A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE BANKING SECTOR IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture is pervasive and powerful. For business, it is either a force for change or a definite barrier to it. For employees, it is either the glue that bonds people to an organization or what drives them away. Managers, today, are increasingly challenged with changing an organization’s culture to support new ways of accomplishing work. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to better understand and differentiate the organizational culture prevailing in the private sector and public sector banks.

This study investigates the level of existing culture in two large banking organizations. The research reviews the various types of culture namely, power culture, role culture, achievement culture and Support Culture and how culture is created and ways in which culture can be sustained or changed.

The key results of the research findings revealed that there is a strong Role culture prevalent at the two companies, with a good mix of the other culture types like, Power culture, Achievement culture and Support culture.

KEY WORDS:

INNOVATION, GLOBALIZATION, PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR, BANKING, CULTURE, ROLE, POWER

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture, at workplace, is a very powerful force, which is consciously and deliberately cultivated and is passed on to the incoming employees. It is the very thread that holds the organization together. The stronger the culture, the more it is directed to the marketplace, the less need is there for policy manuals, organization charts, detailed procedures or rules. In these companies, people way down the line know what they are supposed to do in most situations because the handful of guiding values is crystal clear.

Objectives of this study are to determine-

1. The current culture of the two companies;
2. The comparison of the culture in both the organizations

Rationale for the study - The two companies SBI and ICICI are the top banking organizations of the country. The companies have been providing valuable banking services to the entire nation for many years. They are now at the top of the
This study would generate valuable information on the current culture of these organizations. It would also provide management with the employees’ outlook of the work culture that is prevalent within these companies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational culture has assumed considerable importance in the 21st century, because of its impact on employee performance and job satisfaction. It is imperative of every organization to understand its own dynamic culture so that managers can capitalize on the insights generated by the cultural perspective to wield greater control over their organizations. The culture of an organization has an important impact on its performance.

Robbins (2000:34) postulates that culture, as a concept, has had a long and chequered history. In the last decade, it has been used by some organizational researchers and managers to indicate the climate and practices that organizations develop around their handling of people or to refer to the espoused values and credo of an organization.

- Schein (1999:200) defines culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

- Aswathappa (2003:479) refers to culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man in a society.

- Mullins (1999:806) presents a cultural web, as illustrated in the following figure, which brings together different aspects for the analysis of organizational culture.

2.1 The cultural web of an organization

![Cultural Web](Mullins_1999.jpg)

Source: Mullins (1999:806)
The cultural web, help define and develop the culture of an organization. An organization’s culture can be disseminated by analyzing each aspect of the cultural web.

2.2 Levels of organizational culture

Hosted (1990) developed a four-layered hierarchical model of culture which helps to identify and categorize the constituent elements of culture, as reflected in the figure

![Culture Model Diagram]

Source: Hellriegel et al. (2001:513)

- The least visible or deepest level is that of basic shared assumptions, which represents beliefs about reliability and human nature that are taken for granted.
- The next level of culture is that of cultural values, which represent collective beliefs, assumptions, and feelings about what things are good, normal, rational, and valuable. Cultural values might be very different in different organizations; in some, employees may care deeply about money, but, in others, they may care more about technological innovation or employee well-being.
- The next level is that of shared behaviors, including norms, which are more visible and somewhat easier to change than values. The reason is that people may be unaware of the values that bind them together.
- The most superficial level of organizational culture consists of symbols. Cultural symbols are words (jargon or slang), gestures, and pictures or other physical objects that carry a particular meaning within a culture (Hellriegel et al., 2001:512).
2.3 The importance of organizational culture

Culture helps to explain why different groups of people perceive things in their own way and perform things differently from other groups. Culture can help reduce complexity and uncertainty. It provides a consistency in outlook and values, and makes possible the process of decision-making, co-ordination and control. There is nothing accidental about cultural strengths there is a relationship between an organizations culture and its performance.

2.4 Types of organizational culture

Harrison and Stokes (1993:13) identify four culture types. These four culture types are power culture, role culture, achievement culture and support culture.

- **The power culture:** A power-orientated organization is based on inequality of access to resources. In other words, the people in power use resources to either satisfy or frustrate the needs of others, and, by so doing, they control behavior of others.

- **The role culture:** In a role culture orientated organization, structures and systems give protection to subordinates and stability to the organization. The duties and rewards of employees’ roles are clearly defined. This is usually defined in writing as a job description.

- **The achievement culture:** The achievement-orientated organization is known as the ‘aligned’ organization because it lines people up behind a common vision or purpose. This type of organization uses the mission to attract and release the personal energy of its employees in the pursuit of common goals. There is an inner commitment within these achievement-orientated individuals.

- **The support culture:** The support culture may be defined as an organization climate that is based on mutual trust between the individual and the organization. In such organizations, people are valued as human beings and are not just cogs in a machine. This culture centers on warmth and even love and it makes people want to come to work in the morning, not only because they like their work but also because they care for their colleagues.

These four types of culture all have different implications to the success of a business where the power culture is dependent on a central power source with rays of power and influence spreading out from the central figure. These types of cultures are proud and strong and have the ability to move quickly and can react well to threat and danger, as postulated by Handy (1993:184).

2.5 Organizations profile
1. State Bank of India

State Bank of India (SBI) is the largest Indian banking and financial services company (by turnover and total assets) with its headquarters in Mumbai, India. It is state-owned. The bank traces its ancestry to British India, through the Imperial Bank of India, to the founding in 1806 of the Bank of Calcutta, making it the oldest commercial bank in the Indian Subcontinent.

The State Bank of India is the largest of the Big Four banks of India, along with ICICI Bank, Punjab National Bank and HDFC Bank—its main competitors. It is the 29th most reputed company in the world according to Forbes. Also SBI is the only bank featured in the coveted “top 10 brands of India” list in an annual survey conducted by Brand Finance and the Economic Times in 2010.

There are seven other associate banks that fall under SBI. They all use the “State Bank of” name followed by the regional headquarters’ name:

1. State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur
2. State Bank of Hyderabad
3. State Bank of Indore
4. State Bank of Mysore
5. State Bank of Patiala
6. State Bank of Saurashtra
7. State Bank of Travancore

Foreign Offices

State Bank of India is present in 32 countries, where it has 84 offices serving the international needs of the bank’s foreign customers, and in some cases conducts retail operations.

Formalization:

The formalization of the State bank of India is as follows:

- All the officers have certain financial powers and administrative powers depending upon their positions
- The delegation of financial powers of various grades of officials is decided by the Central Board which is revised from time to time, depending upon the organization’s requirement and also Government / RBI guidelines.
- There is a well defined organizational structure and a clear system of accountability and control system, which also take into account the RBI / CVC guidelines.
- There are quite a number of documents like manuals, book of instructions, codified circulars, scheme of delegation of powers, proceedings of the board etc and also the periodical circulars used by the employees for discharging various functions.
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etc and also the periodical circulars used by the employees for discharging various functions.

**Centralization and Decentralization in State Bank of India**

- Regarding sanction of loans, each officer of the Bank will consider loan proposals and take a decision in terms of the scheme of delegation of powers, on the merits of the proposals.
- If bank need to purchase any kind of equipment like computers or software branch managers are required to take permission from the high authority.
- So in term of decision making centralization is high and low decentralization, managers have some power to take decision but it is very limited.

2. **ICICI Bank:**

ICICI Bank is India’s second-largest bank with total assets of Rs. 3,634.00 billion (US$ 81 billion) at March 31, 2010 and profit after tax Rs. 40.25 billion (US$ 896 million) for the year ended March 31, 2010. The Bank has a network of 2,529 branches and 6,102 ATMs in India, and has a presence in 19 countries, including India.

The Bank currently has subsidiaries in the United Kingdom, Russia and Canada, branches in United States, Singapore, Bahrain, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Qatar and Dubai International Finance Centre and representative offices in United Arab Emirates, China, South Africa, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Their UK subsidiary has established branches in Belgium and Germany.

The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India Limited (ICICI) incorporated at the initiative of the World Bank, the Government of India and representatives of Indian industry, with the objective of creating a development financial institution for providing medium-term and long-term project financing to Indian businesses. In 1998, its stake was reduced to 46 per cent through a public offering of shares in India.

ICICI emerges as the major source of foreign currency loans to Indian industry. Besides funding from the World Bank and other multi-lateral agencies, ICICI was also among the first Indian companies to raise funds from international markets.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design selected in this study is quantitative, and cross-sectional. The data is collected all at the same time. A cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the variables included in the study, at one particular point in time. It may reveal how those variables are represented in a cross-section of a population.

**3.1 Population and Sample**

For this purpose, the population consists of all full-time employees, em-
ployed at the two organizations- ICICI and SBI. The sample size is 60, 30 from ICICI Bank and 30 from SBI Bank.

3.2 Data Collection:

It consists of both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through administering questionnaires which consists of biographical information (to determine a profile of sample group in terms of age, years of service, educational qualifications) and organisational culture sections. The questionnaire was initially developed by Harrison (1992) in an effort to help participants in management training courses understand their own organizational cultures. The questionnaire consists of 7 ‘beginnings’ of sentences that describe some aspects of the organizational functioning and design. Following each beginning are four (4) possible ‘endings’. Combined with the beginning, each ending will form a complete sentence describing one of four different patterns of organizational behaviour, beliefs and values.

At the end of each ‘ending’ sentence is a column, marked ‘E’ for existing culture. In the case of the existing culture, respondents were be required to rank order the phrases following each sentence beginning by placing a ‘4’ next to the ending phrase that came the closest to describing the way things are in the organization, a ‘3’ next to the one that came next closest, and so through ‘2’ and, finally a ‘1’ - the one that least described the way things are in the organization. All the (a) alternatives of the questionnaire refer to an organizational culture called the **Power-oriented Culture**; the (b) alternatives assess the **Role-Culture**; the (c) alternatives describe the **culture based on Achievement**; and the (d) alternatives describe a **Support-Oriented Culture** (Harrison and Stoke, 1992:52).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data that was obtained from the completed questionnaires was captured using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets. The analysis was based on inferential statistics. The descriptive and inferential statistics that were used included measures of central tendency and dispersion. The results have been presented in tabular format.

The analysis begins with a description of the respondents biographical profiles, which helps in understanding the workforce of the selected companies in more detail. Thereafter, the questions on culture are analyzed graphically which was developed by Harrison and Stokes (1993:13).

4.1 Profile as per age group

The two companies have a fairly young workforce, with the majority of respondents being between the ages of below 30 years (50.50% for ICICI and 36.67% for SBI). 36.67% (for ICICI) and 20.00% (for SBI) were in the category of 30-39 years. 10.00 % (for ICICI) and 13.33 % (for SBI) were in the category 40-49 years and 3.33 % (for ICICI) and 30.00 % (for SBI) were above 50 years.
old. There is one thing to notice is that SBI has second highest percentage of its employees having older employees, more than 50 years.

4.2 Profile as per highest qualification obtained

For ICICI: A large majority of the workforce (56.67%) has a professional qualification, while 30.00% have graduation as their highest qualification and 13.33% have the post graduation degree there were none who were having highest qualification as intermediate.

For SBI: A large majority of the workforce (50.00%) has graduation as their highest degree, while 30.00% have intermediate as their highest qualification, 13.33% have the post graduation degree and 6.67% are post graduate.

4.3 Length of Service

For ICICI: A large percentage of the current workforce (43.33%) for less than three years. 30.00% has been working for three years, 16.67% of the employees have been into the organization for five years and only 10.00% has been with the company for more than five years. This suggests that the company has less experienced employees.

For SBI:

66.67% of the workforce is with the company for more than five years, 10.00% of the workforce has worked for five years, and 3.33% have worked for 3 years, whilst 20.00% have worked for less than three years. This is suggestive that the organization has experienced persons working in the organization.

5. RESULTS

The following is a graphical representation of the responses to the organizational culture questionnaire. The responses have been represented graphically and the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of each question is represented in a tabular form too.

5.1 Organizational Culture graph:

For ICICI Bank:

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For SBI:
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5.2 The central tendency statistic- Existing culture and graphical representation

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<td>60</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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Interpretation of central tendency statistics:

The coded values as per the questionnaire are:

1 = least preferred alternative
2 = Moderate preferred alternative
3 = Medium preferred alternative
4 = Most preferred alternative

The results presented are for the following question, as per the questionnaire.

**The organization treats individuals**

(a) As “hands” whose time and energy are at the disposal of persons at higher levels in the hierarchy.

(b) As ‘employees’ whose time and energy are purchased through a contract, with rights and obligations on both sides

(c) As “associates” who are mutually committed to the
achievement of a common purpose.

(d) As “family” or “friends” who like being together and who care about and support one another.

1. Mean

The mean results are as follows:

**For ICICI:**

The mean result for options A, B, C, and D are 3.03, 2.62, 2.43, and 1.92 respectively. This suggests the option A is most preferred, i.e. Power Culture.

**For SBI:**

The mean result for options A, B, C, and D are 2.35, 2.18, 2.40, and 2.44 respectively. This suggests the option D is most preferred, i.e. Support Oriented Culture.

**Standard Deviation**

**For ICICI:**

The questions have standard deviation for A, B, C, and D as 0.40, 0.17, 0.36, and 0.34 respectively, signifying that B deviate the least.

**For SBI:**

The questions have standard deviation for A, B, C, and D as 0.49, 0.50, 0.44, and 0.50 respectively, signifying that C deviate the least.

**Variance**

**For ICICI:**

The questions have variance 0.16, 0.03, 0.12, and 0.13, which reveals that all these variables have differences in respondents’ perception for these study questions.

**For SBI:**

The questions have variance 0.16, 0.03, 0.12, and 0.13, which reveals that all these variables have differences in respondents’ perception for these study questions.

5.3 Conclusions

The graph and charts are used for the representation of the responses of the employees of the two organizations. The central tendency has been represented as well.

**Organizational Culture - Existing Culture**

The respondents of the study expressed varied opinions towards the exist-
ence of power, role, achievement and support culture. However, it was evident that, in most cases, the existence of achievement culture was rated the highest and the preference to achievement culture was rated high as well. The results are being discussed individually for each organization.

**ICICI Bank.**

Power culture had the highest mean of 3.03, which is attributed to the fact that the respondents of the study perceive that there is a strong presence of Power culture currently in this organization. This type of culture, according to Harrison and Stokes is based on inequality of access to resources. Leadership resides in the person who is in charge, and rests on the leader’s ability and willingness to administer rewards and punishments. At best, the power - orientated leader is firm, fair and generous and has loyal subordinates.

There also seems to be an existence of Role Culture as indicated by a mean of 2.62. These respondents, whose average mean for existing power culture is as above, see their managers as people who provide environment of stability, justice, and efficient performance. People are protected in their jobs and need to spend less time looking out for themselves, and can devote more energy to their work.

The Achievement Culture also has been given a mean of 2.42, indicating presence of Achievement Culture in the organization. The achievement - orientated organization is known as the ‘aligned’ organization because it lines people up behind a common vision or purpose. This type of organization uses the mission to attract and release the personal energy of its employees in the pursuit of common goals. There is an inner commitment within these achievement-orientated individuals.

The support culture type is also preferred, as is indicative by the average mean of 1.92. This finding indicates that the respondents would prefer a culture where there is mutual trust between themselves and the organization. The preference to this type of culture means that the employees would prefer to be valued within their organization and not be just treated as ‘cogs in a machine’. This type of culture also supports employee commitment, because employees feel a sense of belonging to the organization.

The Standard Deviation of the means suggest that response for the Role Culture is more consistent (SD=0.17) which has been given second highest mean, while that of power culture has SD=0.40. So culture prevalent in the organization is **Role Culture**.

**SBI**

The Role Culture has the highest mean of 2.62 which corresponds to employees perceiving presence of environment of stability, justice, and efficient
performance. People are protected in their jobs and need to spend less time looking out for themselves, and can devote more energy to their work.

The **Support Culture** type is also widely preferred, has the second highest average mean of 2.44. This finding indicates that the respondents would perceive a culture where there is mutual trust between themselves and the organization. The perception of this type of culture means that the employees would see themselves as being valued within their organization and not be just treated as ‘cogs in a machine’. This type of culture also supports employee commitment, because employees feel a sense of belonging to the organization.

The **Achievement Culture** too is preferred by the employees and has been given a mean of 2.40, indicating presence of Achievement Culture in the organization. The organization is known as the ‘aligned’ organization because it lines people up behind a common vision or purpose. This type of organization uses the mission to attract and release the personal energy of its employees in the pursuit of common goals. There is an inner commitment within these achievement-oriented individuals.

The **Power Culture** had the lowest mean of 2.35, which is attributed to the fact that the respondents of the study perceive that there is some presence of Power culture currently in this organization. According to Harrison and Stokes this type of culture is based on inequality of access to resources. Leadership resides in the person who is in charge, and rests on the leader’s ability and willingness to administer rewards and punishments. At best, the power-orientated leader is firm, fair and generous and has loyal subordinates.

The Standard Deviation for the means suggest that there is presence of **Role culture** (with the highest mean) in the organization (SD=0.50) which is not very large as compared to others.

6. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research initiative has revealed that the perceived, present culture of ICICI Bank as that of Role culture. Though highest average mean for ICICI was given as 3.03 as that of power culture, yet due to the coefficient of variance of it being high, the second highest average mean of 2.62 for Role culture with coefficient of variance being the least(0.06) is considered to be the culture of the organization. But the preference for Power culture in ICICI Bank cannot be ignored. This finding infers that the employees of ICICI Bank consider the main values of a role-orientated organization are order, dependability, rationality, and consistency and, at best, this type of organization provides stability, justice, and efficient performance as to be present in their organization. Also employee consider that the people in their organisation use resources to either satisfy or frustrate the needs of others, and, by so doing, they control behaviour of others.
While that of SBI the coefficient of variance (0.19) being the least for achievement culture, hence it is concluded that achievement culture is most dominant in SBI it means SBI lines people up behind a common vision or purpose. They use the mission to attract and release the personal energy of its employees in the pursuit of common goals.

The research concludes that the culture in two organization are different and so the way of working yet they are giving similar result.

Suggestions:

There is high scope of further research in this topic.

- Introducing a performance bonus would help improve commitment levels as well as improve output;
- Motivating its employees more. Low commitment levels are a direct result of low morale. Innovative schemes to improve employee morale would help increase commitment levels. A simple way of improving morale is to organize team building exercises for each team or shift;
- Training all persons in leadership positions to function effectively. Good people management skills would help improve employee commitment levels;
- Fast - tracking, training programmes for existing employees so that current employees can be promoted easily;
- Creating and building trust through open communication and dialogue;
- The current vision and values initiative is working well and this programme should continue indefinitely to maintain the current culture of this organization. Management must ensure that the workforce is fully represented in this committee;
- Management must engage each employee individually and map a clear and concise succession path for each individual; and
- Management should create mentoring programmes for skilled employees to pass on knowledge and skills to new and existing employees.

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