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Work Values of the Macedonian Workforce

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Abstract—The research paper focuses on the work values of the Macedonian workforce, in the same time identifying the existence of statistically significant differences by age, gender and educational level. The research is conducted on representative sample of the targeted population (N=1000) and the quantitative data is analyzed by the adequate descriptive statistics. The findings can be considered as very important and useful for the Human Resource Management practices, as they are: recruitment, incentives, training and development, retainment, diversity management, job design.

Index Terms—work values, Macedonian workforce, human resource management

I. INTRODUCTION

The changes in the Macedonian business environment in the last two decades are very significant and complex. The change of the economic and political system had influence on all aspects of life, particularly in the way the business is conducted, but it also made change of the values. The meaning of the cultural values and the connection they have in the way the management practice is confirmed is accentuated by many researchers in this field.

Hofstede [1] underlines that all life spheres in the national cultures are in a mutual correlation: the family, work, religion, economic behavior, health, criminal, sentences, science, art, literature, management and leadership. And yet there cannot be a particular national management and leadership culture, but what is of great importance is that management and leadership can be understood only as part of the greater (national) culture.

The aim of the research is to give an answer to the following questions: “Are there unique Macedonian work-related values?” “Which values are preferred at the workplace from the employees?” “Is there a difference between the value preferences of the Macedonian population according to gender, age, education?” “Which values are of great importance?”

There is an attempt to view the preferences at the working age population in Macedonia toward the work i.e. the whole work context. It is a fact that Macedonia is

facing with a specific paradox. On the one hand there is a great percentage of unemployment, which traced backwards through the years it is about 30%, but on the other hand the employer accentuates the comments that quality workers are hard to find of the inability to retain the best ones. Declining the educational system of the country and the management system in the business subjects which greatly because this paradox, this research is focused on the work-related values. The values are meaningful because they characterize individuals as well as societies; they present the changes in time and explain the motivation basis of opinion and behavior. When we talk about values, we talk about things which matter for us in our life. Each person possesses number of values (achievement, security, belonging, philanthropy, hedonism...), but with a various range of meaning.

The individuals and groups have various value priorities i.e. hierarchy of values. Therefore it is expected that the values present the base for action and an instrument for the increase in the performances at work, i.e. the productivity and efficiency.

What is important to point out for the needs of this study is that the term value is used in a sense of what the individual desires and/or prefers (values as important) as a characteristic of the work context or the job, i.e. the term value in this sense is used more as a verb rather than as a noun [2].

Literature review: The concept of the values is a subject matter to a great interest in the social sciences. The values have a significant role not only in sociology, but in the psychophysiology, anthropology, the organizational sciences and other similar disciplines, in the social psychology [3] [4] [5] [6], in the field of ethics [7], social anthropology [8] and as well in the organizational sciences [9]-[12].

The values according to Rokeach [13] are defined as permanent beliefs and specific ways of behavior which are preferred. There are terminal values and instrumental values. The terminal values are personal beliefs for the lifelong goals. The instrumental values are personal beliefs for the way of behavior or how to reach the terminal values. The values have a significant influence over the future actions and decisions of the individual.

They determine the belief of the people about what is fundamentally right or wrong.

The work-related values can be defined as attitudes towards the employees for what can be expected from the work and to act upon so that these expectations can be fulfilled. Those are generalized expectations for the various aspects of work (salary, autonomy, fulfillment, status) [14]-[16]. The work-related values are hierarchically arranged in terms of their meaning for the individual. The work-related values give the answer to the question about what is important for the individual and its job or its life, including the question for money, social interaction, intellectual stimulation, status, fulfillment, achievements. They give the grounds for judgment of the world around.

The analyses of the early theories of the organization, and later, the theories for the organizational structure, have shown that the behavior of the employees is under the influence of the specific characteristics of the work environment i.e. the organizational culture. The employees who will fit into the work environment will be more enthusiastic about the job and will enjoy the same. On the contrary, those who will not fit in, the work for them might cause negative results such as boredom, bad work achievement, lack of pleasure in the same [17].

The working organizations should have in mind that each employee, executives as well as managers, are directed and motivated from the hierarchy of the unique personal values. The organizations should provide the employees to connect their personal values with the organizational values. Constructing such relationship will result with bigger commitment, retention in the organization, engagement of the employees, which will lead to higher organizational performances.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research is conducted on national representative sample (N=1000) of the Macedonian active workforce population. The demographic characteristics of the target population are reflected in the sample.

For certain analysis the respondents aged over 18 years were grouped in 4 categories/subsamples: from 18 to 29 (25.2%); from 30 to 49 (40.5%); from 50 to 65 (21.5%); over 65 (12.8%).

The Likert's 6-item scale is used with verbal description from 1 to 6, where 1 is insignificant and 6 is very significant. The research instrument is designed by a group of researchers [18]. The instrument measures 15 specific aspects of work and work context: 1) team work (working in a team/group); 2) autonomy in the work (or the degree to which you can personally decide how to organize and perform the work); 3) secured job (without fear of being fired); 4) professionalism (or professional competence and knowledge in the field); 5) work hours flexibility (possibility of arriving/leaving to/from work earlier/later and use of work holidays by its own choice); 6) existence of a formal authority (existence of strictly determinate management positions accompanied by responsibility for decision making and usage of the

organizational resources); 7) technology (availability and progress of the work technology, which understands usage of combination of tools, machines, computers, skills, information, knowledge in the production of goods and services); 8) face to face communication (direct communication); 9) e-mail communication (communication over the Internet); 10) communication through the social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, LinkedIn); 11) work structure (or a clear definition of all the posts at the workplace and the work process); 12) participation in decision making (respecting your own opinion during decision making); 13) continuous studying (Support from the side of the employer for studying throughout the accomplishment of the tasks, visiting conferences, seminars, trainings, formal education); 14) entertainment at the workplace (relaxation, humor and socializing at the workplace); 15) acknowledgement of the performance (praise and rewards from the management for good performance).

An examination of the internal consistency of the scale/instrument on the grounds of Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha=0.88$) is performed. The data is analyzed by general distribution, bi variant correlation, cross tabulation, mean values, and the statistical significance is confirmed by Chi-square test and the Pearson's correlation coefficient.

III. RESULTS

Having in mind the social context particularly the economic, in which the country is in, we are surprised with the data provided that "the secured job without fear of being fired" is something which is valued as the most significant for all the respondents (M=5.49). The second most valued characteristic is "professionalism and professional competence or knowledge in the field" (M=5.39). The third is "technology or availability for progress of the work technology, which includes usage of various tools, machines, computers, skills, information, knowledge in the production of goods and services" (M=5.23) and the fourth is "acknowledgment for performance i.e. praise and reward from the management for the good performance" (M=5.17).

Next intention was to discover whether there are differences in the evaluation of the aspects of the job according to gender, age and education.

H_0 =Evaluation of the aspects of the job are independent from the gender.

H_1 =Evaluation of the aspects of the job is dependent from the gender.

The results point out that there are statistically significant difference between man and woman toward the formal authority ($p<0.05$) and face to face communication ($p<0.05$). For women (36%) the existence of the formal authority is more significant than for men (30%). Face to face communication for women (56.4%) is more significant than for men (48.9%).

The existence of differences in the evaluation of the aspects of work in terms of age was also tested.

H₀=Evaluation of the aspects of work is independent from the age

H₂=Evaluation of the aspects of work is dependent from the age

From the analysis of the priority of values according to age, the findings show that for all age groups, the first place is taken by the item secured job, and the second place by professionalism, while technology is on the third place for the ages 18 to 29, from 30 to 49 and for the age over 65. For the age from 50 to 65 the third place is taken by the item acknowledgement of performance.

The results point out that the age is negatively related ($p < 0.05$) with the: team work (-0.89); secured job (-0.096); professionalism (-0.099); flexible work hours (-0.099); technology (-0.114); face to face communication (-0.085); e-mail communication (-0.232); communication through social media (-0.185); entertainment at the workplace (-0.84); continuous studying (-0.062). The negative correlation indicates that by increasing of the age, the significance of the chosen variables is decreasing. Independent from the age is: autonomy at work; formal authority; structure at work; and acknowledgement of performance.

The existence of differences in evaluation of the aspects of the job in terms of education has been also tested.

H₀= Evaluation of the aspects of the job is independent of the education level

H₃= Evaluation of the aspects of the job is dependent of the education level

From the analysis of the priority of values according to education level, the findings show that for all respondents (with finished primary, secondary and higher education), the first place is taken by the item secured job, the second place by professionalism and the technology is at the third place, except the results for the respondents with unfinished primary education differ ($p < 0.05$) from the others, as they consider the acknowledgment, team work and face to face communication as the most significant values (in this order).

The results show that education positively correlates ($p < 0.05$) with all variables such as: team work (0.142); autonomy (0.157); secured job (0.186); professionalism (0.205); flexibility (0.104); technology (0.205); face to face communication (0.125); e-mail com (0.231); social media (0.099); structure at work (0.183); participation in decision making (0.147); continuous studying (0.226); entertainment at the workplace (0.134); acknowledgment (0.102); and authority (0.077).

IV. CONCLUSION

The values influence the perception and behavior and have implications for the interpersonal interactions. When the employees have similar values systems, they have a tendency to see the external stimulation in a similar way. Among the others, this similarity in the interpretation and classification of the surrounding serves

for clarifying their mutual communication. Individuals with similar value systems act similarly.

The similarity of values makes the interaction of the individuals easier so that they can reach the mutual goals, because the hypocrisy of the information and the conflict will be decreased. Therefore, the individuals with similar values will be more satisfied from the interpersonal relations [19]. Because the culture of the organization is in a function of mutual values, correspondence of the individual and organizational values provides access toward measuring the organizational culture and understanding its effect [20]. Most studies have discovered that the correspondence of the individual and organizational values as a result has: bigger commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment [21]-[24].

The research directed towards the values and work attracts big attention in the organizational sciences. The relation values or evaluation of the aspects of the work in the human resource management field is of an utmost significance and may bring about appropriate structure and complementing of all the functions of the management of human resources. Thus, the concept of values may be significant throughout structuring of the posts which means appropriate work conditions which will be acceptable for certain categories of underemployed. Like it can be seen as an example from the results that the young employees with high education despite the secured post, professionalism and technology highly rate the continuous studying; E-mail communication and communication throughout the social media. While for the age category 50-65 with high education despite the secured post and professionalism, according to significance they highly rate the acknowledgment as well as the participation in decision making. The results may be used in the process of recruitment; selection: professional and career development; and especially in the process of retainment of employees. The values of the employees should be taken into account throughout the structure of a quality motivation system which will provide the organization to increase the competitive advantage.

Because the values point out the general direction of the activities of the individuals, it is fairly obvious that the organizational values have a certain effect over the individual values and vice versa and we should go in a direction of creation of their mutual correspondence.

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