

THE EFFECTS OF WORK VALUES AND WORK CENTRALITY ON JOB SATISFACTION. A STUDY WITH OLDER SPANISH WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

Since workforces are ageing throughout Europe, interest in the role of age in the workplace is increasing. Older workers with high work centrality are more likely to negotiate a relational contract and express higher levels of job satisfaction than older workers with low work centrality (Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008). This study examines the role of work centrality and valued work outcomes as antecedents of job satisfaction. A cross sectional study using questionnaires was conducted. The sample consisted of 203 Spanish employees ($M_{age} = 55.78$, $SD = 3.01$). Hierarchical multiple regression analyses have revealed that job satisfaction was significantly predicted by needed income and work centrality. When work is not an important part of older workers' lives, they will prefer extrinsic outcomes and will not invest in the relationship with their organization (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009). Implications for research and theory are explored in the conclusion.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Work Values, Ageism, Work Centrality.

JEL Classification: I10

1. INTRODUCTION

Work centrality has been explored by a variety of researchers across a number of cultural settings, and the finding that work plays a central and fundamental role in the life of a individual has been supported empirically in most industrialized countries (Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997). In addition, work has been found to be of relatively high importance compared with other important life areas such as leisure, community, and religion and has been found to rank second in importance only to family (Harpaz, 1999; MOW, 1987). Research has also conducted exploring the antecedents and consequences of work centrality, showing that work centrality is related to a number of personal, demographic, job, and organizational characteristics such as job satisfaction or psychological contract (Mannheim, et al., 1997; Sverko & Vizek-Vidovic, 1995).

Furthermore, since workforces are ageing throughout Europe (Schalk, et al. 2009), interest in the role of age in the workplace is increasing (Barreira, 2011; Sequeira & Marques, 2011). For instance, Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2008) found that work centrality is related to development orientation (i.e., the propensity to engage in development activities) among older workers, suggesting that older workers with high work centrality are more likely to negotiate a relational contract and express higher levels of job satisfaction than older workers with low work centrality. Therefore, the present study investigates how valued work

outcomes and work centrality are related to job satisfaction in a sample of older Spanish workers.

The theoretical framework for this study was the work by England and colleagues, focusing on eight countries – Belgium, Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, Yugoslavia, USA, Japan and Israel – and supported through follow-up studies to detect longitudinal trends in MOW indices (Harpaz, 1999; MOW, 1987). According to this literature, working carries both instrumental and expressive meanings – work is necessary to procure the means to satisfy physical needs but is also directly linked to a person's self-concept, identity and social standing. Ruiz Quintanilla and Wilpert (1988) described five dimensions of meaning of working: subjective work definitions, work motivation, work centrality, social work norms and dominant work roles. The MOW project (MOW, 1987) and most follow-up studies concentrated on four primary domains: work centrality, social norms about working, importance of work goals, and valued work outcomes.

Within the MOW framework (MOW, 1986), work centrality is measured by the absolute value of working as a life role. In addition, the importance of work can be indirectly assessed by looking at responses to the classic “lottery question”, which assess the respondents' willingness to work without the need for income (England & Harpaz, 1990). It determines how one acts both at the workplace and outside of it (Alvensson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008).

People with high work centrality are willing to invest their valuable resources of time and energy in work, and to invest in the relationship with their organization. As a consequence, these people are more likely to negotiate relational psychological contracts, resulting in positive attitudes (Bal & Kooij, 2011). Empirical evidence for positive relations between work centrality and job attitudes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment) were found in a study of Aryee and Luk (1996), who showed that work centrality was positively related to career and job satisfaction. Similarly, Diefendorff and colleagues (2002) found positive relations between work centrality and organizational citizenship behaviors, and Witt, Patti, and Farner (2002) found positive relations between work centrality and organizational commitment.

A second important dimension of the meaning of working relates to systematic information about the outcomes that individuals seek from working and the functions served through the process of work. Answers to these questions can inform the more fundamental question of why people work, why they extend more or less effort at work, why they intend to remain or consider leaving their place of work, and why they may or may not go beyond the “call of duty” and perform tasks that are outside of their prescribed role yet advance the overall direction of the organization or lead to greater fulfillment of individual goals at work (Mannheim, et al., 1997; MOW, 1987).

Following the original MOW research project (MOW, 1986), six domains were identified: a) needed income, b) status and prestige, c) time absorption (“work keeps me busy”), d) interesting contacts established and maintained at work, and e) professional interest and satisfaction. These elements are also present in Herzberg's theory as motivators and hygiene factors. According to Herzberg (1966), hygiene factors (i.e., interpersonal relations, salary) prevent dissatisfaction, but they do not lead to satisfaction. On the other hand, motivators (i.e., interesting work, achievement) are the real factors that generate higher levels of satisfaction and motivation at work.

Moreover, values work outcomes can be seen as work values, in other words, as end states that guide individuals' work-related preferences that can be attained through the act of working (Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1990). In this sense, some researchers express that work values (i.e., values work outcomes) are an important determinant of work centrality. The variance of work values among individuals creates differences on the importance of

single attributes to working (Hirschfeld and Feild, 2000). On the other hand, work centrality is affected by values and is formed by the person's beliefs toward working (MOW, 1987).

Inspired by the MOW project and due to the lack of research on work centrality in older workers, this study aims to understand the relationship between valued work outcomes, work centrality, and job satisfaction. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Valued work outcomes will positively predict work centrality.

H2: Valued work outcomes and work centrality will positively predict job satisfaction.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sample and procedures

The field research was conducted over a two month period from April to June 2010. Our sample consisted of 203 Spanish employees from five multinational organizations operating in the Spanish industrial sector. As for the sample's sociodemographic characteristics, 63.8% were men, with an average age of 55.78 years old ($SD = 3.01$). 78.1% of the sample were married. Respondents were fairly evenly distributed by professional category: 53.9% were blue workers, and 46.1% were administrative and laboratory staff.

A cross sectional study using questionnaires was conducted. A three-page survey questionnaire in Spanish was utilised as the survey instrument. The human resource department in each department randomly selected participants from their employees list and invited them to participate in our research. All participants were full-time employees. They were informed of the study's objective and the confidentiality of their data, and they were asked to verbally consent to participate. In order to guarantee anonymity, each was given an envelope in which the finished instruments could be kept; they were asked to deposit the envelope in a box placed *ad hoc*. However, to resolve any possible doubts about completing the instrument, the researcher and participants agreed the researcher would pass by their unit in two or three days' time after the scales were turned in.

2.2. Measures

All the constructs included in the analysis were assessed with perceptual self report measures based on multi-item scales whose psychometric properties are well established.

Work Centrality

A one item scale from MOW (1986) was used to measure the importance of work: "How important is work for you?", using a ten-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all to 10 = Very Important). The alpha coefficient for this scale was .675.

Valued Work Outcomes

Five items from MOW (1986) were used to measure valued work outcomes. A sample ten is "work keeps me busy". Responses to all items were made on a ten-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree). The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.785.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured, but the seven-item scale was taken from Meliá et al. (1990). An example is "I am satisfied with current job". Responses to all items were made on a ten-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree). In the current study the alpha reliability was 0.883.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Preliminary analysis

First of all, before testing the regression models, we examined the measurement models with all study variables: work centrality, valued work outcomes and job satisfaction. Harman’s one-factor test was conducted to test the presence of the common method effect. All the variables were entered into an exploratory factor analysis, using unrotated principal components factor analysis, and forcing the extraction of one factor. The factor that emerged accounted for less than 50% of the variance (33.1%). Thus, no general factor is apparent (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). While the results of this analysis do not preclude the possibility of common method variance, they do suggest that common variance is not a great concern and thus is unlikely to confound the interpretations of results.

3.2. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all study variables. Status and prestige, interesting contacts, interesting work, and time absorption were positively related to work Centrality ($p < .05$) so that the higher the valued work outcomes related to status, contact, interesting work and time absorption, the higher the work centrality. Also, status and prestige, needed income and interesting work were positively related to job satisfaction ($p < .05$).

3.3. Testing the hypothesis

To test our hypothesis we conducted a series of multiple and hierarchical regression analyses. Multiple regression was used to assess the ability of valued work outcomes (needed income, status and prestige, time absorption, interesting contacts, interesting work) to predict levels of work centrality. Preliminary analysis was conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 25.9%, $F(5, 149) = 10.41, p < .01$. Only two of the valued work outcomes measured were statistically significant, with interesting work recording a higher beta value (beta = .36, $p < .001$) than needed income (beta = -.17, $p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and correlations of all scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Status and prestige	1						
2. Needed income	.25**	1					
3. Interesting contacts	.34**	.01	1				
4. Interesting work	.48**	.08	.32**	1			
5. Time absorption	.15	-.15	.42**	.34**	1		
6. Work centrality	.31**	-.10	.21**	.44**	.27**	1	
7. Job satisfaction	.17*	.24**	.11	.22**	.12	.21**	1
Mean	6.20	7.51	7.77	6.07	6.94	7.57	3.13
Standard Error	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.08
Standard Deviation	1.80	1.80	1.42	2.05	1.93	1.44	0.89

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Finally, hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of work centrality to predict levels of job satisfaction after controlling for the influence of valued work outcomes (Table 2). Preliminary analysis was conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of

normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Valued work outcomes (needed income, status and prestige, time absorption, interesting contacts, interesting work) were entered at Step 1, explaining 10.8%. After entry of work centrality at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 12.8%, $F(6, 148) = 3.62, p < .01$. Work centrality explained an additional 2% of the variance in job satisfaction, after controlling valued work outcomes, R squared change = .02, F change (1, 148) = 0.07, $p < .01$. Work centrality was statistically significant, recording a beta value of .16 ($p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Results for Job Satisfaction

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Step 1			
Cte	1.38	0.50	
Status and prestige	0.01	0.04	0.03
Needed income	0.11	0.04	0.22**
Interesting contacts	0.01	0.05	0.03
Interesting work	0.06	0.04	0.15
Time absorption	0.04	0.04	0.08
Step 2			
Cte	0.79	0.59	
Status and prestige	0.01	0.04	0.01
Needed income	0.12	0.04	0.25**
Interesting contacts	0.02	0.05	0.03
Interesting work	0.04	0.04	0.09
Time absorption	0.03	0.04	0.07
Work centrality	0.10	0.06	0.16*

Note: $R^2 = 10.8\%$ for Step 1, $\Delta R^2 = 2\%$ for Step ($p < .01$)

4. DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the relationship between valued work outcomes and work centrality, and their role as antecedents of job satisfaction.

In relation to Hypothesis 1, valued work outcomes were found to be related to work centrality, specifically interesting work and needed income. People with interesting tasks at work are more likely to attach higher meaning to the role of work in their lives, and consequently invest time and effort in their jobs. By contrast, needed income had a negative effect on the individuals' identification with the work. These results can be explained according to the distinction of intrinsic work values and extrinsic work values (Nord, et al., 1990). Intrinsic work values, such as interesting work, refer to end-states that occur through work or in the course of people engaging in work activities such as a sense of accomplishment and dependence on the content of work. Experiencing autonomy and interesting tasks at work would lead people to consider that work has a positive impact on their lives, giving it more importance. On the other hand, extrinsic work values, such as salary, refer to end-states that occur as a consequence of work, the instrumental outcome of work (MOW, 1997; Nord, et al., 1990).

In relation to Hypothesis 2, salary was the best job satisfaction predictor. Needed income, as a valued work outcome, seems to more heavily influence job satisfaction. Work centrality

has a significant influence, but it explains very little of the levels of jobs satisfaction in the participants. The relevance of needed income, as an extrinsic work value, is clearly supported by the current findings. Previous studies generally found that job satisfaction is not only associated with salary but also with achievement, personal growth or relationship with others (Robbins, 2001). The lack of relationship between intrinsic work outcomes and job satisfaction can be explained by the age of the participants. It seems possible that older workers, at the end of their professional career, give more relevance to extrinsic outcomes (salary, work conditions) than to interesting work. According to Super (1980), between 50 and 65 years (maintenance), workers will be worried about work conditions to prepare themselves for retirement (i.e., a good salary). Intrinsic elements from job design (i.e., interesting work) would lose their importance in this stage. Also, many older employees disengage more from work when getting closer to their planned retirement age. This disengagement process implies that work centrality decreases in a similar way.

5. CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the literature on work centrality, valued work outcomes, job satisfaction and ageing at work. First, by showing that intrinsic work values are related to work centrality, this study contributes to the literature on work centrality. In addition to organizational citizenship behavior, career satisfaction, and organization commitment (Diefendorff, et al., 2002), extrinsic work values were found to relate to job satisfaction in older workers. Thus, values work outcomes is an important concept to include in studies on work behavior.

Subsequently, we contributed to the literature on ageing by examining the impact of age on the relation between values work outcomes, work centrality, and job attitudes. When work is not an important part of older workers' lives, they will prefer extrinsic outcomes and will not invest in the relationship with their organization (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009). Since there are more older workers active on the labour market, organizations may benefit by employing older workers with intrinsic work values, since these older workers are more willing to invest in their work and relationship with the organization (Bal & Kooij, 2011).

There are limitations to the study that have to be addressed. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study limited the findings in that we could not show evidence of causal relationships. Although we could test for the likelihood of the direction of the relationships, it is still possible that the concepts of the study are reciprocally related. Further longitudinal research is needed to investigate these reciprocal relationships over time. Moreover, because all variables were measured from one source, the employee, there is a chance of a common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, Podsakoff, 2003). Theoretically, concepts like work centrality and job satisfaction exist in the "eye of the beholder", and therefore self-reports are deemed appropriate to measure these concepts (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was partially financed by FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology.

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