BUILDING RESILIENT ORGANIZATION CULTURE ACROSS REMOTE AND TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE

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ABSTRACT

With organizations realigning with remote work during COVID, and moving to Hybrid mode now, leaders are facing challenges related to maintaining organizational culture across the workforce. Organization culture binds the employees in bringing in a sense of responsibility, uniqueness and professionalism. Employees' attitude, motivation and engagement impacts the overall performance of the organization. However, shared beliefs, vision, behavior and goals gets diluted amongst remote workers. Reduced interaction altered communication medium, and collaboration may impact on the overall organization culture. The main objective of this paper is to assess the adaptation of organization culture amongst remote working employees and analyze how different working models and their processes impact organization culture. While considering both the traditional as well as remote functioning, this study also intends to deliberate on how organizations can bridge the organizational culture gap and strike a balance so that the employees feel invested and valued. Data gathered through questionnaires distributed among IT and ITES sector, revealed that remote work impacts organization culture. Appropriate strategic interventions may lessen the burden on the organization to ensure cohesive working amongst employees.

Key words: Organization Culture, Remote working, Resilient culture, Productivity, Employee engagement

1.   INTRODUCTION:

Organization culture plays a significant role in building the core values, beliefs and goals on a common platform, which connects everyone, thus providing a clear direction for all (Adam, et al, 2020). The commitment and effectiveness of employees are closely linked to the culture practiced within the organization. In today's scenario due to competition and changing needs, organisations have to look at the commitment of employees and the level of attachment of employees towards the organisation. This commitment can be derived from the psychological

attachment an individual has towards his/her organization and will impact the employee engagement, performance and connect. Organization culture is one of the determining factor leading to a company's success or failure (Rivai & Mulyadi, 2012).Organizations with strong culture impacts employee engagement and the overall performance of employees, which further contributes to the overall growth of the organization(Durgadevi & Vasantha,2017;Mohammed et al, 2021;Dedi Iskamto,2023)

However, post COVID, with remote work culture being a norm, leaders of various organizations raised concerns about the organization culture and its ensuing impact on socialization, employee turnover and productivity (Raghuram Sumita, 2021).Much against the belief that face to face interactions have a better influence on communication, performance and motivation, the systems and processes had to be tweaked to meet the need of the hour, and that was remote work. Many companies found that the overall connect of employees with their respective organizations depleted over a period of three years and has a detrimental impact on the aspect of culture. This study tries to understand the effect of remote working on the culture of the organization and with the hybrid workplace model replacing the traditional model, there could be a challenge in connecting people back to the organization norms. Attempt is also made to understand how the overall outcome of employee engagement can be bettered with bringing in some small changes in the culture of work.

Though remote work was considered as a Utopian fantasy at the beginning of 21st century, slowly the concept crept into the daily functioning of most of the companies post COVID 19 pandemics. However, remote work or Work from home (WFH) brought in a lot of changes and challenges to people as well as organizations. While remote work brought in flexibility to work from anywhere, there is also a disconnect amongst employees due to less interaction and communication. On one hand, it offers flexibility; on the other it exacerbates stress and emotional challenges, especially with family responsibilities. For women professionals, WFH has made it more difficult to balance between home and work life. As the digital demands have increased considerably, many individuals find themselves working beyond 8-10 hours, which further complicates the work-life balance.

Several empirical studies have highlighted notable advantages of remote and hybrid work models for both organizations and employees. In an exhaustive study, Supriya et.al (2021) reported that a substantial proportion of employees (82%) expressed a strong preference for working from home, indicating a shift in workforce expectations regarding workplace flexibility. Additionally, findings from the same survey revealed that 44% of participants perceived an improvement in their mental health as a result of remote work arrangements. Respondents cited enhanced rest, increased family interaction, and improved engagement in fitness activities as contributing factors. Further, the shift toward flexible work structures appears to have a particularly positive influence on women's employment decisions. Majority of the female respondents indicated a willingness to change jobs if work-from-home options were available, while 71% stated a preference for remote work over receiving a promotion. Overall, it is understood that employee preferences continue to lean toward flexibility, with majority favoring a fully remote work model, but amenable for hybrid arrangements too. These findings underscore the growing significance of remote and hybrid work policies in employee satisfaction, retention, and talent management strategies.

In the post-pandemic period, organizations increasingly transitioned from fully remote work arrangements to hybrid work models. The hybrid mode offers a balanced approach by combining the flexibility of working from home for part of the week with on-site collaboration during designated office days. This model has demonstrated significant cost-effectiveness, as reduced on-site presence lowers the need for extensive office space, minimizes overhead expenses, and decreases maintenance and operational costs. Moreover, hybrid work arrangements have contributed to organizations' sustainability goals by reducing carbon emissions and supporting more efficient energy consumption practices. The model also enhances business continuity, enabling organizations to sustain critical operations during emergencies, natural disasters, or other disruptions while prioritizing employee health and safety. Thus, the hybrid work framework has emerged as a strategic approach that fosters operational resilience, employee well-being, and environmental responsibility.

2.   ORGANIZATION CULTURE AS BINDING FORCE:

The traditional notion of organization culture is challenged in remote working as it changes the whole dynamics of organization function (Fionah.M.J, 2024). The author identifies the negative impact of remote work on cultural cohesion and employee engagement and concludes that organizations which are resilient to the continuous changes and adapt their cultural norms will be able to sustain in the long run. Dedi Iskamto(2021) iterates that a positive organization culture instils a sense of identity and positive association with the organization, while the negative organization culture leads to low employee morale, low productivity and high employee turnover. Organization culture fosters creativity, openness, collaboration and effective communication leading to effective functioning and improved performance. Yasemin & Nazli(2023) opined that remote working has changed the way of working and conclude that strong organizational culture has a positive impact on employee's performance. However, with remote working, there is lesser impact of organization culture, and adaptation of various interventions to address the culture gap.

2.1 Highlights of remote workforce: Remote work environments have demonstrated the potential to enhance employee engagement and morale through virtual socialization, networking, collaborative platforms, and streamlined communication channels. Despite geographical separation, employees often experience a strengthened sense of belonging, facilitated by flexible working hours and the ability to adapt efficiently to changing work demands and diverse time zones. Such flexibility not only supports stronger interpersonal connections but also contributes to increased employee engagement and retention.

Moreover, the development of resilience among remote employees is identified as a key indicator of high performance. Resilient individuals are more likely to adopt emerging digital technologies and proactively prepare for future organizational challenges. This adaptability fosters a culture of trust between employees and organizations, while simultaneously contributing to positive mental well-being and psychological safety within the workforce. Consequently, remote work settings can play a significant role in cultivating a motivated, future-ready, and psychologically supported workforce.

2.1.1 Challenges of remote workforce: The transition to remote work introduces several organizational challenges, particularly in sustaining a cohesive workplace culture. When employees operate in dispersed environments, monitoring and reinforcing organizational values becomes increasingly complex, which can result in cultural inconsistencies. Remote work structures also blur the boundaries between personal and professional domains, potentially diminishing trust and weakening social cohesion within teams. Additionally, while digital tools facilitate communication, over-reliance on technology may contribute to employee isolation and reduce informal interpersonal interactions. This can heighten the risk of miscommunication and misinterpretation of workplace messages, ultimately affecting collaboration quality and employee connectedness. Over time, such disconnects may hinder employees' identification with the organization, impacting engagement and performance outcomes.

2.2 **Highlights of traditional workforce**: Traditional, office-based work environments have long been associated with strong interpersonal relationships and enhanced trust among employees. Face-to-face interactions facilitate effective communication, enabling individuals to resolve disagreements more efficiently and fostering a cohesive organizational culture despite workforce diversity. Physical proximity in the workplace reinforces collaboration, supports informal knowledge exchange, and strengthens professional networks. Collectively, these social dynamics contribute to a positive work climate, improved teamwork, and higher levels of organizational commitment.

2.2.1 **Challenges of traditional workforce:** Despite its strengths, the traditional on-site workforce model presents several limitations. Employees operating in conventional settings often exhibit resistance to change, which may reduce organizational adaptability and flexibility. The predominance of hierarchical, top-down communication structures can further restrain innovation, autonomy, and resilience among employees. Moreover, frequent face-to-face interactions, while beneficial for collaboration, may increase the likelihood of interpersonal conflicts due to differing perspectives and close physical proximity. The reliance on physical presence makes the traditional workforce highly vulnerable during crises such as pandemics or natural disruptions, where continuity of operations may be compromised. These constraints highlight the need for organizations to evolve toward more agile and responsive work arrangements to ensure sustainability in dynamic environments.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

a) To what extent does remote work impact organizational culture?

b) How can organizational culture develop resilience to effectively support both remote and traditional workforce models?

4. OBJECTIVES:

a)   To identify the organisation culture challenges in remote working

b)   To analyse the impact of remote working on organisation culture.

5.   METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature was conducted to examine organizational culture and its implications for employee engagement and workplace practices. However, as limited academic research has specifically explored the influence of remote work on organizational culture, primary data collection was undertaken to address this gap. A structured questionnaire was administered to employees working in the Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITeS) sector. Snowball sampling was employed, whereby initial participants were encouraged to disseminate the survey within their professional networks across the IT industry. The target respondents included individuals employed in organizations operating under hybrid work models.The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine the relationships between the key variables and to derive objective insights into the cultural dynamics emerging from remote and hybrid work settings.

6.   OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PILOT STUDY:

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of forty-two respondents to assess the preliminary effects of remote work on organizational culture and related factors. The findings indicate that effective communication practices and strong leadership remain critical determinants of a successful remote work environment. A majority of participants reported an increase in productivity when working from home, suggesting that remote arrangements may enhance task efficiency and focus.However, the study also identified several challenges. Participants noted that innovation processes, particularly those dependent on collaborative brainstorming, are more difficult to facilitate in virtual settings. Concerns were raised regarding visibility and recognition of individual contributions during remote team activities, potentially affecting career progression and motivation. While remote work has enabled greater workforce diversity and improved flexibility, respondents expressed that the limited informal interactions hinder relationship-building and reduce interpersonal trust among employees. The results also reflect mixed perceptions regarding employee engagement and innovation, while some respondents observed improvements under remote conditions, others experienced barriers linked to reduced social cohesion. Overall, the pilot study highlights both the advantages and complexities associated with remote work in shaping organizational culture.

7.   CONCLUSION:

Organizations have to develop right strategies to ensure that every employee irrespective of the mode in which they work, adapts to the organization culture. With the changing scenarios in terms of remote working, organizations face many challenges. Resilience in terms of adapting and drafting policies and procedure according to the need of the hour becomes imperative. Be it the recruitment process or employee engagement, organizations have to develop newer models to accommodate the new change. They have to work towards a resilient culture for both the traditional and remote workforce. Communication can be prioritized by usage of

digital tools for remote teams and personalised meetings for the traditional workforce to enhance shared values. Employees should be empowered in the decision -making process, both in remote and traditional working environment. In remote work, due to lack of interaction with human counterparts, impediments related to mental health and professional and personal life must be addressed as topmost priority. Leaders should be resilient and adapt to the changing requirement of employees while striking a balance between organization commitment to deliver and human beings as contributors. Hybrid working model is well appreciated by many employees. At the same time it poses greater challenges for which organizations have to find solutions to.

8. FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

It was difficult to draw any conclusions based on the responses given by the limited number of respondents in the pilot study. So, more number of responses has to be gathered to enable achieve the objectives of the study. Also, the relationship between various factors can be tested appropriately. The authors intend to gather more responses to add value to the study.

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