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Towards an understanding of the relationship between work values and cultural orientations

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Abstract

The role of values in influencing behaviour and attitudes has been well documented; however, the relationship between various values has received little academic attention. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between work values and cultural orientations, and to determine which dimension of each predicted work and career satisfaction. Unlike many studies that have focused on the relationship between culture and work, this study has not used a person's country of origin to represent their cultural orientation. Participants' cultural orientations were identified independently of nationality and then used as variables in the analysis, and principal components and regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The results indicated that individuals with particular cultural orientations valued different aspects of work, and that work values and cultural orientations explained a minimal amount of variance in work and career satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Implications of the findings for practitioners and researchers are also addressed.

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1. Introduction

Interest in the analysis of human values has been growing for some time. Much of this interest has focused on the measurement and typology of values, and on the

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relationship between values and constructs such as attitudes, emotions and decision-making (Elizur, 1996; Shafer et al., 2001). Values have been described as “beliefs that are experienced by the individual as standards that guide how he or she should function” (Brown, 2002, p. 49). It is believed that they have cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions, are closely linked to motivation, and, according to Rokeach (1973), that they develop through the influences of culture, society and personality.

The reason for focusing on values as opposed to attitudes, for example, is that unlike attitudes, values do not correspond to a particular object or situation and are relatively stable over time. Furthermore, individuals have fewer values than attitudes (Dose, 1997) and many studies have found that values have influence over a variety of attitudes and behaviours (Brown, 2002).

Values related to work have received considerable scholarly attention for many decades (Hofstede, 1980; Super, 1970). Hertzberg et al. (1956) linked work values to motivation and job satisfaction, and others have demonstrated a strong link between having a high achievement value and being aggressiveness in and showing initiative in one’s work (Pizam et al., 1980). Work values have also been related to organisational commitment (Elizur and Koslowsky, 2001), vocational choice (Super, 1970), ethical decision making (Shafer et al., 2001) and cross-cultural management (Mellahi, 2001).

In an attempt to organise the various theoretical approaches to work values, Jennifer Dose (1997) proposed a framework that categorised them along two dimensions. The first identified whether the value had a moral component or was simply a preference for a particular type of work. The second was continuum between personal and social consensus values.

Fig. 1 shows the relationship between each of these categories, and illustrates how a number of popular approaches to work values can be classified. There is no doubt that this framework is useful for organising, identifying and clustering similar perspectives; however, it raises some conceptual questions.

One concern is to the assumption that personal values and socially constructed values fall along a continuum, as it may be more appropriate to conceptualise them as distinct. For example, while some individuals in a collectivist society may adhere to a particular social value, such as respect for tradition, others in that same society may also value the opportunity to work independently and challenge the status quo. In this sense two types of values are operating within individuals at the same time. Determining whether these values are distinct or in some way connected is of great importance to the question, as yet unanswered, of how they influence work-related behaviours or attitudes (Brown, 2002; Dose, 1997; Rohan, 2000). The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate the relationship between work values and cultural orientations, and its role in predicting work satisfaction and career aspiration.

2. Personal work and social consensus value frameworks

A number of models for understanding personal work values are available, although empirical evidence suggests that little separates many of them (Zytowski,

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