

Impact of Work Value Perceived by Chinese Post-90s Employees on Their Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

90년대생 중국 근로자가 인식하는 직업가치가 직무만족과 이직의도에 미치는 영향

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〈 Abstract 〉

Owing to COVID-19 pandemic and global recession, enterprises are facing more and more fierce competition. Under this situation, retaining as much as recruiting good employees has become a top priority for organization. However, post 90s, with very different characteristics from traditional workers, entered the labor market, and both employers and employees suffered from post-90's high turnover rate. Therefore, this study focuses on Chinese post-90s and examined the effects of work values they pursue (utilitarian orientation, interest congruence, long-term development, and innovativeness) on job satisfaction and turnover intention. In addition, the groups with less than or more than one year of service were compared and analyzed. A total of 267 Chinese workers born in the 90s participated in the survey. Our research findings show that utilitarian orientation affects both job satisfaction and turnover intention, but interest congruence only affects job satisfaction while innovation only affects turnover intention. And the moderating effect of tenure of service was partially verified. Various implications based on the result were discussed.

Key Words: Post-90s Employees, Work Value, Utilitarian Orientation, Interest Congruence, Long-term Development, Innovativeness

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1. Introduction

Owing to COVID-19 pandemic and global recession, enterprises are facing more and more fierce competition. The competition among enterprises has gradually shifted from the traditional market competition, such as cost reduction or economies of scale, into the competition of technology or human resources (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020). World-renowned management master Peter Drucker believed that human resource as an essential resource, is the core power of enterprise development (Tsui, 2021).

With regards to human resource and knowledge management, there has been research about new generation such as MZ generation in Korea (e.g. Hong, 2020), as well as post-90s generation born in 1990s (1990-1999) in China. As the first batch of post-90s employees entered the workplace around 2012, the post-90s, as a new work force, gradually became the main force in today's labor market. However, compared with traditional employees, post-90s employees are very unique (Ping and Zengwei, 2015). Most employers and managers believe that post-90s employees are difficult to manage, their passion for work is not very high, and their turnover intention is accordingly high (Yao, 2021).

According to '2018 survey report on turnover and salary adjustment' released by 51job Human Resources Research Center, the turnover rate of post-90s employees in enterprises is relatively high. The turnover rate of the class of 2018 was 24.6 percent, significantly higher than the overall level. Comparing with the older generation, the post-90s employees have diversified career interests, pay more attention to their own feelings, and have a strong desire to leave (Lin et al, 2015). In the early stage

of employment, post-90s employees who are not satisfied, not adapted to, or difficult to integrate into the work environment will decisively choose to resign (Ping and Zengwei, 2015). Research also shows that the higher the proportion of post-90s employees in enterprises, the higher the average turnover rate of employees will be (Yao, 2021). For the most of post-90s employees, they not only pay attention to the salary and fringe benefits in the work, but also pay more attention to the consistency between their interest and the job, and when there is no match, they show obvious turnover intention (Lu et al., 2019).

The main factors affecting the employee's decision to turnover can be divided into three categories. The first category is personal factors such as demographic characteristics and their beliefs like work values: The second category is organization-related factors such as leadership style and corporate culture: And the third category is job-related factors like salary level, fringe benefits, and job satisfaction (Li and Lu, 2014). Considering personal factors (work values and tenure of service) and job-related factors (satisfaction), we generated the research model to find out reasons post-90's high turnover rate and suggest the ways to decrease it. That is, our research objectives are as follows:

First, it is to examine the relationship among post-90s employees' work values (utilitarian orientation, interest congruence, long-term development, and innovativeness), job satisfaction, and turnover intention.

Second, it is to test the moderating effect of tenure of service (less vs. more than one year) in the relationship between work values on job satisfaction.

Chinese post-90's has been selected as our subjects because China is struggling from especially high turnover

rate of young and new employees (Li and Lu, 2014) although we expect the research findings can provide insightful implications for other countries and contexts.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Chinese Post-90s Generation

"Post-90s" belongs to the demographic division, which refers to all groups born in the decade from 1990 to 1999. The post-90s generation was born under the one-child policy since China's reform and opening up. Most of the young Chinese are only children, who have enjoyed material enrichment and western cultural influence during China's rapid economic growth, and have grown up with the development of information technology and the Internet (Lu et al., 2019). Hence, the general characteristics of the post-90s generation are obviously different from those of post-70s and post-80s. In particular, post-70s and 80s are relatively conservative, prefer job stability, and care more about politics. The post-90s generation, on the other hand, grew up with more autonomy and more focusing on their own mind and feeling (Ping and Zengwei, 2015). The general characteristics of post-90s include as follows (Zhu et al., 2020):

First, post-90s generation pursues freedom, is not afraid of authority. They live and work the way they like. Second, they have a strong sense of self-development and self-motivation. Most of the post-90s have a clear purpose and are not easily controlled. Third, they are optimistic. The post-90s generation, as the only child, grew up in a relatively rich environment and under the care of their

family, and did not experience the major changes and obstacles. Fourth, they pay attention to equality and respect and not be bounded by traditional authority. The post-90s generation has grown up in the Internet era. It is easy and convenient to obtain external and global information. Therefore, the spirit of equality in the Internet era makes them free from the bondage of tradition and authority, and prefer horizontal communication. Because of these characteristics, they are self-conscious, independent, and self-centered.

Thus, these unique attributes considerably affect their preferred values when they are working; that is, they pursue work values such as utilitarian orientation to achieve productivity and profit maximization rather than political idealism (Ping and Zengwei, 2015), interest congruence which means the fit between job and their genuine interest (Hoff et al., 2020), long-term development that is the orientation pursues future prospects (Xie, et al., 2010), and innovativeness not afraid of changes and challenges (Kim et al., 2018).

2.2. Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Organizational success is majorly depending on whether how much the employees are satisfied with the company and they possess a positive and negative stance on the organization, and accordingly, of course, their attitude affects the organizational performance. As employees' job satisfaction is one of the most important antecedents of organization's success, there have been many studies exploring the role of job satisfaction (e.g., Cooper et al., 2001; Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). Job satisfaction can be defined as a positive emotional state

resulting from the work experience (Locke, 1976).

Along with job satisfaction, turnover intention is a representative dependent variable of organizational research. Job satisfaction is a positive determinant of job commitment and loyalty; on the other hand, turnover intention is a negative outcome directly affects employee morale and organizational performance. Turnover refers to the behavior that the employees has left the organization, while turnover intention refers to the psychological state that the employee has before the actual turnover (Mobley, 1977). Turnover intention is one of the important determinants to judge whether the turnover will actually happen. Tett & Meyer et al. (1993) empirically found that the correlation between turnover behavior and turnover intention is as high as 0.49-0.51.

Turnover intention has been a popular research topic in psychology, management, and other fields as it makes direct and extensive effects on both employees and employers (Chung and Shin, 2021). Unlike passive turnover or layoff, active turnover is mostly decided by the desire

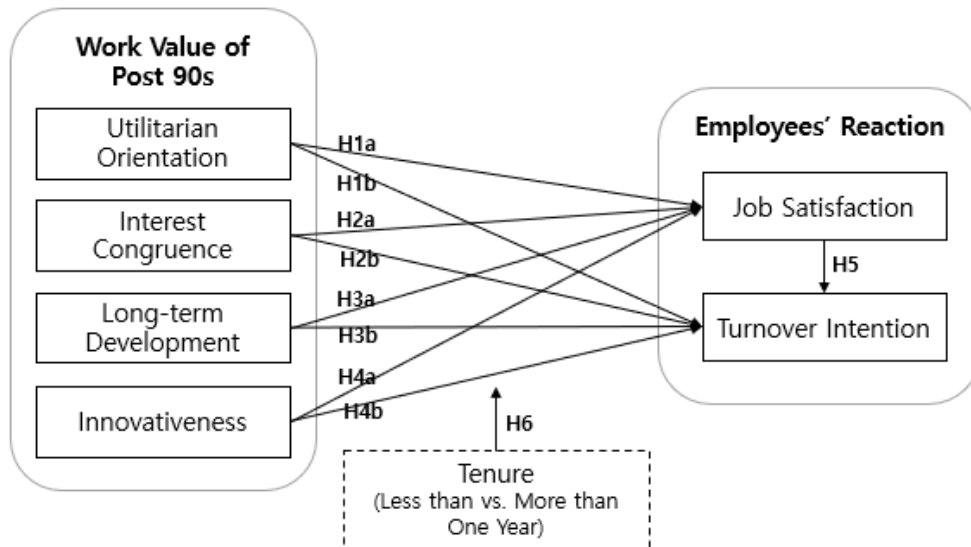
of employees, and it leads to the “brain drain” of enterprises, which has a serious impact on employers.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

Considering our discussion so far, we generated the research model as Figure 1. The work values pursued by most post-90s which are utilitarian orientation, interest congruence, long-term development, and innovativeness are included as independent variables affecting employees’ job satisfaction and turnover intention. To find out whether the relationship between work values and employees’ reaction varies by the post-90s, their tenure of service is included as a moderator.

3.1. Work Values and Employees’ Reaction

Utilitarian orientation is one’s tendency to pursue



<Figure 1> Research Model

practical and realistic value (Fok et al., 2016). Older generation often accept collectivism and sacrifice their own benefits for employers or coworkers for mutual benefits; however, post-90s rarely give up actual rewards and practical values (Lin et al., 2015). Therefore, we can hypothesize as follows:

H1a: Utilitarian Orientation will have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

H1b: Utilitarian Orientation will have a negative impact on turnover intention.

Interest congruence represents alignment between one's interest or aptitude and jobs (Hoff et al., 2020). As mentioned above, the post-90s is not usually willing to give up one thing for another. They are pursuing utilitarian value and hedonic value at the same time even when they are working, so interest congruence, so-called 'deok-up-ilchi' is one of the most important value they would like to obtain (Lin et al., 2015; Park et al., 2029). Considering these arguments, we hypothesize:

H2a: Interest Congruence will have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

H2b: Interest Congruence will have a negative impact on turnover intention.

The post-90s are very interested in self-development and life-long learning, and accordingly, they are long-term oriented, rather than settling for the current situation without any progress (Xie et al., 2010). Therefore, whether the job has good outlook with proper and fair promotion system can be the important factor affecting job satisfaction or turnover intention. The related hypotheses are as follows;

H3a: Long-term development will have a positive

impact on job satisfaction.

H3b: Long-term development will have a negative impact on turnover intention.

Innovativeness which means the tendency to avoid mannerism and seek changes and challenges is another work value that post-90s give importance to (Ping and Zengwei, 2015). Post-90s prefer newer and/or better way although it may be risky while older generations relatively value in maintaining the status quo, safety, and stability (Wan and Liu, 2020). Hence, we hypothesize as follows:

H4a: Innovativeness will have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

H4b: Innovativeness will have a negative impact on turnover intention.

3.2. Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

The inverse relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention has been frequently studied and supported by several other studies (Sturman et al., 2003; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Thus, along with direct effects of work values on job satisfaction and turnover intention, we also set the hypothesis as follows:

H5: Job satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intention.

3.3. Effects of Tenure of Service

In China, like other counties, most companies require new employees some probationary period of about one to six months (Kim, 2019). Therefore, when considering this probationary period, those who have been working for less than one year at their current job can be considered as very new employees and still adjusting to the job. From

this perspective, we can assume that the relationship between work values and employees’ responses may be different by their tenure of service which is less than a year or more than a year. Hence, we hypothesize:

H6: The effect of work values (utilitarian orientation, interest congruence, long-term development, and innovativeness) on job satisfaction and turnover intention will be different by tenure of service.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Development of Measurement Items

The operational definitions and items to measure our research constructs were adopted from previous studies, and modified to fit our research context that is work values perceived by post-90s and its outcomes. All items

are based on 7-point Likert scale, and if necessary, English measures were translated into Chinese. Table 1 shows our measurement items and the references.

4.2. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

The online survey targeting the post-90s who are currently employed by the company was conducted from October 19 to October 31, 2020 for two weeks. A total of 280 questionnaires were received, and 13 of them were excluded owing to insincere or incomplete responses; therefore, we used 267 responses in the analysis. In the sample, 46.74% were male and 53.26% were female, with a slightly larger number of females than males. The sample consists the employees’ age between 20-25 for 26.05%, and age between 26-30 for 73.95%. Education level is mainly college graduates, which accounts for

<Table 1> Measurement Items of Research Constructs

Construct	Measurement items	References
Utilitarian Orientation	1. I think job should have good salary and fringe benefits. 2. I pursue productivity when I am working. 3. I believe hard work will pay off.	Ping and Zengwei (2015) Xie, et al. (2010)
Interest Congruence	1. I think job should in line with my interests. 2. Working itself is interesting. 3. I think job should fit my aptitude.	Hoff et al. (2020)
Long-term Development	1. I think job should have good prospects. 2. I think job should have a good career development plan. 3. I think job should have a good promotion system.	Ping and Zengwei (2015) Xie, et al. (2010)
Innovativeness	1. I think job should be challenging. 2. I do not like routinized work. 3. I think work should be innovative.	Agarwal (2000)
Job Satisfaction	1. I am satisfied with my present job. 2. I was satisfied with my current job from the very beginning. 3. Most of the time I am passionate about my work. 4. I enjoy my job more than the other employees.	Gaertner (1999)
Turnover Intention	1. I often want to leave my present company. 2. I am actively looking for another job. 3. If I could find a better position in other company, I would not stay in the current company.	Michaels and Spector (1982) Mobley (1977)

〈Table 2〉 Demographic Characteristics of Samples (N=267)

Attributes		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	125	46,74
	Female	142	53,26
Age	20-25	70	26,05
	26-30	197	73,95
Education level	Junior college	56	21,07
	College	157	58,62
	Master	45	16,86
	Ph.D.	9	3,45
Tenure of Service	Less than 6 months	44	16,48
	6 months-1 year	73	27,20
	1 year -3 years	99	37,16
	3 years -5 years	33	12,26
	5 years -10 years	15	5,75
	More than 10 years	3	1,15
Types of Organization	State-owned enterprise	56	21,07
	Overseas-funded enterprise	62	23,37
	Private enterprise	101	37,93
	Sino-foreign joint venture	19	6,90
	Public institution	22	8,05
	Others	7	2,68
Total		267	100

〈Table 3〉 Convergent Validity and Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	C.R.	Cronbach's α
Utilitarian Orientation	UTO1	0,836	0,656	0,851	0,737
	UTO2	0,757			
	UTO3	0,834			
Innovativeness	INT1	0,808	0,733	0,892	0,818
	INT2	0,800			
	INT3	0,869			
Long-term Development	LTD1	0,862	0,716	0,883	0,801
	LTD2	0,829			
	LTD3	0,847			
Interest Congruence	INN1	0,869	0,682	0,865	0,766
	INN2	0,843			
	INN3	0,857			
Job Satisfaction	SAT1	0,858	0,698	0,902	0,856
	SAT2	0,810			
	SAT3	0,827			
	SAT4	0,846			
Turnover Intention	Ti1	0,806	0,701	0,875	0,790
	Ti2	0,870			
	Ti3	0,835			

58.62%. The detailed information about demographic characteristics, including tenure of service and types of organization, is summarized in Table 2.

5. Analyses and Results

5.1. Measurement Model

We used SmartPLS 2.0 to test psychometric validity of measurement model. The result of confirmatory factor analysis reached the desired level of factor loadings, AVE

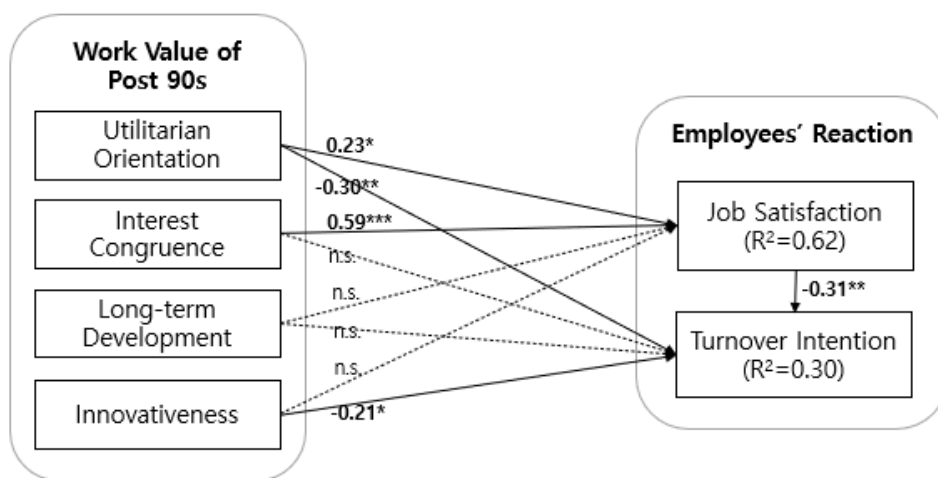
(average variance extracted), composite reliability (C.R.), and Cronbach’s α as shown in Table 3. All the factor loading of items are higher than 0.7, and AVE of all the constructs are higher than 0.5; that is, convergent validity is ensured. Both C.R. and Cronbach’s α values of all the latent variables are over 0.7, so reliability is also confirmed (Gefen et al., 2000).

In order to confirm the discriminant validity of variables, we checked if squared root of AVEs are higher than the values of correlation coefficients (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 4, discriminant validity of latent variables was also confirmed.

<Table 4> Discriminant Validity of Latent Variables

	UTO	INN	LTD	INT	SAT	TI
Utilitarian Orientation	0.810					
Innovativeness	0.699	0.856				
Long-term Development	0.783	0.719	0.846			
Interest Congruence	0.750	0.753	0.723	0.826		
Job Satisfaction	0.668	0.648	0.575	0.772	0.836	
Turnover Intention	-0.479	-0.452	-0.375	-0.416	-0.486	0.837

Note: Diagonal values (bold) are squared root value of AVE on each concept



Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, n.s.=not significant at the 5% level

<Figure 2> Hypotheses Testing

5.2. Structural Model

The main structural model about H1 to H5 was tested using bootstrapping method of SmartPLS 2.0, and the result can be summarized as Figure 2. First, both H1a and H2b are significant; utilitarian orientation positively affects job satisfaction, but negatively affects turnover intention. Second, the positive effect of interest congruence on job satisfaction (H2a) was proved as significant; however, H2b (interest congruence → turnover intention) was not significant. Third, both H3a and H3b regarding the effect of long-term development on employees' reaction were insignificant. Fourth, it showed no significant relationship between

innovativeness and job satisfaction (H4a), but innovativeness significantly decreases turnover intention (H4b). Lastly, job satisfaction makes a significant effect on turnover intention.

5.3. Multi-Group Analysis According to the Tenure of Service

Following Chin (2004)'s method, multi-group analysis was done to test path differences between novice group (less than one year of tenure) and not novice group (more than one year of tenure). All the eight suggested paths (H1 to H4) were compared since group comparisons can be performed regardless of the significance of the path of

〈Table 5〉 Result of the Multi-Group Analysis

Paths	Value	Less than 1 Year (Novice)	More than 1 Year (not Novice)	Result
Utilitarian Orientation → Job Satisfaction	Path coefficient	0,322	0,093	insignificant
	Standard error	0,142	0,097	
	t-value	1,382		
Utilitarian Orientation → Turnover Intention	Path coefficient	-0,326	-0,201	insignificant
	Standard error	0,116	0,163	
	t-value	-0,594		
Interest Congruence → Job Satisfaction	Path coefficient	0,510	0,689	insignificant
	Standard error	0,182	0,093	
	t-value	-0,942		
Interest Congruence → Turnover Intention	Path coefficient	0,273	-0,051	insignificant
	Standard error	0,138	0,165	
	t-value	1,453		
Long-term Development → Job Satisfaction	Path coefficient	-0,175	-0,030	insignificant
	Standard error	0,151	0,099	
	t-value	1,065		
Long-term Development → Turnover Intention	Path coefficient	0,362	-0,121	Novice's perception is counter-intuitive
	Standard error	0,157	0,171	
	t-value	2,028*		
Innovativeness → Job Satisfaction	Path coefficient	0,103	0,132	insignificant
	Standard error	0,140	0,110	
	t-value	-0,168		
Innovativeness → Turnover Intention	Path coefficient	-0,515	-0,047	Novice > Not Novice
	Standard error	0,148	0,124	
	t-value	-2,449*		

each group (Chin and Dibbern, 2010). As you can see in Table 6, two paths showed significant differences; hence, the moderating effects tenure of service are partially accepted.

The first significant difference is about the relationship between long-term development and turnover intention. It is surprising that in the novice group, the higher long-term development perceived, the higher the turnover intention which is counter-intuitive. It may be caused by the fact that novice group lies in unstable probation period which could generate high turnover intention.

Also, the effect of innovativeness on turnover intention is significantly different by the tenure of service. That is, the negative effect of innovativeness on turnover intention is stronger in the novice group than that of the employees having worked more than one year in the current job. It can be interpreted that during the probation period, before getting used to the job, one of the most important determinant of turnover intention is the innovativeness of the job. And if this is not met, the employees may be able to think about leaving the current job.

6. Conclusion

This study was motivated by the relatively high turnover rate of post-90s employees. We focused on understanding Chinese employees, but we believe the research findings and implications of the current study can be expanded to other contexts.

Based on the existing literature and theories, taking work values preferred by post-90s generation as independent variables, this paper generates the model of

the relationship among work values, job satisfaction, and turnover intention, and puts forward the research hypotheses. Furthermore, we investigated the effect of tenure of service on the relationship between work values and employees' reaction. Through the survey and the empirical analysis, a series of conclusions are obtained.

Firstly, utilitarian orientation of post-90s employees is one of the most powerful factor to predict both positive and negative responses. It can be interpreted that appropriate level of salary and fringe benefits is necessary condition for them to work hard, to satisfy with the job, and consecutively, to make them not to leave the current job. For the post-90s, unlike traditional generation, so-called 'passion pay' cannot be endured.

Secondly, we found out interest congruence is an important determinant of job satisfaction although it is not directly associated with turnover intention. From this result, we can assume that if the work itself is interesting and aligned with one's aptitude, the post-90s will be satisfied with the job; however, they do not immediately decide to change the job just because work itself is not fun. They, of course, are perusing interest congruence when they are finding jobs and working; however, utilitarian orientation takes precedence over hedonic orientation.

Thirdly, innovativeness avoid mannerism and routines decreases turnover intention, but does not increase job satisfaction. This result can be interpreted that innovative young people attempt to find their own way to resolve the problem caused by low innovativeness instead of instantly finding another workplace.

Last but not least, long-term development did not make any effects on employees' reactions in the overall analysis

unlike our initial expectation; however, it is interesting that the more the novice pursue long-term development, the higher their intention to leave the current job, but it does not seem to have a significant impact after they are accustomed to the job. The novice period is very short and special stage, and does not represent all the post-90s; however, this produces helpful implications that the employers need to instill a vision for long-term development in the employees who are in their probation period.

To sum up, this study is focusing on Chinese post-90s employees and their preferred work values which have been rarely studied before. Academically speaking, this study makes quite novel and relevant contribution at this moment. Previous studies about post-90s or MZ generation have performed in various contexts such as psychology, education, consumer studies, and so on; however, this study thoroughly examined post-90s as employees in business management contexts. Furthermore, this study is dealing with post-90s' job satisfaction (positive outcome) and turnover intention (negative outcome) at the same time, that can be another contribution of this study.

As managerial implications in terms of human resource management, most of all, it is necessary for companies to understand their post-90s employees preferred work values, along with personal differences, and this research revealed the causal relationship between work values and their reaction. Our research findings also show that the very new employees who have been working for less than a year may need special care. For example, the company should consistently instill the new employees a vision about mutual and long-term development within the current company, as well as should constantly provide them a challenging and interesting works.

Although sincere efforts have been made to conduct the study rigorously, there are some limitations:

First of all, it took only two weeks to collect the online questionnaire owing to the time constraint; therefore, only 267 valid samples were collected in the survey, which could not guarantee the representativeness of the respondents. To generate more fruitful implications, longitudinal studies with larger samples, if possible from various countries, are necessary in further studies.

The other limitation includes that we could consider only four types of work value as independent variables. In further studies, more research constructs not only work value related, but also other traits of post-90s or organizational attributes should be considered. And we have tested the moderating effect of tenure of service, but that of other demographic characteristics that can affect employees' positive or negative reaction should be also examined for more insightful implication.

We believe this research is the preliminary, but the meaningful step to understand not only Chinese post-90s but also new generation like Z generation, and to accept them as colleagues and partners for effective human resource and knowledge management.

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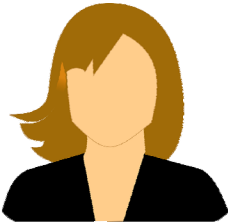
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이화여자대학교 일반대학원 국제사무학과에서 석사학위를 취득하였다. 주요 관심분야는 Office Administration, Human Resource Development, 리더십 등이다.

윤 혜 정 (Haejung Yun)



이화여자대학교 신산업융합대학 국제사무학과와 스마트큐레이션 협동과정의 조교수로 재직하고 있다. 이화여대를 졸업한 후, 연세대학교 경영대학원에서 경영학 석사학위와 연세대학교 정보대학원에서 정보시스템 박사학위를 취득하였다. 미국 American University의 Kogod School of Business에서 Post-doctoral Researcher와 연세대학교 정보대학원에서 연구교수로 재직한 바 있다. Information & Management, Technological Forecasting & Social Change 등의 국제 학술지에 논문을 게재한 바 있으며, 관심 분야는 스마트 큐레이션, 디지털 환경에서의 그림자노동, 정보보호 등이다.

〈 국문초록 〉

90년대생 중국 근로자가 인식하는 직업가치가 직무만족과 이직의도에 미치는 영향

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코로나 19와 경기침체의 영향으로 기업들은 극심한 경쟁상황에 놓이게 되었다. 이러한 상황에서 우수한 직원을 선발하는 것 뿐만 아니라 유지하는 것 또한 기업이 당면한 최우선 과제가 되었다. 하지만 기존의 근로자들과는 매우 다른 성향을 가진 90년대생들이 노동 시장에 진입하게 되었고, 이들의 높은 이직률로 인해 기업과 근로자 모두 어려움을 겪게 되었다. 이에 본 연구에서는 중국의 90년대생 근로자에 주목하여, 이들이 추구하는 직업가치(실용주의, 직업-흥미일치, 장기개발, 혁신성)가 직무만족과 이직의도에 미치는 영향을 살펴보고, 근무시간이 1년 미만인 그룹과 1년 이상인 그룹을 비교 분석하였다. 총 267명의 90년대생 중국 근로자의 응답을 통해 연구모형을 검증한 결과, 실용주의는 직무만족과 이직의도에 모두 영향을 주었지만, 직업-흥미일치는 직무만족에만, 혁신성은 이직의도에만 영향을 주었다. 근무기간의 조절효과는 부분적으로 검증되었고, 연구결과에 따른 다양한 시사점이 논의되었다.

주제어: 90년대생 근로자, 직업가치, 실용주의, 직업-흥미일치, 장기개발, 혁신성

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