

## Intrinsic Work Values on Building ASEAN's Future Workforce: A Comparison between Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia

Bahtiar Mohamad<sup>ac\*</sup>, Jafri Zulkepli<sup>b</sup>, Ahmed Rageh Ismail<sup>c</sup> and Hassan Abu Bakar<sup>a</sup>

\* Corresponding author: Bahtiar Mohamad, mbahtiar@uum.edu.my

<sup>a</sup>*School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia,*

<sup>b</sup>*School of Quantitative Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia*

<sup>c</sup>*School of Business and Humanities, Curtin University Sarawak Campus, Miri, Sarawak, Sarawak Malaysia*

### Abstract

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The aim of this study is to examine the intrinsic work values that were perceived by the university undergraduates in the three nations (Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia). These three nations are among the founders of Association of South-East Asian Nations in 1967 that represents half of the population of the region. Intrinsic work values are an important medium through which employee behaviour can be understood and managed. Therefore, it is important to identify the dimensionality of intrinsic work value in ASEAN future workforce and assess an empirical conceptual framework of work values. The study uses an ASEAN university's student sample from three nations for comparative study. The sample size of 198 students for this study has some external validity. The implications of this model for ASEAN future workforces are discussed, along with its future extension, to be based on a much larger data set. The study gives some indication of what should be included in a university syllabus for future ASEAN workforce planning strategy in order to improve their intrinsic work value. The paper draws attention to intrinsic work values of ASEAN university's student who is considered as future employees in this region.

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**Keywords:** work value; ASEAN; culture; higher education; communication.

### 1. Introduction

Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have shown a strong economic performance and most dynamic countries in the regions. In 2014, these three nations recorded economic growth between 4 – 6 percent



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with combined GDP of 1.5 trillion that more than half of overall ASEAN countries. Based on the World Population data prepared by United Nations Population Division, the population of ASEAN is 631 million people in 2015 and more than 50 percent (353 million) from these countries. The youthful population of ASEAN is one of the most significant drivers of economic growth for the region.

Values and beliefs are in calculated to the peoples by culture and play a significant role in people's lives such as ASEAN countries. For instance, these values are eventually used as guiding principles and characterize an individual to act and justify accordingly (Verplanken, 2004). In general, both academics and practitioners are interested on values because they do not relate to a particular object or situation, are relatively few in numbers and are stable overtime (Dose, 1997). Because of these characteristics, and in light of increasing trends towards internationalization and globalization, work values are an important medium through which employee behaviour can be understood and managed.

Today's globalization and togetherness as one community such as ASEAN Community are unavoidably spreading its influence around the world, especially in the managerial environment (Ghoshal, 2005), and it's essential to understand the structure of work values of professionals. Rapid changes in innovations and technologies are creating changes in employment structures and occupational patterns in ASEAN member states. As a result, the researchers are becoming interested in how to manage and understand the intrinsic work value to the people from a different background in the workplace.

In the context of ASEAN, university's student is considered as future employees, they are the people who have a dream to achieve, and they also possess an analytical mind to fit with the expectation of the employer. There is always a need for quality employees in most companies, organizations and industries, whether small business or large business. In considering a career for the future, it's important to select a job that reflects one's values. The question is what a different of work values among an ASEAN university? Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the ASEAN countries' differences in work values' dimensions.

## **2. Intrinsic Work Values**

Generally, the concept of work values referring to general attitudes toward the meaning that an individual attaches to his work role (Wollack, et al., 1971). As described by Becker and McClintock, (1967) and Schwartz, (1992), the value as normative standards to choose among various behaviours. Work values are generally considered to shape the way in which employees view their experiences (Meyer, Irving & Allen, 1998). Therefore, the work values can be conceptualized as areas of importance that add to one's job satisfaction, such as income, opportunities to use one's skills or the ability to help others in one's job (Leuty, 2013).

The literature provides a number of definitions of values, for instance; Liang, (2012) defined work values as an enduring perspective that guide individuals to evaluate what is fundamentally right or wrong in the work environment. Super (1970) defines a value as "an objective, either a psychological state, a relationship, or material condition that one seeks to attain." As summarized by Dose, (1997). Values can define as a "standard or criteria for choosing goals or guiding action" that is relatively enduring and stable over time. Rokeach (1973) addressed that "values are determinants of virtually all

kinds of behaviour that could be called social behaviour or social action, attitudes and ideology, evaluations, moral judgments and justifications of self and others, and attempts to influence others” ( p.5).

The work values are measured and defined in a variety of ways, depending upon the theoretical background and research objectives (Dose, 1997; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Work values considered by some authors as broad tendencies to select certain job characteristics, consequences or work environment's types (e.g. Furnham, Forde & Ferrari, 1999; Hofstede, 1998; Lofquist & Dawis, 1978; Super, 1973). Moreover, other scholars define them as desirable modes of behaviour (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Work values are beliefs pertaining to desirable end states (e.g. high pay) or behaviour (e.g. working with people). As mentioned by Hirschi, (2010), there is no single established classification of work values; however, many empirical studies and theories have used intrinsic and extrinsic work values as the components of work values.

Intrinsic work values ‘refer to the degree to which employees value immaterial aspect of their jobs that allow for self-expression as important, for example, job variety and autonomy’ (Taris & Feij, 2001). The concept of every dimension under intrinsic values as stated below:

- a) Creativity - Work which permits one to invent new things, design new products, or develop new ideas.
- b) Management - work which permits one to plan and lay out work for others.
- c) Aesthetic - Work which permits one to make beautiful things and to contribute beauty to the world.
- d) Variety - Work which provides an opportunity to do different types of tasks.
- e) Altruism - Work which enables one to contribute to the welfare of others.
- f) Intellectual Stimulation - Work which provides an opportunity for independent thinking and for learning how and why things work.

### *2.1. Hypothesis*

Previous research suggests that the students with good work value will get a competitive advantage and also increased their communication. This is because, a university student has a strong character, and personalities are reflected from the work value. Additionally, work value will create a difference quality of future employees because of their background, level of education and country. Thus, the hypothesis is:

H1: There are no significant differences between the Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia on the work values among undergraduate's students.

### **3. Methodology**

In this section, data-gathering procedures, respondents, and measurements of variables are detailed. This study involves university undergraduate students in ASEAN countries.

### 3.1. Respondents

Online surveys were posted directly to ASEAN Community Facebook's page with 240,000 members. Besides that, the questionnaire also was distributed to the participants at ASEAN University Youth Summit 2015. The participant's individual response is shielded from the larger population. Data were collected by means, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The online questionnaire was developed in accordance with the guidelines for creating computerized test and questionnaires provided by Green, et al. (1984) and Kyllonen, (1991). Subjects of this research were primarily an undergraduate university student whom its relative convenience.

Demographic profiles are shown approximately 57.1% (n = 113) are female and 42.9% (n = 85) are male. This sample distribution may not reflect the representative of undergraduate's students in three ASEAN countries, but the data able to capture the scenario of ASEAN students. The majority of the respondents 40.4% (n = 80) respondents from Malaysia following by Indonesia 33.3% (n=66) and the Thailand 26.3% (n=52). Results also show that a high percentage (92.4%) of the respondents are less than 25 years old; and with regard to the number of years in university, the results indicate that only 5.17% of the respondents less than one year, and the majority (39.9%) have been in university within 2 years.

### 3.2. Measurements

In order to measure work value, the scales such as the Work Values Inventory Super (1970) and the Work Values Scale (Gomez-Mejia, 1986) has been developed. The measurement of the intrinsic work value for this study relied primarily on scales from Super's (1970) "Work Values Inventory" instrument that consists of 18 attributes for intrinsic work values. In a review of intrinsic work value research, Super (1970) identified intrinsic value as creativity, management, aesthetic, variety, altruism and intellectual stimulation to measure the intrinsic work value. Each question is measured on a five-point Likert scale. Subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item in a scale from 1 = very important to 5 = unimportant.

## 4. Findings

Prior testing the hypothesis, data were tested for coding/data entry errors and tests for normality were conducted for each of the survey items as well as the constructs that were created by computing individual items. Skewness measures, kurtosis measures, and visual inspection of histograms are performed to test the normality. The analysis founds; the majority of items appear to be within normality. Skewness measures are around zero, and analysis indicates normal-shaped histograms. Kurtosis measures are below one.

Summary statistics for and intercorrelations between all of the independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Reliabilities of Variables (Three Nations)

Variable	$\alpha$	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Creativity	.721	4.2845	.58403	1.000					
2. Management	.521	3.7340	.66663	.378*	1.000				
3. Aesthetic	.563	3.7593	.61643	.628*	.267*	1.000			
4. Variety	.531	3.6717	.60779	.465*	.301*	.518*	1.000		
5. Altruism	.693	4.0623	.58756	.394*	.381*	.350*	.413*	1.000	
6. Intellectual	.617	3.9764	.49075	.529*	.534*	.507*	.456*	.432*	1.000

\*Significance at 0.05 and 0.01

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics correlations and reliabilities for intrinsic work value dimensions. The mean for all value measure fall above the mid-point of the scale (3.0), suggesting that all variables considered to be of some importance. Of six, creativity, altruism and intellectual were rated most important; and management, aesthetic and variety were rated least important.

The ANOVA tests were undertaken to examine the significant differences between work values for different ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia). One-way ANOVA tests with Kruskal-Wallis's tests were employed to explore significant differences among students from the three countries.

**Table 2.** Intrinsic work values differences between Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia Undergraduate students

Intrinsic work values	Malaysian (N=80)	Thailand (N=52)	Indonesia (N=66)	t-value	significance
Creativity	4.17	4.37	4.36	2.591	0.078
Altruism	3.96	4.02	4.22	3.723	0.026
Intellectual simulation	3.97	3.88	4.07	2.179	0.116
Management	3.71	3.69	3.80	.552	0.577
Variety	3.72	3.62	3.65	0.562	0.571
Aesthetic	3.67	3.84	3.80	1.555	0.214

According to Table 2, undergraduate's students in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia show similar work values. The results of ANOVA test showed that undergraduate students in Malaysia were not statistically significantly different from Thailand and Indonesia's students with respect to 5 intrinsic work values, namely, creativity, intellectual simulation, management, variety and aesthetic. By contrast, statistically significant differences were found between Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian undergraduate students with only one intrinsic work values: altruism. The concept of altruism refers to work, which enables one to contribute to the welfare of others. It was susceptible to social desirability effects to which the value is socially determined or part of a shared culture (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). The findings show Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian students perceived the altruism in the different way because influences by their national culture (Hofstede, 1984).

The mean scores suggest that Indonesian students tend to place high importance on management, altruism and intellectual simulation factors. For instance, Indonesia students are more likely to work, which provides him/her to plan and lay out work for others (management). They are also more likely to have jobs that permit he/she to contribute to the welfare of others (altruism) to be in comparison to

Malaysian and Thai counterparts. Furthermore, the intellectual stimulation value or work provides the opportunity for independent thinking and for learning how and why thing work is reported to high in Indonesian students than students in Malaysia and Thailand. Thus, the mean scores indicated that students in Thailand are more likely to search for work, which permits one to invent new things, design new products, or develop new ideas (creativity) and prefer to work which permits one to make beautiful things and to contribute beauty to the world (aesthetic). Furthermore, students in Malaysia's place more importance on work that provides an opportunity to do different types of tasks (variety) as compared to Indonesian and Thai students.

## **5. Discussion**

This finding has interesting implications. With regard to the three nations (Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia) sample, creativity (mean = 4.28) is the intrinsic work value that students appreciate most (see Table 2), and that specific value is generally emphasized in eastern culture where individuals believe in constant perseverance in order to achieve their goals. This study also shows that ASEAN university students value the work that allows them to fulfil their potential in terms of altruism (mean = 4.06), and intellectual (mean = 3.97). Apparently, a working career can mean many things; it may involve working in management, marketing, corporate communication, sales jobs, creative industry or administrator. The job is stimulating because it requires professionals to be creative.

Our findings also propose that intrinsic work values of university students both instrumental are widely recognizable as an effective strategic instrument and measures to achieve competitive advantage and being studied by more practitioners and academics. It can be a barometer for each country to preparing their workforce for ASEAN Community by the end of 2015. The greater mobility of skilled workers will moves across national boundaries within the region when the ASEAN Community emerges, and the understanding on work values becomes vital for the industry. Under the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements, eight professionals fields include engineering, accountancy, surveying, medical services, architecture, nursing, dental services, and tourism will be provided with free movement. The findings also give some indications of what should be included in human resources development planning strategy for each country.

## **6. Conclusions and Limitations**

The most obvious limitation of this study is in the generalizability of the intrinsic work value structure. Therefore, it is proposed that more cross-cultural comparison studies to be performed to examine the possibility of generalizing the factor structure onto different subjects with different cultural backgrounds. In addition, these findings warrant further investigation on the impact of social/cultural variables on work values.

Secondly, this study focused only undergraduate students from three nations in ASEAN; it represents a limited test on the work values. The next step is to assess the external validity of the obtained results by replication of the study in other settings, and other tasks at hand. For example, future research should test whether the similar effect can be found in other countries (i.e. Cambodia, Philippines, and Singapore, etc.) in ASEAN.

Third, this study duplicates items from Work Values Inventory by Super (1970). Therefore, dimensions of work value suggested by other scholars also needed to be considered such as Manhardt, (1972), Brenner and Tomkiewicz, (1982) and Schwartz, (1992). Such additional dimensions can play a vital role in developing understandings about work values. If further research identifies work values such as Furnham, Forde and Ferrari, (1999), Hofstede, (1998), Lofquist, and Dawis, (1978) which may lead to information that could provide helpful indications of best work values for the ASEAN university students.

In sum, this study represents an initial research effort to identify intrinsic work values (creativity, management, aesthetic, variety, altruism and intellectual stimulation) of the three nation university's students. However, the three nations have a no significant difference on intrinsic work values among their undergraduate's students in 5 categories.

This article contributes to the current knowledge on work values by pinpointing the importance of understanding potential university students work values in the ASEAN context. It is believed that understanding the work values of ASEAN future workforce may enable firms to make the fullest use of their talents.

The findings of this study suggest that a 'one size fits all' solutions across countries in ASEAN will not work. It is important that further research consider the other variables such as self-efficacy, affective commitment and organizational identification.

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