A STUDY OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE ANDEMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT IN INDIAN ORGANISATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Here we are left between the horns of a conceptual dilemma: on the one hand, of adaptationist reductionism which views culture as an autonomous and uniform world of symbols, entirely freed from the constraints of human mind and brain, and on the other, ethereal/ideational idealism which misses the magic of shared symbols among human beings. We should not expect an electic composite under whichall theorists of variant ideas would congregate. Any statement about culture on which they could agree would probably be vacuous. Nonetheless, we can conceive of culture as an ideational subsystem within a vastly complex system – biological, social and symbolic, and ground out abstract models in the concrete particularities of human social life. Such dialectic is likely to yield a deepening understanding of humans-in-environments.

Keywords: - adaptationist, synthesizing, Sturdy, omnipotent

INTRODUCTION

Organizational theorists and corporate leaders have produced voluminous materials on Organizational culture and its offspring – symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth (Pettigrew, 1978). As Smircich (1983) observes, the concept of culture has been liberally borrowed from anthropology, where there is no consensus on its meaning and the concept is fuzzy, if not enigmatic and elusive. Therefore, it calls for in-depth study of culture concept.

CULTURE CONCEPT

Culture has become a *sine qua non* of modern thought, notwithstanding its ambiguities. In the English language, the term „Culture‟ is derived from the original Latin word "cultura"- the "cultivation of soil". As human beings, we are continually activating the process of culturing, that is, producing and reproducing social realities in the ways that are liberating, inhibiting, puzzling, boring or exciting (Smircich, 1983). Kroeber and kluckhohn (1963) identified 164 different meanings of the term „culture‟ that have been used in anthropology, and sociology. We realize that the holistic view of culture synthesized by them is very diffuse. The challenge in recent years has been to cut down the culture concept to size into a narrowed and theoretically more powerful concept (Geertz, 1973). Thus the historical evaluation of the term culture look into two major schools of thought – the Adaptationist system, and the Ideational system – in „cultural theory‟.

ADAPTATIONIST SYSTEM

The adaptationist school conceives culture as a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings. Culture is seen as a pattern of life within a community – the regularly recurring activities, and material, and social arrangements (Goodenough, 1961). A number of scholars such as Leslie White, Sahlins, Rappaport, Vayda, Harris, Carneiro, Binford, Flannery, Longacre, Sanders, Price, and Meggers, working in the adaptationist tradition agree on some broad assumptions (Keesing, 1974):

1. Culture is a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that relate human communities to their ecological settings, namely technologies, and modes of economic, political organization, social grouping, religious beliefs, practices and so on. The culture concept has come down to behaviour patterns associated with particular groups of people – Their customs or their way of life (Binford, 1968; Harris, 1968).

2. Cultural change is primarily a process of adaptation that human beings ought to maintain with their surroundings so as to survive. When the equilibrium is upset by environmental, demographic, technological or other systemic changes, adjustive changes ramify through the cultural system (Meggers, 1975).

3. Technology, subsistence economy, and social organization that are directly linked to production are the most adaptively central realms of culture (Vayda and Rappaport, 1968).

4. The „ideational" components of culture such as religious practices and elements of social organization may have adaptive consequences in maintaining the ecosystem, controlling human beings, and contributing to human subsistence. For instance, Rappaport (1967, 1971) has suggested that ritual systems, and the cultural frame of sanctity play a focal part in mediating cultural adaptation.

IDEATIONAL SYSTEM

In contrast to the adaptationist theorists of culture, stand a number of theorists who see culture as an „ideational" system. This school views culture as a system of knowledge, standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting (Allaire and Firstrotu, 1984). Three different ways of studying culture as a system of ideas are proposed by Keesing (1974):

1. *Culture as Cognitive System:* Culture is seen as a system of knowledge that lies beyond the realm of observable events. Goodenough (1957) says, "A society"s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of thingsthat people have in mind; the mode is for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them".

2.   ***Culture as Structural System***: Culture is viewed as 'shared symbolic system that are cumulative creations of mind'. It is discovered in the structuring of cultural domains – myth, art, kinship and language – the principles of mind that generate these cultural elaborations. Material conditions of subsistence and economy constrain but do not explain lived-in worlds. Only the mind imposes culturally patterned order of relations and transformations on a continuously changing and often random world. Then, culture is seen as transcending individual actors, even as transcending ethnic boundaries (Levi – Strauss, 1964).

3.   ***Culture as Symbolic System:*** Culture is not in people's heads, but is in between the minds of these people. Social actors share symbols and meanings. Cultural patterns are not reifed or metaphysical, but are things of this world such as a cockfight, a funeral, a sheep theft (Geertz, 1972). Humans are always engaging themselves in symbolic actions and studying their culture means studying their shared codes of meaning. This would, then, suggest that culture is a matter of „interpretation" and not just „ decipherment" (Geertz, 1967, 1972).

Schneider (1968) has taken a related but different track. To him, culture is a system of symbols and meanings. It comprises categories or units or rules about relationship and modes of behaviour. The epistemological status of cultural units or things does not depend on their „observability". Nor are rules and categories to be inferred directly from behaviour. They exist, as it were, on their own right, independent of their imperfect manifestations in the thought and actions of their bearers. In short, culture is system – centred; it takes people's position vis-à-vis the world, rather than the people's position onhow to get along in this world as it is given.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

As evident from the title, the present study is an attempt to ascertain relationship between organizational culture and employees" commitment in public and private sector organizations in India. However the specific objectives of the study have been as under: -

(i)   To study the variations in employees" perception with regard to their organizational culture.

(ii) To examine the variations among the employees with regard to their levels of commitment in their respective organizations.

(iii) To ascertain the relationship between background variables and employees" commitment in the organizations.

(iv) To analyze the relationship between the organizational culture and employees" commitment in the organizations.

(v) To compare the status of organizational culture and employees" commitment in public and private sector organizations in India.

(vi) To suggest workable guidelines for the healthy organizational culture and higher level of employees" commitment.

HYPOTHESES

Based upon the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been framed and tested statistically-

Hypothesis 1: There is no variation in the perception of organizational culture between:

- (a) Workers and Supervisors
- (b) Workers and Managers
- (c) Supervisors and Managers

Hypothesis 2: There is no variation in the perception of level of employee commitment between:

- (a) Workers and Supervisors
- (b) Workers and Managers
- (c) Supervisors and Managers

Hypothesis 3: There is relationship between background variables i.e. age, marital status, education, work experience in the present position, work experience in the present organization, and total work experience and employees" commitment.

Hypothesis 4: There is relationship between organizational culture and employee commitment.

KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts included in the study are organizational culture, organizational philosophy, group norms, team work and management support, organization of work, reward system, decision making, conflict management, employee commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

"Organizational Culture" refers to the perception of employees, based on their beliefs and assumptions regarding the organizational practices within their plant. These organizational practices are observed and judged by employees in terms of such dimensions as organizational philosophy, group norms, team work, management support, organization of work , reward system, decision making, conflict management. By appraising the organization on the above-mentioned eight dimensions, a composite picture of the organizational culture is formed.

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational Philosophy: It is defined as the manifested core values practiced in the industry as perceived by its employees.

Group Norms: These are the set standards of behavior to be adhered to by the employees within their department

Team Work: It refers to the degree the employee perceive practices of mutual dependency between peer group members of the organization.

*Management Support***:** It refers to the extent to which superiors are accessible to their subordinates to the extent, superiors provide clear communication to their subordinates and to the extent to which superior accommodates new ideas of their subordinates.

Organization of Work: It is defined as the degree to which superiors creates clear job objectives and performance expectations for their subordinates and also provides challenging jobs to them.

Reward System: It refers to the benefits that flow from the work including pay, promotion, status and their visible pre-requisites.

*Decision Making***:** It is defined as the degree to which decisions related to employees job are taken, after wider consultation with employees across the hierarchal level or strata within the organization/ department.

Conflict Management: It refers to the degree to which employees are encouraged to speak up conflicts related to their life within the organization, without undue fear of being punished by superiors and to the extent to which superiors resolve conflicts within the organization.

TOOLS USED IN RESEARCH

The questionnaire method has been adopted because of the following advantages: -

1. It was impersonal, and therefore, people did not hesitate to fill in what they actually felt.
2. It was easier to classify and tabulate so that result could be co-related meaningfully.
3. It was more standardized and, therefore, eliminated bias to a greater extent.

The questionnaire in some cases was also served as a basis for the interview schedule, as many of the workers had to be explained the meaning of the texts. This lead to a number of interesting and revealing conversations, which gave an insight into the culture of the organization, that was helpful in confirming the validity of one result.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

1. From the Z-test, it is evident that there is variation in the perception of Organisational Culture between (a) Workers and Managers; (b) Workers and Supervisors; and (c) Supervisors and Managers.

2. The workers and the supervisors have been found agreeing to the management practices based on organizational philosophy. They are supportive of the practice of giving promotions to employees on the basis of seniority. They also appreciate the way the superiors recognize their contribution for the growth of the organization. On the contrary, the managers have not been found much satisfied with the promotions policy, as they allege that meritorious work performance is mostly ignored within the organization in favour of seniority in job tenure. In addition, the managers feel aggrieved that they have no forum to voice their work life grievances, since they are not permitted to form employees" union.

3. A common concern of all the three strata of employees is directed towards the dismal management of conflicts prevalent in the organizations.

4. The employees across the strata perceive that the management mostly disregards their suggestions pertaining to work during decision-making. Most of the decisions whether be serious or trivial, are seen as being taken by the top man of the organization and all the employees irrespective of their seniority levels, are expected to strictly implement the decisions made at the top. Because of this centralized system of decision making, the managers are not willing to take even work related decisions, as they think that the top management will not support their decisions.

5. Group Norms are often adhered to by the workers, whereas, they are not the strong points of the supervisors and the managers. The workers agree that they would earn disapproval of their group members if they do their work sloppily. However, the group norms forbid the workers from producing more units of work than the already accepted quantum.

   We cannot conclude that the workers do not produce more units of work than required of them on a day rather many times they produce more units of work on conditional basis.

PERCEPTION OF LEVEL OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

1. The Z-test has revealed that there is variation in the perception of level of employee commitment between-

   a)   Workers and Managers
   b)   Workers and Supervisors
   c)   Managers and Supervisors

The results have indicated that the supervisors perceive a higher level of employee commitment than the workers, and the managers. The low level of employee commitment as perceived by the managers may have negative results for the organization, since the managers by virtue of their professional expertise and authority levels are expected to enhance commitment among workers.

2. The results bring to light some variations among the employees across the strata in their understanding of the concept of commitment. The workers and supervisors are well aware of the lack of job opportunities for them elsewhere, and hence, they are prepared to contribute as required by their superiors. But, the workers and the supervisors emphatically state that they have been taught at home, and in neighborhood circles to believe in the values of remaining loyal to one organization. The managers are emotionally attached to the present organization as long as they work in it. They feel equally capable of shifting loyalty to some other organization, on the eve of their getting better career opportunities in the new organization.

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