

VALUE OF WORK AND WORK MOTIVATION ON THE BASIS OF AGE, GENERATION, MARITAL STATUS AND CONFESSION

Martin Fero, PhD.

Abstract

The paper summarizes the observations of the various sociological studies of recent years, which reveal the place of work in hierarchy of fundamental values of the European society. Secondary analyzed empirical data from European value study 2008 (n = 66281) give the opportunity to present a reliable image of the present reality in Europe, but also to indicate the differences in work motivation according to the socio-demographic characteristics in discussion. In this way, the different sociological theories that since from Max Weber seek to rationalize various observations and expectations based on the confession, but also on the marital status or on the generation of the population in the productive age (generally recognized as generation of baby boomers, X and Y).¹

Key words: Value of work, work motivation, secondary data analysis, EVS 2008, quantitative research, differences based on age, generation, marital status, confession

Introduction

The labor market situation is dynamic due to rapid technological progress, but the changing structure of employees has a considerable impact on the current as well as the future development. In advanced economies, but especially in the US, recently has been lively discussed the arrival of young people in the labor market, who is not only technologically advanced, but in many aspects different from the previous generations. Each year, another group of young people is entering the labor market, which accounts for 3% of the total number of people of working age.² Knowing the preferences of young people entering the labor market for the first time is not just a question of the future development of a business, but also of maintaining its competitiveness.

Age factor

In this context, attention may be drawn to the study of two Slovenian authors Mirjana Ule and Tanja Renner, attributing to the young generation an important role in the modernization process of the society, which can be observed from the mid-20th century to the present. It is primarily about the dissemination of specifically youth cultures, the growing autonomy of youth consumption and extended process of adolescence, which are no longer necessarily connected to the future employment, and which were liberating and strongly individualizing the connection between the everyday world of youth and the world of economically valuable production.³

¹ The paper is elaborated as a part of academic project VEGA 1/0348/17 named: Impact of co-existence of different generations of employees on the sustainable performance of organizations

² AA. VV., *Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2016*, VEDA, Bratislava 2016, pp. 688

³ Mirjana ULE, Tanja RENNER, *The deconstruction of youth*. In: A. Furlong (ed.), *Transitions of youth citizenship in Europe: culture, subculture and identity*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2001, pp. 271-288

The character of modernization trends is so closely related to building a "youth identity", which manifests itself as a search for one's own expression, values and attitudes as an oppositional response to established traditions, and seeking a way of life different from that of adults. This youth rebellion against the structures and institutions surrounding them, which many times consider ineffective or obsolete and therefore trying to change them. When it is possible to consider the youth as the bearer of the modernization process, it can also be labeled as a bearer of the new socio-economic climate. And so we can discuss, accordingly to L. Macháček, about changing the normative environment through young people.⁴

Generations factor

This mentioned trends, however, by academic experts are increasingly attributed to the generational differences. From the demographic point of view, the concept of generation could be defined as the sum of individuals born in one year or within a certain timeframe. However, the generation can also be understood as a large, socially differentiated group of people who are associated with the conditioned condition of thinking and acting, and are experiencing substantial periods of their socialization under the same historical and cultural conditions.⁵ Similarly, in foreign literature, we are experiencing the perception of generation as an age group with common historical experience. Some expert studies say that for each generation there are three common features: Conviction, Behavior, and Location in the history.⁶

The scientific literature in US, which has long been addressing the issue of generational differences in the working environment, divides recent generations in the following groups: the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (and the upcoming generation Z). Several American authors have observed some differences among employees of these generations, especially differences in factors of their job satisfaction. In addition, other studies confirm that different generations have different value systems and respond differently to different life events (Hicks a Hicks, 1999; Kopperschmidt, 2000; Zemke a kol., 1999). Such differences have not only positive potential for organizations but are also the source of undesirable consequences such as stress, workplace conflicts, misunderstandings, distrust that cause a drop in job satisfaction, or lower productivity.⁷ It is remarkable that there is no consensus among the authors in the precise timing of these generations. On the contrary, the characterization of these generations in the work environment is largely the same:

Baby boomers

They can be characterized as a generation of optimistic "workmates" who are willing to spend long hours of hard work in a career for career.⁸ (Kopperschmidt, B., 2000). In recent years of their economically active life tends to slow down and focus more attention on their family.⁹ According to this study, the core values of the Baby boom generation are: optimism, team

⁴ Ladislav MACHÁČEK, *Kapitoly zo sociológie mládeže (Občianska participácia mládeže ako výchova k občianstvu)*, Univerzita Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, Trnava 2002, pp. 236

⁵ Hana MAŘÍKOVÁ, Miloslav PETRUSEK, Alena VODÁKOVÁ, *Velký sociologický slovník*, Karolinum, Univerzita Karlova, Praha, 1996, pp.747

⁶ Deidre EATON, *An investigation of generational differences in job satisfaction in a bureaucratic environment*, Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences. Vol.69 (11-A), 2009, pp. 4403

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Betty R. KUPPERSCHMIDT, *Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management*, In: Health Care Manager, 19(1), 2000, pp. 65-76.

⁹ Ron ZEMKE, Claire RAINES, Bob FILIPCZAK, *Generations at work: Managing the class of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in workplace*. Washington, DC: American Management Association, 2000, pp. 67

orientation, good relationships, personal satisfaction, health, personal growth, youth, work, and personal engagement. They are good team players who are too sensitive to feedback and identified themselves on the basis of the title and the job position.¹⁰ They are willing to do anything to succeed at work, achieve higher workspaces and earn more money.¹¹ In terms of money and recognition, researchers found that they are much more appealing to Baby boom generation than for other generations.¹² The study also shows that they are unwilling to leave their high positions that have succeeded in gaining a lifetime job.¹³

Generation X

They were called the generation of young rebels who fought against the authority, values and lifestyle of their parents. Generation X is considered the most demanding management group. Unlike the previous generation, they do not get hold of titles and hierarchies, and they do not even care about corporate policy. This computer-savvy generation sees its strength in its own abilities. If they do not have more opportunities to learn and develop at their workplaces, they usually leave them. The greatest reward for this generation by the enterprise is growth and autonomy. They want to be productive in the workplace and satisfied if they do not.¹⁴ They have a strong need for independence and want to invest in themselves rather than the organization where they work. The workplace places the greatest emphasis on work, praise and recognition. Because they strive for a balance between work and family, this generation is considered to be lenient by previous generations. Their advantages are adaptability, technological literacy, independence and creativity. They need freedom and autonomy, but also support. It is important that they have a clear goal that they identify.¹⁵

Generation Y

This generation comes in a period of technological sophistication, extreme economic change, individual entrepreneurial prosperity and terrorism. Generation Y members are focused on work that is important to them and which can be beneficial to society. They demand a closer relationship with their superiors and their results. If they feel they are not sufficiently recognized and do not share something, they usually leave the place. Their biggest reward is internal, not external.¹⁶ They often come to new workplaces with many theoretical but also practical experiences they have gained during voluntary work placements or exchange stays, so they do not want to feel like newcomers in the company. I can accept authority, but I do not succumb to it. Y generation members are more connected with life outside work than with life at work. They are much more members of their social environment than other

¹⁰ Lynne LANCASTER, David STILLMAN, *When generations collide*. New York, NY: Harper Business. 2002 ISBN-10: 0066621062, pp. 384

¹¹ Dana KYLES, *Managing Your Multigenerational Workforce* (online), In: Strategic Finance, Dec 2005, Vol. 87, available on:

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?Index=8&did=940768041&SrchMode=1&sid=7&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VTy pe=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1202132346&clientId=57571> (26.9.2017)

¹² Susanne NIEMIEC, *Finding common ground for all ages* (online), In: Security Distributing & Marketing. Feb 2000. Vol. 30, Iss. 3; s. 81 (3 strany), 2000, available on:

<http://argo.cvtisr.sk:2094/pqdweb?index=0&did=49826762&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=6&VInst=PROD&VTy pe=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1294847068&clientId=113805> (26.9.2017)

¹³ Robert MORISON, Tamara J. ERICKSON, Ken DYCHT WALD, *Managing middlecence*. In: Harvard Business Review, 84(3), 2006, pp. 78-86

¹⁴ Dana KYLES, *Managing Your Multigenerational Workforce* (online), In: Strategic Finance, Dec 2005, Vol. 87

¹⁵ Autumn MOODY, *Examining and exploring generational differences by understanding commitment, employee satisfaction, and motivation*, Northcentral University, dissertation thesis, AAT 3298966, 2008

¹⁶ Dana KYLES, *Managing Your Multigenerational Workforce* (online), In: Strategic Finance, Dec 2005, Vol. 87

demographic segments, and they spend more time on social interaction.¹⁷ In the workplace, this generation is significantly focused on the victory and success of the activities in which it participates, as compared to Generation X, they are more aware of advice and procedures from competent.¹⁸ Its members have higher expectations than other generations, they want a fair and direct approach from managers, they want to look for creative tasks, they are interested in their opinion of colleagues, smaller targets with tense terms suit them. If they get the confidence, they can rely on loyalty to the business, but they also depend on the balance between family and careers.¹⁹

Life stages factor

The presented views of several authors suggest a general consensus that relatively large differences in their relationship to work or work motivation can be expected between generations of employees. However, there remains some uncertainty as to whether the differences are related to the age of employees and the changing needs and values, or whether these differences are linked to generational groups whose structure of values and needs was shaped by specific socio-cultural conditions of the period in which they grew up. Professor J. Twenge of the Department of Psychology at the University of San Diego (USA) addresses the question of intergenerational differences over the long term. She and her research team worked on extensive empirical material obtained in three waves of data collection in 1976, 1991 and 2006. A representative sample of US secondary school students (N = 16507) was divided into three generations. In this way, the impact of the respondent's life cycle on his value system and motivation factors at work was avoided. Significant differences were noted in the importance of the value of free time when the research results confirmed a tendency for the increasing importance of this value from the Baby Boom generation to Generation Y, which attributed it the greatest importance. External values (such as state or money) are of the highest importance in Generation X, and their importance compared to the Baby Boom generation is also high in Generation Y. The research results also rebut the often-present claims of popular-literature literature that Generation Y prefers more than other generations of altruistic work values, such as help or common good.²⁰

An important group of authors, however, is more inclined to the opinion that motivates the structure of employees, especially with the aforementioned life stages, which start with generally accepted moments, such as the transition from youth to adulthood, entry into the first job, marriage and similar.²¹ In the current period, some authors draw attention to the increasing individualisation of education and career paths, which is also reflected in the prolongation of youth, by relaxing the transition to adulthood. It is not uncommon for the tendency of young people to go into the world of work and to come back from it again, which is not perceived as a negative but, on the contrary, as a positive one. This oscillation between

¹⁷ Jeromy LLOYD, *The truth about gen Y* (online). In : Marketing Magazine, 10/15/2007, Vol. 112, 2007, Available on: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=8&hid=115&sid=66e2fc04-9eef-4c80-80e4-fb5e30c54d92%40sessionmgr3> 22.9.2017

¹⁸ Neil HOWE, William STRAUSS, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, ISBN 0-375-70719-0, 2000, pp. 432

¹⁹ Cara SPIRO, *Millennials in the workplace*, Defense AT & L, 35(6), 16-17, 19. 2000

Available on: http://washingtonandco.com/pdf/generation_y_workplace.pdf 23.9.2017

²⁰ Jean M. TWENGE, *Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values, Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing* (online), In: Journal of Management, 2010, available on: <http://jom.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/03/01/0149206309352246> 23.9.2017

²¹ Josef ALAN, *Etapy života očima sociologie*, Panorama, Praha 1989, pp. 440

youth and adulthood has its rational origin in the fact that a rapid entry into some permanent employment would mean for most young people a low salary rating and the performance of unskilled work. Young people therefore tend to combine unemployment with short-term courses, part-time employment, contract work, retraining, interrupting work with travel for study and short-term work abroad to gain linguistic knowledge, It is a kind of building a "professional competency" portfolio consisting of skills, knowledge, experiences that can be activated and pragmatically used in the future. It is this splendor of knowledge and skills acquired in various courses and short-term jobs that can be shown as the required competence of the individual in his subsequent professional lifetime.²²

In economically advanced countries, the trend of personalization of career paths in young people is strongly associated with changes in the sequence of steps in the so-called "Success sequence". While increasing differentiation in transition to adulthood, a group of US authors affirms that, as in the previous generations, as well as in the younger generation, compliance with the "success sequence" steps - school termination, entry into the first job, marriage and parenthood reduces the risk of poverty.²³ At the same time, we can see in the coming decades that employees who have children or are married tend to emphasize the importance of the family and prefer employment respecting the needs of their family. What, however, does not mean that the work is less important for them than for others, but vice versa.²⁴ If, in the past, this tendency was associated with women, actually, the differences between men and women are significantly reducing.²⁵

Confession factor

Since the early period of sociology, attention has been paid to the relationship between religious confession and the work performed, respectively the importance of the work in a human life. After the first sociological interpretations based exclusively on secondary statistical data sources, such as Max Weber's well known and also criticized²⁶ study entitled *The Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism*, many authors have been researching this topic especially during the post-World War II period. The approach of sociologists of religion who have studied the relationship between religion and economic life can be considered to be relatively systematic. Although in the 1970s the interest in this relationship was sharpened by other topics, in particular by studying the dynamics of new religious movements. Based on this weak interest and insignificant presence of scientific literature, which has been devoted to this topic at other times, it may seem that religion is likely to have a minimal impact on economic variables such as commitment to work, motivation to performance, or achievement of status.²⁷ During the 1980s, sociologists were more concerned with relations other than religion and economic life, in particular the relationship between religion and the state.

²² Ladislav MACHÁČEK, *Kapitoly zo sociológie mládeže (Občianska participácia mládeže ako výchova k občianstvu)*, Univerzita Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, Trnava 2002, pp. 236

²³ Wendy WANG, W. Bradford WILCOX, *The Millennial success sequence: Marriage, kids, and the 'success sequence' among young adults*, AEI and Institute for Family Studies, June 14, 2017, available on: <http://www.aei.org/publication/millennials-and-the-success-sequence-how-do-education-work-and-marriage-affect-poverty-and-financial-success-among-millennials/> (26.9.2017)

²⁴ Beverly H. BURRIS, *Employed mother: The impact of class and marital status on the prioritizing of family and work*, *Social Science Quarterly*, 72 (1), pp. 50-66

²⁵ Sue SHELLNBARGER, *Work and Family*, Ballantine Books, 1999, pp. 333

²⁶ Weber's conception, which presupposes the development of capitalist principles based on Protestant interpretations and theology, was questioned by R. H. Tawney, H. M. Robertson, Z. Krasnodębski

²⁷ Robert WUNTHNOW in Neil J. SMELSER, Richard SWEDBERG, *The handbook of economic sociology*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1994, pp. 620

One of the first researches on the relationship between religion and economic life was carried out in 1956, but the results showed no evidence of the significant differences between Catholics and Protestants in their social mobility or in the level of job aspirations. Further researches carried out in 1959 by Bernard C. Rosen, and by S.M.Lipset and R. Bendix in 1960, demonstrated that religious denominations with respect to the country of origin did not have a significant impact on labor aspiration or economic status. Similarly, in the research realized by A. Mayer and H. Sharp, which demonstrated differences in status, income, or education between Catholics and Protestants, however, this differences had been reduced to a minimum after data cleaning by the index of the ascribed status.²⁸ Even the research carried out by G. Lenski in 1961, observed that Jews and Protestants are more identified with individualistic and competing patterns of thought and action and on the contrary, Catholics are more identified with collectivistic patterns.²⁹

Except from the ambiguous results of research in this field, it is difficult to demonstrate empirically the relationship between religion and economic life, as well as the great difficulty of methodological procedures, which have been criticized very strongly by methodologists of social research. A large part of the research studies were limited to the recording of religious affiliation, without a closer examination of the religiosity of the respondents, and, of course, as some methodologists remind, an important parameter such as the authenticity of the faith, or quality of the relationship to the transcendent is absent because it is almost impossible to record it empirically. In spite of the differences in empirical findings in scientific literature, we find in modern authors such as P. Berger and M. Novak theoretical assumptions supporting the positive relationship between modern religion and economic activity.

Methods

To validate proposed theoretical expectations, we will use as a source of empirical data for a secondary analysis a freely available data file from The European Values Study (EVS) - the most comprehensive research project on human values in Europe. It is a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program on how Europeans think about family, work, religion, politics and society. Repeated every nine years in an increasing number of countries, the survey provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values, and opinions of citizens all over Europe. Due to the fact that this year (2017) is the data collecting process of the 5th wave of EVS still in progress, we use as the latest data, data file from 2008 which is currently available for analyzing. (n = 66281 respondents from 46 countries in Europe).³⁰ Our secondary analysis is testing the data from this dataset, especially those data from the questionnaire which are recording the importance of work, family, friends, leisure time or politics in the life of European respondents, and also those which are observing the importance of motivational factors in work. The further analysis is testing differences based on variables such as age, year of birth, marital status, the presence of children in the household, belief in God, and confession.

Results

In the chart n.1, we can observe that the family is considered to be the most important value in life of Europeans, while its importance is somewhat lower but still very high at the

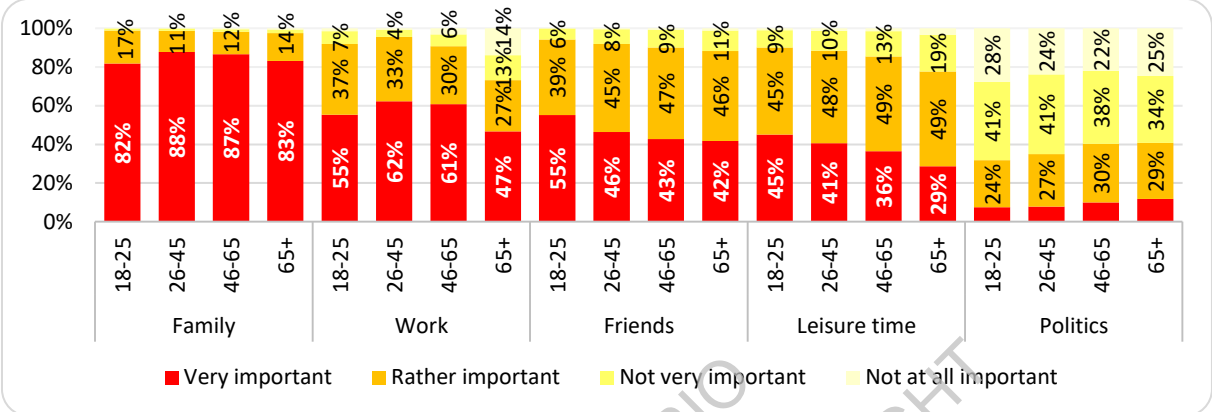
²⁸ Marek LUŽEK, *Max Weber: život a dílo Weberovské interpretace*, Karolinum, Praha, 2005, pp. 753

²⁹ Gerhard LENSKI, *The Religious Factor*, Doubleday, Garden City, 1961, pp. 76-102

³⁰ EVS dataset available at: <https://www.gesis.org/en/services/data-analysis/international-survey-programs/european-values-study/>

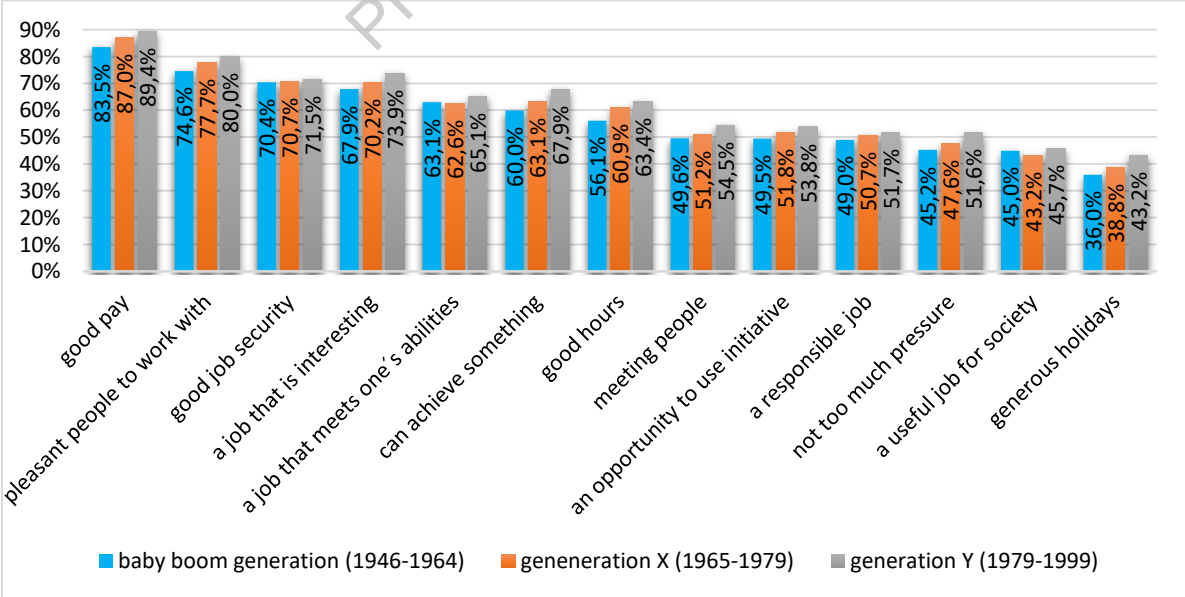
beginning of the productive age and in the post-productive age (2% of the population do not consider it important). A similar trend, but somewhat stronger, is present in the importance of the work placed second in the rankings of values, while its importance significantly decreases in post-productive age. Regarding the importance of the values: friends and leisure time, we can see that with the growing age of Europeans the importance of these values is lower. The politics is the least important value of Europeans and the trend is opposite, with increasing age slightly increasing its importance.

Chart n. 1: The importance of values in life divided by age groups, source: EVS 2008



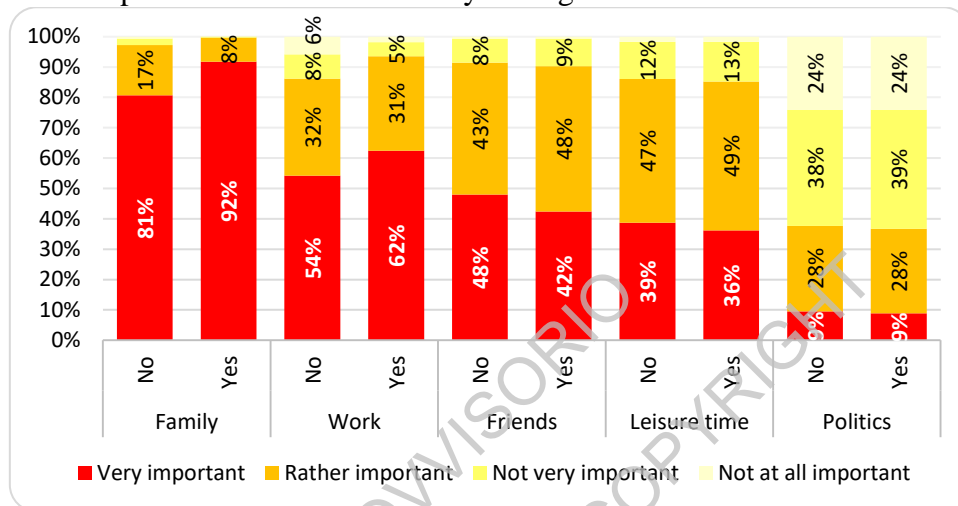
When comparing the importance of life values among Europeans by generation, the results of the importance of individual values are almost identical to those recorded in age groups, with similar trends from the youngest to the oldest generation. Similarly, there is also present a trend of relatively low importance of work in the younger generation, which is approximately on the level of friendship. However, if we look at single motivational factors at work, we can see that the youngest generation among another generations attributes to the all factors the greatest importance, although in the category of good job security we observe rather minor differences. On the contrary, apparently higher scores are present not only in categories such as good hours, meeting people, or generous holidays that can be expected from literature but also in the items of internal motivation such as interesting job or work with the potential to achieve something. This generation also has the highest scores in the items which are the most important for every generation: good pay and pleasant people to work with.

Chart n.2: The importance of motivational factors at work by generation, Source: EVS 2008



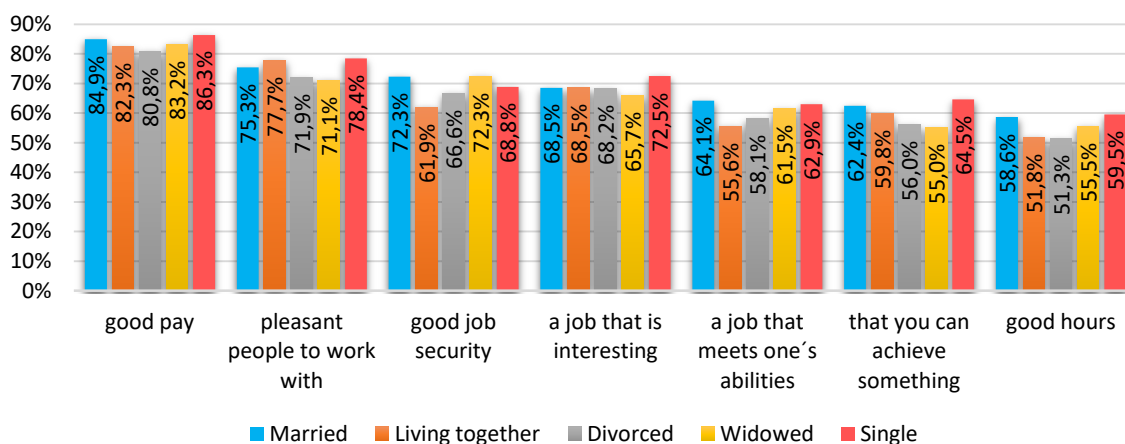
The importance of work for Europeans divided by marital status is the highest for those who are married or living together, and progressively lower for divorced, single / never married persons, while the work is the lowest important for widowed. For single / never married persons, we can see significantly higher values for the importance of friends and leisure time and, on the contrary, compared to the other categories inferior importance of the family. However, the lowest importance of the family can be observed in the divorced group. The importance of life values in the context of life stages strongly determines the presence of a child in a household where family and work reach relatively high values in respondents with children and vice versa in respondents without children in a household we find higher scores on the importance of friends and leisure time (chart n.3).

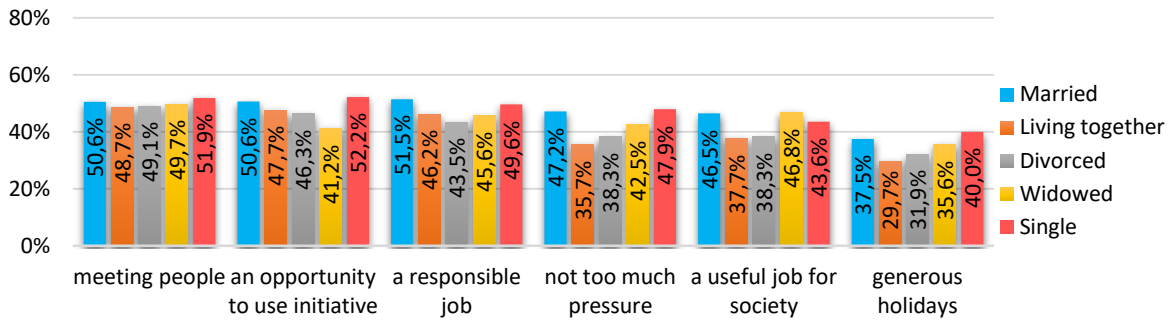
Chart n. 3: The importance of values in life by having children in household: EVS 2008



It is also very interesting the finding that the importance of single items of motivational factors at work is in all cases higher for those with children in household. Substantially more diverse values of individual items of work motivation can be observed for Europeans divided by marital status. In a simplified way, single / never married people have higher scores in majority of items compared to other categories of Europeans, with the highest score in good pay, a job that is interesting and that can achieve something. On the other hand, it is just a category of married who, compared with others, achieve higher values of the motivational factors at work such as: good job security, a job that meets one's abilities, responsible job and a useful job for society (this item is a little bit higher for widowed persons).

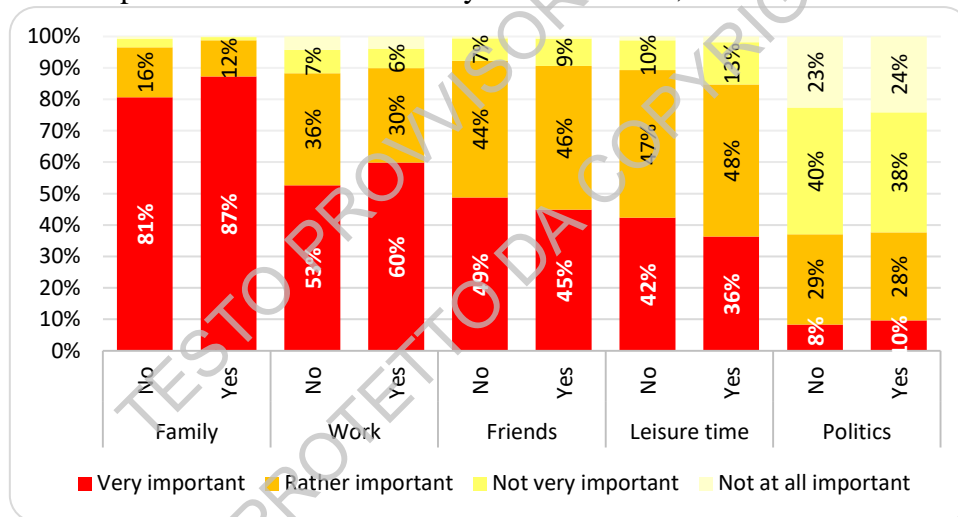
Chart n.4: The importance of motivational factors at work by marital status: EVS 2008





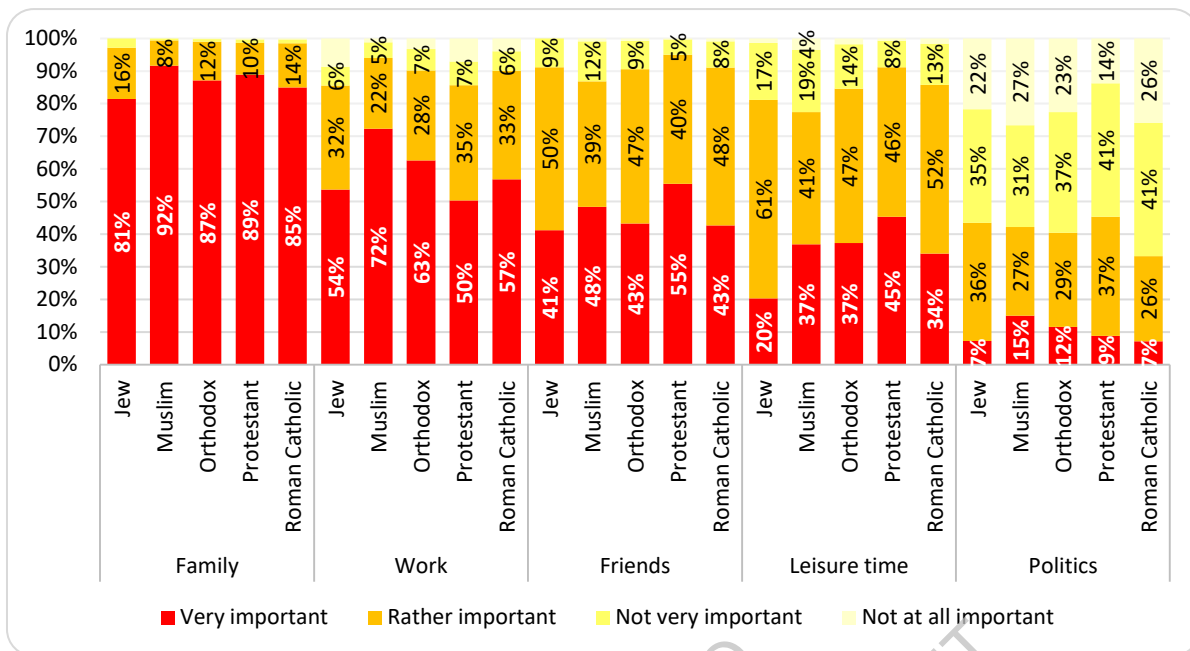
Finally, if we observe the importance of the life values and motivational factors at work among Europeans divided by variable of believe in God, and using current data from 2008, we find that criterion of believe in God is an important distributional variable with the greater effect on the increase of the importance of the monitored items, as in case of the life stages has the presence of children in household. The respondents which believe in God show the greater importance of family and work as a value, and on the contrary, the respondent which do not believe in God show the greater importance of friends and leisure time. By analogy, the importance of single items of motivations factors at work is also higher in all cases for those who believe in God.

Chart n. 5: The importance of values in life by believe in God, Source: EVS 2008



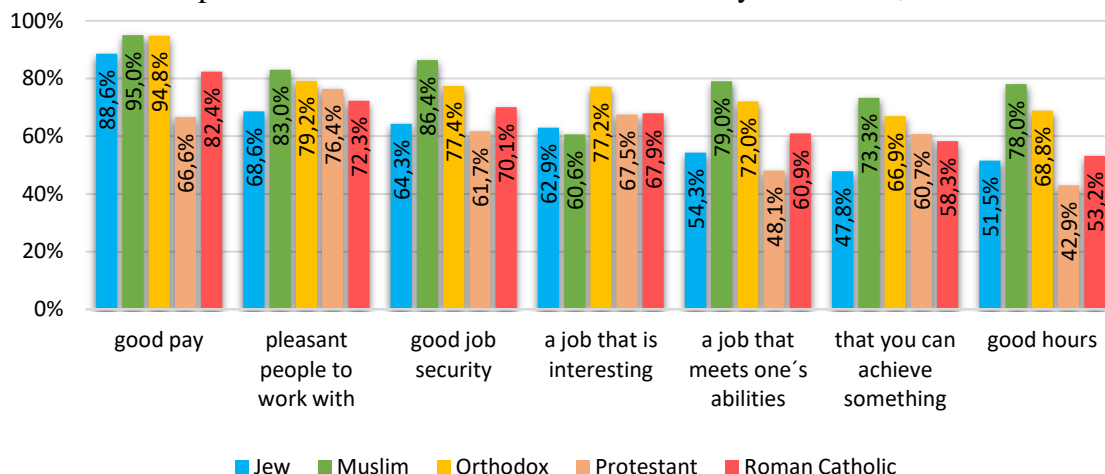
Again, we can find relatively diverse results in life values observed among Europeans divided by confession. Muslims in comparison with the others, reach the highest values of the importance of family and work. Interestingly, the importance of work is the lowest for Protestants, who, on the contrary, consider friends and leisure time more important than other confessions. The importance of lesuire time is the lowest for Jews.

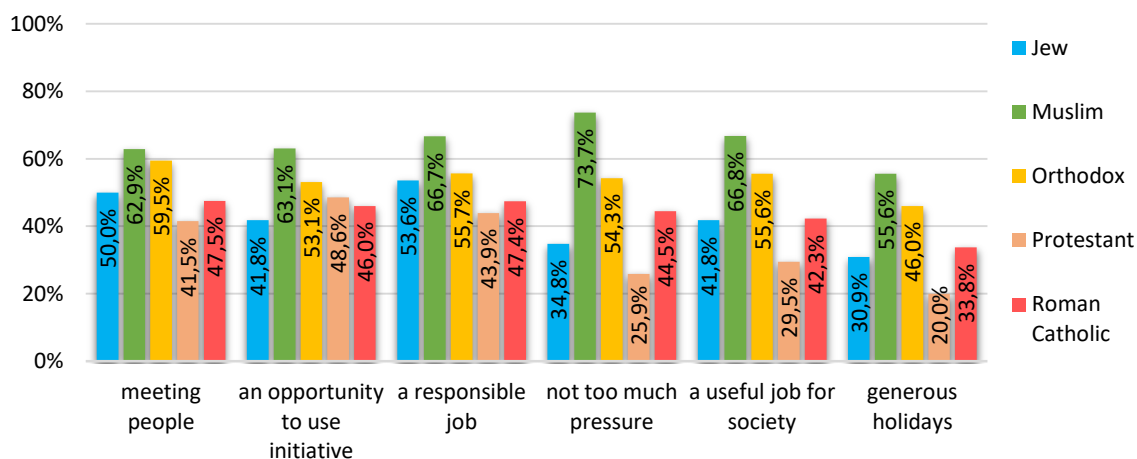
Chart n. 6: The importance of values in life by confession, source: EVS 2008



Very diverse and, at the same time, very interesting values can be observed in the context of the motivational factors at work among Europeans divided by faith. In almost all cases (except for the item - job that is interesting), they are Muslims who, in comparison with another confessions, reach the highest importance of motivational factors at work, especially for items such as: good job security, good hours, not too much pressure, generous holidays, and also a useful job for society. Lower, but still relatively high values are attributed to other items by Muslims. On the contrary, it is just Protestants who, in comparison to other confessions, attribute to most of the items of motivational factors at work the least importance, in particular to items such as: good pay, a job that meets one's abilities, not too much pressure, and a useful job for society but also generous holidays. The Roman Catholics, in comparison to Protestants, attributed less importance only to few of the motivational factors at work: pleasant people to work with, can achieve something and an opportunity to use initiative. Differences to see in the following chart n. 7

Chart n.7: The importance of motivational factors at work by confession, source: EVS 2008





Conclusion

Trying to evaluate the extent to which the expectations from the presented literature are confirmed by empirical data from EVS 2008, we can simplistically declare that, the biggest differences was found no in the area where a scientific literature expect them, but there where were not awaited.

However, the findings did not differ significantly from the nature of expectations expressed in the scientific texts. If young Europeans, respectively generation Y, consider work as a value quite important, but not more than friends, empirical data have confirmed these expectation, and have also shown that for the other generations, work is a little more important. The greater importance of good hours at work and the pleasant people to work with is also corresponding with relevant literature. Similarly, people who are married or living together, evaluate the importance of work more than those who are single or never married. Overall, in line with expectations, there is also a finding that the presence of a child in household is closely linked to the greater importance of motivation factors at work.

The consistency between results of the empirical data analysis and expectations of the literature was quite obviously disrupted in terms of the uncertain differences based on the confession. The results of analysis expressed relatively significant differences, and also, the importance of some motivational factors was considerably lower in the confession that, was to be more dominant, according to the historical texts in social sciences. On contrary, the importance of motivational factors was manifested by confessions in which relevant literature did not pay much attention in the past. However, the fact that the importance of motivations factors at work was higher in all cases for those who believe in God than those who do not believe God fully corresponds to expectations.

Author:

Martin Fero, PhD.
 Materiálovotechnologická fakulta so sídlom v Trnave
 Ulica Jána Bottu č. 2781/25
 917 24 Trnava
 Slovak Republic
 e-mail: feromartin@gmail.com