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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT

***Abstract.** The link between corporate culture and employee engagement has awakened the interest of both the business community and academia. However, the role that entrepreneurial leadership plays in this equation has been neglected by the scientific literature so far. Our paper aims to analyse the relations between the perceived organisational culture (hierarchical, clan, market, and adhocracy) as introduced by Cameron and Quinn (2011) and the level of entrepreneurial leadership, as measured by the ENTRELEAD scale (Renko et al., 2015) and to test whether adopting an entrepreneurial leadership style influences the extent to which employees are engaged with their jobs, employee engagement, as measured by Utrecht work engagement scale-9, UWES-9 developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The results presented are based on a questionnaire addressed to employees of multinational companies in Romania, a sector with one of the highest degrees of organisational culture, leadership and engagement, which might serve as a model for the rest of the economic sectors that have not yet undergone a successful*

transformation process. The conceptual model is validated by the econometric analysis of the data collected, using structural equation modelling.

Keywords: *Corporate Culture, Employee Engagement, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Romania*

JEL Classification: C51, D23, J28, M12, M14

1. Introduction

Organisational culture has been intensively studied over the last 40 years from different perspectives and is still considered a broad, abstract, and difficult concept to define (Schein, 2010). In general terms, organisational culture is a collective belief system about social arrangements that shape the way business is done. Deal and Kennedy (1982) condensed the whole concept to a simple statement: culture is, simply, "how we do things around here". Schein (2010) defines organisational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group and emphasises the importance of external adaptation and internal integration. The relationship between organisational culture and the effects of cultural dynamics on employees has been extensively studied and debated. Szczepańska-Woszczyna (2015) examined the relationships between organisational culture, leadership, and innovation, asserting that leaders with vision create a culture of change, and foster innovation, and support the creative behaviour of individuals and groups. The study conducted by Reis et al. (2016) found that perceived control-oriented organisational culture is negatively associated with authenticity at work and thus with a lower work engagement of individuals.

Innovation and adaptation to constantly changing and disrupting environments have become a rule of performant and agile organisations. Thus, entrepreneurial behaviour is increasingly valued across industries and is seen as a source of competitive advantage. Employees must think about new business opportunities and embrace attitudes and behaviour specific to entrepreneurs (Renko et al., 2015). Moreover, regardless of industry, leadership is a determinant factor in shaping the organisational climate and culture, nurturing the behaviour of the employees, supporting innovativeness and new practices implementation. Therefore, leaders can and should encourage an entrepreneurial culture. In this context, the entrepreneurial leadership style has been increasingly approached in research as a way of motivating and engaging employees at work.

Furthermore, the engagement of employees has been extensively studied. According to different authors (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003; Maslach and Leiter, 1997), work engagement is seen as the opposite of burnout, suggesting that engaged employees have a strong connection with their work and enjoy what they do, while burnt-out employees are exhausted, unproductive, and cynical. Engagement is considered one of the four dimensions of happiness and work satisfaction, together with pleasure, meaning, and goal-setting (Eckhaus, 2021). Organisations are striving

to keep the employees engaged in work as much as possible and look for different human resources policies to improve this strong connection feeling.

In this context, in line with the existing scientific evidence, in this paper, we tested the link between the type of culture as it is perceived by employees and their level of engagement, mediated by entrepreneurial leadership. We investigated whether the four types of organisational culture identified by Cameron and Quinn (2011) influence the entrepreneurial leadership of the employees and whether this entrepreneurial leadership makes the employees more involved with their work, thus more engaged.

2. Literature review

2.1. Types of organisational culture and entrepreneurial leadership

The fast-changing business environment requires every company to innovate permanently in order to survive. In this context, entrepreneurial leaders have the talent to balance the desire for aggressive improvement with the existing capabilities of the employees involved in the process (Gupta et al., 2004) and foster creativity and innovation. Entrepreneurial leadership brings together two concepts, both very important for any company in the fast-changing business environment: leadership and entrepreneurship. The concept of entrepreneurial leadership was defined by Renko et al. (2015) as a leadership style through which the performance of group members is influenced and directed towards the achievement of organisational goals, recognising and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities. According to Gupta et al. (2004), entrepreneurial leadership has five roles, namely: framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limits. Although one might assume that entrepreneurial leadership is specific to small-scale organisations, we consider that entrepreneurial initiatives are essential for any agile business, as different opportunities are discovered and exploited all the time. Therefore, leaders play a defining role in this process by encouraging and stimulating this type of approach among employees.

Edgar Schein (2010) once mentioned in his book that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin. Leaders are building cultures, and sometimes in the process, the culture also influences how leaders manage the business. Organisational culture was always perceived as an abstract concept, hard to define, but still present in every organisation. Culture represents the intersection of objective reality and subjective perception (Latta, 2019), and it is something experienced by all members of an organisation. Atkinson (1997) defines culture as a set of values, behaviours, and norms which tell people what to do, how to do it, and what is acceptable and unacceptable. Positive cultural characteristics give organisations the capacity to adapt to continuous challenges, possess distinctive competencies, and play the main role in engaging innovative employees at work. Organisational culture is considered to bond employees' aims to achieve organisational excellence and success and reflect the organisation's image (Szczepańska-Woszczyńska, 2015). Diagnosing and applying

different measures to improve the organisational culture is meant to increase the professional efficacy of employees.

The organisations can be divided into different types of culture (Cameron and Quinn, 2011) that probably influence the level of entrepreneurial leadership of that company. In order to establish the link between entrepreneurial leadership and distinct cultural profiles, we used the cultural model developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011), based on the competing values framework (CVF). The model divides organisational cultures into four types: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market, according to two dimensions: "One dimension differentiates effectiveness criteria that emphasise flexibility, discretion, and dynamism from criteria that emphasise stability, order, and control" (Cameron and Quinn, 2011).

The Clan type of culture is a family-type organisation in which cohesion, shared values, and goals, and the closeness between the company members prevail. It is internally focused, and its members value flexibility and discretion. The management of the company is a paternalistic one, and leaders act as mentors and value teamwork, collaboration, participation, kindness, and open communication. The goals are achieved through commitment to the organisation, which develops a humane work environment (Yumuk and Kurgun, 2021). Therefore, in this type of culture, leaders might encourage the entrepreneurial behaviour of employees:

H₁. Entrepreneurial leadership is positively related to the Clan culture

The Adhocracy culture refers to highly responsive organisations to the fast-changing business environment. Flexible and agile, these organisations foster innovation, creativity, and focus on the external environment. Entrepreneurship, teamwork, experimentation, and adaptability are highly valued (Reis et al., 2016); thus, employees act as intrapreneurs and develop innovative products and services. The role of managers is highly important, as they drive innovation in often uncertain and ambiguous business environments. Therefore:

H₂. Entrepreneurial leadership is positively related to the adhocracy culture.

The Hierarchical culture is internally focused and strives for stability, predictability, and control. Based on norms, procedures, and rules, such cultures are characterised by a "formalised and structured place to work" (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Managers are capable of following procedures, organising and coordinating the workforce, having authority in the decision-making process. Studies have shown that working from home may be positive in substantial autonomy conditions (Bolisani et al., 2020); hence, hierarchical culture is one that may have worked slightly worse in the pandemic period. This culture emphasises the adherence to norms and formal processes, which are considered significant barriers to employees' engagement as they limit change, empowerment, and autonomy (Ababneh, 2021). Therefore, we consider that:

H₃. Entrepreneurial leadership is negatively related to the hierarchical culture.

The Market type of culture is an external-oriented one, valuing external stakeholders like customers, suppliers, contractors, or regulators. The market

mechanisms like competitiveness and productivity dominate the core values of the organisation. The focus is on achieving results, setting high targets, and meeting short deadlines. The organisations have competitive leaders, tough and demanding, that require mainly results. As a consequence, employees are less committed to the organisation (Yumuk and Kurgun, 2021). We consider that in market-oriented culture, leaders encourage entrepreneurship, thus:

H4. Entrepreneurial leadership is positively related to the market culture.

2.2. Entrepreneurial leadership and work engagement

The concept of work engagement is attributed to the work of Kahn (1990), who considered that personal engagement makes employees become physically involved in their tasks, cognitively vigilant, and emphatically connected to others. More recent research analyses engagement as an opposite concept to burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002), with engaged employees being characterised by energy, involvement, and efficacy (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Schaufeli et al. (2002) define engagement as a state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption and associate the concept with intrinsic motivation, positive attitude, and also high performance. It was proven that commitment and job satisfaction play notable roles in the relationship between diversity and competency-based performance (Owusu et al., 2021).

Visionary leaders can create a positive culture and increase the engagement of employees. The theoretical framework developed by Gupta et al. (2004) calls for five entrepreneurial leadership roles - framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, specifying limits - that contribute to creating a positive, fulfilling state of mind, a proactive work environment. Through the specific role of building commitment, entrepreneurial leaders inspire highly committed teams to be energetic and put their effort into accomplishing the business scenario. The engagement of employees also increases by specifying limits, as the leader "reshapes individuals' perceptions of their own capabilities by eliminating self-imposed ideas of limitation" (Gupta et al., 2004). Therefore:

H5. Entrepreneurial leadership is positively related to work engagement.

2.3. The mediating role of entrepreneurial leadership

Engaged employees bring benefits to everyone involved in the company (Parent and Lovelace, 2018), as they are motivated, energetic, and they develop healthy relationships with the team members and managers. A healthy organisational culture can increase work engagement. Barbars (2019) found that organisational culture dimensions that have a significant impact on the work engagement of information and communications technology (ICT) employees are innovation, performance orientation, and social responsibility. Also, a study conducted by Saks (2006) states that organisational support predicted both job engagement and organisational engagement. Furthermore, following the attribution theory developed by Weiner (1986), Ababneh (2021) argues that employee engagement may enclose the concept of organisational culture because the attitude, disposition, and

perceptions of employees are influenced by the set of values, norms, or basic assumptions. Leaders have a major role in shaping and creating the organisational culture (Schein, 2010). Leaders, through their attitude and behaviour, promoted values and their ways of motivating and incentivising employees, shape a specific organisational culture in the company, which in turn leads to and influences work engagement. Therefore, the organisational culture may influence work engagement directly and indirectly via entrepreneurial leadership. Therefore:

H₆. Entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between ratings of perceived clan (1), adhocracy (2), hierarchical (3), and market (4) types of cultures and work engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objective, method and sample used

The main purpose of this paper is to test whether entrepreneurial leadership can mediate between the type of organisational culture and work engagement.

In this respect, we aim at testing the previous mentioned six research hypotheses. The hypotheses are tested using structural equation modelling.

In order to grasp and outline the respondents' opinions about the three concepts involved in the research (organisational culture, entrepreneurial leadership, and work engagement), a questionnaire has been developed.

The questionnaire was addressed to employees of different types of companies in Romania without targeting a certain field of activity. Respondents were selected using a probabilistic stratified random sampling methodology. One of the main problems related to collecting the data was the hesitation of the respondents to complete the questionnaires. To avoid these concerns, personal data was deleted, and the information was presented in an aggregate format.

In the sample, both managers and employees were selected to have a comprehensive perspective on the three concepts involved. The chosen sample was random, with 108 valid respondents – 34 executives and 74 employees of the analysed companies, stratified by gender, educational level, and age.

3.2. Measures

The questionnaire developed in the research consisted of three scales, each measuring a certain concept: (a) The Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI); (b) ENTRELEAD scale; (c) Utrecht work engagement scale-9 (UWES-9). We decided to use these scales for measuring the three main concepts under analysis in the present paper, since all three scales are validated and recognised as reliable and relevant in the scientific community in this field. Besides these three scales, we also addressed identification questions regarding gender, age, level of education, job level, type of company, and field of activity. As stated above, personal data was deleted.

Organisational culture

In order to assess the perceived type of organisational culture dominant in the respondents' organisations, it was used The Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011). The tool has been extensively used by the scientific community in various industries, and thus, can be applied irrespective of the type of the business (Ababneh, 2021; Yumuk and Kurgun, 2021; Reis et al., 2016). Designed to identify the organisation's current culture and the culture that the organisation's employees consider to be ideal in the future, it describes four types of culture (clan, adhocracy, hierarchical, market). It assesses six key dimensions of organisational culture: dominant characteristics, organisational leadership, management of employees, organisation glue, strategic emphases, and criteria of success. Each dimension has four statements specific to each of the four types of culture.

Entrepreneurial leadership (EL)

In order to measure the entrepreneurial leadership of the respondents' direct managers, we used a validated empirical tool, ENTRELEAD, developed and validated by Renko et al. (2015). It consists of 8 questions. The employees have to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale according to their opinion about their immediate supervisor/manager.

Work engagement (WE)

The work engagement of employees was measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), consisting of 9 statements that evaluate the way the employees feel at work, developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The validated tool (Seppala et al., 2009) uses a 7-point Likert scale, where the response options are between 0 = "Never" and 7 = "Every day". The scale measures three constituting aspects of work engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption. The vigour of employees refers to high levels of energy and resilience; dedication consists in a strong identification with one's tasks, a sense of significance, inspiration, and enthusiasm, while absorption consists in a complete immersion and concentration during the work.

The conceptual model was tested with the Partial Least Square (PLS) methodology, and the data was analysed with the SmartPLS 3.3.1 software. PLS was used because, compared to other methods is more robust and less sensitive non-symmetric distribution, small sample sizes, and the presence of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2011). The β values generated by the PLS- SEM are the path coefficients which measure the relationships between the latent variables.

3.3. Measurement models

We have first analysed the average variance extracted (AVE) in order to assess the convergent validity. According to Hair et al. (2011), convergent validity is assumed if all AVE values are above 0.5. In addition, the exogenous variables are significant if all the values of "Cronbach Alpha" and "Dillon-Golstein's ρ " are above 0.7. Moreover, the model does not have problems related to multicollinearity when all values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) are between 1 and 5. The evaluation of the measurement model can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation of the measurement model

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Dillon Golsteins' rho	Composite Reliability	AVE	VIF
Clan	0.886	0.721	0.712	0.725	2.414
Adhocracy	0.821	0.764	0.719	0.825	1.935
Market	0.789	0.713	0.748	0.712	1.846
Hierarchy	0.748	0.708	0.723	0.705	1.753

Source: Own illustration

From Table 1, we could see that the exogenous variables of the model are statistically significant, as the "Cronbach's Alpha" and "Dillon-Golsteins' ρ " are above 0.7. We also confirm that the convergent validity could be assumed, as all average values extracted (AVE) are above 0.5 and that there are no multicollinearity problems between the independent variables of the model, since the VIF values are not below 1 and do not exceed 5. We could also observe that all Composite Reliability values in Table 1 are between 0.712 and 0.748, which is considered satisfactory.

4. Results and discussions

In Figure 1, we can see the results for the structural model. It includes the independent, the dependent variables, and the coefficients (β) which reveal the impact of the four exogenous variables (clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy) on the two endogenous variables (entrepreneurial leadership and work engagement).

The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Leadership between Perceived Organisational Culture and Engagement

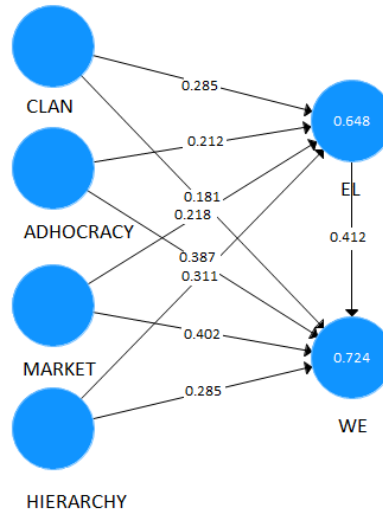


Figure 1. Structural model results
Source: Own illustration

In order to assess the predictive power of the structural model, we will evaluate the coefficients of determination (R^2). Thus, the clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy are explaining (together) 64.8% of the entrepreneurial leadership and 72.4% of the work engagement.

We used Student t-test to validate the five hypotheses, the direct effects between the clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy type of organisational culture on entrepreneurial leadership, and between entrepreneurial leadership and work engagement.

In addition, we performed a Bootstrap test with 3000 resamples to generate the t-test values and the standard error of the parameters of the model. The size effect (f^2) and the decision of acceptance are also included.

Table 2. Results of the testing of direct statistical hypotheses (H_1 - H_5)

Hypothesis	Coefficients (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	Effect dimension (f^2)	Decision
H_1 : CLAN \rightarrow EL	0.285***	0.079	2.567	0.109**	Accept
H_2 : ADHOCRACY \rightarrow EL	0.212**	0.068	2.812	0.098*	Accept
H_3 : HIERARCHY \rightarrow EL	0.311***	0.127	3.215	0.198**	Reject
H_4 : MARKET \rightarrow EL	0.218**	0.075	2.758	0.108**	Accept
H_5 : EL \rightarrow WE	0.412***	0.185	3.107	0.205***	Accept

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$
Source: Own analysis

From Table 2, we can conclude that all independent variables have a significant and positive impact on the dependent variables with a medium-high size

effect. Therefore, H₁, H₂, H₄, and H₅ are validated, while H₃ is invalidated. Our assumption, based on literature review, led to H₃, namely that "Entrepreneurial leadership is negatively related to the hierarchical culture". However, based on the empirical outcome, it can be stated that in the Romanian context, the hierarchical culture, similar to the other three types of culture (clan, adhocracy, and market), is also positively related to entrepreneurial leadership. Surprisingly, this is also the type of organisational culture with the highest coefficient β . This result is not in line with modern theories of management, which emphasise the benefits of empowering individuals. However, this outcome could be traced back to the historical context in Romania, which was characterised for an extended period by a lack of democracy and democratic decision-making process at societal, economic and implicitly organisational/managerial levels. This general approach proved to have long-lasting effects both in society and organisations, with people, respectively employees, being told what to do and how to approach various tasks at work without critically judging the manager's style or decision. Therefore, Romanian employees, even if working in the international environment of multinational companies, might be used to a very hierarchical organisational culture, defined by tight instructions coming from managers, obedience, and very limited space for individual initiative and decision. Employees might perceive the hierarchical organisational culture as the normality in the Romanian business context, and in contrast to countries with a longer capitalistic history, this type of culture might even have attached a positive connotation, associated implicitly with entrepreneurial leadership and work engagement of employees.

The lowest values of the coefficient β are between the adhocracy culture and entrepreneurial leadership (0.212) and between the market culture and entrepreneurial leadership (0.218). These findings are a good reflection of the Romanian society and business environment, where spontaneity, flexibility, dynamism and orientation towards the market historically did not represent the norm.

In addition, we analysed the mediation effect of the entrepreneurial leadership between the independent variables and the work engagement. In Table 3, we can observe the direct and indirect effects of entrepreneurial leadership as a mediator variable and also the bias-corrected confidence intervals resulting from the bootstrap procedure (Nitzl et al., 2016).

Table 3. Results of testing direct and indirect statistical hypotheses (H₆)

Structural effects	Indirect effects. Mediator: EL			
	Direct effects	Coefficients	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
CLAN→ WE	0.181*	0.078*	0.050	0.101
ADHOCRACY→WE	0.387***	0.120*	0.090	0.150
MARKET→WE	0.218**	0.131**	0.106	0.156
HIERARCHY→WE	0.285***	0.216***	0.165	0.267

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$;

WE= work engagement; EL = entrepreneurial leadership

Source: Own analysis

Given the direct positive effect of Clan ($\beta = 0.181$; $p < 0.05$) on Engagement and also the specific positive indirect effect of entrepreneurial leadership ($\beta = 0.078$; 95% BCI = [0.050; 0.101]), where BCI stands for the bias-corrected confidence intervals, we can conclude that entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between Clan culture and Work Engagement. Therefore, the intrinsic positive effects of clan culture on organisational engagement will be stronger if the employees exhibit entrepreneurial leadership behaviour. Considering the direct positive effect of Adhocracy ($\beta = 0.387$; $p < 0.01$) on Work Engagement and the specific positive indirect effects of entrepreneurial leadership ($\beta = 0.120$; 95% BCI = [0.090; 0.150]), we can conclude that entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between Adhocracy and Work Engagement. Therefore, the intrinsic positive effects of the variables of Adhocracy on organisational engagement will be stronger if the company has a system of flexible and informal organisation. Based on the positive effect of Market ($\beta = 0.218$; $p < 0.05$) on Work Engagement and the specific positive indirect effects through entrepreneurial leadership ($\beta = 0.131$; 95% BCI = [0.106; 0.156]), we can conclude that entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between Market culture and engagement. Therefore, the intrinsic positive effects of the market orientation and attention paid to external stakeholders by the company's management on the employees' engagement will be stronger if the market style is adapted to the employee's needs. On the other hand, the direct positive effect of Hierarchy Style on Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.285$; $p < 0.001$), as well as specific positive indirect effects through entrepreneurial leadership ($\beta = 0.216$; 95% BCI = [0.165; 0.267]), support the idea of entrepreneurial leadership mediating in relation to Work Engagement, thus establishing the positive attitude of employees towards a hierarchical management style.

Some positive direct and indirect effects illustrated by the findings exhibited in Table 3 draw our attention. Contrary to our assumptions based on theory, both market and hierarchy organisational culture have a positive direct effect on work engagement as well as specific positive indirect effects through entrepreneurial leadership, which mediates the relation, emphasising the positive perception of employees towards both the hierarchical and flexible, dynamic organisational culture (adhocracy). These results suggest that Romanian employees from multinational companies are actually engaged in their work regardless of the type of organisational culture, and entrepreneurial leadership always mediates the relationship between organisational culture and work engagement.

Therefore, since entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between ratings of the perceived clan, adhocracy, hierarchical and market types of cultures and work engagement (even if not always in the direction presumed by authors), empirical data confirm hypothesis H₆.

5. Conclusions

The present study tested by means of structural equations modelling whether perceived organisational culture styles (clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy) have a significant impact on entrepreneurial leadership and whether entrepreneurial leadership has a significant impact on work engagement. At the same time, we tested whether entrepreneurial leadership mediates the relationship between the different types of cultures and work engagement. Our results suggest that work engagement is strongly and positively correlated with all organisational culture styles and entrepreneurial leadership, and the latter has a mediator role between perceived organisational culture and work engagement.

Five of the six hypotheses formulated in this article based on the literature review were validated. The hypothesis related to the negative relation between entrepreneurial leadership and the hierarchical culture is not validated by the empirical analysis, which reveals a positive relationship. This research outcome is not in line with modern management theories, which put forth the idea of employees' autonomy and empowerment. Still, it can be explained by the Romanian historical context, marked by a long period of communist dictatorship and repression of the individual (entrepreneurial) initiative. The heritage of the communist regime seems to be long-lasting, not only at society level, but also in the attitude, values, and working approach of Romanian employees, despite the fact that most of our respondents are exposed to an international environment in the corporations where they work.

One of the main limitations of our research is represented by the sample, which covers only individuals from multinational companies present in Romania. This shortcoming could be overcome by conducting similar research among other types of employees, such as employees from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), eventually with a majority of Romanian capital, but not only. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis between the results of the present research and the outcomes of similar research conducted in Romania in a different organisational setting, as previously mentioned.

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