

SUSTAINABILITY OF FAMILY VALUES THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS AS VIEWED BY THE BACHELOR PROGRAM STUDENTS

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***Abstract.** The meaning of a term “family” differs from one group of people to another and changes over time. The definition has important political, economic, social and ecological consequences, often determining family members’ roles, rights and obligations. Maintaining and fostering the value of strong families ensures a sustainable development of a country. Strong family with stable values is an excellent instrument of resistance and adaptation to the external world and pressures. The study presents the survey done on bachelor program students’ view on sustainability and how they maintain family values throughout the generations. This helps to build bridges over the traditional and the modernity aspects that emerge in the society’s contemporary understanding of a family as a structural and spiritual unit. The methods of the research employed are the following: the study presents a qualitative research that comprises the content analyses of fifty six essays on a perception of a family by the bachelor programme students from one regional university of Latvia. The data is supported by the focus group interviews carried out with the full time students that are employed in the educational courses „Family pedagogy” and „Social pedagogy” (n = 111).*

***Key words:** sustainability of family values, students’ view, traditional versus modernity.*

Defying the family

Based on the Convention of Human Rights, family can be defined as basic societal unit, and the task of the society is to offer all the necessary support and protection to the family, so that the family can undertake all the responsibilities to ensure a favourable environment for the harmonious development of a child. Family is regarded as one of the most significant socialization institutions for the child, and therefore this is essential to evaluate and to understand the value system of young people, so that values are not oriented only towards the egoistic aims set by parents but the understanding the significance of the role of a family in upbringing of children.

Family should be understood as a complex psycho - physical, spiritual, culturally historical, and a dynamic unit. The way we define family depends of cultural values, social, economic, personal and political contexts. The family should be viewed as influenced by the socio - cultural, political – economic and historical contexts of the time. In the contemporary society considerable changes took place in the society that also has determined the way we define the family. The roles and the functions in the family have changed a lot since women have gained considerable degree of personal and economic autonomy. Changing attitudes about women’s roles and non – conventional forms of families have

caused a low child birth and an increasing number of divorces. Among the changes that need to be mentioned are the following: the increasing number of single parent families, children born in unmarried mothers' families, changes in lifestyles, a breakdown of marriages, and an increasing number of divorces in the families. Traditional division of roles in the family does not allow to view a man as a bread provider and mother as the one who cares about children any longer. Families lose their ability to cope with the demands placed upon it. Family is not capable any more of providing a safe and nurturing place where children can grow up and become happy. Alcoholism among youth is one of the social and family problems. Youth dropping out of school have increased dramatically. Regardless of structure, a family's role is to sustain, to support, and to nourish its children is an imperative.

Families continue the process of integration into European cultural and spiritual values system that emphasises individualization and women's autonomy. Despite of political, ideological and societal changes, the intergenerational transmission of cultural values in the family remains the same. Moral qualities and honour has always been among Latvian family values. Though, value orientations of young people should not be seen as static but rather as a dynamic and changing, depending on many factors (Syrkin, & Lesthaeghe, 2004).

As it is declared in the priorities of second half of the UNESCO decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the emphases is on values, that includes: respect for others, respect for the maintenance of culture traditions, including those of present and future generations; respect for differences and diversity; for the environment, and for the resources of the planet we inhabit. In addition, education should enable younger generation to understand the tradition, values and culture of older traditions and work towards developing one's tradition and culture. ESD aims to move us to adopting behaviors and practices which enable a young person to live a happy and sustainable life.

Consistency of values throughout the generations

Transmission of values from one generation to another involves young people's voluntary acceptance of values as important for them. Voluntary accepted and internalized values allow a self - regulated action of young people. Transmission of family values should be seen as a two - way process: child's perception of parent's values, and, secondly, acceptance, or rejection of values (Knafo & Schwartz, 2009). Intrinsic motivation to accept parental values is not perceived any longer as a threat to young people's autonomy. Soenens, et. al. (2007) emphasizes that parents who support their children's perspective, provide more choices and freedom for action, allow their children to act upon their personal values, they can establish a more sincere relations in a family.

Values are influencing one's attitudes and behaviours. We can use frames as mental structures that shape our ideas, perceptions and interpretations over time

(Cienki, 2007). Some frames are deeply rooted, broader in scope, and may be applied across a variety of different situations, some are shallower. Frames reflect associations that exist between one's concepts and values, and serve as vehicles for engaging and strengthening values. Life provides opportunities and constraints to pursue the growth of certain values. Experiences themselves are not value-free.

In 2013 upon the request of the Ministry of Education and Science, SIA "Excolo Latvia" has carried out a research about the possibilities, abilities and attitudes of youth. The participants of the research were 1063 young people in the age group from 13 - 25. The research reveals that youth consider as significant such values as family and career. In a future perspective they consider significant how to balance between values of work and family, because youth expectations in both spheres are very high (IZM, 2013). Youth don't mention marital life as a significant value; rather they place a priority on informal partnership relations (IZM, 2013). In a long run there might be concerns raising about the non registered families (IZM, 2013).

By determining the content of values and taking into account the time context, this is essential to define philosophical bases of the study. By placing emphases on psychoanalytical humanism, we need to acknowledge that among the most significant values to be mentioned is love. Love includes basic elements, such as care, responsibility, respect and knowledge (Fromms, 2009). The analyses of problem situations with students as a part of a study course, accentuates values that form the existential bases of a human being.

The ownership and decision of a value lies with the young person. Values cannot be forced, even if conveyed with good intentions. The internalization of values is not possible unless the young person perceives values as his/her own. Families may impose their values and may succeed in making their children to articulate them, but this does not make the young learners will live out according to those values when they are out of the learning environment.

Research methodology

Respondents, socio - demographic information. In total (n = 111), 2nd and 3rd year students from Bachelor degree program took part in this study within the age group from 21 - 25, consisting of 42 male and 69 female respondents. Within the framework of the study course „Social pedagogy,” the students were asked to write down an essay about the family values, afterwards they were asked to determine family values in a time perspective: interviewing the past, the present and the future, followed by the focus group discussion. Research was carried out in 2012. / 2013.

Participants were asked to write down their personal information: gender, age, educational level, professional position and family characteristics. They were asked to write down and rank ten the most significant values that dominate in

their values system and ten values that they want to take as a bases for building their own families. Afterwards, during the focus group interviews they were asked to share their opinion on discuss how they internalize family values and which they consider as the most significant in building their own families and upbringing their own children. The aim was to indentify consistencies in the transmission process of family values.

The emphases of this study were on how Bachelor program students formulate their own value system which they live by now and which values do they consider as more significant for building their own families. The focus is on how values of their parents affect their moral development and which value is persistent throughout time.

Research methods

The aim of this study was to explore how students view family values and which are the most essential values that sustain throughout times. The following research methods were employed in this study: essay, questionnaire, focus group interviews.

Essays may be defined as a small piece of art that allows the author to express his/her views and a subjective attitude towards the issue of study. Students were asked to write down their opinion about the values they inherited from their families. The analyses of essays reveals the basic values which students have inherited from their families and pointed out the values which the students want to take as a bases for building their own families.

Questionnaires. Students were asked to write down ten basic values in a time line: past, present and the future. Therefore, the authors have identified values which are repeated, if the students consider those values important.

Focus group discussion. The research comprises six focus group interviews about the values which students consider as sustainable in the family context. The students were interviewed in groups, in total, comprising six groups. The length of interviews was one and a half hours. The data gained from the focus group interviews are reflected as theses.

Limitations of the study. The study has some limitations. The sample does not allow making generalizations. For the further research the authors suggest longitudinal studies and in - depth interviews to gain deeper understanding about value transmission processes in the families of young people from the self - reported data of young people. For the further research it would be advisable to include not only self- reported data but also some graphic research instruments.

Research findings

The analyses of data gained from the essays and questionnaires indicate that the students, despite of their family experience, name only positive values, for example, ability to admire, to be proud of, the ability to find joy in one's life, ability to keep secrets, and the ability to be diligent. The analyses of 2553 values

named by the students, allowed to group values in similar categories or groups. By doing so, the authors have gained 251 values. The analyses of values within the time perspective, indicates to 89 values inherited from their parents, 94 values describing current family values, and 68 future oriented values. The analyses of the content of values point to the social, culture and environmental aspects of values. Economic aspect was not mentioned in self - reported data gained from the student.

There are both trends that are evident in students' responses that contrast openness to change values (autonomy, self - directedness, readiness for new experiences), and to incorporate new values in one's repertoire, different from the one's practiced in families and conservation of family values (security, tradition, self- restriction, self – sacrifice). As Schwartz (1992) argues, that the more imbedded are the individual's set of values, the least likely he/she experiences the conflict between opposing values. The more unstable is one's values system; the more possibilities there are appear to arise for the conflict of values.

The students named values that were significant in their families in the past and at the present moment, but those values were not clearly defined in the future perspective.

	Values of the past and present	Future values
Personal/Culture aspect	Support, diligence, kindness hope.	x- not mentioned
Social aspect	Sharing with others, ability to listen.	
Environmental aspect	Independence, love of work	

Fig.1. Values in a time perspective

Research data indicates to a number of values that make only significance for them in the future.

	Future values	Values in the past and present
Personal/Culture aspect	Respect of the individual. Culture of work. Freedom of action. Independence	x- not mentioned
Social aspect	Flexibility, future thinking. Daring	
Environmental aspect	Real society	

Fig. 2. Values in time perspective

The analyses of the content of values in time perspective, one needs to conclude there are two distinct values as appeared in students' questionnaires, namely, respect of a person and patriotism. These values are mentioned as present in the past and as desirable in the future, though, not mentioned as

describing present existence. Therefore this requires a deeper understanding that is possible by the use of focus group interviews.

Among the dominant values emphasized by the students, there is a sustainability idea that is imbedded. In questionnaires the students have indicated to such values as love, respect, responsibility, health which in their essence are fundamental values. These values can be seen as metacontent and as values that are eternal values. Students have developed their own attitude and value system as a result of socialization in their families but one need to admit the influence of education on students' deeper understanding of intergenerational interconnectedness and responsibility.

Results of focus group interviews

The main conclusions that arose out of focus group interviews were the following:

Parents play the most significant role in preserving and transmitting values to their children. This is essential for the children to have both parents, in spite of some informality of family relationships.

Parents are responsible for preserving certain norms and values. The values of teachers may differ from their student's values as a result of generation gap.

Values that are determined only in the past and present are not reflected in students' future visions, mean that future is quite vague; future can be seen as a new challenge.

Sustainability of values can best be described by flexibility; deeper understanding of culture and hopes that in future might be communicated in families.

Students desire to be respected, though they feel that they themselves cannot be open to the diversity.

Students wish to view their children as patriots, but they are not confident themselves if they may not leave the country themselves. In most cases financial and material factors are being considered as domineering.

Conclusions

A sustainable family is able to create a safe, positive, and supportive environment for all family members to develop their potential. Sustainable families can be maintained by strengthening intergenerational connectedness in value transmission. Healthy and sustainable families transmit to a younger generation values, attitudes, behavior patterns, and expectations about parenting, relationships, and decision-making.

Strong families maintain intergenerational connectedness and support networks. A sustainable family is a critical national resource. Families should offer a safe

place where young people feel comfortable and secure, and to find a support in facing the challenges of the daily.

Research indicates that internalized family values of young people are not necessarily identical to parent's personal values. Intergenerational differences between perceived family values and young people's personal values were seen in two aspects: openness to change, modernity (readiness for risk, new experiences, change) and conservation (tradition, security, order).

Women have slightly higher endorsement of parental values than males and they develop value priorities that are similar to their parents' values. Females accepted their parents socialized values more than males. They consider this essential to attend the needs of others in the family and to conform to their expectations.

In order to transmit the values, parents like the most to see in their off springs' lives, they need to build a caring family environment where there is a respect for the autonomy of young people in the families.

Universities have to educate young people how to value, to choose among alternatives, and to translate knowledge and skills into practice.

Kopsavilkums

Jēdziens "Ģimene" ir mainījies laika gaitā, un tās definīcija ir mainījusies, atkarībā no tā, kurš to definē. Definīcijas formulējumam ir nopietna politiska, ekonomiska, sociāla un ekoloģiska ietekme. Ģimenes atšķirīgais traktējums nosaka ģimenes locekļu lomas, pienākumus un atbildību ilgtspējīgā skatījumā. Stipras ģimenes attīstības veicināšana nodrošinās ilgtspējīgu sabiedrības attīstību. Stipras ģimenes ar stabilu vērtību sistēmu ir veiksmīgs valsts instruments ģimenes ilgtspējai stiprināšanai dažādu ekonomisko un politisku krīžu kontekstā. Pētījums atspoguļo pilna laika bakalaura programmas studentu skatījumu uz ģimenes vērtību ilgtspēju laika griežos. Pētījums ļauj izprast saikni starp ģimenes tradīcijām un inovatīvo, moderno, kas ienāk mūsdienu jaunatnes skatījumā par ģimenes kā strukturālas un garīgas vienības vērtībām. Pētījumā ir izmantota kvalitatīvā metodoloģija, kas ietver sevī eseju satura analīzi, un atspoguļo studentu izpratni par to, kā ir mainījušās ģimenes vērtības laika griežos. Sešas focus grupu intervijas papildina pētījumu ar studentu padziļinātas izpratnes traktējumu par ģimenes vērtībām.

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