

# CROSS CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF WORK GOALS CRITERIA FOR MILLENNIAL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the cultural influence over the perception of work centrality among business students from 14 countries. The research is based on the empirical analysis of a database of 1,522 questionnaires adapted from the MOW International Research Team. The questionnaires were collected among business students coming from more than 30 countries, from 2011 to 2016. The paper provides empirical proof of a significant difference of perception of what constitutes attractive work goals among an otherwise homogenous cohort due to cultural influence. The main limitations of the study came from the lack of biographical data collected during the gathering of the material, as only the nationality was surveyed. The main results are that receiving a Good Pay is clearly the most important goal to the Millennials interviewed. At the opposite side of the priorities, a Good Job Security scores relatively low to those students. The paper includes implications primarily for the field of cross-cultural management studies and practice, in particular in international human resource management. It should be understood as an additional empirical proof of the influence of culture in management, despite a convergence of values due to globalization.

**Key words:** Intercultural management, Cross-cultural management, Recruitment, Work centrality, International human resource management

**JEL Code:** A14, M14, Z13

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## Introduction: Millennials and the meaning of work

The students known as "Millennials," "Generation M" or "Echo Boomers," were born after the year 1992 and are the children of the Baby Boomer generation (McGlynn, 2005). While the term "Millennial" was apparently coined before that period (Strauss & Howe, 2000), the cohort is primarily identified and linked to the new millennium as the high school graduating class of 2000-2005. This group went on to graduating studies in the years 2005-2015, rendering the sample of this article topical.

Many sociological works were conducted in the last decade and illustrate how much those students learn differently and interact differently than former students and than their older classmates (McGlynn, 2005). The main characteristics that apply to the Millennial cohort are:

- Growing up in a time of economic prosperity and post-perestroika world peace.
- Being the most protected generation in terms of government regulations on consumer safety.
- Being used to be indulged as a result of changing child-rearing practices, and being used to be consulted in decision-making by their parents.

Often pinpointed for their supposed narcissism (Bergman, 2011), this "Generation Me" (Twenge, 2014) has been the subject of much scrutiny, with a wide range of analysis about the group's characteristics, abilities, and values (Bejtkovský, 2016). The Millennials are now entering the work place and time has come to look at their understanding of work. Recent studies highlighted the fact that Millennials view work as a key part of life, not a separate activity that needs to be "balanced" by it (Winter & Jackson, 2016). For that reason, they place a strong emphasis on finding work that's personally fulfilling (Hewlett et Al., 2009). To some, it appears they want work to afford them the opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills, and connect to a larger purpose (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Cross-cultural studies have illustrated the differences of meaning of work across cultures (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars, 1993; House, 2004). While single-country analyses are galore, cross-country ones are less frequent (Kasalová et Al., 2015; Khera, & Malik, 2017). A novel look at the connection of Meaning of work for Millennials across cultures should bring valuable insight in our comprehension of this group.

### **Methodology details**

The research is based on the empirical analysis of a database of 1,522 questionnaires adapted from the MOW International Research Team. The questionnaire is a modified version of the MOW questionnaire created by the Meaning of Working Research Program in 1978 (Claes & Ruiz, 1994). It is the adaptation of the question 17 of the 1995 MOW Survey. The current questionnaire is available in the Cross-cultural Management Textbook (Dumetz, 2012), a sample is displayed in the appendix A of this article.

The questionnaires were collected among business students coming from more than 30 countries, from 2011 to 2016. (the list of entries per country is in appendix B). The authors collected questionnaires exclusively from business students during lectures in cross-cultural management and organizational behaviours courses. While most of the students surveyed were following Bachelor studies, some Master's students were also integrated in the list due to their profile proximity.

In order to assess their work centrality, answerers were asked to submit a ranking of their preferred work goals, 1 being the most important factor, 10 being the least important factor. (See Table 1 for full list and corresponding acronyms used in this article)

Each data collection followed a workshop where students were exchanging in small groups their choices and reasons behind such preferences. Criteria cited in those workshops as influencing the meaning of work ranged from age, gender, type of studies, socio-economical factors and of course, culture.

**Tab. 1: Work goal criteria**

Work goal	Acronym
A lot of Opportunity To Learn new things	OTL
Good Interpersonal Relations	GIR
Good Opportunities For upgrades and Promotions	OFP
Convenient work hours	CWH
A lot of variety	LOV
Good Job Security	GJS
A Good Match Between job requirements and your abilities and experience	GMB
Good Pay	GPA
Good physical working conditions	GPW
A Lot of Autonomy	LOA

Source: Authors' own work

Out of the 1,522 questionnaires from 50 countries, only 1,245 from 14 countries were used in this article due to the insufficient numbers in other countries. The countries used in this paper are primarily located in Europe (9/14), but also Asia (4/14) and North America (1/14). The number of samples surveyed range from 19 samples (Belgium) to 270 (Russia).

The main limit of this study came from the absence of biographical data collected during the gathering of the material, where only the nationality was surveyed. Information about the

gender and social-economical background would have enriched the analysis and contribute to gender roles studies at work.

## Main highlights and results

The statistical analysis (table 2) shows major differences of work centrality across cultures, confirming once again the cross-cultural management theories.

**Tab. 2: Statistical analysis of the collected answers**

Country	GIR	OFF	CWH	LOV	GJS	GMB	GPA	GPW	OTL
AUS	4.951923	5.721154	6.990385	4.836538	5.615385	4.423077	4.5	6.576923	4.278846
BEL	4.315789	5.789474	6.263158	5.631579	4.947368	4.157895	3.315789	6.842105	6.526316
CHI	4.214286	4.821429	6.464286	7.464286	6	4.285714	3.25	6.428571	4.071429
CZE	3.795276	6.102362	6.488189	6.007874	7.677165	4.771654	3.291339	6.472441	4.062992
FRE	3.985849	5.179245	7.240566	5.160377	7.386792	4.650943	3.372642	7.745283	4.627358
GER	3.896175	6.513661	7.038251	5.295082	6	4.038251	3.557377	7.42623	4.650273
IND	5.037975	5.974684	6.620253	6.658228	5.544304	3.265823	3.468354	6.848101	4.012658
ITA	3.363636	6.681818	7.954545	5.409091	6.318182	4.318182	3.045455	8.090909	3.681818
RUS	4.688889	4.037037	6.377778	6.555556	7.774074	4.796296	2.77037	6.955556	4.385185
SLO	3.977273	5.977273	6.704545	6.022727	7.522727	4.204545	2.886364	6.704545	4.75
TAI	4.597015	5.522388	6.029851	6.835821	6.701493	3.820896	3.895522	6.149254	4.447761
THA	4	5.64	6.52	6.6	5.56	3.96	5.44	7.52	2.96
UKR	4.763158	4.368421	6.552632	6.684211	7.868421	5.421053	3.631579	6.263158	3.078947
USA	6.037037	5.222222	5.62963	6	4.62963	4.666667	3.740741	6.666667	5.074074
Total	4.353414	5.37751	6.71245	5.914859	6.830522	4.425703	3.42008	7.009639	4.375904

Source: Authors' own work

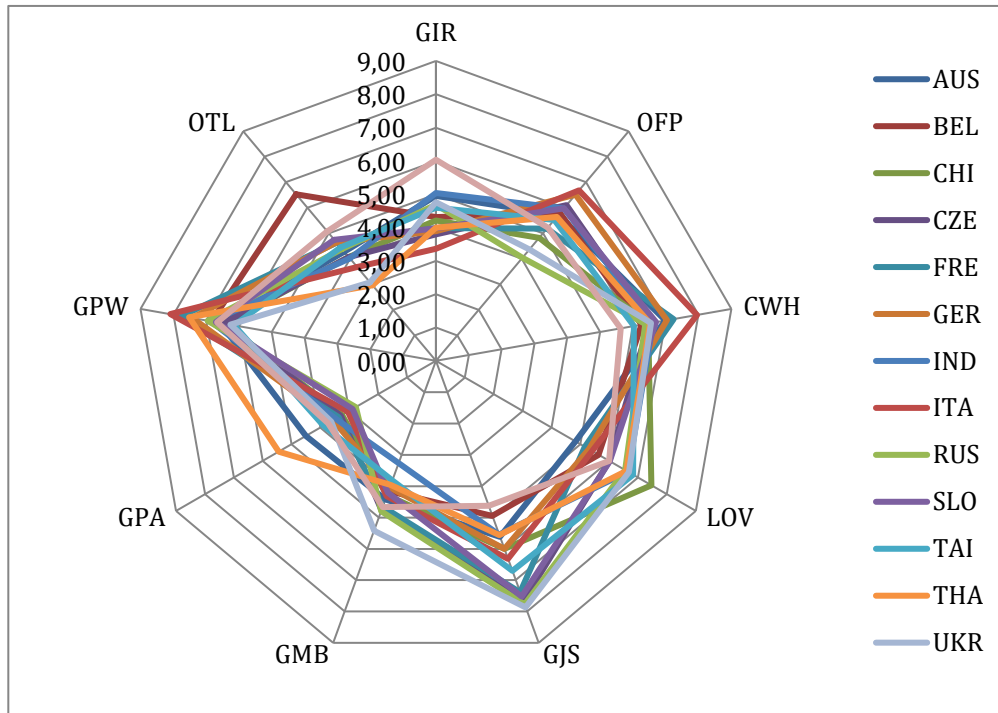
The main result emerging from the analysis is that, with a score of 3.42 , the work goal GPA (Good Pay) stands out to be the most important factor to the Millennials interviewed.

GJS (Good Job Security) and GPW (Good physical working conditions) and CWH (Convenient work hours) appear as the least important factors to all, by far (7.00 for GPW, 6.83 for GJS and 6.71 for CWH)

But there are differences between countries as showed in the radar chart below (Fig. 1).

- GPA (Good Pay) is most important for Russians and Slovak students, least important for Thai and Austrian students.
- OTL (Opportunity to Learn) is valued by Thai and Ukrainians, while least important for Belgians.
- GIR (Good Interpersonal relations) is very important for Italians and Czech, while really not important for the USA and to a lesser extent the Austrians.
- GJS (Good Job Security) is relatively important for the USA and the Belgians; and unimportant for Russians, Ukrainians and Czechs.

**Fig. 1: Radar chart of the 14 selected countries**



Source: Authors' own work

Cultural clusters appear in the analysis. For instance, India, Taiwan and Thailand are the countries where GMB (Match between you and your job) are most valued. Another cultural cluster concerns Slavic cultures present in our panel (Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Rep.) that all score high on GPA (Good Pay) and OFP Opportunity for Promotion.

### **Conclusion and Future research**

The analysis of Work goals preferences among 1,245 Millennial students confirmed existing cross-cultural management theories. Indeed, the work centrality of future graduates differs greatly from one culture to another.

Receiving a Good Pay is clearly the most important goal to the Millennials interviewed. At the opposite side of the priorities, a Good Job Security scores relatively low to those students. Many specific differences were found for each work goal, for instance Russians tend to value a Good Pay the most among surveyed cultures, while Thai students primarily cherish Opportunities to learn (OTL).

Further analysis of the existing database could focus on the need to study eventual heterogeneity within the country cohorts. Authors also plan to compare those preliminary results with existing cross-cultural dimensions. Finally, with those complementary information,

practical recommendations to Human Resource specialists could be given for the countries surveyed.

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## Appendices

### A. Sample questionnaire

*Cross-cultural management textbook by Dumetz et al. ISBN 978-1466459724 - © 2012*

#### Workshop 1.1: Work Goals

In 1987, organizational behavior research was conducted to identify employee reward preferences by examining their work goals<sup>1</sup>. This slightly modified experience is a useful tool to analyze not only personalities but also cultural similarities.

Please rank each work goal according to your own preferences.

The first goal is ranked 1, the second 2 and so on till the last one, number 10.

		Your ranking
A	A lot of opportunities to learn new things	
B	Good interpersonal relations	
C	Good opportunities for upgrades or promotions	
D	Convenient work hours	
E	A lot of variety	
F	Good job security	
G	A good match between job requirements and your abilities and experience	
H	Good pay	
I	Good physical working conditions (such as light, temperature, cleanliness, low noise level)	
J	A lot of autonomy	

Fig. 1.10 – Work goals workshop

#### Discussion Questions:

- What is your own ranking? How does it differ from the person sitting next to you?
- Is there any pattern emerging when comparing results in a group? By age, gender, culture, etc.
- Find real-life examples where knowing the other's ranking might influence your behavior
- Go to [www.crossculturaltextbook.org](http://www.crossculturaltextbook.org) and fill in the questionnaire to get access to the global results.

<sup>1</sup> MOW International Research Team. 1987. *The Meaning of Work*. London: Academic Press.

For more information about this case study and the textbook, go to [www.crossculturaltextbook.org](http://www.crossculturaltextbook.org).



B. Data: Number of answers per country

Country	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
AUS	104	8.35	8.35
BEL	19	1.53	9.88
CHI	28	2.25	12.13
CZE	127	10.20	22.33
FRE	212	17.03	39.36
GER	183	14.70	54.06
IND	79	6.35	60.40
ITA	22	1.77	62.17
RUS	270	21.69	83.86
SLO	44	3.53	87.39
TAI	67	5.38	92.77
THA	25	2.01	94.78
UKR	38	3.05	97.83
USA	27	2.17	100.00
Total	1,245	100.00	

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