

Decoding Work Culture: The Indian Ethos Unveiled

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Abstract:

This paper aims to (1) analyze how some of the key aspects of work ethos manifest themselves in work culture, (2) outline the key characteristics of Indian employees, (3) discuss the social and cultural differences that affect work culture in India and Japan, and (4) discuss how organizational structure, leadership, innovation, and other aspects of organizational climate affect work culture. In the framework of the Indian social milieu, as well as the internal environment and organizational structure common in Indian companies, an effort has also been made to provide a more thorough explanation of the significant components and their consequences.

Work Ethos, Work Ethics and Work Culture

This paper aims to (1) analyze how some of the key aspects of work ethos manifest themselves in work culture, (2) outline the key characteristics of Indian employees, (3) discuss the social and cultural differences that affect work culture in India and Japan, and (4) discuss how organizational structure, leadership, innovation, and other aspects of organizational climate affect work culture. In the framework of the Indian social milieu, as well as the internal environment and organizational structure common in Indian companies, an effort has also been made to provide a more thorough explanation of the significant components and their consequences. (Churchman, 1979, pp 21-23). In the context of human civilization, culture is a group's way of life, which encompasses all of the standardized and learnt behaviors that members of the group employ and that other members of the group anticipate and recognize (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 5, 1970, p 831). Groups are made up of individuals, while organizations are made up of groups. People differ greatly from one another in terms of their psychological makeup or behavior patterns, and there is truly "no average man" (Koontz and CXDonnell, 1972, pages 508-511). The conduct of an individual at work may be described by Lewin's Field Theory, which claims that human behaviour, B, is a function of the person, P, and his or her environment, E, or using mathematical notations, $B = f(P, E)$ (Koontz and CXDonnell, 1976, p 581). Between the ages of 18 and 23, a person enters an industrial organization either as a workman, office worker, supervisor, or professional such as an accountant, engineer, etc. At that moment, he enters the organization as a unique person with a basic pattern of behavior. P, of Lewin's Field Theory, is the fundamental or basic pattern of behavior that distinguishes an individual from other members of the group and organization in the context of human behavior at work. He engages with the organizational environment after joining the company, which includes the organizational climate relevant to his field of

work as well as the structural group he is a part of or is drawn to. This interaction tempers the individual's core or basic behavior pattern, and the outcome is the group's and individual's work ethos.

Effect of Organizational Climate and Dynamics of Work Culture

The preceding section's definitions of work ethos, work ethics, and culture, as well as its discussion of the dynamics of human behavior at work, make it abundantly evident that the concept of work culture and its impact on organizational effectiveness indices are conceptualized in the context of individuals, both men and women, working in organized enterprises. Productivity is a measure of an industrial or corporate organization's performance since it increases growth and profitability. The organization's managers are members of many structural groupings. In turn, these groups must perform a variety of duties that are essential to achieving the organization's objectives. These assignments must be time-bound and goal-oriented, and these groups must collaborate with other groups to complete them. However, the work or task must be completed within the specified organizational environment, which, from the perspective of the individual or group he is a member of, is mostly composed of the following elements:

- the position's duties, responsibilities, and challenges
- the overall group dynamic and collaborative environment
- the organisational structure and rules, regulations, and procedures
- the trust and support received from superiors
- the leadership and example set by superiors in their actions and deeds
- methods of goal-setting and performance evaluation
- the use of rewards, threats, and fear to motivate employees to perform better or higher.

Each member of a group contributes their unique set of abilities, education, and training, as well as their character qualities and societal beliefs. As previously explained, the work ethos of the group is derived from the work ethos of the individuals, and these structural groups interact with the organizational climate and its various components as well as with each other (i.e., within themselves within the organization) to achieve specific organizational objectives. Through these interactions between individuals and groups, the organization's work culture is established. Because of the ongoing nature of this engagement, the resulting work culture is dynamic rather than static.

There are two types of organizational work cultures: positive and negative. A positive work culture is one that supports high levels of organizational performance, as measured by growth, profitability, and productivity. The optimal performance atmosphere, according to Likert (1961), consists of openness, trust, sharing, two-way communication, and participative leadership. With the exception of adding high skill levels and flexibility in their application, Walton's five work culture principles are practically the same (Walton, 1979). Therefore, these factors are mechanisms in that by improving any or all of them, one can enhance organizational performance through increased collaboration and teamwork, better communication and consultation, flexibility, creativity, and persistent efforts to raise individual and group activation levels. These initiatives are focused on achieving the goals of:

1. removing obstacles to organizational success and individual happiness;
2. creating innovative organizational solutions; and
3. enhancing the ability of both individuals and organizations to self-renew (Beer and Huse, 1972, pp. 79–101).

However, insofar as they both individually and in combination define the organizational climate, these variables are likewise features of the organizational climate (Taguiri, 1986). Consequently, there are some distinguishing characteristics of an organizational culture that may also be used to the assessment of the dominant workplace culture. This can be accomplished by creating a single performance index for each of these qualities or traits, or, if required, several indices. Therefore, it is essential to identify all of these elements that may be employed as mechanisms for organizational growth as well as indicators of the current work culture. Since work culture is related to an organization and order and discipline are essential requirements for organizational performance, Likert's and Wai Ton's lists are incomplete (Koontz and CXDonnell, 1972, pages 508-511). According to the author's observations, the following organizational work culture traits are significant in the Indian context:

- **discipline.**
- collaboration and teamwork;
- dialogue and advice No. 4, October–December 1991, Vol. 16 35
- authority delegation;
- individual and group engagement levels;
- identity, feeling of belonging, and how individuals and groups respond to challenges of responsibility
- adaptability and creativity in the workplace
- the function of organizations and unions

Structural Changes:

An organization's hierarchical tree or chain of command alone should not be interpreted as its organizational structure. In the framework of organizational goals, it covers decision-making, delegation, and operational discretion levels in addition to the organization's rules, regulations, and procedures. Formal organizations are always preferable to unstructured ones since the former foster constant squabbling and mayhem and, in contrast to popular opinion, do not promote greater communication and collaboration (Flamholtz, 1972, pages 666-678; Koontz and CXDonnell, 1972, pp 241-242). As Wilfred Brown says: "the more formalisation that exists, the more clearly we will know the bounds of discretion which we are authorised to use and will be held responsible for and prescribed policies make clear to people the area in which they have freedom to act. Without a clearly defined area of freedom there is no freedom ... there is no real freedom without laws" (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1972, pp 241-242).

Formalization, however, goes beyond just creating a binding "Administrative Manual" and issuing regulations, instructions, and circulars on every aspect. Real formalization entails accepting and following the established policies and procedures. Although there is formalization in India, managerial discretion is always applied, which inevitably results in employees feeling that they are being treated unfairly. Later on, this leads to a significant deal of discontent and erodes loyalty. Furthermore, hierarchical rank in decision-making is overemphasized in many Indian firms. The SAIL study on work culture identifies eliminating an excessive focus on hierarchical position as one of its top objectives for change, stating that most documents are reviewed at least eight to nine levels before a judgment is made (Steel Authority of India Limited, 1986, p. 3). In order to exercise responsibility, there has to be

more delegation, which must coexist with accountability for acts and performance review. Only those things that are truly under a person's control should be held accountable, and they should be measured against the objectives established via involvement. Managements must be realistic and must not set unattainable goals. Furthermore, it is all too common for the superior to be in charge and to blame the subordinate for subpar work. Motivation and collaboration cannot flourish in such an environment. However, when discussing delegation or decentralization of authority, it is important to keep in mind that while "Decentralization is becoming an inadequate solution as technologies become more complex and even more functionalization becomes essential," "there is much greater need for cooperation and participation (today) in managing the enterprise than when the technologies were simple and the chief possessed all the technical knowledge needed" (Likert, 1961, pp 2-3). Rebuilding the organizational structure is therefore required in order to:

- Decentralization of authority and operations must include operational and technical limitations
- the organization's hierarchy should be determined by degrees of responsibility rather than seniority, span of control, etc.
- Delegation within divisions and departments should be connected to accountability and responsibility
- broad and general policy decisions should, to the greatest extent feasible, be made at the top of the organizational structure, with more detailed decisions occurring at lower levels
- and the structure should guarantee the free exchange of information between all departments and levels within the organization.

Two particular aspects that are unique to Indian organizations and most likely to our subcontinent must be brought up before wrapping up the study of organizational structure and rules, laws, and procedures. As was previously mentioned, in order for an organization to be viable, it is required to set up (a) policies regarding attendance, work hours and location, and behavior on the job, and (b) policies and procedures pertaining to leave, on-duty travel, daily and travel allowances, medical benefits, and other fringe benefits. Trust must be the foundation of these rules and processes. In contrast, it appears that we believe our staff members are essentially dishonest and willing to defraud the business at any turn. In addition to wasting a significant amount of time, the numerous checks and counterchecks lead to widespread employee dissatisfaction. Second, various departments and individuals work different hours in our company. Compared to the manufacturing sectors and shops, the offices work less hours. In addition to delaying choices and occasionally resulting in needless production delays, this operational inconsistency—and perhaps more importantly—causes discomfort.

Leadership

is the most crucial element in motivation as followers want to be guided and guided well. In the absence of leadership, people put in just enough effort to get by. However, under competent direction, they will work confidently and fervently to the best of their skills (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1972, pp. 508–511). Particularly when it comes to technical innovation and efficient administration, a good leader is a "vehicle of change" (Bhadury, 1987; 1989). Additionally, management consultants, successful executives, and social scientists have written a great deal on leadership. (Likert, 1961; Brown, 1971; Koontz and O'Donnell, 1972; Drucker, 1975; Barnard, 1982), and this essay will only focus on a

handful of the most essential leadership traits that also have the most impact on both individual and group activation levels.

Whether a leader is a manager or a supervisor, his main responsibility is to motivate his team members to put in a lot of effort on the duties they are given. He must provide them with the means to do this, whether it be a machine that is in excellent operating condition, tools, fixtures, drawings, measuring devices, supplies, information, or sufficient instructions. Even the most capable and otherwise dedicated workers are frequently unhappy for a variety of reasons, including bad communication, poor design, poor materials, shortages, delays, and inadequate tooling. The absence of necessary resources is a significant source of demotivation. Motivating subordinates to put in a lot of effort on the duties they are given is the main responsibility of the leader, whether they are a manager or a supervisor. Whether it's a machine in excellent operating condition, tools, fixtures and drawings, measurement devices, supplies, essential knowledge, or sufficient instructions, he must provide them with the means to accomplish this. Lack of necessary resources is a big source of demotivation, and even the most capable and dedicated workers are frequently unhappy for a variety of reasons, including bad tooling, poor design, poor communication, shortages, delays, and inferior materials. In order to foster teamwork, a leader must be dedicated to the work and set an example through actions and deeds (rather than just occasional exhortations), be genuine and truthful in his interactions with subordinates, acknowledge and reward high performers, and actively foster teamwork by supporting those in the group (department/division) who consistently reach out to their coworkers and assist them in performing their jobs more effectively. Individual complaints, no matter how minor at first, must be resolved by the manager or supervisor. To do this, he should set aside some time during the day to meet with his constituents and, to the greatest degree feasible, resolve issues outside of the official grievance system. Thirdly, the leader needs to train his soldiers as well. Last but not least, a successful manager needs to look for unofficial group leaders within his staff. Informal group leaders are not always spokespersons and are frequently inconspicuous. They frequently offer a very helpful guide to collective goals and thinking, if they can be found (Scott, 1970, p 145). These unofficial group facilitators may assist shape group thought, which can enhance departmental activation levels and responsiveness.

Job Enrichment

From the perspective of both job performance and human satisfaction, motivation through work innovation or job enrichment is not only feasible but also desirable, as "work becomes more challenging and interesting for employees as their knowledge and skills improve and as they are increasingly able to influence decisions affecting their jobs" (Fiegenbaum, 1986, p 207). The findings of job enrichment studies conducted on laboratory technicians, design engineers, salespeople, and factory supervisors in British companies, however, highlight the fact that not everyone is amenable to having their jobs enriched and that the resulting differences in task responsibilities in otherwise identical jobs may not be acceptable to everyone (Scott, 1970, p 149). This also applies to employees and secretaries. Employees will only accept changes to the nature of their jobs if they are viewed as opportunities rather than as irrational demands from management. As a result, participation is the only way to effectively implement work innovation.

In addition to the industrialized West and Japan, certain Indian businesses have also made an effort at work innovation, albeit in a minor capacity. Companies must continue this progressive trend, but they must adopt a long-term view because there will always be a conflict between those who want to

reinforce employees' strong achievement motivation through job enrichment and those who want to simplify jobs in order to save time (Scott, 1970, p 149). Other crucial actions that should be made to create a healthy workplace culture are as follows:

1. Deal with subordinates fairly but firmly,
2. and show an active interest in their personal and family needs and issues.
3. Take immediate action in cases of indiscipline and do not condone indiscipline in any form and at any level.
4. Discourage 'pulling of rank' and excessive focus on hierarchical position in daily interactions. Encourage communication and information exchange by holding regular departmental meetings, production committees, and quality circles or small group activities.
5. Encourage goal-setting and decision-making through venues for participation and collaboration, and make sure that decisions are consistent.

Conclusion:

To sum up, it is emphasized once more that the creation of a healthy workplace culture is the most important issue that has to be addressed if the Indian organized sector hopes to buck the current trend of declining productivity, a lack of innovation, and rising final product costs (Ganguly, 1987). However, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to guarantee that human labor will be used when and where it is needed (Scott, 1970, p 143). Since the employee must be persuaded that the suggested action is beneficial to both him and the group he belongs to, human motivation is a complicated phenomena that varies from person to person and responds differently to various stimuli. Furthermore, poor planning, a lack of leadership, and the absence of essential tools, infrastructure, and workflow hinder people's efforts and lead to general dissatisfaction. In these situations, the mature, goal-oriented person may channel his passion for success into areas where it may be useful, like opposing the organization or system that irritates him (Scott, 1970, p 149). Furthermore, a person's basic outlook and attitude toward life greatly influence his or her basic work disposition, sense of discipline, attitude toward regulated work hours, rules, regulations, and procedures, activation level, intrinsic drive, and responses to challenges of responsibility. The social and cultural surroundings are the source of this in turn. With its vast diversity of languages, ethnic groups, customs, attitudes, philosophies, tastes, and economic standing, India is a very big nation. Because close-knit human groups and communities that take pleasure in their unique identities detest being taken for granted and having their needs dictated to them from above, these differences must be acknowledged and respected. Therefore, the establishment of a national work ethic necessitates concerted efforts across several fronts and by numerous entities, including the government, educational institutions, professional associations, technical institutes, and managements of commercial and industrial enterprises. Although this is a challenging and complex undertaking, it is one that has to be followed tenaciously and with genuine intent.

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