

The Role Of Work Values In Job Choice Decision - An Empirical Study

** Commander N.K. Natarajan*

*** Dr. Dinesh Nagar*

INTRODUCTION

Work values have been shown to be related to the way people feel about their work (Spence, 1985), the way people behave on their jobs (England, 1967) and their overall job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins (1989) reported increased job satisfaction and commitment when worker values were congruent with the values of their supervisors. Some research suggests that work values can be manipulated via socialization processes (Watson & Barone, 1976; Watson & Simpson, 1978). However, the more generally accepted view is that individuals establish relatively stable values through life experiences and that organizational socialization is unlikely to alter the basic value structure one brings to the organization (Lusk & Oliver, 1974).

If values are relatively stable (Ravlin & Meglino, 1989), it would be important to examine their role in the selection process since that would be the primary means through which person-organization value congruence may be achieved. Many organizations are now restructuring to achieve leaner and flatter organizational structures (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1991). Accordingly, responsibility and decision making authority has been driven to lower levels in many organizations. Since an organization's culture and image are often closely tied to the value perspective an organization wishes to convey, it would seem that individual value orientation at all levels in the organization will become increasingly important in the future.

One conceptualization of values is that values are enduring perspectives of what is fundamentally right or wrong (Rokeach, 1973). Alternatively, values can be thought of as preference or need for particular outcomes or states (England, 1967). Consistent with the latter perspective, Katz (1973) suggested that occupational choices could be viewed as preferences for settings that allow or encourage expression of particular values or value systems. Since job choice can be seen as an early step one takes to implement an occupational choice (Keon, Latack, & Wanous, 1982), perhaps the occupational argument can be applied to jobs as well. Additionally, Vroom (1966) found that individuals made job choices consistent with their work goals. Some of these goals were value-laden (e.g., chance to benefit society, opportunity to advance), suggesting that individuals make job decisions based, in part, on their work values. Early interactionist perspectives on motivational psychology viewed person environment fit in terms of matching individual needs and environmental press. Needs represent the determinants of behavior in individuals and can be inferred from (1) Observed patterns of behavior, (2) Attention, or particular responses, to specific stimuli, or (3) Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with particular outcomes. Press represents the environmental determinants of behavior. Press implies what an object or environment can do for an individual to facilitate or hinder the fulfillment of internalized needs or the accomplishment of goals (Murray, 1938; Hall & Undzey, 1970). To the extent that values are internalized and affect motivation to fulfill certain needs, values may be expected to influence job choice decisions through need-press relationships. **When faced with a choice, a person activated by particular value structures may be expected to seek out organizational environments that offer the opportunity for value expression and to avoid organizational settings that stifle or repress internalized values. Thus, decision making processes, of which job choice is one example, may be dependent on an individual's value system.**

Meglino et al.'s (1989) results indicated that individuals' perceptions of organizational fit also may be affected by their values. The authors suggested that their results underscored the importance of values in the organizational context. However, if satisfaction is derived from a match between individuals' values and those emphasized in the

* Senior Recruiter, Services Selection Board, Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DRDO), Selection Centre Central, Sultanpuri Infantry Line, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. E-mail : smartnats1@hotmail.com

** Professor of Psychology, Barkatullah University, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

organization (Meglino et al., 1989), presumably individuals will make job choices in order to maximize their anticipated affect (Naylor, Pritchard, & Ilgen, 1980). In other words, individuals may seek jobs where their values fit the organizational environment. Although there appears to be little agreement in the literature regarding the definition, application, or measurement of fit (Baird & Meshoulam, 1988; Blau, 1987; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Gresov, 1989; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Venkatraman, 1989), Chatman (1989) have suggested that values are an appropriate means of conceptualizing fit, since individual and organizational values can be evaluated similarly. Thus, beyond the possible main effect of values on job choices, it is relevant to examine if the attractiveness of particular values in jobs depends on workers' own values. Ravlin and Meglino (1987) examined the effect of work values on perception and decision making. Their results suggested that *'values are hierarchically organized in memory, and that people will find opportunities, within the context of their duties, to apply their dominant value in uncertain situations'* (p. 672). They further indicated that entry of individuals with particular dominant values might, in the long-term, influence the value orientation of the organization. This is consistent with Schneider's (1987) interactionist perspective. However, Ravlin and Meglino (1987) correctly pointed out that their results may be overstated since they were obtained in the absence of other contextual information. They called for additional research regarding the impact of values on individual processes, particularly their influence on job choice behavior. **Theoretically, it appears that values should have an impact on job choice decisions. One way to empirically test whether values actually are important is to empirically investigate their importance by examining their significance and relative effects in the context of variables (such as pay level and promotional opportunity) that have been shown to influence job choices.** Though there have been several studies in the past, there is no compelling evidence on the role of values as each of them used separate value taxonomies. Most studies also used values / attributes such as pay, service conditions etc and sought the subjects to rank order the scale based on its importance which may lead to social desirability issues. Herzberg (1966) using the critical incident technique collected data about people's satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their jobs. The analysis of his data led him to two sets of factors: one set that caused dissatisfaction if they were not met; and another set, which provided positive satisfaction to people. He classified the various needs into, what he called, the 'hygiene' factors those which may prevent dissatisfaction and 'motivators' which may provide satisfaction. He listed variables such as Salary, Working Condition, Company Policy etc., as Hygiene Factors and Advancement, Development, Recognition etc as Motivators. Extending this theory to the job choice process, one may argue that a job seeker will first try to ascertain the presence of Hygiene variables and then go on to evaluate other motivating factors that may / may not be present in a particular job / organization. To give an example, almost all central government jobs are governed by the same pay structure, perks and work culture. Yet, job seekers may prefer to work in a particular organization. It may ,therefore, be believed that values other than pay and conditions of work may also be an important determinant in the job choice decision. Finegan (2000) in her study of the impact of personal and organizational values on organizational commitment used McDonald and Gandz's (1991) 24 item work value taxonomy, an adaptation of Milton Rokeach's value scale. **Rather than analyzing the responses on the basis of individual values, she sought to combine related values into one index in order to create a more reliable measure.** To determine how different values could be grouped into higher-order categories, a principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation was run on the 24 personal-value ratings. This resulted into four sub scales. The first scale included values of Courtesy, Consideration, Cooperating, Fairness, Forgiveness And Moral Integrity and was labeled 'Humanity'. The second scale labeled as 'Adherence to Convention', consisted of the values- Obedience, Cautiousness and Formality. The third scale summed the ratings for Logic, Economy, Experimentation and Diligence and labeled as 'Bottom-Line'. Finally, the last scale, which seemed to tap into issues of 'Vision', summed over the values -Development, Initiative, Creativity and Openness. Using these scales, she concluded that perceived organizational values predicts Organizational Commitment. Also, she found that employees of organizations perceived to be promoting values of 'Vision' and 'Humanity' are more committed. Thus, based on these findings, one may propose that a job seeker must be forming perceptions about the organizational values prior to making a job choice.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study was to examine (a) If job seekers go beyond hygiene factors and evaluate motivators before making a job choice decision (b) If personal and perceived organizational value congruence influences job choice decision (c) Are 'humanity' and 'vision' values important to job seekers in making a job choice decision.

METHOD

✱ **Participants :** A total of 72 engineering / science graduates, all men, participated in the study. They all appeared for selection as an officer in a central government organization which has distinct image in the society. The values promoted in this organization are likely to be known to most aspirants. The subjects had come from across the country and had qualified in the national level entrance test and the preliminary screening tests and were undergoing the final selection process.

✱ **Measure:** Each value of McDonald and Gandz's (1991, 1992) taxonomy of values was rated on a 5 point scale. The rank-order instrument has a test-retest reliability of .76, and the inter-rater reliability for employees of an organization was .77.

✱ **Procedure:** Subjects were assembled in a designated place and explained that they are required to fill in a questionnaire which has no bearing on their selection and that they are not required to mention their roll number or any other identification mark that will enable tracing back the responses. The definition of each value in McDonald and Gandz's taxonomy was provided to participants. Participants were asked to rate the value taxonomy twice, first with respect to how important a given value was to them as a guiding principle in their life from (1) Very important to (5)

Table 1 : Descriptive Statistics Of Values Important To Job Seekers

Values	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adaptability	72	1	4	1.29	.592
Aggressiveness	72	1	5	2.35	1.153
Autonomy	72	1	5	2.65	1.037
Broadmindedness	72	1	3	1.32	.646
Cautiousness	72	1	5	2.39	1.228
Consideration	72	1	5	1.89	.881
Cooperation	72	1	2	1.14	.348
Courtesy	72	1	4	1.46	.730
Creativity	72	1	3	1.36	.589
Development	72	1	5	1.44	.748
Diligence	72	1	5	1.89	.987
Economy	72	1	5	2.58	1.123
Experimentation	72	1	5	2.76	1.068
Fairness	72	1	4	1.56	.837
Forgiveness	72	1	5	2.15	.974
Formality	72	1	5	2.25	1.275
Humor	72	1	5	2.25	1.045
Initiative	72	1	3	1.39	.571
Logic	72	1	4	1.86	.909
Integrity	72	1	4	1.54	.768
Obedience	72	1	5	1.54	.871
Openness	72	1	4	1.78	.876
Orderliness	72	1	5	1.40	.816
Equality	72	1	4	1.47	.769

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Values Perceived To Be Promoted In The Organization

Values	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adaptability	72	1	5	1.72	1.038
Aggressiveness	72	1	5	2.10	1.212
Autonomy	72	1	5	3.10	1.090
Broadmindedness	72	1	22	2.46	2.600
Cautiousness	72	1	5	2.31	1.328
Consideration	72	1	5	1.93	.924
Cooperation	72	1	3	1.18	.422
Courtesy	72	1	5	1.67	.993
Creativity	72	1	5	1.85	1.016
Development	72	1	5	1.81	1.016
Diligence	72	1	5	1.61	.928
Economy	72	1	5	2.60	1.296
Experimentation	72	1	5	2.85	1.360
Fairness	72	1	4	1.46	.730
Forgiveness	72	1	5	2.92	1.230
Formality	72	1	5	1.75	1.196
Humor	72	1	5	2.68	1.254
Initiative	72	1	3	1.24	.459
Logic	72	1	3	1.60	.664
Integrity	72	1	4	1.42	.727
Obedience	72	1	5	1.17	.557
Openness	72	1	5	1.76	1.000
Orderliness	72	1	3	1.17	.504
Social equality	72	1	5	1.75	1.058

Not at all important, and second, in terms of the value's perceived, importance to the organization that they aspire to join from **(1)** Highly promoted to **(5)** Not at all promoted. The mean and standard deviation were computed for each of the 24 values in two distinct group i.e. importance of values to job seekers and perceived values of the organization they aspire to join. The values were rank ordered based on mean values having a collective mean of less than 2 and were separated. In step 2, the collective means of values that are important to job seekers were grouped under four factors of '**Humanity**', '**Convention**', '**Vision**' and '**Bottom Line**'.

FINDINGS

The mean and standard deviation of both the scales are tabulated in Table 1 & 2. Values having means less than 2 for both scales are shown in Table 3. It may be seen from Table 3 that there are 16 out of 24 values that have emerged as important to job seekers. Also, there are 16 values which are perceived to be promoted to a very high degree in the organization they seek to join. It is also seen that 15 out of 16 values that are most important to job seekers are also perceived to be promoted in the organization they aspire to join. Values important to job seekers were grouped under four factors as done by **Finegan (2000)** namely 'Humanity', 'Convention', 'Vision' and 'Bottom Line'. The collective means were summed and averaged and the same is shown in Table 4. **It may be seen that the grouped mean for 'Vision' values is the least followed by 'Humanity'.**

DISCUSSION

The results clearly indicate that job seekers are not only concerned about pay, service conditions etc. (hygiene factors)

Table 3 : Group Mean < 2

Values Important to Job Seekers		Values Perceived to be Promoted in the Organization	
Values	Mean	Values	Mean
Cooperation	1.13	Obedience	1.16
Adaptability	1.29	Orderliness	1.16
Broadmindedness	1.31	Cooperation	1.18
Creativity	1.36	Initiative	1.23
Initiative	1.38	Integrity	1.41
Orderliness	1.40	Fairness	1.45
Development	1.44	logic	1.59
Courtesy	1.45	Diligence	1.61
Equality	1.47	Courtesy	1.66
Obedience	1.54	Adaptability	1.72
Integrity	1.54	Formality	1.75
Fairness	1.55	Social equality	1.75
Openness	1.77	Openness	1.76
logic	1.86	Development	1.80
Diligence	1.88	Creativity	1.84
Consideration	1.88	Consideration	1.93

Table 4 : Values Important to Job Seekers Grouped Under Four Factors

Humanity		Convention		Bottom line		Vision	
Courtesy	1.45	Obedience	1.54	Logic	1.86	Development	1.44
Consideration	1.88	Cautiousness	2.38	Economy	2.58	Initiative	1.38
Cooperation	1.13	Formality	2.25	Experimentation	2.76	Creativity	1.36
Fairness	1.55	Grouped Mean	2.06	Diligence	1.88	Openness	1.77
Forgiveness	2.15			Grouped Mean	2.27	Grouped Mean	1.49
Integrity	1.54						
Grouped Mean	1.62						

but go beyond these to evaluate other factors (Motivators) too. It is also evident that perception of congruence between personal values or values that are important to self and the values promoted in the organization definitely influences job choice decision. Though the means of values that are important and the ones perceived to be promoted are not exactly same, they are close enough to arrive at this conclusion. What is important is that 15 out of 16 values that are important to job seekers are also perceived to be highly promoted in the organization. Finally, it is evident that job seekers do give very high importance to vision and humanity values and thus, it follows that organizations projecting to be promoting these values will attract best talents. Though this finding is consistent with Finegan (2000), the present study has its limitation in terms of its all male sample. Secondly, all subjects are from science / engineering background. May be, different gender and also subjects from different disciplines may exhibit different value preferences. This limitation will be overcome by enhancing the scope of this study suitably in the near future.

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(Contd. From Page 15)

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