

Effect of Service Tenure on Value Congruence – A Case of Public Sector Employees

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This study explored the effect of service tenure on value congruence. 220 managers of the three service tenure categories (1-7 yrs, 8-15 yrs & 16+ yrs) of a large public sector organization were asked to rate 24 items value taxonomy. The values were grouped into higher-order categories based on Principal Component Factor analysis. The composite scores of each of the value factor was computed for personal values and perceived organizational values and the mean of their difference was computed to measure value congruence. The scores were compared across various categories of service tenure to see if there is difference in the degree of value congruence. Results found significant difference in value congruence across service tenure.

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Introduction

The scientific study of human values has a long history. Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (1970) were among the first social scientists who gave the value concept a more concrete meaning. These authors linked values to ordinary activities such as reading newspapers, watching movies or voting and designed a typology of values. Rokeach's (1973, 1979) work however, brought about a shift in the thinking from the idea of a typology of values as a fixed and a stable element to values as guiding principles in life which transcend specific situations, may change over time, guide selection of behaviour and are part of a dynamic system. Values are drivers of behaviour (Rokeach 1973), including workplace behaviour (Schwartz 1994). Dose (1997: 236) observes that 'so much of our time is spent in a working environment that work values are particularly significant and salient'. Once embraced, values become standards of importance (Gellermann, Frankel & Ladenson 1990). They also serve as criteria for making decisions and setting priorities and lie behind the explanations and justifications that are given for one's actions. Unlike

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Literature Review

Several researchers have investigated the concept of congruence between personality and situational variables and its affect on behaviour. Fiedler's leadership theory (1967, 1978), Holland's (1985) theory of vocational choice, Hackman & Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model are but a few examples of the theoretical work that has been based on the idea that characteristics of the person and job interact to determine such things as job choice, satisfaction and employee well-being (Edwards 1994). One fundamental characteristic that both employees and organizations share is values. It is easy to generate examples to show that individuals would be more comfortable in an environment that is consistent with their values. A person who values honesty and integrity working in an organization that believes in 'getting the job done at all costs' will not be very comfortable. In all likelihood, the result of placing people in situations at odds with their personal values will not be positive for either the employee or the organization. Not only could employees' well-being be at risk

but it is also possible that they would be less devoted to the organization and possibly less productive.

Though the literature is full of evidence to highlight the importance of values and its congruence (personal with organizational) in terms of workplace behaviour, it is quite silent about how value congruence is achieved. Caplow's (1964) classic description of how the 'organization man' explained the process of formal socialization which incorporates four things namely: (a) A new self-image of that person in a new role. This self-image is a personal reflection of the individual and organizational status, interaction patterns, organizational values, and role activities. (b) New involvements or patterns of interaction that serve to transmit organizational values and norms. Of equal or greater importance to this process is the abandonment of old relationships resulting from the new involvements. (c) New values that are communicated, accepted (or legitimized), and then internalized (identified with). (d) New accomplishments or the attainment of knowledge, skills, and abilities and the completion of certain activities or tasks. In addition to the formal socialization processes the informal sources of socialization include, but are not limited to, peer networks and informal groups that exists in any work organization. Thus, it could be reasonable to believe that longer the influence of organizational socializations, both formal and informal, more congruent would be the values between the employee and that of the organization. In other words, the duration that one spends in an organization would deter-

mine the degree of congruence between personal and organizational values. The present study aims at examining the effect of service tenure (duration of socialization) on value congruence.

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Respondents

Questionnaires were distributed to 220 employees of a large public sector organization. All the 220 employees returned the completed questionnaire, yielding a return rate of 100%. Thirty three percent (N = 74) of respondents belonged to the service tenure category of 1-7 yrs (short tenure), thirty six percent (N = 78) belonged to the service tenure category of 8-15 yrs (moderate tenure) and thirty one percent (N = 68) belonged to the service tenure category of 16+ yrs (long tenure).

Measures

To measure values the scale constructed by McDonald & Gandz (1991, 1992) was used. This scale comprised 24 items and was found to be having a test-retest reliability of .76, and the inter-rater reliability of .77. Both the convergent and discriminant validity are also very high. The respondents were asked to read each of the 24 personal values one by one and record their response for each value on a 7 point scale. A response of 1 would

mean that the value under consideration is not at all important to the respondent as a guiding principle in life and a response of 7 would mean that the value under consideration is very important.

To examine the organizational values the respondents were asked to read each of the same 24 values one by one and record their response for each value on a 7 point scale based on how they perceive this value being promoted in their organization. A response of 1 would mean that the value under consideration is not at all promoted and a response of 7 would mean that the value under consideration is very highly promoted.

Procedure

The participants were selected at random and assembled in small groups in various locations of the organization. Questionnaires were distributed and collected personally. Participants were assured that their responses will be completely confidential and anonymous, and that no individual questionnaire would be shown to any member of the organization. Respondents were then asked to read the instructions carefully and were told that there was nothing like a right or wrong answer to any of the questions. The values were grouped into higher-order categories based on Principal Component Factor analysis. The composite scores of each of the value factor was computed for personal values and perceived organizational values and the mean of their difference was computed to measure value congruence. The scores were compared across various categories of service tenure to see

if there is difference in the degree of value congruence.

Principal Component Factor Analysis

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. The resulting solution displayed eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 66.56% of the variance, with the individual factors contributing 15.08, 9.59, 8.56, 8.55, 6.65, 6.55, 6.40 and 5.16% of variance, respectively. The items with highest rotated factor loadings were summed together to define a component scale. The subscales are briefly described below.

Factor 1: Harmony. Items with high loading on this factor were characterized by a feeling of harmony with the environment. The items that defined this factor were humour, consideration, courtesy, cooperation, forgiveness, formality and social equality. The coefficient alpha was .81 for the personal and .79 for the organizational values.

Factor 2: Justice. Items with high loading on this factor were characterized by a feeling of fairness and justice. The items that defined this factor were fairness, openness, logic and moral integrity. The coefficient alpha was .67 for personal and .87 for organizational values.

Factor 3: Bottom-Line. The third scale summed the ratings for adaptabil-

ity, diligence and economy which were more to do with economic / bottom-line aspects of an organization. The coefficient alpha was .57 for personal values and .36 for organizational values.

Factor 4: Progress. The fourth scale summed the ratings of broadmindedness, creativity and development and labelled 'Progress'. The coefficient alpha was .56 for personal and .78 for organizational values.

Factor 5: Conservative. The fifth scale summed the ratings of cautiousness, experimentation and obedience and was labelled 'conservative'. The coefficient alpha was .44 for personal values and .34 for organizational values.

Factor 6: Orderliness. The sixth scale included only one item i.e. orderliness and was thus labelled 'orderliness'.

Factor 7: Leadership. The seventh scale summed the ratings for aggressiveness and initiative and was thus labelled 'leadership' with coefficient alpha .41 for personal and .47 for organizational values.

Factor 8: Freedom. The eighth scale summed the rating of a single item i.e. autonomy and labelled 'freedom'.

Analysis of Variance

The findings of the study are tabulated in Table 1. It is seen from the table that the mean of difference between personal values and organizational values is significant across the tenure in case of 5

out of the eight value factors namely harmony, justice, progressive, conservative and leadership. As regards factors harmony, leadership and conservative the mean of difference is lowest in the case of employees with moderate tenure. As regards factors justice and progress the mean of difference is the highest for employees with moderate tenure. The results provide some significant knowledge. Firstly, the tenure does not influence congruence in the case of all the value factors. Particularly the influence is not significant in the case of factors bottom-line, orderliness and freedom.

Secondly, the influence that is seen in the case of five factors is not linear over tenure. For instance, in the case of factor harmony the congruence is the highest when the employee is in moderate service tenure and as his tenure increases the congruence decreases. On the other hand for factor justice the value congruence is the lowest for employee with moderate tenure. This means that value congruence is dynamic in nature and is not uni-directional. Thus, one cannot conclude that it will increase / decrease with tenure.

Table 1: Mean of Difference Between Personal and Organizational Values Across Service Tenure

Components of Values	1-7 Yrs	8-15 Yrs	16+ Yrs	F
1. Harmony	6.99	3.33	5.59	5.18*
2. Justice	4.20	7.38	5.35	6.26**
3. Bottom-Line	1.49	0.99	0.71	1.3
4. Progress	4.32	4.90	3.10	5.16*
5. Conservative	0.77	-1.90	-0.41	15.07**
6. Orderliness	0.59	0.59	0.57	0.006
7. Leadership	1.35	0.65	1.78	4.15**
8. Freedom	1.57	1.41	1.29	0.50

**p< .01, *p< .05

Discussion

The findings are quite interesting and perhaps question the proposition of Caplow (1964) that an organizations' man is made by formal and informal socialization. It is evident from the results that length of socialization (tenure) does not guarantee value congruence and if there is no value congruence it is not likely that the employee will behave in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the organization and hence cannot be

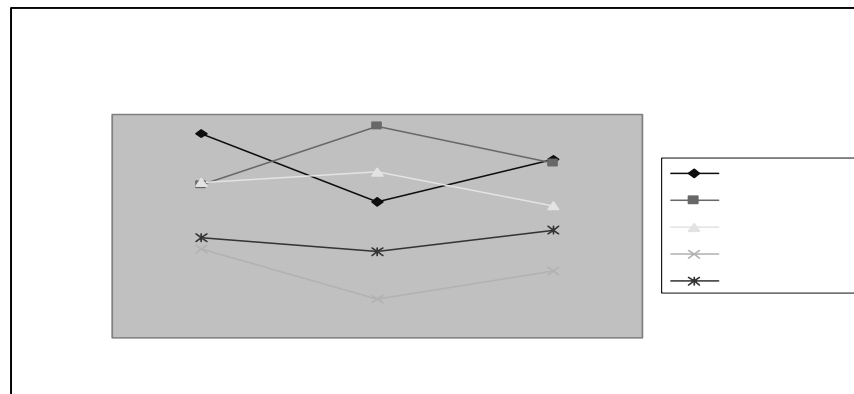
tagged as 'organization's man'. This phenomenon can be explained in the context of life in the public sector organizations. Every person at the basic level wants to secure his physiological needs in terms of secure employment and income, less work pressure, general harmony in life. This is given for granted in the public sector organizations. No wonder that even a Post Graduate candidate does not mind getting a class IV employment in the government sector. Once into a government job the employee en-

joys all the positive aspects of government employment for the first few years. Later on when he sees his counterparts in the private sector marching ahead, he starts complaining and begins to perceive his own organization differently. At this point (moderate service tenure) he finds the organization to be unjust and less progressive. He then starts pushing the system, struggles to achieve the best in the

given circumstances and in the process loses harmony, finds the organization too conservative and lacking leadership. As he matures further, perhaps his saga ends with mixed feelings.

Length of socialization (tenure) does not guarantee value congruence

Fig. 1: Mean of Difference Between Personal and Organizational Values Across Service Tenure



Conclusion

In sum, it could be said that tenure does not guarantee value congruence and that degree of value congruence is not unidirectional and it increases/decreases with tenure. Typically a public sector employee goes through three distinct phases in his work life. In the first phase he tends to meet his basic needs of secure employment and income. In the second phase he tends to achieve growth and recognition which is quite slow in the public sector. In the third phase after a lot of struggle he settles with mixed feelings.

Limitations

This study has its limitations. It can be criticized for covering only one organization. The findings could have been meaningful when compared with a private sector organization. Another criticism of this study might be that common method variance may be inflating the measurement of value congruence. Common method variance, in this case, refers to the problem that occurs when the same participant measures both personal and perceived organizational values using the same type of paper-and-pencil response format. The correlation be-

tween the measures will be higher than it ideally should be because participants will apply the same biases to each task.

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