

Chapter 64

Organizational Culture and Gender Minority: A Case Study of State Bank of India

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture has long been shaped and dominated by male orientations and therefore focus on change in the organizational culture can help in addressing the issue of discrimination and isolation of women in organizations. The present paper aims at identifying the attributes of organizational culture in respect of which the perceptions of female employees differ significantly from those of male employees in State Bank of India. The study is based on the data relating to 54 variables for measuring the attributes of organizational culture. The results indicate that though there were differences between the perceptions of Female group employees and Male employees of State Bank of India regarding many of the attributes of organizational culture, they were not statistically significant. The study points out that despite the compelling evidence in support of the belief that gender discrimination does exist in most firms, some firms have been able to develop an organizational culture that is perceived to be non-discriminatory in nature by the gender minority.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture has drawn the attention of practitioners and researchers across the globe because it has been projected as the panacea for almost all organizational problems (Ogbonna & Harris, 1998). Scholars and business managers alike concluded that all firms have cultures and organizational cultures vary in strength (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Schein, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982). There is almost unanimity among scholars regarding the relationship between organizational culture and performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Collins & Porras, 1994; Collins, 2001; Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Despite the attention paid to it, the construct, in most cases, has not provided the promised solutions.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1913-3.ch064

This is partially due to its complexity and the difficulties with defining and measuring it. Adding to the complexity, some studies emphasize that there are differences in the perceptions of sub-groups & underline the need to focus on the differentiation created by various groups in the company, including minorities and informal social groups (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyer 1982; Riley, 1983; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984; Bell, 1990). With the increasing diversity in the workforce, the role of such sub-groups in the achievement of organizational goals has significantly increased. Traditionally, the dominant sub-groups have defined the organizational culture and minority sub-groups are made to accept the same as they join the organization. This may result in discouragement of minorities to put-in their actual abilities (Ely & Thomas, 2001). For effective engagement of the minority sub-groups, it has become imperative to encourage an organizational culture that is open to diversity. In business organizations, formation of such sub-groups has been on the basis of gender, religion, language, race, etc. (Webster & Hysom, 1998) and gender has been the one the most important basis, with women being the minority group. Effective engagement of women in business processes requires an organizational culture that is non-discriminatory and is open to diversity.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND GENDER: PRIOR STUDIES

Organizational culture has been described as a set of “shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organization’s structure and control systems to produce behavioural norms (the way we do things around here)” (Uttal, 1983). It is relatively enduring characteristic of an organization which distinguishes it from other organizations and (a) embodies members’ collective perception about their organization with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness, (b) is produced by members’ interaction, (c) serves as a basis of interpreting the situation, (d) reflects the prevalent norms and attitudes of the organization’s culture and (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behaviour” (Moran & Volkwein, 1992). With increasing proportion of women in the workforce, business organizations are facing the challenge of assimilation of women in the organization in order to fully exploit their potential for achieving the common goals. A number of studies focus on the gender issues in business such as managerial styles. For example, Rosener (1990), observed that “women are more likely to use power based on charisma, work record, and contacts, and motivated others by transforming their self-interest into the goals of the organization; whereas, men were more likely to use power based on organizational position, title, and the ability to reward and punish, and were less likely to use transformational leadership practices.” Hughes et al. (2002) observed that female managers’ show greater concern for others, consider how others felt about their influencing tactics, and were more likely than men to act with the organization’s broad interest in mind.

Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) found that most men and women still described a good manager as possessing predominantly masculine characteristics. Pierce & Newstrom (2003) found men to be more autocratic or directive than women, and women to be more democratic or participative than men. Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) observed that most organizations have been created by and for men and are based on male experiences.

There seems to a dearth of studies on potential influence of gender on organizational culture and the fact that most of the organizational cultures have been shaped by men (Marshall, 1993).

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