

Moderating Effect of Work Values on the Work Relationship-Satisfaction Association

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Abstract

This article aims to examine whether work values moderate the effect of good relationships in the workplace on job satisfaction; findings are based on data collected from 6,860 working persons living in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Results show that accomplishment, contribution, and power and authority were work values that had a moderating effect on the relationship; the effect of good work relationships on work satisfaction was stronger when the level of each of these three work values was high. Some implications for future study and practical human resource management have been proposed as a result of our research.

Keywords: work values, work relationships, work satisfaction

JEL Classification: M19

1. Introduction

Understanding the relationships between work satisfaction and other variables has been an important research theme in organizational behavior. Work relationships are interpersonal relationships with supervisors, peers, and/or subordinates at the workplace; their roles as antecedents of work satisfaction have been emphasized by the human relations movement and classical motivation theories, such as the need hierarchy theory and the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) theory (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939; Maslow, 1954; Alderfer, 1972). These theories assume that every working person is equally satisfied with his/her work situation if he/she enjoys pleasant interpersonal relationships with others at the workplace. Many researchers have focused on the role of relationships at the workplace on work satisfaction (Dickin, Dollahite, & Habicht, 2010; Falkum & Vaglum, 2005; Heath, 1976; Smith, Pope, Sanders, Allred, & O'Keeffe, 1988). For example, Falkum and Vaglum (2005) examined the influence of a physician's interpersonal problems on occupational stress and job satisfaction levels.

Similarly, Japanese researchers have examined human relationships in the workplace and their corresponding impact on job satisfaction (Ikebata, Oonishi, Kajimoto, & Yamasaki, 2012; Kato & Ozaki, 2010; Tsukahara & Tanaka, 2000)

In contrast with these simple assumptions regarding the consistent effects of good work relationships, the person-organization fit (P-O fit) theory, a concrete concept of person-environment fit (P-E fit), has emphasized the importance of congruence of organizational factors, such as work environment, organizational culture, and organizational goals, to a worker's individual goals, values, and orientation. It has focused also on (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Piasentin & Chapman, 2007; Van Vianen, 2000). According to the P-O fit theory, the fit between individuals and organizational factors enhances employee satisfaction and performance. Research focused on work values indicates that working persons have various kinds of values; subsequently, they have different orientations to each of various outcomes of work.

The concept of work values has captured the attention of researchers in organizational behavior. Work values, subsystems of a person's general values, have been defined in various ways. For example, Duffy (2010) defined work values as "what a person wants out of work in general and also what components of a job are important to his or her work satisfaction" (p. 52). Dose (1997) defined work values as "evaluative standards associated with work or the work environment by which individuals determine what is 'right' or assess the importance of preferences" (p. 228). Further, Hatrup, Mueller, and Joens (2007) defined work values as "beliefs about the desirability of specific outcomes of working" (p. 481). Although the definitions are not necessarily the same, all researchers were consistent in expressing that work values are related to the subjective importance of outcomes of work. If workers' values differ from person to person, traditional discussions about the importance of good relationships at work might have to be changed.

Recently, Ueda and Ohzono (2013) identified four different work values—accomplishment, contribution, power and authority, and monetary rewards—using the data collected from 6,860 Japanese working persons. They found differences in these work values based on gender, age, marital status, and annual income. However, the association between work values and attitudinal factors, such as work satisfaction, was not determined. If the P-O fit theory holds, the congruency of work relationships,

as representative of the organization's work environment, to employees' work values will influence their work satisfaction levels. Therefore, this study has focused on the moderating effect of work values on the work relationships-job satisfaction connection. In particular, we examined whether or not good relationships with coworkers had a consistent effect on work satisfaction, even when work values were different.

2. Hypotheses

From a previous discussion, we formed several hypotheses regarding the effect of work relationships on work satisfaction, and the moderating effect of work values. First, the findings of previous research studies indicated that good relationships with coworkers had a positive impact on job satisfaction; thus, H1 was proposed. This hypothesis needs no explanation.

H1: Good work relationships will have a positive effect on work satisfaction.

Although researchers have not identified common dimensions of work values (Ueda & Ohzono, 2012), the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic work values has been made in many studies (Jin & Rounds, 2012). An extrinsic work value orientation is referred to as "the traditional pursuit of success by advancing up the organizational hierarchy to achieve prestige, status, and high income" (Watts, 1992, p. 52). It is associated with the desirability for something provided exogenously. In contrast, intrinsic work values, according to Vansteenkiste et al. (2007), are related to "employees' natural desire[s] to actualize, develop and grow at the work place (self-development), to build meaningful and satisfying relationships with colleagues (i.e. affiliation) and to help people in need (i.e. community contribution)" (p.253). As shown from these definitions, work relationships are associated primarily with intrinsic work values. Working individuals with high levels of intrinsic work values generally desire enjoyable relationships with their coworkers. They experience greater work satisfaction than those who are not motivated by intrinsic work values because of the atmosphere of trust and communication that characterizes their relationships with coworkers. Therefore, H2 was proposed.

H2: Intrinsic work values, such as accomplishment and contribution, will moderate the work relationships-job satisfaction correlation, such that the positive effect of work relationships on job satisfaction will be strongest when the level of these work values is high.

Ueda and Ohzono (2013) associate power and authority, as well as extrinsic rewards, with extrinsic work values. It may be difficult to predict the moderating effect of these extrinsic work values on the work relationships-job satisfaction correlation because the relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic work values cannot be specified easily. If two kinds of work values were considered simply to have a negative correlation, it could be assumed that extrinsic work values have a moderating effect contrary to that of intrinsic work values. However, work relationships directly relate to both intrinsic rewards and extrinsic values. Teamwork is often necessary to achieve high performance levels that lead to monetary rewards. Further, a well-known finding is that the center of communication within a workplace often becomes the center of authority. Some researchers have proposed a more complicated relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic work values. For example, Amable (1993) proposed that synergistic motivational combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic work values should lead to high levels of work satisfaction. Therefore, we assumed that extrinsic work values, similar to intrinsic work values, would have a moderating effect on the correlation between work relationships and job satisfaction.

H3: Extrinsic work values, including power and authority, and extrinsic rewards will moderate the work environment-job satisfaction relationship, such that the positive effect of work relationships on job satisfaction will be strongest when the level of these work values is high.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

The data collected from “Working Persons Survey, 2010” conducted by Recruit Works Institute (RWI) was used for this study. This survey was conducted every two years since 2000; the final survey was conducted in 2010. RWI transmitted the collected data to the Center for Social Science Japan Data Archives (SSJDA), Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo. SSJDA provided us with permission to use and analyze the data. Although RWI surveyed full-time, contract, part-time, and contingent working persons, we used only data for full-time working persons as part of this study because RWI collected data regarding work values exclusively from full-time employees. The final sample included 6,860 respondents (male, 4913; female, 1947).

3.2 Measures

Although Ueda and Ohzono (2013) used factor scores for four work values produced through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), simple averages of responses to multiple question items were calculated and used as four variables regarding work values in this study because we felt that each of the items should be weighted equally. Referring to factor loadings shown in Ueda and Ohzono (2013), this study selected appropriate items that were foundational to each of the work values (see Appendix for details). All items were measured with a Likert scale (i.e., ranging from [1] “agree” to [5] “disagree”). This scale is unique for Japanese people who tend to consider [1] as the best; further, it is contrary to the traditional western scale, which has a range from [1] “disagree” to [5] “agree.”, then we reversed original scores to meet the western style.

Concretely, as the accomplishment variable, an average of responses for twelve five-point items was used. Exemplary items were “[Work is] an activity that allows me to fulfill my potential” and “[Work is] an activity that gives me a sense of accomplishment.” An average of eight items was used for the contribution variable. “[Work allows me] to contribute to society or the nation” and “[Work allows me] to perform helpful activities” were examples of the items. As the power and authority variable, an average of five items including “[Work is] an activity that provides me with a business title and a sense of belonging” and “[Work is] an activity that allows me to acquire the authority and discretion to perform tasks” were used. The monetary rewards variable was an average of responses of four items. Exemplary items were “[Work allows me] to become financially independent” and “[Work allows me] to support my family.” Although monetary rewards did not have sufficient internal reliability due to a low Cronbach’s alpha value, four work values were used.

Work relationship. The original questionnaire contained six items related to work relationship. It asked respondents to note how much or how little they agreed with each question by the use of five-point scales that ranged from [1] “strongly disagree” to [5] “strongly agree.” An average of responses for these six five-point items was used as the work relationship variable (see Appendix for details).

Gender ([1], male; [2], female) and age (real) variables were used as control variables in regressions.

4. Results

4.1 Basic Statistics, Internal Reliability, and Intercorrelations regarding Variables

Table 1 shows basic statistics, internal reliability (in parentheses), and intercorrelations regarding variables. First, the values of Cronbach's alphas of three work values and work satisfaction are beyond conventional criteria (.7), which means they were confirmed to have reasonably high internal reliability. Unfortunately, the Cronbach's alpha for monetary rewards was .655, indicating that its internal reliability was insufficient, but we did not regard the value as too small to give up this dimension as one of the important work values. Therefore, analysis that includes this variable is recommended.

According to Table 1, males who work achieve higher levels of accomplishment ($\gamma = -.048, p < .01$), contribution ($\gamma = -.068, p < .01$), and power and authority ($\gamma = -.105, p < .01$) for the four work values than their female counterparts. For monetary rewards, however, no difference based on gender was found. Further, significant negative correlations between age and power/authority ($\gamma = -.055, p < .01$), and between age and monetary rewards ($\gamma = -.033, p < .01$) were observed, which means that younger working persons tend to emphasize these kinds of work values more than their older counterparts do. Satisfactory work relationships have significant positive correlations with all work values and job satisfaction. In particular, it should be noted this variable relates positively to extrinsic work values such as power and authority ($\gamma = .169, p < .01$) and monetary rewards ($\gamma = .102, p < .01$).

The finding that age does not influence two intrinsic work values (accomplishment [$\gamma = .03, ns$], and contribution [$\gamma = .018, ns$]) is also interesting; it means that, regardless of their ages, some working persons have stronger (or weaker) intrinsic work values. Almost all correlations between the two kinds of work values were very high. Thus, hierarchical regression analysis using work values as independent variables indicated that it was necessary to consider each work value separately to avoid multicollinearity.

Table 1 Basic Statistics, Internal Reliability, and Intercorrelations regarding Variables

Variables	Means	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	1.280	.451								
2 Age	39.380	10.247	-.147**							
3 Work relationships	3.318	.773	.027*	-.002	(.846)					
4 Accomplishment	3.179	.663	-.048**	.003	.234**	(.899)				
5 Contribution	3.260	.669	-.068**	.018	.286**	.790**	(.877)			
6 Power and Authority	2.668	.744	-.105**	-.055**	.169**	.626**	.601**	(.786)		
7 Monetary Rewards	3.825	.649	-.003	-.033**	.102**	.334**	.378**	.282**	(.655)	
8 Work Satisfaction	3.312	.877	.027*	.068**	.585**	.160**	.213**	.133**	.053**	(.847)

N = 6,860, ** : $p < 0.01$, * : $p < 0.05$

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the influence of work relationships on work satisfaction and the moderating effect of work values on the work relationships-job satisfaction correlation. First, gender and age were entered into the equation to control the effect of these variables, and then work relationships was entered as a variable. After the variable regarding work values was entered, the product of work relationships and work values was entered to determine the moderating effect of work values. All independent variables were entered into the equation; because relatively high correlations between intrinsic and extrinsic work values were observed, we conducted different regression analyses with each of the four work values (Models 3-1 through 6-2 in Table 2).

Results of hierarchical regression analysis with work satisfaction as a dependent variable are shown in Table 2. The values listed are unstandardized coefficients; standard errors of these coefficients are noted in parentheses. Model 2 shows a significant positive effect of work relationships on job satisfaction, which supports H1—good work relationships enhance one's satisfaction with his/her job.

As for a mediating effect of work values, Model 3-2 and 4-2 show significant positive coefficients of two intrinsic-related work values ($\beta = .065$, $p < .01$, for accomplishment, and $\beta = .054$, $p < .01$, for contribution). Further, Model 5-2 shows that the coefficient of the product of power and authority (work value) and work relationships is significantly positive ($\beta = .028$, $p < .05$). These results mean a moderating effect of these work values on the relationship between work relationships and satisfaction, and supports H3. However, Model 6-2 shows no significant moderating effect of monetary

rewards work values, which is contrary to H3.

Table 2 Effect of Work Values (Result of Hierarchical Regression Analysis)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3-1	Model 3-2	Model 4-1
(Constant)	2.984(.056)**	.838(.058) **	.746(.067)**	.719(.068) **	.660(.067) **
Gender	.069(.024) **	.039(.019) *	.042(.019) *	.044(.019) *	.046(.019) *
Age	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **
Work relationships (HR)		.660(.011) **	.653(.011) **	.651(.011) **	.643(.012) **
Accomplishment (A)			.035(.013) **	.041(.013) **	
Contribution (C)					.069(.013) **
Power and Authority (PA)					
Monetary Rewards (MR)					
HR × A				.065(.015) **	
HR × C					
HR × PA					
HR × MR					
ΔF	19.663**	3554.343**	6.923**	18.953**	26.943**
F	19.663**	1204.732**	906.066**	730.555**	913.729**
Variables	Model 4-2	Model 5-1	Model 5-2	Model 6-1	Model 6-2
(Constant)	.628(.068) **	.705(.065) **	.699(.065) **	.854(.075) **	.839(.076) **
Gender	.049(.019) *	.049(.019) *	.050(.019) **	.039(.019) *	.040(.019) *
Age	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **	.006(.001) **
Work relationships (HR)	.643(.012) **	.651(.011) **	.652(.011) **	.660(.011) **	.660(.011) **
Accomplishment (A)					
Contribution (C)	.075(.015) **				
Power and Authority (PA)		.051(.012) **	.052(.011) **		
Monetary Rewards (MR)				-.004(.013)	-.001(.013)
HR × A					
HR × C	.054(.015) **				
HR × PA			.028(.013) *		
HR × MR					.018(.009)
ΔF	13.540**	19.067**	4.309*	0.107	3.509
F	735.038**	910.714**	729.787**	903.457**	723.734**

N = 6,860 **: p < .01, * : p < .05

Figure 1 shows that accomplishment (as moderator) moderates the effect of work

relationships (as predictor) on work satisfaction. Although the difference between two moderated cases is slight, the effect of work relationships on job satisfaction is stronger when accomplishment is at one standard deviation higher (+1SD) than it is at one standard deviation lower (-1SD).

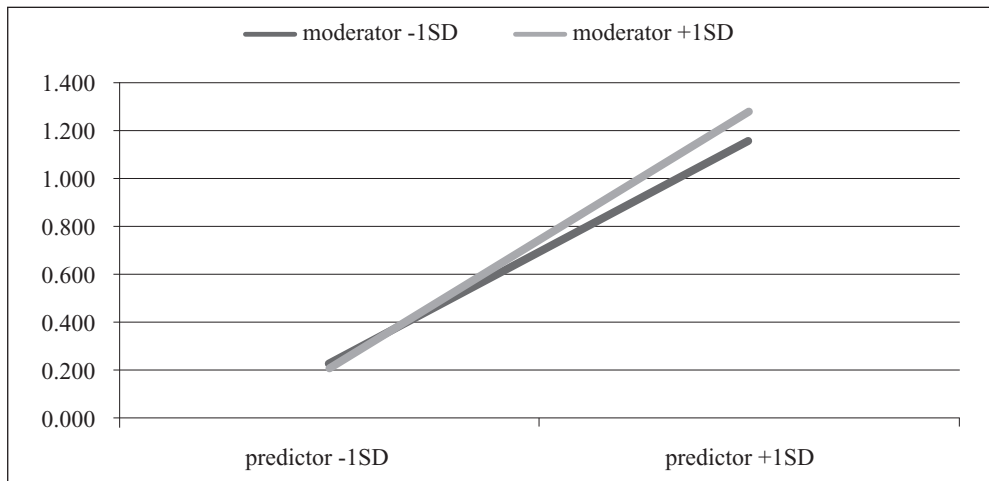


Figure 1 Moderating Effect of Accomplishment on the Work Relationships-Satisfaction Association

5. Discussion

This article has examined a moderating effect of work values on the correlation between work relationships and work satisfaction. Results of this study show that work values regarding accomplishment, contribution, and power and authority have a significant moderating effect on the correlation. In this study, accomplishment and contribution were associated with intrinsic work values, and the comfortable atmosphere produced because of good relationships with coworkers was an intrinsic outcome. Therefore, we assumed that the effect of work relationships on job satisfaction would be stronger when working persons emphasized these work values than when they did not. This hypothesis (H2) was supported by the empirical results of this study. Although power/authority and monetary rewards were associated with extrinsic work values, which influence perceived desirability of exogenous outcomes of work, we assumed that extrinsic work values would also be positively associated with orientation to seek such a good relationship. Results showed a stronger positive effect of work relationships on

work satisfaction when the value of power and authority was high. Two other possible considerations regarding the moderating effect of power and authority were noted.

First, although we assumed that power and authority was one of extrinsic work values, it could be positioned accurately somewhere between intrinsic and extrinsic work values. Power and authority might be associated with the desire to earn respect from other working persons; thus, it might not be contradictory to the value placed on good relationships with coworkers. Secondly, working persons who have stronger work values (of any kind) tend to evaluate situations in the workplace more positively than those who have weaker work values. However, this second argument supports the assumption regarding an entire system of intrinsic and extrinsic work values, which is beyond the aim of this brief article.

This article is preliminary, and some of the methodology is not rigid. First, the work value of monetary rewards did not have sufficient internal reliability; not surprisingly, then, this work value did not have a moderating effect on the work relationships-work satisfaction correlation. However, this result does not imply that a working person's desire to acquire monetary rewards is vague. Rather, future studies should improve the measurement techniques for assessing the impact of monetary rewards on satisfaction with one's work.

Although work values have attracted considerable attention from western researchers who focus on organizational behavior (OB), only a few Japanese researchers have demonstrated interest in them. We found only four papers that address work values ("shigoto kachikan" in Japanese); we retrieved them from CiNii (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator, National Institute of Informatics, Japan). However, work values represent a subsystem of an entire value system; thus, it is crucial for Japanese OB researchers to focus on general work values as well as work values specific to Japanese working persons.

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Appendix

This Appendix shows Question Items regarding work values and work relationships.

Table A1 Question Items regarding Work Values

Accomplishment
[Work allows me] to create something worthwhile and unique by my efforts.
[Work is] an activity I want to perform.
[Work is] an activity that allows me to create something, rather than to receive something.
[Work is] an activity that allows me to fulfill my potential.
[Work is] an activity that gives me a sense of accomplishment.
[Work provides] new and challenging problems.
[Work is] an activity that makes the impossible possible.
[Work is] an activity that is as enjoyable as a game.
[Work is] an activity by which I can commit myself and not worry about time.
[Work allows me] to better myself.
[Work allows me] to achieve more than just a salary.
[Work is] an activity that offers responsible tasks.
Contribution
[Work allows me] to contribute to society or the nation.
[Work allows me] to perform helpful activities.
[Work is] an activity that is appreciated.
[Work] can solve problems in society.
[Work allows me] to pass something down to the next generation.
[Work allows me] to develop my organization.
It is important to work hard.
[Work is] an activity that improves a person.
[Work allows me] to meet the expectations of people with whom I work (e.g., customers, peers, and supervisors).
[Work is] an activity I perform with my peers.
Power and Authority
[Work is] an activity that provides me with a business title and a sense of belonging.
[Work is] activity that allows me to acquire the authority and discretion to perform tasks.

<p>[Work is] an activity by which I acquire social status and recognition. I am unable to find any activity worthier than work. [Work allows me] to represent my company and enhance its reputation in society.</p>

Monetary Rewards

<p>[Work allows me] to become financially independent. [Work allows me] to support my family. [Work allows me] to acquire monetary success. It is natural to work when a person becomes an adult.</p>
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Table A2 Question Items regarding Work Relationships at the Workplace

<p>I have confidence in my supervisor. I communicate with my supervisor well. My supervisor expects me to perform well. I communicate well with my peers about business matters. We have a good atmosphere of mutual helping at workplace. Everyone is interested in others' work and performance at workplace.</p>
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