


Chapter 13

New Generation of Productive Workers: How Millennials' Personal Values Impact Employee Productivity in Industry 4.0

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this chapter is to consider how can the millennials' personal values impact employee productivity in the future organizational environment of Industry 4.0. In the modern business environment, major changes are happening in many fronts. On one hand, we have the phenomenon of digitalization and Industry 4.0, and on another hand, we see that the millennials are rapidly taking over important roles and positions in those organizations that are impacted by digitalization. If we consider the notion that the new industrial revolution behind Industry 4.0 will be based on major improvements in productivity due to the mediating effect of a technological revolution, then the role of employee productivity or better say the millennials' productivity will be paramount. This chapter shows that based on deep analysis of millennials' personal values worldwide, the millennials hold prominent personal values, which correspond well with Industry 4.0 readiness and competency models, meaning that they can significantly impact the productivity of an organization.

INTRODUCTION

It has been well established through the decades of research endeavors, that personal values of an individual lay in the base of his or her attitudes, beliefs and behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 1994; Weber, 2017). But however nowadays, with the ever more apparent changing of the society and its constituent subsystems (Scholz et al., 2018), such as the economic system, personal values are of significant practical importance in trying to understand peoples' behavioral inclinations

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(Črešnar & Jevšenak, 2019; Weber, 2017). Due to the rapid and increased digitalization, many jobs will be automated out of existence and personal values can be seen as a behavioral indicator of the inclined proactive behavior toward tackling these challenges. Proactive attitudes toward work challenges can indicate the level of achievable productivity (Syverson, 2011). The issue of productivity is also at the frontline of the generational changes in the workplace and here the millennial generation will be the most important to consider (Twenge et al., 2012; Weber, 2017; Akers, 2018).

The millennial generation is often described as the largest generation ever to exist, reflecting trends of worlds' population growth and counts as much as 80 million individuals. This generation was born between 1985 and 2005 and they hold, due to their upbringing and with it connected different life experiences, very different personal values (Gibson et al., 2009; Twenge, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Twenge et al., 2012; Weber, 2017). Understanding the millennials' personal values can help us to predict their broader impact on the economic system and within it their impact on organizations. Furthermore, it can help us to assess their potential for being productive and successful in the new organizational environment of Industry 4.0 (Črešnar & Jevšenak, 2019).

Industry 4.0 is a current European trend in the economic and business practice, reflecting philosophies of the improvement of organizational workings and behaviour with the integration of digital technologies, automation, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence into the business processes (Bressanelli et al., 2018; Piccarozzi, Aquilani & Gatti, 2018; Müller et al., 2018). These integrations are supposed to fundamentally improve the levels of productivity to such extent that the next industrial revolution could become a reality (Wang et al., 2016; Klausing, 2017; Yazdi et al., 2018).

Here lies the fundamental problem of the conceptualization of Industry 4.0. The focus that the academic literature and business practice have on this issue is in the large part oriented on technologies and their impact on the business transformation (see for example, Qin & Cheng, 2017; Zhong, 2017). This focus is understandable, as technological areas are the ones that enable these advances. But however, there are a few significant issues regarding the role of employees in the processes of digital transformation. First, not only technological parts of organizational workings will be changing in Industry 4.0, but the entire organizational philosophies will as well (Scholz et al., 2018; Müller et al., 2018). For instance, the organizational environment will become more focused on teamwork, collaboration, become more multicultural and multidisciplinary, etc. (Erol et al., 2016) Second, the work processes and work organization will also change (Prifti et al., 2017; Enke et al., 2018). Some job profiles will no longer be needed, therefore, the question of how to assure the productivity of those employees is a separate issue altogether.

But however, the productivity of those remaining employees and also the newcomers' will be of paramount importance. Millennials are nowadays continuously taking over important roles in organizations (Ng et al., 2010; Twenge, 2012) and the question of how productive they can be in the new business environment and whether they have the right personal values to help them be productive remains open.

To comprehensively address this issue, we utilize a distinct theoretical notion of employee productivity paradigm. Due to the still not comprehensively defined meaning of the concept, it is necessary to apply it only in the sense of the research problem. Therefore in this paper, we explore the relationship between personal values of millennials and the relevant factors of employee productivity.

This study innovatively considers personal values as one of the main indicators of productivity in the changing business environment. In contrast, previous studies have applied the concept of personal values to try and predict certain outcomes in the economic and business practice, such as leadership behavior (Grojean et al., 2004; Bruno & Lay, 2008; Graf et al., 2011), organizational ethics (Fritzsche, 1995; Nedelko, 2015), innovativeness (Dabic, Potocan, & Nedelko, 2016), etc.

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