Factors Determining Creative Values of Thai Government Officials[1]

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Abstract

In order to successfully develop the civil service system, government officials have to have new values which are accordance with the new system. A set of new creative values proposed to be promoted in officials includes moral courage, integrity, transparency, nondiscrimination, and result orientation. Before promoting the creative values, research had to be conducted to clarify some related aspects of the values and part of the research was to investigate the factors determining the creative values. Each outstanding group of every value, as well as the total value, was compared with an ordinary official group. Questionnaires measuring 12 predictors and 5 dependent variables were utilized. Discriminant analyses revealed that organizational citizenship behavior, attitudes towards behaving according to the values, and achievement motivation were good determining factors of all values. Moreover, the Four Paths of Accomplishment or Iddhipada and right thinking or Yonisomanasikara were discriminators of some values.

Key words: Creative values, moral courage, integrity, transparency, nondiscrimination, result orientation, Thai government officials, determining factors.

Introduction

In order to deal effectively with a rapid change in economics, politics, and other social aspects of this globalized era, the Thai Government has recognized the importance of improving the effectiveness of its civil service system. The new system should focus on competency, quality, and ethics. To achieve these aims the Thai government officials should be equipped with desirable values which are in accordance with the new system; therefore, the promotion of the values has been urgent in its strategy. Therefore, a Sub-committee for Improving Culture and Values of Government Officials, established by the Government in 1999, proposed a set of new creative values, including moral courage, integrity, transparency, nondiscrimination, and result orientation. Before promoting these creative values, research had to be conducted to investigate their meanings, indications, antecedents, and many other factors. One of the research problems was to examine the determining factors of these values. The present study intended to find determining factors of each creative value and the total value. The factors expected to be good indicators consisted of internal or personal factors and situational factors. These variables were derived mainly from the Theory of Moral and Work Behaviors (Bhanthumnavin, 1995), Buddhism, and organizational behaviors.

The Meaning of Creative Values

Rokeach (1968) defined a value as an enduring belief related to means or goals in which a person or a society prefers compared to the opposite means or goals. Some preferred beliefs in a society may or may not facilitate the growth of that society. For example, too much obedience to the superior may be an obstacle in working because subordinates may not resist their boss's illegal request, while hard work can enhance an organization's production. Social and economical problems encountered in Thailand have been partly due to the people's change of values. For example, the value of making good merit leading to happiness, has changed to now considering that wealth brings happiness. Even though many desirable values still exist in Thai society, some of them should be abandoned and some new appropriate values to the current situation should be established.

A Sub-committee for Improving Culture and Values of Government Officials established by the Thai Government in 1999 proposed a set of creative values to be promoted in officials which includes moral courage, integrity, transparency, nondiscrimination, and result orientation. The meaning of the creative values were not well defined; therefore, the researchers examined their definitions by utilizing a method of focus group discussion. The participants in the focus group suggested the following meanings. Moral Courage included 1) insisting to act according to regulations, laws, and professional ethics, 2) not inclining to any immoral influences, 3) daring to say and do right, and 4) avoiding morally questionable situations. Integrity refered to 1) performing one's duty with one's full effort, willingness, and pride, 2) being direct to any appointments, and 4) not utilizing or occupying the country's property as one's own. Integrity refered to 1) having a committee and determining steps in performing tasks, 2) clearly stating principles in working and making appropriate decisions, 3) being able to reasonably explain what has been done, 4) searching enough information from different sources for making a decision, 5) keeping every evidence ready for inspection, and 6) making information available to the public and facilitating the access to this information. Nondiscrimination involved performing jobs or services with equality, quality, fairness, and mindfulness. Result Orientation refered to 1) stating work goals, 2) persevering until achieving the goals with efficiency, and 3) managing work environment to facilitate one's performance and getting rid of work obstacles.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Dependent variables of this study were behavior of officials according to these creative values, which seemed to be equivalent to effectiveness and morality of work. Factors related to work effectiveness were derived mainly from the "interactionism model" (Magnusson & Endler, 1977), the "theory of moral and work behaviors" (Bhanthumnavin, 1995), Buddhist teachings, and studies of organizational behavior. The "interactionism model" stated that determining the antecedents of person's behavior should involve both personal or psychological characteristics of the person and also situational or environmental factors. Personal factors, such as personality, could be somewhat stable and accumulative, and psychological factors, such as attitude, were the result of an interaction between personal factors and the current situation. Studies concerning organizational behavior suggested some important variables, such as achievement motivation (e.g., Pinpradit, 2002; Soroj, 2002), organizational citizenship behavior – OCB (e.g., MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1991; Thammanartsakul, 2004), work stress (e.g., Sujinunkul, 1998), emotional intelligence (e.g., Lam & Kirby, 2002; Sukplung, 2000), social support (e.g., Jarassri, 1998; Nipatsirikul, 1998), work role model (Pinpradit, 2002; Chuasatuchon, 2002)

and percieved organizational politics (Vigoda, 2000; Anderson, 1994), were correlated significantly with personnels'. performance. Many of these variable were also in the "theory of moral and work behaviors" (known in Thailand as the "the Tree of Morality Theory") which was established from a large amount of research on Thai people. It included a number of variables necessary for being a good citizen and achieving work goals. These variables were achievement motivation, future-orientation and self-control (Chuasatuchon, 2002; Meekul & Tiemmake, 2002), positive attitudes towards working (Billamard, 1986; Chuemtong, 1993) and moral reasoning (Bhanthumnavin, 2000; Soroj, 2002). Moreover, Buddhist variables were also included. They were the Four Paths of Accomplishment or Iddhipada, right thinking or Yonisomanasikara. This research hypothesized that these personal and situational variables could be good determining variables for government officials' behavioral creative values.

Method

The sample of this study was 1,597 government officials, from 4 ministries, who were categorized as high and low in behavioral creative values; 45% of the sample was used as an external validation group. The measures were mostly summated rating scales with Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .54-.91.

Results

The results of the study revealed that 1) the good determining factors of the total creative value were OCB, achievement motivation, attitude towards behaving according to the values, and correct thinking, 2) the good determining factors of moral courage were OCB, attitude, the Four paths of Accomplishment, and correct thinking, 3) the good determining factors of integrity were attitude, OCB, and achievement motivation, 4) the good determining factors of transparency were OCB, achievement motive, and attitude, 5) the good determining factors of nondiscrimination were attitude and OCB, and 6) the good determining factors of result orientation were the Four Paths of Accomplishment, OCB, achievement motivation, and correct thinking. In summary, OCB, attitude, and achievement motivation were good indicators of almost all of the values.

Discussion and Suggestion

Only personal factors were shown as good indicators in this research. They were variables from Buddhist teachings, the "Tree of Morality Theory", and organizational behavior studies. The factors included the cognitive aspect (e.g., correct thinking), psychological traits (e.g., achievement motivation), and behavioral aspects (attitude and OCB), which were significantly associated with the values. The potential applications of the research may be to examine some factors in the process of recruitment of government officials, to promote the plausible antecedents of these creative values and also the values themselves. However, the strong and consistent support of the value of promotion for government leaders and the recognition of the importance in values of officials are fundamental factors in the success of promotion.

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