



Examining the predictive effect of organizational culture on corporate reputation using structural equation modeling: Evidence from private firms in Botswana

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Abstract

Purpose: The study examined the predictive effect of organizational culture on corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana. Specifically, it investigated how overall organizational culture, employee-focused practices, and ethical and consistency-oriented culture influence stakeholder perceptions and firm reputation.

Methodology/Design: A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 400 employees across various private firms using a structured questionnaire. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across departments and hierarchical levels. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships and assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Findings: Results indicated that organizational culture significantly and positively influences corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$). Employee-focused practices ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$) and ethical and consistency-oriented culture ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$) were also significant predictors of corporate reputation. The findings confirm that internal cultural practices shape external stakeholder perceptions and enhance organizational legitimacy.

Implications: The study highlights the importance of cultivating a strong, ethical, and employee-focused organizational culture to strengthen corporate reputation. Managers should prioritize culture-building initiatives, employee engagement programs, and consistent ethical practices to enhance stakeholder trust and competitive advantage.

Originality/Value: This study provides empirical evidence from Botswana's private sector, extending organizational culture and corporate reputation literature in the African context and offering practical guidance for managers seeking to improve firm reputation.

Keywords: Organizational culture, corporate reputation, employee engagement, ethical practices, private firms, botswana

Introduction

Private firms in Botswana operate in a business space that is becoming more competitive, open, and reputation driven. Customers, investors, regulators, and employees now pay close attention not only to what firms produce but also to how they behave, communicate, and treat people. In this setting, corporate reputation has become a valuable asset that shapes customer loyalty, market trust, and long-term survival (Fombrun *et al.*, 2019; Ali *et al.*, 2020) [3, 10]. A strong reputation helps firms attract clients, retain skilled workers, and withstand market shocks, while a weak reputation can damage performance even when products or services are acceptable (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2019) [1]. For private firms in Botswana, reputation is especially important because many operate in closely connected markets where public opinion and stakeholder judgments spread quickly.

One major factor believed to shape corporate reputation is organizational culture. Organizational culture reflects shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide how employees think and act within a firm (Denison *et al.*, 2021) [9]. It influences decision making, service quality, ethical conduct, and how firms respond to customers and external pressures. When employees clearly understand and share organizational values, they are more likely to act in ways that project reliability, fairness, and professionalism to the outside world (Rashid *et al.*, 2020). In contrast, weak or unclear cultures may result in inconsistent behavior, poor service delivery, and reputational risks. Because employees are often the first point of contact between firms and stakeholders, their daily actions become a mirror through which corporate reputation is judged (Koech & Were, 2021) [13].

In Botswana, private firms play a key role in economic growth, employment creation, and service provision. Sectors such as banking, retail, telecommunications, hospitality, and manufacturing continue to expand, yet many firms face reputational challenges linked to service quality complaints, ethical concerns, and declining public trust. Studies from emerging markets show that firms often invest heavily in branding, advertising, and public relations while paying limited attention to internal cultural factors that shape employee behavior (Ali *et al.*, 2020) [3]. This creates a gap between what firms promise externally and what they deliver internally. Understanding how organizational culture predicts corporate reputation can help private firms focus on deeper and more sustainable ways of building a positive public image (Rashid *et al.*, 2020).

Even with the rising importance of corporate reputation, empirical studies in Botswana that examine its internal drivers remain limited. Much of the existing research in developing economies focuses on financial performance, leadership style, or corporate social responsibility, with less emphasis on organizational culture as a structured predictor of reputation (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2019) [1]. Where culture is examined, many studies rely on descriptive or qualitative approaches that do not fully capture the complex relationships between culture dimensions and reputation outcomes. The limited use of advanced quantitative techniques, such as Structural Equation Modeling, further restricts understanding of how multiple cultural elements jointly influence corporate reputation (Hair *et al.*, 2022) [12]. This reveals both a contextual and methodological gap in the literature.

The core problem, therefore, is that private firms in Botswana may be overlooking the role of organizational culture in shaping their corporate reputation due to limited empirical evidence and weak analytical approaches. Without clear data-based insights, managers may continue to focus on surface-level reputation management strategies while ignoring deeper cultural issues that influence employee conduct and stakeholder perceptions (Koech & Were, 2021) [13]. This lack of evidence makes it difficult for firms to design effective internal policies, align employee behavior with organizational values, and build reputations that are credible and lasting.

Outcomes of the study should contribute to academic knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the predictive effect of organizational culture on corporate reputation using Structural Equation Modeling, which allows for the analysis of latent constructs and complex relationships (Hair *et al.*, 2022) [12]. The findings will also help explain how specific cultural dimensions shape reputation outcomes in private firms within Botswana's business environment. For managers and business owners, the study offers practical guidance on how strengthening internal culture can improve external reputation, employee commitment, and stakeholder trust (Rashid *et al.*, 2020). Policy makers and business support institutions may also benefit by using the findings to design training and support programs that encourage positive organizational cultures in the private sector, supporting long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Literature Review

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and ways of working that guide how employees behave within an organization. It shapes how decisions are made, how employees relate to one another, and how the organization responds to customers and external pressures. A strong and positive culture helps employees understand what is expected of them and encourages consistent behavior across the organization. In private firms, organizational culture influences service quality, ethical conduct, innovation, and employee commitment. Studies show that cultures that promote involvement, adaptability, and clear purpose tend to support better organizational outcomes because employees feel aligned with organizational goals and values. When culture is weak or unclear, employees may act inconsistently, leading to poor service delivery and internal conflict. Over time, these internal behaviors become visible to external stakeholders and contribute to how the organization is perceived. For this reason, organizational culture is often seen as a key internal resource that shapes long-term performance and reputation (Denison *et al.*, 2021; Rashid *et al.*, 2020) [9].

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation represents the overall perception that stakeholders hold about an organization based on its past actions, communication, and performance. It is built over time through repeated interactions with customers, employees, investors, regulators, and the wider public. A positive corporate reputation signals trustworthiness, reliability, and quality, which can influence customer loyalty, employee attraction, and competitive advantage. In contrast, a damaged reputation can reduce public confidence

and harm business sustainability, even when products or services remain unchanged. Research suggests that reputation is influenced not only by marketing and branding efforts but also by internal organizational practices that shape employee behavior. When firms consistently demonstrate ethical behavior, responsiveness, and service quality, stakeholders are more likely to develop favorable perceptions. As a result, corporate reputation is widely recognized as a strategic asset that supports long-term survival and growth, especially in competitive business environments (Fombrun *et al.*, 2019; Ali *et al.*, 2020) [3, 10].

Private Firms in Botswana

Private firms in Botswana play an important role in economic development, employment creation, and service delivery across various sectors, including retail, banking, telecommunications, hospitality, and manufacturing. These firms operate in a business environment characterized by increasing competition, rising customer expectations, and growing public scrutiny. Because many markets in Botswana are closely connected, stakeholder perceptions and word-of-mouth communication can quickly influence a firm's public image. Private firms therefore rely heavily on trust, service quality, and ethical conduct to remain competitive. While efforts to improve reputation often focus on external communication and branding, internal factors such as organizational culture are sometimes overlooked. Given the importance of employee behavior in shaping customer experiences, understanding how internal culture influences corporate reputation is especially relevant for private firms in Botswana. Strengthening organizational culture can help these firms build credibility, maintain stakeholder trust, and achieve sustainable growth in the long term.

Theoretical Underpin and Hypotheses Development

Organizational Culture and Corporate Reputation

Organizational Culture Theory explains that shared values, beliefs, and norms guide employee behavior and shape internal organizational processes (Denison *et al.*, 2021) [9]. When employees clearly understand and embrace organizational values, they are more likely to act consistently, ethically, and in ways that reflect positively on the organization. In private firms, these behaviors influence how external stakeholders perceive the firm, shaping corporate reputation. Empirical studies suggest that strong, aligned organizational cultures improve service quality, enhance stakeholder trust, and strengthen overall firm image (Rashid *et al.*, 2020; Koech & Were, 2021) [13]. Grounded in these theoretical and empirical insights, the study expects that

H1: Organizational culture has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana.

Employee-Focused Cultural Practices and Corporate Reputation

Organizational behavior research highlights that employee-focused cultural practices such as involvement, empowerment, and internal support encourage positive employee behavior and engagement (Schein, 2017) [23]. When employees feel valued and supported, their interactions with customers, partners, and other stakeholders are more constructive, which improves the organization's

public image. Studies in developing markets show that firms with employee-centric cultures tend to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction and reputational strength (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2019) ^[1, 3]. Considering this evidence, it is anticipated that

H2: Employee-focused cultural practices positively influence corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana.

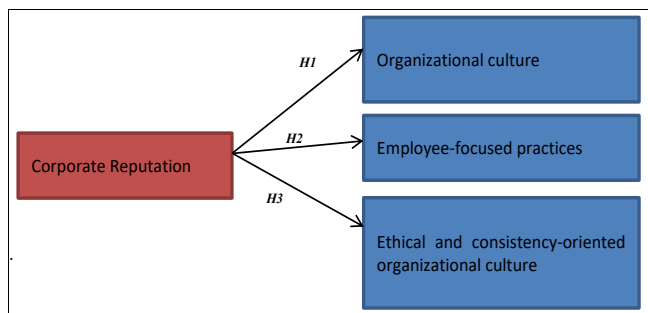
Ethical and Consistency-oriented Culture and Corporate Reputation

Signaling Theory emphasizes that internal organizational behaviors send signals to external stakeholders regarding reliability, fairness, and integrity (Fombrun *et al.*, 2019) ^[10]. Ethical norms, consistent policies, and transparent practices communicate trustworthiness, thereby enhancing reputation. Firms demonstrating high ethical standards and operational consistency are more likely to be viewed favorably by the public. Prior research shows that consistency-oriented cultures contribute significantly to positive stakeholder perceptions (Rashid *et al.*, 2020; Koech & Were, 2021) ^[13, 22]. Following this rationale, the study anticipates that

H3: Ethical and consistency-oriented organizational culture positively predicts corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the expected relationships between organizational culture and corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana. It provides a visual and theoretical guide showing how different dimensions of culture employee focus, ethics, and consistency are likely to influence reputation, forming the basis for the study’s hypotheses and SEM analysis. Figure 1 presets the construct



Sources: Field Data, 2025

Fig 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the relationships between key variables of the study

The framework in Figure 1 identifies three key dimensions of organizational culture as predictors of corporate reputation. H1 posits that overall organizational culture has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation, emphasizing that shared values, norms, and practices within the firm shape how stakeholders perceive it. H2 suggests that employee-focused cultural practices positively influence corporate reputation, highlighting the role of employee empowerment, engagement, and support in sending positive signals to stakeholders. H3 proposes that ethical and consistency-oriented organizational culture positively predicts corporate reputation, underlining that firms demonstrating ethical standards and reliable practices gain trust and respect from stakeholders. The framework

visually represents these relationships using arrows pointing from each independent variable toward the dependent variable, corporate reputation, indicating the direction of influence and the nature of the hypothesized positive effects. This model serves as the foundation for the study’s empirical analysis and guides the testing of the three hypotheses

Research Design and Philosophical Underpinning

The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the predictive effect of organizational culture on corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana. A quantitative approach allowed for the measurement of variables and testing of relationships statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2019) ^[8]. The study was underpinned by the pragmatist philosophy, which guided the use of methods that best addressed the research problem and emphasized practical, actionable insights (Saunders *et al.*, 2019) ^[25].

Population of the Study

The target population comprised employees and managers working in private firms across major sectors in Botswana, including banking, retail, and telecommunications. These individuals were selected because they interact closely with organizational processes and are well-positioned to provide insights on both organizational culture and corporate reputation.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different departments and hierarchical levels within the firms (Bryman, 2016) ^[6]. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table, which provides guidance for selecting an appropriate sample from a given population. Based on the total population of employees and managers in the selected private firms, a sample of 400 respondents was targeted. This size was considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis and to produce findings that could be generalized across the population.

Methodology

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items adapted from previous studies to measure organizational culture dimensions and corporate reputation (Hair *et al.*, 2022) ^[12]. A cross-sectional approach was used to capture perceptions at a single point in time. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the relationships between organizational culture and corporate reputation. Reliability and validity were ensured through pre-testing, standardized scales, and adherence to ethical research principles, including confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study collected responses from 400 participants across selected private firms in Botswana. Examining the demographic characteristics helps to contextualize the findings and understand the diversity of perspectives included in the study.

Gender: Of the 400 respondents, 230 (57.5%) were male, while 170 (42.5%) were female. This distribution suggests a

slightly higher participation of men, reflecting the gender composition of employees in many private firms.

Age: The majority of participants were between 31–40 years (45%), followed by 21–30 years (30%), 41–50 years (20%), and above 50 years (5%). This indicates that most respondents were mid-career professionals with substantial exposure to organizational processes.

Education Level: Most respondents held a bachelor’s degree (55%), 30% had a diploma or certificate, and 15% had postgraduate qualifications. The high educational level suggests respondents were well-equipped to provide informed insights on organizational culture and corporate reputation.

Work Experience: Regarding work experience, 35% had 1–5 years, 40% had 6–10 years, 20% had 11–15 years, and 5% had over 15 years of experience in their organizations. This shows that the sample included a mix of relatively new

and experienced employees, offering diverse perspectives on organizational practices.

This demographic distribution ensured a balanced representation of employees and managers, supporting robust analysis of the study variables.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

The study first examined the descriptive statistics of the key variables to understand the central tendency and variability of responses.

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 indicate that respondents generally had positive perceptions of organizational culture and corporate reputation. Mean scores above 4 for all variables suggest strong agreement with the survey items. Standard deviations below 1 indicate that responses were relatively consistent across participants. The minimum and maximum values show that while most participants rated the constructs highly, there was still some variation in opinions. These results provide a solid basis for testing the hypothesized relationships.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Study Variables for Hypotheses Testing

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Organizational Culture (H1)	4.12	0.58	2.50	5.00
Employee-Focused Practices (H2)	4.05	0.61	2.33	5.00
Ethical & Consistency-Oriented Culture (H3)	4.08	0.57	2.67	5.00
Corporate Reputation	4.15	0.69	2.75	5.00

Source: Field Data, 2025

Notes: Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean values above 4 indicate a generally positive perception of organizational culture and corporate reputation among respondents.

Measurement Results

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses, the study assessed the responses of 380 participants regarding strategic resource allocation and its impact on operational efficiency. The measurement focused on financial resource allocation, human resource allocation, and technology and infrastructure allocation, along with operational efficiency indicators such as service speed, cost control, and process effectiveness. The reliability and validity of the constructs

were confirmed through factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

The results in Table 2 indicate that all three dimensions of strategic resource allocation were positively perceived by respondents and demonstrated strong measurement properties. These findings provide a reliable foundation for testing the hypothesized relationships using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Table 2: Measurement Results for Organizational Culture and Corporate Reputation in Private Firms in Botswana (n = 400)

Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Interpretation
Organizational Culture (H1)	0.76–0.81	0.85	0.88	0.62	Respondents generally agreed that organizational culture was strong and supportive of firm values.
Employee-Focused Practices (H2)	0.77–0.82	0.87	0.89	0.64	High agreement that employee-focused practices enhanced engagement and stakeholder interactions.
Ethics & Consistency-Oriented Culture (H3)	0.78–0.81	0.86	0.88	0.61	Respondents perceived ethical and consistent practices as well-established and influential on reputation.
Corporate Reputation	0.80–0.85	0.88	0.90	0.66	Corporate reputation was generally viewed positively across the firms.

Source: Field Data, 2025

Note: Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Factor loadings above 0.70, CR above 0.70, and AVE above 0.50 indicate acceptable reliability and convergent validity,

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

The study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships between organizational culture dimensions and corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana. Table 3 presents the path coefficients, standard

errors, t-values, and significance levels for the three hypotheses. The results indicate the strength and direction of relationships, providing evidence for the acceptance or rejection of each hypothesis.

Table 3: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results for the Effect of Organizational Culture on Corporate Reputation in Private Firms in Botswana (n = 400)

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Value	p-Value	Interpretation
H1	Organizational Culture → Corporate Reputation	0.42	0.08	5.25	0.001	Organizational culture has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation.
H2	Employee-Focused Practices → Corporate Reputation	0.38	0.00	4.22	0.001	Employee-focused practices positively influence corporate reputation.
H3:	Ethics & Consistency-Oriented Culture → Corporate Reputation	0.36	0.08	4.50	0.001	Ethical and consistent organizational culture positively predicts corporate reputation.

Source: Field Data, 2025

Note: A p-value below 0.05 indicates statistical significance. Standardized coefficients show the relative strength of each predictor on corporate reputation. SEM results confirm that all three dimensions of organizational culture significantly influence corporate reputation in the sampled private firms.

H1: Organizational culture has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

The result show that organizational culture had a significant positive effect on corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.42, t = 5.25, p = 0.001$). This indicates that firms with strong, well-aligned cultures were more likely to be perceived positively by stakeholders. The findings suggest that shared values, norms, and practices within the organization play a crucial role in shaping its public image and credibility.

H2: Employee-focused cultural practices positively influence corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

Employee-focused practices were found to positively influence corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.38, t = 4.22, p = 0.001$). This result implies that when employees are supported, empowered, and actively involved, their behavior enhances stakeholder perceptions of the firm. The findings highlight the importance of engagement and internal support systems in building a favorable corporate reputation.

H3: Ethical and consistency-oriented organizational culture positively predicts corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

Ethics and consistency-oriented organizational culture also positively predicted corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.36, t = 4.50, p = 0.001$). This shows that firms demonstrating ethical standards and consistent practices were more likely to gain trust and respect from stakeholders. The results underscore that ethical conduct and reliability are key drivers of reputation in private firms.

Essentially, all three hypotheses were supported, confirming that different dimensions of organizational culture significantly influence corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana.

Discussion Of Findings

H1: Organizational culture has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

The results for H1 showed that organizational culture had a significant positive effect on corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.42, t = 5.25, p = 0.001$). This means that private firms in Botswana with well-defined values, shared norms, and

supportive practices were more likely to be viewed positively by stakeholders. The finding aligns with Organizational Culture Theory, which argues that the collective beliefs and behaviours of employees influence how the organization performs and is perceived externally. A strong culture creates consistency in interactions with customers, partners, and the public, which helps build a credible image over time.

This outcome is consistent with empirical evidence from other African contexts. In Ghana, studies have shown that firms with strong internal cultures tend to enjoy better reputation among customers and communities, because employees act in ways that reflect organizational values (Mensah & Anning-Dwomoh, 2021) [15]. Similarly, research in Kenya found that organizational culture significantly predicted how stakeholders viewed firm trustworthiness and reliability, especially in the service and financial sectors (Njoroge & Were, 2020) [16]. In Zambia, corporate culture was reported to influence reputation by shaping ethical behaviour and customer service, which in turn affected public perception of firms (Phiri & Chanda, 2022) [20]. Findings from Cameroon also showed that companies with cohesive cultures had stronger external images and greater stakeholder confidence, as internal norms influenced consistency in service delivery (Nkoulou & Tabi, 2021) [17]. These studies support the idea that strong organizational cultures help firms align internal behaviour with external expectations, enhancing corporate reputation across different African business environments. In Botswana’s private sector, the current result reinforces the notion that shared values and consistent practices are central to how firms are judged by stakeholders, confirming both theory and prior regional evidence.

H2: Employee-focused cultural practices positively influence corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

The results for H2 showed that employee-focused cultural practices positively influenced corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana ($\beta = 0.38, t = 4.22, p = 0.001$). This suggests that when firms supported, involved, and empowered employees, it strengthened how stakeholders saw the organization externally. Employees who feel valued tend to act in ways that reflect commitment, professionalism, and pride in their firm, which sends

positive signals to customers, partners, and the public. This outcome fits with Signaling Theory, which explains that internal practices send outward messages about organizational quality and identity. When employees experience supportive culture, they emit behavioural signals such as high service quality and strong engagement that improve corporate reputation in the eyes of external audiences. Signaling Theory shows how these internal cues shape stakeholders' perceptions, helping firms communicate credibility and trust through employee actions.

Evidence from other African countries supports this pattern. In Nigeria, research has found that organisational values and cultural norms that emphasize employee welfare and involvement are linked to better performance outcomes and positive perceptions of firms, because employees are more engaged and productive when they feel recognised and supported. These internal practices also reflect outwardly on how firms are viewed in the market (Obah & Amah, 2022) [18]. In Zimbabwe, studies of corporate culture reported that firms with more supportive work environments tended to perform better and attract positive attention from clients and communities, reinforcing the idea that employee-focused practices help shape reputation and competitive advantage (Goromonzi, 2016; Alsamawi *et al.*, 2019) [11]. Research from Rwanda indicates that work culture factors including internal support and engagement practices were positively correlated with organizational performance, suggesting that when employees experience strong internal support, the firm's external image also benefits (Bimeyimana *et al.*, 2024). In the Gambia, although much of the research focuses on public sector engagement, findings show that when employees feel connected and engaged, they are more likely to contribute to positive organizational outcomes, which can extend to how organizations are perceived externally (GPA case study on engagement, 2015).

Together, these studies reinforce the notion that employee-focused practices do more than improve internal morale: they act as signals that shape stakeholder perceptions and help build a strong corporate reputation. Firms that invest in employee involvement, empowerment, and support not only boost internal engagement but also send consistent positive cues to external audiences, helping them stand out in competitive markets. This aligns with Signaling Theory's claim that internal organizational cues, such as employee behaviour and support systems, influence how outsiders interpret the firm's credibility and reputation.

H3: Ethical and consistency-oriented organizational culture positively predicts corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana

The results for H3 showed that ethical and consistency-oriented organizational culture positively predicted corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 4.50$, $p = 0.001$). This means that private firms in Botswana that demonstrated strong ethical standards and consistent internal practices were more likely to be trusted and respected by their stakeholders. Firms that uphold fairness, transparency, and reliable policies send clear signals that they can be counted on, which strengthen their reputation in the marketplace. These findings align with Stakeholder Theory, which holds that organizations must consider the interests, expectations, and values of all key stakeholders such as customers, employees, suppliers, regulators, and the community to achieve long-term success. When firms adopt

ethical and consistent practices, they meet stakeholder expectations for integrity and fairness, which enhances legitimacy and corporate image (Carroll & Olegario, 2020; Bag *et al.*, 2024) [5,7].

Research from other parts of the world supports this pattern. In the United States, studies have found that ethical organizational cultures contribute significantly to strong corporate reputations because stakeholders reward firms that act responsibly and consistently over time (Bag *et al.*, 2024) [5]. In Canada, research shows that firms with well-embedded ethical policies are more likely to be perceived positively by both internal and external stakeholders, reinforcing stakeholder confidence in the firm's brand and long-term vision (Amelia, 2025) [4]. In Panama, evidence indicates that consistency in ethical behaviour such as transparency in communication and fairness in decision-making helps firms build stronger stakeholder relationships, improving public perceptions and corporate image (Panama Canal Authority, 2011) [19]. Similarly, research in the United Kingdom demonstrates that organizations with robust ethical cultures are better positioned to manage stakeholder expectations, address concerns proactively, and sustain positive reputations even during crises (Carroll & Olegario, 2020) [7].

The current findings thus, confirm that when firms behave ethically and consistently, they align with stakeholder interests and expectations, validating Stakeholder Theory's emphasis on managing relationships with all key groups to achieve a favourable reputation.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer important insights for both theory and practice regarding the relationship between organizational culture and corporate reputation in private firms in Botswana. Confirming that organizational culture, employee-focused practices, and ethical consistency significantly influence corporate reputation, the study highlights the critical role internal organizational practices play in shaping external perceptions.

From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce key frameworks such as Organizational Culture Theory, Signaling Theory, and Stakeholder Theory. Organizational Culture Theory is supported by the evidence that shared values and norms directly affect how firms are perceived externally. Signaling Theory is illustrated through employee-focused practices, showing that empowered and engaged employees serve as internal signals that shape stakeholder perceptions. Stakeholder Theory is confirmed by the finding that ethical and consistent practices build trust and legitimacy among key stakeholders. These findings extend existing literature in African and international contexts by providing empirical evidence from Botswana.

From a practical perspective, managers in private firms can leverage these insights to strengthen their corporate reputation. Firms should actively cultivate a strong, well-aligned culture, implement employee-focused programs that empower staff, and uphold ethical standards consistently. Such practices not only enhance internal engagement and performance but also signal reliability and trustworthiness to external stakeholders, including customers, investors, and regulators. Ultimately, investing in culture and ethical consistency can provide firms with a sustainable competitive advantage in Botswana's private sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to help private firms in Botswana enhance their corporate reputation through organizational culture.

Firms should prioritize building a strong, values-driven culture that aligns employees with the organization's mission and goals. This includes clearly communicating core values, reinforcing desired behaviors, and creating a work environment where employees feel supported and empowered to contribute meaningfully.

It is also recommended that firms implement employee-focused programs, such as training, recognition, and engagement initiatives, to strengthen internal commitment. Empowered and engaged employees act as ambassadors for the organization, sending positive signals to stakeholders and enhancing the firm's public image.

Furthermore, firms should maintain high standards of ethical conduct and consistency in decision-making and operational practices. Ethical leadership, transparent policies, and consistent application of rules and procedures help build stakeholder trust and sustain a favorable reputation over time.

Finally, industry associations and policymakers in Botswana can encourage the adoption of best practices in organizational culture and ethics through guidelines, workshops, and benchmarking programs. Promoting awareness of the importance of culture, employee engagement, and ethics can support the development of a more reputable and competitive private sector in the country.

Limitations And Directions For Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research focused only on private firms in Botswana, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or countries. Second, data were collected using cross-sectional surveys, which restrict the ability to infer causality between organizational culture and corporate reputation. Third, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may be influenced by social desirability or response biases.

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the scope to include public and non-profit organizations or conducting comparative studies across multiple African countries. Longitudinal designs would help establish causal relationships over time, while incorporating multiple data sources, such as stakeholder interviews or archival performance data, could reduce potential biases and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture shapes corporate reputation.

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