

Work Values of New Workforce and the Relationship with Service Orientation :

An Exploratory Study in Chinese Context

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the structure of work values of the new workforce (also called Generation Y) in the service industry and to explore the relationship between work values and service orientation. A total of 246 valid questionnaires were obtained from undergraduates majoring in tourism and hospitality management. Factor analysis demonstrated that three dimensions of work values are a superior fit for new workforce. These dimensions include tangible rewards, self-improvement, and freedom. Weak significant relationship was indicated between work values and service orientation.

Keywords: New workforce; Work values; Service orientation

1. Introduction

Given the centrality of work as a life role, the issue on work values from both conceptual and practical perspectives has drawn increasing interest [1]. Work values are viewed as necessary constructs for vocational psychology and industrial organizational psychology. Several studies have shown that work values predict and influence the attitude, behavior, and performance of employees. The growing number of the new workforce (also called

Generation Y) entering the workplace has garnered interest in addressing the characteristics and the effects of generations.

However, work values in the service industry have been given little research attention. Moreover, in different cultural contexts, people possess different work values [2]. Hence, the results of research conducted in western culture may not accord with the results in Chinese context. Based on these gaps, our paper identifies the constructs of work values of the new workforce. These constructs are critical for individuals and organizations. Furthermore, this study aims to explore the relationship between work values and service orientation. This paper is beneficial in understanding work values of the Chinese new workforce in the service industry, and in helping service organizations appreciate how to effectually design human resource policies to attract, motivate, and retain employees.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. First, this paper presents a review of the literature on work values, new workforce, and service orientation. The next sections describe the procedure adopted to develop the measure and report the findings of the study. The last section presents the limitations, practical implications, and directions for future research.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Structures of Work Values

As necessary constructs for vocational theory, work values refer to certain values applied to work settings [3]. Although the definitions of work values vary in previous research, the core of these definitions focuses on evaluative standards relating to work, or the importance of assessed preferences [1].

As a multi-level construct, the most widely used approach classifies work values as both intrinsic and extrinsic philosophies [4]. Intrinsic work values focus on the intangible rewards obtained directly from work experience (e.g., challenge, autonomy, and responsibility) [5]. By contrast, extrinsic work values focus on the tangible rewards external to the work itself (e.g., income and security). According to the study of Rokeach in 1973, instrumental values and terminal values are theoretical foundations for the classification of work values. Nevertheless, subsequent research concludes that the entire intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy or instrumental-terminal dichotomy should be re-examined as well as other distinctive types of work values. Elizur et al., for example, employed facet theory to define two essential facets of work values, namely, modality of outcome and system performance contingency [6]. Their results of classification largely overlap the intrinsic and extrinsic dichotomy. Based on a sample of Jewish population, they suggested four types of work values, namely extrinsic, intrinsic, social, and prestige [7]. According to the dimensions of the Protestant Ethic, Wollack et al. the six subscales of work values, including status, activity, striving, earnings, pride, and involvement [8].

Although the labels vary, most studies identifying the types of work values are based on intrinsic, extrinsic, and social or relational values [7].

2.2. Work Values of the New Workforce in the Service Industry

Western economies have identified their workforce comprising four generations, namely, Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y [9]. In recent years, the entry and productivity of Generation Y have attracted increasing attention from theorists and practitioners. This study considers the birth year of Generation Y to fall between 1980 and 2000, which is widely accepted in China.

With the increasing number of dual-career and single-parent families, the changing in the meaning of work as well as the increased electronic media and continuous assimilation of new skills [9], Generation Y tends to be open-minded, comfortable with technology, self-reliant, and entrepreneurial [10]. Compared with other generational cohorts, Generation Y likely favors an inclusive management style, desires immediate feedback about performance, and places more importance on status and work-life balance in the workplace [9]. Chu identifies tangible rewards, self-fulfillment, and liberal spirit as components of the work values structure of hospitality students [11]. A survey in Canada reports that millennial undergraduates place greatest importance on individualistic aspects of a job, and thus, emphasize rapid advancement and development of new skills [10].

2.3. Work Values and Service Orientation

Previous research defines service orientation mainly at organizational and individual level. At the organizational level, service orientation is treated as an internal design characteristics or external strategy [12]. At the individual level, service orientation is characterized as initiative, friendly and considerate service attitude or behavior [13]. Specifically, service-orientated employees enjoy dealing with

customers, find personal satisfaction from giving good service to clients, and exert high levels of effort to improve continuously the quality of customer service [12][14]. The current study focuses on the individual-level service orientation of front-line staffs.

According to the self-determination model of work motivation, motivation is essential for employee's transformation of social and technical skills into customer-oriented behavior [12]. Values possess a motivational component [15]. Majority of value theorists confirm the importance of work values in the prediction of work-related attitudinal or behavioral variables, including vocational interests, job satisfaction [16], and commitment to behavioral intention [15].

However, the relationship of service orientation and work values has not received much attention. As a relatively stable and permanent factor, work values are standards for judging and choosing among alternative modes of measuring behavior in the workplace [1]. Thus, employees who have special work values, such as job security, are more likely to be stimulated to achieve higher performance levels [13]. Cran [17] indicates that ambition may influence service orientation. Power- and achievement-related work values are correlated with working more hours and receiving higher salary [18]. Further, front-line staffs who believe customer interest should come first, invest more time and effort regardless of the difficulty they face [19].

From the perspective of organization-person fit, prior empirical results indicated that work values predict and motivate individuals to seek significant jobs or work environments [16]. When an individual has a strong belief in the acceptance of organizational goals, especially when organizational values are congruent, he/she will exert effort on behalf of the organization [20]. Collecting

data from companies in Bulgaria and the USA, Deci et al. [21] reported that perceived autonomy support facilitated satisfaction of the intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which in turn promote both work engagement and well-being. Thus, intrinsic satisfaction is a source of high-quality service of employees in service organizations [14]. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The different dimensions of work values have positive relationships with service orientation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data collection and sample

The respondents of the survey were students majoring in tourism and hospitality management from colleges and universities in Fujian, Ningxia, and Guangdong Provinces. From April to May of 2013, 246 questionnaires were returned, which accounted for an overall total response rate of 80.66%. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 25 years, with the average age equal to 22 years. With regard to gender, 17.9% of the respondents were male and 82.1% were female. The respondents who had internship experience in the service industry accounted for 91.5%.

3.2. Measures

Self-administered questionnaire was conducted to measure the respondents' work values, service orientation, and demographic characteristics.

Work values were measured with Super's (1970) 45-item Work Values Inventory (WVI) scale. Its reliability and validity has been tested by many scholars [11]. The WVI has fifteen dimensions, each of which consists of three items. All items are scored on five-point Likert scale,

ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important).

The questionnaire used to measured service orientation was based on Peccei and Rosenthal's scale [14]. In our study, the first part of the service orientation questionnaire assessed the commitment to customer service (CCS). Another four items were aimed to measure affective customer service orientation (ACSO). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the items on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). This scale performed a good level of reliability of CCS ($\alpha=0.983$) and ACSO ($\alpha=0.987$).

4. Results

SPSS Version 19.0 was conducted to perform the principal components factor analysis using maximum likelihood method. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin measure of sampling adequacy (0.882) and Bartlett's test for sphericity (1155.853, $p=0.000$) were conducted to test the fitness of the data. Both of them demonstrated a high degree of appropriateness for factor analysis. Following Gefen's procedure for assessing the unidimensionality of constructs [22], three items were removed (namely independence, achievement, and prestige) because they loaded equally onto two solutions. Then, the twelve items loaded on three factors with eigenvalue greater than one, and they explained 62.72% of the variance. And almost all of the factors loading from the items to their latent factors are greater than 0.6.

As showed in Table 1, the first factor consisted of six items with accounted for 28.322% of variance. It was labeled tangible rewards since all the six items were related to what gained from workplace directly. The second factor had four items, which accounted for 21.917% of variance. It was called self-improvement because of all the items referred to development at

the level of human self-spirit. The third factor was named freedom, characterized by an emphasis on controlling others and jobs. The two items explained 12.480% of variance. Cronbach's α values are applied to test reliability with each variable. The alpha coefficients for tangible rewards and self-improvement exceeded the threshold of 0.7. The coefficient for freedom is low but acceptable because it includes only two items.

TABLE 1 RESULTS OF EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS(N=246)

Work Values	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3
Associates	0.662		
Surroundings	0.768		
Supervisory Relations	0.790		
Security	0.774		
Way of Life	0.662		
Economic Return	0.644		
Intellectual Stimulation		0.754	
Altruism		0.701	
Creativity		0.755	
Aesthetics		0.760	
Management Variety			0.872
			0.599
Mean	4.323	3.957	3.608
(SD)	(.524)	(.558)	(.598)
% Variance	28.322	21.917	12.480
Cronbach's α	0.864	0.796	0.477

Note: CFA loadings<0.40 are suppressed

Correlation analysis was conducted between work values and service orientation. As presented in Table 2, only freedom has significant correlation with CCS ($p<0.05$). And tangible rewards and freedom had significant correlation with ACSO. However, the results only provide weak support for our hypothesis.

TABLE 2 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN WORK VALUES AND SERVICE ORIENTATION

Construct	CCS	ACSO	tangible rewards	self-improvement	freedom
CCS	1.00				
ACSO	0.961**	1.00			
tangible rewards	0.125	0.155 ⁺	1.00		
self-improvement	0.099	0.118	0.554**	1.00	
freedom	0.152 ⁺	0.151 ⁺	0.446 ⁺⁺	0.383 ⁺⁺	1.00

Notes: ⁺ p< 0.05 (2-tailed), ⁺⁺ p< 0.01(2-tailed)

5. Discussion

The new workforce in service industry has a multi-dimensional structure of work values, which includes tangible rewards, self-improvement, and freedom. Our findings are partly consistent with the findings of previous studies [11]. The new workforce values jobs that offer comfortable environment and good returns. Our findings indicate that except for high rewards, the new workforce expects opportunities for their development. Thus, recruitment and job training offered by organizations should highlight individual intrinsic values.

Tangible rewards are more related to ACSO compared with self-improvement and freedom. Therefore, in the service context, the new workforce emphasizes rewards, and better rewards will make them happier to serve customers. This study also addressed the relationships between work values and CCS. Characterized as highly optimistic, idealistic, goal-driven, and having high self-expectations [23], the new workforce believes they can and should do different jobs, and they have the ability to manage others. The various jobs and the power to manage others provide the opportunities to prove themselves, and motivate these young employees to commit to customer service. Furthermore, low correlations of the variables imply that other incentive factors, besides work values, should be added to human resource management to improve

the level of service orientation of the new workforce.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The present research clarifies the work values of the new workforce in the service industry. Through an empirical test and in the Chinese context, three-dimensional work values were identified, namely, tangible rewards, self-improvement, and freedom. Work values and service orientation indicate a weak relationship. The results of this study will help management to improve its style in handling the new workforce in the service industry.

The present research has several limitations. First, this study is exploratory in nature. The research design is based on a cross-sectional sample using the self-reporting method, which limit us to perform causal inferences from the data. Further studies using a longitudinal data should investigate the causal relationship between work values and service orientation. Another limitation concerns the generalizability of these conclusions. The current study assessed individual work values based on student sample. Future empirical study should be conducted on a larger representative sample. Finally, this study only found the weak correlations between work values and service orientation. The authors suggest that work values might not have direct effects on service orientation, but might moderate the relationship between organization-level variables and individual service orientation. Additional studies should test the possible link between these factors.

7. References

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