

HABILITATION THESIS

Work and work motivation in Romanian cultural context

– ABSTRACT –

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Abstract

The habilitation thesis "Work and work motivation in Romanian cultural context" presents the main scientific results obtained after I achieved my doctoral degree. The first part of the paper is structured in three sections, presenting main topics of research. The second part points out activities focused on coordinating research teams and teaching, along with the main actions taken to facilitate learning and research.

Research on work and work motivation is sorted in five categories: 1) studies on cultural patterns about work, conducted under the conceptual framework of folk theories; 2) studies examining, in the Romanian cultural context, one of the most popular theories of work motivation: equity theory, developed by J. S. Adams (1963, 1965); 3) studies on measurement equivalence in cross-cultural research of organizational factors; 4) studies on organizational dysfunction, resulting in a new theoretical model on burnout; 5) studies on occupational prestige.

In the second section studies on distributive justice and reward allocation norms are summarized. Research on youth national and ethnic identity across cultures is also presented, a recent topic addressed under a new theoretical framework, i.e., Positive Youth Development.

The main research results, achieved as principal investigator or as member in large international teams (in most of them acting as responsible for the Romanian working groups) were published in international journals with high visibility (e.g. papers published and accepted in journals indexed by ISI Web of Science have a cumulated impact factor of 7.96 points), in books (one book published by an international publisher and one book edited, published by a Romanian publisher) and were presented at conferences organized by international professional associations (e.g. European Sociological Association conference, 2013 and 2015 events). The postdoctoral research grant (financed by UEFISCDI/ANCS, between 2011-2013) played an important role in developing my research, as well as the applied research performed for private companies.

In the broader field of popular epistemology (Hardy-Vallée and Dubreuil 2010), popular theories have an epistemic role, giving meaning to reality, allowing a good understanding and making inferences about social reality (Hong Levy and Chiu, 2001). I assumed that in-depth exploration of Romanian employees' perceptions and stereotypes about work, as reflected by folk theories, is a first step to better understand the topic of work, which has been scarcely investigated in Romania after the collapse of communism. Semi-structured interviews and focus-groups have been conducted to find answers to questions addressing: i) work meaning; ii) working patterns; iii) qualities and flaws of Romanian employees; iv) distinctive characteristics of Romanian employees when compared with other workers; v) defining success in professional life. Research

results show cultural-bounded patterns expressed as social constructions developed across time (Buzea, 2013a; Buzea, 2015a, Surdu and Buzea, 2015). Although these results are informative for scholars and professionals, they have to be regarded within the methodological limits of the study (i.e. not identical with observed characteristics as measured under the general paradigm of positivism and scientific method in social sciences; Terracciano et al. 2005).

A second set of studies investigated cultural variation of equity theory constructs, a middle-range theory empirically tested only in the western cultural context (Adams 1963, 1965), but particularly useful for HR professionals working in Romanian organizations. Based on the Kilbourne and O’Leary-Kelly (1994) research design, I developed a cultural-bound model of Adams' theory, integrating categories and subcategories for each construct: inputs, outcomes, "referent other" and strategies to reduce inequity. Papers presenting these results were published in Romanian and international journals indexed in various databases (Buzea, 2014a; Buzea, 2014b; Buzea and Meseşan Schmitz, 2013; Buzea, 2015a, 2015b). Some additional results, based on equity theory, were published: inquiries focused on equity sensitivity construct and a new scale to measure the employee-employer exchange (i.e. Equity Inventory of Employee-Employer Exchange). Among the studies dedicated to work behavior representative are the ones conducted in interdisciplinary international teams, with a particular focus on cross-cultural research methodology, as follows: 1) measurement invariance of a new scale (the Tilburg Work Identity Scale for Commitment and Reconsideration of Commitment - TWIS-CRC in Romania, England, the Netherlands, and South Africa – results published in Adams et al., 2016); 2) measurement invariance of well-known scales (the Satisfaction with Life Scale in Roma minority and Romanian majority adolescents in Romania – results published in Dimitrova, Buzea, Abubakar and Stefenel, 2016; The Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS) across youth from seven European countries – results published in Dimitrova et al., 2016); 3) development of a new theoretical model on burnout (Tziner, Buzea, Truta, and Rabenu, 2016).

Under the theoretical framework of distributive justice, normative judgments employed to allocate financial rewards were investigated using the factorial survey method, a quasi-experimental method, fitted to measure multiple factors that affect judgment and to decompose their unique effects (Wallander, 2009). The study dedicated to youth reward allocation judgments was, to my knowledge, the first research design based on factorial survey method conducted in Romania. It pointed out that Romanian youth prefer to allocate rewards based on equity norm (i.e. according to contributions or effort), but within the general pattern of equal distribution (meaning that the rewards allocated to those with the biggest contribution are not much higher than rewards

allocated to other people) (see Buzea, Meseşan-Schmitz, and Van de Vijver, 2013; Buzea, 2013a).

A distinct direction of research is dedicated to the Roma ethnic minority and in particular to ethnic identity among Roma youth. Published papers present theoretical developments based on the new concept of Romaphobia (Dimitrova, Buzea, Ljubic, and Jordanov, 2015), social mechanism of self and hetero ethnic identification (Buzea and Dimitrova, 2016) or examine psychometric properties of various measures in culturally diverse samples (e.g., Dimitrova, Buzea, Abubakar, and Stefenel, 2016).

Future research directions for each topic are presented in dedicated sections. The second part of the present thesis points out the past performance as team coordinator or principal investigator, along with actions taken to facilitate learning and research, in the broader context of research management in which I am involved within Transilvania University of Braşov

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