# Personal Values Profile of Secondary School Students: A comparative study on Social Class Backgrounds.

## S.M. Shahidul[1], A.H.M. Zehadul Karim[2] and S.M.A. Suffiun[3]

**Md. Shahidul Islam Sarker[1]**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Jalan Gombak, 53100,  Kuala lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia, E-mail: mpshahidul@yahoo.com, Tel:+60143278723, Fax: +603 6196 5041

**A.H.M. Zehadul Karim[2] (Corresponding Author)**

Professor, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Jalan Gombak, 53100,  Kuala lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia, E-mail: ahmkzehadul@yahoo.com,   Tel:+60163907940, Fax: +603 6196 5041

**Samrat Mohammad Abu Suffiun[3]**

 Senior Assistant Superintent of Police, NCB-INTERPOL, Dhaka Police Headquarters, Bangladesh. E-mail: shomrat.84@gmail.com, Tel. +88029553988

**Abstract**

The core objective of this study is to explore whether personal values priority of students vary according to their social class backgrounds and if so to describe the underlying causes to that discrepancies. This study is based on a survey carried out in one of the town zone of the sub-district in Bangladesh through interviews with questionnaires. We received responses from 335 students in the age range 12-16 years. Data have been analyzed with the help of Mean, Standard deviation (S.D) and t-test to study different values of students. The study highlights that students with lower class family background have more religious value compare to the students with higher class family background. Conversely, students with higher class family background have more democratic and power values compare to the students with lower class background. Furthermore, though some values vary in class backgrounds of students but the differences are not statistically significant.

**Keywords:** Personal values, Social class, Family backgrounds

## 1. Introduction

Value is a belief of a person to which the society gives acceptance, which held in high esteem and which serves to motivate behavior. Every individual has a core set of personal values.

Values can range from the common place, such as the belief in hard work and punctuality, to the more psychological such as self-reliance, concern for others and harmony of purpose. Values are statistically used to describe quantitative measure in term of measuring some standards. Values reflect the culture of a society and if the individual accepts a value for him/herself it may become a goal. Values provide generalized standard of behavior that are expressed in more specific, concrete from in social norms (Schwartz, 1992).

Personal values or individual values are the values to which an individual is committed and which influences his behavior (Theodorson and Achilles, 1969). There may be innumerable values for an individual but a few of them significantly influence the behavior. Personal values system is viewed as a relatively permanent perceptual framework which shapes and influences the general nature of an individual's behavior (Anbalagan, 1989). Personal values are implicitly related to choice and guide decisions by allowing for an individual's choices to be compared to each choice's associated values. Personal values developed early in life may be resistant to change. They may be derived from those of particular groups or systems, such as culture, religion and political party. However, personal values are not universal; one's genes, family, nation and historical environments help to determine one's personal values.

Personal values develop by direct learning through parents and the teachers at school and later on the person acquires the values from his society through the different media of communications. Values are significant in evaluating the attitude towards objects and activities having social significance. Along with the parents, another significant matter  that affects the personal values of an individual is the peer group in which people interact, share norms and goals (Garnier and Stein, 2002).

Typically, people adapt their values to their life circumstances. They upgrade the importance they attribute to values they can readily attain and downgrade the importance of values whose pursuit is blocked (Schwartz &Bardi, 1997). Upgrading attainable values and downgrading thwarted values applies to most, but not to all values. The reverse occurs with values that concern material well-being (power) and security. When such values are blocked, their importance increases; when they are easily attained, their importance drops. For example, people who suffer economic hardship and social disorder attribute more importance to power and security values than those who live in relative comfort and safety Inglehart (1997). People's age, education, gender, and other characteristics largely determine the life circumstances to which they are exposed. These include their socialization and learning experiences, the social roles they play, the expectations and sanctions they encounter and the abilities they develop. Thus, differences in background characteristics represent differences in the life circumstances that affect value priorities. From this point of view we argue that school students have different types of value priorities which determined by their family class backgrounds. Moreover, though research on the personal values of students examined based on the some dimensions such as gender, science, arts and commerce streams and school locations however, literature has not been much clarified whether personal values  priority of students vary according to their class backgrounds and if so why. Hence, the core objective of this study is to explore whether personal values priority of students vary according to their family class backgrounds and if so to describe the underlying causes to that discrepancies. As personal values of students affect to enhance academic achievement of students, therefore it is important to explore whether personal values priority of students vary according to their class backgrounds.

## 2. Review of literature

Natasha (2013) reported that adolescents from urban and rural areas gave first preference to social values because both are resourceful and can translate virtues like love, sympathy and kindness into their behaviour. They gave second preference to political values. It may be due to the influence of politicians from these areas at centre and state levels. Moreover, it is an established fact that more social persons are always more political. At the third place they prefer the theoretical values. That means both are very conservative. They are not ready to accept any change in their traditional outlook. Both also preferred economic values at third place. The reason may be that the people of these areas are economically very sound. Aesthetic and religious values are found to be at fourth and fifth places. It may be due to the fact that these people don't find time to devote themselves for aesthetic and religious matters. Nidhi and Jyoti (2011) revealed that the college students showed very high preferences for economic, and power values, and high preferences for aesthetic, and hedonistic values. Average inclination was noticed towards religious, and family prestige values; lower were seen for democratic, knowledge and health values and lowest for social value. Considering the above facts in the foreground, the present investigation was conducted with the following specific objectives: –To assess the personal value profile of the rural and urban adolescents. –To find out differences in personal value system of rural and urban adolescents.

Beer Shing and ArtiShingal (2003) studied to find out the value system between higher achiever and lower achiever students and they found that there are significant differences between the means of four values of high and low achiever students out of six values. Sanyal (19091) conducted a study to see if there was any refection of science education on value profile particularly in respect of two significant levels of science education (i.e. postgraduate and

undergraduate) Das (1993) investigated the value profiles of science, arts and commerce of secondary school students. The findings of the study were; (i) The students belonging to arts stream had highest preference for religious values and least preference for aesthetic value ;(ii) Power and family prestige were equally most preferred values for science students and aesthetic value was the least one ;(iii) The most preferred value for the commerce student was economic value and the least one was democratic value;(iv) Boys preferred the most to the power value and the least to the aesthetic value;(v) The most and least preferred values for girls were family prestige and aesthetic respectively;(vi) Similarity in rank of economic and knowledge values was noticed for boys and girls; (vii) The students belong to Arts and Science streams resemble in ranking of hedonistic and health values;(viii) Significance exist between arts and science students regarding religious, social aesthetic, knowledge, hedonistic power, family prestige and health values; (ix) Democratic and economic values were the areas of value where arts and science students differed significantly in their value preference; (x) Significance sex differences were found in the five value areas like religious, democratic, hedonistic power and family prestige. In religious, democratic and family prestige value areas, girls had high personal values than the boys and the boys had more preference for hedonistic and power values.

Tewari (1993) conducted a study with the purpose of investigating the differences in the value patterns of high and low cast male students in which significant cast differences were found only in aesthetic and religious areas. Chandrekumar (1994) conducted a study to explore the value system of the first degree college students and to study the extend of the influence of the college climate and home climate over the value system and the extend of the influence of the value system over the personal characteristics and the findings were; (i) The first degree college

students gave much importance to social values such as loving and equality personal values such as freedom, honesty, happiness and competence; (ii) The value system did not have significant relationship with the personality dimensions of the sampled students; (iii) Neither the college climate nor the home climate was related to the value system of the first degree college students. Singh (1997) studied the values of urban and rural adolescent students and found that in the theoretical and religious values urban male and female adolescents had significantly higher meaning scores than the corresponding mean scores of rural male and female adolescents. In social and aesthetic values rural male and female adolescents had significantly higher mean scores. In political and economic values the mean difference of urban and rural adolescents were not significant. Although research on the personal values of students examined based on the some dimensions such as gender, science, arts and commerce stream, school location however, literature has not been   much clear whether personal values   differ according to the class background of students and if so why.

### 3. Values Theory

When we think of our values, we think of what is important to us in our lives (e.g., security, independence, wisdom, success, kindness, pleasure). Each of us holds numerous values with varying degrees of importance. A particular value may be very important to one person, but unimportant to another. Consensus regarding the most useful way to conceptualize basic values have emerged gradually since the 1950's. We can summarize the main features of the conception of basic values implicit in the writings of many theorists and researchers as follows:

- Values are beliefs. But these beliefs are  tied inextricably to emotion, not objective, cold

ideas.

- Values are a motivational construct. They refer to the desirable goals people strive to attain.

- Values transcend particular moves and situations. They may be abstract dreams. The core nature of values distinguishes them from concepts like norms and attitudes, which Commonly refer to specific actions, gadgets, or conditions.

- Values guide the choice or assessment of movements, policies, people, and events. That is, values serve as standards or criteria.

- Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. People's values form ordered system of value priorities that characterize them as individuals. This hierarchical feature of values also distinguishes them from norms and attitudes.

The Values theory defines values as acceptable, trans-situational objects, varying in significance that serves as guiding standards in human beings' lives. The five features mentioned above are unusual to all values. The essential content material aspect that distinguishes among values are the sort of motivational goal they express. As a way to coordinate with others in the pursuit of the goals which can be essential to them, corporations and people represent these requirements cognitively (linguistically) as specific values approximately which they communicate . Ten basic values are intended to consist of all the center values recognized in cultures around the world. G.P. Sherry and Prof. R.P. Verma(1998) intends to measure the ten human values in personality and these are; religious,  social, democratic, aesthetic, economic, knowledge, hedonistic, power, family prestige and health value. These ten values are defined below:

(i). Religious Value

This value is defined in terms of faith in God, attempts to understand Him, fear of divine wrath and acting according to the ethical codes prescribed in the religious books. The outward acts of behavior expressive of this value are going on a pilgrimage, living a simple life, having faith in the religious leaders, worshipping God and speaking the truth.

(ii). Social Value

This value is defined in terms of charity, kindness, love and sympathy for the people, efforts to serve God through the service of mankind, sacrificing personal comforts and gains to relieve the needy and the affected of their misery.

(iii). Democratic Value

This value is characterized by respect for individuality, absence of discrimination among persons on the basis of gender, language, religion, caste, race and family status, ensuring equal social, political and religious rights to all, impartiality and social justice and respect for the democratic institutions.

(iv).Aesthetic Value

Aesthetic value is characterized by appreciation of beauty, form, proportion and harmony, love for fine arts, drawing-painting, music, dance, sculpture, poetry and architecture, love for literature, love for decoration of the home and the surroundings, neatness and system in the arrangement of the things.

(v). Economic Value

This value stands for desire for money and material gains. A man with high economic value is guided by considerations of money and material gains in the choice of his job.

(vi). Knowledge Value

This value stands for love of knowledge of theoretical principles of any activity, and love of discovery of truth. A man with knowledge value considers a knowledge of theoretical principles underlying a work essential for success in it. He values hard work in studies, for him knowledge is virtue.

(vii). Hedonistic Value

Hedonistic value, as defined here, is the conception of the desirability of loving pleasure and avoiding pain. For a hedonist, the present is more important than the future. A man with hedonist value indulges in pleasures of the senses and avoids pain.

(viii). Power Value

The power value is defined as the conception of desirability of ruling over others and also of leading others. The characteristics of a person of high power value are that he prefers a job where he gets opportunity to exercise authority over others, that he prefers to rule in a small place rather than to serve in a big place, and that he is deeply status conscious and can even tell a lie for maintaining the prestige of his position.

(ix). Family Prestige Value

The family prestige value is the conception of the desirability of such items of behavior, roles, functions and relationships as would become one's family status.

(x). Health Value

Health value is the consideration for keeping the body in a fit state for carrying out one's normal duties and functions. It also implies the consideration for self-preservation. A man with high health value really feels if through some act of negligence he impairs his health, he considers good physical health essential for the development and use of his abilities.

## 4. Influence of Values on Academic Achievement

Educational studies attempted to explore the relationship between personal values and learning approaches. Renshaw (2003) correlated achievement goals with personal values that were assumed to influence achievement and showed that mastery goals were associated with motivations or engagement patterns and strategies that were consistent with a deep approach to learning. This approach, in turn, was related to positive learning outcomes. In contrast, performance goals were associated with motivations and strategies that tended to be superficial in nature and consistent with a surface approach to learning that yielded a lower level of achievement (Lietz& Matthews, 2010; Wilding &Andrews, 2006). Matthews (2004), for example, found that students in Australia who had low integrity values also showed higher preference for surface learning with a strong positive correlation to the achieving motive. Saraswat (1982) made an attempt to examine the relationship of values and academic achievement and found that boys and girls differed significantly with regard possession of values and values significantly influenced the academic achievement of students. Chand (1992)

conducted study examine the personal values of adolescents and findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between personal values and religious, democratic, economic, knowledge, hedonistic, power and family prestige. Owens (1994) tried to evaluate the relationship between values and academic performance of seventh grade students and found that there is a significant difference in each of the personal values cluster among the four level of academic achievement.

## 5. Methods

### 5.1. Data:

This study is based on a survey carried out in one of the town zones of the sub-district named Pirgonj Upazila of Rangpur District in Bangladesh in March, 2016 through interviews with questionnaires. The town zone of the sub-district was purposely chosen to obtain more heterogeneous respondents. We observed that student compositions are more heterogeneous in schools which are located in the town zone of the sub-district. We received responses from 335 students in the age range 12-16 years in which higher class was 145 persons and lower class was 190 persons.

### 5.1.1. Research tools:

Socioeconomic status scale developed by Kuppuswamy (modifiedversion, 2012) has used to assess the Class Backgrounds of the respondents. The scale consists of 3 main areas: Education, Profession and Income of students' parents. Class background was broadly divided into two groups; higher class and Lower class.

Personal Values Questionnaire Scale developed by Sherry and Verma (2010) has used to assess the personal values of adolescents. The scale had 40 items distributed across ten different types of values. The types of values studied were: Religious, Social, Democratic, Aesthetic, Economic, Knowledge, Hedonistic, Power, Family prestige and Health. Each question had three options and subjects were asked to respond to each item. Data are analyzed with the help of Mean, Standard deviation (S.D) and t-test to study different values of students.

## 6. Results

Table 1 shows that students with higher class background have more democratic value compare to the students with lower class background (mean = 33.30 and 31.33 respectively). Similarly, in the respect of power value result shows that students with higher class background have more democratic value compare to the students with lower class background (mean = 34.30 and 28.33 respectively).

Table 1. Mean, Standard deviation and t-Value of Higher and Lower class Students' Personal values.

| Dimensions of personal values | Higher class (n= 145) | Lower class (n= 190) | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Mean (S.D) | Mean (S.D) |  |
| Religious value | 46.33 (3.23) | 48.19 (4.34) | 4.32*** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social value | 31.02 (5.35) | 30.73 (5.41) | 0.48 |
| Democratic value | 33.30 (6.13) | 31.33 (7.34) | 2.60** |
| Aesthetic value | 27.21 (4.51) | 26.84 (4.11) | 0.77 |
| Economic value | 22.71 (4.61) | 22.44 (4.31) | 0.55 |
| Knowledge value | 24.54 (4.31) | 24.43 (4.21) | 0.2338 |
| Hedonistic value | 28.20 (5.40) | 27.87 (5.22) | 0.56 |
| Power value | 34.30 (4.56) | 28.33 (4.27) | 12.30*** |
| Family prestige value | 26.13 (5.47) | 25.68 (5.27) | 0.75 |
| Health value | 21.02 (5.15) | 20.71 (5.11) | 5.13 |

** indicate significance of value at P = 0.01 and *** indicate significance of value at P = 0.001

Furthermore, though other values such as economic, family prestige value, social value, Aesthetic value, knowledge value, hedonistic value and health values differ in class background of students but the differences are not statistically significant in this study.

### 7. Discussion

Results show that students with lower social class have more religious value compared to the students with higher class background. Substantial research has examined that people with low socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to be religious and tend to seek God through prayers (Albrecht & Heaton, 1984). Nelson (1991) also found that people with lower SES are associated with more religious practices and experiences compared to those with higher SES. Ellison et al. (1990) demonstrated that people with low SES try to get the psychological benefits from religiosity and consequently, tend to be more religious in general. Most of the researches deployed to investigate the relationship between religiosity and SES measure this relationship by focusing on education when education represents the core dimensions of social stratification (Mirowsky and Ross, 1983). Hence, students with low socio-economic status are likely expose

more religious value compared to the students with high socioeconomic status to get the psychological benefits from religiosity.

Results on democratic value indicate that students with high social class background expose more social values compared to the students with low social class background. In this respect, Chu and Chang (2001) also examined that socio-economic factors such as income and education are positively correlated with democratic value. They conclude that socio-economic condition is positively correlated with demand for democratic principles, suggesting that modernization generally facilitates the growth in democratic-value orientation. The functioning of democratic systems is determined not only by either for the action of citizens or the performance of political system, but also by the behavior of political actors. Decision makers in public institutions are political elites and they operate through political parties. What is in permanent tension in current societies is the relationship among power, conflict and authority (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950). Political elites have to deal with power institutions and "shape" the political system. In some cases the elites elaborate strong rules in order to maintain their power avoiding political competition. In other cases, the elites must compete among them and/or with others citizens. Thus, is society controlled by a small group of insiders? This is the paradox of political elites: between political representation and the maximization of their own interests.

Max Weber's sociology developed a strong theoretical framework for understanding the connection between social strata and political action in modern societies. Influenced by Marx's ideas, Weber created a theory of social stratification arguing that power could take a variety of forms in the social interplay. He emphasized the idea that besides class, there were other sources of power in modern societies, such as the status, which was defined by consumption (Weber, 1946, 1964, 1978). Since the 1970s, a wide range of sociological empirical research has mainly

focused on explaining social determinants on ruling elites. Considering topics such as social origins, type of education, socioeconomic status, social and political capital among others, several scholars have analyzed what factors explain the creation of elites as well as how they evolve in time. Most social scientists consider that power can be studied either as collective power, which is the capacity to perform effectively in pursuing its common goals, or regarding the ability of a group (élite) within a community to be successful in conflicts with its rivals. Both dimensions are intertwined, but the second prevails for studying political elites. The theoretical starting point for elites and power structure research is that in modern societies the basis of power, authority and conflict are in the human organizations (Domhoff, 2006). As they are conformed to accomplish a set of purposes, they often develop rules, specific roles and routines. They frequently must compete among them.

In political sociology five theories have attempted –from different perspectives and models– to explain and to analyze power structure (Mann, 1986; Hall and Schroeder, 2005; Domhoff, 2005). Finally, Class Domination Theory analyzes power structure concerning the different positions of domination of each group in the social order. It analyzes the social networks with regard to how the power is wielded (who benefits? who governs? and who wins?). More than dominant classes, this perspective explains how different groups compete for controlling the society and how this affects social evolution.


## 8. Conclusion

Social class has an influence on an individual's values which verified according to the socio-economic backgrounds of the family in which students learn values from their parents or caregivers as they play as role models. Life without values becomes mechanical-like beings,

driven here and there by the vicissitudes of life. In this reality devoid of values, we would live unconscious lives, without meaning or purpose. On the other hand, when we take to values, we live a purposeful and dynamic existence and become truly human. There are many variables which expresses the personal values. In fact, this study highlights   that students with lower class background have more religious value compare to the students with higher class background. Conversely, students with higher class background have more democratic and power values compare to the students with lower class background. Furthermore, though other values such as economic, family prestige value, social value, aesthetic value, knowledge value, hedonistic value and health value vary in class background of students but the difference are not statistically significant. We suggest that students required appropriate guidance and counseling in the schools and at home so that theymight be able to develop and inculcate such values which will help them to lead for a smooth academic career that ultimately accelerate their lives to be successful.

## Acknowledgements

## References

Albrecht, S. L., & Heaton, T. B. (1984). Secularization, higher education, and religiosity. *Review of Religious Research,* 26 (1), 43–58.

Anbalagan, M. (1989). Values and value systems: A review of research studies and some hypotheses for testing. *Decision*, 16 (3), 199-204.

ChandraKumar, N. P. (1994) *Landing of turtle.* CMFRI Newsletter No.63 January- March.

Chand, S. K. (1992). A study of personal values of adolescent boys and girls in relation to socio-economic status and academic achievement. *Fifth Survey of Educational Research*, II, NCERT.

Chander, S & Singh, J. (2004). Performance of mutual funds in India – an empirical evidence. *The ICFAI Journal of Applied finance*, June, 45-63.

Chen, B., and Feng, Y. (2000). Determinants of economic growth in China: Private enterprises, eduction, and openness. *China Economic Review*, 11(1), 1-15.

Garnier H. E., Stein, J. A. (2002). An 18-year model of family and peer effects on adolescent drug use and delinquency. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 31(1), 45–56.

Hall J., & Schroeder, R. (2005). An anatomy of power: the social theory of Michael Mann, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and postmodernization.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kuppuswamy B. Manual of Socioeconomic Status (urban), Delhi, Manasayan, 1981.

Lietz, P., & Matthews, B. (2010). The effects of college students' personal values on changes in learning approaches. *Research in Higher Education, 51*(1), 65-87.

Mann, M. (1986). *The sources of social power: A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760* (Vol. 1). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Matthews, B. (2004). *Life values and approaches to learning: A study of university students from Confucian heritage cultures.* Flinders University Institute of International Education. Research Collection, Number 12. Adelaide: Shannon Research Press.

Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. E. (1989). Social causes of psychological distress. New York: Aldine.

Natasha (2013). A comparative study of value pattern among adolescent. *Internat. J. Edu. Plann. Admin.,* 3(1), 75-79.

Nelson, L. (1991). Student Experiences with information technology and their relationship to other aspects of student engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(2), 211-233.

Nidhi, V. & Jyoti, B. (2011). Personal values emerging among the Indian graduate students: Study conducted in a selected city of Maharashtra. *Internat. J. Edu. Soc. Dev.,* **2** (3), 363 – 374.

Renshaw, P. D. (2003). Motivation and school learning. In J. P. Keeves (Ed.), *Handbook of educational research in the Asia-Pacific region,* 495-510).

Sanyal, B. (1991). Antagonistic cooperation: A case study of NGOs, government and donors' relationships in income-generating projects in Bangladesh. *World Development*,19 (10), 1367-1380.

Schwartz, S.H. (1992). Universal in the content and structure of values: Theory and empirical and tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 1-65.

Schwartz, S.H., & Bardi, A. (1997). Influences of adaptation to communist rule on value priorities in Eastern Europe. *Political Psychology*, 18 (2), 385-410.

Sherry, G. P., & Verma, R. P.(2010). *Personal values questionnaire*. National Psychological Corporation, Agra (U.P.) INDIA.

Singh, B., & Singhal, A. (2003). A comparative study of value system of high and low achiever boys. *Praachi Journal of Psycho-cultural Dimensions*, 19 (2), 92-94

Singh R. P. (1997). A study of values of urban and rural adolescent students', Indian educational abstract. *Journal of Psycho-cultural dimensions,* 9 (1), 7-1 1

Tewari, D. (1993). Non-timber forest produce in poverty alleviation. *Indian Forester*, 119 (12), 959-69.

Theodorson, G.A., & Achilles, G. T. (1969). *A modern dictionary of sociology*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 456-457.

Wilding, J. & Andrews, B. (2006). Life goals, approaches to study and performance in an undergraduate cohort. *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* 76 (1), 171-182.