

ROLE OF CUTURE IN HIRING DECISIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Author: Vinitha Nair, PhD Student, School of Business Management, NMIMS
(vinithanair18@gmail.com)

Co – Author: Dr Veena Vohra, Professor - H.R and Behavioral Science, School of Business
Management, NMIMS

(veena.vohra@sbm.nmims.edu)

Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai.

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Abstract

This study provides a close examination of the role of organizational culture in shaping hiring decisions in organizations. There is a gap in the literature pertaining to the cultural characteristics in Indian organizations and how these shape the dynamics and outcomes of hiring decisions. Hence an interpretive approach has been used in this study. Open ended in depth interviews were conducted and thematic analysis was used to code and develop themes to respond to the research questions. Primary research findings have highlighted the requirement for concrete organizational interventions to minimise bias in hiring decisions based on culture.. While hiring for culture fit, there are dangers of falling into the path of exclusion rather than inclusion. Exploring and understanding what the cultural elements are and how they would shape the dynamics of the hiring processes and their consequences in Indian organizations would enable more effective and efficient decision making, facilitating promotion of diversity and inclusion and ensuring the right person at the right place and at the right time.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Hiring, Unconscious Bias, Inclusion

Role of Culture in Hiring Role Decisions in Organizations

Introduction

Decision making is embedded in the problem-solving process and its many stages (Davidson and Sternberg, 2003; Güss et al., 2010). In the narrow sense, decision making is understood as the ability to select one of several alternatives and to act accordingly (Guss, 2004). The fact that researchers even study decision-making processes suggests that decision making can be controlled, that it is boundedly rational, and that people can learn to be more efficient and effective decision makers (Lipshitz, Raanan et al., 2006). Arriving at a decision requires the decision maker to weigh the risks and benefits of various options and derive a decision that compares potential losses against potential gains (Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman, 1992). Numerous factors, including the availability of choices, the extent of the decision maker's accountability, relationships among stakeholders (e.g., who is affected by the decision) recognition of familiar patterns, and how people construct the narrative (i.e., explain a situation to themselves), are all consciously or unconsciously considered while making a decision (Angie et al., 201; Lipshitz et al., 2006; Weber and Morris, 2010). Apart from this, cultural context shapes the degree to which these additional factors affect the decisions made, whether or not a person acknowledges that culture plays a role in decision making (Sharon Glazer, 2014).

Ovretveit (2014) defines context as 'all factors that are not part of a quality improvement intervention itself' and various authors have developed taxonomies, theoretical and conceptual frameworks to delineate key elements of context that influence the success of quality improvement initiatives. Typical aspects of context highlighted in such frameworks include leadership, organisational culture, teamwork, resources, organisational characteristics and various external environmental factors. Culture forms a relevant facet of the internal social contextual factors in an organization.

Many have debated the definition of culture (Triandis, 1996). Most agree with Kluckhohn's (1951) definition that culture is an acquired and transmitted pattern of shared meaning, feeling and behaviour that constitutes a distinctive human group. Culture can be defined as the "learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols and traditions that are common to a group of people" (Northouse, 2013). Implicit to all perspectives of cultural studies is that culture shapes the values and attitudes that affect people's perceptions, including human phenomenon like leadership (Ayman, Mead, Bassari & Huang 2012; Gerstner & Day 1997; Liu, Ayman & Ayman -Nollwe,2012). Connerley and Pederson (2005) proposed a more integrated definition of culture. They considered it to be a complex (multidimensional and multilevel) and dynamic phenomenon consisting of both visible and invisible characteristics that may influence leadership. These categories of culture include demographic characteristics (place of residence, physical gender), status characteristics (economic and educational variables), ethnographic characteristics (nationality, ethnicity, language) and affiliations. People who differ from one another on these categories can "experience the

world in different ways whether those differences are based on internal differences, external differences in the way they are treated by others or a combination of the two” (Connerley and Pedersen, 2005).

The increasing diversity in today’s workforce means that to be effective, leaders need to develop a multi- cultural perspective and an understanding of the points of view of those who differ from themselves (Connerley & Pederson, 2005). Because leaders’ and subordinates’ gender or culture influences their frame of reference, these factors affect how leaders’ behaviours are described and evaluated (Ayman 1993). Previous research has shown that recruiters do attempt to evaluate applicant fit during the employment interview and this perception of fit affects subsequent selection decisions (Cable & Judge, 1997). Cultural background has been shown to shape many aspects of social and work orientation (Erez and Gati, 2004; Fulkerson and Tucker, 1999) and could influence interviewer rating decisions. Thus at a practical level, ignoring culture and the surrounding dynamics can create problems (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007), in the development of leaders of tomorrow. Culturally inclusive research has many benefits, including expanding on theories, increasing the range of variables, unconfounding variables and understanding the context in which behaviour occurs (Trinadis & Brislin, 1984).

The concept of person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996) can be traced to Schneider’s attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework (Schneider, 1987), which suggests that people and organizations are attracted to one another based on their similarity. Although interviewers’ perception of P-O fit may be based on many applicant attributes (demographics or personality), one important aspect of both individuals and organizations that can be compared directly and meaningfully is values (Chatman, 1989,1991 ; Schein, 1990). Values are enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end state is preferable to its opposite, therefore guiding individuals’ attitudes, judgements and behaviours (Chatman,1989,1991; Rokeach, 1973).

Almost all organizations use the interview when selecting new employees, and it is widely believed that the interviewers’ evaluations of applicants are crucial determinants of organizations’ hiring decisions (Diboye, Smith & Howell, 1994; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt & Maurer, 1994). Although theory suggests that interviewers’ subjective P-O fit assessments should affect their selection decisions, little empirical research has examined the role of fit perception in organizational hiring decisions (Daniel M Cable and Timothy A Judge, 1997). Theoretically individuals are more attracted to others who fit because of reduced cognitive dissonance, improved communication and increased predictability in social interactions (Festinger, 1954; Swann, 1984; Tsui & O’ Reilly, 1989). Although scholars often hypothesize that cultural similarities between employers and job candidates matter for employer’s decisions (Lamont, 1992), systemic empirical research on the role of culture in hiring is virtually nonexistent (Huffcut, 2011; Stainback, Tomaskovic Devey and Skaggs, 2010).

Culture’s expectations of leader behaviour are the most accurate predictors of leadership style as they have a direct influence on leader conduct (Dorfmal et.,al, 2012). Culture Fit can refer to the fit between the candidates skills and job requirements or to the fit between the person and the organization (Charman, 1991; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984 Herbert & Deresky, 1987;

Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Schneider, 1987). It is appropriate to select on the basis of the fit between the candidate and the organizational values and culture, a tendency that seems to be increasing in organizations (Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991; Bretz, Rynes & Gerhart, 1993; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984, Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Managers often use the fit concept as a rationale to hire those who are similar to themselves and to others in the organizations (Schneider, 1987). Person-Organization fit is defined as the congruence between patterns of organizational values and patterns of individual values, defined as what an individual values in an organization, such as being team oriented or innovative (Chatman, 1989). Values are a fundamental element in most definitions of organizational culture (Barley, Meyer and Gash, 1988). Although culture researchers disagree about many aspects of its definition and measurement, they agree that culture plays an important role in determining how well an individual fits into an organizational context (Rousseau, 1990).

‘This study explores the role of culture in the way in which hiring decisions are made in organizations. It reveals inconsistencies in the ratings given by the respondents in adopting culture fitment as the primary evaluation criterion. Although all the respondents categorically cited culture fit as a significant evaluation criterion, there were considerable variations in the level of priority they associated to culture fit. While hiring for culture fit there are dangers of falling into the path of exclusion rather than inclusion. There is ample evidence that diverse and inclusive companies are likely to make better, bolder decisions - a critical capability even in the pandemic crisis (McKinsey Report, 2020). Exploring and understanding how organizational culture influences decision making in organizations with focus on decisions made during selection and hiring processes would enable more effective and efficient decision making, facilitating promotion of diversity and inclusion and ensuring the right person at the right place and at the right time. By exploring and understanding the various cultural elements and how these cultural elements shape the dynamics of the hiring processes and their consequences, this study proposes to contribute in further bridging the gap prevalent in the pipeline in Indian organizations and thus pave the way for more inclusive organizations.

Literature Review

Previous research has often focused on decision making in relatively predictable environments with clear goals (e.g., expected utility theory of von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). In recent decades the focus has been on decision making heuristics, i.e., strategies or rules of thumb, applied in uncertain situations (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Simon, 1979; Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier, 2011). There is a lot of research on culture’s impact on human behaviour, yet when we look at judgement and decision - making psychology, the evidence is much sparser (Elina Halonen, 2020).

Eversole et al. (2012) concluded based on their research that organizational culture is an important factor in attracting and retaining talent. Researchers suggest that P-O fit plays a larger role at later stages of the selection process (i.e., the choice stage), than earlier stages (i.e., screening stage) (Bretz et al., 1993; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Researchers who advocate the PO fit perspective argue that managers should select job

applicants who share the values and visions of the organization (Bowen et al., 1991). Bowen et al. (1991) suggests that the organization should define organizational culture and values for the assessment of P-O fit. One selection device that may be critical in assessing applicant fit is the employment interview (Chatman, 1991; Judge & Ferris, 1992). Cable and Judge (1997) also found that interviewers' hiring recommendations directly affected organizations' hiring decisions.

Danielle M Cable and Timothy A Judge (1997), in their study suggests that interviewer's subjective person-organization fit/ culture fit assessments have large effects on their hiring decisions relative to competing applicant characteristics and that the interviewers hiring recommendations directly affect organization's hiring decisions (e.g., job offers). This study has suggested future research to continue examining P-O fit perceptions and interviewers' perceptions of applicants' characteristics as this is what most interviewers and their organizations rely on for their hiring and selection decisions.

Although previous research has suggested that ingratiation and self promotion have direct effects on interview outcomes, these effects are mediated by recruiter perceptions of fit (Chad A Higgins and Timothy A Judge, 2004). To understand the effects of these influence tactics fully, future research must rely more heavily on the intricacies of interpersonal interactions that take place in the employment interviews (Chad A Higgins and Timothy A Judge, 2004). Charles A. O'Reilly, Jeniffer Chatman & David F. Caldwell, (1991), in their study had examined person-culture fit and its implications for work attitudes and behaviour and the results have demonstrated that person-organizational culture fit is related to commitment, satisfaction and turnover. Although these results suggest that person organization fit may provide meaningful insights into individuals adjustments to organizations (Holland, 1985; Louis, 1980), the impact of person-organizational fit on decision making remains unexplored. Adkins, Russel and Werbel (1994) examined work values congruence between applicants and organizations and found that values congruence did not affect the interviewers' subjective P-O fit perceptions and that the interviewers' P-O fit perceptions had little effects on organization's selection decisions. The study done by Peterson and Saporta (2004), states that the opportunity to discriminate is greatest at the point of hire, because disappointed job applicants are unlikely to challenge the adverse decisions. The study by Elizabeth Gorman and Julie Kmec (2009) has refrained from exploring how the increasing disadvantage pattern varies with organizational characteristics, a prominent one being the gender traditionalism of organizational culture.

Although scholars often hypothesize that cultural similarities between employers and job candidates matter for employer's decisions (Lamont,1992), systemic empirical research on the role of culture in hiring decisions is virtually non-existent (Huffcuff 2011; Stainback, TomasKovic-Devey, Skaggs,2010). Applicants' display of cultural signals and lifestyle markers are typically marked as non-productive and thus has received minimal empirical attention (Tilly and Tilly,1998). Although culture and structure are mutually reinforcing (Sewell 1992), and structural positions including gender and race strongly influences the content of ones cultural toolkit (Swidler 1986), considerable variation in values, experience and behaviour exists within demographic groups (Lamont and Small,2008). Perceived similarity is thought to be more important than actual similarity in the decision to hire (Graves and Powell, 1995). A critical source of perceived similarity is shared culture (Lamont and Molnar, 2002).

There is a need to advocate for individual and organizational culture shifts that would support the themes of promoting women and in framing policies and procedures that would address the underlying issues (Diana Bilimoria, Deborah O'Neil, Margaret M Hopkins and Angela M Passarelli 2008). Alice H Eagly and Steven J Karau (2002), proposed the Role Congruity Theory to explain the sparse representation of women in leadership roles in organizations creating the 'pipeline problem'. This study does not explore interventions and subcultural and cultural variations in the definitions of gender roles and leadership roles. With the help of this role congruity theory as well as the relevance of contextual and individual variations to these principles, researchers would be able to anticipate whether gender prejudice is likely to happen in the selection, evaluation and promotion of people for senior roles in organizations (Alice H Eagly and Steven J Karau, 2002). Both the studies (Diana Bilimoria (2008) et al;) as well as Alice Eagly (2002) have given less focus to culture and its role in bridging the existing gap in the pipeline.

Increasingly, research is showing that while explicit goals for diversity may be set, implicit biases may often limit the ability to achieve those goals (Macan T & Merritt .S, 2011). In institutions where the structures, systems, environment, traditions and interactions are created and sustained primarily by men, the culture that develops tends to be defined and understood in terms that reflect male norms (Ayman and Korabik, 2010; Helgesen and Johnson, 2010; O'Neil et al, 2008). Cognitive association of maleness and leadership challenges women's advancement whether that association is held subconsciously or overtly (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Koenig et al. 2011). These cultural dynamics can create challenges for women who aspire to advance to senior roles, including the problem of wage inequities, lack of supportive workplace priorities, policies and reward structures (Kellerman and Rhode, 2014) and second generation bias embedded in stereotypes or organizational practices (Ibarra et al. 2013). The challenges faced by women in leadership cannot be targeted in isolation; rather, the first step is to recognize that women encounter barriers at all three levels, that micro and macro barriers impact women's ability to see themselves as leaders as well as others' ability to consider them for leadership roles (Diel and Dzubinski, 2016).

Culturally inclusive research has many benefits, including expanding on theories, increasing the range of variables, unconfounding variables and understanding the context in which behaviour occurs (Triandis & Brislin, 1984). Culture is an acquired and transmitted pattern of shared meaning, feeling and behaviour that constitutes a distinctive human group (Kluckhohn, 1951). Consisting of the unwritten rules of the social game, it is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others (Hofstede et al, 2010). The increasing diversity in today's workforce means that to be effective, leaders need to develop a multi cultural perspective and an understanding of the points of view of those who differ from themselves (Connerley & Pederson, 2005). Because leaders' and subordinates' gender or culture influences their frame of reference, these factors affect how leaders' behaviours are described and evaluated (Ayman 1993). Previous research has shown that recruiters do attempt to evaluate applicant fit during the employment interview and this perception of fit affects subsequent selection decisions (Cable & Judge, 1997). Cultural background has been shown to shape many aspects of social and work orientation (Erez and Gati, 2004; Fulkerson and Tucker, 1999) and could influence interviewer ratings.

Surprisingly P-O fit has not been considered in the context of the employment interview in any of the nine comprehensive literature reviews of interview research (Harris, 1989). Rynes and Gerhart (1990) suggested that employment interview might be a means to assess and hire for P-O fit. Interviewers most often mentioned job-related courses, experiences and general applicant characteristics (attractiveness) when responding to open ended questions about their subjective fit evaluations (Bretz et al. (1993). It may be possible to improve interviewers' P-O fit judgements by structuring interviews around organizational cultures (rather than specific jobs) and by assessing applicants' personal characteristics that are relevant to the fit criterion (Judge and ferris, 1992).

Again, Jeniffer A Chatman, 1991, in her study on how person-organizational fit is established and maintained and its consequences on organizational settings by examining the selection and socialization processes in public accounting firms, the extent to which high levels of person-organization fit are good for organizations and for people remains unexplored. While the study emphasizes how organizations affect people, how people are influencing the organizations need to be looked at more closely (Snyder,1983; Chatman, 1989). Also, the study recommends future research on person-organization fit to be more explicitly interactional. Adkins, Russel and Werbel (1994) examined work values congruence between applicants and organizations and found that values congruence did not affect the interviewers' subjective P-O fit perceptions and that the interviewers' P-O fit perceptions had little effects on organization's selection decisions. However, Danielle M Cable and Timothy A Judge (1997), in their study suggests that interviewer's subjective person-organization fit assessments have large effects on their hiring recommendations relative to competing applicant characteristics and that the interviewers hiring recommendations directly affect organization's hiring decisions (e.g., job offers). There is no multi stakeholder perspective here on P-O fit. The study fails to look into the larger scenario after hiring. This study has suggested future research to continue examining P-O fit perceptions and interviewers' perceptions of applicants' characteristics as this is what most interviewers and their organizations rely on for their hiring and selection decisions.

The study done by Peterson and Saporta (2004), states that the opportunity to discriminate is greatest at the point of hire, because disappointed job applicants are unlikely to challenge the adverse decisions. The study by Elizabeth Gorman and Julie Kmec (2009) has refrained from exploring how the increasing disadvantage pattern varies with organizational characteristics, a prominent one being the gender traditionalism of organizational culture. Although scholars often hypothesize that cultural similarities between employers and job candidates matter for employer's decisions (Lamont,1992), systemic empirical research on the role of culture in hiring is virtually non-existent (Huffcuff 2011; Stainback, TomasKovic-Devey, Skaggs,2010). Applicants' displays of cultural signals and lifestyle markers are typically marked as non-productive and thus has received minimal empirical attention (Tilly and Tilly,1998). Although culture and and structure are mutually reinforcing (Sewell 1992), and structural positions , including gender and race strongly influences the content of ones cultural toolkit (Swidler 1986), considerable variation in values, experience and behaviour exists within demographic groups (Lamont and Small,2008). Perceived similarity is thought to be more important than actual similarity in the decision to hire (Graves and Powell, 1995). A critical source of perceived similarity is shared culture (Lamont and Molnar, 2002).

The paper by Manjari Singh (2012) examines gender inclusivity in corporate India adopting a Resource-based view, taking into account the reality of gender inclusion becoming a business imperative. However, this study has not taken into account any of the contextual factors. Although the study done by Preeya Daya (2014), facilitated deep insights into the diversity and inclusion components in an emerging market context, it highlights the need for pluralistic and multicultural organizations to focus heavily on recruitment in future research, pointing it out as one of the many first steps to create an inclusive environment. Again this study does not take into account any other organizational contextual factors. Organizational sociologists working on 'cultural matching' in hiring processes show that embodied cultural processes (habitus) plays a strong role in hiring in elite investment banks, law firms and management consulting firms, where employers tend to hire based on an affective sense of commonality or 'homophily' with a job candidate (Rivera 2012). Again, Jeniffer Elrick(2015), conducted a study on immigrant hiring processes at ICT companies in Greater Toronto area to show that there is organizational level variation among firms in three key aspects of hiring that are relevant to the discussion of immigrant skill utilization : definition of skills, screening processes and the notion of 'cultural fit'. In line with the studies on cultural matching in elite US firms (Rivera, 2011,2012), these findings also show that cultural capital in its embodied and objectified forms affects immigrant hiring in the ICT sector as well. However, the hiring managers in the GTA study did not talk about their hiring practices in a way that suggested that ethnic discrimination could be an issue in immigrant hiring. The findings here, besides requiring further probe to account for ethnic discrimination, cannot be generalized and calls for continued research. To be able to bring about multilevel, systemic, sticky changes requires operating at three levels – systemic, cultural and behavioural. Although Lauren A. Rivera (2012), in her study investigates the often suggested but empirically unexamined hypothesis that cultural similarities between employers and job candidates matter for employer's hiring decisions, the study does not examine the degree to which gatekeepers use cultural similarities and also emphasising cultural similarities may result in greater sex or race biases than was the case in Rivera's study, when culture and demography are more tightly coupled (Turco, 2010).

There is a lot of research on culture's impact on human behaviour, yet, when we look at judgement and decision-making psychology, the evidence is much sparse (Elina Halonen, 2020). Literature review reveals that one of the reasons for this is the universalist assumption among decision researchers that cognitive process and content are independent of each other (Elina Halonen, 2020). The scattered findings and a lack of unifying theoretical framework clearly indicates a need for further research in this area. This study explores what cultural elements and how these cultural elements shape the dynamics of the hiring processes and their consequences in organizations. Exploring and understanding how organizational culture influences decision making in organizations with focus on decisions made during selection and hiring processes would enable more effective and efficient decision making, facilitating promotion of diversity and inclusion and ensuring the right person at the right place and at the right time.

Research Questions

- How do organizational culture characteristics shape the dynamics of hiring decisions in Indian organizations ?
- How do organizational culture characteristics shape the outcomes of hiring decisions in Indian organizations ?

Methodology

Qualitative method of study could be adopted here as previous research studies have indicated this method as the most ideal method to be used when the phenomenon to be studied is too complex or delicate to be captured fully through a statistical enquiry. An interpretive approach has been used in this study. Open ended in depth interviews were conducted and thematic analysis was done to identify the themes, sub themes and dimensions. Purposive sampling method was used here. A sample size of 8 interviewees in the middle and senior level management from various organizations were interviewed. All the protocols were adhered to during the interviews which were conducted. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. These interviews were done on HR heads, Talent acquisition heads and Diversity heads from five different corporate organizations mostly pertaining to the Finance sector as well as Diversity and Inclusion Consulting firms. All the respondents were within the age group of 30-50 with at least 10 years of experience in the corporate sector. Out of these eight respondents, one of them had moved on from working in an MNC to setting up her own D&I consultancy in Mumbai. Before conducting the interviews, the participants were briefed about the nature and purpose of the research. Data was collected using open ended in depth interviews. These interviews facilitated the collection of multiple perspectives, thus enabling a holistic insight into the intricacies of the area under study.. Data was collected through face to face interviews as much as possible. Questions were based on the interviews conducted in the organization, personal experiences of the interviewers during these interviews and the criteria that were used for evaluating the candidates. They helped to understand whether there was unanimous awareness and agreement within the organization on conducting these interviews and what exact role the HR could play to bring about fair selection decisions in the organizations, how the stakeholders can contribute and their views on the same. These questions were framed in a manner to facilitate deeper understanding into the significance and role of culture on decision making during hiring within these organizations. The duration of each interview was around 45 minutes. The interviews conducted were later transcribed and thematic analysis was done to generate codes and later themes, subthemes and dimensions. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Braun & Clarke (2006). Unlike many qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective which makes it a very flexible method. It is a method rather than a methodology (Braun & Clarke 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Open ended questions used during the interviews :

- Describe 2-3 situations where you experienced cultural characteristics shaping the dynamics of the hiring process.
- Describe 2-3 situations where you experienced cultural characteristics shaping the outcomes of the hiring process.

Details of interview respondents:

Respondent Details	Criteria for selecting the respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR & Talent Acquisition head of a leading financial services organization in Mumbai • Senior Talent Acquisition head of a multinational financial services firm in Mumbai • HR head of a consulting firm in Pune • Leading consultant in Asia Pacific & Managing partner of leading D&I research organization in Delhi • Founder & CEO of a D&I consulting firm in Bangalore • HR head of a multinational IT company in Mumbai • HR head of an Indian IT company in Mumbai • HR head of a financial technology company in Mumbai 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale behind the choice of organization from each of these sectors being the variation in their diversity hiring rates as follows: Consulting sector- 44%, IT sector- 39%, BFSI - 36% (CNBC 2020) • Middle & Senior level management professionals • Age group – 30-50 years • At least 10 years experience

Findings

Thematic analysis was conducted to and the codes and themes were identified. Some of the codes were - conducive environment, mismatch of values, discrimination, varied perceptions, golden handcuff on me, feeling of being caged, targeted women more, wrong choices, inertia in bringing change, create more awareness, no growth, tokenism, enabling environment, minimal women participation, senior management support etc., . A theme is a

pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme (Braun & Clarke (2006). A theme is characterised by its significance. Patterns were identified among these codes and themes generated. Some of the themes generated from these codes were culture elements, organizational interventions, hiring consequences. etc. Conducive environment, enabling environment , senior management support , inertia in bringing change were all subthemes clubbed under organizational interventions. Wrong choices, less intake, minimal participation were all merged and clubbed under the theme hiring consequences. Again, mismatch of values, varied perceptions, tokenism,unconscious bias were all brought under the theme cultural elements. Most of the codes were associated with one theme although some were associated with more than one. Conducive environment and enabling environment for instance could be brought under the themes cultural elements as well as organizational interventions. Once the themes were identified, the next step was to think about whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set. How the themes work both within a single interview and across all the interviews was worked out. These themes were compared with the literature review and their link to the research questions were traced.

Some of the major themes common to all the interviews:

- Significant variations were found in the rating each of the interviewees allocated to the three factors ie; Culture fitment, Competency and Leadership traits, associated with the informal evaluation procedure.
- Unconscious bias definitely has a significant impact on hiring decisions in organizations. The prevalence of bias was unanimously agreed upon and each had his/her own experience to narrate.
- Women were at the receiving end of such unconscious biases more than men.
- Hiring decisions based on culture fitment was cited as one of the major reasons for biases.
- Lack of senior management support was cited as a major factor responsible for preventing the HR and senior managers from adopting better, more stringent and less subjective initiatives to minimise the prevalence of such biases.
- Culture fitment in hiring had greater impacts on hiring decisions in senior management levels.
- Hiring for culture fit could lead to dangerous patterns of groupthink and also increased chances of the organization falling into the path of exclusion rather than inclusion.
- The need for organizational interventions was emphasised by all the respondents in order to create better awareness on the role of culture fit and to also create a logical balance between culture fitment and hiring decisions in organizations.

A very brief description of some of the interviews conducted is given below.

One of the respondents, was a Senior Talent Acquisition Head of a multinational financial services firm. When asked on the major criteria he would focus on while conducting interviews for leadership positions, it was interesting to note that culture fitment would be his topmost priority. Competency was mentioned as the next criteria he would consider, followed by leadership traits. This participant narrated his experiences with 'unconscious bias' which he felt was widely prevalent in the industry. He specifically went on to describe the unfortunate predicament of a high potential woman candidate who was not selected as she was in the very early stages of motherhood. He was very forthright in voicing his thoughts stating that many organizations are yet to mature and reach that level where they could claim themselves free of biases in hiring. He revealed how he had succumbed to biased notions while conducting interviews which has led to wrong choices during selection processes. Lack of Senior Management support was pointed out as one of the major factors responsible for the prevalent inertia in taking strong and conscious steps to minimise the prevalence of bias in Organizations. It also came to light that women were mostly at the receiving end of such biased decisions. Again, culture fitment in hiring decisions was stated as one of the prime causes for bias during hiring in organizations.

Another interview conducted with a lady who is a leading consultant in Asia Pacific and a Managing Partner of a leading D&I research organization also brought to light the prevalence of bias, where lack of culture fitment was cited as the major reason for the biased treatment. Prior to setting up her own space, she was working for a Multi National Financial Services organization. According to her, such biases were relatively lesser at senior management levels. She had come across several instances where MNC's would hire candidates only from MNC'S and not any Indian organization fearing culture mismatch. Unlike the first participant, she had diverse opinions on culture as an evaluation criterion during interview processes and felt that culture fitment would lead to a form of reverse bias. One of the interviewees, the HR and Talent Acquisition Head of a leading Financial Services organization, was of the opinion that as standardising questions or including preset questions to capture culture fitment and assessment of leadership traits were difficult to do on an across the board basis, for select roles, assessment tools like MBTI etc could be used which would include the assessment of leadership traits and cultural fitment. These would definitely bring down the bias significantly. She also emphasised that it would be practical and more effective to use such tools for senior roles in organizations where fitment could become a really important issue.

The interviews conducted brought to light the prevalence of bias in the various decision-making processes during hiring in organizations. This prevalence of bias was unanimously agreed upon and each interviewee had his/her own experiences to narrate. It was gathered from the various narratives that cultural similarities or differences was one of the prime factors responsible for biased decisions. Lack of senior management support was unanimously cited as a major factor responsible for preventing the HR and senior managers from adopting better, more stringent and less subjective initiatives to curb the prevalence of such biases during hiring decisions. Secondary data has also brought to light the possibility of a new concept called 'culture add' which reflects the desire to ensure all voices, opinions, views etc to be reflected in the organization's employee makeup. This would also promote inclusion in the organization. Besides these findings, secondary data has also brought to light

that there is still a dearth of substantial research on cultures role in decision making . This warrants further research in the area .

Discussion

The themes generated were very much in synchronization with the secondary data from literature review done. Researchers who advocate the PO fit perspective had argued that managers should select job applicants who share the values and visions of the organization. Mismatch of values was identified as a subtheme under cultural elements. Literature review had also revealed that the interviewer's subjective person-organization fit/ culture fit assessments have large effects on their hiring decisions relative to competing applicant characteristics and that the interviewers hiring recommendations directly affect organization's hiring decisions. The findings of the study also reveals how interviewers hiring decisions based on culture fit often led to biased decisions. Wrong choices, less intake, minimal participation were all the subthemes that had been identified under the theme hiring decisions. Another common insight was that the opportunity to discriminate would be the greatest at the point of hire, because disappointed job applicants are unlikely to challenge the adverse decisions. The need to advocate for individual and organizational culture shifts that would support the themes of promoting women and in framing policies and procedures that would address the underlying issues were identified after literature review during the study. This points towards the identification of the theme 'organizational interventions' under which conducive/enabling environments were clubbed as subthemes. The significance of gender inclusivity to be viewed as a business imperative was highlighted throughout all the interviews. All these themes have contributed to understanding better the various cultural elements and their role in shaping the dynamics of the hiring processes and also their consequences in Indian organizations.

One of the major limitations of this study is that due to practical issues, the scope of the study is limited to the Indian context for now. The sample size also is limited due to practical constraints. Also, organizational rigidity, the existence of organizational subcultures, organizational conservatism are all some of the other limitations that this study might have encountered.

Conclusion

The role of culture fitment in hiring decisions in organizations has been examined in this study. This study contributes to the existing literature on organizational culture and hiring in organizations highlighting the requirement for concrete procedures and practices to minimise bias in hiring decisions and promoting a unanimous perception of culture fitment in hiring where it acts as a catalyst for promoting inclusion in organizations. These findings and research considerations can be utilized to further guide future research and inform practice on how organizations can engage with culture fitment .

Through the proposed methodology, further research could be conducted on the benefits of enhancing the need for organizational interventions which could play major roles in ensuring culture fitment in hiring to act as a catalyst for more inclusive organizations. How best one

can delve deeper into the organizations hardcore underlying assumptions that could be difficult to access could also be a significant area for future research. Indigenous and customized training programmes could be made mandatory for organizations with initiatives from HR and ample support from senior management. Periodical evaluations and feedback on diversity and inclusion status could go a long way to ensure that hiring decisions based on culture fit are beneficial to the organization.

A deeper understanding of the role of culture in decision making through further research could aid in deriving effective general recommendations for organizations, facilitating the efficient and effective utilisation of human capital. Recognizing and building awareness of the cultural differences and openly discussing these within the decision making teams, ensuring mutual cultural values are respected, creating certain ground rules to ensure positive outcomes from the hiring decisions, even creating a project culture that would allow open discussions of cultural differences and allowing people to indicate violations of ground rules without fear of repercussions are all just a few of the possibilities that could be attained through further deeper research in this area. In future, this study could also contribute in understanding the relationship between Organizational culture and employee retention, to identify cultures that would produce high employee engagement and satisfaction and also enable organizations to frame their policies in such a way so as to reflect the company's culture while attracting prospective candidates.

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