

Managing Organizational Culture Integration Post-Acquisition: Lessons from PT 'X' in the Oil and Gas Sector

Syahrial Maulana¹, Popong Nurhayati¹, Ujang Sumarwan¹, Anggraini Sukmawati²

¹School of Business, IPB University, Jl. Raya Pajajaran, Bogor

²Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Management, IPB University

Jl. Raya Dramaga Kampus IPB Dramaga Bogor

Email: syahrialmaulana@apps.ipb.ac.id

Abstract

In the upstream oil and gas industry, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are often used to enhance access to limited resources and improve competitiveness in the global market. However, a major challenge arises in post-acquisition organizational cultural integration, which can impede the success of this process. At PT "X," the acquisition of PT "Y" and PT "Z" highlighted a cultural gap between a company oriented towards familial values and companies with more professional and structured cultures. Although numerous studies have addressed the importance of cultural integration in M&A, few have delved deeply into cases in Indonesia's oil and gas sector. This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology with a Soft System Methodology (SSM) approach. The findings reveal that cultural differences, particularly in communication styles and work systems, led to tensions and decreased performance. The study further indicates that the lack of cultural assessment in the early stages of the acquisition exacerbated these issues. The research implications underscore the need for a more systematic and planned cultural integration strategy to ensure post-acquisition success.

Keywords: acquisition; management; merger; organizational culture; Soft System Methodology.

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) have become one of the primary instruments for companies to accelerate growth, particularly in highly competitive industries such as the upstream oil and gas sector (Malhotra, 2020). In this sector, M&A is often used to expand access to limited oil and gas reserves and to enhance competitiveness in the global market (Brueller & Capron, 2021). The oil and gas market, which is heavily dependent on technological innovation and operational efficiency, also makes M&A an important tool for companies to strengthen their

position within the industry. However, despite the various business benefits that M&A offers, the success of these processes is not solely determined by financial or commercial aspects (Zhang et al., 2023). One of the key factors that often dictates the success of post-acquisition efforts is how a company manages the integration of different organizational cultures.

In many cases, the process of integrating organizational cultures post-acquisition becomes a significant challenge (Moura et al., 2023). The merger of two companies with different cultural

backgrounds often leads to employee resistance and causes uncertainty, which can impact operational performance. Various studies have shown that failure in post-acquisition cultural integration can be a major cause of M&A failure itself (Weber & Tarba, 2012; Zhang et al., 2023).

In the context of PT "X," operating in the upstream oil and gas sector, this challenge became particularly evident after the company acquired two foreign companies, PT "Y" and PT "Z." PT "X," which has a family-oriented and result-driven organizational culture, faced difficulties integrating the more professional and structured cultures of PT "Y" and PT "Z" (K. Lee et al., 2022). The mismatch in values, communication styles, and working methods between these companies created tensions that had the potential to disrupt the integration process.

The integration of organizational culture in the process of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) is a significant challenge that is often overlooked in literature, which tends to focus more on financial and strategic aspects. According to Jatmiko (2022), cultural differences between two merging entities can lead to a clash of cultures that hinders the achievement of desired synergy. This is relevant to the case of PT "X", where differences in values and communication styles between PT "X", which has a more informal culture, and PT "Y" and PT "Z", which have more professional cultures, became a major obstacle in the post-acquisition integration process.

J. Lee & Lee (2022) emphasize the importance of conducting a thorough cultural assessment in the M&A process, noting that a comprehensive evaluation of organizational culture during the early stages of an acquisition can minimize the risk of cultural clashes later on. This finding supports the research on the necessity of conducting an in-depth cultural assessment before an acquisition is undertaken, enabling companies to understand existing differences in values and norms and to prepare a more effective integration strategy.

Additionally, research by Schweizer et al. (2022) indicates that the speed of integration and leadership style play crucial roles in maintaining employee commitment post-acquisition. If integration is carried out too quickly without considering cultural adaptation, or if leadership fails to align different cultural values, employee resistance to change will increase. This aligns with the findings that show a decline in motivation and productivity among employees of PT "Y" and PT "Z" following their acquisition by PT "X", due to uncertainty about the new work systems they were expected to adopt.

Marks and Mirvis (2011), in their framework for successful M&A, highlight that managing organizational culture and human resources is key to successful integration. They underscore the importance of open communication and systematic integration strategies to address cultural differences and build trust among employees. In the context of PT "X", this research supports the recommendation to implement more inclusive communication strategies and cross-cultural training tailored to the specific needs of each department, to reduce confusion and increase employee engagement in the integration process.

Buono and Bowditch (2003) also emphasize that an adaptive and participatory approach is essential in managing cultural differences in M&A. They argue that successful cultural integration cannot be achieved solely through structural or procedural changes but requires an understanding and appreciation of existing differences in values and norms. This is relevant to the situation at PT "X", where differences in values between the family-oriented approach of PT "X" and the professional approach of PT "Y" and PT "Z" led to significant cultural misalignment.

Furthermore, Razi and Garrick (2019) highlight the role of leadership in overcoming cultural differences in M&A. Their findings indicate that effective leadership can help reduce employee resistance to change and enhance the success of cultural integration. In the case of PT

"X", leadership played a crucial role in fostering constructive dialogue between employees from different companies, addressing uncertainties, and rebuilding trust in management.

The existing literature suggests that successful cultural integration in the M&A process requires careful planning, a deep understanding of cultural differences, and leadership capable of guiding the integration process wisely. These studies provide a strong theoretical foundation to support the argument that without serious attention to cultural aspects, the M&A process is at high risk of failure.

Although numerous studies have discussed the importance of cultural integration in the M&A process, there is a lack of in-depth research on how companies in the oil and gas sector, particularly in Indonesia, address the challenges of post-acquisition cultural integration. Most of the existing literature focuses on financial aspects and commercial strategies, while the cultural aspect is often overlooked or superficially addressed. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of PT "X's" approach in managing organizational cultural differences following its acquisitions. This study aims too to analyze how PT "X" manages the integration of organizational cultures after acquiring PT "Y" and PT "Z."

Specifically, the research will explore how PT "X" handles differences in organizational values, communication styles, and working systems among the companies involved. The main objective of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural integration in the success of M&A, particularly in the oil and gas industry. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a guide for stakeholders in designing effective and systematic cultural integration approaches to ensure long-term post-acquisition success.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive design with a Soft System Methodology (SSM) approach (Padgett, 2017). SSM was chosen due to its ability to address complex and unstructured problems, which often occur in the context of post-acquisition cultural integration. This approach is highly relevant to the upstream oil and gas industry, where cultural challenges frequently arise from differences in values and norms between companies. Through SSM, the researcher can map out various stakeholder perspectives and develop conceptual models that can be used to address the cultural integration challenges at PT "X" after acquiring PT "Y" and PT "Z."

Materials

This research relies on two main data sources: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews with stakeholders at PT "X," PT "Y," and PT "Z," including senior managers, employees, and several academics who are knowledgeable about the cultural integration process. Secondary data is collected from internal company reports, employee engagement surveys, and organizational performance data. These secondary sources are used to reinforce the findings from the interviews and provide contextual background to the ongoing cultural integration process.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study is a semi-structured interview guide specifically developed to collect qualitative data. This guide is designed to explore various important aspects related to organizational culture integration, including the challenges faced in merging the corporate cultures of PT "X," PT "Y," and PT "Z." The interviews also aim to understand employees' and managers' perspectives on the cultural differences, as well as the impact of those differences on the integration process. Additionally, the interviews investigate

management's efforts to address resistance and conflict arising from the cultural differences between the companies.

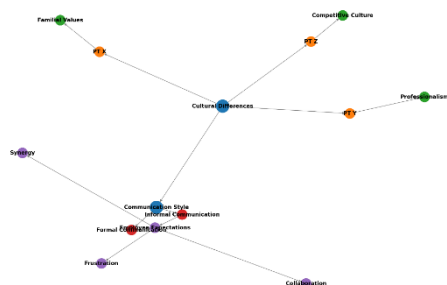
In addition to interviews, NVivo software is employed as a tool to assist in the coding and analysis of the data. NVivo enables the researcher to categorize key themes that emerge from the qualitative interview data and helps identify patterns and relationships between relevant concepts. By using this software, the data analysis process becomes more systematic and structured, facilitating the researcher in processing and understanding the collected data.

Procedures

The research procedures consist of three systematic stages: data collection, analysis, and validation. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from PT "X," PT "Y," and PT "Z," and analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Finally, validation and triangulation are performed by combining interview data with secondary sources, such as company reports and employee surveys, to enhance the reliability and credibility of the findings.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Cultural Differences in the Integration Process



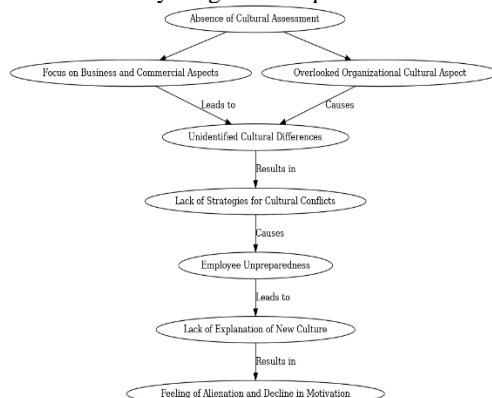
The primary theme of "Cultural Differences" is interconnected with various sub-themes and components that collectively influence the post-acquisition integration process. PT "X" embodies an organizational culture centered

around familial values, promoting an informal communication style that prioritizes interpersonal relationships. Conversely, PT "Y" and PT "Z" are characterized by more professional and competitive cultures, which lead to the adoption of a formal and structured communication style.

These divergent communication styles create a significant impact on employee expectations and behavior. For instance, the informal style of PT "X" supports direct and casual discussions in small meetings, while PT "Y" and PT "Z" require formal agendas and superior approvals before decisions are made. This mismatch generates confusion and frustration among employees, particularly during the early stages of integration, and undermines the effectiveness of collaboration and synergy within the newly merged organizational environment.

The cultural dissonance not only hampers communication but also affects the alignment of work processes and interpersonal interactions, ultimately challenging the overall integration process. By identifying and addressing these cultural differences, companies can implement strategies to harmonize communication styles and enhance the potential for successful integration and improved organizational synergy.

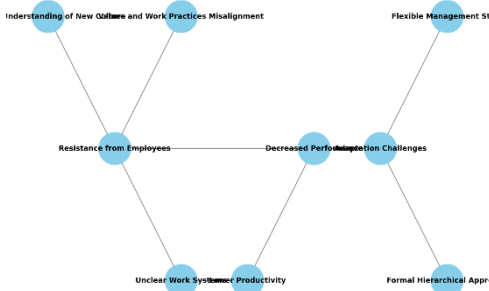
Figure 2 Lack of Cultural Assessment in the Early Stages of Acquisition



The central issue identified in the research is the absence of cultural assessment during the early stages of the acquisition process. This oversight led to a focus on business and commercial aspects, such as financial and operational assessments, while the organizational cultural aspects were overlooked. Consequently, the significant cultural differences between the acquiring and acquired companies were not identified early on. This lack of identification meant that no strategies were developed to address potential cultural conflicts.

As a result, many employees, particularly those from the acquired companies, expressed feelings of unpreparedness for the changes that ensued. Without a clear explanation of the new cultural expectations, employees felt alienated and uncertain about their roles and expectations in the new environment. This led to a decline in motivation and overall dissatisfaction among employees. The concept map helps illustrate how the lack of initial cultural assessment cascades through various stages, ultimately impacting employee motivation and the success of the organizational integration.

Figure 3 Resistance to Change and Uncertainty



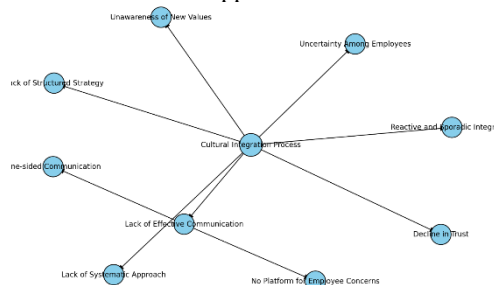
The findings reveal significant resistance among employees due to a lack of understanding and misalignment with the new organizational culture introduced by PT "X." Employees from PT "Y" and PT "Z" experienced a sense of devaluation of their established work values and practices, which were not recognized in the new organizational structure. This led to confusion

about whether to retain their traditional work methods or adopt PT "X"'s approach. The resulting uncertainty diminished employee productivity, as they were unsure about the expectations and procedures to follow.

Furthermore, the resistance contributed to increased tension and decreased performance, particularly in operational departments where effective cross-departmental collaboration is essential. The employees' difficulty in adapting to PT "X"'s informal and flexible management style, which starkly contrasted with the formal and hierarchical management systems they were accustomed to, exacerbated these issues. The findings indicate that successful organizational integration requires clear communication, support for employees in understanding and adopting new cultural norms, and strategies to bridge differences in management styles to minimize resistance and its negative impacts on performance.

This narrative outlines the critical need for addressing cultural integration in organizational changes to foster a smooth transition and maintain high performance levels.

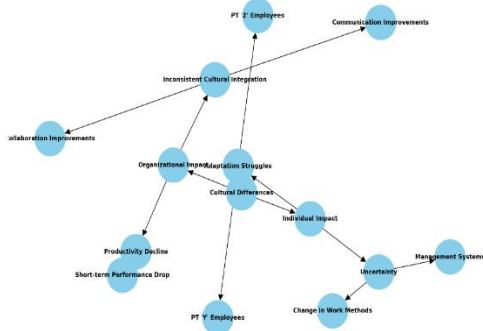
Figure 4 Non-Systematic Cultural Integration Approach



The concept map illustrates a poorly managed cultural integration process characterized by a reactive and unstructured approach. The lack of a systematic strategy and effective communication channels led to widespread confusion and a decline in trust among employees. This situation highlights the

critical need for a well-planned integration strategy that includes clear communication, employee involvement, and support for the adoption of new cultural values. The findings suggest that the company should focus on creating a more inclusive and transparent communication framework to facilitate a smoother integration process.

Figure 5 Impact on Organizational Performance



The concept map presented illustrates the intricate relationships between cultural differences and their impact on both individual employees and the organization as a whole. At the center of the map is "Cultural Differences," which serves as the root cause of various challenges. On the individual level, employees experienced significant adaptation struggles and uncertainty. Workers from PT "Y" and PT "Z" found it difficult to align with the work expectations and management practices of PT "X." This struggle was compounded by uncertainty, as changes in work methods and management systems were not clearly communicated or adequately prepared for, as highlighted by an employee's remark about being unaware of how their working methods would change.

Organizationally, these poorly managed cultural differences led to a decline in productivity, especially in the short term. Departments across the organization experienced varying levels of impact, indicating

that the integration of new cultural values was inconsistent. Although some efforts were made to improve communication and collaboration, the overall desired cultural integration was not fully achieved. The concept map also shows a direct link between adaptation struggles and a short-term performance drop, suggesting that the inability of employees to quickly adapt to new cultural norms disrupted their work efficiency and productivity. Despite this, there were some improvements in communication and collaboration over time, reflecting partial progress towards better cultural integration.

Figure 6 Soft System Methodology (SSM) Analysis and Solution Modeling



The analysis identified that cultural integration challenges arose primarily from differences in values, communication styles, and work structures among PT "X," PT "Y," and PT "Z." Employees from PT "Y" and PT "Z" struggled to adapt to the informal culture of PT "X," indicating a conflict between structured and flexible work approaches. PT "X" employees, on the other hand, felt underappreciated, suggesting a misalignment in recognizing and valuing different work styles.

CATWOE analysis provided further insights by mapping key stakeholders, including actors, customers, owners, and environmental factors, which influence the integration process. This analysis highlighted the roles and interests of

various stakeholders, such as the importance of aligning organizational values and expectations to create a cohesive work environment.

The concept map encapsulates these dynamics, visually demonstrating the relationships between the identified challenges and stakeholders involved in the cultural integration process. It serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of organizational cultures, highlighting the need for strategic alignment and communication to facilitate smoother integration.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the literature on cultural integration in the context of mergers and acquisitions (M&A), particularly in the oil and gas sector in Indonesia, an area that has been underexplored (Vuorenmaa, 2024). As identified in the research gap, most previous studies have predominantly focused on financial and commercial strategies, often neglecting the cultural aspects or addressing them only superficially (Pandey et al., 2023). Therefore, the results of this research specifically fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges involved in cultural integration within the M&A context of the oil and gas sector.

The study revealed that cultural differences between PT "X," which is family- and results-oriented, and PT "Y" and PT "Z," which are more professional and competitive, posed significant challenges during the post-acquisition cultural integration process (Wu et al., 2023). The contrasting communication styles—informal at PT "X" and formal at the acquired companies—contributed to a gap in expectations and understanding among employees (Shafique & Hagedoorn, 2022). These findings reinforce the view of Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1988), who argue that cultural differences often lead to a

"clash of cultures" during integration, making it more difficult to achieve the desired synergy.

However, this research challenges existing understanding by demonstrating that cultural differences do not only affect interpersonal relations but also directly impact organizational productivity and efficiency (Chaturvedi & Weigelt, 2024). Employee resistance to change, as found in this study, indicates that cultural integration cannot be enforced solely through structural or procedural changes. This supports Buono and Bowditch's (2003) argument that a more adaptive and participatory approach is required to bridge cultural differences in M&A (Yue et al., 2021). Therefore, a cultural integration strategy that focuses more on interpersonal communication and fostering mutual understanding is essential.

The findings also highlight that the absence of cultural assessment in the early stages of the acquisition process was a key factor in the cultural gap (Sears & Hitt, 2023). Although due diligence is typically directed towards financial and operational evaluations, this research shows that cultural aspects are often overlooked. This perspective is reinforced by Marks and Mirvis (2011), who noted that the failure to conduct cultural due diligence can significantly increase the risk of post-acquisition cultural integration failure.

Consequently, this study extends the understanding of the importance of conducting cultural assessments prior to acquisition (Fong & Chang, 2022). These findings align with the views of Weber and Tarba (2012), who suggest that companies that perform comprehensive cultural assessments during the initial stages of an acquisition are better equipped to face integration challenges, as they have a clearer understanding of the potential differences in values and norms. For companies in the oil and gas sector, which often operate in a global environment with diverse cultures, cultural assessment becomes increasingly crucial in minimizing future conflicts.

This study reveals that employee resistance, particularly from PT "Y" and PT "Z," whose members felt that their values and work practices were disregarded within the new organization, was a major cause of declining motivation and productivity (Razi et al., 2021). These findings align with Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) assertion that the success of M&A heavily depends on how well employees from the acquired companies feel accepted and valued in the new organizational structure.

However, the resistance to change identified in this research expands the understanding that cultural adaptation is not only an individual challenge but also a broader organizational issue (Takhtehkar & Rademakers, 2020). Uncertainty about the new work systems created emotional instability and a decline in performance in several departments. To mitigate this resistance, Burke (2018) suggests that more intensive employee engagement programs focused on open communication can help reduce resistance and increase employee involvement in the change process.

The reactive and unstructured approach to cultural integration was also identified as a major issue in this study (Razi & Garrick, 2019). The ad-hoc nature of the integration process, without well-planned strategies, led to confusion among employees. These findings support the view of Marks and Mirvis (1992), who stated that non-systematic cultural integration risks causing "cultural drift," where new values fail to be properly adopted by the entire workforce.

Therefore, this research emphasizes the importance of a more systematic and planned approach to cultural integration. Management must develop a clear and structured integration plan, including strategic steps that involve two-way communication between management and employees (Wang et al., 2020). This supports the argument of Larsson and Lubatkin (2001), who contend that successful cultural integration requires serious attention to ongoing planning and implementation, rather than merely reacting to issues as they arise.

The findings of this study also demonstrate that poorly managed cultural differences negatively affect organizational performance (Klueter et al., 2024). The decline in productivity observed in several departments highlights the importance of more effective management of cultural change. These results support Schwartz and Davis's (1981) theory, which posits that cultural misalignment within an organization can hinder collaboration and coordination processes, ultimately leading to reduced productivity and overall performance.

However, the results also expand the understanding that the impact of cultural differences is not merely temporary (Wei & Clegg, 2020). Employees who feel alienated and undervalued in the new environment tend to exhibit long-term declines in motivation. If left unaddressed, this can affect the company's continued success. This highlights the necessity of appropriate communication strategies and training to foster cultural harmony that supports the achievement of organizational goals.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that companies in the oil and gas sector, such as PT "X," strengthen the cultural integration process by conducting comprehensive cultural assessments before acquisitions and developing more targeted communication strategies (Shin & Jin, 2022). Management should actively involve employees in the change process through cross-cultural training programs tailored to the specific needs of each department (Hanif et al., 2023). These recommendations align with the findings of Buono and Bowditch (2003), who emphasized the importance of open communication and cross-cultural training in reducing resistance and increasing employee engagement.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that post-acquisition organizational cultural integration in the oil and gas sector, particularly at PT "X," PT "Y," and PT "Z," faces significant challenges due to

poorly managed cultural differences. The lack of a cultural assessment during the early stages of the acquisition and the non-systematic approach to cultural integration have led to employee resistance and a decline in productivity across several departments. These findings highlight the importance of a more structured and directed approach in managing cultural differences, as well as the need for open communication and active employee involvement in the change process. Consequently, this research contributes to strengthening the understanding of the necessity for planned cultural integration to achieve post-acquisition success. It also provides practical recommendations for companies to address the challenges of cultural integration through initial cultural assessments, inclusive communication strategies, and cross-cultural training programs.

Theoretically, the findings contribute to the business management literature, particularly in the context of post-acquisition cultural integration in the oil and gas sector, an area that

has been relatively underexplored. This research expands the understanding of how cultural differences can impact organizational performance and offers more targeted solutions for managing these differences. Practically, the findings provide guidance for managers and organizational leaders in designing more effective cultural integration strategies, including the importance of early cultural assessments and ongoing communication. However, this study has limitations, particularly regarding its scope, which focuses solely on one industry and specific companies. Thus, the results may not be entirely applicable in other contexts. For future research, it is recommended to conduct further studies across different industries and explore additional variables that may influence the success of cultural integration, such as social and political factors that play a role in the M&A process.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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