

**WORK VALUES, PERSONALITY TRAITS  
AND  
CAREER SUCCESS**

**by**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
ABSTRAK	xi
ABSTACT	xii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background of study	1
1.2 Research Problem	5
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Research Objectives	6
1.5 Significance of the study	6
1.6 Definition of important terms	7
1.6.1 Values	7
1.6.2 Work Values	7
1.6.3 Personality	8
1.6.4 Career Success	8
1.7 Scope of the study	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Theoretical Foundation	9

2.3	Values	10
2.4	Early research on Values	12
2.5	Contemporary research on Work Values	14
2.6	Distinction of values with other socio-psychological concepts	15
2.6.1	Values and Beliefs	15
2.6.2	Values and Attitude	15
2.6.3	Values and Social Norms	15
2.7	Work Values	16
2.7.1	Rokeach Value Survey ( RVS )	17
2.7.2	Survey of Work Values ( SWV )	18
2.7.3	Super's Work Value Inventory	19
2.8	Personality	20
2.9	Personality Theories	21
2.9.1	Trait theory	21
2.9.2	Psychoanalytic theory	22
2.9.3	Behaviourist theory	22
2.9.4	Humanistic theory	22
2.10	Big Five or Five-Factor Model ( FFM )	23
2.11	Career Success	24
2.11.1	Culture and Career Success	25
2.11.2	Work Values and Career Success	26
2.11.3	Personality Traits and Career Success	27
2.11.4	Personality Traits and Work Values	27
2.12	Assumptions	28
2.13	Conclusion	28

## CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Research Framework	29
3.3	Theoretical Framework	32

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

4.1	Introduction	33
4.2	Research Design	33
4.3	Operationalisation of Variables	33
4.3.1	Independent Variable – Work Values	33
4.3.2	Independent Variable – Personality Traits	34
4.3.3	Dependent Variable – Career Success	34
4.4	Population and Sample	40
4.4.1	Sampling Frame	41
4.4.2	Sampling Technique	41
4.5	Questionnaire Design	42
4.6	Pilot Study	44
4.7	Data Collection	44
4.8	Statistical Techniques	45

## CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1	Introduction	46
5.2	Demographic Statistics	46
5.3	Factor Analysis for Work Value Dimensions	48
5.4	Analysis of Internal Reliability for Personality items	50
5.5	Revised Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses	51
5.6	Validity of Career Success Index	52
5.7	Answers to Research Questions	55

5.8	Revised Theoretical Model	59
5.9	Control Variables	63
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION		
6.1	Introduction	66
6.2	Findings and Discussion	66
6.3	Control Variables – Education and Organisation Size	68
6.4	Implications	69
6.5	Limitations of the study	70
6.6	Suggestions for future research	70
6.7	Conclusion	71
REFERENCES		72
APPENDICES		76

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Table 2.1	Elements of Rokeach Value Survey	17
Table 4.1	Index for Age	37
Table 4.2	Index for Position	38
Table 4.3	Index for Salary Level	38
Table 4.4	Illustration of Career Success Index ranking	38
Table 4.5	Summary of operationalisation of variables	40
Table 4.6	Summary of Questionnaire Design	43
Table 4.7	Summary of Response	44
Table 5.1	Demographic Characteristics	47
Table 5.2	Rotated Component Matrix for Work Value items	49
Table 5.3	New Dimensions for Work Values	50
Table 5.4	Results of Cronbach Alpha for Personality items	50
Table 5.5	Correlations for Career Success Index	53
Table 5.6	Career Success Index statistics	53
Table 5.7	Breakdown of Career Success Index by percentile	54
Table 5.8	Pearson Correlations for all variables in study	55
Table 5.9	Order of ranking for Work Values	55
Table 5.10	Order of ranking for Personality Traits	56
Table 5.11	Regression of Work Value dimensions onto Career Success Index	57

Table 5.12	Regression of Personality Traits onto Career Success Index	58
Table 5.13	Regression of Work Values and Personality Traits dimensions onto Career Success Index	61
Table 5.14	Regression of control variables onto Career Success Index	63
Table 5.15	Regression of all variables onto Career Success Index	64
Table 5.16	Summary of results of hypotheses testing	65



## **LIST OF FIGURES**

	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Figure 3.1	Relationship of Variables	30
Figure 3.2	Theoretical Framework	32
Figure 5.1	Revised Theoretical Framework	51
Figure 5.2	New Theoretical Framework	60

## APPENDICES

	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
I	Questionnaire	76
II	Factor Analysis output for Work Values	81
III	Cronbach's Alpha for Work Value items	83
IV	Cronbach's Alpha for Personality Type items	84
V	Descriptive statistics for research variables	85
VI	Regression of Work Values onto Career Success	86
VII	Regression of Personality Types onto Career Success	87
VIII	Pearson's Correlations for research variables	88
IX	Regression of Work Values and Personality Traits dimensions onto Career Success	89
X	Regression of control variables onto Career Success	90

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mencuba untuk menyiasat perhubungan antara perbezaan individu dengan kejayaan dalam kerjaya. Perbezaan individu diukur menerusi dua ciri, iaitu nilai-nilai Kerja dan jenis-jenis personaliti. Kedua-dua ciri ini diuji dengan kejayaan dalam kerjaya untuk mendapatkan perhubungan yang mungkin boleh menerangkan persamaan dan perbezaan yang terdapat pada mereka yang berjaya di dalam kerjaya dan mereka yang kurang berjaya. Sejumlah 111 orang pengurus dari sektor swasta di Malaysia telah diberi soalan dan jawapan mereka dianalisis. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa dua daripada enam nilai-nilai kerja, iaitu penyeliaan dan kebebasan, didapati mempunyai perhubungan yang positif dengan kejayaan di dalam kerjaya. Empat nilai yang baki, iaitu aesthetics & altruism, kebijaksanaan & daya kreatif, ganjaran kewangan dan perhubungan di tempat kerja mempunyai hubungan secara negatif terhadap kejayaan di dalam kerjaya. Kesemua lima jenis personaliti, iaitu, ketekunan, persetujuan, extraversion, kestabilan emosi dan terbuka kepada pengalaman adalah berhubung secara positif terhadap kejayaan di dalam kerjaya pengurus-pengurus di Malaysia. Penyiasatan lanjut dijalankan untuk menyiasat perhubungan apabila kedua-dua ciri, nilai-nilai kerja dan jenis-jenis personaliti, diambil kira pada tahap yang sama. Didapati bahawa model ini mempunyai kuasa penerangan yang lebih di dalam perhubungannya dengan kejayaan dalam kerjaya apabila dibandingkan dengan model terdahulu di mana dua ciri ini di kaji pada tahap yang berlainan.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study attempts to investigate the relationships between individual differences and career success. Individual differences are operationalised by two characteristics, work values and personality traits. These are examined against career success to obtain relationships that explain the commonalities and differences between those who advance faster in their career and those who advance moderately. A total of 111 managers from the private sector in Malaysia are given questionnaires and their responses are analysed. Results show that two of the six work value dimensions, namely; Supervision and Independence, are positively related to career success of Malaysian managers. The remaining four dimensions, namely; Aesthetics & Altruism, Intelligence & Creativity, Economic Returns and Work Relationship are negatively related with career success. All five personality types, namely; conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability and openness to experience are positively related to career success of Malaysian managers. Further investigation is carried out to ascertain the relationships when both the variables, work values and personality traits are considered at the same level. The theoretical model when these variables are considered at the same level has a stronger explanatory power than them being considered at different levels.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

Why are some people more successful in their careers than others? This is an interesting and important question to individuals as well as those who manage them. An understanding of the success factors will enable employees to have a clearer focus on their career management. Career success is of concern not only for individuals but also to organizations because employees' career success eventually contributes to organizational success. Therefore, a study towards identifying the variables that influence career success will eventually contribute towards a better understanding of organizational success. Amongst the assets in an organization, its people are the most 'elastic', in the sense that they can be trained and moulded. Therefore, an understanding of the variables that contribute towards career success will enable managers to plan and structure employee development programmes to cater for these variables.

The problem of disparity in achieving career success gives rise to the following symptoms seen in the working environment. Those successful are seen to have more power, wealthier, and respected by society. Therefore those less successful, especially amongst the same age group or peers, find that they are left out in the rat race and feel frustrated, demotivated and disappointed. This gives rise to other related problems whereby these less successful people seek alternate means to build their wealth and power to be on par with their peers who are successful. Generally, this is the beginning of unethical practices at the work place, such as office politics, back-biting and much serious ones like criminal breach of trust.

Newspapers have been publishing news concerning unethical business practices in Malaysia, Ang (2006). Malaysia's Second Finance Minister has reminded Malaysia corporate that there should not be any shortcuts or employment of unethical means in the race to secure new businesses. Furthermore, the Malaysian Prime Minister has announced that Malaysia will sign the United Nation Convention against Corruption, in an effort to step up war on graft in the country ( New Straits Times, 5/02/2003 ), as quoted by Ang (2006). These happenings at the national level indicate that the desire for increasing one's wealth through unethical means, is becoming a serious issues in Malaysia.

Preliminary interviews with five individuals who are heads of organisations revealed the following findings with respect to this problem. Identifying the traits of employees that would contribute to their success in career is a difficult task and any knowledge into this area will be very useful for managers in organisations. Quite often, potentially promising employees are not noticed until they have left the organisation. On the other hand, many managers also make mistakes in identifying employees for development, only later to realise that these employees do not have the capabilities to be successful. An insight into the traits or values upheld by employees that have the potential to be successful would greatly contribute towards talent development and succession planning activities in organisations. Other inputs obtained during the preliminary interviews relate to the measures of career success. Job satisfaction, career planning and peer comparisons were suggested as suitable measures for career success. The individual's own assessment of his career success is considered to be an important measure because career is very personal in nature and a third person cannot determine the success rate of another person's career.

Understanding the factors that predict career success is a topic that interests individuals and organisations (Feldman, 1989). As more organisations encourage employees to manage their own careers, these individuals have sought guidance on how to do this effectively. At the same time, organisations continue to have an interest in identifying the factors that predict career success in order to effectively select and develop high-potential employees. Given the importance of careers to individuals and organisations, there is a need to examine the factors that influence career success (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer & Graf, 1999 ).

An examination of the variables that influence career success shows that there are a wide variety of factors that contribute towards a person's advancement in career. A recent study carried out by Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman (2005) classified these factors into four categories, namely; human capital, organizational sponsorship, socio-demographic status and stable individual differences. Human capital refers to hours worked, job tenure, organization tenure, work experience, willingness to transfer, international work experience, education level, career planning, political knowledge and skills and social capital. Organisational sponsorship includes career sponsorship, supervisor's support, training and skill development opportunities and organisational resources. Socio-demographic variables are marital status, age, gender and race. Individual differences refer to the personality of the person, which is categorized into the Big-5 types, namely; Extroversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience. Ng et al.'s study is a comprehensive one looking at the variables affecting career success. However, they did not look into work values and personality factors together and a gap exists there. This study would take into consideration of this gap and attempt to fulfil it.

Eddleston, Baldridge and Velga (2004) studied effects of individual differences towards career success and concluded the following to have a significant effect; level of education, gender and mentoring. Aryee, Chay and Tan (1994) found that the antecedents for career success in a sample of Singaporean managers were, human capital, work values, family variables and structural variables. These variables accounted for 40% of variance in career success.

In the Malaysian context, Poon (2004) conducted a study on white-collar employees from a diverse set of occupations and organisations and found that career commitment is a predictor of career success. Wafa, Saufi and Chong (2003) studied three factors; namely, hard work, family ties and politics, that contribute to career success of Malaysian executives in local Chinese firms. It was found that 'hard work' is the major significant factor contributing to career success.

As seen from the above studies, career success is of concern to individuals as well as organisations. There are numerous western studies analysing predictors of career success. Malaysian studies have looked into some aspects of career success but not much have been done on the relationship between individual differences and career success. Specifically, Malaysian studies have not looked into the relationships of the big-five traits with career success. Therefore this study attempts to fill this gap and subsequently add new knowledge to the field of career success predictors, especially in the Malaysian context.

The study by Ng et al. (2005) found that individual differences had a significant relationship to career success. Individual differences are manifested through the personality of a person, which in turn is influenced by the values inherent in the person. Based on this relationship, this study would examine the influence of values and personality towards career success. As the subject of this study is career success, which



is a work-related phenomenon, it is seen more appropriate to look specifically at the work values component of values. This brings to the core investigation of this study, that is; work values, personality traits and career success.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

There exists a situation where some people are more successful in their career than others. Why does this happen? What influences the upward career mobility of people? This study attempts to explore the above situation by investigating the phenomena where some individuals move up their career at a faster rate and to a higher level compared to their peers of similar age and attributes. People who succeed have certain qualities, and these are attributable to work values and personality traits. This research will find out if the above phenomenon could be explained by the individual differences in a person, specifically their work values and personality traits. It could be achieved by examining what are the characteristics of those who achieved success in their career. As argued before, this study will attempt to examine if work values and personality traits can predict career success. The findings would enable a better understanding of the phenomenon of differences in career success.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This study attempts to examine the work values and personality traits of Malaysian managers in relation to their career success. The research questions for this study are:

- i) What are the work values of Malaysian managers?
- ii) What are the personality traits of Malaysian managers?
- iii) What are the relationships between the various work values and

career success of Malaysian managers ?

- iv) What are the relationships between personality traits and career success of Malaysian managers ?
- v) What are the relationships between both the work values and personality traits dimensions towards career success of Malaysian managers ?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

There are six objectives for carrying out this study, as follows:

- i) To examine the work values of Malaysian managers
- ii) To examine the personality traits of Malaysian managers
- iii) To examine the relationship between work values and the extent of career success of Malaysian managers
- iv) To examine the relationship between personality traits and the extent of career success of Malaysian managers
- vi) To examine the relationships between both the work values and personality traits dimensions towards career success of Malaysian managers ?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study will help to provide an understanding on the career success of Malaysian managers and how is this influenced by their work values and personality traits. Findings of this study can be used to address current problems of career advancement among Malaysian managers by identifying the work values and personality traits that correlate with career success and using them in selection or promotion of managers to hold key positions. The findings will also contribute towards

improving executive coaching methodologies by providing a better understanding of managerial career advancement.

Currently, in the Malaysian employment scenario, there is an increasing use of personality tests as a means of identifying the suitability of candidates for managerial positions. There are a wide variety of personality tests available in the market and the personality tests themselves are extensively validated instruments. However, the problem lies in the interpretation of the results of the tests to the Malaysian environment. The matching of personality traits to a particular job is based on western studies and may not hold true in the Malaysian context. In other words, a western instrument is used in the eastern context. This study attempts to address this gap by identifying the work values and personality traits that influence career success specifically for Malaysian managers. Findings of this study will greatly assist the field of Human Resources in Malaysia for recruitment, training, promotions and succession planning decisions.

## **1.6 Definition of important terms**

### ***1.6.1 Values***

Values are the broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes (Schemerhorn et al., 2005). It is the inherent belief system in a person that guides a person's actions and behaviours.

### ***1.6.2 Work Values***

Work values are the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in the work role (Dudeck, 2004).

### ***1.6.3 Personality***

Personality is the relatively stable set of psychological attributes that distinguish one person from the other (Moorhead, 2004). Luthans (2002) defines personality as ‘how people affect others and how they understand and view themselves’.

### ***1.6.4 Career Success***

Career Success is the highest level of achievement attained by a manager in terms of job level and salary level within the shortest period of time.

## **1.7 Scope of the study**

The scope of this study is individual differences of managers. Other attributes that influence career progression, such as human capital, organisational factors and socio-demographic variables are not within the scope of this study.

As seen earlier in 1.1, studies on individual differences and career success in the Malaysian context is lacking and therefore it is intended to narrow the scope of this study to specifically analyse and understand the relationships between them.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section starts with a review of articles by prominent researchers in the study of individual differences. It is followed by a chronological review of research done on values. An attempt is made to provide a brief clarification of the differences in meaning between the subject matter of this study, that is values, to the common concepts in socio-psychology. Subsequently work values are specifically reviewed, followed by culture and personality.

#### **2.2 Theoretical foundation**

The theory behind differentiating individuals based on attributes is ‘traits theory’. Yukl (1989) states that the trait approach emphasizes the personal attributes of leaders. Early leadership theories attributed success to possession of extraordinary abilities such as tireless energy, penetrating intuition, uncanny foresight and irresistible persuasive powers. Gehring (2007) states that the traits theory is possibly the first recorded theory of leadership. In ancient times , scholars attempted to capture the essence of great leaders, particularly those characteristics, or traits, that distinguished them from their followers. Traits were viewed as personal characteristics of a leader, such as intelligence, values and appearance.

This study attempts to understand the individual differences in managers who are more successful in their career and the traits theory is considered to provide the basis for conducting this research. The traits theory provides a platform to differentiate individuals based on their inner characteristics and is seen appropriate for this study.

### 2.3 Values

The landmark study on values was conducted by Rokeach (1973) and his book on 'The Nature of Human Values' has formed a reference for many subsequent studies related to the concept of values. Rokeach formulated the nature of human values with the guidance of five assumptions, as follows.

- i) the total number of values that a person possesses is relatively small.
- ii) all men everywhere possess the same values to different degrees
- iii) values are organised into value systems
- iv) the antecedents of human values can be traced to culture, society and its institutions, and personality
- v) the consequences of human values will be manifested in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding

These assumptions brings to the argument that the concept of 'value', more than any other concepts, should occupy a central position across all the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, political science, education, economics and history. When comparing the relative power of the concept of value against other concepts, that is, by focussing upon a person's values, "we would be dealing with a concept that is more central, more dynamic, more economical, a concept that would invite a more enthusiastic interdisciplinary collaboration (Rokeach, 1973).

With the above in consideration, it can be said that a person has a 'value' and a 'value system'. A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-of-state of existence. A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end states of existence along a

continuum of relative importance. Subsequently, Rokeach (1979) gave a more refined definition of value system as an organized set of preferential standards that are used in making selections of objects and actions, resolving conflicts, invoking social sanctions, and coping with needs or claims for social and psychological defenses of choices made or proposed. The key concept in these definitions is ‘the preference’ of a person, that means, something is preferable to something else, that a particular mode of conduct or end state of existence is preferable to an opposite mode or end-state. This concept is adopted in the measurement of values and operationalisation of variables in this study.

Rokeach developed 36 items of value measurements, listed in section 2.6.1 of this study, and divided these values into two categories, namely, instrumental values and terminal values. All values concerning modes of behaviour are called instrumental and those concerning end-states are terminal. In other words, instrumental values are a means to an end whereas terminal values are ends themselves.

In summary, Rokeach’s conceptualisation of value can be said to guide the conduct of someone in the following manner.

- i) lead someone to take particular positions on social issues
- ii) predisposes someone to favour one particular ideology
- iii) guide presentations of one-self to others
- iv) evaluate and judge, and to praise and blame on one self or others
- v) standards to ascertain whether one is moral and as competent as others
- vi) standards employed to persuade and influence others
- vii) standards that tell someone how to rationalise, beliefs, attitudes and actions for the maintenance and enhancement of self-esteem.

## 2.4 Early research on Values

Early research on values was initiated by (Spranger, 1922), (as cited in Allport, 1976), where Spranger had proposed the existence of six fundamental types of subjective evaluations or *Lebensformen*. This classification is also adopted by Guth and Tagiuri in 1965, as quoted by England (1967) and Harrison (1999), where the value systems were divided into six categories namely; theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious. In his book ‘Types of Men’, Spranger classified people into six major groups on the basis of their value orientations (Jalilvand, 2000).

### 1. The theoretical

This type of person’s primary interests are the discovery of truth and the systematic ordering of knowledge. To pursue his or her goals, the theoretical person will take a cognitive approach, will look for identities and differences, will disregard the beauty or utility of objects in judgments, and will seek only to observe and to reason. The theoretical individual is an intellectual with empirical, critical, and rational inclination; examples are scientists and philosophers.

### 2. The economic

The economic person is mainly interested in utility, self-preservation, the practical affairs of the business world, production, marketing, consumption, the use of economic resources, the elaboration of credit, and the accumulation of tangible wealth. Thus, his decisions are dominated by the expected economic and practical results. This type of individual is thoroughly practical and represents the stereotype of the American businessperson.



3. The aesthetic

Interested primarily in the artistic aspects of life, the aesthetic person values form and harmony, judges events in terms of grace, symmetry, or harmony and fitness, and enjoys events for their own sake.

4. The social

This type of person loves people and has an altruistic or philanthropic outlook on life. Viewing other people as ends, the social individual tries to be kind, sympathetic, and unselfish. He looks at theoretical, economic and aesthetic people as having rather cold and inhuman orientations. The social person values love, as the most important component of a human relationship, and has an attitude toward life that approaches that of a religious type.

5. The political

This type of person's main interest is power in all activities ( not just politics ). Often political individuals are leaders in many areas, seeking personal power, influence, renown, and recognition.

6. The religious

The religious person is mystical and seeks to relate, in a meaningful way, to the cosmos as a whole. His mental activity is constantly directed towards creating the highest and most satisfying values in experience.

According to Spranger, all people have all these values, which form a hierarchy that varies from person to person. The relative importance of these values differs from one person to another.

Spranger defined the six ways of looking at life in terms of separate and distinct ideal types, although he did not imply, that a given person belongs exclusively to one and only one type. This study would attempt to utilise all the six value elements as

suggested by Spranger, but will not embrace the idea that the six values are mutually exclusive.

England (1967) carried out a study on the personal value systems of American managers and how these values contributed to the understanding of managers and their behaviour. This was one of the early works pertaining to managers in the U.S.

Guth and Tagiuri (as cited in Agle & Caldwell, 1999) did the seminal study on values and decisions and they have defined “value”, as a conception, explicit or implicit, of what an individual or a group regards as desirable, and in terms of which he or they select, from among alternatives available modes, the means and ends of action, an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.

Schwartz (as cited in Sarros and Santora, 2001), says that values:

- 1) are concepts or beliefs;
- 2) pertain to desirable end states or behaviours;
- 3) transcend specific situations;
- 4) guide selection or evaluation of behaviours and events;
- 5) are ordered by relative importance

## **2.5 Contemporary research on Values**

Contemporary definition of “value” is summarized by Harrison (1999) as the standards that guide the conduct of individuals in a variety of ways.

Value systems contain all the values held by individuals, including their cultural and work values. Cultural values are those typically held by certain cultural groups, such as values regarding human nature, person-nature relationship, time orientation and social relationships.

In summary, values are the inherent belief system in a person that guides and directs a person's actions and behaviours.

## **2.6 Distinction of Values with other socio-psychological concepts**

### **2.6.1 *Values and Beliefs***

There are three types of beliefs distinguished by Rokeach (1973). These are:

- i) Existential belief - those capable of being true or false.
- ii) Evaluative belief - the object of belief is judged to be good or bad.
- iii) Prescriptive or Proscriptive belief - some means or end of action is  
judged to be desirable or undesirable.

Value is a belief of the third kind, a prescriptive or proscriptive belief. Value is a belief upon which an individual acts by preference (Allport, 1961), (as cited in Rokeach, 1973).

### **2.6.2 *Values and Attitude***

Attitude differs from value in that an attitude refers to an organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation (Rokeach, 1973). A value on the other hand, refers to a single belief of a very specific kind. Values occupy a more central position than attitude within one's personality and cognitive system and they are the determinants of attitude and behaviour.

### **2.6.3 *Values and Social Norms***

Social norm refers to a mode of behaviour generally practised and accepted by society. A value is more personal and internal and a social norm is external to the

person. A social norm is formed from the generally practised values in a society or environment.

Having seen the broad picture of values, and later how it differs from other sociological concepts, next an attempt is made to provide an explanation of the specific concept of 'work values'.

## **2.7 Work Values**

Most research on work values has differentiated values with reference to two types of rewards derived from working. The first is extrinsic rewards, such as, income, advancement opportunities and prestige associated with the job. The second is intrinsic rewards such as the inherent interest towards work, the potential for learning and the opportunity to be creative (Johnson, 2001). Following this, another two dimensions of work values are altruistic and social values

Dudeck (2004) defines work values as the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in the work role. Financial prosperity, achievement and responsibility are examples of work values. Chen, Chu and Wu (2000) states that a person's values act as a criteria for choosing goals or guiding actions. Work values are important components that drive individuals to seek certain kinds of jobs or working environments.

Work values reflect people's attitude towards work in general. It is a reflection of people's attitude towards the various aspects of work such as preferences for activity and involvement, attitude towards monetary and non-monetary rewards and the desire for upward career mobility. Work values are of importance because they influence a variety of organisational behaviours and outcomes such as performance, satisfaction and job behaviours (Nasurdin & Sohod, 1996).

### 2.7.1 Rokeach Value Survey ( RVS )

Rokeach developed an instrument known as RVS - Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973), where he used 36 items classified into two categories, Terminal and Instrumental Values as listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

*Elements of Rokeach Value Survey*

No.	Terminal Value	Instrumental Value
1.	A comfortable life	Ambitions
2.	An exciting life	Broadminded
3.	A sense of accomplishment	Capable
4.	A world of peace	Cheerful
5.	A world of beauty	Clean
6.	Equality	Courageous
7.	Family Security	Forgiving
8.	Freedom	Helpful
9.	Happiness	Honest
10.	Inner harmony	Imaginative
11.	Mature Love	Independent
12.	National Security	Intellectual
13.	Pleasure	Logical
14.	Salvation	Loving
15.	Self-respect	Obedient
16.	Social Recognition	Polite
17.	True Friendship	Responsible
18.	Wisdom	Self-controlled

The scope of this study is limited to ‘work values’ which is narrower than the broad field of values done by Rokeach. However, the elements of Rokeach Value Survey are used to compare with the instrument to be used, to check if it captures the main concepts of value as defined by Rokeach.

### **2.7.2 Survey of Work Values ( SWV )**

Two studies on work values conducted in Malaysia by Nasurdin and Sohod (1996) and Lian (1998) utilised the Survey of Work Values ( SWV ). This survey uses six dimensions of work values as follows, classified into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic work values. Brown (2002) defines intrinsic work values as the “objectives that can be satisfied in the work itself”. Extrinsic work values are “objectives that can be satisfied through work as a means to an end”, that is the external outcomes achieved due to the work.

(a) Intrinsic Work Values

- i) Activity Preference
- ii) Pride in Work
- iii) Job Involvement

(b) Extrinsic Work Values

- i) Attitude towards earnings
- ii) Social status of the job
- iii) Upward striving

This survey instrument provides a simplistic classification of work value dimensions and does not capture many of Rokeach's value dimensions. However, it provides a structured classification of work values which would be useful in a systematic analysis for research purposes.

### 2.7.3 *Super's Work Value Inventory*

Another study done in the Malaysian context is by Awang (1975), where he used Super's Work Value Inventory to study the relationship between work values and occupational preference. This is an instrument that measures work values through 15 dimensions as follows.

<b>Work Value</b>		<b>Description</b>
<b>Dimension</b>		
1. Altruism	:	contribute to the welfare of others.
2. Aesthetic	:	make beautiful things and to contribute beauty to the world.
3. Creativity	:	invent new things, design new products or develop new ideas.
4. Intellectual Stimulation	:	independent thinking, learning how and why things work.
5. Achievement	:	gives a feeling of accomplishment in doing a job well.
6. Independence	:	work in one's own way, as fast or as slow as one wish.
7. Prestige	:	standing in the eyes of others and evokes respect.
8. Management	:	plan and layout work for others to do.
9. Economic Returns:	:	pays well and enables one to have the material things one wants.
10. Security	:	provides one with the certainty of having a job, even in hard times.
11. Surroundings	:	working conditions are pleasant, not too hot or too cold, noisy, dirty etc.

12. Supervisory Relations : under a supervisor who is fair and with whom one can get along.
13. Associates : come into contact with fellow workers whom one likes.
14. Way of Life : live the kind of life one chooses and be the type of person one wishes to be.
15. Variety : opportunity to do different types of jobs.

## **2.8 Personality**

There are many definitions for personality (Mount, Barrick, Scullen & Rounds, 2005). Although there is a disagreement in the meaning of personality, there is a common agreement that what people do is influenced by stable characteristics, that is, their personality. Personality traits refer to the characteristics that are stable over time, provide the reason for the person's behaviour and psychological in nature. They reflect who we are and in aggregate determine our affective, behavioural and cognitive style. Personality is the collection of emotional, thought and behavioural patterns unique to a person that is consistent over time.

Carver and Scheier (2000) describe personality as a dynamic organisation, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings. This definition makes several points:

- i) Personality isn't just an accumulation of bits and pieces, it has organisation.
- ii) Personality doesn't lie there, it is active and has processes.
- iii) Personality is a psychological concept, but it is tied to the physical body.
- iv) Personality helps to determine how the person relates to the world.
- v) Personality shows up in patterns, recurrences and consistencies.



- vi) Personality is displayed in many ways, in behaviours, thoughts and feelings.

## **2.9 Personality Theories**

There are several theoretical perspectives on personality in psychology, which involve different ideas about the relationship between personality and other psychological constructs. Most of these theories can be grouped into one of the following.

### ***2.9.1 Trait Theory***

The notion that people could be divided into different types goes back to the time of Hippocrates, about 400 BC, where people were thought to form four groups; choleric ( irritable ), melancholic ( depressed ), sanguine ( optimistic ) and phlegmatic ( calm ). Each personality type was thought to reflect an excess of one of four bodily fluids (Carver & Scheier, 2000). A more recent categorisation of people is provided by Carl Jung where people are divided into two, introverts and extraverts.

Personality Traits or Types are “prominent aspects of personality that are exhibited in a wide range of important social and personal contexts”. People have certain characteristics that partly determine their behaviour. The most common models of types incorporate four or five broad dimensions or factors.

Allport (as cited by Engler, 1985) classified traits into several categories. ‘Central traits’ are basic to an individual’s personality, while ‘secondary traits’ are more peripheral. ‘Common traits’ are those recognised within a culture and may vary from culture to culture. ‘Cardinal traits’ are those by which an individual may be strongly recognised.

Cattell proposed a two-tiered personality structure with sixteen primary factors

and five secondary factors. Eysenck (as cited by Engler, 1985), believed in three traits; extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. Building on the work of Cattell, Goldberg proposed a five-dimension personality model, known as the “Big Five”.

### **2.9.2 *Psychoanalytic theory***

Luthans (2002) states that psychoanalytic theory explain human behaviour in terms of interaction between the various components of personality. Sigmund Freud is the founder of this theory where he divided the human personality into three significant components; the ego, superego and id. Freud claims that personality is shaped by the interactions of these components.

### **2.9.3 *Behaviourist theory***

Skinner initiated the behaviourist theory where he explains personality in terms of reactions to external stimuli. People’s behaviour is formed by processes such as operant conditioning (Skinner, 1972).

### **2.9.4 *Humanistic theory***

Maslow and Carl Rogers are proponents of this theory for personality where it is emphasized that people have free will and they play an active role in determining how they behave. Maslow views that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy and these needs vary in their urgency and power (Carver & Scheier, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, the ‘traits theory’ as proposed by Allport (1976) and subsequently enhanced by Goldberg, will be adopted. Goldberg categorised personality into five main types known as the Big – Five, (Srivastava, 2006). As this study is aimed at examining personality characteristics with respect to career success,

the traits theory of personality is found appropriate because it attempts to explain personality through its manifestation in behaviour. In the work environment, behaviour is the key factor in determining performance and the traits theory would be relevant for this study.

## **2.10 Big Five or Five-Factor Model ( FFM )**

Many traits have been identified which differentiates personality characters but they seem to cluster around five major dimensions, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional stability and Openness to experience, (Newstrom & Davis, 2002). These five dimensions are called the five-factor model of personality or FFM in short and some authors call it the Big – Five.

The five-factor model of personality describes the basic dimensions of the normal personality. Generally, there is a widespread agreement about the five personality dimensions and their content (Mount et al., 2005). The descriptions for these five dimensions are adopted from Furnham (2002), as follows. Furnham's descriptions are preferred because it has an inclination towards work related activities which will be more appropriate for this study on work values and career success.

- 1) Extraversion - Extraverts are active, expressive, impulsive and sociable.

They can also be risk-taking and prone to make mistakes. They do not have their enthusiasm dimmed but they need watching. They also need lots of stimulation and variety.

- 2) Agreeableness - Highly agreeable people are appreciative, forgiving, generous, kind, trusting and sympathetic. They are modest and straightforward.

- 3) Conscientiousness - They are efficient, organised, reliable, responsible, dependent, thorough and prudent. They are self-disciplined and get things done
- 4) Emotional Stability - They are calm, relaxed, comfortable and can cope with stress well. Some researchers also term this trait as 'Neuroticism'. This study adopts the term 'Emotional Stability' as this term has a positive connotation compared to 'Neuroticism', which means a lack of positive psychological adjustment and emotional stability, (Judge et. al.,1999).
- 5) Openness to Experience - They are curious, flexible, receptive, artistic, imaginative, original and creative. Typically, they have a wide range of interests and are quite intellectual. They embrace change and are sensitive to ideas of others.

## **2.11 Career Success**

Career success is a way for individuals to fulfill their need for achievement and power. At the individual level it refers to acquisition of materialistic advancement, power and satisfaction. Knowledge of career success helps individuals develop appropriate strategies for career development, (Lau & Shaffer, 1999).

Career success is defined by Ng et al. (2005) as the accumulated positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one's work experiences. Career success is operationalised in two ways. The first includes variables that measure objective or extrinsic career success. These include indicators of career success that can be seen and therefore evaluated objectively by others, such as salary attainment and the number of promotions in one's career (Judge et al., 1995). The second way that career success is