

CAN HRM UTILIZE HERO ANALYSES IN IDENTIFYING EMPLOYEES' PROFILES? THE CASE OF THE SLOVAK AND CZECH REPUBLICS

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ABSTRACT

Finding feasible ways to predict the behaviour of organizations' current and future employees is one of the most crucial HRM roles. The identification of heroes is a potential and innovative technique. The objective of the study is to identify heroes recognized by university students (to-be employees) and the values the students attach to them, as the grounds for establishing an employee profile useful in recruitment and selection processes. Simultaneously, the study pays attention to the respondents' cultural context, namely the one of national culture (students of Slovak and Czech universities). The sample employee profiles open new opportunities for further exploration of the approach on the academic level as well as in the HRM practice. The differences identified in applicants' hero categories significantly enhance understanding of their behavioural tendencies. The findings open several questions about the role of companies as well as educational systems in future employees' value system evolution.

Keywords: human resources management, role model, heroes, value profile, selection process

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INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

During the lifespan, every individual evolves in multiple dimensions that include not only his/her physical development, but also cognitive and psychosocial development (Sigelman & Rider, 2015). The dimensions of an individual's development are the subject of the integrating field of developmental psychology embracing various areas. Initially, it dealt with child

development, later with human development, and currently it focuses on lifespan development (Burman, 2016). Traditionally, developmental psychology presents a standardized picture of individuals' development, primarily emphasizing the description of universal psychological development in the environment perceived as "common". Woodhead (1999) builds his theory on this viewpoint and, in addition, tries to highlight the importance of an individual's

development as part of a socio-cultural process. Therefore, he pays more attention to cultural aspects of an individual's development.

Culture as sustainable behaviour, ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared by the members of large groupings and transferred from one generation to another (Myers, 1993), has an impact on human beings in various ways and in various situations.

Culture itself consists of several levels with each of them influencing individuals differently. Theorists view these levels differently; for instance, Hofstede (1997) recognizes the following culture levels: the levels of the culture differentiated by a nation represented by a region, ethnicity, religion or language, by gender, generation, social layer, or organization for those who work for it. Brooks (2003) presents various levels of culture as well and presents it in ascending subcultures, such as professional (occupational), organizational and societal, work, national, and supranational ones.

Different authors also presented the structure of culture in various ways. Hofstede (1997) depicts it as an "onion" that may be revealed in layers. These layers include symbols, heroes, and rituals grouped under activities (they can be observed directly). In his perception of culture, the core of it is formed of values (they cannot be observed directly). Schein (2004) presents the structure of culture in layers as well. He recognizes three of them, the deepest one being formed of basic assumptions (non-observable), i.e. natural and self-evident views and ideas that function as sources of values and behaviour. Values form the mid-layer, and the observable layer consists of artefacts (such as language, rituals, heroes, etc.).

Values that represent the non-observable part as well as heroes, or idols (Melnick & Jackson, 2002), examples (Grác, 1990), role models (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007), and behavioural models (Copuš, 2015) that represent its observable part are constituents of any culture. Levels of culture comprise many values represented on its visible layer by various heroes whose influence on individuals is diverse. Heroes embody values (Vrabec & Petranová, 2013) and thus a hero is perceived as a person whose voluntary deeds represent moral and ethical values in a particular time

(Taylor, 2010). Some values, however, exceed a particular period and place and they can be perceived in wider context – some as universal ones (Sanchez, 1998).

One of the heroes' functions is their instructional function (Grác, 1990). The basis of this function lies in the assumption that an individual imitates the behaviour of the relevant hero, if he/she perceives the hero's behaviour in a positive way in comparison with the individual's own behaviour. This leads to a specific experience that can be described as the situation when an individual is not as good as his/her hero, but the individual wants to be such, and therefore it is probable that he/she will modify the behaviour towards his/her model's one. The mode and intensity of such a behavioural change is also conditioned by the cultural level of which the individual as well as the heroes in question are part. The heroes can be persons with whom the individual is in personal contact, e.g. his/her parents. In their study, Kogan, Stricker, Lewis, and Brooks-Gunnvo (2017) describe the influence of the parents on their children's development in several areas, for instance, having an impact on their children's future success in the studies. Another example of the heroes in direct contact with individuals covers their friends or peers (Eccles & Roeser, 1999).

Currently, individuals who are generally denoted as Generation Z (born after 1995 (Woods, 2013) even though there is no consensus on the exact year delineation (Maioli, 2017)), participate in education processes or enter the labour markets. This generation is strongly influenced by another phenomenon – the Internet (Berkup, 2014). Virtually unlimited amounts of information covering daily news on various well-known persons (sportsmen/women, politicians, singers, actors, actresses and the like) cause these personalities to have an impact on individuals without any personal contact (Brown & Basil, 2003). From a psychological point of view, individuals can perceive them as their heroes and therefore the individuals' behaviour can be shaped by such models as well.

Identification of individuals' heroes can thus provide a picture of their current and future

orientation (Šajgalíková, Copuš, 2017) not only in their personal but also professional life.

Organizations endeavour to set criteria on their employees and draw up their profiles consisting of a range of aspects. For instance, Susilowati, Anggraeni, Fauzi, Andewi, Handayani, and Maselena (2018) present intellectual criteria including, e.g., education, systematic thinking, reasoning, and real solutions, concentration, flexible thinking, creative imagination, anticipation, or intelligence potential. Another criterion in their list includes work attitude, which covers, e.g., rigour and responsibility, prudence, ethics, encouragement, achievement or vitality. The profile composed in this way can be used in recruitment and selection. Profile matching is one of the methods used to help Human Resources in discovering gaps between applicants' capabilities and the criteria attributed to the position in question (Nasriyah, Arham & Aini, 2016; Brunet-Thornton, Cramer & Jirsák, 2019).

At present, personnel officers use and, at the same time, refine and seek techniques allowing them to formulate profiles of their employees on various positions and enable them to draw up profiles of applicants for various jobs and compare them (e.g. Gonzalez, Santos, & Orozco, 2012, Singh, Rose, Visweswariah, & Chenthamarakshan, 2010). The identification of heroes admired by the applicants can become one of such techniques. It attains a specific importance in the group of university students who prepare for their professional career with regard to their positioning on the labour market. Because this group is still malleable within the tertiary educational institutions, Europe Strategy 2020 (European Commission, 2010) also focuses on it, seeing it as an important element in the European Union effort to achieve sustainable economic growth for the better future of Europe as a whole (Pereira, 2011). The Strategy aims at increasing employment rate and presents numerous goals and expectations of the students of tertiary educational institutions as potential employees. Thus, the identification of their heroes can become an indicator of their future behaviour in job performance and brings a new dimension to its utilization not only in educational processes, but

also in recruitment and selection of this group of applicants for jobs. This aspect of hero identification and its usage has been of little interest so far. It is important namely in the perception of the fact that interviews and questionnaire surveys use language as a tool. Because questions related to values deal with highly abstract notions, the danger of misunderstandings as well as shifts in meanings is highly probable. If the picture of a hero is completed with the values the hero represents, the subjects' responses get closer toward the more observable layer of the image.

Each category of heroes embodies certain sets of values in particular cultural contexts (Šajgalíková & Copuš, 2018). The question is how heroes and their values change in different cultural settings or which levels of culture exercise a more distinct impact of heroes on behaviour modelling of individuals – the members of individual subcultures. This also evokes a question of how the employee profiles will change from the perspective of different cultural contexts.

The objective of our survey is to identify heroes admired by the university students (as future employees) based on a particular cultural level (national culture in this case), and identify the values attributed to the heroes by the respondents. At the same time, we look at the opportunities to use the results of the survey in managerial practice, primarily in developing employee profiles from the point of view of human resources management.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was used to identify heroes and the relevant values. The sample consisted of 168 university students. Selected universities in the Slovak and Czech Republics represented in both cases the most recognized university with high requirements and an average one. The questionnaires were distributed in cooperation with the research partners at each university online via school intranet, and the respondents participated in the survey on a voluntary basis.

The questionnaire comprises two types of questions, demographic and research ones. The demographic questions cover age, gender, and

the location of the respondent's educational institution.

The research questions include the following:

- Write down who you take for a hero in your life, i.e. the person you admire, and you want to be like him/her. If there is nobody in your life, please, put it down as well.

(This question is open, and the respondents introduce their responses in the way they want, i.e., as a single word or a phrase or describe their responses in full sentences.)

- Choose the category your hero introduced in the question above belongs to.
- (This question is closed with the possibility to choose just one option out of the range provided.)*

- Explain, please, why you admire your hero, i.e. what are the values (qualities) of your hero you look up to as the basis of your esteem exercises.

(This question is open, and the respondents introduce their responses in the way they want, i.e., as a single word or a phrase or describe their responses in full sentences.)

- Choose the category of the values you look up to in your hero and you introduced in your previous response.

(This question is closed with the possibility to choose one or more options out of the range provided.)

The categories of heroes include: family member (mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, and the like); friend; teacher; sportsman/woman; show-business figure (singer, actor, actress, and the like); religious character (God, saint, priest, nun, monk, etc.); entrepreneur or manager; politician; philanthropist; another popular personality; others.

The values of heroes include: wisdom and intelligence; kindness; talent; wealth (money);

beauty; courage, fearlessness; support of others; responsibility; ambitions, determination; creativity; success; modesty; honesty and fairness; generosity; stubbornness; diligence; friendliness and outgoingness; frankness; social influence, others.

The presented categories of heroes and values result from previous surveys (Copuš, 2014).

Because the respondents could attribute more values to a hero (there was no limit set for minimum or maximum number), we calculated the average of attributed values to a hero so that the results for individual hero categories could be compared. The data come in the interval $<0,1>$ with 0 meaning that the value is not attributed to the hero by any respondent and 1 meaning that the value is attributed to the hero by all respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part covers the results of hero identification and the attributed values; the second part presents the potential use of the results in a respondent's profiling based on his/her hero.

Identification of heroes

The results of hero identification by university students in the Slovak and Czech Republics are presented separately and then compared. Figure 1 shows that in the responses of the Slovak students the highest hero representation includes family members (52.50%) while other categories do not occur significantly. Heroes of the category publicly known persons (including sportsman/woman; show-business figure; politician; another popular personality) account for 6.25% and the religious characters account for 3.75%. Friends as heroes account only for 1.25% and the category of other heroes is identified by 6.25% of respondents. The category of no hero accounts for a high level of 26.25%.

In the Czech students' responses, family members also represent the highest number (42.05%) followed by publicly known persons (14.77%). Other categories do not reach any significant representation. Teachers as heroes account for 3.41% responses and friends as heroes for 2.27%. The category of businessman/manager is represented in 1.14%

responses and the category of other heroes' accounts for 11.36%. No hero category accounts for 25.00% of responses.

When comparing the results for both the countries, several similarities occur. Family members as a category prevail pronouncedly in both samples. This can stem from the fact that a family constitutes the primary social group (Singh, 2011) influencing its members' behaviour and its leading personalities become naturally heroes for the others. These findings could be interesting in comparison with other countries in this particular age group. Similar results account for the category of publicly known persons, even though the occurrence is

much lower. The ratio of no-hero responses is also comparable. These results are surprising because – as mentioned above – media and the Internet provide various models (whether they are successful entrepreneurs, sportsmen/women, artists, and the like) and a lot of money is invested in their endorsement. In spite of the fact, the ratio of the students without any hero is relatively high and, on the other hand, the representation of publicly known persons is relatively low. This means that the respondents do not manage to find any positive model and they follow their *ad hoc* heroes, and therefore the influence of them on this group of students remains unclear.

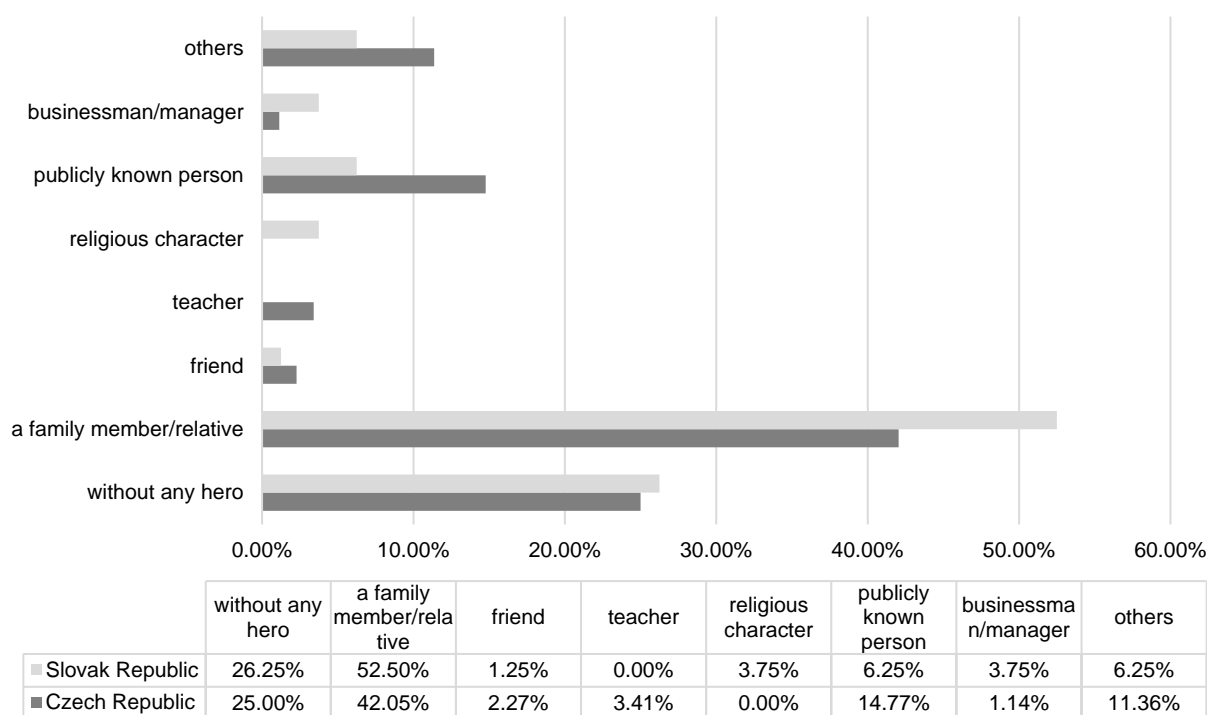


Figure 1. Heroes of the students by categories and countries

Source: Developed by authors

Identification of attributed values

To understand how heroes can influence the respondents, it is necessary to identify the values the respondents attribute to their heroes, i.e. what values the respondents admire in their heroes. To compare the results of the students from the Slovak and Czech Republics, the average number of attributed values to hero is

calculated. The results are surprisingly similar in both the groups and reach 8.3 values per a hero in average. Therefore, the figures do not require any coefficients to be used in calculations.

First, we present the values identified by the students in general, and then we look at the selected categories of heroes. The data appear in the interval <0,1> with 0 meaning that the value

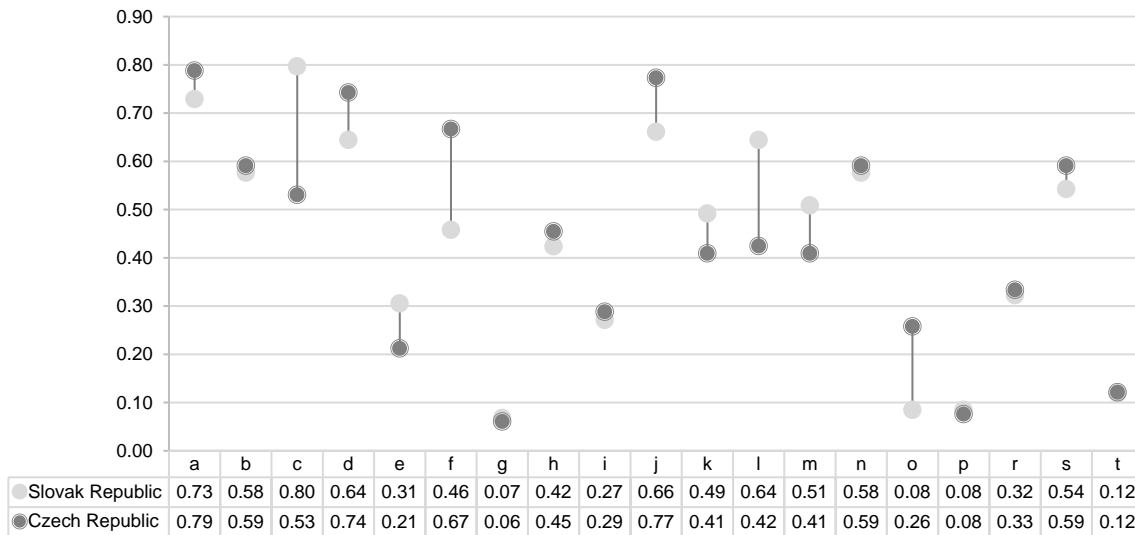
is not attributed to the hero by any respondent and 1 meaning that the value is attributed to the hero by all respondents.

Figure 2 shows that the students of the Slovak universities consider kindness (0.80) as the most recognized value followed by wisdom and intelligence (0.73), honesty, fairness (0.66), responsibility (0.64), and diligence (0.64). These values represent reliable grounds for their work in services, namely social services. The least identified values include wealth (money) (0.07), social influence (0.08), beauty (0.08), and stubbornness (0.12).

In the responses of the students of the Czech universities the most recognized values are wisdom and intelligence (0.79) closely followed by honesty and fairness (0.77), responsibility (0.74), and courage and fearlessness (0.67). The least recognized values start with wealth

(money) (0.06), beauty (0.08), and stubbornness (0.12). These values mean reliable grounds for knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial jobs.

Even though the above-mentioned lists of values exercise some similarities, they show many differences even though the two countries are historically and territorially very close. The common recognized values include wisdom and intelligence, honesty, fairness, and responsibility and the least recognized values comprise wealth (money), beauty, and stubbornness. The significant difference relates to kindness, a diligence in which their representation in the responses of the Czech students is much lower than in the responses of the Slovak students; on the other hand, the representation of courage, fearlessness, and social influence is much more outspoken in the Czech group.



Legend: a - wisdom and intelligence, b - support of others, c - kindness, d - responsibility, e - talent, f - courage, fearlessness, g - wealth (money), h - ambitions, determination, i - success, j - honesty and fairness, k - generosity, l - diligence, m - friendliness and outgoingness, n - frankness, o - social influence, p - beauty, r - creativity, s - modesty, t - stubbornness

Figure 2. The values attributed to heroes by respondents

Source: Developed by authors

To understand the influence of a hero on a subject's behaviour, the values must be attributed to the corresponding hero category (Figure 3). The most represented category of heroes - a family member - is used to demonstrate the construction of a sample

employee profile based on the identification of his/her hero.

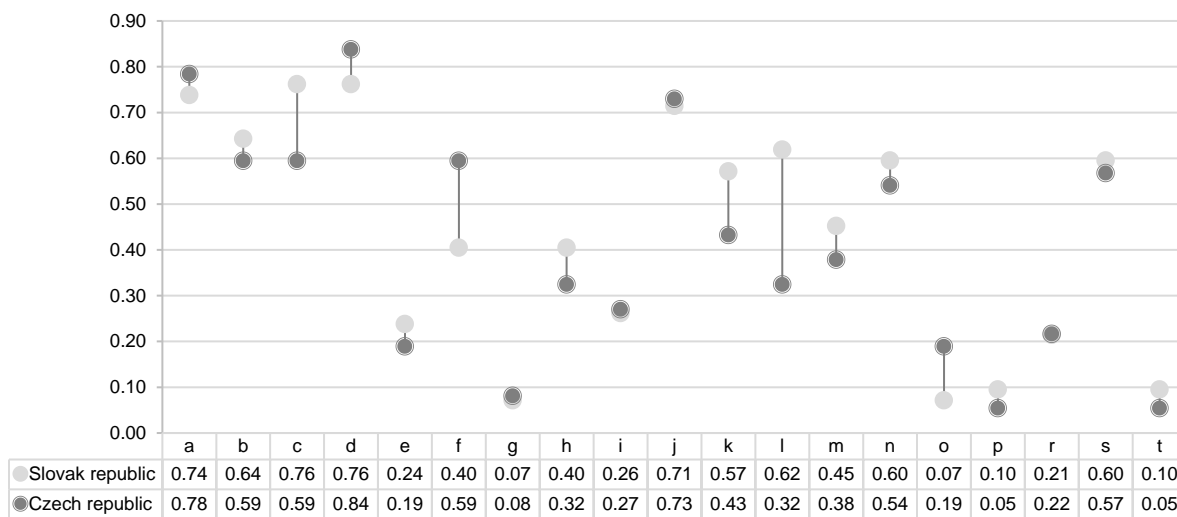
As comes from the above results, the most represented category of heroes is a family member. To a large extent the results support the idea of common family values in the region

(they may slightly differ in the subcultural context the family belongs to).

The students of the Slovak universities attribute the following values to the hero of this category: kindness (0.76), responsibility (0.76) wisdom and intelligence (0.74), honesty and fairness (0.71). The least represented values include wealth (money) (0.07), social influence (0.07), beauty (0.10) and stubbornness (0,10).

The students of the Czech universities attribute them the values including responsibility (0.84), wisdom and intelligence (0.78), honesty and fairness (0.73). The least represented values comprise beauty (0.05), stubbornness (0.5), wealth (money) (0.08).

In both respondent groups, the most represented values include wisdom and intelligence, honesty and fairness, and responsibility. The least represented values are beauty, wealth (money), and stubbornness. The differences lie in the values of kindness and diligence that is represented in the responses of the Czech students as well, however, with lower score than in the responses of the Slovak students. On the contrary, the Slovak students attribute the values of courage, fearlessness, and social influence to their heroes with lower score than their Czech peers.



Legend: a - wisdom and intelligence, b - support of others, c – kindness, d – responsibility, e – talent, f - courage, fearlessness, g - wealth (money), h - ambitions, determination, i – success, j - honesty and fairness, k – generosity, l – diligence, m - friendliness and outgoingness, n – frankness, o -social influence, p -beauty, r – creativity, s – modesty, t - stubbornness

Figure 3. The values attributed to the family members as heroes

Source: Developed by authors

A sample employee profile

Composition of a sample employee profile is the key output of our effort. Based on the identified values for individual hero categories it is possible to compose separate profiles. Using the most represented hero category of family members below we provide the sample profiles separately for the Slovak (Figure 4) and Czech (Figure 5) respondents.

The left-hand side list of values includes those ones the employee is likely to respect and thus they may influence his/her behaviour, in the right-hand side list the values are most probably not recognized and therefore not influencing his/her behaviour.



Figure 4. Employee profile based on the identification of a family member as a hero (Slovak Republic)
Source: Developed by authors



Figure 5 Employee profile based on the identification of a family member as a hero (Czech Republic)
Source: Developed by authors

As comes from the above profiles even though the virtual employees represent similar values, their ranking and some slight differences can give the more reliable answer to the question who to select for a particular job. Such an answer would not be acquired if the analysis were based just on the identification of a hero category. The identification of a hero category together with the attributed values provides more detailed and more reliable picture.

The composed profiles can be used in various contexts. A company employee profile can be compared with the applicant/employee's profile, profiles can be used in exploration of the opportunities in selecting larger groups of employees, the changes in employee behaviour can be monitored based on the profiles and the likes. The reliability of the composed profiles

depends on many factors, however, anchoring the employee profiling in particular contexts makes it more reliable.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the study is the identification of heroes admired by university students as future employees based on the values, they attribute them, and compare the peer groups coming from the Slovak and Czech Republics. Both the republics formed a common state with uniform educational system and mutually understandable languages for decades and therefore some cultural characteristics are expected to be similar. The results confirm many similarities, but they show some differences. Both the groups identify family

members as the most outstanding hero category with significantly lower occurrence of other categories. The responses with no-hero category in both groups account for the almost identical score.

Many similarities in the responses of both groups can be also seen in the values attributed to individual hero categories. Here, however, some differences can be identified in the general ranks of values as well as those attributed to individual hero categories. Because the respondents are members of one generational subculture, the differences may stem from the differences in the national cultures in question.

The results of the analyses are not the final outcomes, but they can be used for employee profiling. To demonstrate the approach, the category of family members as heroes is used. Based on the identified differences in the values attributed to the heroes, two separate profiles can be composed (Figures 4 and 5). They may serve as samples of the hero identification that can be used in recruitment and selection processes. The method helps minimize the image the applicant/employee can purposefully create because he/she is familiar with the expected profile of the successful applicant/employee in a particular situation. This simple and quick hero identification can provide additional aspects of the employee/applicant value preferences and thus help the personnel officers understand the applicant/employees' personalities more adequately.

At present, in human resources management various techniques are used, aimed at analyses not only of knowledge and skills of job applicants, but also their personality traits and qualities. It becomes more and more evident that the latter are those whose importance is growing, for instance, from the perspective of building the most appropriate teams or achieving synergistic effects in joint efforts of the organization in question. Therefore, organizations compose employee profiles based either on the organization's expectations or on the comparison with the labour market and/or other competing organizations.

The identification of heroes admired by applicants can be one of the techniques in composing or completing such profiles. It is

obvious that the future behaviour of the candidates and employees can be explored only if multiple approaches are applied and therefore the method of hero identification can be one of them. Because each employee/applicant as well as organisation must be considered on a cultural/subcultural level, it is important to identify also the influence of the relevant level and implement it in the profile. Hero identification is just the initial information and it must be interpreted in wider contexts.

The results of the study show some tendencies and opportunities for applying this methodology in human resources management; however, the sample range of hero categories and values are limited and ask for much wider exploration. Therefore, the future research will cover more comparisons on the levels of national cultures (international comparison) as well as those of occupational, social and generational subcultures. The long-term research should monitor the changes in hero categories as well as the attributed values.

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