



## Value hierarchies of students

<sup>1</sup>Saman Hasani, <sup>2</sup>Gholamreza Tajbakhsh, <sup>2</sup>Leila Azimi

1. Department of Sociology, Boroujerd Science and Research branch, Islamic Azad University, Boroujerd, Iran
2. Department of Sociology, Boroujerd Science and Research branch, Islamic Azad University, Boroujerd, Iran

### ABSTRACT

*According to the importance of values in the value structure of society, the present study aims to evaluate the value structure of students based on the Schwartz's theory. To do this, we used 258 male and female undergraduate university students of Ghachsaran. This is a survey study with the following results: About Schwartz's value system, universalism and generosity value priorities are considered as the first and second priorities of male and female students. But the difference in power orientation, conformity and traditionalism are used as the sixth, seventh and eighth priority among men. These types of values for women are located in eighth, seventh and sixth priorities from which we can infer that women are more conservative than men, although this issue was statistically significant. The results also showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and traditionalism.*

**Keywords:** value system, Schwartz, social status, economic status, students

### INTRODUCTION

Value is one of the most fundamental factors in explaining the individual thoughts, actions and also the formation of social life. Value is a principle and basis which is verified through the custom and tradition view of the majority of people. It is associated with spatial and temporal situations. According to Quinn, values are rooted emotions that community members share them. These feelings often determine the actions and behavior of community members [5].

Values' importance is shown during the youth and adolescence, because at this time the values change and the implications are being questioned [4]. According to Debs, value system is established along with the knowledge world in adolescents and regulates their behavior and also helps them to clarify their ideas. Adolescents, compared to other age groups, have much more importance because over the next few years, the older age groups will be replaced by them. That is why values, that these groups believe them, will mainly form the value system of society. The reason, that why we discuss the issue of values refers to its importance in structure of general culture. Currently, Iran is transferring from the traditional to industrial society and changing values is much more considerable in the process of economic, social and industrial changes (Sahami, 1998: 16). Formation of values, thereby determine the rate of value continuity or gaps between the different generations. It helps us to reveal the challenges, crises and also the importance of value structures and processes of society associated with changes and damages in it [7]. In Iran's present society, due to the young population, a special place is given to this group because these people, as experts, will form the future of the country. Thus, a sociological study of students' value priorities is important. This study aimed to identify and compare the status of value systems among pre-university students and their awareness from the value structure.

### Research Goals

#### Overall Goal

Inference of semantic and structural relationships of values among students in adolescence

#### Specific Purposes

- Identifying and assessing the students' value system
- evaluating the most important variables affecting the value system of students
- Comparing the values expressed in both male and female students

### Value Definition

Cohen calls values as rooted feelings that community members share them and mainly determine their behavior and actions [5]. But Chalmers Johnson (1984) in a more sociological definition has emphasized on the social patterns of values. In terms of its acceptability among a group of people, it can provide the basis and criterion for mutual expectations and direction of the behavior: values are social patterns that the rate of their acceptability by a group of people is a basis for shared expectations and norms to guide behavior. This description also covers the value of subculture.

### **Literature Review**

Empirical study of the 1970s stated in the West and was quickly welcomed. The literature of study is based on this assumption that cognition is in condensation form. There are many researches in general, and in the system of values and value hierarchies in particular, in several research centers: regarding the importance and further credit of the works done in the university centers, we mention some of them:

Daryapour (1993) in a review "studying the structure of values and value priorities of Tehran citizens", studied three hypothesis through a survey method. The population of study consisted of all 18 year men and women of Tehran. According to the results of this research which have been conducted based on Schwartz's value structure, values like protecting the environment, family security, respect for parents and elders, independence and inner peace, were five values with high priority among the respondents. Based on this study, they had given higher place to these values and results of 10 values indicate that men and women difference in globalism, excitation and hedonism values were significant. Age had an impact on value priorities and the relationship between age and tradition, conformity and globalism value was significant. Also the people's income and the households had an impact on value priorities.

Sahami (1998) in a study called "value priorities of students" conducted an academic recognition of value system among the Islamic Azad university students of Marvdasht. His study results show that the values in priority order are: Self-transcendence, self-improvement, conservatism and readiness for change. Conservatism is inversely related to education and self-improvement and readiness for change is directly related to education. The father education level is inversely related to conservatism, self-improvement and readiness for change. It is also directly related well Self-transcendence.

Results of a study by Tamayou and Partou (2009) with a sample of 614 students from Brazil confirm the international findings in Schwartz's values theory (2005, 1992). They addressed on the construct validity of the questionnaire. The observed distinctions with the adult's patterns were as follows: relationship between universalism and benevolence, power and success, self-direction with the pleasure [3].

### **Theoretical Framework**

During the research and theoretical expression, we focused on the Schwartz views. Schwartz considered the human values as embodied cognition of abstract and desired goals. Metaposition which is used as guiding principles in the life of individuals and different groups and people categorize them in hierarchical order [12, 13]. The most striking feature of Schwartz's theory is that this theory, unlike previous theories that considered values hierarchically and ignored the relationship between them, talk about the structure and relations between value priorities, conflict and consensus priorities and not only classified the values. He offers his own theory based on three universal requirements and responses which should be given to these requirements (i.e. things that would later become value). They mention the institutions and 10 kinds of value determined with 57 subitems. These 10 value species come in two fundamental dimensions as follows: "desire to change" versus "being conservative" and "considering the beyond self" versus "improving the personal goals". In the end, Schwartz by dividing his values into two categories (the ultimate values and instrumental values) completed his discussion. Finally he reminds that this theory has much more explaining capability in comparison to the other theories. Compared with the previous theories, it has stronger structure, however, has never been safe from various critics.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study aims to use a survey method. Since that the overall goal of study is to assess the students' value priorities, to measure the variable we used a survey method.

### **Statistical Population and Sample**

The statistical population of this study includes pre-university students of Ghachsaran in 2013-2014 academic year. They were 856 students. Using the Cochran formula, we chose 258 students as the research sample. Explaining of the formulas and statistical functions to calculate the sample size is given.

$$n_i = \frac{2pq}{(T^2 pq + Nd^2)} \quad \left( \begin{array}{l} N = 856 \\ T = 1/96 \\ P = 0/5 \\ P = 0/5 \\ d = 0/05 \end{array} \right) \rightarrow n_i = 258$$

### Sampling method

Due to the large sample and the presence of several pre- university centers, and also the presence of a large number of students, Proportionate Stratified Sampling was used. Based on the number of students in each school, sample size percent was determined. Measuring instruments was Schwartz questionnaire.

### Validity and Reliability

To measure the validity and reliability of this study and the questionnaire, we used a sample including 20 students and conducted the Pre- Test. The final questionnaire, using the results of this test, was designed. To determine the validity of the questionnaire, we used formal validity. In the way that the questionnaire was investigated and confirmed by three faculty members and then it was used.

Questionnaire reliability has been determined using the Spearman-Brown split-half method and it was confirmed with 71% coefficient. We also employed the Cronbach alpha method. The alpha was 79 %, which was also evaluated in desirable level.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: the value hierarchies of students**

Value priorities	Value Types	Mean
1	Considering beyond self	77.22
2	conservatism	69.19
3	Improving the personal goals	48.28
4	Tendency towards changing	45.3

As the research results show, the assumption that the value priorities of students is conservative, is not verified because considering beyond self variable assigning the highest rating is the first priority of students with an average 77.22. Conservatism with an average of 69.19 in the second, improving the personal goals with an average 58/48 in the third rate and tending to change with the least average 45.30 is placed in the end of hierarchy of value system. Results of this study reject the mentioned assumption, while it has enough reasons for verifying this objective observation which changes happen from conservatism to the other values priorities.

**Table 2: 10 value priorities of students**

Benevolence	41.8
Universalism	35.5
Security	32.7
independence	27.3
Success	22.7
Conformity	18.66
Tradition	18.63
power	18.40
Motivation	10.68
pleasure	7

As the above table shows, Universalism and benevolence as smaller aspects of tendency towards meta-self has the highest average (35.5 and 41.8). Two security-oriented and power-orientation categories seem to have been severely affected by the current conditions of society, because according to the rotational value structure of the Schwartz, safety orientation is considered as an aspect of "conservatism" and the power-oriented as an aspect of "improving the personal goals", though perhaps we cannot reject this possibility that the value structure of our society is basically like this.

### The relationship between socio – economic status and value types

To study the relationship between socio – economic status and four values (conservatism, tendency to change, improving the personal goals, considering the meta-self) and also 10 types of value, we used ANOVA test. Given the significance level was lower than 0.05, the obtained result was statistically significant. In explaining the above mentioned results, we can say that in most of the previous studies, the relationship between conservatism and the higher class value priorities, or tendency to change value and middle class values, were positive. However, two of the ten value types had significant correlation with social class as follows.

#### A - The relationship between success and socio-economic status

**Table 3: ANOVA test between social class and success**

Changing sources	Freedom degree	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	2	59.017	29.50	3.4	0.036
within groups	69	586.829	8.50		
Total	131	645.847			

ANOVA was used to test this relationship. The main hypothesis of the study was that there is a relationship between the socio – economic status and value priorities (success - pleasure and power). The obtained results show that the significance level of the test was less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the original hypothesis accepted.

#### B. The relationship between independency and socio-economic status

**Table 4: ANOVA test of independency and socio-economic status**

Source of changes	Freedom degree	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	12	47.41	23.7	3.37	0.039
within groups	120	505.9	7.02		
Total	128	553.32			

The main hypothesis of the study was that the social and economic status and value priorities (pleasure-seeking, thrill-seeking and independence) are related. ANOVA was used for the test. Since the significance level was less than 0.05, so original hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was a significant relationship between Independence and socio, economic status.

#### A - The relationship between gender and conservative values priority

In this study, two groups of men and women were used as sampled. In the following part, rate of conservatism, tendency to change, improving the personal goals and considering beyond the self are tested. The results are as follows.

The statistical hypothesis was that there is a relationship between female gender and conservatism value priorities. According to the following table, this hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 5: mean difference test of conservatism based on the gender**

Gender	Number ob observations	mean	Standard deviation	Rate	Degree of freedom	Sig.
male	139	69.92	12.03	1.55	1690	0.12
Female	119	65.88	12.43			Not significant

Test of variance between groups indicated that there was no significant difference between the variances of two groups ( $P = .454$ ). Therefore, variances of the two groups are the same. That is why in this table, t and significant quantities referring to the same variance have been reported. As can be seen in table, conservatism mean of men is more than women's one. Indeed, the mean conservatism for men was 92/69 and for women was 88/65. The level of significance (0.124) shows that in the significant level of five percent ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) main hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

Among the students' value preferences, considering beyond the self- assigning the highest average (77.22) form the first priority of the students. Conservatism with a mean value of 69.19 is the second priority. Improving the personal goal with an average of 48.58 and 20.61 difference between with conservatism is the third priority of students. Tendency to change as one of the 4 types of value profanities with an average of 45.3 forms the last value priority of students.

Value priorities among students, considering the 10 types of values are as follows: Benevolence with an average 41.8 first priority, Universalism with an average 35.5 second priority, security-orientation with an average 32.7 third priority, independence-orientation with an average 27.3 fourth priority, success with an average 18.66 sixth priority, traditionalism with an average 63/18 seventh priority, power orientation with an average 18.40 as eighth priority, excitation with an average 10.68 ninth priority and pleasure seeking with an average 7 makes the last value priority of students. It seems that among the above mentioned ten priorities, both safety-orientation and power- orientation influenced by social conditions and trends in recent years. The results of the relationship between socio - economic status and value priorities imply lack of association between these two variables. Even in the division of socio - economic status into three categories: high, middle and low and using the ANOVA test, we see that there was only significant correlation between independent orientation and success with three of these categories.

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