



Building Networks for University Success: An Essay on the Role of Organizational Culture and Social Capital

Priority care group and the preferential rights of older adults in Ecuador

Alberto Efraín Prado Chinga

Simon Bolivar Andean University

alberto.prado@uasb.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3723-0729>

Luisa Nicole Quiñonez Caicedo

Luis Vargas Torres Technical University

luisa.quinonez.caicedo@utelvt.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7290-8662>

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the interrelationship between organizational culture and social capital in the context of Ecuadorian universities, highlighting their influence on institutional performance, sustainability and innovation. Based on a systematic review of indexed scientific literature, the main characteristics of both dimensions are identified and a theoretical model is proposed to explain how cultural values, organizational structures and interpersonal relationships influence the generation of networks of trust, reciprocity and collaboration. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, without primary data collection, prioritizing argumentative analysis and conceptual synthesis. The findings reveal the predominant presence of hierarchical cultures and fragmented social networks within the university system, which limits institutionalized cooperation and hinders innovation. The proposed model organizes the interaction between organizational

culture and social capital in three dimensions: structural, relational and cultural, which feed back on each other. It is concluded that the transformation of universities requires comprehensive strategies that simultaneously strengthen organizational culture and social capital, promoting more participatory structures, distributed leadership and sustained collaborative practices. This study provides a useful theoretical basis for future empirical research and for the formulation of inclusive and sustainable university policies.

ABSTRACT

In Ecuador, the Constitution establishes the rights of the priority care group and the preferential rights of older adults in Ecuador. The discrimination and lack of interest in how this leads to the exclusion of the priority care group and the preferential rights of older adults is of utmost importance because with this study, we will promote the collaboration and initiative of society so that the priority care group and the preferential rights of older adults are constantly involved in social programs to improve their quality of life. The content is divided into three chapters, which develop the theoretical framework, mentioning concepts and theoretical aspects of the topics that support this study. The methodological aspects are then established, presenting and describing the results obtained, as well as the conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords / Palabras clave

organizational culture, social capital, university management, institutional networks, university success.

Introduction

In the contemporary context of higher education institutions, organizational culture and social capital have positioned themselves as fundamental categories for understanding the factors that influence university efficiency, sustainability and innovation. Organizational culture represents the set of shared values, beliefs, norms and practices that guide the behavior of the members of an institution (Schein, 2010), while social capital refers to the networks of trust, reciprocity and collaboration that facilitate collective action (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

In Latin America and particularly in Ecuador, multiple studies have evidenced limitations in the articulation between hierarchical

organizational structures and the generation of effective social capital (Cabrera & Fuenzalida, 2016; Narváez et al., 2017). The absence of participatory cultures prevents the consolidation of strong internal networks, which has a direct impact on academic performance, governance and the university-society relationship (De Boer et al., 2015).

This phenomenon becomes particularly relevant in the context of university management reforms promoted by quality assurance agencies, which demand greater transparency, collaboration and social relevance. Despite this, bureaucratic structures persist that limit the development of social capital, making it difficult to implement models of institutional innovation (Deem et al., 2007).

Several research studies have explored how a collaborative organizational culture can enhance social capital and vice versa (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 2002). However, a greater theoretical understanding of how these variables interact in specific university contexts is still required. In the Ecuadorian case, empirical approximations exist, but integrative models that account for the bidirectionality and synergistic effects of this relationship are scarce (Saltos et al., 2016; Saravia & Peña, 2019).

This article is framed within a constructivist and relational perspective, assuming that both organizational culture and social capital are dynamic social constructs, influenced by the historical and contextual trajectories of each institution. The contributions of Schein (2010) in the deep understanding of cultural levels (artifacts, values and assumptions), and those of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) in the articulation between structural, relational and cognitive dimensions of social capital are mainly taken up.

Based on this theoretical foundation, a conceptual model is proposed that synthesizes the main findings of the literature, identifying the mechanisms through which organizational culture influences the consolidation of university social capital, and vice versa. This model will be developed in the following sections of the article.

Based on the above, this article aims to analyze the role of organizational culture and social capital in Ecuadorian university management, proposing a theoretical model that explains their interrelation and impact on institutional performance. This purpose is approached through a systematic review of indexed scientific literature, prioritizing verifiable sources of high academic rigor.

Organizational culture in higher education institutions has been widely studied as a determining factor in the configuration of institutional behavior, decision-making processes and strategic orientation (Schein, 2010). In general terms, it refers to the shared patterns of beliefs, values and norms that shape the daily functioning of an organization (Hofstede, 1980).

In the university environment, organizational culture acquires particular relevance due to its influence on aspects such as academic management, teaching-administrative work dynamics, the perception of leadership and the degree of institutional innovation (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). According to comparative studies, universities with cultures oriented towards collaboration and participation tend to be more adaptive and resilient in the face of environmental changes (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007).

Authors such as Cabrera and Fuenzalida (2016) have evidenced that in the Ecuadorian case verticalist cultural patterns persist, with little participation of intermediate actors and a weak institutionalization of values such as trust and autonomy. These features hinder educational innovation and the building of consensus for institutional development.

has been conceptualized as the set of networks of social relations characterized by trust, cooperation and reciprocity, which facilitate coordination and collaboration between individuals and groups (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). In the university environment, this construct acquires a strategic value by influencing the formation of cohesive academic communities and the articulation with surrounding actors.

Empirical research has identified that the existence of solid social capital translates into higher levels of innovation, research productivity and social linkage (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Indeed, universities with strong horizontal and inter-institutional links manage to generate more inclusive and sustainable academic ecosystems (Narváez et al., 2017).

In the Ecuadorian context, studies such as that of Saltos, Vera and León (2016) evidence the prevalence of informal networks based on personal affinities rather than shared institutional objectives. This fragmentation weakens cross-cutting cooperation and limits the development of long-term collaborative projects.

Several theoretical approaches have highlighted the interdependence between organizational culture and social capital. According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), institutional culture conditions the types of social relations established within an organization, and these relations, in turn, influence the reproduction of certain cultural patterns.

This bidirectional link has been represented in models such as the one proposed by De Boer, Enders and Schimank (2015), who argue that university performance is influenced by the quality of social interactions mediated by cultural elements. For example, institutions that foster transparency and shared leadership tend to consolidate trust networks that facilitate collective action.

From an applied perspective, several authors recommend simultaneously considering cultural diagnosis and social network mapping as key tools for strengthening university governance (Putnam, 2000; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This integration makes it possible to identify critical nodes of collaboration, as well as cultural values that can enhance or limit institutional development.

Recent studies reinforce the idea that organizational culture not only shapes internal behavior, but is deeply connected to sustainability and social responsibility. Bravo et al. (2023) analyze how organizational culture and corporate social responsibility are interrelated, highlighting their impact on the work climate and the perception of institutional legitimacy. In a similar vein, Galindo (2023) emphasizes the relevance of organizational culture in higher education institutions as an articulating factor between management practices and commitments to society.

Castro et al. (2024) offer a systematic review showing that an organizational culture oriented toward participation and internal coherence facilitates better implementation of strategic plans. These findings are key for the university system, where many reforms fail due to the dissonance between institutional discourse and dominant cultural practices.

Espinosa et al. (2024) address a frequently forgotten component: the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the analysis of organizational culture. In their study, they show that the lack of recognition of structural inequalities within organizations reproduces forms of exclusion that hinder the construction of decent work environments. This perspective enriches the approach to

organizational culture in universities, where gender equity still faces serious limitations.

Social capital, understood as an intangible resource based on trust and collaboration, has recently been analyzed by authors such as Garro and Li Bonilla (2025), who argue that it can be decisive for the viability of emerging cooperative initiatives. Through their analysis in the Costa Rican context, they show that organizational social capital is key to the consolidation of solidarity and sustainable networks.

The study by Núñez et al. (2022) delves into the relationship between social capital and scientific performance in research groups. The findings show that the practice of sharing knowledge is a manifestation of social capital that has a direct impact on productivity and academic visibility.

The incorporation of this research strengthens the theoretical model proposed in this study by broadening its applicability to different types of organizations and highlighting new variables, such as gender equity and social responsibility. Taken together, these contributions allow understanding organizational culture and social capital as complex, interdependent dimensions with a high transformational potential when managed consciously and strategically.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, with a descriptive and analytical design. This choice responds to the need to understand in depth the theoretical interrelationships between organizational culture and social capital within the Ecuadorian university context, without resorting to primary empirical data collection.

The study is based on a critical review of indexed scientific literature, selecting academic articles, books and comparative studies that address the concepts of organizational culture and social capital, as well as their applications in university management. The inclusion criteria considered the thematic relevance, methodological rigor and timeliness of the publications, covering a time range between 1980 and 2023.

The analysis strategy consisted of intensive reading, systematization and synthesis of the selected documents. A thematic approach was used to categorize the findings according to the conceptual dimensions of each variable, identifying patterns of interrelation,

theoretical convergences and significant empirical contributions. This process made it possible to structure an explanatory theoretical model that guides the interpretation of the bidirectional relationship between organizational culture and social capital in higher education.

Since this was a documentary study, neither data collection instruments nor statistical techniques were applied. Instead, priority was given to argumentative consistency, the validation of the sources used and the logical construction of the proposed conceptual model. The methodology adopted provides a solid basis for future empirical research that seeks to validate or contrast the approaches developed here (Knight, 2004).

Results

The results of this research are organized around the systematization of conceptual and empirical findings identified in the specialized literature, which allow structuring an explanatory theoretical model of the interaction between organizational culture and social capital in Ecuadorian universities.

The documentary review made it possible to identify that, in many Ecuadorian universities, a hierarchical type of organizational culture predominates, characterized by vertical structures, centralization of decisions and little collective participation (Cabrera & Fuenzalida, 2016; Saravia & Peña, 2019). This type of culture is usually accompanied by fragmented institutional communication, resistance to change and little openness to innovation.

It was also evidenced that organizational cultures focused on regulatory compliance or operational efficiency, although they may contribute to administrative order, tend to limit spontaneous collaboration, sense of belonging and the creation of resilient academic communities (Deem et al., 2007; Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

The studies analyzed coincide in pointing out that social capital in higher education institutions in Ecuador is weakly structured. There is a strong presence of informal networks, based on personal affinities or political loyalties, which sometimes hinder transparency, meritocracy and institutionalized cooperation (Saltos et al., 2016; Narváez et al., 2017).

However, some outstanding experiences show that, when practices such as collaborative research, community linkage or peer mentoring

programs are promoted, bonds of trust and reciprocity are strengthened, generating positive social capital that enhances organizational performance (Putnam, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

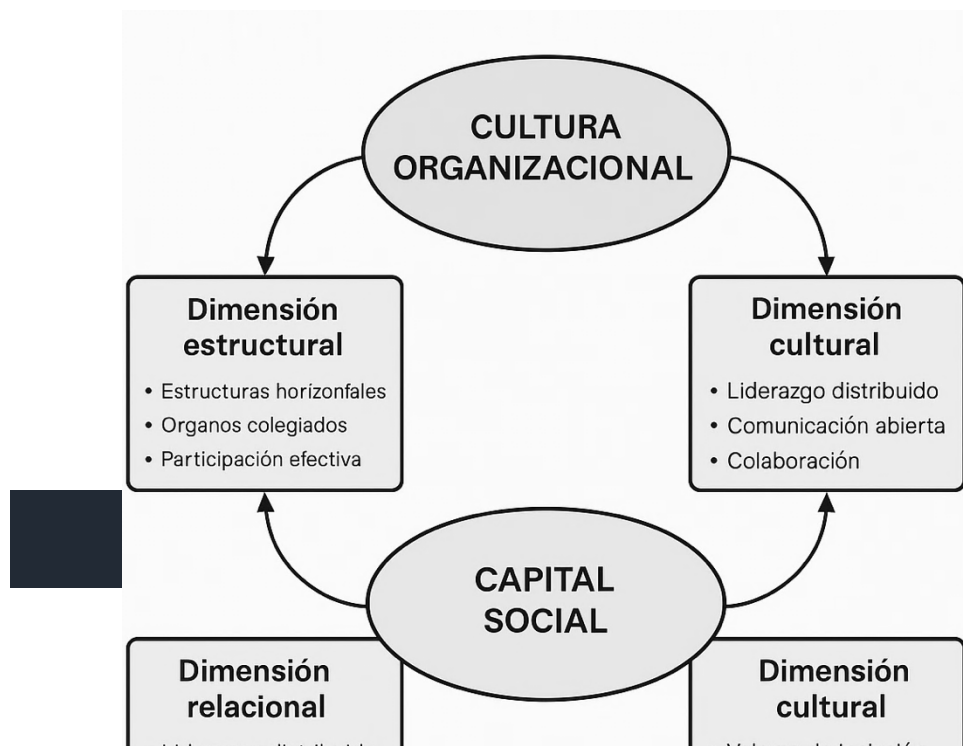
Based on the analysis of the findings, a theoretical model was constructed to explain the bidirectional relationship between organizational culture and social capital. This model identifies three main dimensions of interaction:

Structural dimension: refers to the organizational mechanisms that regulate interaction, such as hierarchical structures, internal regulations, communication channels and collegial bodies. A flexible and participatory structure tends to facilitate the generation of social networks.

Relational dimension: encompasses the quality of relationships between members of the university community. Elements such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation are fundamental to consolidate institutional social capital.

Cultural dimension: refers to the shared values and assumptions that shape institutional behavior. A culture based on openness, equity and commitment fosters collaborative practices sustained over time.

Diagram 1. Diagram of the theoretical model of interaction between organizational culture and social capital.



Source: Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., & Ryan, J. (2003).

This model suggests that the strengthening of a positive organizational culture has a direct impact on the development of social capital and vice versa. Consequently, any institutional improvement strategy should address both dimensions integrally and simultaneously.

- The findings allow us to outline some practical recommendations for universities:
- Implement participatory cultural diagnostics to identify structural weaknesses.
- Promote spaces for inter-institutional dialogue, learning networks and communities of practice.
- Promote distributed leadership that reinforces organizational trust.
- Establish institutional social capital evaluation indicators as part of the quality system.

These strategies could contribute to a more inclusive, flexible and results-oriented university governance, strengthening the articulation between internal processes and the demands of the socioeconomic environment.

The results obtained allow establishing a critical dialogue with the theoretical body reviewed, which makes it possible to articulate

conceptual, empirical and strategic reflections on the interaction between organizational culture and social capital in the Ecuadorian university environment. This section is structured according to four axes of analysis: theoretical convergences, empirical validation, institutional implications and implications for university management.

First, the empirical findings and the literature reviewed ratify the existence of a bidirectional relationship between organizational culture and social capital, as proposed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). These authors argue that organizational structure and shared culture have a direct impact on the configuration of social networks, as well as on the levels of trust, cooperation and sense of community within an institution. Evidence from Ecuadorian and Latin American studies reinforces this conception, showing that universities with more horizontal structures and participatory models consolidate greater institutional cohesion (De Boer et al., 2015).

Likewise, Schein's (2010) theory on the levels of organizational culture (artifacts, values and underlying assumptions) is useful to understand why many universities have difficulties in transforming their internal culture: superficial changes in procedures or regulations do not automatically modify the deep beliefs that underpin organizational behavior. Hence, structural transformations must be accompanied by reflective and inclusive processes that challenge the traditional logics of power and leadership.

The results allow us to observe empirical regularities that validate the theoretical contributions reviewed. For example, it is found that the hierarchical and authoritarian organizational culture, still present in much of the Ecuadorian university system, tends to generate institutional environments with low levels of participation and low capacity for innovation (Cabrera & Fuenzalida, 2016). This is consistent with the studies of Saravia and Peña (2019), who document how top-down structures hinder the formation of cohesive and committed academic communities.

Likewise, successful institutional experiences are identified where the implementation of transparency policies, distributed leadership and practices of linkage with society have enhanced university social capital. Such is the case of peer mentoring programs, inter-institutional research networks and spaces for faculty-student participation, which have been pointed out as effective practices to

consolidate bonds of trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000; Narváez et al., 2017).

In this framework, the theoretical model proposal presented is nourished not only by international literature, but also by contextualized empirical contributions, which reinforces its relevance to guide organizational transformation processes in public and private universities in Ecuador.

A critical reading of the results also suggests that organizational culture should not be understood as a static or homogeneous phenomenon. Universities are complex systems where subcultures, institutional tensions and power dynamics coexist and influence the way social relations are constructed (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In this sense, cultural transformation requires recognizing the historical trajectories of institutions, their governance structures and the normative frameworks that regulate their functioning.

Social capital, on the other hand, should be conceived as a strategic institutional resource, which cannot be imposed by regulations, but must be cultivated through genuine practices of collaboration, participation and mutual recognition. The studies reviewed show that, in contexts where inclusion and equity are fostered, more favorable conditions are generated for the emergence of sustained networks of trust and cooperation (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

In practical terms, this research offers concrete directions for university management. First, it highlights the need to design institutional diagnoses that integrate cultural and social variables, making it possible to map the relational dynamics that strengthen or weaken the processes of change. In addition, it proposes including qualitative indicators of social capital in internal quality assessment and assurance systems, in order to capture aspects related to institutional cohesion and interdepartmental collaboration.

Another relevant implication is the importance of distributed leadership as a catalyst for cultural change. Academic leadership figures that promote deliberation, networking and relational horizontality play a key role in the consolidation of more democratic and resilient organizational practices (Deem et al., 2007).

Finally, it is reaffirmed that university reform processes should not focus exclusively on administrative efficiency or compliance with quantitative indicators, but should incorporate ethical, symbolic and

social dimensions that provide legitimacy and sustainability to the transformations. The theoretical model proposed in this study represents a useful conceptual tool to guide such reforms from a systemic and integrative perspective.

In sum, the discussion leads to the conclusion that the relationship between organizational culture and social capital is central to understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by Ecuadorian universities in their transition to more inclusive, participatory and sustainable management models.

This study is based exclusively on secondary sources, which limits the possibility of observing real organizational dynamics in the present time. In addition, the institutional diversity of the country requires more specific studies by type of university (public, private, community, intercultural). The development of empirical research, using social network approaches, case studies and longitudinal analysis, is suggested to validate the proposed model and analyze its applicability in specific contexts (Astin, 2011).

Conclusions

The present research has allowed us to deepen the analysis of the interaction between organizational culture and social capital in the context of Ecuadorian higher education, providing an integrative theoretical framework that articulates structural, relational and cultural dimensions. Through a critical review of indexed academic literature, common patterns, persistent challenges and relevant experiences were identified that support the need to jointly address both constructs as key factors in institutional strengthening.

First, it is confirmed that organizational culture strongly conditions the configuration of university social capital. Institutions with participatory structures, distributed leadership and institutional values oriented towards inclusion, transparency and collaboration tend to develop networks of trust and reciprocity that enhance organizational performance, innovation and links with the environment. In contrast, hierarchical, top-down and normative cultures inhibit the generation of social capital, generating institutional environments that are fragmented and resistant to change.

Secondly, social capital should not be conceived as a spontaneous or accessory phenomenon, but as a strategic resource that has a direct impact on educational quality, institutional welfare and the sustainability of university processes. The literature consulted and the systematized findings show that the strengthening of collaborative networks, the promotion of interpersonal relationships based on trust, and the construction of a shared institutional identity are fundamental elements for advancing towards a more democratic, open and socially committed university.

Third, the theoretical model proposed in this study represents a relevant conceptual contribution, as it integrates different dimensions of analysis in a scheme that can be used as a diagnostic and guiding tool for institutional policies. Its usefulness lies in its ability to demonstrate how changes in organizational culture can strengthen social capital, and how the latter can, in turn, positively feed back into the cultural processes within universities.

Finally, it is recommended that the management teams and collegiate bodies of higher education institutions implement strategies aimed at participatory cultural diagnosis, the promotion of distributed leadership, the design of mechanisms for evaluating social capital and the institutionalization of collaborative practices. These actions would contribute to overcoming the traditional barriers that limit organizational development and would allow the consolidation of more resilient and inclusive management models that are coherent with the challenges of the contemporary environment.

In sum, the analysis developed reaffirms the importance of understanding and comprehensively managing the relationship between organizational culture and social capital, recognizing its strategic nature for institutional success. Future research could complement this study through comparative empirical approaches, case studies and mixed methodologies to validate the theoretical model in different contexts and with different types of universities.

References

- Adler, Paul S., and Seok-Woo Kwon. 2002. "Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept." *Academy of Management Review* 27 (1): 17-40. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.5922314>.
- Astin, Alexander W. 2011. *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Bravo, Yessenia Johana Márquez, Benigno Javier Alcívar-Martínez, Ernesto Negrín Sosa, and María Belén González García. 2023. "The Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility and Organizational Culture in a Construction Company." *Uniandes Episteme. Journal of Science, Technology and Innovation*. <https://doi.org/10.61154/rue.v10i4.3230>.
- Cabrera, Ángel F., and Verónica Fuenzalida. 2016. "Organizational Culture and its Influence on University Performance." *Managerial Studies* 32 (138): 51-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.estger.2016.06.003>.
- Cameron, Kim S., and Robert E. Quinn. 2011. *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Castro, Mauricio Alejandro Becerra, Alex Paz Becerra, José Luis Condom Bosch, and Gabriel Soriano Soriano. 2024. "Impact of Organizational Culture on the Effective Implementation of Strategic Plans in Organizations: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Organizations*. <https://doi.org/10.17345/rio33.446>.
- Coleman, James S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (Supplement): S95-S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>.
- De Boer, Harry, Jürgen Enders, and Uwe Schimank. 2015. "A Conceptual Model of University Performance: A Social Capital Perspective." *Higher Education* 69 (3): 423-439. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9780-4>.
- Deem, Rosemary, Sam Hillyard, and Michael Reed. 2007. *Knowledge, Higher Education, and the New Managerialism: The Changing Management of UK Universities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Espinosa, Irma López, Irene Vázquez Ibarra, José de Jesús González Hernández, and Laura Fierro Rosales. 2024. "The Scope of Decent Work in Organizational Culture: The Need for a Gender Perspective." *LATAM Latin American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 5 (6). <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v5i6.2991>.
- Galindo, Franklin Manuel Osorio. 2023. "Organizational Culture in Higher Education Institutions: Concepts, Importance and Relationship with Social Responsibility." *Le Cordon Bleu*

- University Research Magazine* 10 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.36955/riulcb.2023v10n1.006>.
- Garro, Oscar Sanabria, and Federico Li Bonilla. 2025. "Organizational Social Capital as a Tool to Enhance the Viability of Newly Created Cooperatives in Costa Rica Within the Social Spin-Off Between 2019 and 2024." *CIRIEC-Spain, Journal of Public, Social and Cooperative Economics* (113).
<https://doi.org/10.7203/ciriec-e.113.29353>.
- Hargreaves, Andy, Lorna Earl, and Jim Ryan. 2003. "Cultures of Professionalism: International Differences in the Practice of Teacher Professionalism." *Teachers College Record* 105 (3): 451-485.
- Hofstede, Geert. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Knight, Jane. 2004. "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8 (1): 5-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832>.
- Nahapiet, Janine, and Sumantra Ghoshal. 1998. "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage." *Academy of Management Review* 23 (2): 242-266.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225>.
- Narváez, María José, Andrea Elizabeth Jara, and Patricia Paredes. 2017. "Social Capital in University Management: An Approach From the Social Network Approach." *Revista Digital de Investigación en Docencia Universitaria* 11 (1): 13-29.
<https://doi.org/10.19083/ridu.11.546>.
- Núñez, Claudia Benítez, Paola García Sánchez, Nieves Lidia Díaz-Díaz, and Petra de Saá Pérez. 2022. "The Role of Social Capital of Research Groups in their Scientific Performance: The Importance of Knowledge Sharing." *Journal of Labor and Social Security. CEF.* (4665).
<https://doi.org/10.51302/rtss.2022.4665>.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Salto, Jaime, Andrés Vera, and Maribel León. 2016. "Análisis del Capital Social en la Gestión Universitaria: Una Aproximación

Desde la Percepción de los Docentes." *Education Management* 7 (2): 81-98. <https://doi.org/10.26423/gae.v7i2.140>.

Saravia, Paola, and Diana Peña. 2019. "Organizational Culture and its Influence on Work Climate in an Ecuadorian University." *Revista Ciencia y Tecnología* 12 (2): 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.53766/rct.v12i2.61>.

Schein, Edgar H. 2010. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.