to describe the entire organization, its structures and processes, and its imaginative and material dimensions. Organizational culture is seen as a complex and continually evolving whole consisting of people, goals, experiences, and interpretations (Cheney et al., 2010).

This shift in perspective aligns with the development of organizational theory studies. Organizational theories have evolved from managerial approaches to cultural approaches. These theories have rapidly developed alongside societal advancements, starting with classical organizational theories by Weber and Taylor, which provide views on organization and management. Weber's theory focuses on bureaucracy, which is known as formal organization. Taylor's theory emphasizes organizational management concerning the division of labor.

Subsequent developments led to transitional organizational theories, including systems theory and behavioral theory, proposed by Chester Barnard, focusing on communication and authority.

Additionally, the human relations theory by Elton Mayo is well-known, along with fusion theories from Bakke and Argyris. Also included in this group are Likert's linking pin theory and Katz and Kahn's social systems theory. The most recent developments include advanced organizational theories, such as Weick's organizing theory and organizational culture theory. While the previous two theories have an objective viewpoint, advanced organizational theories, particularly organizational culture theory, view them from a subjective perspective (Pace & Faules, 2013).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research method. Library research is a data collection method that involves studying theories from various literatures relevant to the research topic. The stages of conducting library research include preparing the necessary tools, preparing a working bibliography, organizing time, and reading or noting down research materials (Zed, 2008). Therefore, the literature obtained serves as a tool for designing the research and as a primary data source for analysis. The application of the literature review methodology has proven beneficial in examining significant findings and providing a concise and systematic discussion of knowledge (Quan-Hoang et al., 2020).

Data was collected through various sources, including books, journals, and previous studies on organizational culture, both domestically and internationally. The library materials obtained from these various references were then critically and thoroughly analyzed based on specific themes to support the research objective: to provide an overview of the emergence of cultural perspectives in corporate culture studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Viewing Organizations as Cultures

The term culture originates from the Latin word "*culture*," which means to cultivate, and "*colere*," which means to care for. However, in the social sciences, the concept of culture is broader. In anthropology and sociology, culture encompasses all common characteristics shared by humans, including systems of symbols, clothing, rituals, myths, metaphors, stories, values, and attitudes. Based on this broader interpretation, culture can be understood as a system of meanings that guide the construction of reality within a social community. Sociologist Talcott Parsons offers another definition, stating that culture is one of the fundamental institutions of society, and studying culture helps us understand how a society sustains itself. For a culture to survive, it must ensure that individual members internalize its values, beliefs, and norms. Cultural meaning systems are dynamic, making culture both a cause and an effect of human activity. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz puts it, humans are animals suspended in webs of significance they have spun, with culture being those webs. Geertz uses the metaphor of a web (Cheney et al., 2010).

Alvesson & Berg further explains the phenomenon of culture, which appears or is experienced in various forms. It is also important to note that cultural order includes the "geography" of culture and hierarchical occurrences, such as status symbols, classification patterns, and so on (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

Referring to Schein, culture can be analyzed at three levels: Artifacts, Espoused Beliefs and Values, and Basic Underlying Assumptions. These levels range from the tangible (real,

manifest, and visible) to the intangible (hidden, deeply embedded, and often unconscious basic assumptions). Between these two layers of tangible (referred to by Schein as Artifacts) and intangible (Basic Underlying Assumptions) exist beliefs, values, norms, and rules that govern the behavior of organization members, which they use to explain the culture to themselves and others (Schein, 2004).

Organizations can be viewed as structures or machines from an objective perspective, whereas organizations can be seen as processes or cultures from a subjective perspective. This is relevant to Geertz's perspective on the spider web metaphor. Geertz views humans as spiders within webs of significance they have spun. These webs form the culture (Felts, 1992). Geertz explains that humans are spiders dependent on webs of significance, with each person spinning their unique web. According to Geertz, culture is the web spun by the spider, and each web is unique. Thus, to understand culture, one must focus on its meanings (West & Turner, 2010).

The anthropological tradition and interpretive approach converge in Clifford Geertz's writings, where he developed an interpretive approach to anthropology studies (Felts, 1992). Finally, Geertz describes cultural analysis as an interpretive rather than positivistic approach, which leads to a managerial perspective. As quoted in Mumby, Geertz states that the interpretive approach to studying organizational culture focuses on the expressions of culture, such as symbols, conversations, artifacts, and practices that are tangible manifestations of a particular culture (Mumby, 2013).

Experts have proposed various definitions of organizational culture. For instance, Robbins & Judge states that organizational culture is the underlying values and beliefs that form the identity of an organization or company (Robbins & Judge, 2008). According to Siagian, organizational culture is an agreement (commitment) about values in organizational life that binds everyone (Fauzi, 2016). Meanwhile, Littlejohn & Foss asserts that organizational culture is an identity that distinguishes one organization from another. Organizational culture is produced through daily interactions, encompassing all types of communication, not just work tasks (Littlejohn & Foss, 2019). As cited in Mumby, Geertz mentions that organizational culture focuses on studying cultural expressions, such as various symbols, conversations, artifacts, and practices, which are tangible manifestations of a particular culture. In this sense, symbolic forms do not represent something else but are the culture itself (Mumby, 2013).

Pacanowsky and Trujillo in West & Turner state that organizational culture is an identity that distinguishes one organization from another. Organizational culture does not refer to things like tribe, ethnicity, or someone's background; it is the organization's way of life. Organizational culture is not merely a piece of the puzzle but the puzzle itself (West & Turner, 2009). Organizational culture encompasses group thinking ways of interpreting and organizing the actions of organization members (Liliweri, 2004).

According to Kondra & Hurst, organizational culture is like nested layers, with each layer carrying and being influenced by the layers surrounding it. So, changes in one layer affect all the surrounding layers, both from top to bottom and vice versa. Culture, as understood in context, evolves as shared meanings created through interaction and/or resistance and is taken for granted, stabilizing and attempting to regulate behavior. Cultural carriers are routine, structural, and cognitive, facilitating the transmission of culture explicitly and implicitly through active conversation, behavior, structure, and physical artifacts (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). Organizational culture is a set of values, beliefs, practices, and norms that are taken for granted, guiding members' appropriate behavior in any situation (Barbosa & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007).

Organizational culture relates to assumptions, priorities, meanings, and values shared by organization members, forming a collective pattern of beliefs. However, organizational culture

research's most popular view of culture highlights common values. Therefore, organizational culture is seen as a phenomenon that can be narrowly or broadly defined. A broader interpretation of the culture concept means the entire company is viewed as a culture (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

Ethnographers and others who study culture consider these cultural dimensions and organizations as social bonds. When studying a particular organizational culture, differences and similarities between its culture and its environment are found (Cheney et al., 2010). Organizational culture is a collective term for culture-oriented research within an organization. The main part of research at this level is descriptive, focusing on cultural characteristics within individual organizations. The emphasis is on the organization's uniqueness, unrelated to other organizations in the same industry or society. What seems to characterize research at this level is the effort to find concepts that capture culture. One way to capture this collective perspective is by using metaphors from anthropology, such as tribe, clan, character, identity, personality, and soul (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

4.2. Communication as a Performance of Organizational Culture

The cultural approach offers a significantly different way of thinking about the relationship between communication and organization. Experts consider organizations to be communication phenomena that exist only because their members engage in complex communication behavior patterns. They view organizations as structures of meaning created through the everyday symbolic actions of their members (Mumby, 2013). For the organization's goals to be realized, the values that emerge in the organizational culture must be instilled in its members. This organizational culture manifests as messages that must be conveyed from the communicator to the communicant. The communicator, message, and communication components indicate organizational communication activities (Pace & Faules, 2013).

Pace and Faules further classify organizational communication into two types. First, functionally or objectively, organizational communication is understood as a form of performance involving the sending and receiving messages that occur within the units of the organization. Second, interpretively or subjectively, organizational communication focuses on handling messages. People's perceptions of the organization determine how the communication process occurs and what meanings emerge (Pace & Faules, 2013). In this subjective approach, the well-known metaphor of culture emerges. This metaphor states that the existence of an organization is determined by its culture, which is evident in the interaction behavior among its members (Eriksen, 2020).

Some core characteristics of organizational culture are closely related to dynamic members, consisting of competing assumptions and values, with communication becoming the foreground and background of an organization. Thus, organizational culture is communicative. It is a process of interacting. The product of this interaction is communication. Therefore, organizational culture is communicatively built by all organization members (Keyton, 2011).

Communication experts view organizational communication as the process and mechanism of organizing. They see the flow of messages as interactions and dialogues. When we truly understand an organization, we will discover much about communication. In a certain sense, organizations exist as patterns or networks of energy and interaction. There are several ways to understand what we call "communication." We need metaphors to describe it because it is so complex (Cheney et al., 2010). Thus, the constitutive role of communication in creating organizational culture is identified and explained. The communicative study of "organizational

culture” is an interesting amalgamation of ideas that brings together those studying symbols, narratives, metaphors, identities, and organizational politics (Jablin & Putnam, 2004).

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo adopted a cultural approach in their study of “Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance.” They argue that organizational culture studies focus on communication activities where culture is formed (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). They further assert that these communication activities are conceptualized as performances that are interactional, contextual, episodic, and improvisational (Littlejohn & Foss, 2019). By highlighting the importance of “cultural performance,” Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo emphasize the communicative processes through which organizational culture emerges and continually shifts. Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo states that one of the potential uses of the cultural approach to organizations is recognizing that communication is the central process of an organization (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). In Miller's view, Pacanowsky and Trujillo suggest that the study of organizational culture should focus on communication as the site of cultural creation (Eriksen, 2020).

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo are pioneers in the organizational culture theory, which has influenced research on organizational communication. They claim that the communication behavior of members within an organization contributes to the formation of its culture. Culture becomes the way of life of the organization members (Widowati, 2013). This implies that the communication behavior among organization members can create a culture that eventually becomes a guide for all members. Culture is present in organizational life and becomes the core of organizational existence. A key component of the organizational culture theory is performance. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell Trujillo state that specific communication performances produce a unique organizational culture. Performance is likened to the symbolic process of human behavior in organizations. This performance has theatrical elements where superiors and subordinates perform their respective organizational roles. In his article, Pacanowsky introduces the idea of the process into the organizational culture by viewing organizational communication as cultural performance. Five cultural performances are described in current organizational literature: ritual, passion, sociality, politics, and enculturation. These performances are a good starting point for empirical research. The shift from a systems metaphor to organizational culture. Performance is a metaphor that describes the symbolic process of understanding human behavior in organizations (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

In conclusion, performance is the action of organization members to build and reveal the culture to other members. Thus, it can be understood that the communication performance of organization members can build and display the organization's culture. It can also be said that to reveal the organizational culture, one must pay attention to the communication performance of its members (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

The organizational culture theory presented by Geertz, Pacanowsky, and O'Donnell-Trujillo states that organization members perform specific communication behaviors that result in a unique organizational culture. Performance is a metaphor that describes the symbolic process of understanding human behavior in an organization. Organizational performance often has theatrical elements, where leaders and subordinates choose to take on specific organizational roles (West & Turner, 2008).

Several studies related to communication and organizational culture in various countries include research from India (Shameem & Rengamani, 2018), Pakistan (Usman, 2019), Spain (Díaz-Soloaga, 2019), Nigeria (Gbarale & Lebura, 2020), Saudi Arabia (Nasser & Jais, 2022), and Malaysia (Sulaiman et al., 2017). Studies on organizational communication and culture have

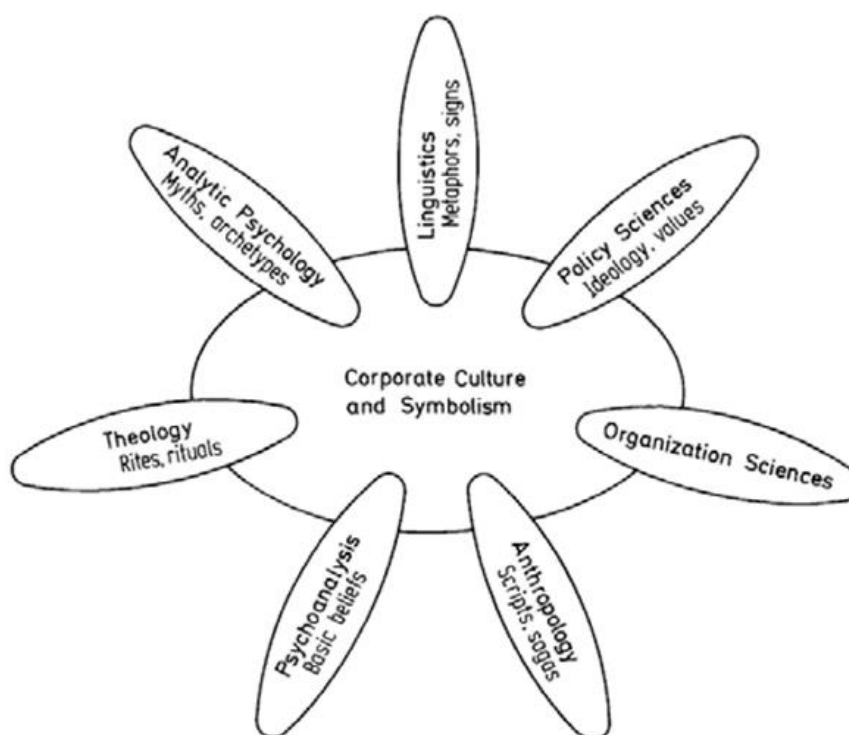
also been conducted by several researchers in Indonesia (Agustini & Purnaningsih, 2018; Fikri & Ubaidillah, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Siregar et al., 2020; Syakur et al., 2020).

4.3. Opportunities and Developments in Corporate Culture Studies in Indonesia

Traditional research has often been criticized for emphasizing the measurement and quantification of organizations. Concurrently, cultural breakthroughs have weakened the objectivist position in organizational research. However, it should be noted that cultural studies do not necessarily imply interpretive or ethnographic approaches. It has been suggested that the symbolic perspective signifies the end of the rationalistic tradition (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

Culture is often not considered a research paradigm in various scientific studies, nor has it become a universally accepted concept or a methodological reference. Establishing a clear demarcation line between cultural research and other types of research remains challenging. However, it is possible to find some basic cultural perspectives in almost all social science studies and most aspects of organizational research (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

What makes it difficult to trace the roots of cultural research is the assertion that corporate culture stems from many different disciplines, which are not necessarily interconnected. Consequently, corporate culture has become an interdisciplinary field of research, borrowing concepts, perspectives, models, and methods from various disciplines, ranging from ethnography (Jones et al., 1988) to accounting (Mouritsen, 1989). Although many studies are inspired by closely related disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, semiology, etc.), they are fundamentally related to the overall theoretical framework of organizations. Ultimately, we must accept that diverse research in corporate culture studies involves various perspectives to understand better how culture develops within organizations (Alvesson & Berg, 2011). Alvesson describes it as follows:



Source: (Alvesson & Berg, 2011)

The multitude of perspectives, definitions, and theories in the field and the interrelation of these concepts provide a strong theoretical advantage when researching cultural phenomena in organizations. Another argument supporting this field's character is that, intuitively, many cultural concepts seem to help explain elusive organizational phenomena more precisely (Alvesson & Berg, 2011).

From the perspective of organizational culture, it is possible to practically describe anything imaginable as an object of organizational research, such as strategy, technology, structure, policies, systems, administration, image, identity, climate, ideology, philosophy, symbols, rites, and rituals (Alvesson & Berg, 2011). Thus, the cultural perspective can complement organizational culture studies and other studies, such as business, management, and communication.

Corporate culture is often used when dealing with culture from a managerial perspective or even when addressing companies in a specific business context (Alvesson & Berg, 2011). Various studies on organizational culture in different countries include Spicer's discussion of corporate culture in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the phenomenon of companies when all employees work from home (Spicer, 2020). Mohelska & Sokolova highlight the bureaucratic corporate culture in the Czech Republic, which hinders innovation (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2018). Ylonen & Bjorkman describe the organizational culture in Norway's nuclear industry, focusing not only on safety and security but also on the well-being of workers (Ylonen & Bjorkman, 2023). Bukoye & Abdulrahman discusses the diverse organizational culture adopted by local governments in Nigeria (Bukoye & Abdulrahman, 2023). In Indonesia, Ningsih and Setiawan found that the most researched dependent variable is employee performance, the most researched independent variable is organizational culture, and the most commonly used research method is quantitative. Most studies examine organizational culture in the private sector (Ningsih & Setiawan, 2019). Refi and Jamali researched organizational culture in banking (Refi & Jamali, 2020). Sari et al. researched organizational culture in schools (Sari et al., 2022), as did Sampurno et al. (Sampurno et al., 2022).

Corporate culture studies in Indonesia have exciting opportunities and developments because corporate culture plays a crucial role in a company's success. First, corporate culture studies are interdisciplinary, allowing various disciplines to examine them with different approaches, scientific perspectives, and diverse concepts or theories. Second, few studies employ a subjective or symbolic perspective, with most research dominated by an objective or functionalist perspective. Third, regarding research methods, surveys dominate, so in-depth interviews and participant observations can be alternative methods. Fourth, most research is conducted in private corporations, with few studies in government organizations. Fifth, cultural diversity: Indonesia has rich cultural diversity. Corporate culture studies can explore how companies respect and integrate this diversity into their organizational culture.

5. Conclusion

There are numerous opportunities for developing corporate culture studies in Indonesia, alongside a paradigm shift in evaluating corporate culture from a managerial perspective and incorporating a broad cultural perspective. The cultural perspective can complement organizational culture studies and other fields such as business, management, and communication. Additionally, corporate culture studies can provide practical benefits by exploring how companies can integrate cultural diversity into their organizational management. There are opportunities to study corporate culture through various disciplines, conduct corporate culture research from a symbolic perspective that is still underutilized, and

use interviews and observations as alternative methods to surveys. Conducting corporate culture research in non-private organizations and considering Indonesia's rich cultural diversity is also crucial.

6. Acknowledgment

The authors thank those willing to cooperate profusely during this research.

7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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