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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
<u>1</u>	Influential Factors Effect to the Trends of Online News Business. Teetima Piyasirisilp and Chanchai Bunchapattanasukdav	<u>1-19</u>
<u>2</u>	Small and Medium Scale Enterprises and Economic Growth in Nigeria. Obasan Kehinde A. and Adediran, Olanrewaju Adewole	<u>20-46</u>
<u>3</u>	Need and Importance of Professional Growth. Dr. M. Sugunatha Reddy and Dr. B. Rama Bhupal Reddy	<u>47-56</u>
<u>4</u>	Non-formal Education in Punjab: Approaches for Lifelong Learning. Zarabi Dazy and Nair Balakrishan	<u>57-78</u>
<u>5</u>	Effective Approach of Web Based Human Resource Management System for Optimistic Development of Institutions. Akmal Rehan, Nayyar Iqbal and Muhammad Milhan Afzal Khan	<u>79-96</u>
<u>6</u>	Food Security- Need for a Commitment to Universal Distribution System. Dr. G. V. Kokkalki	<u>97-105</u>
<u>7</u>	Meaning and Determinants of Values: Research Insights. Dr. S.L. Kaushal and Dr. Yasmin Janjhua	<u>106-124</u>
<u>8</u>	Consumer's Expectation from Pharmaceutical Companies in Pune City. Richa Arora and Nitin R. Mahankale	<u>125-146</u>
<u>9</u>	Rural Industrialization through Khadi and Village Industries: a Study. M. Rama Satyanarayana and Ch. V. Krishna Reddy	<u>147-160</u>
<u>10</u>	The Socio-economic Characteristics of the Poor in Rural Kerala. K. Rajan	<u>161-189</u>
<u>11</u>	Various Techniques in Intrusion Detection: A Survey. Jay Kant Pratap Singh and Abhishek Kumar Sahu	<u>190-204</u>
<u>12</u>	Growth of Services Sector Under the WTO: An Analysis. Dr. Jamil Ahmad	<u>205-225</u>
<u>13</u>	Dominance of Innovative Leadership in Construction Project Management. S. Binil Sundar	<u>226-254</u>

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Title

**MEANING AND DETERMINANTS OF VALUES:
RESEARCH INSIGHTS**

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Abstract:

Values play a significant role in everyone's life. The values possessed and practiced by the individual in their personal as well as work life determine the decisions taken and the activities conducted by them. The behavior of an individual is based on the values held individually and collectively. The present paper brought forward the contributions made by the researchers in this field. The concept of values in light of various research studies has been discussed. Further an attempt has been made to throw light on the factors that has some effect on values pattern. The factors such as role of family, gender, socioeconomic status, culture, religion, occupational status, experience in the job, etc., in determining the values of an individual have been discussed in the present study.

(Key words: Values, religion, attitudes, family, occupational status)

Introduction:

India in the past has made a substantial contribution to the evolution of mankind's culture and moral values. According to Encyclopedia Britannica the Vedas are the oldest philosophical literature and philosophical ethics of mankind¹. Numerous foreign travellers and writers of historical records have from time to time, written in the praise of high standards of Indian values and morality². According to the Hindu concept of four Purusarthas, the values are kama, artha, dharma and moksa. The value kama constitutes the entire range of human cravings, desires and satisfactions at sensory level, the second is the artha, the wealth which is the means for the satisfaction of kama and the third purusartha i.e. dharma means the ethical sense which helps to discipline and regulate the activities engaged in achieving kama and artha which prevents a man from adopting disvalues. The value dharma develops the inner and spiritual growth of man and leads from a sense of individuality to social responsibility. Vedanta philosophy therefore treats these three values kama, artha and dharma as trivarga which always go together to ensure welfare of all. The fourth value the moksa means full spiritual freedom³.

Besides, Vedanta the Mahabharata also lays great stress on the values of dharma, artha and kama which helps in the realization of moksa i.e. complete welfare of the individual and the community. Similarly the Ramayana is treatise of our moral, social and religious values. In the

Ramayana, Lord Rama has been depicted as an embodiment of various ethical values like generosity, compassion, forgiveness, absence of jealousy and anger, truthfulness, pleasant speaking, non discrimination on the count of status or richness, honoring one's pledge at all costs, humanity, etc⁴.

Meaning of Values:

Since 1930s social scientists have used the concept of values to explain a range of diverse phenomena. For example, psychologists conceived values as phenomena mainly linked to personality types such as dogmatism, authoritarianism, ethnocentrism and machiavellianism (Feather 1971)⁵. Sociologists on the other hand thought of values as chiefly related to society's collective consciousness, which determine social conduct (Blau 1964)⁶. Researchers in the field of organizational behaviour, for their part considered values as a phenomena mainly associated with problems within organizations (McMurry 1963)⁷, corporate decision strategies (Guth and Taguiri 1965)⁸, and indices of managerial success (England and Lee 1974)⁹. Allport (1951)¹⁰ considered value as a belief upon which man acts by preference. According to Kluckhohn (1951)¹¹ value is a conception, explicit or implicit and distinctive of an individual or of a group of the desirable which influences the selection from the available modes, means and ends of action. It follows that a value serves to provide a basic set of standards or criteria that guide human thoughts and actions.

Value pattern of an individual is a set of principles which guides one's desires and feelings, resulting in a choice of appropriate action. Rokeach (1973)¹² defined values as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or an end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence. Hofstede (1980)¹³ conceptualized values as relatively stable attributes of individuals as well as collectivities. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987)¹⁴ summarized five features common to most definitions of values. Accordingly values are (a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviours, (c) that transcends specific situation, (d) guides selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance. Seshadri (1992)¹⁵ referred values as objects that human beings consider desirable and worthy of pursuits in their thoughts feelings and actions. Schwartz (1992)¹⁶ emphasized that values are cognitive representations of

three universal human requirements (a.) biologically based organism needs, (b.) social interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination and (c.) social institutional demands for group welfare and survival. According to Vittal (2002)¹⁷ values ultimately are those principles, which we hold dear and which determine our course of action. Further, Balasubramaniam (2004)¹⁸ described values as those that are nurtured, developed and cherished based on ones basic and fundamental principles, faiths and beliefs and values in turn gives rise to demonstrated external outcomes of ethical standards, attitudes and behaviour.

The values has been used variously to refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, goals, needs, aversions and attractions and many other kinds of selective orientations. In short, it can be said that a value is a principle, a standard or a quality that is considered worthwhile or desirable, which influences behaviour.

Determinants of Values:

Values are the set of principles that an individual live by and continually develop as he/she lives. Some of the determinants of the values are discussed as under.

Family:

The family is the first unit with which the child has continuous contact and it is also the most powerful medium through which value systems develop. In an Indian family the important determinants of authority which a person can hold are age, gender and generational status. Regardless of personal talents and achievements, respects for traditions, showing respect to age and differential treatment on the basis of status are the values which are often inculcated in the Indian family set up (Bhardwaj 2001)¹⁹. Families have been noted as an important context for value development and socialization (Roberts and Bengtson 1999)²⁰. These have been the most powerful medium through which value system of an individual develops. To large extent patterns of ethical behaviour are in built into what one learns instinctively as a child. However, the foundation laid in children gets reinforced by the experiences of life (Chauhan and Chauhan, 2002)²¹. Gecas and Sef (1990)²² listed three primary mechanisms through which parents' values influence children's values: (a) occupational/social class influences, (b) perceptions of value,

similarity, and (c) parental behaviours/ child rearing practices. Glass et al. (1986)²³ found that parental attitudes influence children's attitudes, even accounting for family social status, highlighting the importance of family socialization in the development of children's ideologies.

Hoge et al. (1982)²⁴ argued that structural characteristics of families (e.g. democratic decision making styles) were more important than affective factors (quality of relationship) to the transmission of values within the family. However Bengston (1975)²⁵ found little support for the idea that there is strong similarity between parents' and children's values beyond the wider generational similarities in values within culture. Viewing the problem of intergenerational difference in parent-child context, Chitnis (1969)²⁶ has reported it in terms of differences in attitudes and values of the parents and their offsprings. Gangarde (1975)²⁷ reported younger generation to have more individualistic, modern, progressive and pessimistic values and attitudes in comparison to the older generation. Sinha (1972)²⁸ in his pioneering study observed a general similarity in the value pattern of students, younger teachers and older teachers. The similarity was greater when the members belonged to same generation and profession. However the younger subjects were more social, less religious, less aesthetic and slightly less political than older ones. Also Tiwari and Mishra (1979)²⁹ found that younger and older generation differ significantly on political and religious values but there had been a general agreement on the hierarchy of values.

Exposure to different values is part of the informal education children get at school, where most of their earliest values are absorbed from the teachers they respect and those of their peers they wish to copy (Sharp,2002)³⁰. The demonstrable conduct and righteous way of living of teacher is likely to inspire and stir the value consciousness of the students. The teacher who lives by values and whose reactions are not in conflict with his words will be in a happy position to speak about values with strength, clarity and confidence, thus motivating pupils to internalise values.

Values are infact collection of what child learns from his parents and from the society in which he is reared and brought up. Under all circumstances, however the families role for both preventing or precipitating the cultivation of different types of values is very much prominent.

Gender:

Gender has been noted to be an important determinant of values pattern of the individuals and also perceived as important for understanding differences in work related values (Halaby 2003)³¹. Beutel and Marini (1995)³² found significant gender differences on three value measures representing compassion (concern for well-being of other), materialism (emphasis on material benefit and competition) and meaning (philosophical concern with finding purpose in life). Females were found to score higher on compassion and lower on materialism and competition and more likely to report finding “meaning in life” as important. Marini et al. (1996)³³ found that young woman are more concerned with intrinsic, altruistic, and social values than are men, although they found no gender differences in external reward values. Further studies have shown that females tend to indicate those values that are oriented to other persons, like social service, relations with other and interest in people, while male value orientations refer to such things as security, material comforts, self esteem, hardwork and fame (Reddy and Parameswaran 1966)³⁴. However Govindarajacharylu (1968)³⁵ indicated no difference in value orientations of males and females.

Gender seemed to be an important variable affecting values. Kaushal (2004)³⁶ found that women were inclined to participative and cooperative work environment while men show tendency to follow strict and autocratic control to deliver results. It has been concluded that women were found to be more dedicated and ethical at workplace than men. Joshi (1990)³⁷ brought forth that inspite of the prevalence of stereotyped perceptions about women there was widespread agreement that women have the leadership potential, on account of greater sympathy, caring, sharing, loving, sensitivity, etc. Gilligan (1982)³⁸ believed that while men are likely to consider rules, rights and fairness, women are more likely to be concerned with relationships, compassion and caring. It was found that older literate girls were more religious than younger educated boys (Bhushan and Sinha 1997)³⁹. Thus gender seemed to be an important factor that accounts in differences in the values of an individual.

Socio Economic Status:

Socio-economic status has been observed to play an important role in value orientation. Bhushan and Ahuja (1980)⁴⁰ found socioeconomic level significant in the development of value

preferences. Ananthraman (1980)⁴¹ indicated that people who belong to high socio-economic status have more religious value, subjects from urban locality have lesser theoretical value and more aesthetic values. Kareem and Vijay Kumar (1981)⁴² noted no significant difference among the socio economic status groups, in their social, political and religious values however there have been significant differences between upper and lower classes in their theoretical and aesthetic values, the middle and lower classes differ significantly in their theoretical and economic values. The upper and middle classes differ only on the economic value. In another study Hafeez and Hafeez (1982)⁴³ indicated that low socio-economic status group shows higher economic value whereas high socio-economic status group have higher theoretical, social and moral values. Though same mean score of both groups on religious value showed that religious value is not determined by socio economic status. Rokeach and Parker (1970)⁴⁴ studied the importance of values at various income levels. Further it has been brought forward that different levels of employees in an organisation are likely to differ on work values because of the differences in socioeconomic status, role demands and commitment to organizational goals.

A study conducted by Suar et al (1989)⁴⁵ revealed that higher level employees put more emphasis on achievement and self actualizing values followed by the personal values (family, security, happiness, comfortable life etc.) whereas the lower level employees put more emphasis on many personal values followed by a few number of achievement values. Hofstede (1980)⁴⁶ also noted change in values with changes in the socio-economic conditions. Thus on the basis of empirical studies it can be said that socio-economic status is an important determinant of values orientations.

Occupational Status and Experience:

Occupational status and occupational experiences are perceived to determine the values. Chandra and Bhogle (1986)⁴⁷ analysed the work values of four professional groups namely doctors, engineers, administrators and teachers and showed that the most preferred work values by all the four professional groups is creativity and achievement followed by independence whereas the least preferred work value was working in rural set up. Kakkar (1971)⁴⁸ investigated values among teacher trainees and college teachers and found that teachers obtained higher scores on political values followed by theoretical and social values. However, teacher trainees

gave first preference to social values followed by aesthetic and theoretical values. Thus variations in the importance in values are characteristics of each occupation. Further Traxler and Mccall (1941)⁴⁹ found boys higher in mechanical, scientific, occupational and persuasive areas and girls higher in the musical, artistic, literary, social service and clerical areas. Gajels and King (1983)⁵⁰ and Young (1984)⁵¹ have indicated that authority, autonomy creativity, physical activity and rich values were found to be dominant among women in non-traditional occupations.

Some of the organizational theories revealed that work experience can have powerful effect on the value systems of individuals. Most see this influence as a part of the larger organization socialization process. Values also develop through socialization in organizations and institutions. Bandura (1971)⁵² proposed that values can develop through imitative processes. Stable changes in the values of individuals can occur as a result of their observation of models. The model characteristics such as success, competence and nurturance provide information about the appropriateness of imitation and the likelihood of the observer receiving valued outcomes for behaving similarly or expressing similar values. Rosenberg (1957)⁵³ found that work values of college graduates change to become more consistent with the values that characterize their initial occupations. The values of an individual in an organization may change partly because of his changes in personal and socio economic status and partly because of his training on the job and socialization in an organization.

Religion:

Religion is also considered as powerful factor in inculcating as well as strengthening of values. Religious beliefs can be understood as ideologies, theoretical constructions that subsume attitudes and values (Maio et al 2003)⁵⁴. Kim (1999)⁵⁵ reported that Korean social values were formed under the influence of three major resources Confucian thought, the patriarchal system of extended large families and collective community system. These social values in turn influence the work values of Korean business enterprise.

Values such as tolerance, love, truth, spirit of sacrifice, fellow-feeling and the refined sense to hold that the things of the mind and heart are higher than the material benefits could be inculcated through religious precepts in a very effective manner. Ali and Karunanidhi (1995)⁵⁶

believed that practice of particular religion code and the belief system of the individual has significant influence over one's value pattern. It can be said that religion remains a powerful force in the minds of people, despite the advancement of science and technology. Schwartz and Huisman (1995)⁵⁷ argued that influence is bi-directional between individuals' religiosity and their values. Values such as certainty, self-restraint and submission to external verities incline people to be more religious whereas values of openness to change and self-expression incline people to become less religious. Christopher (1992)⁵⁸ reported that persons who engages in frequent devotional activities (e.g. prayer, Bible study) were more open and less suspicious than their less religious counterparts. Thus it can be said that religion has a great influence in individual behaviour.

Culture:

Values are at the core of any culture. Individuals in different cultures learn different behavioural scripts and sets of values with which to evaluate situation and potential courses of action in group settings (Erez and Early 1993)⁵⁹. Various studies have examined values from a cross cultural perspective and have focused the differences in value importance, how national or other groups differ in importance they attribute to different values. The values and culture of various groups may not be identical. But one is expected to conform to the respective values and culture, as long as one continues to have the membership.

The expectations derived from culture create norms of acceptable behaviour and ways of doing things in the organization. An organization's culture is analogous to an individual's personality like people, organization can be described on trait continuum as conservative/experimenting, warm/cold, stable/dynamic, relaxed/tense, uncontrolled/ controlled, practical/imaginative etc. Culture influences the relationship among members inside and outside organization, and also affects the kinds of goals pursued, the ways for pursuing the goals and by and large motivates the workers towards goals. The use of rules, standard procedure, amount of direction and openness of communication, style of leadership and amount of supervision is function of organizations' culture. Behaviours like innovating, decision-making, communicating, organizing, measuring success, and rewarding achievement may vary considerably from organization to organization, and the differences related in the organizational culture. Values

which are an element of culture, are important component in the action scheme of individuals and indicates the direction in which organizations are likely to move in future.

On the perusal of above studies it can be put forth that age, family, gender, socio-economic status, education, professional status, socialization process, occupational experiences may have profound impact on the values of the individuals. Also the religion and culture play a significant role in development of values. However the values have not been static, neither for individual nor for the community. While the core values may remain integrated in the personality of an individual for the majority of his life, but at the same time a change may occur in the peripheral values. Nevertheless, values as a whole activates human mind to determine the course of action a person is rendering in his personal, work as well as social life and determine the type of behavior ethical or unethical being manifested.

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