



Evidence of construct validity for work values[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of work values in the process of career adjustment (Dawis, 2002), little empirical research has focused on articulating the domains represented within the construct of work values and the examination of evidence of validity for the construct has been limited. Furthermore, the larger number of work values measures has made it difficult to determine the key domains that constitute the construct. The current study sought to examine multiple measures of work values to understand domains represented within the construct of work values and to establish evidence of validity for these domains. Principal Components Analysis utilizing scores on the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Rounds, Henley, Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1981), the revised edition of Super's Work Values Inventory (SWVI-R; Zytowski, 2006), and Manhardt's Work Values Inventory (Manhardt, 1972) found that six components best explained the data. These components reflected the importance of: the working environment, having challenging work, opportunities for status and income, autonomy, organizational support, and relationships. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

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Research on work values suggests that values are an important predictor of job satisfaction and tenure (Dawis, 2002), but little research on work values has been focused on understanding the domain of work values. Moreover, the research to further understand the construct of work values has been stagnant in the past few decades. This deficit in the literature, combined with the ending of research programs on values that were lead by Donald Super during the 60's and 70's, and Rene Dawis and Lloyd Lofquist in the 60's through 90's, has resulted in little 21st century research on the construct of work values. Furthermore, few commercially available measures of work values with adequate evidence of validity and reliability are readily available, leading to various measures of values being created for the purpose of individual studies. This trend, if anything, has further contributed to the lack of research on the validity of work value domains. The purpose of the current study was to add to evidence of validity for the construct of work values by determining the domains represented across multiple measures of work values.

1.1. Conceptualizing work values

In the vocational literature, Allport (1961) provided the preliminary definition of values as beliefs that cause individuals to act on their preferences. Donald Super (1980) later defined work values as “an objective, either a psychological state, a relationship, or material condition, that one seeks to attain” (p.130). Furthermore, Dawis and Lofquist (1984) suggested that work values were central to understanding job satisfaction, as posited in their Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), which assumes that individuals develop job satisfaction when their values are fulfilled by aspects of their job. The development of different instruments to measure work values also provides some insight into how the construct of work values has been conceptualized.

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1.2. Minnesota Importance Questionnaire

As Berings, de Fruyt, and Bouwen (2004), as well as Rounds and Armstrong (2005) note, many of the existing measures of work values are very similar despite varying conceptualizations of work values that drove the construction of the instruments. Popular measures of work values – the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ; Rounds et al., 1981) and the revised edition of Super's Work Values Inventory, (SWVI-R; Zytowski, 2006) – assess the most widely accepted domains within the construct of work values. The MIQ was developed to understand individual factors that contribute to job satisfaction, as an element of decades of research on TWA by Dawis and Lofquist (1984). The MIQ is hierarchically structured and is comprised of 20 separate work needs which are grouped into six work values: Achievement (the importance of accomplishment), Comfort (freedom from stress), Status (the importance of recognition and prestige), Altruism (the importance of helping others), Safety (the importance of stability and structure), and Autonomy (the importance of control over one's work). The six values scales were developed empirically by factor analysis of the 20 work needs represented on the MIQ (Lofquist & Dawis, 1978). Although the lower-order scales on the MIQ are referred to as needs (Lofquist & Dawis, 1978), they are analogous to work values on other values measures (Macnab & Fitzsimmons, 1987). Strong evidence of validity and reliability exists for MIQ scores (see Hendel & Weiss, 1970; Weiss, Dawis, Lofquist, & England, 1966). Of the work values measures available, Rounds (1990) noted that the MIQ appears to be the most comprehensive measure of the construct. Moreover, a strength of the MIQ is that it is presented as a comparison task, with individuals asked to indicate their preference among pairs of need statements, allowing for more differentiation of the importance of the 20 work needs, versus ranking or Likert scaling methods (Thurstone, 1954).

1.3. Super's Work Values Inventory

Donald Super offered another popular conceptualization of work values. Super's Work Values Inventory (Super, 1970) was created to operationalize values in Super's historic Career Pattern Study that followed the career development of a group of 9th grade boys into adulthood and eventually led to the development of Super's Life-Span, Life-Space theory (Super, 1985). Super (1970) mentions that items for the Work Values Scale were selected from Spranger (1928), the Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey (1960), and research on job satisfaction and morale by Hoppock (1935) and Centers (1948). Additional items were selected based on other theories, leading to the inclusion of additional work values proposed by Darley and Hagenah (1955), Fryer (1931), Ginzberg and colleagues (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951) and Super (1957).

The current version of this measure is Super's Work Values Inventory-Revised (SWVI-R; Zytowski, 2006). Updates to the measure included dropping three scales (Altruism, Esthetics, and Management) that demonstrated poor evidence of discriminate validity given high correlations with measures of interests (Zytowski, 2006). The 72 item SWVI-R includes 12 work values scales—Achievement, Co-Workers, Creativity, Income, Independence, Lifestyle, Challenge, Prestige, Security, Supervision, Variety, and Workplace.

1.4. Manhardt's Work Values Inventory

Along with the work values included in the MIQ and SWVI-R, additional work values have been suggested. Manhardt (1972) developed a measure of job characteristics called the Work Values Inventory (MWVI). However, information about the process used to select items for this measure is limited. Consisting of 25 items, Manhardt (1972) found that three factors emerged from factor analysis of items. Principal components analyses by Meyer, Irving, and Allen (1998), on a sample of university students, confirmed three components fit the data and yielded interpretable components. Meyer and colleagues labeled the three extracted factors Comfort and Security ($\alpha = 0.72$), Competence and Growth ($\alpha = 0.65$), and Status and Independence ($\alpha = 0.68$). The first factor (Comfort and Security) describes characteristics of a comfortable working environment including having a routine schedule, leisure time, and good relationships with coworkers. The second factor (Competence and Growth) included items that were characteristics of successful workers such as the importance of responsibility, advancement, and supervision of others. The final factor (Status and Independence) included items that were intrinsic characteristics related to the nature of work such as, independence, continued development of skills, and intellectual stimulation. At the item level, Manhardt's measure includes questions that are not included in other measures such as "satisfies your cultural and esthetic interests" which loaded on the Competence and Growth factor, and "permits a regular routine in time and place of work" which loaded on Comfort and Security.

1.5. Additional measures of work values

Beyond the values measured by the MIQ, SWVI-R, and MWVI, other domains have been hypothesized to comprise the work values construct. For instance, Pryor (1981) developed a values measure named the Work Aspect Preference Scale, which included 13 values scales—Security, Self Development, Surroundings, Altruism, Life Style, Physical Activity, Detachment, Independence, Prestige, Management, Co-workers, Creativity, and Money. A unique aspect of Pryor's conceptualization is the inclusion of the importance of being physically active (Physical Activity) and separation of life and work roles (Detachment). Berings (2002) also offers another conceptualization of work values. Much like other measures, some of Berings' values cover areas such as relationships, autonomy, creativity, earnings, security, and achievement. However, Berings' conceptualization also incorporates some different domains such as the importance of innovation, rationality, structure, and stress avoidance. Additional conceptualizations of work values have appeared in different studies as well (see for example, Elizur, Borg, Hunt, & Beck, 1991; Furnham, Forde, & Ferrari, 1999; Kalleberg, 1977; Kraut & Ronen, 1975; Lyons, Higgins, & Duxbury, 2010).

Many authors have noted that the plethora of work values, measured by different instruments, makes comparisons across research studies on work values difficult and limits understanding of the construct of work values (e.g., Furnham, Petrides, Tsaousis, Pappas, & Garrod, 2005; Roe & Ester, 1999). Furthermore, the work values literature lacks consensus on the domains

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