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THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES AND SOCIAL NORMS ON DEMOCRACY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROCESSES

Abstract

This study examines the formation of values, their interaction with social norms, and their influence on socio-economic development and democratic institutions through a multidisciplinary framework integrating social, psychological, and biological perspectives. Drawing on theoretical analyses, empirical research, and cross-cultural models developed by scholars such as Schwartz, Hofstede, Narvaez, Inglehart, and Welzel, the study demonstrates that values emerge through socialization, psychological development, and neurobiological processes, forming universal motivational structures that function consistently across cultures while allowing contextual differences in prioritization. The findings show that values operate dynamically within social norms and institutions, reinforcing social order, guiding collective decision-making, and contributing to economic progress. Moreover, socio-economic development fosters emancipative and participatory values that strengthen democratic institutions and support democratic resilience. Overall, the research suggests that values play a significant role in supporting human development, social cohesion, and democratic sustainability, providing useful insights for policy-making, education, and institutional design.

Keywords: values, social norms, cultural universals and cultural diversities, human development, socio-economic mechanisms, democratic development.

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Introduction

The study of values, social norms, and their role in socio-economic and democratic processes has become a central topic in contemporary social sciences. Values are fundamental determinants of human behavior, guiding moral orientations, ethical choices, and social interactions. At the same time, social norms and institutions provide the framework within which these values are transmitted, internalized, and operationalized. The interaction between values, norms, and institutional mechanisms not only shapes individual and collective behaviors but also influences economic development, social stability, and democratic sustainability.

This paper explores the multi-dimensional formation of values, analyzing social, psychological, and biological perspectives, and examines their organization within culture through universal motivational structures. Furthermore, it investigates the socio-economic mechanisms through which values and norms contribute to the consolidation and functioning of democratic institutions. By integrating theoretical, empirical, and cross-cultural evidence, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how moral and cultural frameworks underpin social cohesion, economic performance, and democratic resilience.



Factors in the Formation of Values: Social, Biological, and Psychological Perspectives

The formation of values is a complex and multi-layered process grounded in social, psychological, and biological foundations of human development. Although the human being is born as a biological entity, through the process of socialization they become a member of society and adapt their behavior, moral orientations, and motivations to the socio-cultural environment. Socialization begins in the family and continues through school, community, social institutions, and cultural practices; this process shapes not only the individual's behavioral repertoire but also their moral and psychological structures. [1, p.29] As is evident, the transmission of values, the internalization of normative structures, and the acquisition of social roles serve as fundamental mechanisms in the development of the human being as a social entity.

The needs that constitute the motivational basis of human behavior are the fundamental driving force of social, economic, and moral development. Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains this sequence through the stages of physiological needs, safety, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, demonstrating that human needs are simultaneously biological, social, and cultural. [16, pp.371-375] Ibn Khaldun similarly notes that the satisfaction of basic (necessary) needs marks the beginning of culture, while the fulfilment of higher-order needs enables the development of advanced cultural products such as knowledge, art, and moral values. From this standpoint, the staged satisfaction of needs forms the principal mechanism of both socio-cultural and economic development. [2, pp.51-52] Building on this, changes in the structure of human needs shape not only individual motivations but also the evolution of entire value systems.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud's id-ego-superego model explains the psychological foundations of value formation. The superego functions as the normative structure that embeds the values of society, family, and culture into the individual psyche; through this structure, social norms and moral principles

are internalized at both conscious and unconscious levels. [15, p.11] For this reason, the socialization process is understood not merely as the learning of behavior but also as the regulation of the psyche through values.

The biological and evolutionary foundations of values are also strongly emphasized in contemporary research. D.Narvaez integrating neurobiological and evolutionary psychology approaches, demonstrates that the early childhood environment, mother-infant interaction, emotional security, and stress levels influence the development of brain regions such as the orbitofrontal cortex and the amygdala. These regions constitute the neuropsychological basis of empathy, ethical responsiveness, and social behavior mechanisms. Due to neuroplasticity, experiences of care, safety, and closeness in the early years shape the foundations of values, empathy, and moral identity, while trauma and neglect weaken these systems. [17, pp. 434-446, 448-458] Narvaez's Triune Ethics Metatheory further explains this process in a broader framework, showing that moral orientations—engagement, protection, and imagination—emerge through the interaction of social, biological, and emotional factors. [17, pp. 15-18]

In understanding the social foundation of values, the example of altruism holds particular importance. Fehr and Fischbacher empirically demonstrate that altruistic behaviour cannot be explained solely through instrumental rational choice; rather, it arises through the interaction of mechanisms such as reputation, reciprocity, social norm internalization, altruistic punishment, and the sense of fairness. Ultimatum and trust games, as well as ethnographic observations across societies, show that altruism plays a fundamental role in preserving the stability of social systems and can be understood as a joint product of biological, psychological, and cultural evolution. [4] Thus, the value-oriented nature of social behaviour confirms the simultaneous operation of social and biological determinants.

Socialization processes, psychological structures, and biological-neurological development do not function as parallel factors but interactively in the formation of values. As shown in Narvaez's research, early care, emotional security, and social bonding constitute the basis not

only of social behaviours but also of moral orientations and value systems. In this regard, the formation of values can be understood not as a single-domain process but as a dynamic synchronization between the individual's biological potential, psychological structures, and socio-cultural environment.

Thus, the formation of values is a multi-level process shaped by the integrative interaction of social institutions, psychological developmental mechanisms, and evolutionary-biological factors, and it is precisely this interaction that forms the core foundation determining the individual's moral orientations, ethical behaviour, and social identity.

Culture and the Universal Structure of Values: Analysis of Theoretical and Empirical Approaches

Culture and values are two fundamental concepts that play a central role in shaping human behavior, and their interaction determines an individual's adaptation to the social environment. While personality expresses the uniqueness of the individual, culture shapes collective identity and creates a system of norms and values that regulate people's interactions with their environment. Within this framework, the guiding role of values within culture is of particular importance. Hofstede describes culture as the "programming of collective consciousness," [8, p.9] Kluckhohn interprets it as patterns of thought shaped by symbols and historically selected ideas, [14, p.73] and Gorodnichenko and Roland define it as a system of values and beliefs. [5, p. 402] These diverse definitions indicate that values form the foundational mechanism for both individual behavior and the social structures of society. Such conceptualizations provide a solid foundation for understanding the interdependence between culture and values.

The central role of values in human behavior has led different scholars to classify them into various categories. Nelson identified individual, group, and social values; Spranger proposed scientific, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious categories; and Rokeach distinguished between terminal and instrumental values, explaining different levels of human activity. Grondon divided values into intrinsic and

instrumental categories, highlighting their utility-based and non-utility-based characteristics. [6, p.45] Schwartz generalized these classifications by studying values at both individual and cultural levels and identifying ten motivational value categories that guide human life. [23, p.21] Comparing these classifications thus offers a broader theoretical perspective for understanding how values influence behavior.

The idea that values possess a universal psychological structure was empirically confirmed by Schwartz and Bilsky. In a survey conducted with 195 university students in Germany and the United States, factorial and multidimensional scaling analyses identified five main motivational categories: biological needs, social interaction, group coordination, self-expression, and transcendental goals. [21] These findings demonstrate that values are not merely culture-bound social constructs but are also formed through universal motivational mechanisms inherent in the human psyche. These results laid the groundwork for broader empirical testing and the development of a universal value structure.

Schwartz's (1992) empirical research covering 20 countries provided broader confirmation of the universal value structure. The ten motivational values he identified—Security, Tradition, Conformity, Benevolence, Power, Achievement, Stimulation, Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Universalism—exhibited similar circular motivational structures across all societies. Multidimensional scaling results revealed that values are interrelated based on complementary or conflicting functions, and these relationships create a stable structure in every country. [22] This empirical evidence reinforced the idea that universal values are both conceptually sound and observable in reality.

In his later studies, Schwartz expanded the universal model and organized values along two main opposing axes: openness to change versus conservatism, and self-transcendence versus self-enhancement. This classification more accurately demonstrates the mechanisms through which values influence individual behavior, social choices, and cultural norms. Consequently, this framework clarifies the operation of value

systems at individual, social, and cultural levels. [24] The existence of a universal structure does not negate the role of cultural differences; Schwartz shows that while the value system remains stable, the prioritization of values varies across cultures. These differences are shaped by historical experiences, social institutions, economic development, and collective memory. For instance, values such as benevolence and self-direction serve the same psychological function in all societies, yet they may be emphasized more in some countries and less in others. [22] This demonstrates how universal structures coexist with culturally specific expressions of values.

Overall, the analysis indicates that culture and values function as mutually influential mechanisms shaping behavior at both individual and societal levels. The classification of values clarifies their psychological and social functions, while the universal value structure reveals cross-cultural similarities and stable motivational principles. Schwartz's sequential studies (1987–2012) demonstrate that values are rooted in enduring psychological mechanisms, and cultural differences largely reflect shifts in the prioritization of these values rather than changes in their essence. Consequently, the theoretical and empirical evidence confirms that values constitute the core elements of a universal motivational structure underlying human behavior, a structure that remains stable despite cultural variation. Thus, the universal value model offers a reliable and broadly applicable analytical framework for comparative analysis across social, institutional, and economic processes.

Values, Social Norms, and the Socio-Economic Mechanisms of Democratic Development

The social function of values manifests through the mechanisms formed in their interaction with normative systems. Parsons emphasizes that individual behavior is guided through an integrative system of values, norms, roles, and sanctions; this system serves as a key coordination framework that ensures the continuity of social order. [19] Social norms define accepted behavioral standards within groups and provide stable guidelines for individuals to perform their social roles. The internalization of

norms from family to broader social groups regulates interpersonal relations and establishes social control. At the same time, values and norms are not static; social change, modernization, and cultural diversity continuously reshape their interaction. Hofstede's onion diagram model shows that values occupy the core of culture and, unlike visible symbols and rituals, direct the formation of social norms. [8, pp.10-11]

The normative nature of values ensures their interaction with social institutions—family, education, religion, law, and politics. Karakaş demonstrates that values are not merely individual ethics but collective products reproduced through social practices and institutional frameworks. [13, pp. 69–80] This approach aligns with classical sociological research by Durkheim, Weber, and Berger, highlighting that values provide a foundation for both social stability and change. [13, pp. 72-86] The interaction between normative systems and institutions explains the long-term stability of norms, particularly in closed and traditional societies. Concurrently, Narvaez (2018) notes that early childhood experiences and parent-child interactions influence the development of the orbitofrontal brain region, playing a crucial role in shaping moral and social behavior. [17] This psychobiological mechanism conditions individuals to act in accordance with social norms and values.

This structural framework is also central to democratic development. Welzel and Inglehart argue that emancipative (freedom-oriented) values constitute a key socio-cultural mechanism for the emergence and sustainability of democratic institutions. Their “effective democracy” model shows that democratic quality is determined not only by the presence of formal institutions but also by the orientation of the value system toward freedom, participation, and trust. [27] Earlier research by Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann conceptualizes the cyclical interaction between socio-economic resource growth, the strengthening of emancipative values, and democratic institution consolidation as a “human development syndrome”. Increased social resources reduce survival pressures, fostering postmaterialist, tolerant, and participatory values, which, in turn, strengthen democratic insti-

tutions through intolerance to corruption and effective rights enforcement. [28, pp.360-367] Guriev and Melnikov note that war, inflation, and other socio-economic stresses reduce social capital, weaken interpersonal trust and collective-oriented behavior, negatively affecting the effectiveness of democratic institutions. [7, pp. 230–235]

The individual-level manifestation of modernization is empirically demonstrated in Inkeles and Smith's "modern man" model. Research across six countries shows that civic participation, trust in science and technology, openness to new experiences, and independence from traditional authority are shaped by the modern socio-economic environment. [12, pp.1-34] Education, industrial work, and urban environments act as social institutions that strengthen these behaviors. The link between individual altruism, social responsibility, evolution, and social norms demonstrates that people act not solely in self-interest but also for collective benefit, playing a vital role in stabilizing social behaviors and strengthening democratic participation.

Schwartz (2006) explains the connection between values and socio-economic development through cultural value orientations. In societies prioritizing collective harmony and conservation, social order and conformity dominate, whereas in societies emphasizing openness and cognitive autonomy, individual rights, innovation, and initiative drive economic behavior. [24, pp.140-146] The institutional outcomes of cultural values create a systematic link between economic performance and social order. [24, pp.152-158] Historical and structural factors further reinforce this value-institution relationship. Van Leeuwen shows that social mobility is determined not only by individual effort but also by institutions such as the education system, industrialization, political regimes, and inheritance rules. [26]

The influence of economic development on values and democracy is conceptualized by Inglehart and Welzel as an "economic prosperity → values → democracy" sequence. [11, pp.15-18] While modernization generates general value orientations, Inglehart and Baker indicate

that historical-cultural heritage preserves the long-term structure of values, with cross-country positions changing very little over time. [10, pp.23-27] Social norms and altruism principles ensure dynamic stability within society and strengthen collective welfare-oriented behavior, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of democratic institutions.

Hofstede and Minkov note that values internalized from early childhood shape the long-term behavioral structure of institutions and economic activities. [8,9] This aligns with Hofstede's onion diagram: values form the deep layer of culture, guide the formation of social norms, and direct behavior at both individual and societal levels.

The overall findings indicate that values, institutions, socio-economic development, and democracy are interconnected in a reciprocal and cyclical manner. Values shape institutions, institutions stabilize social behavior, socio-economic resources enable value transformation, and this cycle ensures a sustainable mechanism for democratic development. Values and social norms mutually reinforce each other; norms guide individual behavior, and individuals adhering to these norms maintain societal stability. As cultural values vary across nations, norms also differ from one society to another. Social and cultural changes generate new norms, which in turn transform values, maintaining the dynamic equilibrium of society.

Values, social norms, and institutions form a dynamic system of mutual influence. This interaction directs individual behavior, stabilizes social norms, and shapes collective decision-making. Through economic development and modernization, emancipative and participatory values are reinforced, providing a sustainable socio-economic mechanism that supports the emergence, consolidation, and enduring functioning of democratic institutions. Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that the interplay between values, norms, and institutions is not merely theoretical but a concrete mechanism that drives social stability, economic progress, and democratic resilience, highlighting the indispensable role of cultural and moral frameworks in shaping societal trajectories.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the formation of values serves as one of the fundamental determinants of human development. The interaction among social institutions, psychological structures, and biological–neurological mechanisms shapes an individual’s moral orientations, ethical behaviors, and social identity. This integrative process demonstrates that values not only guide personal choices and behaviors but also function as a central mechanism necessary for social stability and normative coherence. Early socialization, education, and family institutions, along with cultural traditions, ensure the transmission of values, while psychological and neurological factors reinforce the continuity of this process.

Building on this foundation, the interaction of values with social norms and institutions generates broader societal outcomes. It is this interaction that creates conditions conducive to economic development and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Universal motivational structures and the stable mechanisms of culture guide individual behaviors and collective decision-making, while the reinforcement of emancipative and participatory values constitutes a key requirement for democratic progress. Consequently, values and their complex integrative mechanisms form the fundamental basis for the social, economic, and democratic sustainability of society.

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**DƏYƏRLƏR VƏ SOSIAL NORMALARIN DEMOKRATIYA VƏ SOSİO-İQTİSADI
PROSESLƏRƏ TƏSİRİ**

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat dəyərlərin formalaşmasını, onların sosial normalarla qarşılıqlı təsirini və sosial-iqtisadi inkişafı demokratik institutlara göstərdiyi təsiri sosial, psixoloji və bioloji perspektivləri birləşdirən multidissiplinar çərçivədə araşdırır. Şvarts, Hofstede, Narvaez, İnqlhart və Velzel kimi alimlərin inkişaf etdirdiyi nəzəri təhlillər, empirik araşdırmalar və mədəniyyətlərarası modellərə əsaslanaraq tədqiqat göstərir ki, dəyərlər sosiallaşma, psixoloji inkişaf və neyrobioloji proseslər vasitəsilə formalaşır və mədəniyyətlərdə ardıcıl şəkildə fəaliyyət göstərən universal motivasiya strukturları yaradır, lakin onların prioritetləşdirilməsində kontekstual fərqliliklər mümkündür. Tədqiqatın nəticələri göstərir ki, dəyərlər sosial normalar və institutlar daxilində dinamik şəkildə fəaliyyət göstərərək sosial qaydanı möhkəmləndirir, kollektiv qərarverməni istiqamətləndirir və iqtisadi tərəqqiyə töhfə verir. Bundan əlavə, sosial-iqtisadi inkişaf emansipasiya yönümlü və iştirakçı dəyərlərin formalaşmasını təşviq edir, bu isə demokratik institutları gücləndirir və demokratik dayanıqlığı təmin edir. Ümumilikdə, tədqiqat belə nəticəyə gəlir ki, dəyərlər insan inkişafının, sosial həmrəyliyin və Ümumilikdə, tədqiqat göstərir ki, dəyərlər insan inkişafının, sosial həmrəyliyin və demokratik davamlılığın dəstəklənməsində mühüm rol oynayır və siyasət formalaşdırılması, təhsil və institusional dizayn üçün faydalı perspektivlər təqdim edir.

Açar sözlər: dəyərlər, sosial normalar, mədəni universallar və mədəni müxtəlifliklər, insan inkişafı, sosio-iqtisadi mexanizmlər, demokratik inkişaf.



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ВЛИЯНИЕ ЦЕННОСТЕЙ И СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ НОРМ НА ДЕМОКРАТИЮ И СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ

Резюме

Это исследование рассматривает формирование ценностей, их взаимодействие с социальными нормами и влияние на социально-экономическое развитие и демократические институты в рамках многодисциплинарного подхода, объединяющего социальные, психологические и биологические перспективы. Основываясь на теоретическом анализе, эмпирических исследованиях и межкультурных моделях, разработанных такими учёными, как Шварц, Хофстеде, Нарваз, Инглхарт и Велзель, исследование показывает, что ценности формируются через социализацию, психологическое развитие и нейробиологические процессы, создавая универсальные мотивационные структуры, которые функционируют последовательно во всех культурах, при этом допускаются контекстуальные различия в их приоритетах. Результаты исследования показывают, что ценности динамично действуют в рамках социальных норм и институтов, укрепляя социальный порядок, направляя коллективное принятие решений и способствуя экономическому прогрессу. Кроме того, социально-экономическое развитие способствует формированию эмансипативных и участнических ценностей, что укрепляет демократические институты и обеспечивает демократическую устойчивость. В целом, исследование показывает, что ценности играют важную роль в поддержке человеческого развития, социальной сплочённости и демократической устойчивости, предоставляя полезные рекомендации для разработки политики, образования и институционального проектирования.

Ключевые слова: ценности, социальные нормы, культурные универсалы и культурные различия, человеческое развитие, социально-экономические механизмы, демократическое развитие.

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