



A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON EMPLOYEE WORK VALUES

Fredrick Wasike 

Department of Business Administration, University of Nairobi, Kenya

fred.wasike@isuzu.co.ke

Peter K'Obonyo

Department of Business Administration, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Florence Muindi

Department of Business Administration, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

The principal objective of the study reported in this paper was to explore what constitutes work values and their differences by critically reviewing existing literature on this subject and how it relates to job satisfaction, motivation, organizational commitment, work performance and career choices. Values are presumed to determine the fit between the individual and the employing organization. The study assumption was that employees will be happier, motivated, satisfied and committed when their values agree with those of the hiring organization. From a synthesis of factors influencing work values, three broad classifications emerge - Employee characteristics (Gender, Education and seniority); Organizational characteristics (Public or Private) and National characteristics (Economic Development and Socio-cultural status). The study population comprised of 500 Articles drawn from peer reviewed journals and research papers, touching on work values from Europe, Asia, USA, and Africa. The study was underpinned by three theories – the Generational gap theory, Life–span life–space theory, and the Theory of work adjustment that helped in explaining the origin and foundations of work values. The tools used to measure the work values comprised of the Minnesota importance questionnaire (MIQ), Work value inventory and Taxonomy of needs. The study revealed that the suggestion that

different groups of employees have different values and preferences based on both age and other factors such as gender & ethnicity remains a useful idea for human resource practitioners. Further, the study revealed that “clash of generations” theory to explain work values appears to be a “myth”. Finally, the study revealed that on contemporary work values in Africa and Europe, intrinsic and extrinsic work orientations were not different regardless of the macro context that varies so much.

Keywords: Work values, work ethics, work values inventory, theories of work values, Minnesota importance questionnaire (MIQ), taxonomy of needs inventory

INTRODUCTION

Values have been described as beliefs, needs, goals, criteria for choosing goals and attitudes (Dose, 1997). According to Schwartz et al. (1987) values are concepts or beliefs about desirable end state that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, ordered by relative importance (Schwartz et al. 1987). Values serve to justify behavior as legitimate and thus as standards for judging the individual's own behavior and that of others (Hitlin et al. 2004). Hofstede (1980) defines values as “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others”. Values play an important role in people's behaviors, affecting their perceptions, attitudes and motivations.

While people's values shape their general beliefs about what is desirable or undesirable, they also have values specific to events or situation, including work. Ros et al (1999) observes that work is significant for people as a vehicle for reaching important goals. Research on work values, therefore, seeks to infer the types of goals that people believe their work may enable them to attain. One way of determining the meaning of work for individuals is to identify the basic values that people associate with work. They might view work primarily as a way of attaining public acclaim, an opportunity to exercise power, to gain security, or to express their independence. Rewarding work can itself be an important goal in life, one that serves as a guiding principle that influences decisions and evaluations. Hence “work” can be included in the list of values to which people respond to.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study reported in this paper was to critically review literature on work values covering definitions, structure and measurement of work values, theoretical foundation and prior research on differences in work values categorized according to employee characteristics (generation, gender and education level), Organizational characteristics (public

vs private organizations) and National characteristics (Economic development and socio-cultural differences).

Work Values

Super (1980) defines work values as “an objective, either a psychological state, a relationship or material condition that one seeks to attain” through working. There are no right or wrong work values; rather it is a process of identifying what matters most to you rather than someone else. Work values have alternatively been defined as desirable workplace behaviors, reflections of the significance of work, the meaning of work, or the basis for business ethics (Lyons et al 2009). They have also been defined as the outcome people desire and feel they should attain through work (Nord et al,1990). Work values shape employees’ perceptions of preferences in the workplace, exerting a direct influence on employee attitudes and behaviors (Dose, 1997), job decision (Judge et al. 1992), and, perceptions and problem solving (Ravlin et al. 1987). There is consensus that work values are relatively stable but may change over time to maintain a positive self-concept (Rokeach, 1973). Changes in work values may be triggered by events such as entering the workforce or job change, as well as general presence or absence of rewards (Johnson, 2001).

Different scholars have defined work values using different viewpoints. Monica (2005) considers work values as beliefs about the desirability of various work features and are usually applied by referencing potential rewards derived from working. Brown (1996) defines work values as the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their occupational work. From the definition of work values by Levy et al. (1976), an item is subject to the universe of work values if its domain asks for an assessment of the importance of a goal or behavior in the work context and the range is ordered from very important to very unimportant. A work value can be defined as the importance individuals give to outcomes arising in the work context (Elizur, 1984). Work related values refer to the goals or rewards people seek through their work, and they are expressions of more general human values in the context of the work setting (Schwartz, 1994). Work values are a kind of evaluations of persons for requirements of social career (Huang et al, 1994). Work values are the standards of individual evaluation and vocational choice (Jin et al., 2005). Liu et al. (2001), define work values as one person’s evaluations and viewpoints about meaning and importance to a related objective thing.

Work ethics

The concept of work ethic has evolved from the writings of Max Weber known as the protestant work ethic (PWE), (Hirschfeld et al. 2000). Weber highlighted the value of work

commitment and raised questions as to why some people place a greater importance on work and appear more conscientious than others. Miller et al. (2002) introduced a measure for work ethic referred to as the multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEPE) which has seven Weber associated dimensions of leisure, wasted time, self-reliance, morality or ethics, the manner in which people act, the belief in justice, and moral existence.

Work ethics applies to the conduct of persons fulfilling a particular social role (Bowie et al. 2005). Often work ethics is presented in terms of the decisions facing Board members, managers and employees and the dilemma or temptation facing them. However, these individual choices must be seen in the context of the roles that people are expected to play within a specific organization operating in a political, economic and social system. It is individuals who must ultimately make moral choices, either on their own or collectively, but identifying what choices exist and decisions they ought to make requires analysis of the morality of the existing and potential system and its constituent roles (Bowie et al. 2005). Other Work ethic dimensions are hard work, centrality of work and delay of gratification.

The Minnesota importance questionnaire (MIQ)

One of the most widely used measure of work values is the Minnesota importance questionnaire (MIQ), Rounds et al. (1981). The MIQ is hierarchically structured and is comprised of 20 separate work needs which are grouped into six work values: Achievement, comfort, status, Altruism, safety and autonomy. The six values scales were developed empirically by factor analysis of the 20 work needs represented on the MIQ (Lofquist et al. 1971).

The work values inventory

In the context of conducting the career pattern study, Super (1985), developed a measure of work values - the work values inventory. Super's work values inventory includes 12 work values scales – Achievement, co-workers, creativity, income, independence, lifestyle, challenge, prestige, security, supervision, variety, and workplace.

Along with the work values included in the 'Minnesota importance questionnaire' and Super's 'work values inventory', additional work values have been suggested. Manhardt (1972) developed a measure of job characteristics that often is used as a measure of work values and has also been called the work values inventory (Lawton et al. 2008). Consisting of 21 items, Manhardt found that three factors emerged from items on his measure. These three factors were comfort and security, competence and growth, and status and independence. The first factor describes characteristics of a comfortable working environment including having a routine

schedule, leisure time, and good relationship with coworkers. The second factor included items that were characteristics of successful workers such as the importance of responsibility, advancement, and supervision of others. The final factor included items that were intrinsic characteristics that relate to the nature of work such as independence, continued development of skills, and intellectual stimulation. At the item level, Manhardt's measure includes questions that are not included in other measures such as 'satisfies your cultural and aesthetic interests' and "permits a regular routine in time and place of work".

Taxonomy of needs

Ronen (1994) offered another measure of work values called Ronen's taxonomy of needs. Ronen identified 14 needs; advancement, area, autonomy, benefits, challenge, co-workers, earnings, manager, physical, recognition, security, skills, time and training, assessed with 14 questions, that related to work (Ronen et al. 1979). Individuals were asked to rate how important these values were in their ideal state using a scale ranging from 1- 'utmost importance' to 5 – 'very little importance'. Unlike other measures, Ronen's taxonomy of needs asked about fringe benefits and the ability to live in an area that was desirable to the individual.

According to Berings et al. (2004), as well as Rounds et al. (2005), many of the existing measures of work values are very similar despite varying conceptualization of work values that drove the construction of the instruments. Previous work by Macnab et al. (1987), does offer some empirical comparisons between different measures of work values. The Minnesota importance questionnaire (Rounds et al, 1981); the work values inventory (Super, 1970); the values scale (Super et al. 1986) and, the work aspect preference scale (Pryor, 1981) – finding support for eight work values shared across instruments. These work values represented across instruments were authority, co-workers, creativity, independence, security, altruism, work conditions and prestige. While the 'Minnesota importance questionnaire' and the work values inventory are still widely used, the use of the 'values scale' and the 'work aspect preference scale' has diminished (Berings et al, 2004).

The above four instruments are the most dominant in the structure and measurement of work values. However, different studies use very different instruments to measure work values. Some studies do not list the precise work value items included in their measurement instrument (Hui-Chun et al. 2003). Some studies use a combination of measurement instruments (Cennamo et al. 2008). Some studies used instruments which measure concepts that are closely related to work values, such as motivation factors, but are not actual work values themselves (Wong et al, 2008, Jurkiewicz, 2000). Other studies measured concepts that were unrelated to work values such as distrust (Taylor et al. 1976).

Many authors have pointed out that the many work values, measured by different instruments, makes comparisons among different studies of work values difficult and limits further understanding of the construct of work values (Roe et al. 1999). Furthermore, the work values literature lacks consensus on the domains represented in the construct of work values. To further the confusion, many researchers develop their own measures of work values to use in their research. Additionally, some have contended that other values that may be relevant to work have yet to be articulated in current measures of work values. Other authors have speculated that younger workers may have different values that relate to their work environments that may have not been relevant in the past (Armour, 2005; Services, 2005).

Despite understanding the similarity of work values covered by various instruments, both Brown (1996) and Rounds et al. (2005) question if current measures of work values capture the breadth of work values and hypothesize that there may be other work values that have yet to be identified. Likewise, Nord et al. (1990) contend that most conceptualizations of work values are deficient because they lack inclusions of other values that are likely important in a work context. For example, they suggest that current measures of work values do not include items on spirituality at work or the relationship between customers and workers. Furthermore, some authors have proposed that values previously not associated with work, may now be relevant to the workplace for younger workers. Armour (2005) posits that younger individuals value opportunities to balance work and family demands. Research done by Catalyst (2001), a non-profit organization that focuses on expanding opportunities for women in business, found that younger workers were attracted to organizations that offered benefits and options to balance work and life commitments such as telecommuting and flexible work hours. In summary, current discussions of work values imply that work values instruments may not have changed whereas the domain of work values may have changed.

Theories of work values

There are several theories in the literature reviewed that explain the origin and foundation of work values. The most dominant theories include the following:

Generational gap theory

The generational gap theory was proposed by Schale (1965) who posited that as cohorts of individuals are born around the same time and exposed to similar and related events during their formative and critical development stages, they will develop particular values, peer personalities and belief systems strong enough to remain stable throughout their lives. These events could be in terms of social events, economic events, industry trends, rearing practices

and cultural forces (Howe et al. 2007). Such events are influential during periods of childhood and adolescence. The general theory acknowledges that there are distinctive differences among generations. However, this theory states that the differences are not absolute. This implies that although the generational workforce is distinctive in some respects and shares certain aspects; it would not be expected that a particular generation would act entirely different from its counterparts (Lamm et al. 2009).

The connotation of no absolute differences is further clarified by Twenge (2010) who stipulated that generations change over several years due to linear rather than categorical effects. Lack of consistencies on defining a generational time frame as to when a certain generation starts or when it ends adds complication to generation gap studies. Similarly, Macky et al. (2008) argued that the generational theory does not segregate generations in a definite way.

Against studies that refute the generational gap theory, Twenge et al. (2012) conducted a series of empirical studies that attempted to investigate the differences among a generational workforce. Their studies were conducted with the purpose to refute or confirm the anecdotal information pertaining to generational differences found in cross sectional studies. What distinguishes their studies is the utilization of time lag studies that compare individuals of the same age at different points in time. Such a method addresses the limitation of cross-sectional studies, which has been the major assumption against the credence of the generational theory Parry and Urwin (2011). Thus, any differences may be attributed to generational effects, or perhaps to the time effects. Nevertheless, the time effects do not have strong effects. As people develop belief systems and shape their personalities during formative years, these beliefs and personalities are said to become stable throughout an individual's life (Twenge et al., 2012)

Lifespan, life-space theory

Super (1953) was one of the first authors to propose inclusion of work values in assessment of individuals' vocational traits suggesting that work values influence one's career choice. He later incorporated discussion of values into his lifespan, life-space theory of career development. Super's theory is a developmental theory that emphasizes longitudinal view of career development (Super et al.1996). Lifespan refers to the lifetime of an individual and Super outlines five stages of development that occur during one's lifetime. The first of these is growth where the main goal is development of autonomy and self-esteem, followed by the second stage of exploration, where developmental goals include solidifying one's vocational identity and choosing a career. Super asserts that once a career is chosen one acquires new abilities to meet the demands of his or her work position and establishes the set of skills needed for the

position during stage of establishment. The following stage of maintenance occurs as the individual sustains the skills and the knowledge for the position. Eventually, individuals reduce their responsibilities at work, begin planning for retirement and then exit the workforce marking the final stage of disengagement Super's theory suggests that individuals progress through these stages as their career develops. When individuals change careers, recycling through stages may occur. Furthermore, according to the theory, career maturity is measured by assessing the degree to which an individual progresses through each stage.

According to Super, life space refers to the roles that one occupies in life (Super, 1970). He defines eight major life roles for individuals – child, student, leisure, citizen, worker, homemaker, spouse and parent. These roles are expected to interact, and these interactions can be both positive and negative and may influence one's career development and choice. Beyond the concepts of lifespan and life-space, the central tenant of Super's theory posits that people differ in their skills, interests, personality, self-concepts and values and are suited for several occupations that also require specific constellations of skills and traits (Super, 1970). Furthermore, Super asserts that individuals make career choices based on their self-concepts - the personal understanding of one's abilities, interests, values and choices – which develop throughout their lives as they progress through the five development stages. Within this theory, values are assumed to influence one's self concept and this in turn influences career choice. Super also notes that work values can be used to assess one's motivation to work (Super, 1970).

Research generally supports Super's lifespan, life-space theory. Most research have explored the concept of lifespan, particularly the exploration and establishment stages (Swanson et al. 2000). Empirical evidence supports that interactions occur between life roles (Swanson, 1992). Overall, reviews have concluded that Super's model is difficult to test but is generally supported (Osipow et al. 1996).

Theory of work adjustment

One of the most popular vocational theories incorporating work values is the theory of work adjustment (Dawis et al. 1984). The theory of work adjustment (TWA) is a person-environment fit theory, that explain how a person's traits fit with the requirements of an environment and the interactions between the two. The theory asserts that individuals have specific requirements to survive in life and that these requirements, referred to as needs in the theory of work adjustment are satisfied by or through the environment (Dawis, 1996). Moreover, the TWA assumes that individuals make choices to try to satisfy these needs while individuals also have different abilities to use to satisfy their needs. When both the individual and the

environment are satisfied, correspondence is said to occur. Therefore, the basic premise of the TWA is that persons and environments are constantly trying to achieve correspondence, which is when both an individual and his or her environment are satisfied (Dawis, 1996).

Much empirical support has been found for the TWA model. Generally, research has found that the congruence between values and the work environment is predictive of job satisfaction (Dawis, 2012) and values account for a significant portion of variance in job satisfaction and tenure (Dawis et al. 1984). Hesketh et al. (1992) found support for correspondence predicting job satisfaction in addition to finding support for the relationship between correspondence and intentions to stay on the job and tenure.

Value-Based Holistic Theory

Brown (1996), Brown et al. (1996) offer a more conceived theory of career choice and development that centers on values. In this theory, like others, values are conceptualized as having behavioral, affective and cognitive components that guide behavior. Both personal and work values are considered in the application of Brown's theory. The main premise of Brown's values-based, holistic theory is that individuals make career choices based on their values with the expectation that they will achieve satisfaction. Moreover, Brown's theory assumes that individuals are motivated by expected outcomes such as job satisfaction (Brown, 1996). Like Super's theory, Brown suggests that Life roles influence career choice and development. Specifically, life satisfaction is dependent upon fulfilling values related to multiple life roles. Therefore, the fulfillment of work values, values that are central to one's role as a worker is related to that individual's overall life satisfaction (Super et al. 1995). Brown's theory includes discussion of the importance of the role of work compared to other life roles. As Brown notes, the more the importance placed on a role the more influence values related to that role can have on the individual's satisfaction (Brown, 1996).

A few empirical researches directly investigate the tenets of Brown's theory. He refers to broader research on work values as offering support for his premises (Brown, 2002). As such, there is support for the influence of work values on career decision making processes (Judge et al. 1992), the relation between work values and job satisfaction (Dawis et al. 1984).

Generational differences in work values

The word "generation" has multiple meanings. It can refer to groups of individuals, psychological characteristics, or ways of thinking (Attias-Donfut, 1988) and can be applied to different concepts such as demographic generations, social generations or historical

generations (Chauvel, 2003). In the field of management, the word “generation” mainly refers to a cohort defined in the demographic sense of the term.

Individuals born between 1946 and 1964 in the USA are labeled baby boomers. Growing up, baby boomers were affected by the civil rights and women’s movements, the Vietnam war and assassination of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King and Watergate. In another survey, human resource professionals indicated that they believed baby boomers were ‘results driven’, ‘plan to stay for the long term’ and ‘give maximum effort’ (Alexandria, 2004). Those born between 1965 and 1981 – generation X, experienced the AIDS epidemic, economic uncertainty and the fall of the Soviet Union (Chauvel, 2003). They had a substantially higher probability of witnessing their parents’ divorce or job loss due to downsizing than had any prior generation. As a result of these experiences, members of this cohort are purported to be independent and less committed to their employing organizations and likely to job hop to increase marketability and to see work-life balance as extremely important (Beutell et al. 2008). The workplace traits most associated with generation X were ‘tech savvy’, ‘Learn quickly’, ‘Seek work life balance’, ‘embrace diversity’ and ‘like informality’ (Alexandria, 2004). The youngest generation in today’s workforce, generation Me, born between 1982 and 1999, watched several iconic companies (for example Enron, Tyco, Arthur Andersen) collapse due to unethical leadership. Members of this generation have been “wired” since they were very young; growing up with the internet has made them accustomed to getting access to information quickly (Alexandria, 2004).

In a study of generational differences in work values in China, Cheng et al. (2015) concluded that, contrary to results of some western studies, which show no significant differences among generations for extrinsic rewards and altruistic work values, the oldest generation of Chinese respondents in the study, the cultural revolution generation, attached more importance to extrinsic rewards and altruistic work values than did the younger generations (Cheng et al, 2007). In addition, their findings indicated that although there was no difference between the two older generations, there was a small increase in intrinsic work values from the two older generations to the millennial generation. They also found that generations predicted work values much more significantly than did age, a result that was consistent with that of Hansen et al. (2012). The limitation of the study was use of cross-sectional research design which according to Rhodes (1983), is insufficient for examining generational differences because of the difficulty in separating generation effects from age and time period effects.

Wong et al. (2008) compared scores of different generations on the motivation questionnaire and found differences in the degree to which generations were motivated by affiliation, power and progression. Generation X and Y were more motivated by progression

than were baby boomers, generation Y was more motivated by being in an affiliate workplace than baby boomers were, and generation Y was less motivated by power than generation X, which was less motivated by power than baby boomers. Wong et al (2008) recognized the difficulties in differentiating cohort from other effects and concluded that the differences they identified were better explained by career stage rather than generational differences.

Chen and Choi (2008) used a cross sectional survey to look at generational differences in work values in the hospitality industry in China and found that baby boomers viewed altruism and intellectual stimulation more highly than generations X or Y did; generation X ranked security and independence more highly than baby boomers or generation Y did; and generation Y ranked economic return more highly than baby boomers or a generation X did. Generally, Chen and Choi's findings showed that baby boomers rated personal growth more highly than younger generations, while generation Y valued work environment more highly than generation X or baby boomers did. In addition, generation Y was less concerned about personal growth such as intellectual stimulation and achievement and more about economic returns. Lamm et al. (2009) found through a cross sectional survey of 701 individuals that members of different generational cohorts responded differently to workplace fun, and that generation membership moderated the relationship between workplace fun and workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment.

Other studies reviewed were not clear about the differences. Jurkiewicz et al. (1998) investigated the relative importance of 15 work-related factors among 278 public employees and found that the values held as important by veterans, baby boomers and generation X were similar. Employees were found generally to want to progress in terms of income, responsibility and influence within the organization. Jurkiewicz et al. (1998) suggested that the generations may indeed be different outside work but were generic in what they wanted from their jobs. These needs may change with age, but this was true across all generations. Jurkiewicz (2000) conducted a second cross-sectional study examining work-related differences and similarities between generation X and baby boomers in the public sector and again found that the two generations were more alike than different. Out of the 15 factors Jurkiewicz asked her respondents to rate, only three demonstrated differences; baby boomers ranked "chance to learn new things" and "freedom from pressure to conform" significantly higher than generation X did. These findings are contrary to common stereotypes regarding the two generations. Jurkiewicz also found that Generation X ranked "freedom from supervision" significantly more highly than baby boomers did, therefore supporting this stereotype of generation X. Jurkiewicz concluded that managers would gain better results from developing similar initiative, for all employees rather than segmenting the workforce. This is opposed to the current fashion in both

marketing and management which suggests that the different generational segments within the workforce should be treated differently (Parry et al. 2011).

Other findings suggested that baby boomers respect authority, and hierarchy (Zemke et al., 1999), while millennials tend to challenge authority (Gursoy et al., 2008). Findings also suggest that while baby boomers live to work, millennials work to live. Baby boomers are willing to wait for their turn for promotions and rewards and they are very loyal. On the other hand, younger generations want immediate recognition through title, praise, promotion and pay. They also want a life outside of work; they are not likely to sacrifice theirs for the company. Millennials believe in collective action and are optimistic. They like teamwork, showing a strong will to get things done with great spirit (Gursoy et al., 2008).

Appelbaum et al. (2005) investigated the factors that were stereotypically seen as motivating baby boomers and generation X and found that both ranked a high salary and a stable and secure future as the most important motivational factors. This suggests that the stereotypes associated with these generational cohorts were not supportable and supports the earlier work of Mahoney (1976) that found a substantial core of intergenerational agreement regarding work goals and basic agreement on role appropriate values. Parker et al. (1990) failed to find differences between generations on the work values that they rate as most important (accomplishment and self-respect) and those they rated as least important (Salvation, beauty and national security). However, they did find significant differences on five of the eighteen work values, showing that baby boomers assigned higher importance to a comfortable and exciting life and social recognition at work, while veterans placed a higher value of their harmony at work. It is worth reiterating that it is inconclusive as to whether the findings from the studies above were not due to age or maturation effects, as all used a cross-sectional design.

Smola et al. (2002) provided perhaps the best evidence for generational differences in work values, through their longitudinal study to assess whether there were generational differences in work values and whether these values changed as workers grew older. Smola et al. (2002) compared levels of desirability of work outcomes, pride in craftsmanship and moral importance of work in 1999 in generation X and baby boomers and with those levels found in 1974. Their results showed that baby boomers and generation X differed significantly in that generation X had a stronger desire to be promoted more quickly and were less likely to believe that "work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life". This is in keeping with the stereotype of generation X as being more of "me" oriented and less loyal to an employer. However, generation X was also more likely to believe that working hard was an indication of one's worth, and that they should work hard even when their supervisor was absent. Smola, et al. (2002) found that workers' attitudes change as they mature but concluded that work values

were more influenced by generational experiences than by age and maturation. This study appears therefore to support the proposition that work values differ between generations.

Empirical evidence for generational differences in work values is at best mixed, with as many studies failing to find differences between generations as finding them (Parry et al. 2011). Those differences that are found are not consistent, with several authors finding differences that contradict the popular stereotypes of baby boomers, generation X, and generation Y. On top of this, majority of studies rely on cross sectional data, so it may be that some of the differences espoused as generational differences can be ascribed to age effects as opposed to generational differences. While personality characteristics remain stable, people generally change what they want from their jobs over time, as they progress from pre-graduate employment to career positions, mix family and career interests and on to retirement. Only one study by Smola et al. (2002), found generational differences using longitudinal data. But, as the study did not use panel data, even these findings may be based on individual differences or period effects rather than actual generational differences.

Parry et al. (2011) further observe that within a single generational cohort, individuals will have very different characteristics. For example, would we expect women within generation X to have values that are similar to men of this generation? Would we expect others of different ethnic backgrounds or with different levels of education to be similar? The probability of significant differences within a generation is another aspect that makes the distinction between generations more complex. Parker et al. (1990) found differences in generational characteristics. Similarly, Lippmann (2008) found distinct differences between male and female cohorts (as well as between ethnic groups) in their experiences after displacement.

The problems with the study of generational differences run deeper than the variations in empirical findings and are fundamental enough to question exactly what these studies are testing. Sociology literature has suggested that generations cannot be defined based purely on age of birth, and that their formation is based on a more complex combinations of birth cohort and a shared experience of historical and political events, collective culture (Mannheim, 1952) and the competition for resources (Edmunds et al. 2002; Eyerman et al. 1998). Taking this view of generations, one can see that a “cohort” may possibly be used as a proxy for a generational group, as a well-chosen cohort may be likely to contain a predominance of members from a generation who have shared experiences. There is often no implied change in attitudes or behaviors as a result of shared birth year- rather environment and institutional factors are thought to determine shared cohort experiences (Jurkiewicz, 2000).

Rhodes (1983) and Denecker et al. (2008), highlighted the difficulty in distinguishing between age, period and cohort (generational) effects and suggested that cohort effects cannot

be identified using cross-sectional studies. Investigations of generational differences in work values still focus primarily on cross-sectional studies and have therefore not overcome these failings (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Many studies do not find value differences between generations in western countries. Studies that did find only small differences, and the results were inconsistent between different countries. It is possible that within a given generation values differences are quite heterogeneous and therefore it is difficult to detect clear differences between generations. Lyons et al (2007) conclude that the values within each generation are heterogeneous, in that individuals within a given generation vary greatly in their work value preferences.

There is little agreement among researchers on the composition of each generation. Indeed, Giancola (2006) criticized the commonly used boundaries of generations on several bases. First, he pointed out there was little agreement about the beginning of the baby boomer generation, with authors dictating this as being 1943 or 1946, depending on whether the author focused on demographics (1946 represented a surge in births) or formative experiences. In addition, some experts have added a fifth generation, the 'Swing generation' as part of the veteran cohort, and others have commented that those born near the beginning or end of a generation do not resemble those born in the middle, thus casting doubt on the concept itself. Giancola (2006) suggests that as the baby boomer generation covers 19 years, it should be split into smaller groups. So, altogether based on past research, it is certainly very difficult to determine whether different generations do have different work values.

Gender differences in work values

One of the meaningful global economic and social changes is the increase in women's participation in the workforce. These changes seem to have a potential to affect women's work values and expectations regarding the goals they aspire to obtain through work. In an exploratory study of working persons in Tokyo Japan, Ueda et al. (2013) found that male workers had higher levels of work values on accomplishment, contribution, power and authority, while female workers had a higher level of work values on monetary rewards.

In a meta-analysis of 242 samples from the US between 1970 and 1998, Konrad et al (2000) found significant gender differences on 33 of 40 job attribute preferences examined. Overall, men and boys preferred earnings, promotion, power and autonomy, while women and girls preferred interpersonal relationships, helping others, and work environment. The findings according to the researchers were generally consistent with gender roles and stereotypes. Related to non-gender type goals, they also found that women prefer variety, interest, use of capabilities and personal growth, while men prefer leisure. According to the researchers, Job

security that was more important for men in the 1970s has become more important for women in the 1990s.

Extrinsic rewards-oriented work values have been found not to be in congruence with role expectations for Women, Hutges et al. (2015). Warr (2008) found that men attributed higher importance to good pay, responsibility and opportunities for promotion, achievement and initiative while women preferred interpersonal relationships and convenient working hours. While men and women ranked good pay at the first place, men ranked additional goals in the following order: interesting job, achievement, job security and using initiative, whereas women ranked achievement, interesting job, job security and convenient hours.

According to Warr (2008) and Sagie et al. (1996), social work values such as having pleasant colleagues and the opportunity to meet other people are more important to female than to male employees. On the other hand, Gunkel et al (2007) found few gender differences related to work values in the USA and Germany. Income and opportunities for advancement were more important only among men in the production domain in the USA. Co-operation was more important only among German and American women in the production domain. Working relationships with the manager and use of skills and capabilities were more important only among American women in the production domain and German women in the administration domain. In addition, job security scores higher importance only among German women in administration and production, while there were no differences between American women and men.

Wide studies found that convenient hours and interpersonal relationships are more important for women than for men (Hofstede, 2001; Warr, 2008) and income is more important for men than for women (Hofstede, 2001, Konrad et al 2000). Women also attributed higher importance to professional growth (Bigoness, 1988) and to interest and variety (Clark, 2005; Konrad et al., 2000), while men preferred promotion (Hofstede, 2001, Konrad et al., 2000,) and autonomy, (Clark, 2005, Konrad et al., 2000).

Regarding job security, the findings are controversial. While studies based on historical data found that job security was more important for men than for women (Clark, 2005, Konrad et al. 2000), studies based on recent data reveal that there are no differences (Clark, 2005, Warr, 2008) or that it is more important for women than for men (Gunkel, et al., 2007; Hofstede, 2001). When asked to discuss their work lives, women more frequently speak about their family and less frequently about their work than do men (Montgomery et al 2005). Men with traditional attitudes toward work and family experience more guilt when family interferes with work (Livingston et al. 2008), and traditional women typically diminish, work rather than family demands to cope when family interferes with work (Somech et al. 2007). Research on work

family conflict finds that mothers experience more work-family conflict than fathers (Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005).

Studies of Europeans showed somewhat different results on gender-related issues of working time. Krings et al. (2009) studied the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions 2007 data. The authors discovered that in Europe long working hours is a largely male phenomenon, and part time work is a predominantly female phenomenon. For instance, 22% men versus 20% women work full time jobs, but 45% women versus 15% men work part time jobs (Krings et al., 2009). Additionally, as compared to men, women participate more in flexible or discontinuous work to reconcile with family responsibilities (Krings et al., 2009).

Education and differences in work values

Studies on the origins of work values demonstrate that the educational level of employees influences their preferred job aspects. Workers with higher educational attainment judge jobs more by their intrinsic qualities, whereas workers with lower educational attainment attach more importance to the extrinsic characteristics of their jobs (Johnson et al. 2002). Educational level is also related to job mobility, although contradictory results regarding the direction of the effect of educational level are shown in empirical studies (Greenhalgh et al. 1996). The ambiguous results for the educational level could be due to the different effects of human capital on job changing behavior for men and women (Theodossiou et al. 2009); especially women with lower education tend to change jobs less often. Besides the effects of education on work values, education indirectly affects employees' preferred job aspects. Initial education prepares students for their future life as workers. Students' work values reflect their expectations of labor market requirements (Daehlen's, (2007).

Hiltin et al. (2004) stress that educational attainment is an important mediating variable between values and occupation. Clark et al. (1996) controlled for income and found that highly educated people appear less content with monotonous work. When income is not controlled the effect of education on 'pay' satisfaction disappears but that between overall job satisfaction remains. Moreover, the authors find that using lagged values of education and income returns a negative correlation between past education and current job satisfaction. While this outcome is in line with several studies they cite demonstrating the same relationship. Clark et al. (1996) state that the result is 'harder to interpret but may be consistent with the view that utility depends on the gap between outcomes and aspirations, and that education raises aspiration targets'. Clark (1996) points out that the causal mechanisms of this relationship is ambiguous, 'the process of education could itself raise workers' expectations, or those who already have

high expectations could be more likely to continue their education'. Clark (1996) presents results in support of the idea that workers with higher levels of education report themselves as relatively dissatisfied. Torgler (2011) stresses that the effect of education level of workers' satisfaction varies across diverse aspects of the job when controlling for job or worker attributes.

In general, education is positively correlated with more efficient use of information and the formation of expectations at work (Ganzach, 1998). A significant body of literature regarding the role of human capital on economic performance concentrates on only one aspect of human capital endowment namely educational stock. Alternative factors such as job satisfaction are proving to be interesting avenues of investigation, especially considering results that indicate job satisfaction exhibits a positive influence on growth in European regions (Rodriguez-Pose et al. 2005). Ganzach (1998) finds that intelligence is negatively correlated with job satisfaction when job complexity is held constant. Based on the sample constructed, the author argues that most of the jobs held by the respondents were, not challenging or interesting enough and the dissatisfaction produced by lack of interest was stronger, among more intelligent people.

Long's (2005) survey in Australia indicates the importance of differentiating between levels of education when looking at gender differences. The determinants of job satisfaction for men and women with lower levels of education are significantly different, a result not found when looking at higher skilled and educated individuals. Women in this group exhibit similar levels of satisfaction to their male counterparts. Education is, along with social status and occupation another important factor to understand differences in work values (Hitlin et al. 2004). In this regard, education level is expected to be positively related with intrinsic job attributes such as having an interesting job or to work independently. In contrast, aspects such as income or security tend to be less important among higher educated employees, partially because these employees tend to have better paid jobs to begin with. In this regard Warr (2008), for example, found that employees with a higher educational level rather emphasize intrinsic work values while less educated workers more often endorse extrinsic work values. For both men and women more education leads to higher expectations for better paying jobs and career advancement (Fuchs, 1971). Domenico et al. (2006) supported the idea that education is positively associated with career success and increased salary for women, which means that the more education women receive, the more they get paid.

Studies in China showed somewhat similar results to western studies. Liu et al. (2001) found that people with high education generally had higher demand for self-improvement and self-realization. They placed greater attention to achieve personal growth and took the initiative to seek opportunities for development. Li et al. (2008) conducted a survey of employees from different enterprises in north China to analyze the relationship between education and work

values. They found that work values were closely related to educational levels. The higher the education the employees received, the higher the ranking on social relations and sense of achievement. Huang's (2004) study also revealed that quality control staffs with higher education were more achievement oriented; wealth-oriented and had stronger sense of superiority. She found that highly educated employees had a clear goal in mind that their purposes of work were not only to earn, but also to pursue self-realization and successful careers.

In their study, Nielsen et al. (2008) used data from the China mainland research company survey, which was conducted from 10,716, respondents across 32 cities of China about their occupation and the rewards people seek when looking for a job. They found that there were significant differences between blue-collar and white-collar workers. The blue-collar workers with less education and lower income cared more about job security and job stability and less about income and promotion. The white-collar workers with higher education and higher income were more likely to be concerned with senses of achievement and job prestige. Education increases peoples' breadth of perspective (Gabennesch, 1972), and their abilities and cognitive skills which make them more critical towards authority and enhances their level of personal autonomy and ability of individual judgments. Earlier studies revealed indeed that higher educated people are more in favor of personal development qualities in work than lower educated people (Zanders, 1994).

Organizational characteristics and work values

Public administration scholars have devoted much attention to public service motivation (PSM) as altruistic work values primarily embedded in the public institutions and organizations (Perry et al. 1990). Whereas one key assumption of PSM is that it affects an individual's choice of employment sector, previous empirical studies have shown mixed findings (Wright et al., 2015). Most research used cross-sectional survey data of individuals, thus, it is unclear whether individuals with higher PSM are attracted to jobs in the public sector or whether such individuals come to have a higher PSM by working in the public sector (Perry et al., 2010). Based on Person-Organization (P-O) fit theory, traditional PSM studies argue that people with higher PSM are more likely to choose careers in the public sector organizations because they believe their orientations towards altruistic values are well matched with work environment in the public sector (Kjeldsen, 2014). Individuals prefer to work for the sector and job that reward their existing work values. In other words, people are drawn to a sector, job or organization based on their work values (Lyons et al., 2006).

It has been argued that public sector employees have special motives and distinct work attitudes regarding the public interest (Rainey et al. 2000). Perry et al. (1990) define PSM as ‘An individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.’ Individuals who place a greater importance on helping others and being useful to society seek public sector careers. Individuals with higher levels of PSM are more likely to work in public sector organizations because such organizations provide opportunities for meaningful public service (Wright et al. 2010). Indeed, several authors such as Karl et al. (1998) and Houston (2000) reported significantly different job values of public workers compared to private sector workers. These studies suggest that public sector workers are more likely to place a higher value on intrinsic work aspects whereas private sector workers place a higher value on extrinsic factors. Public sector workers prove especially satisfied in experiencing work that contributed towards society or helped the people far more so than private sector (Norris, 2003). Karl et al. (1998) suggested that job values of public sector workers are changing because of organizational changes: as downsizing also threatens the jobs of public sector workers, they place in contrast to earlier research reported by them – a similar importance to job security as workers in the private sector.

In a study of work values and organizational commitment in public and private sector industries in Pakistan, Shah et al. (1992) found that private sector executives were significantly higher on job involvement as compared to public sector executives. As job involvement is one of the intrinsic work values, it indicates the interest and seriousness of the employees with whom they perform their jobs. The higher job involvement of private sector employees indicates two major aspects which determine the differences in job involvement of private and public sector executives. First, the meaning of work in the context of an organization and second, the reward and punishment associated with the quantity and quality of work an employee delivers in any organization (Shah et al., 1992).

According to Shah et al. (1992), the first aspect is a collective one and it relates to the joint efforts and responsibilities of workers to make the organization efficient and effective. This aspect directly relates to the survival of an organization and its workforce. If a particular organization is competitive and it gets good returns for its output, then it only flourishes but the benefits are also shared by the employees. The public and private organizations differ very much in this aspect of work. The concept of efficiency and productivity and the competitiveness of the organization has little relevance in the public as compared to the private sector (Shah et al., 1992). If a public sector organization runs in a loss, it is bailed out by the government. The loss in the private sector can lead to its bankruptcy and closure. Moreover, the management in the public sector organizations are not so concerned in maintaining the competitiveness and

profitability of the organization as compared to the private sector organization. The second aspect of job involvement according to Shah et al. (1992) involves the expectations of the employees toward the job. Certain values play a significant role in determining job involvement. The prestige of the job, the degree of responsibility, the social status attached to it, the chances of upward movement, creativity, monetary benefits etc. are associated with the degree of involvement of an employee in the job.

In addition, Shah et al. (1992) state that private and public sector organizations greatly differ in these characteristics of job involvement. In the public sector organizations there is mostly, no well-defined system of rewards based upon performance as compared to the private sector organization. However, other characteristics such as security of the job, status, and in some cases, monetary benefits may characterize some professions in the public sector organizations. Nevertheless, their non-contingency on one's own striving may lessen their impact on the job involvement of an individual. As compared to the private sector organizations, one finds more cases of employee misplacement on their jobs in the public sector organizations. A person misplaced or unsuitable for a job will tend to show low job involvement (Shah et al. 1992).

In a study of 2,302 employees from public and private British organizations, Metcalfe (1989) reported that public sector employees place more importance to the opportunity to contribute to society, and to the job security offered by their organizations. In contrast, when compared to private sector employees, their public counterparts place less importance on fringe benefits and economic earnings. In the same vein, Khojasteh (1993) also found that public sector employees are much more motivated by the social recognition of their work than by the economic incentives that their organizations might provide. Fostering the distinction of the values of public sector employees from their private sector counterparts, it has been stated that public sector employees attribute more value to interesting work and less value to wages when compared to private employees (Karl et al. 1998). Thus, it could be argued that public sector employees seem to have a set of personal values that emphasize the importance of the development of their societies, and not as much on the economic incentives that their professional activities might generate for them individually. Accordingly, private sector employees are described as being more motivated by high incomes whereas their public counterparts are more motivated by being useful to the society (de Graaf et al. 2008).

In a study of job security work value in the public and private sector, Baldwin (1987) concluded that public-sector managers value greater job security than their private sector counterparts, while Karl et al. (1998) did not find statistical differences on that variable. Similarly, Lyons et al (2006) found no sector differences in terms of extrinsic work values, such as pay,

while Karl et al. (1998) showed that private-sector employees value wages more than public sector employees. According to Van Der Wal et al. (2008) accountability is the most important value in public sector decision making, followed by 'lawfulness', 'incompatibility', 'expertise', 'reliability', 'effectiveness' and 'impartiality'. Notable is the relatively low position of 'obedience'. It might well be 'obedience' is too strong a term, associated with blindly 'following the leader' loyalty as a value might have been ranked substantially higher. On the other hand 'Self-fulfillment' and 'profitability' are the relatively least important public sector values: only two public executives mentioned 'profitability' as an important 'actual' public sector value. As for the private sector, 'profitability' is the most important value in business decisions, followed by 'accountability', 'reliability', 'effectiveness', 'expertise' and 'efficiency'.

Houston (2000) argues that public administration literature holds that public employees are different from their private sector counterparts. Public administrators are characterized by an ethic to serve the public hence they are motivated by different job characteristics. Moreover, very few authors of the twenty-eight studies mentioned extant motivational theories and accompanying models to justify their own study (Baarsful et al. 2011). As an example, Khojasteh (1993) found that public sector employees are more satisfied with pay than their private sector counterparts. He did however not link the outcomes on this variable to other variables that could have influenced this, such as the relative amount of salary; any salary growth pattern; or the amount of effort an individual job holder must make.

National characteristics and work values

Like general values, work values vary significantly across countries. According to Inglehart (1997) materialistic values are more important in less developed countries and that their importance will decrease with increasing economic development.

Economic Development

Literature suggests links between orientations towards work and the stages of societal development. Yanklovich et al. (1985), argue that in traditional, agrarian societies such as Africa, sustenance predominated peoples' reasons to work. According to Inglehart (1997) developed countries such as the United States evaluate themselves as an individualistic culture and value independence, individual effort, and achievement with individuals often pursuing their own goals in competition with others. As a moderately feminine culture, North Americans are flexible in their roles and supportive of others. In addition, North Americans cope with ambiguity and uncertainty, and, in fact, anticipate change and a fast-paced environment. With low uncertainty avoidance, U.S individuals are comfortable in ambiguous situations, tolerate deviant

behavior and dissent, and experience relatively low anxiety. The U.S culture is also predominantly a low power distance culture, which views individuals as equals and emphasizes legitimate power and interdependence between supervisors and subordinates (House et al. 2004).

Socio – cultural differences

Research by Hofstede et al. (2005) incorporate a dimension measuring time-orientation and the U.S culture reflects a short-term orientation. Short-term time orientations value freedom, thinking for yourself, and achievement. The most desirable work outcome was a feeling of pride in work followed by money, thus demonstrating a dialectical tension between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Schwartz et al. (1995), in their analyses of western values, suggested that the U.S has a high emphasis on mastery values and de-emphasis on harmony values. The U.S puts emphasis on individualism, rejects authority and tradition, and individuals look to others to confirm their views (conformism). Egalitarian and intellectual autonomy values are supported by a view of work as impersonal. A Gallup poll on job satisfaction (Jones, 2006) found that US workers preferred doing what is fulfilling, interacting with and helping others, job flexibility, flexibility in work hours and good pay. Most important dislikes included a heavy work schedule, low pay, too much politicking, boring work and poor management or supervisors.

Results of a study on work values in 45 European countries by Aneli (2011) provide strong support for the assumption that the relative importance of work values depends on the level of gratification of values. First, extrinsic (instrumental) values are more important in countries with a lower level of trust and belonging to organizations. Hence, the results confirm that if needs are gratified, they become significantly less important. The results also indicate that cultural differences have a significant role in explaining the differences in the relative importance of work values. Uncertainty avoidance values seem to be an important determinant of affective and cognitive work values, while individualism – collectivism has no correlation with work values; probably due to the relative similarity of European countries concerning individualism and collectivism. The results confirm the assumption that in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, affective values, including the need for esteem appeared to be higher and the importance of self- actualization turned out to be lower.

Studies have established differences in work values influenced by socio-cultural differences between western countries and China. As suggested by Huang (1995) and Neitai (2010), the influence of social environment on work values is so strong that there may be substantial differences between dimensions of western work values and those of Chinese work values. Basing on the research of Huang (1995) and Elizur et al. (1991), Neitai (2010) came up

with a four dimensions model of Chinese work values: material conditions, self-realization, social harmony, and prosperous development. Research by Hofstede (1983), Shackleton & Ali (1990) showed that west Africans scored high on power distance, medium/low on uncertainty avoidance and low on individualism compared to the British who scored low, low and high respectively. Lamb (1990) describes the importance of courtesy and respect in social interaction, social approval, group orientation, position, prestige, tribal loyalty, obedience to elders and the Law.

CONCLUSIONS

On generational work values, Parry et al. (2011) argue that the suggestion that different groups of employees have different work values and preferences based on both age and other factors such as gender, remains a useful idea for managers but a convincing case for consideration of generation as an additional distinguishing factor has yet to be made. As observed by Parry et al. (2011), managers may see little to gain from a rigorous dissection of the extent to which any observed differences in work values or consumer preference are due to age, cohort, generation or period effects. If workers born between certain dates can be shown to exhibit a certain set of values and attributes, the extent to which this is driven by cohort or generation effects (which will endure as this group ages) as opposed to age or period effects (which will be less enduring) is often not important to the practitioner audiences (or HR consultants), particularly if they are focusing on short term planning rather than the long term picture. In this practitioner context, the use of cross-sectional studies and the lack of distinction between age, cohort or generation and period effects may be less of an issue. According to Audet (2007) and Giancola (2006) the 'clash of generations' appears to be a 'myth'. If it is true that there are no major intergenerational or intercultural differences, it would certainly be counterproductive to adjust HR management practices for minor differences.

Because of practical limitations in conducting cross-generational research, existing knowledge about differences in work values across generations is unsatisfactory. In contrast, the time-lag method compares people of the same age at different points in time, so any differences must be caused by generation (or perhaps time period) rather than age. Using this period enables us to inform managers whether young workers now differ from young workers in the past and whether leaders need to adapt their management strategies for a new generation. If the differences in the previous one-time studies are due to age or career stage rather than generation, then managers can use the same techniques they have always used to recruit, retain and supervise young workers. However, if there are true generational differences, then

managers may need to deal with young workers differently from the way they dealt with workers in the past.

Many studies are unable to find the predicted generational differences in work values, and those that do often fail to distinguish between 'generation' and 'age' as possible drivers of such observed differences. In addition, empirical literature is characterized with methodological limitations through the use of cross-sectional research designs in most studies, confusion about the definition of a generation as opposed to a cohort, and a lack of consideration for differences in national context, gender and ethnicity. Given the multitude of problems inherent in the evidence on generational differences in work values, it is not clear what value the notion of generations has for practitioners, and this may suggest that the concept be ignored. Ultimately, it may not matter to practitioners (HR managers in various organizations) whether differences in the values of different birth cohorts reflect true generational effects provided one can reliably demonstrate that these differences do exist.

An often-applied distinction is made in instrumental or extrinsic and expressive or intrinsic work values. These two orientations are linked to ideas of modernization of society in the sense that modernization means that instrumental or extrinsic work gradually decline in importance while expressive or intrinsic work attributes become increasingly important. However, a study by Halman et al. (2008) on contemporary work values in Africa and Europe which included South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe concluded that indeed intrinsic and extrinsic work orientations can be found in the African context and that the meaning and interpretation resembles the meaning and interpretation in Europe to a large extent. Africans do not appear to have exceptional or unusual work orientations compared with Europeans. African countries display more modest positions on both work dimensions. Africans and Europeans are not all that different when it comes to what is valued in work. If work values concepts and measures between Europe and Africa are comparable as the literature suggests, that is, that Africans and Europeans are not all that different when it comes to what is valued in work, the pegging question remains, why is there so little variations in terms of work orientation when the macro context varies so much?

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