

A Review of Research on Work Values

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Abstract: Researches on work values have been conducted for decades at home and abroad, but scholars have different opinions and it is difficult to form a unified theoretical framework. This paper summarizes some representative research on work values and their arguments since the 1970s. Starting from the definition of the concept of work values, we analyzed the different understandings of different scholars and the two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and four-dimensional work values division methods. The differences in work values are mentioned in a large amount of literature on work values, so this paper summarizes some scholars' research on work values among gender, occupation (industry), country and region, and intergenerational differences, and finds some of defects and shortcomings and suggestions among them. Based on the summary of research and the characteristics of work values, this paper also puts forward several points for future research.

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, the continuous development of the industrial era and the gradual expansion of the company's scale have deepened the diversity of the company's employees. The new generation of employees has shown higher self-attention and individualism, which has pushed managers to pay more attention to their personal characteristics, however, values are useful indicators of personal decisions and actions [1]. Some foreign scholars have begun to pay attention to the impact of employee values on work behaviors and developed the concept of work values. A perspective on the dimensions, scales, and applications of work values [2]. Understanding young people's work values helps organizations identify how to organize work, working conditions, pay packages and other human resources policies to attract the new generation.

2. Definition and dimension of work values

2.1 Definition of work values

For the definition of the work values, scholars at home and abroad have different emphases. Various views on work values are like blind impressions: the theorists are concerned about the content categories of specific areas of work values, and recognize that there is little overlap or connection between different fields [3]. Rokeach (1973) argues that value is an inherent, persistent, fundamental view of what is right or wrong. Work values represent these perspectives applied in the work context [4]. This statement focuses on the understanding of the logical species relationship between work values and values. Zytowski (1970) defined work values as a set of concepts that coordinate between a person's emotional orientation and external objects that provide similar satisfaction [5]. This statement is more concerned with the level of judgment standards. According to Super (1973), values are derived from needs and more common than interests. Work values are goals that people pursue to meet requirements; they may be met by more than one activity or profession [2]. Schwartz & Surkiss (1999) concluded that work values, like basic values, are beliefs about the ideal end-state (such as high pay) or behavior (such as working with people) [6]. Both these statements focus on demand.

2.2 Dimension of work values

As the definition of work values, for the analysis of the dimensional structure of work values, scholars at home and abroad also hold different views.

2.2.1 Dichotomous classification

The main representative view of the two-dimensional division is Miller's research in 1974, which divided the 15 work value factors proposed by Super (1972) into: intrinsic work values and external work values. Elizur (1984) proposed a two-level theory of work values through research in the Israeli sample. He believes that the analysis of work values from the results of work has two levels. The first level is the modality of outcome. This level divides work values into the following three categories: "Instrumental-material", "affective-social" and "cognitive-psychological" work values; the second level is the "performance level": this level divides the work results into work outcomes (system rewards) due to the organizational environment or personal performance, to distinguish between two types of values.

2.2.2 Trichotomous classification

The most classic division of work values is the "intrinsic-rewards-Concomitants" division method of American psychologist Super (1962). Intrinsic values include: altruism, creativity, independence, intellectual stimulation, esthetics, achievement, management; external rewards include: way of life, security, prestige, economic returns; concomitants values include: surroundings, associates, supervisory relations, variety [2]. Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss (1999) summarizes three types of work values that most work researchers seem to agree with: (1) intrinsic or self-actualization values, (2) extrinsic, security or material values, and (3) social or relational values. Elizur (1984) arrived at a related dichotomous classification of work values by considering the modality of their outcomes: instrumental outcomes such as work conditions and benefits; cognitive outcomes such as interest and achievement; affective outcomes such as relations with associates [6].

2.2.3 Quartered classification

Surkiss (1992) proposed that work values have four dimensions: intrinsic value, extrinsic value, social value and prestige value. Then Ros (1999) confirmed that the four dimensions proposed by Surkiss (1992) correspond to the four dimensions of general values of Schwartz (1994), and found that the cognitive outcomes pointed out by Elizur (1984) can be subdivided into intrinsic values and prestige values to understand his experimental data better. Chen hao et al. (2012) surveyed students from 30 universities in China, and concluded that the structure of work values of contemporary college students includes four dimensions: talent development, self-realization, social status and prestige, working environment and welfare protection [7].

Looking back at the studies of work values by scholars, we can see that, despite the divergence of opinions among scholars in the world, it can be roughly divided into three dimensions: the internal factors or internal values of work; the external factors or external values of work; development factors or attached value. Below each dimension can be divided into several factors. The main differences among researchers are the classification of these factor items, such as: prestige, management ability, achievement, rights, etc., and whether these three dimensions can be subdivided into other dimensions.

3. Differences in work values

Usually, people believe that there is a certain difference between individual values. However, are there differences in work values among people of different genders, generations, occupations, countries and regions? And what are the differences

3.1 Gender differences in work values

The traditional view is that women are less stressed and have better ability to cope with unemployment. The most important reason is that men value work more than women. Isaksson,

Johansson, Bellaagh & joberg (2004) found empirical research on the unemployed and found no significant differences between women and men in work values [8]. But a survey by Hagstrom et al. (2007) found that women value social relations, working conditions, and altruistic values more than men; men value interests, careers, and influence more than women. This difference will be gradually reduced or eliminated in subsequent practice. In recent years, women's participation in the labor market has become higher and higher, and such differences are likely to diminish, as dual-worker couples will become the norm, and women will even begin to replace men who support their families [9]. It can be seen that there is still no generally accepted conclusion on whether gender has a different impact on work values.

3.2 Vocation differences in work values

Ning Weiwei (1996) revised the Super Work Values Scale (WVI) and evaluated the work values (career values) among six group of youths with different vocation. The results showed that among the factors of workers' work values, the most influential factors were aggressiveness, economic value, social contribution, prestige, and interpersonal relationships; among the factors of cadre's work values, the most influential were aggressiveness, economic value, autonomy, work environment, work content; among the factors of educational staffs' work values, the most influential are aggressiveness, job stability, economic value, interpersonal relationships, and autonomy; among the factors of college students' work values, the most influential is aggressiveness, economic value, prestige, job stability, lifestyle; among the factors of business service personnel' work values, the most influential are the initiative, interpersonal relationship, economic value, autonomy and work content[10]. Further, Nair and Ghosh (2006) compare the work values of managers in four industrial sectors in India. They found that manufacturing and consulting staff value health factors more than the other two industries; managers in IT, consulting and service value motivation more than manufacturing managers [11].

3.3 Generational differences in work values

Twenge et al. (2010) based on the classification of "leisure, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, altruistic rewards, and social rewards", using big data to analyze the work values of Baby Boomers generation (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1981) and Generation Me (also known as generation Y, born 1982-1999). The results shows that Generation X pays the highest attention to extrinsic rewards (such as status, income). Compared to the Baby Boomers, Generation Me pays less attention to altruistic rewards (such as helpful), social rewards (such as making friends) and intrinsic rewards (such as interesting, results-oriented work). Macky et al. (2008) also found some differences in their study. The results proved that the youngest groups placed more importance on status and freedom work values than the oldest group, and Baby Boomers reported better person-organization values fit with extrinsic values and status values than Generation X and Generation Y [12]. From these, we can infer that the work values of different generations differ to some extent. By understanding the differences and similarities between generational groups, human resource professionals and managers can develop policies, which aid communication, improve satisfaction, commitment, and retention, and increase organizational knowledge management and productivity.

4. Discussion

As discussed above, work values plays an important guiding role in the human resource management of enterprises, it has been concerned in the academic world for decades. During this period, scholars around the world have raised, or questioned, or confirmed, or amended some perspectives. At present, researches on work values has at least the following shortcomings or deficiencies: (1) There is still no widely accepted theory of the structural dimensions of work values in the Western or eastern cultural context. Numerous research results have not been accumulated and mutually verified. (2) Although some scholars have developed measurement scales for work values (such as WVI, CWVQ, etc.), existing measurements for testing work values are not yet perfect and they have not been widely used. (3) In the study of differences in work values, interview,

questionnaires, and other methods are often used. The impact on control variables is not fully considered, and the external validity of the research results is low. In addition, as the intergenerational differences in work values have been confirmed, and post-90s people have begun to enter the work place, the current research on post-90s workers' work values is not rich and systematic.

In view of the above discussions, I believe that future research on work values should pay more attention to: (1) the influence mechanism of work values. For example, the impact of work values on job selection decisions, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee relationships, etc. (2) what are the factors that lead to differences in work values such as gender, occupation, generation and region (3) Future research is also necessary to continue to focus on the reliability and validity of the developed measurement scales in the current era and cultural background or to develop new and more rigorous scales or tools.

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