



# Exploring the Dynamic Organizational Culture on Ethics and Compliance: Engineering Perspective

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## Abstract

To evaluate engineering ethics and the practical compliance practices, the practitioners must understand the dimensions affect ethics and compliance in the engineering community. This study attempts to explore the dimensions of dynamic organization culture, and it affects ethics and compliance in the engineering community. This framework will contribute to the literature of engineering ethics in the context applied ethics since a handful of studies conducted in this domain. Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive model to connect the elements of dynamic organizational culture on engineering ethics and compliance due to the scarcity of literature on engineering ethics and compliance. Since no single method to measure this context in every industry, the transcendental phenomenological approach allows for the cognitive understanding the extent of multiple domains of dynamic organizational culture in engineering ethics and compliance. Dimensions important to engineering ethics and compliance from the perspective of dynamic organizational culture are identified and defined to construct the framework.

**Keywords:** Dynamic organization culture; engineering; ethics; compliance;

## 1. Introduction

The emerging economies are facing challenges because organizational cultures challenged by a diverse and often dynamic environment. Engineering-based companies have grown fast, and their processes and procedures have not kept pace with sustainability features in ethics and compliance; caused bribery and corruption, consequently economic crime [36]. Despite the effort to combat economic crime, there is no indication that the levels in the Middle Eastern engineering-based companies or globally have decreased. Economic crime in engineering-based companies remains as tough to tackle as it has ever been. Although the reported statistics have not pointed directly to this sector, the mobilization of the labor force in Middle Eastern and North Africa (MENA) region will offer for an unethical and non-compliance opportunity among the engineers, thus jeopardizing engineering professional codes of ethics [4].

[13] stresses the importance of subcultures in engineering ethics and compliance particularly to the engineering community. He reaffirms that engineering ethics should make some tangible, practical difference in the way engineering elements are designed, developed, interacted, and implemented. This provision supports the argument by [7] that argues many, and various temptations might lead the engineering community being push away from the practical goal of ethics compliance. To evaluate engineering ethics and the practical compliance practices, the practitioners must understand the dimensions affect ethics and compliance in the engineering community. Thus, this study attempts to explore the dimensions of dynamic organization culture, and it affects ethics

and compliance in the engineering community. This framework will contribute to the literature of engineering ethics in the context normative ethics since a handful of studies have been conducted in this domain (Abdulwahed & Hasna, 2017; Abu-Faraj, 2014; Furani, 2014). Prior research emphasizes on education perspective examining the module, context, curriculum, evaluation from students, educators and practitioners contexts, which adds complexity due to ethics-unique characteristics [4]. Ethical compliance perspective has its characteristics such as awareness, judgment, motivation, and behavior [37]. Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive model to connect the micro-ethics and macro-ethics in engineering because the content of engineering ethics and compliance encompass multiple domains. [13] argues that context plays a role, with no single method to measure this context in every industry, there is a scarcity of literature on engineering ethics and compliance. [43] suggest that there is a need for an integrated and validated engineering ethics framework. Dimensions important to engineering ethics and compliance from the perspective of dynamic organizational culture are identified and defined to construct the framework.

## 2. Relevant Literature

Engineering ethics “is an occupation that requires specialized knowledge and skills and that affects the public safety and welfare, cannot be governed solely by self-interest, define additional obligations (Watkins, 2015, p. 2). It highlights the obligations of engineers that beyond self-interest, reflected the interests of employers, customers, peers and the public. This factor is an improved form of applied ethics as it includes micro-

ethics and macro-ethics context [13]. Engineering ethics is not limited to engineering setting; it extends to all sciences, technology, and society [11]. The core principle is concerned with ethical decision making by individual engineers and their internal relationships (micro-ethics), and profession's social responsibility that affects societal decisions [12].

The Ethics and Compliance Report [30] reports that 85% of Middle Eastern-based companies have a comprehensive Code of Conduct to support the regular training (60%). The report also considers that Board of Director believes the organization's values are well understood (84%). Respondents mention that the ethical behavior is part of their human resource (HR) procedures (77%), and the senior leaders are ethical in business activities to (74%). Although the respondents have given positive reactions on people and cultural perspectives, however, it was reported that 33% of staff are committed in economic crimes reported in the last two years. Thus, the thin-gray-lines existed between the top management and senior management when conveying the culture; they perceived and believed. Ethics and compliance are co-existed within the business strategy and aligned and led by organizational values. The same survey also reports that more than 1 in 5 respondents unaware of the existence of a formal ethics and compliance program planned, and executed in their organizations. Employees confused about ownership for ethics and compliance programs even though 79% of respondents believe that their companies have a formal plan in place. 76% of companies in the Middle Eastern rely on internal audit to ensure the effectiveness of their ethics and compliance program; while 33% of companies believe they should experience bribery and corruption in doing business. The unawareness results in 42% of companies claimed that employee morale is the largest casualty of economic crime; followed by business relation (35%), reputational harm (34%) and regulations with regulators (29%) as the top forms of damage [30]. Engineers governed by a professional code of ethics that provide a guideline to enable engineers to understand and promote the principle of sustainability due to their obligations toward environmental, social and economic [4]. On the other hand, ethics and compliance are co-existed within the professional code of ethics and embedded into the business strategy to align and support by organizational values. The fundamental issue for this problem is the evolving obstinate threat of economic crime driven by the deficiency of ethics and compliance in engineering-based organizations. As the economic crime becomes a diversified global issue, a proactive measure may increase opportunities available for countering economic crime in the UAE. Organizations in the Middle East become aware of the needs in reporting economic crime with an increment of 5% in 2016 compared to 21% in 2014. Despite the fact the internal audit can identify more bribery and corruption incidents; but the number keeps increasing; from 5% in 2014 to 10% in 2016. On the other hand, 17% of reported cases uncovered by accident, a much higher rate than the global average of 11% and a third of the incidents of serious economic crimes perpetrated by internal parties [30]. These statistics confirmed the disconnection between tone at the top and the reality, requires accurate definition and modification of the structure to communicate organizational values and to be understood by everyone in the organizations. The leaders must set examples in adhering these values rather than mere communication top-bottom. The report concluded that the ethics and compliance provide an embedded control measure into organizational culture due to risks business faces that unlock the vulnerable areas in business processes. This approach leads to 63% of respondents believed opportunity or ability to commit the crime as the most prevailing factor; due to 1 in 4 respondents disclosed that they have never carried out a fraud risk assessment to close the gap between internal and external fraud actor. 30% of the Middle East organizations reported to not keeping the pace in business preparation to sustain in business. According to the evidence, only 33% of Middle East organizations have an ethics

and compliance response plan, while the rest perceived it was not a pertinent issue because less than half of the board members do not request information about their organization's state of ethics and compliance readiness [30]. This number has exhibited a relatively low engagement from top management yet the strategic decision makers in the organization, and it has become critical to stand up to reality.

While the statistics are providing compelling confirmation on the ethics and compliance status, however, there is a scarcity of literature on organization culture on ethics and compliance in engineering-based companies. Prior studies have yet to explore the multiple aspects of culture and how ethics and compliance are embedded [18]. As a result, the specific guidance on how engineering based-companies mold its subcultures into one coherent dynamic ethical culture not identified and explained [1]. To evaluate the dynamic ethical culture in the engineering sector, a researcher must first understand the inherent dimensions affect ethical culture. In engineering ethics context, scarce research assesses organizational culture ([2]; [34]; [43]), and generic society culture ([3]; [8]). This problem leads to lacking in the literature in a dynamic organizational culture on engineering ethics and compliance framework ([12]; [13]). Exploring dynamic organizational culture on engineering ethics and compliance dimensions are important to integrate these subcultures elements into a holistic framework. Thus, this study attempts to develop a dynamic ethical culture framework, contributing to the literature on ethics and compliance into culture dimensions in the context of engineering sector since only a few studies are available in this domain [38]. Therefore, the first research question is:

RQ1: Does dynamic organizational culture affects engineering ethics and compliance?

Dynamic organizational culture has become a major area of attention for researchers and practitioners due to its strong impact on societal-based ethical decisions ([4]; [43]), and organizational outcomes [13]. Dynamic organizational culture plays an increasingly critical role in the engineering ethics setting ([12]; [13]). [37] claim that research must be more specific when it comes to dynamic organizational culture. They suggest future research to include the conceptualization and measurement of community perceptions, context-specific, transcendental phenomenological underpinnings, and multidimensional. [6] began with three subcultures in describing engineering ethics, science and technology studies, science, technology, and public policy, and science, technology and society. He argues that research and education are significantly important to engineering ethics and professional engineering societies due to the societal contextualization of science and technology. Later, [12] simplified the subculture into micro-ethics and macro-ethics contexts. [43] suggest three dimensions – scholar-oriented, policy-maker oriented, and activist-oriented for better integration of subcultures in engineering ethics perspective. Even though much research conducting quantitative approach to study dynamic organizational culture on engineering ethics [20], transcendental phenomenological is a powerful approach to further understand the common patterns and themes in dynamic organizational culture [27]. These provisions support the role of dynamic organizational culture as a multidisciplinary to understand the societal context that requires live-experience cooperation and in-depth shared insights from researchers and practitioners ([6]; [13]).

Considerable research has been conducted on ethical culture outside engineering-context, examining the interwoven between ethics and culture within the organization, which adds complexity due to culture-specific unique characteristics [35]. Ethics in engineering have its characteristics such as safety, health, and welfare to highlight the importance of a comprehensive model of

dynamic ethical culture in engineering. [15] highlight the absence of a proper framework for dynamic ethical culture in engineering since most researchers concentrating the ethical culture models to the education context. [23] argue that context plays a role, with no single method to measure the concept perfectly in every industry, there is a scarcity of literature on dynamic ethical culture, specifically in engineering. [21] suggests that there is a need for an integrated and validated dynamic ethical culture framework. Thus, this highlights the gap and needs for a comprehensive framework of dynamic ethical culture in engineering-context. The gap provides a reason for this study to specifically address the problem of creating, implementing and maintaining a dynamic ethical culture using a synthesizing process to collect a significant amount of useful information that could be helpful for this issue. Furthermore, no study has attempted to inquire about the lived experiences of ethics and compliance professionals in the UAE as they manage and maintain effective ethics and compliance programs and practices in organizations. As a result, the proposed study is intended to explore the lived experiences of organizational ethics and compliance professionals and practitioners in engineering-based companies who face challenges when developing and maintaining ethics and compliance programs. Ethics and compliance program managers need to gain the trust of organizational members to influence behavior and introduce necessary changes in organizational culture to ensure continued adherence to ethics and compliance program requirements [21]. Ethics and compliance program managers must instill trust in the organization and the ethics and compliance program.

[44] conclude that trust is a key element in overcoming resistance to change in organizations. This proposed study critically criticized the utility of quantitative approach and highlight the utilization of transcendental phenomenological study was to explore, and understand common patterns and themes regarding the challenges of effective ethics and compliance programs experience in developing, implementing, and maintaining effective ethics and compliance programs. [5] and [29] argue that quantitative research not provide a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. [26] explains qualitative as a necessary approach to be used to capture the essence of the lived experience, and to gain new insights into the phenomenon. The transcendental phenomenological approach allows for the cognitive understanding as the experience will be probing to obtain comprehensive descriptions to provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that illustrates the essences of the experience ([10]; [25]). The transcendental phenomenological approach will address this significant topic to reveal a further understanding of unflinching adherence to compliance practices and rigorous protection of reputational pitfalls ([32]; [33]). This provision promotes the preservation of company integrity and offers new pathways to greater business sustainability and competitive advantage. Previous studies have linked theories of organizational and managerial trust and organizational culture as the framework for their research. [22] argue that organizations can avoid misconduct and the harm that typically follows misconduct when their culture is more dynamic. The official of ethics and compliance practices must be aware of and constantly monitoring their organization's culture and be prepared to introduce changes to the organization's ethics and compliance program to address changing requirements. A study conducted on the relationship between an organization's ethics program and organizational culture revealed that ethics program is expected to be effective in improving the ethical culture of organizations [35]. [40] claim organizational culture encourages ethical conduct and a commitment to compliance with the law. Even though most of the organization did not include much detail or description to guide organizations for determining what specific characteristics or attributes to organization's culture to achieve the goal, but [17] [18] contended that interpretation and clarification must be

available. The intent to link ethical behavior with organizational structures would result in employees trusting their organization for being transparent ([35], [16]); resulted in following the organization's behavioral requirements. Lack of clear definition places a great burden on those within organizations charged with implementing and maintaining ethics and compliance to encourage ethical conduct and compliance practices. While previous scholars have attempted to study organizational culture from a system perspective; [15] research on how to manage the organizational culture. [19] examines the effectiveness of ethics program by unraveling the organizational culture, and [22] discloses the role of organizational culture in preserving ethics and compliance practices to drive of competitive advantage.

[31] recognizes a matrix of five elements within an organization to determine and represent culture: (1) language, (2) artifacts and symbols, (3) patterns of behavior, (4) espoused values and beliefs, and (5) underlying assumptions. These detailed descriptions have simplified the complicated culture theme into more discrete aspects of people. Nevertheless, the link between compliance, ethics and individual aspect of culture did not explain. [21] argue values shared by organizational members be the most relevant element in determining an organization's culture. The suggestion was made to establish proper values as the core ingredient to an ethical corporate culture [28]. [15] add that a structured program must be developed within an organization to promote ethical behavior and an ethical culture. To ensure the effectiveness of a structured program, common elements found in organizational ethics and compliance program; code of conduct, clear policies, communication program, helplines and non-retaliation policy should be addressed accordingly [35]. The form of program structure must be tailored to instill proper values [41], and justification for implementing and focusing on a structured program will provide a value-added that to control mechanism at the organizational level. Having the UAE as one of the biggest employment hubs in the Middle East, each engineering-based organization is expecting to have a unique culture to itself. The co-existed multiple cultures tend to increase misconduct and unethical behavior within a single organization. Multiple studies have found, and confirmed subcultures exist within organizations ([14]; [40]; [41]). [40] identify subcultures within an overall organizational culture experience, respond to, and influence organizational events and activities differently. The information on subcultures is imperative when given the impact and acceptance of any organizational change or initiatives. The extent that subcultures align with the dominant culture has not been explored, analyzed, and understood in previous studies; let alone the approach to strengthening it. [21] explains that conflict between subcultures or overall culture within the organization is common. Subcultures that are significantly different from the dominant culture can destabilize the entire organization. [14] also address the interactions between organizational culture and individuals within an organization. Interactions are an important aspect of organizational existence because an effective acculturated employees are often more productive; commit and loyal with the same organization, and contribute more to an organization's success. On the other hand, organization's with weak or no acculturation strategy are more likely to experience significant differences between organizational culture and individual perceptions.

[24] indicated organizational and managerial trust is the key elements in gaining acceptance of organizational change. Previous studies implied that trust had been identified as a significant determinant of interpersonal and group behavior ([9]; [35]; [44]). [9] argued that trust establish organizational members' perception of organizational fairness. Fairness exhibits different perspectives; from honesty, integrity, a wide-ranging ethical cognizance, thoughtfulness and courteous of others. [23] demonstrated fairness as an outcome s perceived from decision-making procedure; while

[39] explained fairness approach of conveying the effectiveness of procedure used. [21] concludes fairness is important for organizational justice. However, the complexity of the dynamic organizational culture that involves multiple subcultures that require further understanding is a reason many researchers have failed to use or replicate existing models in disparate contexts. Based on the above literature review, the following research question is developed:

RQ2: What are the elements of dynamic organizational culture?

### 3. Research Implication And Future Research

A holistic framework was designed to be used by researchers as a starting point for future examinations. This paper provides scholars and practitioners with a comprehensive framework on how dynamic organization culture affects ethics and compliance in engineering-based companies, serving as a guideline for clearer understanding and future research. With new challenges and new technological development worldwide regarding engineering, it will be important to consider the dimensions are appearing in the framework while developing and evaluating ethics and compliance. This paper offers several opportunities for the engineering sector to avoid misperception of ethics and compliance program. Moreover, it addresses the needs of support from the top in providing an effective compliance training and ethics education to shape the leadership role in driving the dynamic culture. For employees to embrace the ethics and compliance program, employees must see the ethics and compliance program as being contained within and consistent with the dynamic culture of the organization. When creating values must comply with the rules or be accountable for doing otherwise. Ownership will drive responsibility for maintaining an ethical organizational culture.

### 4. Conclusion

Ethics and compliance must be embedded into the dynamic organizational culture to penetrate the world market that upheld ethics-citizenship as a factor for competitive advantage. Therefore, there should be approached to evaluate these factors qualitatively. In the absence of quantity approach of organizational culture towards ethics and compliance, this paper identifies the discussed dimensions that best fit this perspective. The holistic framework combines all dimension necessary to ensure ethics-citizenship through dynamic organization culture in ethics and compliance. The findings from this study extend the understanding of the factor associated with the development of ethics and compliance from the beginning.

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