

# A Study on Cultural Differences of Organizations Based in India and Middle East

–Prajakta Dhuru\*

## ABSTRACT

*Culture is the most important intangible aspect of an organization that ensures its success. The important values relevant to the organizations are openness, confrontation, trust, authenticity, proactivity, autonomy, collaboration and experimentation. The study is an attempt to explore the dynamics of organizational culture in Indian organizations and Middle East organizations using OCTAPACE framework. The study aims to study the differences of various cultures of organizations in India and Middle East and highlight the factors behind it. In the current study, 140 responses were obtained on OCTAPACE profile questionnaire developed by T.V. Rao (1999).*

*The study found the significant differences on various dimensions of OCTAPACE culture, organizational ethos and values which are linked to each other. The study addresses the meek aspects of culture in terms of beliefs and values that exist in the organization. It further helps in building a sustained competitive advantage and generating the desired organizational performance. The outcomes of the study can be helpful in right selection of personnel when hiring for different demographics. The study will not only add value to the core operative functions of HR, but enable best fit.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, OCTAPACE, Organizational Effectiveness, Organizational Ethos, Values, Competitive Advantage*

## INTRODUCTION

Every organization has its own culture, which have a direct effect of the external societal culture. Schien (1985) defines culture as ‘a blueprint of

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basic assumptions invented, discovered or developed by a given cluster as it learns to cope with its troubles of external adaption and internal combination that has worked to be considered applicable and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.’

The application of the idea of organization culture began in United States post world war and became popular in the 1980s. Many management books instilled the notion that organization culture was a very important variable in the management of organizational performance. Last decade has seen tremendous growth in the importance given to organizational culture. Many researchers have studied culture across many industry settings.

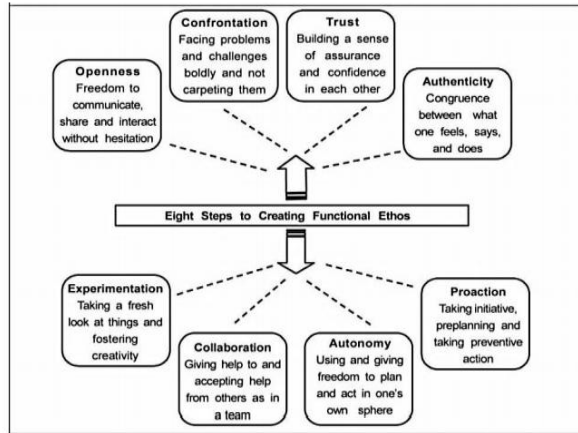
Abraham’s (1989) study has linked Human Resource Development climate and organizational performance in financial terms. Organizational performance widely depends on organizational culture. Culture serves as a most important and effective mechanism for setting performance standards, monitoring performances and controlling. Hofstede (1980, 1991) Organization culture has gained importance in a way to understand and to be aware of human behavior. Since 1980’s the concept of organizational culture has been an important area of research.

To recognize the corporate climate focus is on organizational research. This ‘corporate climate’ was relabeled as an important aspect of organizational values. Organizational culture comprises beliefs and values of an organization. Organizational norms, the guiding principle are developed from organizational values that lay down the opposite kinds of behavior by employees and manage the actions of organizational employees.

Rao (1999) developed OCTAPACE model. It stands for Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Authenticity, Proactive, Autonomy, Collaboration and Experimentation. These values help in nurturing a climate of continuous development of employees in an organization. A most favorable level of these values is essential for facilitating Human Resource Development. The essentials of OCTAPACE are as follows:

1. Openness: It can be defined as natural expression of thoughts and feelings, and involvement of these without defensiveness. Openness is in both directions, giving and receiving. Both of these may be related in giving and receiving suggestion or generating ideas, feedback and feelings as well as criticism. Openness also means the spatial openness in the terms of entry into or accessibility.

The openness promotes unbiased performance feedback. Productive meetings systemised and improved implementation of systems and innovations are indicators of openness in an organisation. To discuss issues without hurting each other. Enhances problem-solving ability



**Figure 1: Dimensions of OCTAPACE Model of Organizational Culture Source: Azmi, F.T. and Sharma, R., (2007)**

2. **Confrontation:** It can be defined as facing issues directly than shying away from problems. It encourages discussion of issues without hurting each other's feelings. It involves taking up challenges. It also implies a deeper investigation of interpersonal problems. The term confrontation is used with some stipulations and means putting up a front, as contrasted with turning ones back to the problem. The outcome of confrontation can be better role clarity, improved problem solving, and willingness to deal with problems and with 'difficult' employees and customers. There will be willingness in terms to discuss and resolve sensitive issues. These indicators, which are the outcomes, can be increased by periodic discussions with clients, bold actions and refusal to postpone sticky matters.
3. **Trust:** Trust is reflected in maintaining the confidentiality of information shared by others and in not misusing it. It is also reflected in a sense of assurance that others will help when help is needed and will honour mutual commitments and obligations. Trust is accepting what another person says at face value and not searching for ulterior motives. Trust is an extremely important ingredient in organisational building processes. The outcome of trust includes high empathy, timely support, reduced stress, and reduction and simplification of forms and procedures. Such simplification of procedures, reduced paperwork, effective delegation and higher productivity are indicators of trust.
4. **Authenticity:** Authenticity is the congruence between what one

feels, says and does. Authentic is near to openness. It is reflected in owning up to one's mistakes and in a complete sharing of feelings. The basic result of authenticity in an organization is reduced distorted organizational communication.

5. **Proactive:** Proactive means preplanning, taking initiative and taking preventive action and calculating pay offs of an alternative course of action to solve the organizational problem. The term proactive means act before and is the opposite of react which means action afterwards. The term react, the action is in response to an act from some source, in the former, the action taken is independent of the source. It is a person's initiative to start a new process or set up a new pattern of behaviour. In reactive behaviour, the initiative lies with the source and the person merely acts according to the pattern set by that source.

The outcome of high proactivity is greater initiative in anticipating problems and issues, planning, developing strategies, ensuring faster response, and processing raw materials etc. The outcome is early problem detection, detailed planning, analysis of successes and failures, reduction of surprises, improved time management, reduction of 'emergency' meetings in organisations and with customers, willingness to enter new areas of work, and timely curtailing of unbeneficial business. All these can also be used as indicators of proactivity, including better capital management.

6. **Autonomy:** It means using and allowing planning freely and takes steps in one's own field. It means encouraging and respecting individuals and role independence. Autonomy develops mutual admiration and is likely to result in readiness to take individual initiative and responsibility and better succession planning. The main indicator of autonomy is effective delegation in an organisation and reduction of references to seniors for approval of planned action.
7. **Collaboration:** It means giving and asking for help. It means working together to solve troubles and developing team spirit. The outcome of collaboration includes teamwork, timely help, and improved communication, experiential sharing, and enhanced resources contribution. The indicators could be productivity reports, frequent meetings, involvement of staff in decision making, more joint decisions, better resource utilisation and value meetings.
8. **Experimenting:** It can be defined as encouraging and using novel approaches to solve problems, using criticism for improvement, taking a new look at things, and cheering creativeness. In an or-

ganisation there are various kinds of creativity. It is a indication of novel suggestions made by employees, whereby the older way of working can be improved, new methods can be originated, to try out new ideas and sidelining the constraints if any while thinking about the problem. Thus such thinking contributes to the development of new products, new processes and new methods.

In OCTAPACE Culture Rao has stated that when the OCTAPACE values are present in the following combinations, organizations benefit more. The combinations are:

- a. Openness and Confrontation
- b. Autonomy and Collaboration
- c. Trust and Authenticity
- d. Proactive and Experimentation.

Rao elaborated that if the OCTAPACE model is practiced in an organization; they are likely to get the best out of people at work. Studies of organizational culture are continuously increasing. Studies have used different terminologies and the same terms used with separate meanings. It is necessary to clarify some of the terms and terminologies, so that they can be used properly.

The many terms are used in the background of organizational culture are as - the climate, the ethics, the ethos, the beliefs, the values of the organization, the environment of the organization etc. The value of the organization, the attitudes, beliefs and norms are the interconnected. Interface between the beliefs and values results in attitude formation (attitudes = beliefs x values) and then produces the norms. Ethics are the normative aspects to what is socially desirable. Schein (1985) has proposed three levels of variables in culture

- Artifacts and creations, which are noticeable but often not understandable.
- Values, which indicate greater consciousness.
- The basic assumptions, that are taken for granted, are unseen, and preconscious.

The coined term OCTAPACE is a very meaningful and it shows - eight means Octa and pace means steps and thus, together means the functional ethos of any organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Joshi & Khare (2014) in their study attempted to identify the major factors based on OCTAPACE in IT Industry. The study the organization should work towards developing its ethos based on the OCTAPACE model - Openness,

Confrontation, and Trust and Trustworthiness, Authenticity, Proactivity, Autonomy, Collaboration, and Experimentation. The organization should encourage honesty, Integrity, efficiency and truthfulness. The middle level management should possess honesty, sincerity and dedication to work. Developing these traits will ensure their effectiveness and future growth.

Jong, et al (2006) studied the cultural determinant openness. They conducted a cross cultural analysis constituting 53 countries. The researchers found that the culture of the country has an effect on the openness. They found that individualism was positively affected and uncertainty avoidance and power distance has negative effect on openness. Their studies found that individualism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance have considerable effects on openness. They also suggested that uncertainty avoidance is the most significant and dependable cultural factor in explaining openness.

Krishna and Rao (1997) in their study of organizational climate at BHEL, India, found that the atmosphere of openness for senior and middle managers in the organization was good.

Nika and Sofi (2013) explored the OCTAPACE culture on the tourism industry in hotels in Srinagar. They aimed to have a better view about the prevailing culture in tourism industry. Openness, Confrontation, Autonomy and Experimentation were found to be on low to average side of the limits thereby limiting adequate opportunities to employees to enhance their creativity and take steps for their development. Sr. Alphonsa, (2000) found that the openness level was good amongst employees of hospitals of Hyderabad.

Srimannarayana (2008) studied over a thousand respondents from services IT, and manufacturing sector. He inferred, the OCTAPACE culture in these sectors seemed to be over average with 60%. Collaboration topped the rank with a mean score of 62.45 followed by autonomy, authenticity, pro-activity, trust, openness and confrontation and confrontation ranking the lowest. It was found that manufacturing sector topped the list of sectors than service and IT in OCTAPACE culture. IT sector scored more than service sector on confrontation, while the latter topping in proactivity.

Wells & Kipnis (2001) in their researched the consequences of trust in terms of influencing strategies used and the frequency of people interacting with each other. The study also assessed the effect of technology on the dependency of management on their employees. The findings cleared little dependency on employees; strong tactics of persuade and use of personal characteristics to explain distrust were associated with managers distrusting their subordinates. The subordinates also distrusted their managers through fewer interactions, not as much of attempts to influence

and use of personal related characteristics to explain lack of trust. The study contributed towards relations among work trust, dependency and social influence and how trust can impact the work relations.

Lather et al (2010) compared organizational culture of the selected 70 companies in the manufacturing sector and identified and measured the perceived organizational culture. The result suggests that the non-executives and executives perceived culture in a different way. The employees didn't discriminate in the perception of organizational culture in terms of their positions engaged in the organization, which suggested that the organizational joint work culture was so well-built that employees do perceive equivalently irrespective of their positions in the organizations. It was found that trust and openness were highly correlated, and had a significant effect on authenticity, and collaboration. Trust, autonomy, and experimentation with other variables have considerable relationship with confrontation. Experimentation is the only variable which is negatively correlated with pro-action, autonomy and collaboration.

Tiwari (2014) assessed the elements of OCTAPACE culture among teachers of higher education institutions of Madhya Pradesh. Openness, collaboration and autonomy were scored fairly well while confrontation and authenticity managed good scores. The HRD values among teachers of higher education institutes appeared to have good scores.

Rijal, (2010) studied the impact of organizational culture and transformational leadership on the progress of learning organizations with respect to few organizations in the pharmaceutical sector of India and Nepal. This study highlighted the importance of leadership and organizational culture. The study found that the telecommunication sector organizations in India and Nepal provided support for the expectation that transformational leader. It was observed that there was disparity in the development of learning organizations in Nepal and India.

In Nepal they did not focus on learning to improve the performance in spite of facing rigid competition. They do not focus on long term gains and give more importance to short term gains.

The study also found that the leaders in both the countries demonstrated less transformational leadership distinctiveness. Both India and Nepal, contributed positively to predict learning organization through openness and proactivity, but they are other cultural values that support and facilitate learning.

Wani (2013) studied the culture of Cadbury India Ltd., Thane Plant after it was overtaken by Kraft Foods in 2010 found out the culture within the organization was pleasant with most of the attributes of OCTAPACE above average values. The study concluded that Attributes like openness and confrontation are lacking in the organization. The study also suggested

to induce more sense of autonomy amongst the people in the plant.

Subramanian (2012) focused on organizational culture experienced by software employees. The study was conducted on Adrenalin Systems Ltd. 200 employees working in software were considered for the study. The study revealed that the culture of the organization is overall good with regards to important proportions required for a software company which includes trust, planning and free flowing communication among employees. Collaboration and trust among employees is crucial for every organization for its efficacy and the management ought to work for developing the OCTAPACE culture. Dimensions like Autonomy, Authenticity and experimentation show lesser limit than standard norms required further investigation.

Senthilrajan and Renganathan (2013) studied employee's intuitivism of practices in Auto Component industry and organization culture. Descriptive research was adopted with a sample of 106 employees from HR, Finance, sales, operations, and outsourcing. The study revealed the organization culture and aid to gratify the employer-employee relationships. Conversely the study only covered automotive component industries.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this article is to understand the differences of the organization cultures in the companies based in India and those based in Middle Eastern countries like Oman, UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The study has adapted OCTAPACE model and the questionnaire developed by TV Rao.

The following objectives are undertaken for the study:

- To study the perceived organizational culture and its various proportions.
- To learn how diverse groups (Indian residents & Middle East residents) of the organization recognize its culture.
- To determine the factors for cultural differences in these geographical regions.

## METHODOLOGY

### Tool

The Questionnaire was sent to 140 employees of companies in India as well as in Middle East. The data was then analyzed through bar graphs to clearly understand the difference in the eight dimensions of culture.

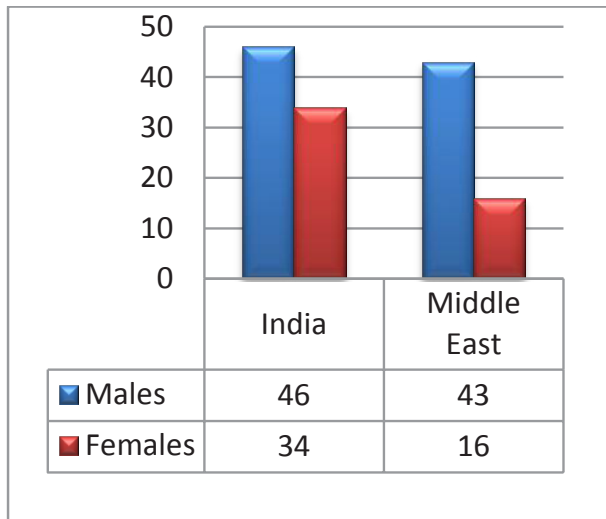
- a. Hypothesis 1: There is no significant differentiation in the OCTA-PACE culture in the companies based in India versus companies based in Middle East.

### Sample

Subjects for this research were selected from offices in India and Middle East. A total of 140 employees are selected out of which 60 are from Middle East and 80 reside in India. The sample size includes employees across different levels of organizations and fall in the age bracket 20 – 50.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

1. Gender Proportion in both the geographies



**Figure 1: Gender Proportion**

As the bar graph clearly depicts, one major differentiating factor is the gender equality ratio. In the Middle East not many females were found working as compared to India. Also one questionnaire was found without the gender information, making the total 139.

We can consider the following rational:

- a. Since Middle East has a conservative culture, women may have to face difficulties in getting working visas. Though the region has

seen a tremendous growth in the past few years, they are yet to gain gender equality.

- b. Also, few companies have rules of not allowing their spouse work in the same organization. This also restricts opportunities for the married women to work in Middle East.

## ANALYSIS OF OCTAPACE MODEL

### **a. Openness**

- i. 37% of the responses from India believe that their organizations strongly agree on the openness dimension.
- ii. 32% of the responses from the Middle Eastern companies happen to feel that their organization is not open to expression of thoughts and feelings, and their sharing without defensiveness.
- iii. This can be possible because major of the companies in the Middle Eastern countries (esp. Oman and Saudi Arabia) may have adopted Authoritative Style of leadership and do not entertain expression of thoughts.

### **b. Collaboration**

- i. 32.5% of the responses from the Indian companies strongly agree that there is collaboration between the employees and they are helpful to each other.
- ii. 24.67% of the employees from Middle East feel that there is a lack of collaboration among the employees and also, 15% are neutral about this dimension.

### **c. Trust**

- i. Trust dimension sees a difference as compared to the other dimensions. A few Indian responses, i.e. 21.25% feel there is trust in the organization, while 25% strongly disagree to this.
- ii. Talking about Middle East, 38.33% of them strongly agree that there is trustworthiness among the employees.
- iii. In Middle East, promotions and responsibilities are given on the basis of trust, especially in the proprietary industry.

### **d. Authenticity**

- i. Only 25% of the responses from the companies based in India have responded positively, while there were 20% who disagreed as well when it came to Authenticity.
- ii. Middle East has only 14% strongly disagreeing to the fact that there is strong presence of Authenticity in their companies.

**e. Proactive**

- i. The bar graphs show that 28% of the Indian employees slightly agree that people are proactive and they take initiatives.
- ii. 35% of employees from the Middle East disagree when it comes to pro-activeness.
- iii. The main reason for this is due to the lack of motivating factors in companies based in Middle East.

**f. Autonomy**

- i. Autonomy is strongly present in the Indian companies as you see the 25% of the responses in the positive end.
- ii. In the Middle Eastern countries, companies are very stringent there aren't many start-ups coming up. Even private sector isn't booming as much as in India. So the laws and rules are followed to the higher extent.

**g. Collaboration**

- i. As the bar charts show, in India, there is higher confrontation among the employees as compared to the Middle Eastern countries.
- ii. 29.75% of the responses from India strongly agree, while 25% from Middle East strongly disagrees

**h. Experimentation**

- i. The most striking differences among all the dimensions of the organization culture is absolute opposite when it comes to experimentation.
- ii. 36.25% of the responses from India agree that employees are allowed to experiment around their task.
- iii. 31% of the employees based in Middle East disagree on the part where the employees of their companies are allowed to experiment.

Variables	Mean (India)	Mean (Middle East)	Difference
Openness	3.75	3.05	0.70
Confrontation	3.67	2.56	1.11
Trust	2.89	4.21	1.32
Authenticity	3.58	2.88	0.70
Proactivity	3.03	2.61	0.42
Autonomy	3.47	2.75	0.72
Collaboration	3.43	2.75	0.68
Experimentation	3.86	2.75	1.11

## DISCUSSION

The results show that employees in Middle East rated trust factor higher than employees in India, their Confrontation was much lower (2.56) as compared to Indian employees (3.67). Experimentation was also found to be higher in India (3.86) as compared to 2.75 in Middle East. The study suggested that there was no major difference in proactivity, where in India it was 3.03 as compared to 2.61 in Middle East. Indian organizations (3.75) were more open for their employees than organizations in Middle East (3.05). Also Authenticity (3.58), Autonomy (3.47), and Collaboration (3.43) was found more in Indian companies as compared to Middle East were Authenticity (2.88), Autonomy (2.75), and Collaboration (2.75).

Trust has its prominence in Middle East countries and confrontation has less significance. Trust acts as an important ingredient in organizational building process thereby ensuring high commitment levels of employees. In Indian context, Openness is the highest considered value that reflects on high confrontation thereby ensuring fruitful meetings, enhanced execution of systems and innovations, better role clarity and improved problem solving. Experimentation encourages creativity and in Indian context it works in favor of the organizations as compared to employees of Middle East. Low Authenticity and Autonomy restricts people to be creative in Middle East.

**Table 1: Mean of the Level of Presence of the 8 Dimensions of Organizational Culture**

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Mean (India)	8	27.68	3.46	0.1162
Mean (Middle East)	8	23.56	2.945	0.284286

**Table 2: ANOVA – Single Factor**

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1.0609	1	1.0609	5.298067	0.037226	4.60011
Within Groups	2.8034	14	0.200243			
Total	3.8643	15				

### Table 3: ANOVA

The Null Hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the organizational cultures (OCTAPACE) between the companies based in both the geographies (India and Middle East).

The rejection or acceptance of a null hypothesis is based on some level of significance (alpha level) as a criterion.

From the above table we see, p value is  $0.0372 < 0.05$ . Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

That means that there is a significant difference between the organizational cultures between the companies based in both the geographies.

## CONCLUSION

Organizational culture comprises the cumulative and shared values, attitudes, rituals and sanctions in a group. The framework of eight values OCTAPACE here has enabled to understand the factors that have an impact on people working in different countries. The present study examined the cultural differences in the organizations based in India and Middle East. The study used OCTAPACE model to study the cultural dimensions of the sample belonging to both the geographical areas. It was found that there is significant difference in all the eight dimensions of OCTAPACE cultural model. The study can add value while acquiring talent for companies functioning in India and Middle East. Right People Right Job fit can be achieved to a considerable way by selecting people with specific traits to suit the values and ethos of the country. The study can further add value to various operational functions of Job Design and Competency Assessment.

## LIMITATIONS

The sampling technique was convenience based. A few subjects of research got impacted by the central tendency which had to be eliminated. There are chances a few of them would have answered on the positive scale simply to present the firm as a better one. Interpretation of the reasons of such differences was not confirmed.

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