Relationships between Content and Hierarchy of Values, Demographic and Academic Variables among University Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to study the values, hierarchies and content of students of the Payame Noor University. The sample in this study consists of 487 university students (250 female and 238 males) who were selected by the cluster-random sampling method. The Schwartz values survey was administered to them. The information was analysed using the SPSS program. The results indicated that the priorities of values hierarchies were Benevolence, Universalism, Security, Self-direction, Tradition, Power, Achievement, Conformity, Stimulation and Hedonism. The collected values are stated in the first priority and the individual values are dominated in the second priority. There are no significant differences between the girls and boys in the hierarchies of values and no significant differences between the science and humanity students, or married and single students.
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1. Introduction

Values are beliefs about what is good and important. The sum of such values forms a person's value system.   The value system is defined as the way in which people organize, rank and prioritise the topics and make decisions based on them (Ursery, 2008). Value is a concept by which a person or group can be labelled (Garry, Gelade, 2008) or that creates a deep tendency in behaviour so that a matter or reality is preferred to others (Hofstede, 2001) or guiding principles of what people consider important in life and how something ought to be (Cheng & Fleischmann, 2010), and serve a link between self and society (Rokeach, 1979, Koepfle & Fleischmann, 2011).

Some of these values show how to do something, for example, pride, self-regulation, kindness, while others show that objects are valuable in a person's life, for example, money, power, security, family, health and wisdom.

They are complex sets of strategies and personal priorities that are used to make personal decisions, and are built on the knowledge, beauty, experience, religious and ethical backgrounds or sets of these (Olson, Stone, 2005). There can be classified into four major categories: Personal, national, religious, and global. The four supporter systems of these categories are families, governments, religious centers and mass media such as television and the internet respectively (soltanifar, 2011).

Value priorities are formed on the basis of the socialization process or cultural and social backgrounds (Schwartz, 1992 Schwartz, Bilsky, 1987, 1990). They are influenced by developmental stages, contextual variables (for example, ethical

and race status), which, in turn, are affected by the attribute process and create a deep tendency to see the world in exceptional ways (Aronson, 1999, Kirk patric, Shaver, 1990, Miller, 1995, Shely, 2004).

To obtain and save these value priorities generally occurs through an unconscious interaction among developmental, emotional and attribution processes (Shely, 2004). Teaching and training can transfer the values and skills in more standards ways (Saikhifini, 2011). Values are the main factors not only in culture, but are strong determiners for human behaviour as well as for satisfaction, happiness and progress (Posner, Roy, 2008). Values can be considered guides and factors that determine attitudes, ideologies and social functions that are observed in traditions, laws, beliefs and lifestyles. In psychology, values are important and are investigated from both the functional and theoretical dimensions. From the theoretical aspect the following value are considered:

A: Beliefs and values are transmitted across generations. B: Some networks or constellations of beliefs and values become reliably codified into recognizable systems of thought (e.g., authoritarianism). C: What people believe about why they and others do what they do (i.e., their attributions have a demonstrable impact on human development and functioning. D: Developmental, affective and attribution processes are inextricably linked to the beliefs and values people claim as their own. E) Such processes often occur at a relatively automatic or non-conscious level (Aronson, 1999, Carig, Shely, 2005).

In recent decades, most research about values were based on Hofstede (2001) or Schwartz (1994, 1997). Both these researchers have investigated values in many countries; however, the research by Schwartz is more significant for two reasons: First, Hofstede's study consisted of 50 countries that are not in this study and their samples were working in an international company whereas the sample of Schwartz consisted of 73 countries that were evaluated at the personal and national levels (Garry, Gelade, 2008); and second, the research of Schwartz produced more hypotheses than Hofstede. These constitute the reasons why the present research is based on the values theory of Schwartz.

Schwartz (1994, 1999) organized a conceptual system into three domains. These domains cope with the three social principles of organizations. The first domain is related to the relationship of persons and groups. The second aims at behaviour in groups. That is when society balances and coordinates different people's behaviours within it. The third domain shows the relationship between humans and nature. This relationship can be built on control or concordance. The culture based on control shapes the values that human duty is to control and shape the world based on human ideals. According to Schwartz's value theory, there are ten broad cross-culturally divided individual and collective values. A) Individual values insist of benevolence, universalism, tradition, security and conformity. B) Collective values consist of power, achievement, stimulation and hedonism (Schwartz, Galit, Sagiv, 2000).

Schwartz (1992, 1994, Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990, Schwartz, Ros (1995) describe the derivations of the ten basic values. For example, a conformity value was derived from the prerequisites of interaction and of group survival. For interaction to proceed smoothly and for groups to maintain themselves, individuals must restrain impulses and inhibit actions that might hurt others. A self-direction value was derived from organism needs for mastery and from the interaction requirements of autonomy and independence. Each of the ten basic values can be characterized by describing its central motivational goal**: 1- Self-Direction.** Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring. **2- Stimulation:** Excitement, novelty, and challenges in life. **3- Hedonism:** Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself. **4- Achievement:** Personal success through

demonstrating competence according to social standards. **5- Power:** Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources. **6- Security:** Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self. **7- Conformity:** Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. **8- Tradition:** Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self. **9- Benevolence:** Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the 'in-group'). **10- Universalism:** Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

2. Results

The number of participants in this study is 487; 52% of them are female and 47.1% are male. The percentage of unmarried participants is 85% and 6.9% of them are married; 45.5% of the subjects are studying in the field of humanities and in the field of basic science the percentage of participants is 54.5%. The participants' aged between 19 and 23 is 79%, while the percentage between 24 and 27 years old is 14.6%. The five primary priorities that were analysed consisted of individual family values, security, health, respect for parents, and respect and having privacy. The five last priorities, such as ambition values, Epicureanism, authority, pleasure and wealth are also surveyed by analysis of the students' value priorities. The results about hierarchy of basic values are shown in bellow:

1. **Benevolence** (mean= 64.31, standard deviation= 9.71). **2. Universalism** (mean= 62.5, standard deviation= 8.79). **3. Security** (mean= 50.49, standard deviation=7.46). **4. Self-direction** (mean=42.65, standard deviation=7.53). **5**. **Tradition** (mean= 34.56, standard deviation= 8.79). **6. Power** (mean=33.06, standard deviation=8.07). **7**. **Achievement** (mean= 32.40, standard deviation=7.28). **8. Conformity** (mean=26.53, standard deviation=5.88). **9**. **Stimulation** (mean=19.60, standard deviation=4.19). **10. Hedonism** (mean=12.05, standard deviation=3.17). In this hierarchy, the collected values are stated in the first priority and the individual values are dominated in the second priority. The final values with an mean of 196.96 have more priority than the instrumental values with an mean of 181.21 by analysing the values hierarchy according to being a final value or being as an instrumental value. Young values hierarchies based on four main values are analysed and the results is shown in the first table:

Table 1. Frequency distribution of four main values.

Kind of Values	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Percentage	SD
Self enhancement	167	37	77.53	30.3	13.8
Self transcendence	206	26	126.56	22.4	18.86
Openness to change	150	22	74.31	23.8	11.87
Conservation	205	37	111.58	23. 7	17.04

Results of the study showed that self transcendence had more mean than self-enhancement. and conservation had more mean than openness to change. The results of the analysis of the collected data is illustrated below in order to answer the question of whether or not there is a significant difference between students' value hierarchies and their gender. The difference can be seen among them based on their conducted averages, as shown below in table 2.

Table 2. The result of the Mann-Whitney test between genders for hierarchy of basic values.

Values Tradition	Self Direction		Stimulation		Hedonism		Achievement			
Gender Male Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mean 237.85 227.47 249.21	221.95	245.09	226.94	247.90	240.49	237.67	240.30			
U- value 25754	24517.500		26083		28002		28045			
Sig.P 0.08	0.011		0.133		0.823		0.846			

Values Universalism	Security		Conformity		Power		Benevolence			
Gender male female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Mean 259.04 220.01 255.81	218.08	257.52	238.80	239.18	232.68	244.59	216.37			
U- value 24083	23650		28290.500		26920.500		23266			
Sig.P 0.005	0.002		0.976		0.345		0.01			

The results show that there is a significant difference between male and female students for the values of self-direction, universalism, benevolence and security. In addition, there is a significant difference between male and female students in instrumental value, as shown in table 3.

Table3. The result of the Mann- Whitney test for comparing final and instrument values   between male and female

values	Mean		U- value	Sig.P
Gender	Male	Female		
Final	229.02	247.083	26101	0.137
Instrumental	220.18	255.67	24119	0.005

The results for considering different value hierarchies in different fields of study show that there is a significant difference for students' value hierarchies between field of humanities and basic science. The students' value hierarchies in the field of humanities are: tradition in the first priority, stimulation in the second priority, security in the third priority, benevolence in the fourth priority, achievement in the fifth priority, self-direction in the sixth priority, hedonism in the seventh priority, universalism in the eighth priority, conformity in the ninth priority and power in the last priority.

Table 4. The results for the Mann- Whitney test for comparing value between basic sciences and humanities students

values	Mean		U- value	Sig.P
	basic sciences	humanities		
Security	231.36	232.78	264.2	0.909
Conformity	241.07	221.08	24271.50	0.108
power	241.70	220.31	24121	0.086
Benevolence	234.46	231.45	26449	0.935
Self- direction	236.90	226.10	25326.50	0.368
Stimulation	230.47	233.48	26178.50	0.787
Hedonism	237.19	225.75	25253	0.358
Achievement	233.52	225.75	2618.50	0.788
Tradition	226.38	238.77	25143	0.320
Universalism	237.92	224.86	25066	0.294

The results show that there is no significant difference in the ten basic values among students in humanities and basic science. In addition, there is no significant difference between ultimate-values and tool-values between the two mentioned groups.

Students' value hierarchies based on their marriage positions are shown in table 5.

Table 5. The results for the Mann- Whitney test for comparing value between married and single student.

values	Mean		U- value	Sig. P
	Single	married		
Security	224.04	216.48	6399	0.748
Conformity	221.03	255.47	5601	0,1144
power	223.29	226.20	6037.500	0.902
Benevolence	223.73	220.58	6530.500	0.894
Self- direction	225.26	200.70	5894.500	0.298
Stimulation	226.11	189.72	5543	0.123
Hedonism	220.93	256.73	5560.500	0.128
Achievement	223.46	224.05	6606	0.511
Tradition	222.39	237.88	6164	0.511
Universalism	223.4	223.89	6611.500	0.986

The conducted results show that single students' value hierarchies are in the following order: stimulation in the first step, self-direction in the second step, security in the third step, benevolence in the fourth step, universalism in the fifth step, achievement in the sixth step, power in the seventh step, tradition in the eighth step, conformity in the ninth step and hedonism in the last step. However, for married students the value hierarchies are different. They are ordered into different

3. Conclusion

The results show that students' values are prioritized as ten factors: benevolence, tendency towards the world, safety, self-guidance, and tendency towards tradition, tendency towards power, development, harmony, tendency towards stimulation, and tendency towards pleasure. The distribution of these values in students are prioritized as four main factors: tendency towards helping others, which is more important than achieving personal goals and being conservative, which is more essential than the tendency towards change. In addition, the final or ultimate values are more important than the instrument values.

This value prioritization can be examined based on two dimensions. Dimension one: considering individual profits and the second dimension: being conservative versus the tendency towards change. It seems that students pay more attention to group profit rather than individual or personal ones. Benevolence and tendency towards the world are two examples of such group profit. Such values show that students pay attention to others as well as themselves, which agrees with the youth psychology. The mentioned values are caused by the needs of society and include understanding and perception, tolerating problems, supporting others and protecting the environment. This part of the research

classifications such as: hedonism in the first priority, conformity in the second, tradition in the third, power in the fourth, achievement in the fifth, universalism in the sixth, benevolence in the seventh, security in the eighth, self-direction in the ninth and stimulation in the last priority. However, there is no significant difference in the values between single and married students. In addition, the results show that there is no significant difference between them in their final and instrumental values. agrees with international psychological findings about young people (Schwartz, Bilisky 1992).

After the two main mentioned priorities, security has occupied the third place and refers to the needs of both the individual and society. The importance of security shows that young people need safety. Also Mazlo believes that values are a manifestation of needs. This issue

proves that the safety need is active. Schwartz believes that safety values are caused by the society and organism needs. Moreover, the social and economical circumstances of the society can affect the importance of security.

After security, other values are ranked based on the profit to the individual and society. For example, self-direction is based on individual profit whereas tradition is based on the needs of society and so on. Stimulation and hedonism are the least important among young people's priorities, however, this ranking does not agree with the psychology of the youth very much. According to another dimension, that is, openness to change or conservatism, young people are expected to prefer values based on change, however, the research result proves that values based on being conservative are more important to the youth.

This subject can be interpreted from two aspects. Either young people are affected by the official training of the society and religious thoughts and training, which leads them to prioritize society's needs over their own individual needs (likes and dislikes) or it could be an indicator that shows they have suppressed their own feelings because they lack the right situation or facilities to meet their needs. The results of this research reveal a very important subject. Students' development has been reduced to the seventh rank. This is really surprising, because development should be a very strong motivation for a student to continue. That students' development is not an important value for them is worrisome because it can be considered as social and scientific damage. Another important point is that power is more important to students than development. It is logical to think that young people think of development as a tool to gain power. However, the present findings introduce these two factors differently. The findings show that gaining power and social influence have a higher rank for students in comparison to individual success.

According to Schwartz (1999), young people in developing countries who have a low level of social and economical development, have good reason to prioritize gaining power over their own individual or educational success. Therefore, it is not strange to see they prefer superiority, gaining honour and having a high level of social rank. The tendency towards stimulation and pleasure has been mentioned as the last and least priority for students. One of the other findings of this research shows that male and female students have different attitudes towards self-guidance, universalism, benevolence and security. They do not have very different final or ultimate goals in their life but their instrumental goals or how they achieve their goals makes male and female students different from each other. Schwartz, Rubel, (2005) have also reported that benevolence, universalism

and security mean different things to male and female students. On the whole this finding shows the strong harmony between male and female students' values and expectations. As for the main four factors, male and female students are different.

According to the research findings, the student's major (course) does not affect their attitude towards life's values and it seems that the lack of difference in values between students of humanities and basic science is because of having the same social values and respecting society's values. As the findings show, there is no difference between the values for single and married students. Schwartz & Bardi (2000) also agreed with this. Since individual values are formed and to some extent fixed until marriage age, marriage is not supposed to change people's attitude towards life and what is more couples who get married, usually have similar interests, which is a determining factor in their fixation of attitude.

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