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Youth, Attitudes and Values

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Abstract:

Youth is ever changing in their outlook so too in their value system. The transient period of growth from adolescence to youth hood and the changing environment around them contribute to this. They are attuned to these changes than any other section of the population. For this very reason, the value system held by them is often transitory. Such unsteady nature of value system often creates conflicts among themselves as well as in the larger society. The older generation finds difficult to understand the youth and vice-versa, creating misunderstandings, anxiety and frustration in both. It is not rare that the older generation blames the youth for deviating from the traditional value system which they have tried to instill into their children. A study on the changing nature of value system in the youth will throw light into these ongoing phenomena.

1. Objectives

- i. To study the changing nature of value system among the youth
- ii. To arrive at the factors that most affect the values in the young
- iii. To locate areas of intervention that can help to guide the youth for value formation.

2. Methodology

The present study is done on a sample size of 754 youth, mostly college going, within the state of Kerala following descriptive design. Multiple random sampling has been used to select the respondents. A structured questionnaire was served to collect responses. Besides, group discussions, interviews and review of related literature has been done. The questionnaire has been standardized by the researcher following the norms of research. The Reliability test was done. The set of statements had the Cronbach Alpha values 0.767.

3. Review of Literature

Values refer to generalized principles of behavior which are internalized in the process of socialization (Scott: 2009). They guide choices of objects and behavior and so are essential for the integration of any individual in to a group or a society. Values are subject to a host of influencing factors like one's experience, belief system, family, culture, knowledge and environment. They keep changing with the fluctuations in the influencing factors. Integration of values into one's personality is a developmental task most felt as the adolescent matures into youth. (Hjelle & Daniel: 1981). Many of the values that children pick up during their period of childhood and adolescence get changed as they enter into youth. The adolescent who enters in to the freedom of the youth undergoes several experiences for the first time and this affects his values and attitudes.

4. Youth is a Period of Value Changes

Values are basic principles, moral codes or criteria which guides one's thoughts and actions. For an individual to attain consistency in behavior he has to arrive at certain standards of conduct. He must decide for himself what kind of a person he wants to be and ascertain for himself what things are worthwhile that would make his life meaningful. Such standards are known as ideals or values. They are developed through a process of socialization which includes learning through training and assimilation. The values developed during one's childhood and adolescence get changed as he enters in to new social contacts and experiences. The problem faced by a young person in finding a set of values by which to regulate one's conduct is made more difficult due to the shift in values of society, parents and those individuals who matter much to him.

Extensive studies are done in the area of moral and value development in a person. Development psychologists like Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg etc. are prominent among them.

Piaget (1932), as cited in Hjelle (1981), speaks of Stages of Cognitive Development, as a person grows from infancy to adulthood. The various Stages are: Sensory motor stage (at infancy), Pre-Operational stage (age- 2-7), Concrete Operations stage (age- 7-12), and Formal Operations stage (age-13-17). According to him, the adolescent and young adult is at the Formal Operations stage when the thinking process matures. It is then that they become capable of dealing with abstractions and understand complex ethical issues.

Developmental Psychologists Kohlberg and Kramer as cited in Hjelle (1981) used Piaget's model in the concept of the Development of Moral Reasoning. They spoke of Pre-conventional Morality (infancy-childhood), Conventional Morality (age: childhood to adolescence), and finally the Universal Ethical stage (adolescence and youth). At the final stage the young adult is capable of greater understanding of truths beyond mere rules of conduct. Based on this, Trevethan et al (1989) made further studies and affirmed that, the moral reasoning theory is true in the case of children and youth who grow up in the normal family while showed difference and variations in the case of children and youth who were delinquents or psychopaths.

These theories in short content that as the person matures in age, his sense of ethical values too develop. He is able to assess situations and take decisions based on a set of ethical principles called values. These values provide motivating force behind his thoughts, emotions and actions. A mature person is expected to weigh the worth of the values he has been holding from his childhood and reject or accept them accordingly.

Values differ from person to person. What one person hold as a value need not be so for another. Again, Values differ in priority. A value which is given a top priority by one person may be given a least priority by another. However, there are certain conventional values which are held in esteem by all, eg. truthfulness, justice, love and concern etc.

Values are learned and integrated through socialization of the young. Among the socialization agents that contribute in the formation of values in the young, the family, educational institutions and the peer group have a significant role (Gore :1977 and UGC :2003). Together with this, globalization, modernization and liberalization, too has affected the youth and has altered the value system to varied levels says, Kataria (2010). As for the young adult, the college atmosphere gives him immense opportunity to strengthen or shed old values and imbibe new ones. As he discovers and experiences a wider group, what he learned in his child-hood is now better understood and evaluated before making it his own.

A person with a good value system is better appreciated and encouraged by the society. Where as a person whose value system is corrupt and shaky, endangers the wellbeing of the society. When he/she projects good values they are accepted and integrated into the society, and if the contrary takes place, they become a problem.

The researcher would like to find out if the youth are affected in their value system as they get socialized in the process of their growth. If so, what are their values regarding self, family, education, politics and society? Has there been a major shift in their value system? What are the factors that most affect their value system? These are factors that need to be looked into.

5. Areas of Value changes in Youth

Values are many and so those values pertaining to youth under this study have been classified as, Family values, Religious values, Social values, and Educational values. The respondents were asked to express their agreement on statements related to these 5 categories of values, which are prone to undergo changes. The scored opinions are summarized below according to the various values.

5.1. Family Values

Among the various categories of values in any individual, the values that are close to one's life stems from the family. Family being the cradle of socialization, values in a person also reflects the values of the family. But these values can change if there are other more powerful influencing agents like friends, groups, personal experiences and learning. The following statements try to assess the values of the respondents related to their family.

Sl.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Parents must have control over	215(28.5)	285(37.8)	146(19.4)	108(14.3)
2	Obeys parents than friends	336(44.6)	260(34.5)	110(14.6)	48(6.4)
3	Looks for family approval	229(30.4)	280(37.1)	169(22.4)	76(10.1)
4	Parents must respect freedom	208(27.6)	383(50.8)	105(13.9)	58(7.7)
5	Likes to be consulted	221(29.3)	382(50.7)	114(15.7)	37(4.9)
6	Likes strict parents	222(29.4)	256(34)	180(23.9)	96(12.7)
7	Dislike disappointing the family	465(61.7)	207(27.5)	52(6.9)	30(4)
8	Priority to family than politics	425(56.4)	204(27.1)	82(10.9)	43(5.7)

Table 1: Family Values - Summary N= 754

The above table depicts the agreement or disagreement with regard to statements on family values. It is noticed that all the statements obtained a high level of agreement, (more than 60%) showing the intense sense of family values the youth hold. This is indicative of the fact that the youth have looked at family values in a more mature way corresponding to the intellectual and moral development he/she has attained. However, those statements that got lower approval (1,3,4 and 6 with 66.3%, 67.5%, 58.4%and 63.4% respectively) exhibit their changing value system with regard to family.

5.2. Religious Values

This is an area where the youth are usually confused. Most people are brought up in a particular religious belief by their parents and they stick to it no matter whether they understood everything in it. Even personal convictions on religion are rarely expressed or exposed. Hence to a certain extent there is a blind acceptance of the religious beliefs and practices that they live with. Yet when an

adolescent reach maturity, they question, criticize and even object to certain demands of their religious belief, though not at the cost of being termed anti-religious. Secondly, there is lot of duplicity in ones belief and practice. This is due to the fact that the religious matters are not convincing to the extent of making it one's own. The socio-economic changes in the society do affect the attitude towards religion as well. Today's youth are no different. The table below portrays the opinions given by the respondents on statements related to religious values to which they were asked to give their level of agreement.

Sl.	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Helps to live a good life	200(26.5)	209(27.7)	167(22.1)	178(23.6)
2	Give meaning to life	368(48.8)	198(26.3)	79(10.5)	109(14.5)
3	God is guiding principle	378(50.1)	193(25.6)	91(12.1)	92(12.2)
4	Religious practices are necessary	269(35.7)	247(32.8)	117(15.5)	212(16)
5	Religion is a private affair	416(55.2)	211(28)	71(9.4)	56(7.4)
6	Helps to understand others	302(40.1)	288(38.3)	86(11.4)	78(10.3)
7	Religion has become a business	352(46.7)	236(31.3)	98(13)	68(9)
8	Religion is not my concern	183(24.3)	202(26.8)	197(26.1)	172(22.8)

Table 2: Religious Values- Summary
N= 754

The Table shows very clearly that the respondents have scored with high (more than 50%) approval regarding the first 6 positive statements. But to the question whether they feel religion has become a business, a large majority (78%) has expressed their consent to it. This reflects their critical outlook about religious matters as it is being practiced today. Again, the last question regarding their personal conviction, their answers are almost equally divided. Hence we see a dichotomy in the set of answers; on the one side a clear approval of the religious beliefs and on the other unsteady personal convictions. Therefore it is concluded that the youth under consideration face an ambiguity regarding their religious values.

5.3. Social Values

One's social values are reflected on one's attitude towards what goes on in the society. These values are a mixture of certain general principles of social life and one's duty towards other fellowmen which are constantly changing according to the dynamics in the society. The respondents have given their opinion regarding these aspects which helps to understand the nature of the social values they hold.

Sl.	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Youth have a role in the society	494(65.5)	226(30)	22(2.9)	12(1.6)
2	Society changes with individuals	548(72.7)	170(22.5)	22(2.9)	14(1.9)
3	Everyone should be treated equally	568(75.3)	144(19.1)	25(3.3)	17(2.3)
4	Respect everyone's freedom.	554(73.5)	176(23.3)	19(2.5)	5(0.7)
5	Duty first, rights second policy	433(57.4)	229(30.4)	62(8.2)	30(4)
6	Corruption is to be tolerated	128(17)	248(32.4)	177(23.5)	201(26.7)
7	Only the shrewd people survive	162(21.4)	348(46.2)	178(23.6)	67(8.9)
8	Honest person cannot be successful	290(38.5)	313(41.5)	100(13.3)	51(6.8)

Table 3: Social Values – Summary
N= 754

From the Table above it is observed that a very large majority (more than 80%) have given their approval to the first four statements. While to the statement whether corruption is to be tolerated, there is an equally divided opinion. This is indicative of the nature of values the youth hold regarding corruption. There is unfortunately a good section of the youth (50%) who today would approve of corruptive practices or at least tolerate it. This conclusion goes well with the 7th statement which says that in today's society only shrewd people can survive which is approved by a good majority of the respondents (67.8%). Therefore it can be concluded that the students who get involved in student politics have a different set of social values than that which is commonly acceptable.

5.4. Educational Values

After having seen and experienced what an educational system is through more than 12 years of schooling, the youth is now in a position to form one's own opinion about education, its purpose and the values it entails.

Sl.	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Need teacher - student Relationship	563(74.7)	161(21.4)	21(2.8)	9(1.2)
2	Education needs peaceful climate	464(61.5)	236(31.3)	37(4.9)	17(2.3)
3	Edu. is to develop a person	506(67.1)	213(28.2)	24(3.2)	11(1.5)
4	Edu. should answer society's need	438(58.1)	267(35.4)	39(5.2)	10(1.3)
5	Edu. stress on white collared jobs	223(29.6)	331(43.9)	158(21)	42(5.6)
6	Edu. be given only to the deserving	293(38.9)	262(34.7)	114(15.1)	85(11.3)
7	Edu. be given only by the Govt.	252(33.4)	225(29.8)	200(26.5)	77(10.2)

Table 4: Educational Values - Summary

N= 754

Regarding the above statements pertaining to educational values, a large majority of the respondents have shown agreement. It is again a clear indication that the youth are mature enough to assess the purpose and value of education.

From the analysis of the Values system during the period of youth, the transient nature of value system of the young is evident. The youth are aware of the correct values in the various fields but are yet to conform to it fully due to the poor examples they see around in real life. Consequently this leads to lack of appreciation of the traditional value system by the youth.

6. Conclusion

From the discussions above, it is clear that the most influencing factors that affect the formation of values among the youth are Family, Religion, Education and Society. These are the change agents that need to be considered if good value system is to be imparted to the youth. The youth are fully aware of this, but their peculiar psycho-social attributes plays major role in accepting or rejecting these change agents. More studies could be done to identify the typical youth psycho-social attributes that the youth develop and grow with.

7. References

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