"Other-Oriented Values and Job Satisfaction"

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Other-Oriented Values and Job Satisfaction[1]

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Abstract

Considering the propositions of Simon (1990;1993) and Korsgaard and collaborators (1997), that an individual who assigns priority to values related to altruism tends to pay less attention to evaluating personal costs and benefits when processing social information, as well as the basic premises of job satisfaction that establishes that this attitude is centered on a cognitive process of evaluating how specific conditions or outcomes in a job fulfill the needs and values of a person. We proposed that individuals who score higher on values associated with altruism, will reveal higher scores on all specific facets of job satisfaction than those who score lower. A sample of 3,201 Mexican employees, living in 11 cities and working for 30 different companies belonging to the same holding, was used in this study. The results of the research clearly support the central hypothesis.

Key words: Work values, job satisfaction, Schwartz's Theory.

Introduction

In recent years a lot of attention has been paid to values that concern on the welfare of others in everyday interaction. This set of values has received many labels: prosocial (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), collective morality (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989), concern for others (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987), etc. A lot of research has been conducted about the consequences of these values in the work context. For instance, some authors have proposed that the declining importance assigned to them is one of the main causes of the increasing rate of unethical practices in organizations, such as fraud and corruption (e.g. Etzioni, 1994). Other authors have shown that the presence of these values is vital to the well-functioning and survival of organizations (e.g. Organ, 1988), and that values related to altruism are common to all forms of helping behaviors in organizations (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). In addition, Korsgaard, Meglino & Lester (1997) have suggested that these values could have further implications in organizations than simply helping others. In this research we propose that one of these implications could be the effect on a widely-studied variable in the work setting: job satisfaction.

Other-oriented values and job satisfaction

Based on the theoretical work of Simon (1900;1993), Korsgaard, Meglino and Lester (1996) stated that individuals who assign high priority to values related to altruism are less willing to evaluate personal costs and benefits when processing social information because engaging in personal evaluations limits the importance of information an indivdual obtains from others. Under this way of thinking, individuals who assign high priority to other-oriented values tend to pay less attention evaluating personal costs and benefits when processing social information.

According to Locke's classical definition of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976; 1984), this construct consists of evaluating how the needs of an employee are fulfilled through the presence of certain conditions, or the achievement of goals in the work setting, that are aligned to the value priorities of the subject.

From the perspective of equity theory (Adams, 1963; Summers & DeNisi, 1990), the individual always establishes a process of comparison between him or her and a social referent, that can be either internal or external to the organization, and sometimes himself or herself in another time or setting. For example, employees evaluate the effort and dedication they give to their jobs

and therefore expect that the rewards and benefits received from the organization will match or exceed their efforts. If a positive relationship is perceived, the employee will be satisfied. However, if the relationship is perceived as negative, the employee will experience dissatisfaction. Given the previous findings discussed above, we propose that values related to altruism produce an effect in the way an individual experiences job satisfaction, regardless of whether it is measured as a unidimensional construct or by specific facets.

Other-oriented values and the universal theory of values

Schwartz' (1992) universal theory of values, establishes that any human value can be classified according to the motivational goal it expresses, the theory proposes ten general values that can be grouped in four high-order values. According to Schwartz's ideas, many of the behaviors of each individual are highly influenced by a specific set of values that are important to him or her.

Two of the ten values are clearly centered on the concern for others: benevolence and universalism. The former contains all those values having as core objective the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of persons with whom one is in frequent personal contact, while universalism refers to values whose motivational goal is centered on the protection of the welfare of all people and nature. Both values are part of a high-order value labeled self-transcendence. It could be said that self-transcendence groups all those values related to transcending selfish concerns and promoting the welfare of others. Altruism for instance, could be a clear example of these values, Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) define this as a regard for the well-being of others.

For the purpose of this study, all values related with the concern of the welfare of others are considered. This approach allows to evaluate the collective effect of all values sharing this motivational goal, rather than a single value such as altruism, on the job satisfaction experienced by individuals.

Recent research evidence has demonstrated that Schwartz' (1992) universal theory of values, specifically the four higher-order values (i.e. openness to change, conservation, self-enhancement and self-transcendence) can be used to analyze work values (Arciniega, 2001; Arciniega & González, (In press); Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999).

Considering the propositions of Simon (1990;1993) and Korsgaard et al. (1997) that an individual who assigns priority to other-oriented values tends to pay less attention to evaluating personal costs and benefits when processing social information, as well as the basic premisis of job satisfaction that establishes that this attitude is centered on a cognitive process of evaluating how specific conditions or outcomes in a job fulfill the needs and values of a person, we propose the following central hypothesis: Individuals who score higher on the high-order value self-transcendence will reveal higher scores on all specific facets of job satisfaction than those who score lower.

Method

Sample

In order to evaluate our hypothesis we used part of a data set collected in a large organizational survey conducted in a Group of Mexican companies based in Mexico City. The sample of this study consisted of 3,201 employees from 11 different cities in central and northern Mexico. The individuals surveyed were employed by 30 different companies belonging to the same holding. The sample was stratified by type of contract: unionized, non-unionized, and temporary employees, and by organizational level. The mean tenure of all employees was 8.24 years, 32.4% were female and 67.6% male.

Instruments

To assess values, specifically work values, we used a new instrument that operationalizes the four high-order values proposed by the Schwartz's theory (1992), but centered in the work context (Arciniega & González, 2000). The 16 items of the instrument are based on the *Portraits Values Questionnaire* (Schwartz et al., 2001). The questionnaire uses short verbal portraits that

describe the goals and wishes of 16 employees, implicitly expressing their work values (e.g., *He always strives to make sure that all employees receive the same treatment and opportunities*). Respondents are asked to rate themselves in terms of each of the 16 portraits, and use a 7-point Likert-type scale (7= *very much like me*, 1= *not like me at all*) to score their comparisons. For this study we centered our attention on the subscale that measures the high-order value self transcendence. The internal consistency index (Cronbach's alpha) found in this subscale was 0.80. In order to measure job satisfaction we used a back-translated version of the specific job satisfaction scale of Hackman and Oldham (1975) that operationalizes five specific facets trough 15 items. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among measured variables are shown in Table 1, also internal consistency indexes of each scale used.

It is important to say, that for this research we conceived job satisfaction as an evaluative judgment (i.e. cognitive approach).The way we measured it (i.e. the JDS) was congruent with this approach, following a recent suggestion made by Brief and Weiss (2002), concerning the adoption of a common approach in conceiving and measuring the construct in any research project.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations between Variables

Value- Job facet	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Self-transcendence	5.50	1.20	(0.80)					
2. Security	4.20	1.73	.15	(0.70)				
3. Compensation	3.46	1.80	.13	.52	(0.87)			
4. Development	4.95	1.29	.27	.59	.53	(0.73)		
5. Co-workers	5.59	1.09	.32	.47	.38	.67	(0.63)	
6. Supervision	4.84	1.70	.26	.45	.42	.65	.53	(0.90)

Cronbach's Alphas of each scale measured are shown on the diagonal

Results and Conclusions

In order to compare the responses of individuals who assigned high and low priority to the high-order value self-transcendence, we decided to divide the sample into two sub-samples, the criterion was based on the mean rating of the high-order value. The first group, or the group low in self-transcendence (LST), consisted of individuals whose scores in the high-order value were below the mean, whereas subjects who reported averages above the mean were classified in the group high in self-transcendence (HST).

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations on each of the five facets of job satisfaction, for each of the two sub samples: HST and LST. In the last column of the table, the values of the *t* tests for the differences between the two sub samples on each facet are reported. It was assumed that the variances of the sub-samples were different when evaluating the results of the *t* test.

As can be seen in Table 2, the differences encountered between the means on each of the five facets of work satisfaction, were highly significant (p<0.001) according to the values of the *t* tests. These results allow us to confirm our central hypothesis.

We can affirm that individuals who assign high priority to the high-order value self-transcendence tend to be more satisfied in their jobs because these subjects pay less attention to the evaluation of personal costs and benefits when processing social information, a process that occurs when the subject evaluates if some conditions at work fulfill his or her needs that are aligned to his or her values.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of each sub-sample and t-tests

Job facet	Mean (HST)	SD (HST)	Mean (LST)	SD (LST)	t tests
Security	4.42	1.79	3.94	1.61	7.99**
Compensation	3.64	1.85	3.26	1.70	6.03**
Development	5.22	1.21	4.64	1.29	13.14**
Co-workers	5.88	0.96	5.26	1.14	16.47**
Supervision	5.16	1.66	4.47	1.66	11.80**

SD=standard deviation, HST= Sub-sample high in self-transcendence.

When there is a pay raise in a company, every employee typically obtains information about the percentage received by other co-workers in order to weigh if his daily effort and dedication is well rewarded compared to his peers. Line workers tend to compare themselves to their peers doing the same job or to other employees in the same company with similar levels of responsibilities or competencies. Meanwhile, subjects in higher positions tend to compare themselves against others with similar education levels from the same college generation, or with other colleagues in a similar position but in a different company. Our findings suggest that individuals who assign priority to the high-order value self-transcendence tend to put lower attention to these comparisons and to use little information from the social referents.

Future research should focus on other cognitive processes that take place in the work context and that are centered in evaluating the personal costs and benefits using social information (e.g. continuance commitment and procedural justice). It seems that other-oriented values have many effects on the everyday life of organizations.

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