WORK VALUES AND JOB INVOLVEMENT OF THE POST-80S IN MACAO

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ABSTRACT

To better understand the work values and job involvement of the Post-80s, quantitative data using established scales was used to collect data in this study. Based on data collected from 384 respondents, this study identified four work value factors considered important by the Macao Post-80s. The work value factors are social environmental, extrinsic, altruism and freedom-related work values. These values are significantly positively correlated with job involvement. Work values and job involvement vary significantly across demographic variables. Intrinsic work values have prediction power towards job involvement. Practical implications for management in terms of recruitment and commitment are included.

INTRODUCTION

The Post-80s have been criticized by managers as lacking job commitment. As a cohort of Generation Y, the term Post-80s has become popular in Hong Kong and China in recent years. News from different media, such as news.com.au (2010), Ming Pao (2009) and Armour (2005) have reported the Post-80s as highly educated and technology knowledgeable, place emphasis on flexibility at work and desire a work-life balance while being criticized as indolent, lack of career pursuit and employee loyalty. As a consequence, it is believed that a failure to understand their work values would demotivate this generation of workforce in contributing their best to the organization.

Literatures suggest work values can be one of the key variables to explain job involvement (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977). Several empirical findings also suggest that work values have significant impact on job involvement (Chang, 2008; Chuang, 2002). Given the relationship between work values and job involvement (Rabinovitz, Hall, and Goodale, 1997), and little is known about the work values and job involvement of the Post-80s employees, this study seek to identify the work values and job involvement of the Post-80s employees. The study also will also identify whether any relationship exists between different demographic variables and work values and between different demographic variables and job involvement. The findings contribute to improve
understanding of the work-values and job involvement of the Post-80s. More importantly, a better understanding of the work values of the Post-80s may result in strategies to improve organization behavior that improve job performance, turnover, and absenteeism.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Post-80s in the Workplace**

The characteristics that the Post-80s possess may not be viewed as problems by the employers in the workplace. Their proactive and independent working style may be viewed as egocentric and stubborn (Lau, 2010). One of the reasons may be due to their preferred ways in getting things done are different from the operating style that has been defined in the older generations. Erickson (2008) has highlighted the preferred operating styles between Generation Y and most corporations. The operations of the organizations have been created for years and have been accepted in the older generations., which emphasizes on organization hierarchy, authority, steps and procedures to get things done while the Post-80s focus on peers, trust, immediate actions and completion of tasks. The differences in operating styles may create conflicts in the workplace.

Another reason that the employers or older generations view the Post-80s differently may be due to different characteristics that each generation possesses. Gursoy, Maier and Chi (2008) conducted a research among Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials in the hospitality industry and found that generational differences existed. Due to generational differences, the views and working culture may vary which may cause problems in understanding the youngest generation in the workplace. Similar to other generations, the Post-80s have their unique characteristics formed in their time. However, their characteristics have often been criticized by the older generations, especially in the workplace. The critique may be due to the differences on the ways of doing things between the Post-80s and the organizations or the different characteristics possessed by different generations. It appears that the work characteristics of the Post-80s do not fully align with their work environments and with the characteristics of the older generations.

**Work values and job involvement**
Work values and job involvement have been studied and examined for many years. Super and Sverko (1995, as cited in Eslinger, 2000) defines work values as objectives, either a psychological state, a relationship, or a material condition, that one seeks to attain or achieve through their work. Work values have implications for the kinds of career we choose, the work environment we prefer, and the kinds of decision we will make (Dose, 1997). Work values are seen as important in shaping both individual expectations of work, the response to specific work situations and likely performance within a specific work role (Gahan & Abeysekera, 2009). Work values can be a guiding factor of how an individual chooses his work, how he views the work environment and how he performs in the work. Various studies suggested that work values can be a predictor of work behaviors, such as job satisfaction (Blood, 1969), job choice (Judge & Bretz, 1992) and organizational commitment (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2001).

Job involvement on the other hand is the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self-image (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Job involvement (the psychological importance of work) is more of a personal characteristic than satisfaction (affective responses to one’s job) (Rabinowitz and Hall, 1977), which implies that job involvement is an important feature of a person’s self-definition which may not change easily. Job involvement can affect an individual’s performance (Diefendorff, Brown & Kamin, 2002), job satisfaction and turnover.

**Research on Work Values and Job Involvement**

Work values and job involvement are different constructs. Values may help explain attitudes, behaviours and perceptions (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Thus work values may help explain one’s attitudes, behaviours and perceptions in the workplace. Job involvement is one form of job attitudes (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Therefore, knowing one’s work value system may help predict and explain how one is involved in the workplace. Ruh, White and Wood (1975) also found that job involvement can be partially explained by values thus job involvement is a basic value-orientation.
Lodahl and Kejner (1965) consider job involvement as the internalization of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work to a person. And that the main determinant is a value-orientation toward work learned early in the socialization process. Protestant Work Ethic was considered as one stream of work value construct (Dose, 1997). And a person who endorses the Protestant Work Ethic would be job-involved (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). Super (1973) views work values as needs to be attained through work while Kanungo (1982) states one’s psychological identification with a job (or with work in general) depends on the saliency of his/her needs (both extrinsic and intrinsic) and the perceptions he/she has about the need-satisfying potentialities of the job (or work). These researches all assume work values as a key variable in job involvement.

A number of studies were conducted to examine the relationship of work values and job involvement. In the study of Morrow and McElroy (1987), work commitment and job satisfaction facets and personal characteristics were examined under three career stages. They found out that work values and job involvement are positively related. Rabinowitz, Hall and Goodale (1977) also found that Protestant Work Ethic can be one of the variables to predict job involvement. Given the absence of empirical studies on work values and job involvement of Post-80s in Macao, the hypotheses for this study were stated as:

H1: There is significant difference in work values across different demographic variables.

H2: There is significant difference in job involvement across different demographic variables.

H3: There is significant correlation between work values and job involvement.

**METHODOLOGY**

A cross-sectional questionnaire survey was conducted with respondents recruited through convenient sampling. An online questionnaire supported by the Google documents was also setup to collect data from those who met the criteria for the study. The advantage of using questionnaire survey includes the low cost and it requires less time to gather data from a large population (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The target population includes employees who were born in or after 1980 in Macao. The target
sample size is 377 assuming 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval (see Raosoft. Sample Size Calculator. http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html). Data was collected in 2011.

Measurement tool and data analysis

A questionnaire consisting of 3 parts with 41 questions was constructed for this study. Part 1 comprised of the work values scales developed by Lyons (2003). It has 25 items which loaded to six factors with Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranging from 0.64 to 0.91 (Lyons, 2003). A 5-point Likert Scale was adopted for asking the respondents to indicate the level of importance of each item in the workplace. Part 2 comprised of the job involvement questionnaire (JIQ) to measure an individual’s psychological identification with a specific job (Kanungo, 1982). There were 10 items 5-point Likert Scale. Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranges from 0.76 to 0.84 (Ho, 2006). Each of the ten items which were summed to provide a total involvement score, two of which are negatively phrased and hence reverse scored. Past study also confirm the appropriateness on using the JIQ as it is a reliable instrument for measuring an employee’s level of job involvement (Ayers, 2010). Part 3 comprised of 6 demographic variables (gender, birth year, education level, position level, tenure and salary level) were to identify respondents’ demographic characteristics.

The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Chinese because the majority of respondents in Macao are Chinese. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese were then translated back into English to check if there was any significant discrepancy between the translated items and the original items. Revisions of items were made to ensure the meaning of the translated items is close to the meaning of the original items. To ensure the right respondents were selected, a filtering question asked if “they were born between 1980 and 1989 in Macao and currently hold a full time job.”

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program was employed for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, t-test, and ANOVA were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Mean Scores of the Factors
The mean scores for the overall work values is 4.03 while the mean scores of the 6 work value factors range from 3.84 to 4.21. Specifically, Social Environmental factor, Extrinsic factor, Altruism factor, Freedom-Related factor were viewed important at 4.21, 4.15, 4.04 and 4.00 respectively while Intrinsic factor (3.93) and Status-Related factor (3.84) were not viewed as important. The mean score of the 25 work value items range from 3.61 to 4.4, with 13 items considered important (over 4) and 12 not valued as important (below 4). The mean score of job involvement is 3.09 and while the score for individual items ranged from 2.49 to 3.73, implying no consensus by the respondents. The scores for five items was below neutral implying that they do not consider their job as center of their life.

Relationship between Demographic Variables and Work Values

Females consider social environment more important in work values than males do (t = -3.79; p < 0.001). There is no significant difference between age subgroups in work values while significant differences were found between education levels in altruism, freedom-related and status-related work values. Employees with Bachelor’s degree and above value more on altruism than employees with secondary degree or below (F = 5.91; p < 0.05), employees with Master’s degree or above value more on Freedom-related factor than employees with secondary degree or below (F = 3.09; p < 0.05) and employees with diploma value more on status-related work values factor than employees with Bachelor’s degree (F = 4.29; P < 0.05). In terms of position, Senior Executive values significantly more on status-related work values than Rank & File employee (F = 4.18; p < 0.05) while employees with tenures of 7 to 9 years in the current organization value extrinsic work values significantly more than employees with tenures of less than 1 year in the current organization (F = 3.21; p < 0.05). Lastly, there is no significant difference found between salary levels in work values.

Relationships of Job Involvement across Different Social Demographic Variables

Based on the independent-sample t-test and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), male respondents were significantly more job-involved than female (t = 3.03; p < 0.01). There is no significant difference between age subgroups and education level in job involvement. Respondents holding a supervisory/managerial/senior executive position has significantly higher mean score than
Rank and File position of 2.96 (F = 15.62; p < 0.05). Moreover, rank and file employees slightly disagree with their current job. On the other hand, respondents with 4 to 6/7 to 9 tenure years has a mean score of 3.19/3.28, which is significantly higher than a person with less than 1 year of tenure (F = 5.14; p < 0.05) while employees with salary ranging from 15,001 to 20,000 or from 25,001 to 30,000 is significantly more job-involved than one with salary less than 10,000 (F = 5.31; p < 0.05).

In addition, those with salary level less than MOP15,000 slightly disagree with their job.

**Relationship between Work Values and Job Involvement**

To determine whether there is any relationships between work values and job involvement and whether there is any impact of work values on job involvement, correlation analysis was conducted. All work values variables are positively correlated with job involvement (p < 0.01 & p < 0.05), the Pearson correlation coefficient of altruism, intrinsic, status-related and work values scale are 0.185, 0.284, 0.25 and 0.233 (p < 0.01) respectively, while freedom-related work values is 0.109 (p < 0.05). However, there is no significant correlation between two work value variables (extrinsic and social environmental) and job involvement. Interestingly, the 6 work value variables of the work values scale are positively and significantly correlated with each other (p < 0.01).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Significant differences were found in work values across gender, education level, position level and tenure. Specifically, Post-80s female value social environmental work values significantly more than male Post-80s do (p < 0.001). This observation is similar to Miller’s (1974) finding in their study on the relationship of vocational maturity in work values where they noted that female employees placed more importance on the Surrounding work values than Male employees did (p < 0.05). Taken together, both Miller’s and our finding implies that female employees prefer to work under pleasant conditions. As values develop through the influence of culture, society and personality (Dose, 1997), it is believed that one with different education backgrounds during their years of studies may have different value system. In this study, higher educated Post-80s viewed altruism and freedom-related
variables more important than those with secondary degree. Interestingly, those with diploma viewed status-related variable more important than those with bachelor’s degree.

Significant differences were found in job involvement across gender, position level, tenure and salary level. This study showed that Male of Post-80s were more job-involved than female (p<0.01). This may be due to the traditional concept of the Chinese society that “Husband/male is in charge of earning money to support the family, while wife/female is responsible for doing housework” (Ming Pao, 2009). Therefore male employees would devote more effort to work while female employees would devote more effort to family. Although Lodahl and Kejner (1965) and Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) concluded that highly job-involved people are older, there was no significant difference found in job involvement across birth years in this study. This supports the findings of Brown’s (1996) study that job involvement does not depend on age. Post-80s with supervisory/managerial/senior executive positions were significantly more job-involved than those with rank and file positions which is in accordance with Brown’s (1996) findings that supervisory behaviors (participative decision making and leader consideration) were significantly related to job involvement.

The findings have several implications. First, given that there are impacts of work values on job involvement, the Post-80s should carefully evaluate their personal work values and select appropriate jobs or career that match their work values rather than take any jobs that comes along. This step is crucial to promote their job involvement at work. For example, a person who scored highly in freedom-related work values may find jobs such as insurance broker more suitable than accepting a job as a security guard which obviously requires long hours (such as from 7am to 7pm). Second, organizations should devise appropriate work setting to suit the work values of the Post-80s employees. Similarly, organizations should observe the work value systems of their Post-80s employees so that they will be matched with jobs that offers similar values to them. For example, job rotation program can offer more learning opportunities and job varieties to the Post-80s employees to meet their expectation of intrinsic work values thus enhance their job involvement.
In sum, the results indicated significant differences in work values and job involvement across various demographic variables of the Post-80s. Significant correlations were also found between work values and job involvement. As one of the firsts studies on work values and job involvement in Macao, the findings can help organizations and managers to understand the Post-80s better. It also provides an empirical basis for future work on Post-80s issues in Macao, and in other parts of the world.

REFERENCES


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