

Enhancing Workplace Culture Among Lecturers at Colleges in Ho Chi Minh City: Policy Issues and Strategic Solutions

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ABSTRACT: Workplace culture has become an essential factor in improving educational quality, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable institutional development in higher education. In the context of educational reform, institutional autonomy, and digital transformation in Vietnam, strengthening workplace culture among college lecturers is increasingly recognized as a strategic priority for enhancing professionalism and institutional competitiveness. This study examines the current situation of workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City and proposes strategic solutions for its continuous improvement. A qualitative research approach was employed using document analysis, content analysis, comparative analysis, and policy analysis. The study synthesizes legal documents, educational policies, previous academic studies, and institutional reports to identify major achievements, existing limitations, and emerging challenges in workplace culture development. The findings indicate that colleges have made significant progress in establishing professional regulations, promoting ethical standards, encouraging continuous professional development, and integrating digital technologies into educational management. However, inconsistencies in institutional governance, leadership practices, organizational communication, professional development opportunities, and digital competence continue to influence workplace culture across institutions. The study argues that workplace culture should be regarded as a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a set of behavioral regulations. Accordingly, it proposes six strategic directions, including strengthening leadership commitment, improving institutional governance, promoting continuous professional development, integrating digital transformation, enhancing organizational communication, and establishing systematic workplace culture evaluation mechanisms. These recommendations provide useful implications for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to build professional, collaborative, innovative, and sustainable workplace cultures within Vietnam's higher education system.

KEYWORDS: workplace culture; college lecturers; higher education; educational governance; digital transformation; Ho Chi Minh City

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace culture has become an increasingly important factor in improving the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of educational institutions. Beyond serving as a set of shared values, norms, and behavioral standards, workplace culture shapes professional ethics, organizational commitment, collaboration, and institutional performance (Schein & Schein, 2017). In higher education, lecturers are not only responsible for delivering knowledge but also for fostering academic integrity, promoting professional values, and contributing to institutional development (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Consequently, cultivating a positive workplace culture among lecturers is considered an essential prerequisite for enhancing educational quality and strengthening the competitiveness of educational institutions in the context of globalization and digital transformation.

In Vietnam, the education sector has undergone significant reforms aimed at improving governance, educational quality, and institutional autonomy. The Government has introduced numerous policies emphasizing the development of a professional, accountable, and service-oriented public sector, while educational institutions are encouraged to establish modern governance models that prioritize transparency, collaboration, and innovation (Tierney, 1988). These reforms have highlighted the importance of workplace culture as a critical component of institutional governance and human resource development. In addition, the rapid advancement of digital technologies, the increasing application of artificial intelligence, and the growing expectations of learners and society have fundamentally transformed the working environment of lecturers (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Workplace culture today extends beyond conventional professional conduct to include digital communication, ethical use of technology, knowledge sharing, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the promotion of innovation within educational organizations.

Ho Chi Minh City is the largest economic, educational, and technological center in Vietnam, hosting a large number of colleges with diverse ownership models, including public, private, and vocational institutions (OECD, 2023). These colleges play a vital role

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in developing skilled human resources to meet the demands of regional and national socio-economic development. As the educational landscape becomes increasingly competitive, colleges are expected not only to improve teaching quality but also to establish professional organizational cultures that attract and retain qualified lecturers (UNESCO, 2023). Workplace culture has therefore become an important strategic resource for institutional development, influencing employee motivation, organizational cohesion, and public trust (Kraus et al., 2022). Nevertheless, differences in organizational management, institutional resources, leadership styles, and policy implementation have created varying levels of workplace culture across colleges in Ho Chi Minh City, posing challenges for sustainable institutional development.

Existing studies have extensively examined organizational culture, educational leadership, teacher professionalism, and quality assurance in higher education. Previous research has demonstrated that organizational culture significantly influences employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, innovation, and institutional effectiveness. Other studies have emphasized the importance of ethical leadership, collaborative working environments, and professional development in enhancing educational performance (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2022). However, relatively limited attention has been devoted specifically to workplace culture among college lecturers in Vietnam, particularly from the perspective of policy analysis and institutional governance. Most domestic studies tend to focus on professional ethics, pedagogical competencies, or administrative management rather than providing a comprehensive examination of workplace culture as an integrated governance issue (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Furthermore, few studies have explored how workplace culture should be strengthened in response to emerging challenges associated with digital transformation, educational autonomy, and changing stakeholder expectations.

This research seeks to address these gaps by examining workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City through qualitative document analysis and policy analysis. Rather than employing quantitative surveys, the study synthesizes relevant legal documents, national education policies, academic literature, and previous research findings to identify major achievements, existing limitations, and emerging challenges in developing workplace culture within colleges (Huong, 2018). The analysis also considers contemporary trends in educational governance, digital transformation, and organizational development that increasingly shape professional behavior and institutional culture (Nguyen, 2020).

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it reviews the theoretical foundations of workplace culture and its significance for lecturers in higher education institutions. Second, it analyzes the current situation of workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City by examining institutional practices and policy contexts. Third, it proposes strategic solutions to strengthen workplace culture through improvements in institutional governance, leadership, professional development, digital ethics, and organizational management. These recommendations are intended to support policymakers, educational leaders, and college administrators in building professional, collaborative, and innovative educational environments that respond effectively to the demands of educational reform and digital transformation.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. Conceptually, it integrates organizational culture, educational governance, and workplace culture into a coherent analytical framework for higher education institutions. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of document analysis and policy analysis in examining educational management issues where comprehensive empirical data remain limited. Practically, the findings provide policy-oriented recommendations for enhancing workplace culture among college lecturers, thereby contributing to improved institutional effectiveness, lecturer professionalism, and sustainable educational development in Vietnam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Workplace Culture

Workplace culture has attracted considerable scholarly attention because of its profound influence on organizational performance, employee behavior, and institutional sustainability. Although scholars have employed different definitions, there is broad consensus that workplace culture represents the system of shared values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and behavioral expectations that guide how individuals interact within an organization. It shapes employees' perceptions of their work environment, influences decision-making processes, and establishes standards of professional conduct that support organizational objectives.

The concept of workplace culture is closely associated with organizational culture, which has long been recognized as one of the most important intangible resources contributing to organizational success. Schein (2017) defines organizational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein & Schein, 2017). These assumptions are transmitted to new members as the appropriate ways to perceive, think, and behave within the organization. From this perspective, workplace culture can be regarded as the practical manifestation of organizational culture in employees' daily professional activities.

In educational institutions, workplace culture encompasses not only formal regulations and codes of conduct but also informal norms governing professional ethics, collegial relationships, communication practices, collaboration, and organizational commitment. It influences lecturers' motivation, teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and willingness to participate in

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institutional development (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). A healthy workplace culture promotes mutual respect, academic integrity, transparency, responsibility, and continuous learning, thereby strengthening institutional quality and public trust.

The increasing adoption of digital technologies has further expanded the scope of workplace culture. Digital communication, online collaboration, artificial intelligence applications, information sharing, cybersecurity awareness, and responsible digital behavior have become integral components of modern workplace culture (Denison & Mishra, 1995). Consequently, contemporary workplace culture is no longer confined to physical office environments but extends into digital workplaces where professional interactions occur through various technological platforms.

For educational institutions, workplace culture therefore represents a comprehensive framework integrating organizational values, professional ethics, interpersonal relationships, institutional governance, and digital responsibility. This broader understanding provides an important theoretical foundation for examining workplace culture among college lecturers in Ho Chi Minh City.

2.2. Workplace Culture in Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions possess distinctive organizational characteristics that differentiate them from other public organizations. Their missions extend beyond administrative functions to include teaching, scientific research, community engagement, and knowledge creation. Consequently, workplace culture in educational institutions is expected to support academic freedom, professional responsibility, collaboration, innovation, and ethical behavior while simultaneously ensuring accountability and institutional effectiveness (Tierney, 1988).

Lecturers occupy a central position in shaping educational culture because they influence not only institutional performance but also students' intellectual and moral development. Professional behavior demonstrated by lecturers contributes significantly to institutional reputation and educational quality (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Therefore, workplace culture among lecturers should promote professionalism, respect for diversity, academic honesty, teamwork, continuous professional development, and commitment to educational excellence.

Educational reforms implemented in Vietnam over the past decade have emphasized institutional autonomy, quality assurance, digital transformation, and learner-centered education. These reforms require lecturers to assume expanded professional responsibilities that extend beyond classroom instruction (Nguyen, 2020). Modern lecturers are increasingly expected to participate in curriculum innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, scientific research, international cooperation, digital teaching, and institutional governance. These changing expectations require workplace culture to evolve accordingly.

In addition, digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the academic working environment. Online teaching platforms, learning management systems, cloud-based collaboration, digital administration, and artificial intelligence have become common features of higher education institutions. As a result, workplace culture now includes digital professionalism, ethical technology use, cybersecurity awareness, responsible management of educational data, and effective online communication. Institutions that successfully integrate these dimensions into their workplace culture are generally better positioned to improve organizational resilience and educational quality.

Within the context of Ho Chi Minh City, colleges operate in an increasingly competitive educational market characterized by institutional diversity, rapid technological change, and growing demands from employers and learners. Workplace culture therefore functions not only as an internal management mechanism but also as a strategic resource supporting institutional competitiveness and sustainable development.

2.3. Factors Influencing Workplace Culture among Lecturers

Previous studies indicate that workplace culture is influenced by multiple organizational, managerial, and individual factors. Rather than emerging spontaneously, workplace culture develops through continuous interaction between institutional leadership, organizational systems, professional values, and employee behavior.

Leadership is widely recognized as one of the most influential determinants of workplace culture. Leaders establish organizational vision, communicate institutional values, formulate policies, allocate resources, and model expected behaviors. Ethical and transformational leadership encourages trust, collaboration, innovation, and organizational commitment, whereas ineffective leadership may contribute to fragmented organizational relationships and declining employee motivation (Warrick, 2017).

Institutional governance also plays a significant role. Transparent administrative procedures, fair evaluation systems, participatory decision-making, and accountability mechanisms create conditions that support positive workplace relationships. Conversely, bureaucratic procedures, inconsistent policy implementation, and limited communication often weaken organizational cohesion.

Professional competence and continuous learning constitute another important dimension. Lecturers who actively engage in professional development, academic collaboration, and lifelong learning are more likely to contribute positively to institutional culture. Continuous improvement strengthens not only individual capabilities but also collective organizational knowledge.

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Human resource policies likewise influence workplace culture. Recruitment, promotion, recognition, professional development opportunities, and performance evaluation shape employees' perceptions of fairness and organizational support. Equitable human resource management encourages commitment, motivation, and professional responsibility.

Technological development has become an increasingly significant determinant in recent years. Digital transformation requires lecturers to adapt to new teaching methods, digital communication tools, artificial intelligence applications, and data management systems (Westerman et al., 2014). Consequently, digital competence, ethical technology use, and cybersecurity awareness have emerged as essential elements of contemporary workplace culture (Leal-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

Finally, broader socio-cultural contexts also affect workplace culture. National cultural values, legal frameworks, educational reforms, and stakeholder expectations continuously influence organizational norms and professional behaviors. Colleges in Ho Chi Minh City therefore operate within a dynamic environment where workplace culture must balance traditional educational values with contemporary governance principles and international standards.

2.4. Research Gap

Although workplace culture has received considerable scholarly attention internationally, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature concerning Vietnamese higher education. First, many studies examine organizational culture from general management perspectives without focusing specifically on lecturers' workplace culture (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022). The unique professional characteristics of lecturers—including academic autonomy, teaching responsibilities, research obligations, and community engagement—require analytical frameworks that differ from those applied in corporate organizations.

Second, domestic studies frequently emphasize professional ethics, educational management, or quality assurance independently rather than examining workplace culture as an integrated governance issue combining institutional values, organizational behavior, leadership, and digital transformation (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Consequently, there remains limited understanding of how workplace culture can be strengthened through comprehensive governance strategies.

Third, the growing influence of digital transformation has introduced new dimensions of workplace culture—including digital ethics, online collaboration, responsible artificial intelligence use, cybersecurity awareness, and digital professionalism—that remain insufficiently explored in existing Vietnamese research (Huong, 2018). These emerging issues are increasingly relevant as colleges continue implementing digital governance and educational innovation (Vu & Nguyen, 2022).

Finally, relatively few studies have examined workplace culture specifically within colleges in Ho Chi Minh City despite the city's strategic importance as Vietnam's largest educational and economic center. Institutional diversity, educational competition, and rapid technological development create contextual characteristics that warrant dedicated analysis.

Based on these observations, this study addresses the identified research gaps by employing document analysis and policy analysis to examine workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City. Rather than measuring individual perceptions through survey methods, the study synthesizes theoretical perspectives, legal documents, policy frameworks, and previous research to develop strategic recommendations that contribute to strengthening workplace culture in the context of educational reform and digital transformation. This analytical approach provides both theoretical insights and practical implications for institutional leaders, policymakers, and higher education practitioners seeking to build professional, collaborative, and sustainable educational organizations.

Table 1. Summary of Key Literature on Workplace Culture in Higher Education

Authors	Research Focus	Main Findings	Contribution to This Study
Tierney (1988)	Organizational culture in higher education	University culture shapes institutional effectiveness and academic identity.	Provides the higher education perspective for workplace culture.
Denison & Mishra (1995)	Organizational culture and effectiveness	Organizational culture positively influences organizational performance and adaptability.	Supports the relationship between workplace culture and institutional effectiveness.
Cameron & Quinn (2011)	Organizational culture framework	Organizational values influence employee behavior and organizational development.	Provides analytical dimensions for workplace culture.
Deal & Peterson (2016)	School culture	Educational leadership is essential for building	Supports leadership analysis.

		positive institutional culture.	
Schein & Schein (2021)	Organizational culture theory	Organizational culture consists of shared assumptions, values and behaviors.	Serves as the principal theoretical foundation of this study.
UNESCO (2023)	AI in education	Responsible AI should become part of educational governance.	Introduces digital ethics into workplace culture.
OECD (2023)	Higher education development	Higher education institutions require innovation, collaboration and digital readiness.	Supports governance implications.
Westerman et al. (2014)	Digital transformation	Digital transformation requires organizational change rather than technological adoption alone.	Supports digital workplace culture.

Table 1 summarizes the principal theoretical perspectives that underpin this study. Although previous research has extensively examined organizational culture, educational leadership, and institutional governance, relatively limited attention has been devoted to workplace culture among college lecturers in Vietnam, particularly within the context of digital transformation. The reviewed literature therefore provides the theoretical foundation for developing the analytical framework employed in this study and identifying existing research gaps.

Based on the literature review and the identified research gap, this study develops an analytical framework to examine workplace culture among college lecturers. The framework illustrates the relationships between external environmental factors, institutional governance, leadership commitment, organizational practices, and workplace culture, which collectively contribute to institutional effectiveness and sustainable educational development. This framework provides the conceptual basis for organizing the document analysis and interpreting the findings presented in the following sections.

Figure 1. Analytical Framework for Enhancing Workplace Culture among College Lecturers

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using document analysis as the primary research method to examine workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City. This approach is appropriate because the study aims to analyze theoretical perspectives, educational policies, and institutional practices rather than examine causal relationships through quantitative data.

The study collected documentary data from four principal sources. First, legal and policy documents issued by the Government of Vietnam and the Ministry of Education and Training were reviewed to establish the policy context for workplace culture and



higher education governance. Second, books and peer-reviewed journal articles on organizational culture, workplace culture, educational leadership, and higher education management were examined to provide the theoretical foundation of the study. Third, previous studies concerning organizational culture and digital transformation in higher education were synthesized to identify major research findings and existing knowledge gaps. Finally, reports and official publications related to higher education development in Vietnam were consulted to better understand the institutional context.

The collected documents were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Relevant information was coded and organized into major themes corresponding to the research objectives, including workplace culture, institutional governance, leadership, professional development, organizational communication, and digital transformation. Comparative analysis was subsequently employed to identify similarities and differences among previous studies, while policy analysis was applied to evaluate the implications of existing educational policies for strengthening workplace culture in colleges.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study relied on authoritative documentary sources, including peer-reviewed publications, official policy documents, and reports issued by recognized national and international organizations. The integration of document analysis, content analysis, comparative analysis, and policy analysis provides a systematic basis for interpreting the current situation of workplace culture and proposing strategic recommendations for improving workplace culture among college lecturers in Ho Chi Minh City.

4. CURRENT SITUATION OF WORKPLACE CULTURE AMONG COLLEGE LECTURERS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

4.1. Positive Developments in Workplace Culture

The development of workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City has received increasing attention over the past decade, particularly in the context of higher education reform, institutional autonomy, and digital transformation. Existing legal frameworks governing public employees, professional ethics, and educational management have encouraged colleges to strengthen organizational values, improve administrative transparency, and establish professional standards for lecturers (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). As a result, workplace culture has gradually evolved from a narrow focus on compliance with institutional regulations toward a broader emphasis on professionalism, collaboration, accountability, and service quality.

Documentary evidence indicates that many colleges have incorporated workplace culture into their institutional development strategies through codes of professional conduct, internal regulations, quality assurance systems, and ethical guidelines (Huong, 2018). These initiatives seek to promote respectful communication, responsible behavior, teamwork, and professional integrity among academic staff. In addition, many institutions have introduced mechanisms that encourage lecturers to participate actively in curriculum development, scientific research, community engagement, and institutional governance. Such participation contributes to strengthening organizational commitment and reinforces shared institutional values.

Another encouraging trend is the increasing recognition of lifelong learning as an essential component of professional culture. Colleges have expanded opportunities for lecturers to participate in professional development programs, pedagogical training, research collaboration, and international academic exchanges. Continuous learning has gradually become part of institutional culture, encouraging lecturers to update disciplinary knowledge, improve teaching methodologies, and adapt to technological innovation.

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Digital transformation has also generated positive changes in workplace practices. Learning management systems, digital administration, online meetings, electronic document management, and cloud-based collaboration have become common features in many colleges. These technological developments have improved communication efficiency, facilitated information sharing, and enhanced administrative transparency (Nguyen, 2023). Consequently, digital professionalism—including responsible online communication, appropriate technology use, and collaborative digital working practices—has increasingly become part of workplace culture among lecturers.

Furthermore, the competitive educational environment in Ho Chi Minh City has motivated colleges to strengthen institutional reputation through improvements in organizational culture. Colleges increasingly recognize that a positive workplace culture contributes not only to employee satisfaction but also to educational quality, institutional image, student satisfaction, and stakeholder confidence.

4.2. Existing Challenges and Limitations

Despite these encouraging developments, documentary analysis suggests that workplace culture among lecturers continues to face several structural and managerial challenges.

One significant challenge concerns inconsistency in the implementation of workplace culture across institutions. While many colleges have developed codes of conduct and professional regulations, the practical application of these policies often depends on institutional leadership, organizational capacity, and administrative commitment. In some institutions, workplace culture remains largely compliance-oriented, focusing primarily on administrative discipline rather than fostering collaborative professional values and organizational innovation (Vu & Nguyen, 2022).

Another challenge involves organizational communication. Effective workplace culture requires open communication, mutual trust, and participatory decision-making. However, previous studies have indicated that communication channels within educational institutions may not always facilitate meaningful dialogue between institutional leaders and lecturers (Nguyen, 2020). Limited opportunities for participation in organizational decision-making can reduce employees' sense of ownership and weaken organizational commitment.

Workload pressures also influence workplace culture. College lecturers are expected to fulfill multiple responsibilities, including teaching, scientific research, curriculum development, student advising, administrative duties, and community engagement. These expanding responsibilities, particularly under institutional autonomy, may create work-related stress and reduce opportunities for collaborative professional interaction. Excessive administrative requirements can shift attention away from activities that strengthen organizational learning and collegial cooperation.

Professional development represents another area requiring continuous improvement. Although many colleges provide training opportunities, access to high-quality professional development remains uneven among institutions. Differences in institutional resources, financial capacity, and strategic priorities create disparities in lecturers' opportunities for research collaboration, international engagement, and digital skills development. Consequently, workplace culture may develop unevenly across colleges.

Digital transformation has introduced additional challenges. While digital technologies improve organizational efficiency, they also require lecturers to continuously acquire new competencies related to online teaching, digital communication, educational technology, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. Variations in digital literacy among lecturers may influence workplace interaction and organizational collaboration, particularly when institutions rapidly implement digital governance systems.

4.3. Emerging Issues in the Era of Digital Transformation

The rapid digitalization of higher education has significantly transformed the working environment of lecturers. Workplace culture today extends far beyond traditional office etiquette and professional behavior, incorporating digital interaction, virtual collaboration, responsible technology use, and ethical management of educational information (UNESCO, 2023).

One emerging issue concerns digital professionalism. Lecturers increasingly communicate with colleagues, students, and institutional leaders through email, learning management systems, online conferencing platforms, and social media. Professional behavior in these digital environments requires respect, transparency, responsiveness, and ethical communication. Institutions therefore face growing demands to establish clear standards for digital workplace behavior.

Artificial intelligence presents another important dimension of workplace culture. AI technologies are increasingly applied in teaching preparation, assessment design, academic writing, research support, and administrative management (OECD, 2023). While these technologies provide significant opportunities for improving productivity, they also raise ethical concerns related to academic integrity, intellectual property, transparency, and responsible technology use. Colleges therefore need workplace cultures that encourage innovation while maintaining professional ethics and academic responsibility.

Knowledge sharing has likewise become increasingly important. Modern educational institutions rely heavily on interdisciplinary collaboration, digital repositories, online resource sharing, and collaborative research networks. A workplace culture characterized by openness, trust, and knowledge exchange enhances institutional learning and organizational innovation (Westerman et al., 2014). Conversely, organizational environments that discourage collaboration may limit institutional adaptability and reduce academic productivity.

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In addition, cybersecurity awareness has become an essential component of workplace culture. Colleges manage extensive digital information related to students, lecturers, research activities, and institutional administration. Responsible management of digital information requires not only technological infrastructure but also appropriate employee behavior concerning data security, privacy protection, and ethical information use.

4.4. Factors Contributing to Current Challenges

The current situation of workplace culture among lecturers reflects the interaction of multiple institutional, organizational, and external factors rather than isolated individual behaviors.

Institutional leadership remains the most influential determinant. Leadership practices significantly affect organizational values, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and employee motivation. Colleges that demonstrate transparent governance, participatory leadership, and consistent policy implementation generally create more supportive workplace environments than institutions characterized by hierarchical administrative practices.

Institutional governance mechanisms also influence workplace culture. Policies concerning performance evaluation, professional development, recruitment, promotion, and recognition shape lecturers' perceptions of organizational fairness and institutional commitment. Transparent governance systems encourage professional responsibility, whereas inconsistent administrative procedures may reduce organizational trust (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2022).

Resource availability represents another important factor. Financial capacity, technological infrastructure, and human resource investment influence colleges' ability to implement professional development programs, digital transformation initiatives, and organizational improvement strategies. Resource disparities among colleges therefore contribute to variations in workplace culture (Nguyen, 2023).

Finally, broader policy reforms continue to reshape organizational expectations. Educational autonomy, quality assurance requirements, digital transformation policies, internationalization, and increasing stakeholder expectations require lecturers to assume increasingly diverse professional responsibilities. These changes necessitate corresponding adjustments in institutional culture, organizational leadership, and professional support systems.

Overall, documentary evidence suggests that workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City has experienced substantial progress toward greater professionalism, collaboration, and digital adaptation. Nevertheless, persistent challenges associated with governance, leadership, communication, professional development, workload management, and digital transformation indicate that workplace culture remains an evolving organizational capability rather than a fully consolidated institutional strength. These findings provide the basis for the subsequent discussion and the development of strategic policy recommendations aimed at strengthening workplace culture within the higher education sector.

5. DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City has undergone considerable transformation alongside broader educational reforms, institutional autonomy, and digital transformation. Rather than functioning merely as a collection of behavioral norms, workplace culture has increasingly become a strategic organizational resource that influences institutional governance, educational quality, lecturer professionalism, and long-term organizational sustainability (Warrick, 2017). The documentary evidence reviewed in this study suggests that colleges have made significant progress in establishing professional codes of conduct, strengthening institutional regulations, promoting continuous professional development, and integrating digital technologies into teaching and administrative activities. Nevertheless, workplace culture remains uneven across institutions because its development depends largely on leadership capacity, governance mechanisms, organizational resources, and institutional commitment (Denison & Mishra, 1995).

These findings support the theoretical perspectives presented in the literature review. Organizational culture theory argues that institutional values become meaningful only when they are consistently embedded within leadership practices, management systems, and employees' daily behaviors. The present analysis demonstrates that workplace culture in colleges is not created simply through formal regulations or administrative directives. Instead, it develops gradually through continuous interaction among institutional leadership, organizational governance, professional ethics, and collaborative working relationships. Consequently, colleges that integrate workplace culture into their strategic management systems are more likely to establish cohesive, innovative, and resilient academic communities.

One important implication emerging from this study concerns the relationship between leadership and workplace culture. Documentary evidence consistently indicates that institutional leaders play a decisive role in shaping organizational values, communication patterns, and professional expectations. Leadership extends beyond administrative authority; it establishes the organizational climate in which lecturers perform their professional responsibilities. Transparent leadership, participatory governance, ethical decision-making, and effective communication encourage organizational trust and collective responsibility. Conversely, hierarchical management styles that emphasize administrative compliance over professional engagement may weaken organizational cohesion and reduce lecturers' motivation to contribute to institutional development.

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This finding is consistent with international research emphasizing transformational leadership in educational organizations. Educational leaders who communicate a shared vision, encourage collaboration, recognize professional achievement, and support innovation contribute significantly to sustainable workplace cultures. Therefore, strengthening leadership capacity should be regarded not merely as an administrative reform but as a strategic investment in organizational culture.

A second important issue concerns institutional governance. The analysis suggests that workplace culture cannot be separated from governance quality. Policies relating to recruitment, performance evaluation, professional development, promotion, recognition, and organizational communication collectively shape lecturers' perceptions of institutional fairness and organizational support. Governance systems characterized by transparency, accountability, and participation foster stronger organizational commitment than systems relying primarily on administrative control.

This relationship has become increasingly significant as Vietnamese higher education institutions continue implementing institutional autonomy. Greater autonomy provides colleges with increased flexibility in managing academic programs, financial resources, and human resources. However, autonomy also requires stronger internal governance to ensure accountability, ethical conduct, and institutional effectiveness. Workplace culture therefore becomes an essential governance mechanism that guides professional behavior even when formal supervision is limited.

Another notable implication concerns the changing professional identity of college lecturers. Traditional perceptions often defined lecturers primarily as classroom instructors responsible for knowledge transmission. Contemporary higher education, however, expects lecturers to perform multiple roles simultaneously, including researcher, curriculum developer, academic advisor, innovation facilitator, community partner, and institutional contributor. These expanding responsibilities require workplace cultures that encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, continuous learning, adaptability, and professional resilience.

The findings indicate that colleges increasingly recognize lifelong learning as an essential organizational value. Nevertheless, differences in institutional resources continue to create unequal opportunities for professional development. Sustainable workplace culture therefore requires institutional investment in continuous learning rather than relying solely on individual motivation. Professional development should become an integrated component of organizational culture that encourages lecturers to continuously improve pedagogical competence, research capability, leadership skills, and digital literacy.

Digital transformation represents perhaps the most significant factor reshaping workplace culture in contemporary higher education. The rapid adoption of digital technologies has fundamentally altered communication patterns, teaching methods, administrative processes, and professional collaboration. Digital workplace culture now encompasses online communication, virtual teamwork, electronic administration, cloud-based information sharing, cybersecurity awareness, and responsible digital citizenship.

Importantly, the analysis suggests that digital transformation should not be understood merely as technological modernization. Technology itself cannot create positive organizational culture unless accompanied by corresponding changes in institutional values, professional ethics, and organizational behavior. Institutions that successfully integrate digital technologies with collaborative organizational values are better positioned to achieve sustainable educational innovation than those focusing exclusively on technological infrastructure.

Artificial intelligence further expands this discussion. AI-supported educational technologies increasingly assist lecturers in lesson preparation, assessment, academic writing, research activities, and institutional administration. While these technologies improve efficiency, they simultaneously generate new ethical challenges involving academic integrity, intellectual property, transparency, data privacy, and responsible decision-making. Workplace culture therefore becomes an important mechanism for guiding responsible AI adoption within higher education institutions.

The findings also demonstrate that organizational communication constitutes a central dimension of workplace culture. Effective communication facilitates knowledge sharing, interdisciplinary cooperation, institutional learning, and organizational trust. In contrast, fragmented communication structures reduce opportunities for collaboration and weaken organizational identity. Modern colleges therefore require communication cultures characterized by openness, mutual respect, constructive feedback, and inclusive participation. Such communication practices not only improve internal organizational effectiveness but also strengthen institutional adaptability in rapidly changing educational environments.

Another important observation concerns organizational resilience. Higher education institutions increasingly face uncertainty resulting from technological disruption, changing labor market demands, demographic transitions, public health crises, and international competition. Workplace culture significantly influences institutional resilience because organizations characterized by collaboration, trust, adaptability, and innovation respond more effectively to external challenges than organizations dominated by rigid administrative structures. Consequently, workplace culture should be viewed as a strategic organizational capability supporting institutional sustainability rather than merely an element of employee discipline (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

The analysis further highlights the importance of aligning workplace culture with national educational reform policies. Vietnam's ongoing reforms emphasize educational quality, digital transformation, institutional autonomy, innovation, international integration, and human resource development. Colleges are therefore expected to establish organizational cultures consistent with these strategic objectives. Workplace culture should encourage ethical behavior, professional accountability, collaborative learning,

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digital competence, and continuous organizational improvement. Such alignment enables institutional culture to function as an effective mechanism for implementing educational reform policies.

From a policy perspective, the study suggests that strengthening workplace culture requires an integrated governance approach. Isolated initiatives focusing only on codes of conduct or professional ethics are unlikely to produce sustainable organizational change. Instead, workplace culture should be embedded across leadership development, governance systems, human resource management, professional development, digital transformation strategies, quality assurance, and institutional performance evaluation. This systemic perspective recognizes workplace culture as an interconnected organizational ecosystem rather than a collection of independent administrative regulations (Hartnell et al., 2011).

The discussion also reveals several implications for future research. Because the present study relies on qualitative document analysis, future investigations may employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to examine lecturers' perceptions of workplace culture across different institutional contexts. Comparative studies involving universities, colleges, and vocational institutions could provide deeper understanding of how organizational characteristics influence workplace culture. In addition, longitudinal research examining the effects of digital transformation and artificial intelligence on workplace culture would contribute valuable evidence for educational policymakers and institutional leaders (Vu & Nguyen, 2022).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that workplace culture has evolved into a strategic determinant of institutional effectiveness within contemporary higher education. Colleges in Ho Chi Minh City have established important foundations for developing professional organizational environments; however, sustaining these achievements requires stronger leadership, more effective governance, greater investment in professional development, enhanced digital competence, and organizational cultures capable of adapting to continuous educational change. These considerations provide the conceptual and practical basis for the strategic recommendations presented in the following section.

6. STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING WORKPLACE CULTURE AMONG COLLEGE LECTURERS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Developing a sustainable workplace culture requires a comprehensive and integrated approach involving institutional leadership, governance systems, professional development, digital transformation, and continuous organizational improvement. Based on the findings of this study, several strategic solutions are proposed to strengthen workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City.

6.1. Strengthening Leadership Commitment to Workplace Culture

Institutional leadership should regard workplace culture as a strategic asset rather than merely an administrative requirement. Leaders play a decisive role in establishing organizational values, shaping professional behavior, and creating an environment that encourages collaboration and innovation. Therefore, college leaders should integrate workplace culture into institutional development strategies, annual operational plans, and quality assurance systems (Ly, 2023).

Leadership should also emphasize transparency, accountability, and participatory governance. Regular dialogue between administrators and lecturers can improve mutual understanding, strengthen organizational trust, and encourage shared responsibility in institutional development. Furthermore, leaders should demonstrate professional ethics through their own behavior, thereby serving as role models for lecturers and reinforcing organizational values.

Embedding workplace culture into strategic leadership will help create a consistent organizational vision in which lecturers understand not only institutional regulations but also the values guiding professional conduct and long-term institutional development.

6.2. Improving Institutional Governance and Human Resource Management

Workplace culture should be supported by effective governance mechanisms that promote fairness, transparency, and organizational accountability. Colleges should review existing regulations concerning recruitment, promotion, performance evaluation, rewards, and professional development to ensure that these policies reinforce positive organizational values.

Human resource management should increasingly recognize collaborative behavior, innovation, professional ethics, and institutional contribution alongside traditional teaching and research performance. Evaluation systems that reward only individual academic outputs may unintentionally reduce teamwork and organizational cooperation. Consequently, performance management should incorporate indicators reflecting collaboration, mentoring, community engagement, and contributions to institutional development (Fralinger & Olson, 2007).

Institutions should also establish clear communication mechanisms allowing lecturers to participate in decision-making processes affecting academic activities and workplace conditions. Inclusive governance encourages organizational commitment while strengthening lecturers' sense of responsibility toward institutional objectives.

6.3. Promoting Continuous Professional Development

Professional development should become an integral component of workplace culture rather than an occasional administrative activity. Colleges should establish systematic training programs addressing pedagogical innovation, research methodology, educational leadership, communication skills, digital competence, and professional ethics.

Interdisciplinary collaboration should also be encouraged through research groups, academic seminars, communities of practice, and professional mentoring programs. Such collaborative learning environments strengthen organizational cohesion while facilitating knowledge sharing among lecturers from different disciplines.

Particular attention should be devoted to supporting early-career lecturers. Structured mentoring systems involving experienced academic staff can accelerate professional adaptation, strengthen institutional identity, and transmit organizational values across generations of lecturers. This approach contributes not only to individual development but also to the long-term sustainability of institutional culture.

Moreover, colleges should expand international academic cooperation, enabling lecturers to participate in professional exchanges, collaborative research, and international training activities. Exposure to international academic environments promotes openness, innovation, and continuous learning, all of which are fundamental characteristics of modern workplace culture.

6.4. Integrating Digital Transformation into Workplace Culture

Digital transformation should be viewed as an opportunity to modernize organizational culture rather than simply introducing new technologies. Colleges should establish clear guidelines concerning digital communication, online collaboration, electronic administration, cybersecurity, and responsible technology use (Do, 2022).

Digital competence should become a core professional competency for lecturers. Training programs should therefore include digital pedagogy, learning management systems, educational technologies, artificial intelligence applications, and digital information management. Building digital confidence enables lecturers to participate more effectively in institutional innovation while reducing resistance to technological change.

Responsible use of artificial intelligence deserves particular attention. Colleges should develop institutional guidelines encouraging AI to support teaching, research, and administrative work while maintaining academic integrity, intellectual honesty, transparency, and respect for intellectual property. Ethical AI use should become an essential component of institutional workplace culture rather than an isolated technological issue.

Furthermore, digital collaboration platforms should be utilized to strengthen knowledge sharing across departments and institutions. Online professional communities can facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation, reduce organizational isolation, and promote continuous organizational learning.

6.5. Strengthening Organizational Communication and Collaborative Culture

Effective communication represents one of the most important foundations of workplace culture. Colleges should establish organizational environments characterized by openness, respect, constructive dialogue, and mutual support.

Internal communication strategies should encourage lecturers to share professional experiences, innovative teaching practices, research outcomes, and institutional initiatives. Regular academic forums, departmental meetings, interdisciplinary workshops, and collaborative projects provide valuable opportunities for strengthening organizational relationships (Dao & Nguyen, 2024).

Conflict management also deserves greater attention. Educational institutions inevitably encounter differences in professional perspectives and organizational priorities. Constructive conflict resolution mechanisms emphasizing dialogue, mediation, and mutual respect contribute significantly to maintaining healthy workplace relationships and organizational stability.

In addition, colleges should recognize and celebrate examples of professional excellence, collaborative achievement, and institutional contribution. Public recognition reinforces organizational values while motivating lecturers to actively participate in building positive workplace culture.

6.6. Establishing a Sustainable Workplace Culture Evaluation System

Long-term improvement requires systematic monitoring and continuous evaluation. Colleges should therefore develop workplace culture assessment frameworks integrated into institutional quality assurance systems.

Evaluation should extend beyond compliance with administrative regulations to include organizational trust, professional collaboration, communication quality, leadership effectiveness, digital professionalism, ethical behavior, and employee engagement. Multiple sources of information—including institutional reports, self-assessment activities, peer feedback, and quality assurance reviews—can provide comprehensive understanding of workplace culture development (Thao, 2023).

Continuous improvement should become a fundamental organizational principle. Assessment findings should be used not for administrative control but for identifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, and supporting organizational learning (Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021). Such evidence-informed management enables colleges to adapt workplace culture continuously in response to changing educational environments.

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At the policy level, educational authorities may consider developing general guidelines and evaluation indicators that assist colleges in implementing workplace culture more consistently while preserving institutional autonomy. These frameworks should emphasize flexibility, allowing institutions to adapt workplace culture initiatives according to their organizational missions, disciplinary characteristics, and strategic priorities.

Figure 2 summarizes the strategic framework proposed by this study. The framework integrates leadership, governance, professional development, digital transformation, communication, and evaluation into a comprehensive approach for strengthening workplace culture and improving institutional effectiveness.

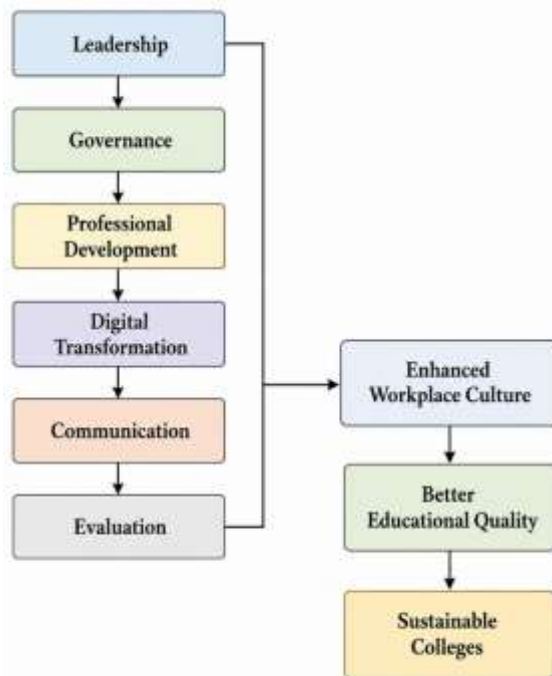


Figure 2. Strategic Framework for Strengthening Workplace Culture

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined workplace culture among lecturers at colleges in Ho Chi Minh City through qualitative document analysis and policy analysis. The findings demonstrate that workplace culture has become an increasingly important component of institutional governance, influencing lecturer professionalism, organizational effectiveness, educational quality, and the long-term sustainability of higher education institutions. Contemporary workplace culture extends beyond compliance with administrative regulations to encompass professional ethics, collaborative relationships, continuous learning, digital competence, responsible use of emerging technologies, and organizational adaptability in an era of educational reform and digital transformation.

The analysis indicates that colleges in Ho Chi Minh City have achieved important progress in strengthening workplace culture through institutional regulations, professional development initiatives, digital transformation, and improvements in governance practices. However, several challenges remain, including inconsistencies in policy implementation, differences in leadership capacity, communication barriers, unequal professional development opportunities, workload pressures, and the growing demands associated with digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Addressing these issues requires workplace culture to be viewed not as an isolated administrative function but as a strategic organizational capability embedded within leadership, governance, human resource management, and quality assurance systems.

Based on these findings, the study proposed strategic solutions focusing on leadership commitment, governance reform, continuous professional development, digital transformation, organizational communication, and systematic evaluation of workplace culture. Collectively, these recommendations provide a comprehensive framework that may assist college leaders and educational policymakers in creating professional, collaborative, innovative, and sustainable academic environments capable of responding effectively to future educational challenges.

This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating perspectives from organizational culture, educational governance, and digital transformation to analyze workplace culture within the context of Vietnamese colleges. Nevertheless, the research is limited by its reliance on documentary sources without empirical evidence collected directly from lecturers or institutional leaders. Future studies may employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to validate the proposed framework, compare workplace culture across different types of higher education institutions, and further explore the influence of digital

transformation and artificial intelligence on organizational culture in higher education. Such research would provide additional empirical evidence to support policy formulation and institutional improvement in Vietnam's evolving higher education system

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