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Hierarchy of Values (With Emphasis on Theories of Parsons)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Values play a dual role in society and human behaviors; On the one hand, they do as the force on structure of human behaviors, and on the other hand, they are considered as the patterns structured by society dominant culture. **Objective:** The purpose of this study is to review hierarchy of values in university students. This has taken place by citing to the theory of functionalists, especially Parsons and clear how hierarchy of values for students. To answer this question, we provided a descriptive study survey using a questionnaire, and we conducted on 386 students from Azad University of Gachsaran. In this study, we examined the relationship of variables including socio- economic base, religiosity, and gender of the target students with the dependent variable of value hierarchy. **Results:** There is a significant relationship between the student values subsystems. The research hypothesis has been confirmed based on significant differences in hierarchy of the student values in terms of their religiosity in cultural and economic value levels. However we are not seeing significant differences between the mean of values at the levels of social and political values. There is a significant difference between gender of students and hierarchy of values. **Conclusion:** The results showed that the hierarchy of values was social, cultural, political, economic, respectively. It means that unlike theoretical model, the social values are at first priority and cultural values are placed at second priority. But according to the theoretical model presented, political and economic values are in the third and fourth priorities.

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INTRODUCTION

The values can be sorted as one of the most important behavioral determinants for members of the society as well as social order infrastructure that are lasting and permanent and will not change overnight. Values play a dual role in society and human behaviors; On the one hand, they do as the force on structure of human behaviors, and on the other hand, they are considered as the patterns structured by society dominant culture. From the perspective of sociology, values are social phenomena that are created and are transmitted through social interactions; Values in every society play an important role in shaping individual actions in social life and put it under their control. Values offer the concept ultimate legitimacy and rules and regulations of social behaviors (Mohseni, M., 2000). In fact, they are collective concepts which are deemed of what is good, acceptable and appropriate culturally or bad and undesirable. Social values are kind of cultural standards that characterize the general and desired objectives to an organized social life. The importance of values appears during adolescence and youth period; because at this time, individual values are changing and the implications are questioned (Erfani N, 2001). According to Debs, the system of values is established adjacent to the world of science and knowledge in young people, and helps them to regulate their behavior as well as revealing their beliefs. Comparing with other age groups, young people are more important because they are replaced with older age groups over the next few years. For this reason, the values which this group believe in, will probably build the society dominant feature of values. Therefore, policymaking and planning focused on value system, would not be possible without recognition of youth values and related factors. So, studying of student's value system can provide the necessary information about the status quo, and place as a basis for educational planning.

In sociology which its focus of study is study of human social behavior, value would have greater significance; because people consciously or unconsciously act according to those values that society has

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determined for them. Hence, values cause motivations for behavior in human populations. Thus, studying of values is important for correct understanding of the fundamentals of social behavior formation. Empirical literature of values began in 1970 in West and was quickly embraced. The issue of values has been one of the important concerns for many sociologists. It is said that apparently the first step in the field of addressing the issue of values in sociology began with Simmel Philosophy of Money (Erfani N, 2001). While we are seeing the study of values implicitly and explicit in the works of Durkheim, Marx, Weber and even Spencer as the pioneers of sociology (KraybYan., 1999).

Also there are extensive researches about values that have contained some interesting results. Sato (1973) showed that in youth and adolescence, superior values are replaced and hence there is a significant difference between men and women. Fedor (1975) found that religious values are stronger in young girls and there is a significant difference in moral values between men and women. Rokich (1976) also found similar results and indicated that there is a significant difference between the value systems of men and women in USA.

The research done by Jenings and Naymer (1981) has shown that parents play an important role in determining the political, social and moral attitudes of their children (Erfani N, 2001).

We have also a number of studies in Iran have been carried out on the values which some of them are discussed in the following.

Faramarzi (2000) prioritized the value of students and identified that there are significant relationship between social, economic classes of students with some of their value priorities.

In accomplished researches on values in Iran, limited studies are about Parsons ideas in illustrating the values. Mahboubi Manesh (2001) invoked the theory of AGIL to Parsons, explored the hierarchy of values in students and concluded that the four values of studied students have significant relationships in the form of a system together. Also, the psychograph in hierarchy of values in the students based on religiosity was fixed and the same, while in horizontal incision, depending on the aforementioned variables, cultural and political values levels and at all levels of the four values, the difference is significant. Also Safiri and Sharifi (2005) examined the hierarchy of values in students and its relation to reference groups. They used Parsons theory, and concluded that hierarchy of four students values in order of preference was values, social, cultural, economic and political, which the social and cultural values places have changed contrary to the theoretical model.

Sociologists approach to values:

Parsons, who is a pioneer in functionalism, defined values as: An element of shared symbolic system which serves as an index or benchmark in choosing between alternative tend and it can be found in a position inherently. In other words, all existing values can be described as a social reference (KraybYan., 1999). In Parsons thought, people have often common metrics, and expect each others to follow these standards in their actions. However, as far as they follow the standards, their society will be organized. Parsons observes social world from the perspective of public opinion, especially norms and values, and knows values important in the development of social order (KraybYan., 1999).

Parsons showed how social order emerges in the context of institutionalized shared values; Discipline which is not based on rational pursuit of self-interest. But this order arises through the creation of moral discipline that controls the interaction in terms of shared values (Hamilton, Peter, 2000). He acknowledged the integration and complementary of moral conscience as well as collective consciousness of Freud and Durkheim, that the former is based on values and outer patterns in character and the other is based on the value in inner patterns institutionalized in society and culture. Emphasizing the complementarity of individual and the collective tasks, the same thing Georges Gurvitch's is called mutual expectations, solutions sense in order to build an action system namely in patterns, norms and values for individual or collective actors. These factors are internalized in the person character and at the same time they have been institutionalized in society and culture. Thus, solving the problem of order from the perspective of Parsons, depends on the problem internalization of values in personality of individual and institutionalization values in society. Therefore, the socialization process and socialization factors, especially religion and official tutorial are important in Parsons thought, because of their role in protecting of values and their transmission (Hamilton, Peter, 2000).

Parsons believes that because people are very susceptible to each other, they actually feel satisfaction or discomfort to each other reactions. They are trying to internalize norms and values and account the values and norms among internal beliefs and expectations of people from each other. In Parsons view, it is believed that the entire system is comprised of distinct components that complement each other, and is involved somehow in the entire society continuous operation. Because these different components are in the direction of unity, so there is no conflict between them and the incompatibility and social consensus are dominant; any changes in the institutional structure will lead to irregularities in relationships between institutions. Thus, because of the presence of institutions such as religion that is a protector of values and encouraging individuals towards their loyalty, family and education systems inspire the established values in society new members and put on internal control over society. They are as enforce of values are causing social behavior in terms of the values (Hamilton, Peter, 2000). The concept of social action in Parsons thought, is the same human behavior that the actor explores

them outside the world s, implications which attracts his attention and finally answers them (Mahboubi Manesh, H., 2001). Parsons social action is a meaningful action based on the actor's thoughts, the perception that interpret from his environment and the values that motives him. So, Parsons social interaction is an interactive action that responds to his mind (Ego) and the other mentality (Alter) constantly (Mahboubi Manesh, H., 2001).

Parsons achieved a functional model of interaction system, inspired by the work of Bilz and distinction between of the inner, outer and consumption functions, with intersection in a two-dimensional table. He uses the abbreviation AGIL for determining the four basic functions of act system and reading it in a clockwise direction. Where A represents the word Adaptation, G for Goal Attainment, I for Integration, and L represents Latency. Parsons is capable to analyze all the basic concepts from the highest to the lowest level of abstraction in the form of AGIL. This way, each of the four sub-systems of action is considered as a system. As a system in turn, each of them are divided into four sub-system and this trend can be continued to the lowest level of abstraction (Safiri Kh, Sharifi, N., 2005).

Generally, values are the core foundation of social development and the maintenance of order in society. In fact, Parsons social system is built around norms and values along with other actors that constitute part of the environment.

Methods:

This is a developed applied study via a survey that has been conducted and data are collected through interviews and questionnaires. Present study aims at assessing the relationship between demographic characteristics and the effects on students' values.

Statistical population, Sample size:

Statistical population consists of all 9,000 girls and boys of Gachsaran University that the sample size has been obtained 368 students using Krejcie and Morgan Tables (1975). Method of sampling was stratified quotas and we used SPSS 16 for data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean calculation and inferential statistics, Mann-Whitney U test and t-test were studied.

Reliability and Validity:

To assess the validity, we designed a questionnaire to give some experts of sociology and considering their views, the original questionnaire was designed. To assess the reliability of the designed questionnaire, we distributed it among the 5 percent of respondents, and then Cronbach's alpha was calculated equal to 0.8660 which can be acknowledged that the measurement accuracy has a high degree.

Describes the hierarchy of values:

In terms of gender, the most frequent belongs to female students with 53% and male students have a lower frequency of 47%. 81.2% of the respondents' student were single and 18.8 were married. Students under study in terms of age distribution have the range from 18 to 42 years with average of 24.

Table 1: Hierarchy of student subsystems values in the study group (first hypothesis).

	Priority	Hierarchy of values	Average range (20-100)	Average with range (1-5)
I	First	Social Values	8099	4.04
L	Second	Cultural Values	7610	3.80
G	Third	Political Values	7304	3.67
A	Fourth	Economic Values	6499	3.24

Table 2. The relationship between student subsystems values in the study group (second hypothesis).

Cultural Values	0.3494 N (354) Sig 0.000		
Social Values	0.3856 N (365) Sig 0.000	0.6019 N (362) Sig 0.000	
Political Values	0.3380 N (364) Sig 0.001	0.5496 N (365) Sig 0.000	0.4933 N (365) Sig 0.000
	Political Values	Cultural Values	Social Values

Research findings and conclusions:

Hypotheses Proof:

According to the theory of Parsons optimal model, it was hypothesized that hierarchy of values in the study population is cultural, social, political and economic, respectively. But based on the average of each four values, the result indicate the hierarchy of values is social, cultural, political and economic. It means that contrariwise theoretical model, social values are at first priority and cultural values are placed at second priority. But

according to the theoretical model presented, political and economic values are in the third and fourth priorities. So hierarchy of values in the first and second level it is not in accordance with the hypothesis, but it is in accordance with the hypothesis at third and fourth levels.

Via "Spearman correlation» (RS), this research hypothesis regarding significant relationship between the students value subsystem, means a significant relationship between the economic, political, social and cultural in the form of a system was confirmed at the 5% level. Therefore, systemic relationship of individual values is confirmed here. The mentioned correlation coefficients are visible at table above.

Table 3: Students' hierarchy of values depending on of religiosity (third hypothesis).

Religiosity	Medium to high		Medium to low		Significance test
Priority	Hierarchy of values	Average	Hierarchy of values	Average	Sig
First	Social Values	82.4462	Social Values	78.7333	0.2342
Second	Cultural Values	77.2	Cultural Values	75.8667	0.0001
Third	Political Values	74.9	Political Values	69.2	0.3425
Fourth	Economic Values	64.6	Economic Values	65	0.001

According to the table we can see that hierarchy of values based on average is the same in studied students profiles in subgroups with the medium to low and medium to high levels of religiosity (economic aspects and religious sense), thus it includes social, cultural, political and economic values. Therefore, any changes in the hierarchy of values are not based on religion. But in Horizontal incision through the test OF "Mann Whitney", we can see significant difference between cultural and economic values average at 5% level of error in the two subgroups of individuals who are less and more religious that Spearman correlation coefficient is 0.6161 and 0.5779 respectively, in terms of religion as an independent variable. However, the test did not show a significant difference in the levels of social and political values. Therefore, the research hypothesis based on significant differences in students' hierarchy of values at cultural and economic values levels depending on religiosity is confirmed. But, we do not see a significant difference between the average values in the levels of social and political values

Table 4: Students' hierarchy of values in terms of economic- social status (fourth Hypothesis).

economic- social status	Low		High	
Priority	Hierarchy of values	Average	Hierarchy of values	Average
First	Social Values	81.7561	Social Values	83.7333
Second	Cultural Values	77.4878	Cultural Values	78.4667
Third	Political Values	73.6053	Political Values	77.7333
Fourth	Economic Values	63.8837	Economic Values	67.7143

According to the table information, we observe relative differences in students' hierarchy of values with regard to their economic, social and family status based on average profile. So that four values of students with high social status including social, political, cultural values, while in low economic- social status, it is as social, cultural, political and economic values. Then, as you see in the upper layer, cultural and political values are placed at the second and third priorities respectively, but in the lower layer, cultural and political values are shown at, second and third priorities. In the horizontal incision, based on Mann Whitney test, we see no significant difference between the average of the four values and so the research hypothesis is not supported from this perspective. Thus, in vertical incision of research hypothesis based on differences in the hierarchy of values with regard to socioeconomic status, will be confirmed only in levels of political and cultural values, and in horizontal incision it can be confirmed just at the level of political and economic values. Nevertheless, Mann Whitney test did not obtain significant difference in the average of society and culture values.

Table 5: Comparing the average of hierarchy of value in male and female students in terms of gender (Fifth Hypothesis).

Gender	Female Students	Male Students	Significance test
Hierarchy of values	Average (1 to 5)	Average (1 to 5)	Sig
Social Values	4.11	3.98	0.3832
Cultural Values	3.74	3.83	0.8349
Political Values	3.65	3.86	0.001
Economic Values	3.29	3.76	0.001

This research hypothesis was that the hierarchy of values in studied students is altered based on gender. According to findings of table, it can be stated that social values for both male and female students has a high priority; So that, the average of social values for female students was 4.11 and for males 3.98. In second order of the hierarchy of values, male students have a greater tendency for political values, while female students have chosen cultural values as their second priority. Third priority includes political values for female students according to hierarchy of values table, and for male student it is cultural values. Then, economic and social values in students of both sexes are placed at the first and fourth priorities, respectively. Thus in vertical incision, the results indicate that differences in students' hierarchy of values are based on gender. So, from this view hypothesis is confirmed.

Research suggestions:

The desired suggestions based on both theoretical and implementation concepts can be expressed as follows:

Due to the lack of a comprehensive theory in the studying values in sociology, it is advisable to adopt an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to develop a theoretical framework. Also, it is recommended using the techniques of observation and profound interview, with the questionnaire in subsequent studies in order to increase the rate of research validity.

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