

# Career Entrants' Expectations on Workplace Values

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## Abstract

Today it is a key issue to define the term value both in a holistic and a corporate approach. After graduation from higher education institutions young people set up a value system concerning workplaces they have to enter to start a career. In the present research we focus on the process how career entrants develop their values spontaneously and how these values are formed in a conscious way. We do not consider value as an abstract term but rather how it gets reality in practice, everyday activities and behaviors. The present study will concentrate on expected values at workplaces and not on experienced ones. Value systems are the result of a series of dichotomy decisions where we must oppose various aspects and ideas. We will examine what values young graduates expect from the companies prior to their employment. To get authentic results and a proper base for analysis the method of research is based on structured interviews with young people just before starting a profession. In the future the results will be beneficial for researchers as well as for companies that can review their existing values according to expected ones revealed at the research.

*Keywords:* career entrants, value expectations, research, interview

## 1. Basis of Research

For the last two decades it has been a core issue for graduates which employers they find proper for their goals in long term. Many national and international workplaces are keen searching for the best human workforce and so do the young graduates or career entrants for the most convenient workplaces. In the present paper the focus is on what aspects and values are considered by the graduates when making their choices. The extreme fast flow of information and variety of their sources make it a complex task to decide which values can contribute to creating an inspiring workplace for their career. After reviewing literature on existing value systems I will reveal the most typical values that career entrants expect from their employers before starting to work. I must emphasize that the present study will concentrate on expected values at workplaces and not on experienced ones. I will also highlight congruency between expected and offered values and analyze how much they are overlapping. Corporate value systems may be the subject to a wholesale overview after learning demands of young employees-to-be.

## 2. Organizational and Personal Values

Several researchers focus on value determined choices in corporate and social context, as well. 'Values are stabilized beliefs about personally or socially acceptable behavior or end states of conduct' (Rokeach 1973). Regarding personal values Williams (1979) claims that fully conceptualized values become individual criteria for judgments, preferences and choices. According to Connor and Becker (1979) values contribute to formulating individual opinions that enable the development of decision making

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behaviors. Values are regarded by Ferrell and Gresham (1985) as individual factors that influence decision making processes.

As for organizational values experts conducted plenty of research (Niedermeyer 2014) work into the relation of value systems at organizations and decision making (Tompos 2015; Ablonczy 2013). Hill and Jones (2001) consider organizational values in terms of beliefs and ideas about the goals organization members should pursue, and also, ideas about the proper standards of behavior organization members should use to achieve corporate goals. From Schein's aspect (2010) rules have been established by organizational leaders who expect organizational members to adhere to them, and these rules make it possible to predict behavior.

It is important to note that the two aspects (i.e. personal and organizational values) cannot be sharply separated as in practice they have impact on each other, they can influence one another. In various studies this phenomenon is described as value congruence. Value congruence is defined as the similarity between an individual's values and those of the organization (Lamm, Gordon, Purser 2010). The extent to which individual values match organization values is considered P-O fit (Verquer, Beehr, Wagner 2003). In his holistic definition Kristof (1996) describes it as 'the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs or (b) they share fundamental characteristics or (c) both.'

In the present study the main focus is on values young graduates expect from workplaces. It is not subject of the present research to what extent companies are willing to modify their existing values systems according to career entrants' demands and needs. It is clear, though, if employers want to have loyal workers on their sites in the long run, they have to rethink and transform new approaches to prevailing values.

### **3. Methodology**

The research is conducted with the help of semi-structured interviews (Berg 1989; Bryman 2004; Babbie, Mouton 2011) with graduates right before starting their career at various types of workplaces (companies, service centres, local government offices, financial institutions). In directed interviews it is possible to get the most relevant information on expected values concerning future workplaces as it is the most flexible way of interviewing by giving the opportunity to the respondents to modify their statements or extending them.

The method of semi-structured interview is chosen because it allows a relatively open framework for research. During face-to-face interviews it is possible to get reasons and explanations with the answers and the interviewer has the chance to interpret and ask for clarifying as well (Garai, Nádai 2017). The sample for the research was obtained from Hungarian university students, on the base of stratified sampling. The respondents of interviews are 26 graduating students at Széchenyi István University (Győr, Hungary field) aged between 22 and 29 years, with diverse fields of study: economics, engineering and social sciences.

#### 4. Generation Y as Career Entrants

In today's world certain groups of any common features are labelled mostly with letters, numbers or subcultural identification. According to age specific attitudes people born between 1975 and 1994 are members of 'generation Y', whose approach to any social, political, cultural, technological and ethics related phenomena is of relatively similar character. Generation Y is subject to the present study, so it is worth highlighting some common characteristics based on previous international research work. Martin (2005) and Foreman (2006) claim that this generation is willing to work hard and sacrifice work – life balance in short term for a higher career. And also, they are mostly focused on a career where a degree is necessary as they deem a more respected job than people without a degree (Sheahan 2005). Flexible working hours and an acceptable beginner salary are important for them, though, generation Y is trying to find a fair effort-reward equation (Garai, Nádai 2015; Sheanan 2005).

Shaw and Fairhurst (2008) found that collaborative, multitasking challenges match young career entrants' needs about future jobs to ensure a career development in long term. According to their studies there is congruence between generation Y graduates' expectations of work and their real experience of work (Pongrácz 2012a, 2012b). Obviously, one cannot make an overall generalization of topicalities as individual differences may occur as a result of personality and social background diversity (Konczosné 2007, 2009; Kovács, Reisinger, Szóke 2015).

In this study we have to make a differentiation between four key aspects young graduates take into account when deciding for a job. According to Schwartz (2001) the basic values can be defined in four comprehensive categories, such as a) openness to change, b) self-enhancement, c) self-transcendence and d) conservation. However, in the present research categorization is based on having seen personal and organizational values and description of generation Y.

It was highly necessary to formulate new categories as they are more specifically applicable for analyzing the young generation's value expectations. It is necessary to clear the basic categories because they serve as a starting point in the interviews. Regarding expectations from corporate and organizational values we defined the following categories: a) task orientation, b) financial status, c) human relations and d) professional career.

*Task orientation* for generation Y is of more importance than financial rewards because they see themselves as unique personalities with especially high commitment to and ability of problem solving. Creative mindset must determine all activities in work as it gives the impression of freedom to act according to self-made decisions.

*Financial status* means all rewards, bonuses and perks that can be regarded as a kind of acknowledgement for their professional efforts. The amount of money/salary is, however, not regarded as a measure for their success or fail but rather something that enables them to reach their materialistic goals in private life.

*Human relations* are much desirable for the young employees' private comfort and are also used as a tool to open new ways in their career in long term. They expect to work in motivating teams and to be surrounded by people they can learn from. They wish to acquire skills of communication, negotiating and creative ideas on any field.

*Professional career* has got different traits from previous generations' ideas on promotion. For the generation Y career does not only mean higher positions and salaries but rather a job at a highly appreciated organization with more and more challenging, creative and interesting tasks where they can utilize and present their special individual skills.

Based on the topic of the present research we can state that the value system of Schwartz is properly applicable in terms of workplace value expectations. In the research Schwartz's value categories can be well defined and also further expected values as subcategories can be added. In the present study we created four broader categories of values and subordinated ten values by Schwartz (2006) completed with basic values that match young career entrants' expectations.

Value categories reflecting career entrants' expectations:

- Task orientation
  - Self-direction
    - individualism, creativity
  - Confirmity
    - team-work, community, trust
- Financial status
  - Power
    - reliability, innovation
  - Security
    - financial motivation, stability
- Human relations
  - Hedonism
    - friendly atmosphere
  - Benevolence
    - fairness, respect
  - Traditions
    - regional closeness, local patriotism
  - Universalism
    - responsibility, solidarity, environment consciousness
- Professional career
  - Achievement
    - competence, success
  - Stimulation
    - excitement, variety, flexibility

The semi-structured interviews involved 26 students at Széchenyi István University who were right about to start a career at various organizations.

In the interviews questions are asked about the career entrants' expectations concerning values at workplaces. We must emphasize that the goal of the study is to reveal the demands of graduates and what values *should exist* at organizations that make workplaces appealing for them. It is not discussed which values *do exist* at organizations. My purpose is to conduct a qualitative research based on value expectations and not a quantitative analysis regarding existing value elements.

The questions focus on values that can be subordinated into the categories of a) task

orientation, b) financial status, c) human relations and d) professional career.

In terms of the present research values are connected to wishes and expectations and they are typical of individuals and a group, as well. Values give identity to societies, organizations and individuals. In the present research value expectations are studied with the method of value tests by Schwartz. His value test is based on earlier value research and value tests, which are applicable for quantitative as well as qualitative research. Values help to reach goals and have a motivating affect which is obviously true of career entrants' organizational value expectations.

In the interviews the respondents have to rate the similarity of their stances in a 6 grade scale, that is, how much they adopt a specific value compared to others. The answers may range from *very much like me* to *not like me at all* (Schwartz 2006). In the interviews we offer the respondents to make any comments and remarks to make their answers complete. This option enabled us to get more transparent answers and we could get a clear picture of value expectations. The respondents were given the opportunity to speak free about their ideas on future workplace values so each student was regarded as an individual and not just an item of samples in the research which made them more enthusiastic about giving real answers. The result of the study can be beneficial both for universities who prepare future human resource for labor market and organizations intending to hire the best graduates and creating organizational values that fit career entrants' demands.

How much are you like the described person?	very much like me	like me	somewhat like me	a little like me	not like me	not like me at all	comments and remarks
He prefers working in the region of his home.							
He prefers working with well-balanced people.							
He requires acknowledgement for himself from his colleagues or bosses.							
He likes doing challenging tasks and taking responsibility.							
He likes helping others with any problems.							
He appreciates individual work more than team work.							
He definitely prefers working in teams.							
He prefers working for the same organization for a long time.							
He likes doing monotonous tasks.							
He finds salary the most motivating factor.							
He likes doing things in his own special and original way.							
He likes using only the most updated technologies during his work.							

We must emphasize that we can make a generalization based on the research, though, we

must note that the members of the generation Y share common values, their everyday actions vary as they are rooted in individual decisions. Consequently, each individual takes a decision, regarding current situations, what is right or wrong. According to the preliminary analysis of responses we must offer some useful ideas for organizations to consider if they wish to employ loyal and motivated workforce. Generation Y requires not only competitive salaries with sufficient perks and bonuses but are rather motivated by a vital, young style working environment with the opportunity of career promotion and professional development. These conditions are mutually beneficial for the employees and the organizations as employers. Generation Y can be much more creative, innovative and energetic at work, their attitude to employers is rather positive so they contribute to formulating a stable team and a successful organization (Kecskés, Rácz 2016).

Revising the four basic categories that we formulated we have to make some remarks based on preliminary interviews. We must emphasize that the described tendencies are based on graduates' responses on value expectations and not on their work experience. *Task orientation* is not merely defined as an absolute focus on task management by all means, but rather as a tool for expressing numerous ways of creative ideas and a useful activity to show sense of community. By this feature the category shows parallel features with the category of *human relations*. Reflecting value expectancies on workplaces Schwartz's unit of basic values of hedonism, benevolence, traditions and universalism, which must also be experienced at organizational level, make workplaces an environment dominated by human relations rather than a place of completing stressful duties. Generation Y finds *financial status* as a necessity for reaching their materialistic desires and a tool for assuring them security and independence. The advantages of *professional career* do not definitely have a close relation with financial rewards but they have to do with social acknowledgement, respect and new challenges at work where young employees can show their best as an efficient member of organization. As we can see, considering the four categories we cannot make a sharp distinction between them as there are some connections regarding expected values.

## 5. Conclusion

The cross-sectional research was mainly focused on a homogenous group of individuals concerning age and education level which contributed to attaining a general idea on workplace value expectations. We can conclude that organizational and personal values can be congruent but may change according to specific situations (Ablonczy, Tompos 2013). Generation Y, subject for research, have got specific and more complex expectations compared to earlier generations. Existing value system models (Schwartz 2001) could be adapted for the present research with some necessary modifications by formulating new value categories. In the pilot interviews it was possible to get valuable information from the respondents about their future career visions, as they were given the opportunity to comment any questions they got.

The novelty of the research is the transformation of an existing model that can be used in any further research into the topic of the present study; and besides, organizations can make use of results when opting for hiring the best graduates. The research can be

extended to a broader number of samples in the future where cultural differences can be taken into consideration, that is, how much different cultural backgrounds may affect value conceptions about starting a career after university graduation.

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