A qualitative comparison study of social and moral values and modernization (attitudes toward innovation) in freshmen and graduate university students

Masome Esmaeily, Somaye Kazemian and Reyhane Talebi

Department of Psychology and Education, Allameh Tabataba'I University, Tehran, Iran

_____

ABSTRACT

Universities are faced with the challenging task of educating an increasingly diverse student community with different attitudes and values. So the aim of the study is to analyze and compare freshmen and graduate university students' attitudes toward innovation and social and moral values. this is a qualitative research. The sample consists of 40 university students of Allame Tabatab'I University, which were chosen by convenience sampling. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted and analyzed and qualitative analyses of data were conducted by grounded theory method. The analysis of the interviews showed that the frequency of social and moral values was higher than the frequency of graduate university students. And also the frequency of tendency to change was higher in graduate university students compared to freshmen. The present findings suggest that university students' tendency to change and their attitudes toward innovation was related to social and moral values. In other words, as the university students pass the four years of college, their commitment to social and moral values decreases, but they become more flexible to changes and more reluctant to innovation.

Keywords: attitude toward innovation, social values, moral values

_____

INTRODUCTION

Each person possesses some judgments about what is wrong or correct and good or bad. These judgments come into being as a result of the values formed by individuals throughout their lives. The concept of values, on the other hand, is made up of some structures dictating to people what the priorities should be, what should be preferred and how they should be performed. Ethical principles are the basic thoughts triggering the ethical values possessed by a person [1].

On one hand, on ethical judgments, we see the effects of families, regional differences, ethnic culture, milieu and the disposition of the individual. It has also been found that the gender of individuals is influential on decision-making processes with females exhibiting a greater tendency to make ethical decisions than males. Moreover, it has been reported that age is also influential on making ethical decisions with older people making more ethical decisions than younger people [1].

On the other hand, we focus on social values, treating private values as an individual idiosyncrasy that is orthogonal to social values requiring social interactions [2].

_____

Innovativeness is a generalized personality trait called 'innate innovativeness' being a function of dimensions of human personality and degree to which an individual makes innovation decisions independently of the communicated experience of others or explained as an early purchase of a new product [3].

Innovation not only allows adaption to rapid and even disruptive changes in firms' technological, economic, regulatory, and social environments, but also provides a means to actively drive and shape such change. Thus, it represents an important source of competitive advantage and a mainspring of a firm's wealth and growth [4].

Schumpeter (1934) defines innovation as carrying out new combinations-launch of a new product or new species; an application of new methods; an opening of a new market; an acquiring of new sources of raw material supply or creation or destruction of a monopoly organization. Innovation is seen as the process of generation, acceptance and implementation of new ideas, processes, products or services as well as an outcome - any thought, behavior or thing that is new, new ideas, new technology or practice .Damanpour (1996) encompass a range of outcomes, including a new product or service, new process technology, a new organization structure or administrative systems, or new plans or programs pertaining to organization members. Important contribution to innovation was made by Altshuller (2007) defining levels of innovation [5].

College students, as a population at the crossroads of adolescence and emerging adulthood, face a broad spectrum of influences with regards to values. Adolescence is a development period when teens ''selectively internalize a personal value system through exploring values provided by parents, peers and society' [6].

According to Arambewela [7], personal values are preditors of individual behavior. Mayhew and Murphy [8] compared 4th year university students having had ethical education with 5th year university students not having had ethical education and found that ethical education is not necessary for students to internalize ethical behaviors but affects ethical behaviors.

The study of Lehmann (1958), which covers "changes in critical thinking" attitudes, and values from freshman to senior years at Michigan State University showed that both males and females became less stereo-typed in their beliefs from their freshman to senior years. Students became more flexible less rigid and less authori-tarian during their four years at college. They became less traditional value-oriented from their freshman to senior years, in other words, they became less inner- directed and more outer-directed. Finally he found that both males and females became more open-minded and more receptive to new ideas from their freshman to senior years [9]. Research has shown that creativity is negatively related to authoritarianism, conservatism, and dogmatism [10].

Taking into the importance of innovation and social and moral values and possible link between these terms, the purpose of the study is to identify relationships between attitudes toward innovation and social and moral values among freshmen and graduate university students. Accordingly, the following question was developed: How are the differences between attitudes toward innovation and social and moral values in freshmen and graduate students of Allameh tabataba' I university?

Method (experimental section)
We adopted a qualitative approach and conducted fieldwork at Allameh tababa' I university. The sample was selected by using a convenience sampling. A total of 40 in-depth interviews were conducted across four faculties of the university. Individual qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to examine the university students' attitudes toward innovation and social and moral values. The interviews lasted between 30 min and 1 h. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. We used the qualitative interview method because it encourages participants to speak for themselves and in their own way. Qualitative analysis of data was conducted by using the phenomenology approach and context analysis. Data have been coding line-by-line and themes and concepts have been emerged by constantly comparing data with data, data with code, code with code, and so on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews were analyzed using an interactive process of reading, coding, and interpreting to identify themes within the data. The analysis of the data led to the two following tables.

Table 1: themes of social and moral values of freshmen and graduate university students

sentences	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding	Frequency in Freshman university students	Frequency in Graduate university students
- I think there is not such a thing as white lie, and we should always be honest. - In my opinion the most important feature in every human being is to be truthful. - I always tried to tell the truth because I find it more relaxing.	honesty	Inner values associated with self	Inner values cause individual's growth and excellence	18	17
- When I do something to others, I do it with my whole heart. - I do not pretend to be the person that I'm not. - I don't want to play a role in my relationships and I always show my true self.	sincerity			16	11
- I annually dedicate a part of my salary to charity. - I always have an excellent feeling when I do something good to others. - As far as I can, I help my coworkers in workplace.	benevolence	Outer values related to behavior	Outer values related to others and society, cause social and individual's excellence	16	12
- In my opinion it's really important to be responsible in your life. - I don't regularly accept tasks, bet when I accept it, I do my best. - I think people are less responsible than they were in the past.	responsibility			18	10
- I neglect other people's mistakes as far as I can. - If people take things easy they would be more relaxed. - The worst thing that you can do is to take one's revenge on your heart.	Forgiveness			14	9
- It is very important to help other people. - Although I have short time doing my own businesses but I dedicate my time to solve others problems. - Trying to help people makes me feel fruitful.	Willingness to help			19	9
- I never felt lonely because others were always beside me. - If one day I had a problem, many people around me can help me. - In my opinion almost all the people are trustworthy.	People being trustworthy	Outer values related to thoughts		15	8
- I think it's very important to teach kids to respect the elderly. - Although I can decide independently, but asking about my parents opinion is important to me. - Though having many quarrels with my parents, but I never insult and hold them high regard.	Attitude of Respect to the elderly			14	11

According to table 1, we differentiated three dimensions of social and moral values: Inner values associated with self, outer values related to behavior and outer values related to thoughts. Inner values associated with self consist of Honesty and sincerity. Outer values related to behavior consist of benevolence, responsibility, forgiveness and willingness to help. Outer values related to thoughts consist of people being trustworthy and attitude of respect to the elderly. And the frequencies between the two groups suggest that freshmen university students have higher social and moral values compared to graduate university students.

According to table 2, we found that a theme of tendency to change means searching to changes in interpersonal relationships and consists of fashion-oriented, novelty seeking, risk-taking, learning tendency, and openness. The frequencies between the two groups suggest that freshmen university students are more reluctant to changes and they have more positive attitudes toward innovation compared to graduate university students.

_____

Table 2: themes of attitudes toward innovation in freshmen and graduate students

sentences	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding	Frequency in Freshman university students	Frequency in Graduate University students
- I always follow the newest trends. - Compare to the other people the cloths that I wear are more up to date. - I love to follow fashion and I go shopping almost every week.	Fashion-oriented	Search for changes in interpersonal relationships	Tendency to change	10	17
- I don't like to live a daily routine. - In my opinion. - Variety is the spice of life. - If you don't spice up your life, you will get stuck in inaction.	Novelty seeking			9	14
- I love to take risks from time to time. - I think the only way that you can make a happier life is to seek for excitement. - Everything will be dull and boring if you don't take risks in your life.	Risk taking			10	16
- I like to learn about art, culture and history. - Being aware of different issues makes me feel alive. - I think learning about different things is an important task in every one's life.	Learning tendency			11	15
- I love doing different and new things. - I think living in so many different countries can be an excellent experience. - It is important for me to be familiar with rituals of various cultures.	Openness			8	17

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to analyze and compare freshmen and graduate university students in their social and moral values and their attitudes toward innovation. In one hand the results of context analysis showed that in case of social and moral values, inner and outer values cause individual's growth and excellence. And the frequencies between the two groups suggest that freshmen university students have higher social and moral values compared to graduate university students. On the other hand, the results showed that the tendency to change and the university students' attitudes toward change increases as they pass their four years Moreover, by comparing the data of social and moral values of freshmen students with their attitudes toward innovation we can interpret that the freshmen have higher commitment to social and moral values but less tendency to change. And also graduate students had less commitment to social and moral values but had much tendency to innovation and changes. These findings correlate with former researches like Lehman (1958), Murphy (2009) and Arambewela (2011).

during student's progress through the four years of college students tend to become more conformist to whatever is the pattern of norms of the particular college. so these differences between freshmen and seniors attribute mainly to the university environment called college culture, simply because they interact with the student culture for four years. College culture is the collective response to problems and an outcome of the communication process among college students. This college culture is perpetuated by or has its continuity because of the communication occurring between new students and the older students. Thus it can be assumed that these changes in their social and moral values and their attitudes toward innovation would be due to the university environment. Consequently, future research needs to investigate if the present findings also hold for western students. Moreover, future studies may profit from including non-student samples (e.g., community samples) to examine if the present findings generalize beyond university students.

REFERENCES

[1] C, Busra; S Nurettin. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, **2015**, 186, 137- 142.
[2] JK Yong; L Chul-In. *Journal of economics & control*, **2015**, 53, 69–84.
[3] B Sylwia; Z Anna; R Anna. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, **2015**, 213, 1050 – 1056.

_____

[5] D Mikus; G Elina. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, **2015**, 213, 965 – 970.

[6] A, Osman Tolga; D Sahin; S Mark. *Computers in human behavior*, **2015**, 49, 362 - 374.

[4] G Alois; H Achim. *Journal of business research*, **2014**, 67, 1285 – 1292.

[7] A Rodney; Hall, John. *Social and Behavioral Sciences,* **2011**, 29, 1807 –   1815.

[8] B Mayhew; P Murphy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, **2009**, 86, 397 – 416.

[9] K Maan. Wayne state university, **1976**, education and social sciences.

[10] MG Mona; HA Hadia; AM Ahmed. *Personality and Individual Differences*, **2016**, 94, 163 – 167.