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**LAUGH OUT LOUD: HOW ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE  
INFLUENCES WORKPLACE HUMOUR**



**A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
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## **Abstract**

Workplace humour is an important component of organisational culture and social behaviour, yet this topic is under-researched and neglected within the field of organisational studies. This thesis explores the influence of organisational culture on workplace humour enactment.

Key research objectives are to contribute empirical data regarding the influence of organisational culture on humour and to create a model that explains and connects significant aspects of humour and organisational culture. A further aim is to explore the element of formality within organisational culture and its impacts on humour enactment.

Research was undertaken in four New Zealand companies from different industries. A mixed-method approach is used and methods include: interviews; participant observation and document collection. An assessment tool was created to compare levels of formality and/or informality in the studied organisations.

Findings show that the organisational culture and levels of formality and/or informality within the culture influence humour practices through the creation of boundaries that constrain or enable humour activities. A model was created to depict the influence of organisational culture upon humour enactment. The model shows that levels of formality or informality are key cultural elements and that formality/informality levels influence the boundaries that are created for humour enactment. Specific individuals (identified as either jokers or gatekeepers) assume dichotomous roles and within these roles either challenge or constrain the humour boundaries. Organisational members perceive that humour and organisational culture have both positive and negative impacts upon workplace outcomes such as: retention; satisfaction; performance and recruitment.

Humour at work is widespread and a significant component of modern working life. Humour manifests itself within workplace culture and understanding the influence of organisational culture on humour enactment is an important facet of organisational studies.

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