"An empirical study of elements of organizational culture on employees' divergent behavior"

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – Cultures shape individuals and individuals use their ideas and values to create cultures. Rice (2003) points out how employees can engage in creative behavior as long as the working conditions within the organization are flexible enough and conducive to allow for individual and group creativity. Many organizational culture researchers agree that organizational culture is a contributing factor to the degree to which creativity and innovative behavior is found among employees. This research paper is intended to examine whether any significant relationship exists between organizational culture and employees' divergent behaviour.

Methodology– For this study, responses of a sample of employees of automobile and auto ancillary companies in India would be collected. A self-administered questionnaire including a Five-point Likert-type numerical scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree will be used. Reliability test will be applied using Cronbach's Alpha to know the relationship between research variables, Karl Pearson's Correlation was applied.

Findings – Finding of the research will be based on data and its respective analysis.

Research Limitations- The current study divergent behavior is defined as creativity, decision making, originality in ideas, problem solving, flexibility and risk taking the study reflects the point of view of researcher. There may be other variables of divergent behavior as this topic is not researched.

Keywords – Organization Culture, Divergent Behaviour, Divergent Thinking, Creativity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity and innovative problem-solving must be cultivated within an organization. While productive, useful idea-generation does require a degree of structure, and even deadlines, a truly innovative organization provides its employees with room to explore, pursue novel approaches, and even fail (Ciit, 2016). Culture of an organization can influence not only how its employees eat, dress, or talk but also numerous aspects of its employees' lives, including how productive or creative they might be. In fact, cultures and individuals cannot be treated as separate entities. A reciprocal relationship lies between culture and individuals. Cultures shape individuals and, individuals use their ideas and values to create cultures. Rice (2003) points out how employees can engage in creative behavior as long as the working conditions within the organization are flexible enough and conducive to allow for individual and group creativity. In a positive organizational culture, managers encourage an open work environment where collaboration and innovation are supported and encouraged. This means many people can work together to come up with new ideas and, even if they fail, do not have to fear reprisal. On the other hand, negative culture is one that bogs down the employees with countless tasks having inadequate time to complete, enforces a conservative attitude toward innovation, and openly criticizes any form of failure. Thus, negative culture doesn't want its employees to innovate nor even allows them the time to do so. Many organizational culture researchers agree that organizational culture is a contributing factor to the degree to which creativity and innovative behavior is found among employees in an organization although it's also recognized as an understudied topic and that more research should be done to better understand it. The present study is an endeavor to examine the relationship between organizational culture and employees' divergent behavior which is a broader concept than creativity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted in this domain where the influence of organizational culture was sought on employees' creativity. According to Gómez, Marcos (2010), creativity and the creative product are not exclusively the result of cognitive and mental processes aided by human interaction and collaboration, but they are also the result of the cultural background of individuals as well as the socio-cultural environment in which they live and create. Further, it has been revealed that apart from individual characteristics such as education, cognitive type, personality or motivation, employee creativity is also a function of their cultural identity and the cultural values that they hold. In fact, some research studies suggest a link between organizational culture and employee creativity (Hofstede, 2001; Luthans and Doh, 2012). Amabile (2012) reported that employee's creativity may be enhanced due to social factors such as a sense of positive challenge in the work; work teams that are collaborative, diversely skilled, and idea-focused; autonomy in carrying out the work; encouragement from supervisors for the development of new ideas; to management that supports innovation through a clearly articulated creativity-encouraging vision and through appropriate recognition for creative work; mechanisms for developing new ideas; and norms of actively sharing ideas across the organization. George, J. M., & Zhou, J. (2001), in their study found that how openness to experience and conscientiousness, two of the Five-Factor traits, are linked to creative behaviour in the workplace. When the context allows for the manifestation of

characteristic effects, it is thought that openness to experience leads to high levels of creative behaviour while conscientiousness leads to low levels of creative conduct. The authors hypothesized that if feedback valence was positive and job holders were given a heuristic task that allowed them to be creative, openness to experience would result in high levels of creative behaviour. The authors also expected that if managers closely monitored employees and peers were unsupportive, conscientiousness would result in low levels of innovative activity. In another study done by Scott David Williams, (2004), the author mentioned that divergent thinking is an integral process in creativity. Contextual factors also have an impact on creative thinking and behaviour. The attitude of one's supervisor is also likely to influence attitude toward divergent thinking (ATDT). The amount of structure that supervisors impose on their subordinates is highly probable to have a direct, negative impact on their divergent thinking, and it may also have an indirect impact on divergent thinking by influencing their ATDT. Managers may be able to stimulate employee creativity through ATDT-friendly creativity training. However, more research is required in this zone. Moreover, Kalargiros & Manning (2015) suggested that leadership must also seek to develop holistic creative problem solving/opportunity seeking internal processes and norms to ensure refinement, testing, and implementation of creative ideas.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

Does any significant relationship exist between organizational culture and divergent behaviour of employees at work?

4. HYPOTHESIS

H01: There is no significant relationship between Organization Culture and Divergent Behaviour of employees.

H11: There is a significant relationship between Organization Culture and Divergent Behaviour of employees.

5. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Culture is expressed through its values, symbols, rituals, heroes and practices that distinguish one group of people from another in modernized societies and which are passed on from generation to generation, independently of the biological genes (Parson, 1949).

Divergent behaviour can be defined as the response of employee in various business situations and day to day decisions. It involves the process of generating many different ideas thus bringing individual creativity in an organization. Effective creative problem-solving requires the creation of diverse and diverse potential solutions (Ford, 1996), and diverse thinking provides creative ways for individuals to implement interesting problems and solutions. Divergent behaviour of employees was measured by computing the overall scores of components like Creativity, Decision making, Originality in Idea, Problem solving, Flexibility and Risk taking.

Following components of organizational culture and divergent employee have been identified for the present study.
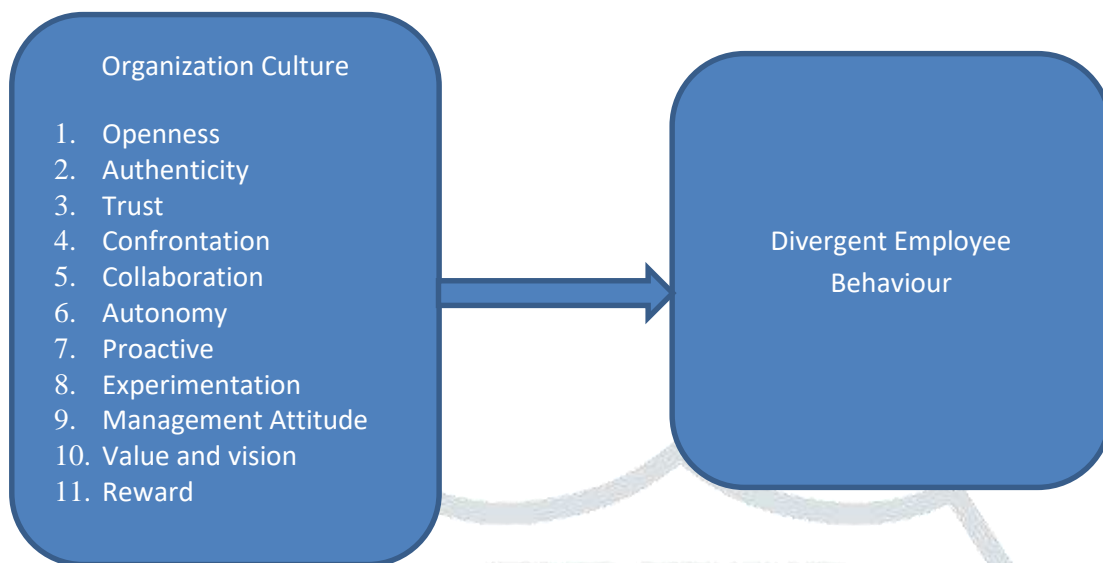

Figure-1 Influence of Organizational Culture on Divergent Employee Behavior

Eleven dimensions were identified to measure the organization culture. These are elaborated hereunder-

a) Openness – Here employees are allowed to be open to express their ideas have no pressure, they interact without any hesitation they are open to take and give feedback may be from external or internal customers, suggestions are welcomed.

b) Confrontation –Here employees share the problems, recognize it, bring it up to the concerned people, explore the solutions or the ways to handle the problem leads to solution oriented organization who focus more on solutions rather than problems and help the organization to grow and improve.

c) Trust –Trust in an organization is faith which comes when openness with confidentiality of information shared is maintained in the organization. Trust leads to better understanding, support, reduced stress and confidence in the process.

d) Authenticity- The organization which have authenticity in the culture has good interpersonal communication which build up the confidence and develops a culture of mutuality.

e) Proactive – Proactive behaviour in an organization encourages its employees to be ready to face any situation by taking initiative, planning in advance, taking preventive actions.

f) Autonomy – Autonomy is the willingness to use power without fear and helping others to do same. Basically autonomy is all about using and giving freedom to plan and act in one's own sphere.

g) Collaboration - Collaboration refers as working together as a team to achieve a common goal.

h) Experimenting – Assessing the various options with innovative approach to solve any problem. It emphasis more on innovative thinking, exploring new ways of doing things and dealing with problem within the organization.

i) Management attitude - It is key to the success of any organization; if the management attitude is supportive towards the employees it develops the environment of openness and trust.

j) Reward – An effective reward system in an organization helps employees to get motivated and reinforces the desirable behaviour.

k) Value and Vision- Value are the beliefs shared by member of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable in the organization. It is the framework in which employee has to behave and perform. It influences the person's behaviour and attitude and serves as guidelines in all situations. A vision is an expression of what the organization wants to become, what it wants to be, to be known as or to be known for.

6. RESEARCH METHODS

Participants

A sample of 163 employees from various companies in India was collected using convenience sampling technique. They were contacted through mails and social media.

Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire including a Five-point Likert-type numerical scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was used. The questionnaire survey was conducted during one month period. The link to the questionnaire was sent via email directly to various employees working in various industry in India.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to get a broader picture of relationship between organizational culture and divergent behaviour, firstly relationship of various components of organizational culture was measured with divergent behaviour then a composite score of organizational culture was computed and its relationship was measured with divergent behaviour. Pearson Correlation was applied to know the relationship between such variables.

Table-1 Relationship between Components of Organizational Culture and Divergent Behaviour

Correlations of Total Divergent Behaviour score & Components of Organizational Culture		Values	Results
Total Value & Vision	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.398	Low Positive but Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Openness	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.557	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Confrontation	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.582	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Trust	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.484	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Collaboration	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.616	Highly Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Proactive	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.647	Highly Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Autonomy	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.589	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Experimentation	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.647	Highly Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Management Attitude	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.624	Highly Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Reward	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.591	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	163	
Total Authenticity	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.546	Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation
	P Value	0.000	
	N	152	

The analysis showed that a significant positive correlation was found between each component of organizational culture and divergent behaviour which implies that these components of organization culture have positive influence on divergent behaviour of employees.

Table-2 Relationship between Total Organizational Culture and Divergent Behaviour

Correlations of Total Divergent Behaviour score & Total Organizational Culture		Values	Results
Total Organizational Culture Score	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.656	Highly Positive and Significant Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	163	

The value of r i.e. 0.656 is found to be statistically significant (p<0.05). The value shows a highly positive relationship between total organizational culture and divergent behaviour. Thus we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between Organization Culture and Divergent Behaviour of employees.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the analyses reveal that-

1. Low Positive but Significant Correlation was found between Value and Vision of an organization and Divergent Behaviour of employees. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Barney (1986) and Glăveanu (2010) who reported that creative individuals use previously creative artifacts (e.g. symbols, norms, rules, values) existing in the culture, to produce new artifacts that are returned to the culture once created. Thus, it can be concluded that Values and Vision of an organization have low but positive influence on divergent behavior of employees.

2. Moderate Positive and Significant Correlation of Divergent Behaviour was found with openness, confrontation, authenticity,trust (consistent with Nakata and Sivakumar, 1996),
autonomy (Amabile, 1996), and Reward (Huo Kun, 2020).

3. Highly Positive and Significant Correlation of Divergent Behaviour was found with proactive, experimentation, collaboration (Amabile, 1996; Zhou and George, 2003) however, George and Zhou (2001) found no statistically significant relations between employee creativity and support provided by co-workers, and Management Attitude (Kalargiros and Manning, 2015; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Teng and Wijnen, 1999).

9. CONCLUSION

The paper discussed the relationship between organizational culture and employees' divergent behaviour in employees of various companies located in India. It assumes that a positive organizational culture will enhance employees' divergent behaviour. Thus, results of the study support many organizational culture researchers (e.g. Judge, Fryxell and Dooley, 1997; Tesluk, Farr and Klein, 1997; Tushman and O'Reilley, 1997) agree that organizational culture is a contributing factor to the degree to which creativity and innovative behavior is found among employees in an organization (Martins and Martins, 2002). The research findings are also consistent with Amabile (2012) who mentioned some stimulants of creativity including, a sense of positive challenge in the work; work teams that are collaborative, diversely skilled, and idea-focused; freedom in carrying out the work; supervisors who encourage the development of new ideas; top management that supports innovation through a clearly articulated creativity, encouraging vision and through appropriate recognition for creative work; mechanisms for developing new ideas; and norms of actively sharing ideas across the organization.

Practical implications

- Industry

A positive organizational culture enhances employees' divergent behaviour which may lead to organizational effectiveness. It encourages creative thinking on the job in order to better compete in the increasingly competitive business environment.

- Society

Organization supporting creativity and innovation among employees develop new ways to solve any problem thus would be beneficial for the society in terms of innovative products and services.

- Academic

This paper opens new vistas for academicians and researchers since it is an understudied topic and requires more research to better understand the relationship between organizational culture and divergent behaviour of employees.

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