

Course Name: Organizational Behaviour: Individual Dynamics in Organization

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Week – 06

Lecture – 03

Lecture 28: Values that cut across cultures

Dear students, welcome back to the course on Organizational Behaviour: Individual Dynamics in Organisation. We move to the next lecture of module 6 where we look into values. Values at workplace and specifically values that cut across cultures. Now this is going to be a very interesting topic because culture is very significant when we look into OBM, organizational behaviour management specifically. So, what are the values that cut across cultures, what is the relevance of that, that we will discuss in this session.

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So let us start with today's theme. “It is fascinating to explore the differences in values across cultures and appreciate the richness they bring to the tapestry of human experience”.

Now this is quite relevant because when we look into different culture, different cultural orientation, values embedded in different culture, it all amalgamates, it all combines to form a tapestry of human experience. Tapestry is something which we hang as part of cloth or wall hanging which will see something like this. So, values across culture. Let us begin with values across culture.

Now values can, in the previous lecture if you recollect, we have discussed what values are. That said values can vary significantly across cultures, there is no doubt about it. But some common themes emerge, be it in the same culture, be it in different culture, but when we are looking into spectrum of values there are some common themes that are emerging. In some cultures, we see that there might be a strong emphasis on community harmony. We do not want individualistic oriented people, we want to have a community harmony while others might prioritize individualism or personal improvement, personal achievement. All these aspects we have seen.

So there if you are looking into culture, so any discussion on culture specifically starts

with taking two turns. One is looking culture from a collectivistic point of view; we will discuss that in detail. We also look into cultural segmentation where there are individualistic oriented culture. So, when we look into culture specifically values in culture, it is fascinating to explore that the differences and we appreciate the richness that they bring to the tapestry of human experience. So, when we have people who belong to different culture, who come from different culture are part of the same team or part of the same group or the organization in general, we feel that there are a plethora or there is a group of, there is a big cohort of ideas, fresh ideas, innovative ideas that are coming your way.

Now let us look into values across culture. We will try to look into the different cultural orientation, we will look into the different models behind cultural orientation specifically. The first one is hierarchy and authority. Now there are some cultures which specifically give prime importance to hierarchy and authority. Cultures which look into the hierarchy as the way to progress in an organization.

There are cultures which specifically have reverence, have respect towards authority. But then there are also contrasting cultural context which look for more of egalitarian set up which looks more into equality-based arrangement in terms of their work force. Now there is also another important aspect which is known as time orientation.

Now when we look into time orientation there are some cultures which are let us say monochronic. When you look into monochronic culture we see that the task in hand is important. Rather than going for multitasking they do different segments of tasking like let us say one task in the hand they complete it in a very systematic way then they move it to the next task. The monochronic culture also brings in a certain level of appreciation towards punctuality, a certain level of appreciation towards doing everything in time within the schedule. As you look into a contrasting culture context of polychronic culture which is more of time-based frame where time is considered as fluid. Time is more fluid there is lack of appreciation towards punctuality, there is lack of appreciation or adherence to schedule, deadlines etc. So there the social aspect of congruence is important.

There people are more interested in working together, let it take more time but the task could be fluid, there could be multitask that people are engaged in. Time is not the specific criteria of completion of a particular task. So, there are culture context. Specifically, when you look into the western culture it is more monochronic in nature whereas the mid-eastern Asian culture etc. are little more polychronic in nature where you look or where you see time as fluid.

So that is where when we at least assume that the deadlines are not very important

multitasking becomes critical. There are situations where you know people tend to involve in different task but seldom do they complete one. So, we see all types of people like this in the organization that is the relevance of time orientation in organizational behavior.

Now let us look into the communication style. There are certain cultural context which are high context communication oriented. For example some cultural context whereby, you look and see that the communication happens to non-verbal cues. There are situations where more than explicit talk, explicit channels of communication you look into the non-verbal cues, back-channel communications etc. So those are high cultural context communication strategies whereas you look into low context it is more of explicit communication whatever you want to put as record you tell it explicitly or you write it or document it explicitly. More of a western culture is low context in that perspective whereas you again look into the eastern or the Asian cultural context is more of high context communication that we have seen.

Another important aspect is attitude towards changes. Now this is very critical when you look into the cultural ramifications specifically when people are prone towards change or there is a lack of adaptability towards change. So, all these two parameters we see that certain culture generally enhances or reinforces the quest for innovation, new fresh ideas. So, this is where you look and see that more different cultural inputs coming into picture. There are some cultures which are open to this whereas there are some cultural contexts which are very much resistive to all the inputs that are coming in different ways. So, attitude towards change happens to be yet another important value across culture.

Now you look into specifically individualism versus collectivism. I am giving you a set of all possible values that are spread in a platter across culture. So individualism versus collectivism we see the most discussed value among the cultural context in any talk, any discussion pertaining to culture. So there are some culture context which are highly individualistic, they look for personal achievement, they look for personal glory, they are not very keen on team based output, group based working arrangements whereas there are some cultural context which are more collectivistic in nature where the group is important, where the social norms are important, how you achieve is more important than what you achieve. So, there are such situations which restrict an individualistic personality to work in a collectivistic centric context. So those are some of the inherent disadvantages that may creep in.

Another important aspect is power distance. When you look into certain culture context there could be a hierarchy based set up which we have already seen in the previous slide. People are more prone to keep a distance based on the hierarchy or based out of the respect towards the levels of functioning. So, there are some cultures which again promote or advocate as I mentioned egalitarian set up, there are some cultures which are

more equality centric cultures.

Then there is something called as uncertainty avoidance. When people are more oriented or high on uncertainty avoidance they want to be away from uncertainty, they want to be away from ambiguity. So, any instance where which can create confusion, which can create uncertainty, which can elicit ambiguity, they stay away from that. But then there are certain cultural context which do not actually mind about ambiguity. They try to thrive and survive and flourish during this atmosphere of ambiguity or uncertainty.

Then there is another important aspect which is known as achievement nurturing orientation. So, this you have to see achievement versus nurturing. Some cultural context which focuses on achievement, there is a quest to achieve, a personal gain, personal achievement, materialistic. Whereas there are some collectivistic scenarios we can say where people tend to bring out the best out of individuals, but not on a personal front, but more on a group-based dynamics. So, this is nurturing orientation.

So I am giving you an explanation of different types of values that cut across different cultures. That said we should not be under the impression that it is all oriented in one dimension or it is all going in one line of thought. There are caveats about cross cultural knowledge. Cross cultural organization research specifically has gained attention due to increased globalization and culture diversity within organization. If there was hardly any opening up of the economy, there was hardly any globalization that has happened across the world, then we do not see a possibility of different culture being imbibed or getting transferred or people from different context working in other organization.

The very concept of MNCs and organizations that are spread across different continents have emerged or have happened because of the existence of the arrival or of globalization specifically. So, the problem that many studies though we say that have researched on cultural aspect, the significant issue in all those studies if you look into, they are being done on a small sample. Now there is a problem with sampling in those cases because it need not specifically represent a culture. Making the assumption while making the study that a small sample, it is irrespective of whatever research flavor you are taking in. It is a sample-based study, there could be some dimensions of error that can creep in.

Another problem in those studies that often assume that one country represents one culture and that is not the case. Similarly, if you look into India, we see that it is a microcosm or it is an amalgamation, we sometimes call this as a tossed salad or sometimes we call it as a mixture of all those culture which come together. There could be diversity which we will discuss in the coming aspects or coming portions. We will see that a particular country need not represent one single culture and that is a mistake most of

these studies have categorically made when they are looking or studying into a particular culture. They try to make the assumption which might be possibly wrong that one country represents one particular culture.

Now we look into specifically culture diversity in India because I feel that a small discussion is warranted in this part. We look into India which has been historically known for having been the cradle of many cultures and religions. We see that India has evolved as a country where there is lot of differences but there is unity irrespective of these differences. There are different cultural aspects, there are different language barriers, there are different way people eat, dress, the way they carry on in their day-to-day activities. They work, they talk, everything might be different.

The value systems but of a majority of people in India have some homogeneous values that is more interesting. When we look into the background where there are lot of differences, we see people from different culture they bring in a lot of differences but that said when you totally try to scan the entire value system there are some quite homogeneous values forming the sum total of the overall culture. That is where sometimes I have already told that when we do a research we make a fundamental error in assuming that one country represents a culture and this is the thought or this is the point which acts as an antidote to the earlier point where we see that it might be the case that there are different cultural context, there are different cultural aspirations, different ways people behave, different types of acts or different types of attires or the way they carry or their predisposition might be different but all that said there could be some congruence at one point where there are some homogeneous values coming together and forming a set of core values. Certain homogeneous values like high regard for collectivism, feminism, power distance etc have been observed commonly in context of India. Now let us look into certain dimensions of this cultural diversity specific to India. One is urbanization.

When we look into urbanization specifically, we will see that the development and expansion of the economy, new urban centers are being developed. There is still some divergence in terms of values in the workforce. So, we see that what all development the country claims it is a collective outcome of both the metropolitan cities as well as the small towns or the small cities which are emerging. In fact, there are many scientifically proven studies which say that the innovation or the entrepreneurial potential is more vigorous in terms of people from small towns. So, urbanization has had its effect there is no doubt about it that said there is a possibility or there is a level of improvement in terms of cultural diversity that is coming from different parts of the country.

There is another important aspect of linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity is nothing but the dominant use of a language for informal communication among groups that may depend on the popular language spoken in the region of the workplace or the one spoken by a majority of people in the workplace.

So, we see that India represents amalgamation of lot of languages. In fact, there are so many languages even in the Indian constitution the eighth schedule there are 22 languages which are being registered but apart from that there are so many languages that are existing within the country. In fact, if we go deeper into that analysis within the same language there are so many dialects, there are so many variations of how people approach the language, how people actually speak or talk the particular language.

So linguistic diversity is a very critical aspect when you look into organizational behavior specifically. There are organizations which work in let us say Bengaluru and people are coming all the way from let us say Uttar Pradesh or let us say from Bihar or let us say from West Bengal there might be amalgamation of different languages that are coming in that particular zone. Then let us take a particular region, let us look into a company that is based out of Hyderabad. You might see that even within the south there is possibility of different languages from Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam to Kannada etc. So, all these aspects they form what is called as the linguistic diversity.

Another important aspect is ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity is all about work places that should have an egalitarian and equalitarian view and respect the needs of employees of every ethnicity. People belong to different ethnicities there is no doubt about it, people come from different ethnic origins but even organization is not egalitarian in its approach. There is a certain level of discrimination we had a detailed analysis about discrimination in terms of diversity etc. in our previous lectures you can always revisit those segments of those lectures specifically.

If an organization is discriminatory in its approach towards different ethnicity the organization is bound to perform in a very a worst way. So, we look into organizations where people gel together, the people who are coming from the human capital which is coming from different ethnic origin they tend to take up and form as a single culture which is called as the organizational culture. Sometimes there is some learning associated to that it could be part of organizational learning. All this documented it could be part of institutional memories all these discussions we already have so that is what I am not going into that in detail but if an organization has to thrive in a multicultural set up it has to appreciate the existence and the thriving and the benefits ethnic diversity can bring in to the work force.

Another important aspect is regional diversity. When we look into regional diversity

specifically all the previous elements of diversity are spread differently among different kinds of India. This makes specifically cultural pockets within an overall multicultural land. Cultural pockets determine the definitive value dimensions of the dominant work force of a particular region. So, when you are looking into specifically regional specific diversity people come from different zones, people come from different areas similar to ethnic diversity organizations should tend to appreciate the regional diversity aspect as well.

Now let us look into one last point before we conclude which is generational values. Now this is very keen and this is very interesting because many a time we see that individuals do not perform in a way that therefore fathers or the previous generations would perform or would actually talk or walk or perform. So generational values happen to be very critical area of study. So, in the beginning of this the whole course itself I am categorically mentioned that this course has a certain background in empirical sound empirical research. On that basis we tend to see that generational values are very significant when you actually tend to develop or tend to look into the importance of values in organization. When you look into generational values what we see is that researchers have integrated several recent analyses of work values into four groups that attempt to capture the unique values of different codes or generations mainly with respect to the US workforce.

We should not undermine that the context here. The first part would be baby boomers. Boomers are a large cohort born after World War II. So, you should look into the period when veterans returned to their families and times were really good. Boomers enter the workforce from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s. So, these baby boomers happen to be the first and the foremost segment of the workforce which tend to transfer the first generational values.

The second aspect or second set of people would be the life of Xers which are also called as generation Xers who have been shaped by globalization, they have been shaped by two career parents, more modern amenities, MTV, AIDS, technology, computers etc. So, they are looked mainly or they are nurtured or they are being influenced mainly by globalization. They don't tend to work with respect to one single rule. They don't tend to work with respect to one particular path in an organization. More than that they are looking into or they are being born and brought up in a world which is shaped by technology, which is shaped by globalization, which is shaped by the modernity that is happening all around us.

And the most recent entrance to the workforce are the millennials. When you look into the millennials they are also called as Netters, Nexters, Generation Years and Generation Nexters. They grew up during the prosperous times. So, they are more particular, they are

more choosy, they have the instant gratification that is in there, they have a lot of things that other generations do not possess in a positive as well as in a negative sense. So, the point I wanted to specifically mention here is when we look into values specifically, we have seen that there are different variations but there are also generational values that are very critical.

To sum up this session I wanted you to understand and analyze what is the importance of values that cut across different cultures. There are specific values that are milestones or that are the kingpin differentiators of particular values, no doubt about it of different cultures. But that said I always believe and this is the outcome of certain research that we have some set of core values, some set of homogeneous core values which tend to reflect what that particular culture is. We look into India specifically it is having different culture, it is having different languages, different types of people, different ethnicity, ethnic origins lot of differences but that said there is some level of some set values, some core values which are homogeneous in itself. So mainly when you are looking into organization there might be people who are coming from different walks of life, different ethnic origin, different languages, different types of people all across you but there are some values, some values like let us say respect towards others, some value like you know the team capability, working in teams. So, there are some collectivistic centric approaches all these aspects tend to make that organization one single entity.

Just introspect are you working in such an organization or what is that the core set of values that define or that play a vital role in your organization. Thank you for listening to me patiently that is all from today's class.

We will see you in the next lecture till then take care, goodbye