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Generational Differences in Human and Work Values in Iran and Poland

Summary of Doctoral dissertation

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The globalizing world confronts organizations and their employees with new challenges. Organizations operate across borders, and so do employees who join teams of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. With the deepening shortage of young workers, an increase in pre-and retired people in the labor force is expected[1].

Teamwork is one of the most important challenges in twenty-first-century organizations. According to a 2019 report[2], 31% of companies in the 60 countries surveyed from all continents operate entirely or almost entirely based on a team model. In another 65%, teamwork is part of a structure beyond the vertical hierarchy.

Teamwork can be a unique and valuable source of competitive advantage for an organization, which is difficult for rivals to replicate in a short period. More and more business tasks demand the cooperation of specialists. The complexity of tasks, such as the number of data that must be analyzed before making a decision, is escalating, and teams of experts in multiple fields are required. Building such organizational culture and employing management tools to facilitate the productive operation of multicultural and multigenerational teams is one of the most significant challenges managers face today.

The generational theory posits intra-societal shifts in values and attitudes across individual members from differing age cohorts[3]. Although **generations may have different time frames in PL and IRN**, we must refer to **universal cut-off points** if we want to do international comparisons (and we do!). The categorical indicator of generations active in the job market was created by assigning respondents to one of 4 categories based on the year of birth: **BB** [1946-1964], **X** [1965-1980], **Y** [1981-1994], **Z** [1995-?].

The generational literature review identified one common formation experience for Poland and Iran: the **Internet spread broke the generational dependence.** Millennials are the first generation socialized in the Internet age, which does not need "parents" to access information, so instead of asking more experienced coworkers, they rely on Internet "wisdom."

1 Moczydłowska, 2020

[2] Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, 2019

[3] Strauss & Howe, 1991

Generational diversity is on the top of the list of current trends and challenges in management research and practice. The number of publications dedicated to generational diversity in organizations is growing. In 2020, the term **generational diversity** appeared 600 times in Google Scholar in the title or keywords of publications. Researchers' attention is focused primarily on the specifics of the individual generations, their similarities, and differences in behavior in the work environment, with particular emphasis on the expectations towards employers, especially in the areas of motivation and loyalty.

The most frequently discussed topics are stereotypical perceptions of representatives of different generations, building multigenerational teams, professional mobility, and career paths of people of different ages. There is also a search for tools and good practices for managing generational diversity.

It is discussed[4] that generationally intelligent organizations use the intellectual resources of employees, relying on the synergy effect created by the diversity of knowledge and generational experiences. Some claim [5] that members of different generations react distinctively to guiding principles, boundaries, and technologies and are motivated by varied rewards, as they all are affected by their counterparts, mass media, parents, time and culture, and social and financial circumstances. All these factors create their value systems which distinguish them from others[6]. Misunderstanding the **values** held by members of different cultures and generations can lead the multinational, multigenerational organizations to employees' conflicts and lower work attitudes[7]. "Psychological Battlefield" is a term coined to discuss tensions and struggles between Millennials and their BB employers[8].

Globalization blurring the world's cultural diversity and an aging workforce can make the challenge of **working** in **multicultural** and **multigenerational** teams commonplace.
These changes require identifying the challenges managers face in managing increasingly culturally and generationally diverse **teams**.

[4] e.g. Moczydłowska, 2018
[5] Levenson, 2010; Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007
[6] Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010
[7] Wolff et al., 2010
[8] Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010

Consequently, **HRM** should find a way to nurture **human engagements and collaborations** via building cohesive, multicultural, and multigenerational **teams** to make the most of human forces' abilities, whether from different **cultures** or **generations with a wide range of values**.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, when the number of publications on any topic grows exponentially, **difficult decisions** must be made to **narrow down literature studies**.

My first choice was to limit my literature studies in addition to classical publications focused on big, international surveys on generational differences in values supported by empirical data, not simply observations.

I can say that the greatest influence on the theoretic model I adopted was exerted by the following works (in alphabetical order): Bilsky, Janik, & Schwartz, 2011; Cheraghi, Kadivar, Ardelt, Asgari, & Farzad, 2015; Cogin, 2012; Delkhamoush & Ahmadi Mobarakeh, 2013; Hofstede 1980-2011; Inglehart, 1971- 2018 & Welzel, 2010; Kwiatkowska, 2019; Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2003-2009, Marcus, Ceylan, & Ergin, 2017, Minkov, 2000-2018, Moczydlowska, 2014-2020; MosaferiGhomi, Rastegar, Azar, & Damghanian, 2017; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Ross, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999; Schwartz et al., 1987- 2018; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010; Wieczorkowska, 2011-2022; Wilczyńska, 2022, Wolff, Ratner, Robinson, Oliffe, & McGillis, 2010 (A full list of references can be found in the "References " section at the end of the dissertation).

The **main objective** of this empirical doctoral dissertation is to **expand HRM knowledge** of **generational differences in PL and IRN** to facilitate the **formation** of **multigenerational Polish-Iranian teams**. The specific objective is to accomplish the following **five research tasks.**

The **first** research task was to collect statistical data for both countries in one place so that additional considerations could be embedded into the socioeconomic context.

Chapter 1, titled "**Comparison** of **PL** and **IRN** from the Sociodemographic and Economic Point of View," contains a comparison of GDP, education expenditures, unemployment rate, human development index (HDI), life expectancy, infant mortality rate, doing business index, corruption perception index, gender gap index, globalization index and comparison on sociodemographic indicators such as age, school enrollment ratio, and urban population share.

The **second** research task was a **query** for **all international studies PL** and **IRN** participated. The query results were included in **chapter 2,** titled "**Comparison** of **PL** and **IRN** based on **survey results.** There were identified three surveys : (1) **Hofstede**'s 1983 research; (2) **GLOBE** study in 2004; (3) **World Value Survey** in 2005 and 2020. These data were collected with high methodological diligence, so testing hypotheses on these survey data should be the first choice of the researcher. Unfortunately, **the first two polls do not provide open access to raw data**. Our request sent to GLOBE remained unanswered, so the theoretical model was tested on **World Value Survey [WVS]** data (in those editions in which both countries participated[9]).

The **third** research task was to analyze the literature regarding generational differences. One common formation experience for both Poles and Iranians was identified: **Internet spread broke the generational dependence.** The Millennials are the first generation socialized in the Internet age, which does not need older employees to access information, so instead of asking more experienced coworkers, they start with the Internet search and do it more efficiently than older employees. **Chapter 3**, titled **"Generational Differences** in **Values** and **Hypotheses Development**," contains a focused literature review that selects three types of values: individualistic proself vs. collectivist prosocial, work importance, and postmaterialist values

[9] Wave 5 and Wave 7

and ends with the formulation of three main hypotheses. The first relates to the rise of individualism, the second to the diminishing importance of work among younger generations, and the third to the growing acceptance of post-materialistic values.

Chapter 4, titled **"**The **Methods** of the **Empirical Research, "** presents the methodological paradigm of WiW with five types of triangulations used in the data analyses and describes the research carried out and chosen operationalization of variables.

The **fourth** research task was to conduct **own study** in **IRN.** The goal of the quantitative part was to **replicate** the finding from the World Value Survey 2005 indicating a generational shift in the acceptance of proself individualist values 14 years later in the Iranian sample, comparing primarily two generations in the same socioeconomic background: university students/graduates who were mainly Millennials, and their parents. The objective of the qualitative part was to deepen the understanding of the 'numbers' people chose while answering the Schwartz's Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ) used to create indicators of individualistic proself vs. collectivist prosocial human values. The new form of **structured interviews** was used when respondents were confronted with the descriptions of situational dilemmas.

The fifth research task was to test generational differences in both countries on four datasets:

- Dataset A: World Value Survey 2005*- PL and IRN (N= 3585)
- Dataset B: World Value Survey 2020*- PL and IRN (N=4356)
- Dataset C: European Social Survey 2018- PL (N= 1500)
- Dataset D: Own research conducted in IRN 2020 (238 respondents answered survey questions, 52% of them (N = 125) participated in the interview)
-

*2005 and 2020 were used as a proxy to sign the Vth and VIIth waves of the World Value Survey.

Chapter 5, titled **"Results"** contains the results of the analysis of quantitative (part 5a) and qualitative (part 5b) data. According to WiW methodological paradigm, three main hypotheses were tested using a different type of triangulation (data, method, operationalization, statistical analyses).

The **first** hypothesis predicted **no country differences** and a **strong generational effect** on accepting **individualistic proself** vs. collectivist prosocial **human values**. Hypothesis #1 was tested on three data sets, and the analyses confirmed that compared to the older generation (BB and X), the younger generation (Y and Z) is more proself-oriented.

In 2005, prosocial values acceptance was stronger for all generations than proself values acceptance. This difference disappeared in 2018 in PL for generation Z and 2020 in IRN for both Y and Z due to the increasing acceptance of proself values in younger generations.

The quantitative part of Iranian data was supported by qualitative analyses of the interviews conducted with 57 Iranian families (university students/graduates and their parents). Respondents' answers to situational dilemmas were consistent with their Schwartz's Portraits Value Questionnaire (PVQ) scores, used to create the individualistic proself vs. collectivist prosocial indicators. In many cases, we could predict what respondents would say while confronted with situational dilemmas by looking at their age, gender, and answers to the close-ended questions. It should be noted that **comparing generations within the same family** enables us to **control** the **variance stemming** from **socioeconomic differences**. The qualitative study confirms the hypothesized relationship that **older Iranians** value **more collectivist prosocial** values than proself individualistic human values, unlike **younger generations**, which are **more individualistic**. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the older generation is more conformist; they do not want to harm others, violate social expectations and standards, or disrespect parents and elders.

Hypothesis #2 predicted **stronger work orientation in IRN** than in PL (main effect of the country) and generational effect (main effect of generation) stated that compared to the older generation (BB and X), the younger generation (Y and Z) is less work-oriented. The generational effect was predicted to be stronger in PL than in IR (interactional effect of country and generation).

The hypothesis was tested on World Value Survey collected in 2020. Only the **Polish** and **Iranian BB** do **not differ** regarding work orientation. All **other Iranian** generations value **work more** than Poles. Congruent with the hypothesis, the **differences** between **Iranian** generations are **smaller** than **between Polish** generations. The size of the generation effect in work attitude explanation is ten times higher in PL (eta2 = 0.12) than in IR (eta2 = 0.012). The

cognitive dissonance reduction mechanism could explain it. The younger generation doubts that they can achieve what previous generations obtained in terms of their careers (stability with attractive benefits and pension); thus, they diminish the value of what they can not achieve. These attitudinal trends are likely exacerbated by the spread of precarious work (poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and unable to support a household). However, we can predict that this rationalizing is more prominent in countries where parents are rich enough to support their adult children. Therefore, in IRN, where we observe a remarkable GDP drop, this generational effect is weaker than PL.

In conclusion, generations, especially Millennials, and their work-related values have received significant attention in recent years, but empirical evidence is inconclusive. One possible reason behind these mixed results is the tendency to apply generational groupings universally and ignore the potential impact of the broader context, such as economic situation and national culture[10].

Consequently, the results from the World Value Survey analyses were confirmed in our qualitative study of Iranian family members.

Our finding regarding generational shifts in work attitudes in 2020 was corroborated by other analyses conducted on Polish data (2005 vs. 2020) [11], indicating the same generational shift.

The third hypothesis regarding determinants of PMV human values acceptance was tested using four sub-hypotheses (only in this case, thanks to 2 measurement points in 2005 and 2020, the period, age, and cohort effects could be separated) :

- **H3a**: The degree of PMV acceptance depends on the country (PL vs. IRN).
- **H3b**: The degree of PMV acceptance depends on the research time (2005 vs. 2020).
- **H3c**: The degree of PMV acceptance depends on the generation (BB vs. X vs. Y).
- **H3d**: The degree of PMV acceptance depends on the biological age of the respondents.

The tests of four hypotheses, H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d, showed that the strongest factor is the time of the study (PERIOD effect). Acceptance of post-materialist values in 2020 is significantly stronger than in 2005 in all generations of both countries. The generational effect,

[10] Peretz, Fried, & Parry, 2022

[11] Wilczyńska, 2022

which was significant, albeit weak, in 2005, disappeared in both countries in 2020. Test of H3d showed that respondents' biological age did not explain their values.

Country differences in PM index can be explained by country differences in GDP per capita, which is the most direct indicator of a country's standard of living. Inglehart (2018) reported a solid correlation between value systems and GDP per capita. PL enjoys about two times higher GDP per capita than IRN, but the 2005-2020 data comparison showed that both PL and IRN are moving in the same post-materialist direction.

Chapter 6, titled **"Summary, Conclusions, and Implications for HRM,"** contains discussions of results from all studies, limitations, directions for further research, and recommendations for HRM.

As mentioned numerous times throughout this dissertation, while we discussed generations, the analysis focused on **birth cohorts** (called by us and many other **generations**), which ignores the diversity of generational experiences in PL and IRN. The next limitation was not considering subgroups in generations, e.g., for generation Y, described in the literature[12].

One of the most important topics in the generation literature is whether the generation is a useful construct? or do they have clear boundaries? Can the difference between generation X and generation Y be seen in the single birth year that divides these two groups, or those who are born in 1979 (Gen X) and 1982 (Gen Y) are, in fact, more similar in psychological aspects than people who are born in 1965 and 1979 (Gen X)?

Some researchers[13] failed to find **abrupt generational cut-off points** in work values and workplace preferences. They claim that it does not matter which model is considered- a sociological model that says generational changes are based on dramatic historical events or a cultural model that says generational changes are driven by cultural changes or a psychological model- **generational changes,** in most cases are **gradual** which even can be modeled as linear or curvilinear. Although, sometimes **abrupt** changes can also happen, for instance, **during a major technological breakthrough** that remarkably impacts generational work-related values. We experienced such a major technological breakthrough when the **Internet remodeled**

[12] eg. Moczydlowska, 2020

[13] Campbell, Teweng, & Campbell, 2017

generational relationships (the younger do not need the older to gain information), so we argue that the **main generational cut-off point** divides respondents into **Internet generations** (those who were socialized using the Internet) and the older generations[14].

We should bear in mind that values may change throughout a person's life as a function of age[15]. To distinguish the AGING effect from the GENERATIONAL effect, longitudinal data are required, and in this dissertation, it was possible only in the case of PMV values.

We rely heavily on pre-existing data (large cross-national World Value Survey), but we were forced to collect the Iranian sample (both quantitative and qualitative study) of 238 respondents, which was constrained in several ways. First of all, a snowball sampling method was chosen. Some of the families' data were incomplete due to the mentioned fact (e.g., missing data from husbands). Thus, the same study should be replicated in a larger sample in the future.

Additionally, **the choice** of **values** for **generational comparisons** was limited by the possibilities of their **operationalization** on the **World Value Survey** data. In World Value Survey in 2005, ten values in the Schwartz model were measured by ten questions (1 item per value), so to ensure the reliability of the analysis, we were forced to build indicators consisting of at least three questions. In this way, we constructed **individualist proself** vs. **collectivist prosocial indicators**. The European Social Survey in 2018 (in PL) and the Iranian sample used a 21-item version of the Schwartz's Portraits Value Questionnaire (PVQ); in order to assure comparability, the indicators were constructed analogously to World Value Survey (although 3-4 questions were operationalized this time for each value). Principal component analyses revealed the same factor structure in all analyzed data sets.

Future studies would be worth checking generational differences in the level of individualism using **standard questionnaire tools**, which are used for cultural comparisons. However, it should be noted that a variety of conceptual, methodological, psychometric, and empirical concerns regarding this standard way of individualism-collectivism measurement have been raised. For example, a large replication[16] study aimed at examining the psychometric properties of Hofstede's Survey failed to replicate the expected factorial structure at the country level and

[14] Wieczorkowska, 2022, Wilczyńska, 2022
[15] Gouveia, Milfont, & Fischer, 2015; Marcus, Ceylan, & Ergin, 2017
[16] Spector, Cooper, & Sparks, 2001 as cited in Poortinga 2021

found inadequate internal consistencies; also, there were reported frequent failures to obtain expected country differences; e.g., the lack of support in numerous studies for the idea that Japanese people should be more collectivist than US Americans [17]. A large meta-analysis[18] found "European Americans were NOT more individualistic than African Americans, or Latinos, and NOT less collectivistic than Japanese or Koreans.". Very low correlations between the country scores obtained by Oyserman[19] and individualism-collectivism measurements in the Hofstede tradition are also reported [20].

The last part of the dissertation, titled **"Annex,"** contains supplementary materials that are not necessary to track the course of the argument but are necessary for people who want to learn about the classic literature positions (Annex 1, Annex2, Annex3).

Annex 1, titled **More on Human and Work Values,** contains additional information on Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (SOV), Spindler's Theory of Values, Prince's Classification of Values, Rokeach's Value Survey, Gouveia Functional Theory of Values (FTV), Schwartz's Human Basic Values and theoretical foundation of work values.

Annex 2, titled **More on Generations,** contains additional information on the generational gap, generational differentiation, generational experience, and discontinuation of generation.

Annex 3, titled **More on Research Method,** contains additional information on research orientation, philosophy, approach, strategy, the sample, data collection tools, statistical analysis, and validity and reliability.

[17] e.g., Matsumoto, 1999; Takano & Sogon, 2008 as cited in Poortinga 2021
[18] Oyserman et al. 2002 as cited in Poortinga, 2021
[19] Oyserman et al. 2002
[20] Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2005 as cited in Poortina, 2021