A Comparative Study of Gender and Age-Based Differences in Organisational Culture: Evidence from an Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

Organisational culture (OC) plays a significant role in shaping employee attitudes, engagement, and overall effectiveness. However, limited empirical evidence explores how demographic factors, such as age and gender, influence employees' perceptions of organisational culture. This study reveals age and gender-based differences in organisational culture among employees from leading Indian-origin IT services companies in Bengaluru. Grounded in the Denison Organizational Culture Model, the study examines four key dimensions: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission. Data were collected from employees using a structured questionnaire, and statistical analyses, including ANOVA and Z-tests, were applied to examine differences in cultural perceptions. The results indicated that overall organisational culture scores did not differ significantly among age or gender groups. Specific dimensions, such as capability development, core values, agreement, and vision, exhibited significant age-related differences, with younger employees (20–30 years) perceiving a stronger culture than those in the 31–40 age group. No significant gender-based differences were observed across any dimension. These findings demonstrate the importance of demographic responsiveness in shaping inclusive organisational practices. The study contributes to organisational behaviour literature and offers practical implications for HR managers and leaders seeking to develop employee engagement and cultural alignment in the IT services sector.

Keywords: Age, Denison Model, Employee Engagement, Gender, IT Services, Organisational Culture.

Introduction

Organizational culture (OC) influences managerial decisions, employee behaviour, and organizational effectiveness. Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices (1). The Denison Organizational Culture Model, which emphasises four dimensions—Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, and Mission—has been widely used for assessing organizational culture (2, 3). These dimensions are particularly relevant in knowledge-intensive sectors such as the IT industry, where organizational culture alignment significantly affects innovation, employee engagement, and employee retention (4). At the same time, diversity and inclusion have emerged as central themes in organizational research, particularly with respect to how demographic characteristics such as age and gender influence workplace involvement and cultural attitudes (5, 6). In contemporary organizations characterised by workforce diversity and dynamism, understanding how age and gender shape employees' perceptions of organizational culture has become increasingly important. These effects are especially evident in organizations with multigenerational and gender-diverse workforces. The IT services sector shows a unique context for such analysis, featured by its fast-paced work environment, widespread adoption of hybrid work models, a multigenerational workforce composition, and evolving cultural norms. Post-pandemic shifts in work arrangements have significantly altered where and how employees work, with remote and hybrid models becoming increasingly prevalent across industries (7). Despite this relevance, empirical evidence examining demographic differences in organizational culture perceptions within the IT services sector remains limited. Although workplace diversity has received increasing managerial attention, relatively few empirical studies have examined the relationship between age, gender, and organizational culture, particularly through the application of the Denison Organizational Culture Model in the IT services

industry. Existing studies have focused on the non-IT sectors, relying mainly on qualitative methodologies or examining age and gender independently. Furthermore, much of the literature is dominated by global or cross-cultural perspectives, often overlooking sector-specific evidence that could better inform organizational strategies in localised contexts. To address this gap, the current study adopts the Denison Organizational Culture Model as the theoretical framework. It uniquely integrates the Denison Organizational Culture Model with a demographic analysis to empirically examine how age and gender shape culture perceptions within Indian IT services firms, addressing a notable gap in sector-specific evidence. The study applies statistical techniques such as Z-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine age and gender-based differences in employees' perceptions of organizational culture within the IT services sector. It provides empirical insights into how diverse employee groups experience the four dimensions of organizational culture.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the influence of demographic factors on employees' perceptions of organizational culture within the IT services sector. Specifically, it seeks to identify and compare gender-based and age-based differences in employees' perceptions across the four key dimensions of the Denison Organizational Culture Model, namely Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, and Mission.

Organizational Culture and Demographic Diversity

Organizational culture has been widely recognised as a critical determinant of employee attitudes, behaviours, and organizational outcomes. Past studies indicate that employees' interpretations of organizational values and practices differ, but are shaped by demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and hierarchical position (8, 9). These demographic factors influence the way organizational culture is perceived, enacted, and sustained across the different organizational contexts.

Cross-national situations highlight the contextual nature of demographic effects on organizational behaviour. It has been found that the relation between gender and organizational commitment varies significantly across cultural contexts, with national cultural characteristics such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance influencing commitment patterns. These results challenge traditional gender role assumptions and underscore the importance of examining demographic effects within specific cultural and organizational settings. Similarly, it has been reported that organizational culture values such as fairness, opportunities for personal development, and organizational reputation positively influence job satisfaction. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that aggressive values of the culture have negative impacts (10). Age and gender of employees moderate these relations, suggesting that demographic characteristics influence how workers view and react to company culture (11).

Age Diversity, Generational Dynamics, and Organizational Outcomes

One particularly complicated aspect of employee diversity is the age diversity. Studies have shown that, compared to gender and cultural diversity, age diversity has a major positive impact on organizational performance (12). This highlights the importance of age-related dynamics in shaping how organizations operate and their overall performance.

However, age diversity may also introduce relational and psychological challenges. It has been observed that situations involving younger supervisors managing older subordinates can increase emotional strain and negatively affect organizational performance, particularly when emotional expression is encouraged (13). Moreover, research has shown that higher levels of age diversity can intensify perceptions of age discrimination, reduce collective affective commitment, and negatively influence organizational performance (14).

In addition, it has been demonstrated that hierarchical position may exert a stronger influence on perceptions of organizational culture than age or gender (15). Diversities in cultural views across various dimensions, including leadership, fairness, compensation, and employer care, have been identified, with effects in the relationship between position and age, as well as between position and gender.

Generational Perspectives and Methodological Critiques

Considerable debate has emerged regarding generational differences in organizational research. Evidence suggests that leadership

preferences vary across demographic categories, such as age, gender, department, and hierarchical rank, in different national contexts (16). These findings suggest that demographic similarity does not necessarily lead to share cultural or leadership preferences.

Critical reviews of generational research have highlighted methodological inconsistencies and limited theoretical grounding in much of the existing literature (17). Therefore, rather than being a stable demographic category, generational identity has been conceptualized as socially created and dependent on context. This perspective is supported by meta-analytic evidence, which discloses that generational variation in satisfaction with work, commitment to the organization, and turnover intention are typically less noticeable and frequently related to tenure or age instead of generational membership (18).

Gender, Leadership, and Cultural Embeddedness

The effect of gender on leadership styles and organizational culture has been examined in detail. Evidence suggests that age and gender significantly influence managerial leadership preferences, with older managers and female managers exhibiting stronger inclinations toward transformational leadership. In comparison, younger managers tend to favour transactional approaches (19).

Work-life balance has also been shown to vary across age and gender classes. The changes have been observed among male managers across age groups, whereas age-related differences were not found to be important among female managers (20). These findings underscore the intersectional nature of age and gender in shaping managerial experiences.

Gender has further been shown to be embedded invisibly within organizational cultures. Organizational practices have been found to normalise gender inequalities through ostensibly gender-neutral structures and narratives (21, 22).

Ageism, Discrimination, and Organizational Behaviour

Age-based discrimination continues to influence workplace experience and organizational outcomes. Systematic evidence indicates that age stereotypes act as hindrances to employment for older workers, with intergroup bias and self-

categorisation processes explaining the persistence of age-based discrimination (23). Additional evidence suggests that ageism observed during the COVID-19 pandemic largely reflected pre-existing patterns rather than representing a distinct phenomenon (24).

Demographic characteristics have also been found to influence discretionary workplace behaviours. Significant age and gender-based differences in organizational citizenship behaviour have been reported, reinforcing the importance of incorporating demographic considerations into organizational practices (25).

Organizational Culture, Innovation, and Sectoral Contexts

The interaction between demographic diversity and organizational culture has been shown to influence innovation and performance. While group culture generally promotes innovativeness, its positive effects are moderated by gender diversity, with highly gender-diverse organizations sometimes experiencing barriers to fully leveraging group culture for innovation (26).

Leadership and innovation research further indicates that gender differences exist in leadership expression among young professionals, with evidence suggesting that transactional leadership behaviours adopted by women may support organizational innovation (27). In addition, organizational culture has been shown to enhance performance when aligned with appropriate leadership styles (28).

Within the Indian context, it has been observed that age, tenure, and generational factors influence employees' perceptions of organizational culture, while gender differences are less pronounced (29). These findings highlight the importance of age-related life stages in shaping cultural perceptions in technology-driven organizations.

Research Gap and Positioning of the Present Study

Although much research has detailed the influence of age and gender on organizational outcomes such as leadership preferences, satisfaction in the job, commitment, discrimination, and innovation, limited empirical work has explicitly merged these demographic dimensions with the Denison Organizational Culture Model using the Denison Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS) (30), particularly within the IT services sector. Existing studies are concentrated mainly in non-IT sectors,

employ qualitative or descriptive designs, or examine age and gender independently.

By systematically examining age- and gender-based differences across the four dimensions of the Denison model, this study directly addresses the gap. It provides empirically grounded insights into how demographic diversity shapes organizational culture perceptions in the IT services sector.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a quantitative research design to examine age and gender-based differences in organizational culture among employees working in leading Indian-origin IT services companies located in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Population and Sample

The empirical investigation was conducted among employees of five leading Indian-origin IT services firms, namely "Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies, and Tech Mahindra". These organizations were chosen due to their substantial workforce strength as reported by Bloomberg (31). A purposive sampling approach supplemented by snowball sampling was adopted, consistent with prior research that recommends combining these techniques to enhance participant recruitment and reach relevant subgroups, thereby facilitating adequate representation across different age and gender categories in the present study (32).

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected by using a structured questionnaire administered digitally through Google Forms. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to their participation in the data collection. The Institutional Review Board granted ethical approval for the study.

Research Instrument

Organizational culture was measured using the "Denison Organizational Culture Survey", which consists of 60 items covering four major dimensions: Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, and Mission (30). Each dimension comprises three sub-dimensions, and feedback was recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed through a pilot study, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.975, indicating excellent reliability (33). Content validity was established through expert evaluation prior to the collection of large-scale data.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS software, version 20.0. Descriptive statistics were applied to understand respondents' demographic characteristics and to compute mean scores and standard deviations for the organizational culture dimensions.

Inferential statistical techniques were applied to examine demographic differences. Independent samples Z-tests were used to assess gender-based differences between two independent groups (male and female employees). One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine age-based differences across three age categories: (a) 20–30 years, (b) 31–40 years, and (c) 41–50 years. Although the questionnaire included age categories of 51–60 years and 60 years and above, no responses were obtained in these categories (N = 0). Therefore, these groups were excluded from the analysis, and the final age-based analysis was conducted using the 20–30, 31–40, and 41–50-year groups. The ANOVA results indicated statistical significance, post hoc multiple comparison tests using Tukey's HSD method were conducted to identify specific group differences.

The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05 for the all analyses. This methodological approach ensures the reliability, validity, and replicability of findings related to organizational culture perceptions in the Indian IT services sector.

Results

This section presents the findings on organizational culture within leading Indian-origin IT services firms in Bengaluru, interpreted across the four dimensions of the Denison Organizational Culture Model—Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, and Mission—to examine demographic influences on employees' cultural perceptions.

Age Differences in Organizational Culture

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in organizational culture scores across three age groups: 20–30 years, 31–40 years, and 41–50 years (Table 1). The overall organizational culture scores did not differ significantly across age groups (F = 2.383, p = 0.094). However, analysis of

individual dimensions revealed that Consistency exhibited a statistically significant difference (F = 3.792, p = 0.023), while Involvement (p = 0.177), Adaptability (p = 0.341), and Mission (p = 0.116) did not (Table 2). Post-hoc tests indicated that employees aged 20–30 years reported significantly higher Consistency scores than those aged 31–40 years (p = 0.006), with no other significant pairwise differences observed in Table 3. Further ANOVA analyses across the 12 dimensions of organizational culture showed significant age-based differences in four dimensions, namely

Capability Development (F = 3.750, p = 0.024), Core Values (F = 5.252, p = 0.006), Agreement (F = 4.160, p = 0.016), and Vision (F = 3.668, p = 0.026) (Table 4). Post-hoc tests confirmed that respondents aged 20–30 years scored significantly higher than those aged 31–40 years in these dimensions (Table 5). The remaining eight dimensions did not exhibit significant age-related differences. These findings suggest that younger employees perceive developmental and value-related aspects of organizational culture more positively compared to the 31–40 age group.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviation, and F-Value for Organizational Culture by Age Group

Variable	Age	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	p value
Organizational Culture	20-30	275	220.42	38.34		
	31-40	101	211.08	35.66	2.383	0.094
	41-50	8	212.75	17.52		

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation and F Value for Organizational Culture Dimensions

Variable	Age	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	p value
Involvement	20-30	275	55.63	10.60		
	31-40	101	53.42	10.55	1.739	0.177
	41-50	8	53.38	5.97		
Consistency	20-30	275	55.99	10.23		
	31-40	101	52.77	9.85	3.792	0.023
	41-50	8	54.75	4.98		
Adaptability	20-30	275	52.34	9.96		
	31-40	101	50.72	8.71	1.080	0.341
	41-50	8	52.75	5.99		
Mission	20-30	275	56.46	10.92		
	31-40	101	54.17	10.94	2.171	0.116
	41-50	8	51.88	5.51		

Table 3: Multiple Comparison Test for Consistency across Age Groups

Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	p-value
20–30 vs 31–40	3.22	1.17	0.006
20–30 vs 41–50	1.243	3.607	0.731
31–40 vs 41–50	-1.978	3.694	0.593

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviation, and F-Values for Organizational Culture Sub-Dimensions by Age Group

Variable	Age	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	p value
Empowerment	20-30	275	18.27	3.95		
	31-40	101	17.61	3.90	1.024	0.360
	41-50	8	18.00	2.67		
Team orientation	20-30	275	19.26	3.89		
	31-40	101	18.86	3.91	0.469	0.626
	41-50	8	18.63	1.77		
Capability development	20-30	275	18.11	3.89		
	31-40	101	16.94	3.61	3.750	0.024

	41-50	8	16.75	3.28		
	20-30	275	19.04	3.77		
Core values	31-40	101	17.60	3.98	5.252	0.006
	41-50	8	18.88	3.23		
	20-30	275	18.71	3.61		
Agreement	31-40	101	17.52	3.57	4.160	0.016
	41-50	8	17.75	1.83		
	20-30	275	18.25	3.86		
Coordination and Integration	31-40	101	17.64	3.57	0.957	0.385
	41-50	8	18.13	1.46		
	20-30	275	18.57	3.66		
Creating change	31-40	101	18.20	3.34	0.397	0.673
	41-50	8	18.50	2.88		
	20-30	275	18.72	4.06		
Customer focus	31-40	101	17.87	3.47	1.748	0.176
	41-50	8	18.63	2.45		
	20-30	275	15.05	3.47		
Organizational learning	31-40	101	14.65	3.14	0.686	0.504
	41-50	8	15.63	1.19		
	20-30	275	19.03	4.09		
Strategic direction and Intent	31-40	101	18.43	4.01	1.344	0.262
	41-50	8	17.38	2.45		
	20-30	275	18.68	4.08		
Goals and objectives	31-40	101	18.15	4.16	1.009	0.366
	41-50	8	17.25	2.43		
	20-30	275	18.76	3.92		
Vision	31-40	101	17.59	3.91	3.668	0.026
	41-50	8	17.25	1.98		

Table 5: Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison Tests for Organizational Culture Dimensions

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	p value
	20-30	31-40	1.16486*	0.443	0.009
		41-50	1.355	1.366	0.322
Capability development	31-40	20-30	-1.16486*	0.443	0.009
		41-50	0.191	1.399	0.892
	41-50	20-30	-1.355	1.366	0.322
		31-40	-0.191	1.399	0.892
	20-30	31-40	1.43604*	0.444	0.001
		41-50	0.165	1.368	0.904
Core values	31-40	20-30	-1.43604*	0.444	0.001
		41-50	-1.271	1.401	0.365
	41-50	20-30	-0.165	1.368	0.904
		31-40	1.271	1.401	0.365
	20-30	31-40	1.18070*	0.416	0.005
		41-50	0.955	1.281	0.456
Agreement	31-40	20-30	-1.18070*	0.416	0.005
		41-50	-0.225	1.312	0.864
	41-50	20-30	-0.955	1.281	0.456
		31-40	0.225	1.312	0.864
	20-30	31-40	1.16230*	0.452	0.011
		41-50	1.506	1.395	0.281
Vision	31-40	20-30	-1.16230*	0.452	0.011
		41-50	0.344	1.428	0.810
	41-50	20-30	-1.506	1.395	0.281
		31-40	-0.344	1.428	0.810

* Indicates statistically significant mean differences at p < .05

Gender-Based Analysis of Organizational Culture

Independent samples Z-tests were conducted to assess gender differences in organizational culture. There were no significant differences observed between male and female employees in overall organizational culture scores (p = 0.693) or in the four dimensions, namely Involvement (p = 0.730), Consistency (p = 0.553), Adaptability (p = 0.625), and Mission (p = 0.963) (Tables 6 and 7). Similarly, analyses across all 12 sub-dimensions revealed that no statistically significant gender differences (all p > 0.05) (Table 8). These results indicate that, within the sample, gender does not substantially influence employees' perceptions of organizational culture.

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviations, and Z-Test Results of Organizational Culture by Gender

Variable	Gender	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z	p value
Organizational Culture	Male	245	218.38	34.85	0.396	0.693
	Female	139	216.80	41.89		

Table 7: Means, Standard Deviation and Z Values for Organizational Culture Dimensions by Gender

Variable	Gender	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z	p value
Involvement	Male	245	55.14	9.87	0.346	0.730
	Female	139	54.76	11.66		
Consistency	Male	245	55.35	9.30	0.593	0.553
	Female	139	54.71	11.47		
Adaptability	Male	245	52.10	9.12	0.488	0.625
	Female	139	51.60	10.38		
Mission	Male	245	55.78	10.59	0.046	0.963
	Female	139	55.73	11.42		

Table 8: Means, Standard Deviation and Z value for Organizational Culture Sub – Dimensions by Gender

Variables	Gender	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z	p value
Empowerment	Male	245	18.11	3.68	0.144	0.886
	Female	139	18.05	4.31		
Team orientation	Male	245	19.24	3.63	0.657	0.512
	Female	139	18.97	4.26		
Capability development	Male	245	17.79	3.71	0.142	0.887
	Female	139	17.73	4.06		
Core values	Male	245	18.65	3.66	-0.067	0.947
	Female	139	18.68	4.20		
Agreement	Male	245	18.53	3.38	1.154	0.249
	Female	139	18.09	3.95		
Coordination and Integration	Male	245	18.17	3.53	0.564	0.573
	Female	139	17.94	4.12		
Creating change	Male	245	18.57	3.34	0.750	0.454
	Female	139	18.29	3.93		
Customer focus	Male	245	18.60	3.74	0.719	0.472
	Female	139	18.30	4.17		
Organizational learning	Male	245	14.93	3.32	-0.235	0.815
	Female	139	15.01	3.44		
Strategic direction and Intent	Male	245	18.89	3.88	0.336	0.737
	Female	139	18.74	4.33		
Goals and objectives	Male	245	18.46	4.05	-0.323	0.747
	Female	139	18.60	4.14		
Vision	Male	245	18.44	3.83	0.116	0.908
	Female	139	18.39	4.07		

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that demographic factors have varying effects on organizational culture, depending on the level of analysis. Out of the four dimensions of organizational culture, Consistency was the only one that showed a statistically significant age-based difference. Post-hoc analysis revealed that employees between the ages of 20 and 30 had higher perceived Consistency than those between the ages of 31 and 40. Significant age differences were found in Capability Development, Core Values, Agreement, and Vision when the twelve organizational culture dimensions were further examined; no statistically significant variation was found in the other dimensions.

The findings are consistent with the prior research indicating that age and gender act as mediating factors in how employees interpret organizational culture, thereby challenging the universality of organizational culture constructs (8, 10). In particular, lower ratings were observed primarily in the Consistency dimension among certain age groups which suggest difficulties in aligning with rigid or hierarchical systems that may not resonate with the evolving work values. Such patterns reflect broader changes in workforce expectations, where flexibility, purpose, and innovation are prioritised over conventional hierarchical structures (17). These findings align with earlier evidence suggesting that demographic effects on organizational culture are often dimension-specific rather than uniform across all cultural attributes (8, 15, 17).

Younger employees (20–30 years) reported significantly higher perceptions in several value- and development-oriented dimensions compared to the 31–40 age group. This pattern may reflect early-career optimism, higher expectations of development opportunities, or stronger alignment with organizational values among younger employees (20).

Although female employees reported marginally higher mean scores in involvement and adaptability, these differences were not statistically significant. These results suggest stronger alignment with participative decision-making processes and change-oriented cultural attributes. Such perceptions are commonly associated with relational and transformational workplace orientations, which have been linked to collaborative leadership approaches and adaptive organizational practices (21, 28).

From a sectoral perspective, these findings hold particular relevance for the IT services industry, where innovation, collaboration, and continuous knowledge exchange are critical. The ability of organizations to recognise and leverage demographic variations in cultural perceptions may function as a strategic capability rather than a managerial challenge (4). Overall, the findings indicate that a uniform, one-size-fits-all approach to organizational culture development may be ineffective in demographically diverse environments such as the IT services sector. Differentiated cultural interventions may therefore be needed, including on boarding and mentoring practices along with younger employees' expectations, alongside engagement strategies that reinforce long term commitment among older employees.

Furthermore, the implementation of gender responsive cultural audits and leadership development initiatives may help reduce perception gaps and strengthen employee engagement. Such interventions are particularly important for minimising disengagement and turnover risks among underrepresented employee groups (14, 23). Figure 1 summarizes the key empirical findings on age- and gender-based differences in organizational culture.
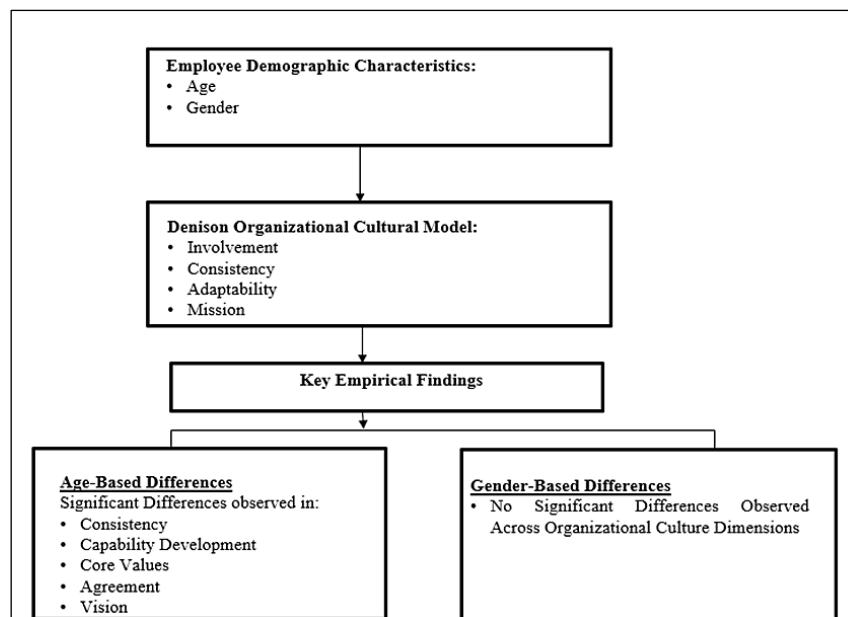
Figure 1: Summary of Key Findings on Demographic Differences in Organizational Culture

Conclusion

The current study investigated how employee perceptions of organizational culture differ across gender and age groups within the Indian IT services sector. The study used the "Denison Organizational Culture Model" as a theoretical and analytical framework. The results indicate that age was associated with differences in specific cultural dimensions, namely "Capability Development, Core Values, Agreement, Vision," which underscores the importance of recognizing demographic diversity when assessing organizational culture. In contrast, gender-based differences were not statistically significant across overall organizational culture, sub-dimensions, or individual cultural dimensions. These results underscore the importance of examining demographic influences at the dimension level rather than assuming uniform cultural effects. By applying robust empirical methods, this research contributes to the limited body of work that quantitatively explores demographic influences on organizational culture in the South Asian IT context. The results provide practical guidance for HR professionals, organizational leaders, and culture strategists seeking to enhance involvement, cohesion, and retention in a hybrid and digitally evolving workplace. Further study can build on these insights by integrating longitudinal and intersectional analyses to refine demographic-sensitive cultural frameworks further.

Abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance, OC: Organizational Culture.

Author Contributions

Silpa Mary John: conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, manuscript drafting, final editing, Smita Kavatekar: supervision, critical review of manuscript content, guidance throughout the research process, final approval. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI-assisted technologies for language refinement, grammar correction, and improving readability. All content was subsequently manually reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity, originality, and accuracy of the final manuscript.

Ethics Approval

IRB Approval: This research was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards. Approval was obtained from the institutional

ethics committee, and the relevant IRB form is available upon request.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

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