



Rokeach's instrumental and terminal values as descriptors of modern organisation values

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ABSTRACT

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Many authors have created different tools to measure or estimate organisational culture. Among the possibilities, they emphasize the use of organisational values. One of the most well-known values classifications is Rokeach's (1973) terminal and instrumental values. Although this classification has been developed more than 40 years ago, the theory is still a basis for many modern studies. The aim of our study is to find out whether Rokeach's values are still valid and relevant in modern organisational cultures or not. Almost 150 representatives of Estonian organisations were questioned in order to find out which Rokeach's values they perceive to be in use in their organisations. According to the results, general ethical values as instrumental values were named least frequently and just one of the terminal values was not named at all – salvation. Rokeach's values lists are not sufficiently relevant enough today to measure and describe the wide and colorful variety of values.

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Introduction

Personal and organisational values have been the object of different studies almost for four decades. Today, values are central to public discourse. Long-term researches of theorists have concentrated on the values central to understanding social behaviour (e.g., Allport, Vernon &

Lindzey, 1960; Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Williams, 1968). They see values as deeply rooted abstract motivations that guide, justify, and explain attitudes, norms, opinions, and actions (Feather, 1985; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Every individual and organisation has its own unique value system or hierarchy (Woodward & Shaffakat, 2014). Everyone has different value priorities and the prevailing value emphases in organisations and societies differ. Values have predictive and explanatory potential at the individual, organisational, and societal levels. Moreover, values can reflect major social changes in societies and across nations.

Many researches have connected the values with different individual and organisational characteristics or factors like commitment, satisfaction, and culture. In 1973, Milton Rokeach created the Value Survey, which has received widespread positive response and is still quite widely used as a research tool. Rokeach's list of values is so essential when we talk or think about the values that only few studies (e.g. Braithwaite & Law, 1985) have dared to doubt whether the tool is still valid today.

Our question in this study is whether the Rokeach's 36 values are all still important and describe the individual and organisational variety of values. The first step was to identify the most common terminal and instrumental values in Estonian companies based on Rokeach's value distribution and according to those results, estimate the importance of every value from the list. The research was conducted in autumn 2014 among the students of Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences. Only the working students were surveyed.

The Literature Review

Organisation's values are closely linked to leadership, development of organisational culture, and motivation of the employees. We may conclude that by ignoring values, it is impossible to lead people today. Before the 1990s, the organisational culture and values were treated as resources that help stay in competition (Barney, 1991); today, we declare that basing on values is the issue of survival (Raich & Dolan, 2008). Employees, their merits, motivation, and commitment are increasingly important.

There are many different approaches and definitions for the term "values", but no consensus has been reached about the nature of values (Mailk & Yusof, 2013; Nonis & Swift, 2001; Schwartz, 2012; Woodward & Shaffakat, 2014). Usually the researchers' approaches are based on their own interests and needs in defining the concept of values (Rohan, 2000), although several authors have already tried to clear the content (Jaakson, 2010; Ofori & Sokro, 2010; Woodward & Shaffakat, 2014). Beyond different conceptions, there has been considerable interest in defining and measuring values (Dyląg, Jaworek, Karwowski, Kozusznik, & Marek, 2013).

Another confusing issue is connected with the level of values interpretation and expression. The concept of values is multifaceted (Abreu & Camarinha-Matos, 2008), meaning that values may be expressed in different levels – instrumental and terminal (Rokeach, 1973), individual and organisational level (Posner & Schmidt, 1992), occupational, organisational, and national level (Hofstede, 1989), and real and propagated level (Titov, Virovere, Meel & Kuimet, 2013). These different value levels show which individual values coincide with values held by others at either the organisational or the national level. It is important to distinguish between the

group and the organisational level in the studies of organisational culture and success – if there are several groups inside the organisation, the group values and organisational values should be in line with the organisational values (Titov, 2015). Every employee brings his/her own values into the organisation. Those values form the organisation's face, when individual value systems are in sufficient coincidence, have a common understanding to smooth differences. Usually, in this way a small number of interrelated shared values develop instead of one particular value. These values form the organisation's value system. A value system is frequently understood as the ordering and prioritisation of a set of values (principles, standards or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable) that an actor or a society of actors holds. However, the values that a group or an actor holds may fall into several different categories since the concept of values is multifaceted (Abreu & Camarinha-Matos, 2008).

Researchers have constructed value models trying to name and categorise the types of values which would help to understand and describe the value systems. Rokeach's model provides 36 terminal and instrumental values; Schwartz (1994) provides 56 values which are classified into 10 motivation value types and into four classifications; Jaffe and Scott (2004) provide 40 values with 6 categories; McDonald and Gandz (1992) have a 21 values' list; and Hofstede (2003) describes 36 values. All those models try to fix up and limit the infinite number of words which are used to express values.

Having the values system, organisations and individuals also need to have order and priorities in their system. Values are expressed in hierarchy (Feather, 1995) and the basis of the hierarchy is their importance for their owners. In an individual level, several researchers have argued about the shape of perception, attitude, and behaviour of a person who owns hierarchically ordered values (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Every person may have many values and just having the right value is not the most important, but how high this value is in a person's value hierarchy – the one which is in a higher level will be more influential in determining behaviour (McDonald, 2004). Both in individual and organisational level, the values are prioritised and form hierarchies according to their importance to a person or an organisation (Bardi, Lee, Hofmann-Towfigh & Soutar, 2009; Feather, 1995). Core values are those that have impact on people's behaviour and their action prevails over that of other values in the value hierarchy (Pant & Lachman, 1998). Several authors have described the values hierarchies in individual level (Melé, 2012; Schwartz, 2012). According to similar principles, also value hierarchies on the organisational level have been created (Beck & Cowan, 2005; Lencioni, 2002), but according to their theories, the hierarchy is not the hierarchy of sole values but that of value groups.

Schwartz (2012) points out five common characteristics in value definitions – values are beliefs; they concern behaviour or desirable ends, transcend specific situations, guide the choice or assessment of the situation, and follow an order of importance. According to Woodward and Shaffakat (2014), there are some general elements in different approaches of values, for example they are understood as standards and guiding principles, they are abstract and connected to many other concepts, they are learned and remain relatively stable over time, and they exist in hierarchy and influence people's choices. In general, the values are interpreted as beliefs, standards, principles, and preferences, but different authors mostly agree that values play an important role in behaviour and are influenced by the external environment.

In this article, the Rokeach's terminal and instrumental model of values is used (see Table 1). Rokeach (1973) defines values as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence". He proposed a list including two sets of values, namely the terminal values (referring to desirable and end-state existence; the goals that a person would like to achieve during their lifetime and may vary among different groups of people in different cultures) and instrumental values (referring to preferable modes of behaviour; means of achieving the terminal values).

Table 1
List of Terminal and Instrumental Values (Rokeach, 1973)

Terminal Values (End-States)	
<i>Social (Focus on Others)</i>	<i>Personal (Self-Focused)</i>
A World at Peace	A Comfortable Life
A World of Beauty	An Exciting Life
Equality	A Sense of Accomplishment
Family Security	Happiness
Freedom	Inner Harmony
Mature Love	Pleasure
National Security	Salvation
Social Recognition	Self-respect
True Friendship	Wisdom
Instrumental Values (Behavioural)	
<i>Moral (Focus on Morality and Relations)</i>	<i>Competence (focus on competence)</i>
Broadminded	Ambitious
Forgiving	Capable
Helpful	Clean
Honest	Courageous
Loving	Imaginative
Cheerful	Independent
Obedient	Intellectual
Polite	Logical
Responsible	Self-Controlled

In original lists, the values are ranked according to the terms of their importance as guiding principles of the respondent's life. According to Rokeach, a value once acquired becomes part of an organised system of values; this value system works as a general plan for resolving conflicts and making decisions. Two types of values represent two separate yet functionally interconnected systems wherein all the values concerning modes of behaviour are instrumental to the attainment of all the values concerning end-states. One mode of behaviour may be instrumental to the attainment of several terminal values; several modes may be instrumental to the attainment of one terminal value (Rokeach, 1973). In their later articles, Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach (1989) also declared that societies and individuals could accurately be compared to other not only in terms of specific values, but also in terms of values priorities (hierarchies).

Models and surveys of different researchers are based on Rokeach's values (Braithwaite & Law, 1985; Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1997; Mills, Austin, Thomson, & Devine-Wright, 2009; Vadi & Jaakson, 2011) and the use and meaning of an original list is modified. Braithwaite and Law (1985) altered the Rokeach's original value list from a rank order task into a rating

procedure. These and other researchers (e.g. Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987) found the psychometric properties of a rating scale to be as satisfactory as the original ranking version. In addition, the original meaning of the values list has changed. In his paper, Tepeci (2001) points out the effect of personal values on the organisational culture and that Rokeach's list corresponds to organisational-level values in a way that allows it to assess person-organisation fit. Meglino and Ravlin (1998) stated that measuring values that are specific to a particular organization constrains values research to studies in single organizations that are of limited generalization. Several studies have tried to use the Rokeach value survey for cross-cultural comparisons of value systems. However, this is an area where problems could arise. The translations transporting value construct across cultures and obtaining equivalent measure are generally possible, but a comparable interpretation is not always guaranteed (Braithwaite & Scott, 1991). Hofstede (1994) argues that only an individual's instrumental values can be changed in the organisational level and therefore, terminal values do not allow description or comparison of organisational values. Korvajärvi (2002) adds that in organisational values studies, gender must be an important issue because it is rooted in the activity of people and patterns of relationships between individual values and organisational culture vary among men and women.

Method

To find out whether Rokeach's values are still valid and relevant in modern organisational cultures, the authors constructed a questionnaire made up of three different parts.

Focus in the first part was on descriptive statistics of social-demographic background information of a respondent (his/her position in the organisation, gender, and working experience). Our background investigation was followed by a block of questions based on the most well-known values classification of Rokeach's terminal values. We asked to state three most important terminal values from a list of 18. We also added an open question where the respondent could add his/her idea of a missing answer if they felt that something important was missing from the given list. The same kind of block was created to measure the instrumental values and finally, the respondent was asked to add the missing values using an open answer.

The research was conducted among the students of Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences during six weeks in the autumn 2014. We sent the questionnaire through a special questioning module of the Learning Management System to the first year Estonian-speaking student groups (general sample 310 students); however, students not having a job were excluded. The final number of respondents was 149 of whom 80 respondents were female and 69 male.

To estimate the importance of the values differences for different groups (according to a respondent's gender, position, and working experience), the Fisher exact test was used. Usually the Chi2-test is used to assess the importance, but due to the data amount and peculiarities (not binary data), the answers to that test proved unreliable.

Results and Discussion

The Fisher test was used to estimate the importance of difference between the groups, according to a respondent's gender, work position, and length of work experience. Among 36

values, only a few showed the difference (see Table 2). Apparently, females tend to value happiness more than males and males value exciting life significantly higher than females. Among instrumental values, obedience, responsibility, and love were more frequently mentioned by females than by males. It must be pointed out that males did not mention the value of love at all. Males tend to value self-control more than females. From this generalisation, we derived the overall difference of what males and females see and value in an organisation. Among the values offered, helpfulness and obedience as the instrumental values and family security as a terminal value were the most important factors for females. Male respondents, however, preferred an exciting life as their most important terminal value – almost every second male chose this value and they seem to see that instrumental values like ambitiousness and helpfulness lead to that goal.

Table 2

Values Priorities and Significant Differences according to Respondents' Gender, Work Position, and Length of Work Experience

	Values	Difference by Gender			Differences by Working Position			Differences by Working Experience						
		Overall	Women	Men	Managers	Specialist	Administrative staff	Less than 1 year	1 to 5 years	Over 5 years				
Terminal values	Self-focused	An Exciting Life	52	35%	-9%	10%	**	3%	4%	-8%	6%	2%	-9%	
		A Sense of Accomplishment	39	26%										
		Wisdom	30	20%					7%	0%	-6%			
		Inner harmony	29	19%					-4%	6%	-3%			
		Happiness	28	19%	5%	-6%	*					0%	3%	-6%
		Self-Respect	28	19%								0%	3%	-6%
		A Comfortable Life	22	15%					10%	-4%	-4%			
		Pleasure	8	5%										
		Salvation	0	0%										
	Focus on others	Family Security	50	34%										
		True Friendship	32	21%										
		Freedom	31	21%								6%	0%	-5%
		Social Recognition	29	19%					16%	-3%	-11%	**		
		Equality	13	9%										
		A World at Peace	10	7%					-7%	2%	4%	*		
		Mature Love	9	6%										
		National Security	6	4%										
		A World of Beauty	3	2%										
Instrumental values	Focus on competence	Ambitious	36	24%				9%	-6%	-1%	0%	3%	-6%	
		Capable	34	23%				8%	-3%	-4%				
		Independent	34	23%				-7%	8%	-2%	10%	-1%	-7%	
		Logical	22	15%										
		Intellectual	20	13%								5%	-1%	-3%
		Imaginative	18	12%										
	Focus on morality and relations	Self-Controlled	18	12%	-5%	5%	*	-5%	-3%	9%	*	7%	-1%	-4%
		Courageous	10	7%				7%	-7%	2%	**			
		Clean	5	3%										
		Helpful	52	35%								8%	-1%	-7%
		Broad-Minded	43	29%				9%	0%	-8%				
		Obedient	40	27%	6%	-7%	*					-5%	5%	-4%
Focus on morality and relations	Responsible	30	20%	5%	-6%	*					-7%	0%	6%	
	Honest	24	16%											
	Polite	17	11%											
	Cheerful	14	9%											
	Forgiving	9	6%											
	Loving	6	4%	3%	-4%	*					7%	-1%	-4%	
Overall		149												

Source: compiled by the authors

Those results support Hofstede's (1994) opinion that there are no significant gender differences in terminal values – in this research, also the terminal value of family security was equally important among males and females. The importance of the terminal value of exiting

life among males might be reasoned with the samples peculiarities (first-year students are mostly young and tend to prefer more Open System Type of an organisation) (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981). However, this conclusion should be confirmed in further studies. Significant differences tend to appear when comparing work goal importance scores of men and women (Hofstede, 1994). Considering the instrumental values, Korvajärvi's (2002) claim that there are differences in the modes of behaviour (instrumental values) according to the gender is proved.

Our analysis covered also the results according to the respondents' work position (see Table 2). According to the Fisher exact test, only four values from 36 distinguished the groups. The value of social recognition was clearly prioritised by the managers but was not so important in the specialists and administrative staff level. This trend might be explained by the changing management paradigm, since in higher education, the necessity of recognition at the work place is highly propagated. As the respondents were all also university students, they represented mostly the postmodern management school. In contrast, the value of self-control seems to be important for the administrative staff and this may reflect the general organisational culture where mostly modernist values dominate in Estonia (Titov, 2015). A slight management shift has taken place at the propagated and management level, but at the real values level, the old modernist values dominate.

Among self-focused and relations-focused values, the results did not reveal any clear differences according to a respondent's position and we can conclude that position is not relevant to those value groups. According to an Estonian management study (Vadi & Jaakson, 2011), managers believe that stability and caring are important values to implement in an organisation; as compared to this study, the frequency of values like helpfulness and social recognition support those findings.

According to the respondents work experience, only one value from Rokeach' list showed that the importance of this value may change because of the length of work experience (see Table 2). The value of love was negatively correlated to the length of work experience – longer work experience means lower significance of the value of love. Previous research mostly concluded that working experience and values are correlated (Burke, 2001; Johnson, 2002), but the field of experience rather than the length of experience is important (Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). Those studies highlight that work experience and values are linked together across time and that earlier work experience appears to have a greater impact on work values than vice versa. In this study, the connection between the length of work experience and values was estimated, but in general, it seems that those two indicators are not correlated. We conclude that the length of work experience will not change or designate which values the respondents perceive as organisational values. This conclusion is in compliance with the results of previous researches (Burke, 2001; Porfeli, 2008).

The results show that the general ethical values as instrumental values were mentioned least frequently and just one terminal value was not named at all – salvation. It may be explained through Estonian national culture. According to Crabtree and Pelham (2009), Estonia is the least religious country and classical “bible-values” are not important there. It leads to a very general conclusion that Rokeach's values list might not be valid or descriptive enough today to measure and describe the wide and colourful variety of values.

Conclusion

Based on Rokeach's (1973) list of terminal and instrumental values, a new wave of value research was conducted in 2014 in Estonian organisations. The sample consisted of approximately 150 respondents who all were students of Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences. The aim was to investigate whether the definition of values of "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973), was still applicable in modern society. According to our results, the perceived organisational values were connected to respondents' (employers') characteristics like gender, work position, and working experience through certain values. According to Rokeach's values list, the values are divided into terminal and instrumental values. The same kind of division was applied in the current research that is reflected in the results model (see Figure 1) where the variation of the perception of values among different characteristics (gender, position in the organisation, and working experience) is reflected.

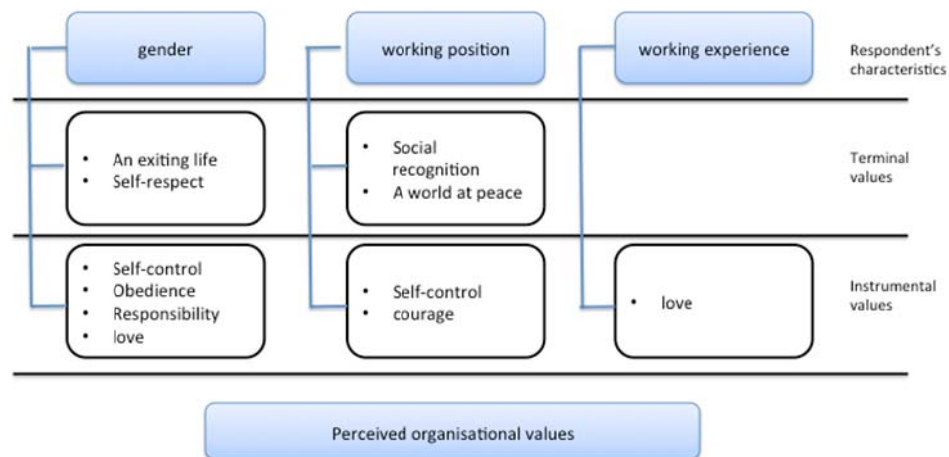


Figure 1. The perception of organisational values according to the respondents' characteristics

The results showed that the gender affects an overall value perception more than the position in the organisation or working experience.

According to the results of our study, the values that were recognised less than by 7 respondents (it means less than 5% of respondents chose it as important) could be considered as unimportant in contemporary society. These values that have lost their importance are salvation, national security, a world of beauty, cleanness, and loving. Rokeach's list of values (see Table 1) consists of terminal values including focus on others and self-focus and instrumental values including focus on morality and focus on competences. Among all the sub groups, one of the values was not recognised important any more. In addition to these four subgroups (salvation, a world of beauty, cleanness and loving), which could be taken as unimportant values in contemporary life and the item of national security appears not to affect the organisational level unless the political situation in Europe is unstable.

In every study, several limitations should be outlined to understand the results better. Rokeach's model does not consider well the cultural issue - this could be a considerable limitation for an in-depth value study. In this article, one cultural group was involved which

allows focusing on the cross-cultural level still remaining substantial due to one language use in the survey. Respondents' sample should be wider to estimate organisational values in one organisation. If we generalise the result over the organisations, without estimating the values of one single organisation, then the question of representational sample in one organisation level is not decisive. Several studies have connected the values to the respondents' educational level. In our research, the majority of respondents were at the start of their higher education level studies. Using another form of sample construction, the correlation between the values and the educational level would be an important characteristic to study. A larger amount of respondents will allow making wide-scale conclusions for the Estonian organisations level.

In this article, only the respondents' characteristics were used to find out and compare the organisational values. Further research should also focus on the organisational characteristics (size, age, field etc.) that predict the organisational values.

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