

Abstract

This study examines the differences in values held by Israeli Jewish adolescents (male and female) by comparing highly religious, traditional, and secular adolescents. Three decades have passed since the study carried out by Gumbo and Schwartz (1989) which compared the importance assigned to certain values by adolescent females who belonged to different groups based on religious observance. Given the changes in Israeli society, specifically in the religious sector, it is necessary to re-examine these differences. This is especially important given that the Ministry of Education adopted in recent years the three goals of education according to the OECD organization: to impart knowledge, improve skills, and values education (Alexander & Topol, 2022). Values are used as guidelines in a person's life (Schwartz, 1992). The examination of the value sets of adolescents is based on Rokeach's value sets (Rokeach, 1973) which is the basis of Schwartz's theoretical model of values (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz, 1992, 1989). The value circumplex is divided into ten types of values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism.

This study has three main aims, the first is to examine the differences in the significance allocated to various values by Jewish adolescents of several levels of religious observance and to provide a current view of the differences in values of religious, traditional, and secular adolescents. The second aim is to explore the way in which adolescents explain the similarities and differences between the variations in values and religious observance levels while identifying significant educational factors in value education. The third aim is to examine the effect of gender on the value sets of adolescents.

The quantitative study included 187 students, religious, traditional, and secular, between the ages of 14 and 15, which studied in the 9th grade in state-secular and state-religious schools in the central district. After the quantitative study phase (before the Covid-19 pandemic), the rest of the study was carried out using qualitative methods (during the Covid-19 pandemic). The study included six focus groups with twenty students, during which we discovered the opinions of the students regarding the findings about their perception of values and how they explained the differences and similarities between the importance placed on certain values.

The study was carried out using mixed methods in explanatory design. In this model the mixing is done in stages, first the quantitative and later qualitative (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This study method, which combines a quantitative stage using questionnaires and afterward a qualitative stage to explain the gathered information, allows a glimpse into the world of adolescents and their personal interpretations. The quantitative research tool consisted of two questionnaires: 1. PVQ- Portrait Values

Questionnaire (Schwartz, et al., 2001) which was tested in dozens of cultures (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005) 2. An integrated questionnaire with school involvement- this questionnaire is based on items taken from Questionnaire from Asur and Ilot (2001), Asur and Utanzoser (1991), Schwartz (Schwartz, 1992) and Rokeach (Rokeach, 1973). The data analysis in the qualitative stage was done according to the four steps in the method of Gross (Gross, 1995). The study was done in accordance with the approval and instructions of the office of the main scientist in the Ministry of Education. The participation of the students was consented to by their parents, and they were guaranteed secrecy and anonymity, and the option to terminate their participation at any stage.

The study hypothesis: Firstly, religious adolescents will attribute more importance to values centered around society (conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism) in comparison to traditional and secular adolescents. Secondly, traditional, and secular adolescents will prioritize values pertaining to the individual (conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism) in comparison to religious adolescents. Thirdly, females will prioritize thoughtfulness and school involvement more than males will.

Findings and Discussion

These are the findings corresponding to the first aim, which is the examination of the prioritization of values and a current view of the value sets of adolescents.

1. Values centered around society- the first hypothesis was not substantiated. The findings of the quantitative study show that the prioritization of values centered around society: conformity, benevolence, and universalism was higher among secular and traditional adolescents than among the religious, except for tradition which was the opposite. The qualitative study findings partially supported those of the quantitative one. The adolescents tended to think that the values of benevolence (caring and focusing on the well-being of others), conformity, and tradition (which demonstrate conservation) are characteristics of the religious group and are more highly prioritized by it. These findings correspond to previous studies in the field, according to which religious and adults prioritize collective values with an altruistic element, for example, more community help and less so values focusing on the individual (Gross, 2008). However, regarding the value of individualism, they tended to think that it is more characteristic and more valued by secular group.

2. Values centered on the individual- The second hypothesis was mostly substantiated. The findings of the quantitative study show that values pertaining to the individual: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, and achievement were ranked higher by the secular group than the other groups, while power was ranked higher by the traditional group. Aside from security, which was highly ranked by the religious group. The qualitative study findings strongly correlated with these findings. The adolescents tended to think

that the values of self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power characterize the secular group and are more important to it. However, they thought that the value of security characterized the religious group but should have been more important to all. Schwartz (2012) found that all religious groups from various religions had the most positive view of the value of tradition and the most negative view of the values of hedonism and stimulation. The older the person gets, the less importance he assigns to open-mindedness and more importance to conservation, regardless of the religion they are a part of, except for security among the Jewish people.

3. A structural similarity was found in the value perception of adolescents- traditional, secular, and religious adolescents prioritized the value of benevolence which denotes the well-being of their group members; however, they also prioritized the value of achievement which denotes self-advancement.

The second aim of this study was to clarify the meanings that adolescents attribute to the similarities and differences of values as they are ranked by adolescents in different religious observance levels while identifying significant educational agents in values education. The findings of the qualitative research combine two theories: Schwartz's theory of values (Schwartz, 1992) and Lamm's three conflicting ideologies (2001). This analysis revealed the importance attributed to values education using Lamm's ideologies:

1. Socialization- the influence of significant educational agents in values education: the family, school, informal education, peers, society, and the striving for equality while remaining open-minded.

2. Acculturation- the influence of religion on values education while prioritizing the values of tradition, conformity, and security. Religion can emphasize certain values (for example benevolence or conformity). Adolescents can determine their level of religious observation based on the values they prioritize (Schwartz, 2012).

3. Individuality- the adolescents acknowledged the influence of a person's personality regarding values education. Their explanations confirm the findings of a previous study that examined the relationship between personality structures and personal values, where it was found that certain values are related to certain personality types.

The third aim is to examine the effect of gender on the value sets of adolescents. The third hypothesis was not substantiated- there were no gender-based differences in the ranking of the values of thoughtfulness and school involvement. However, there were significant gender-based differences regarding the values of self-direction and hedonism. Gross' (2013) study found that the variables: gender, religious observance, and ethnicity affect the significance assigned to certain values.

Additionally, in the conversation with the students, the subject of the power to change stood out- the idea of being open to change. The uniqueness of this study is that it examines the importance assigned to different values by adolescents who are part of “Gen Z” and how it affects their value-based mindset. Among the secular and traditional group members, values regarding other individuals as well as the self were ranked higher. The religious group prioritized the values of tradition and security but with receptiveness to values centered around the individual.

Study Contribution and Limitations

Values education is an important field, and it is important to examine the current value structure of adolescents. This study shows that values education does not occur in a vacuum, as there are built-in differences between different groups in society which are separated by levels of religious observance. This finding should be taught in the training of social studies teachers and guide those who take part in values education and those who are meant to measure it. These need to address not only the value sets but also other factors that are tied to values education. The other variables are the school culture, gender, societal sector, and more as well as times of crisis (Alexander & Topol, 2022). This study does not contain sufficient information on the effects of participation in values education, however, follow-up studies can examine this more thoroughly to understand the influence of a values education program in Israel, including on adolescents of various degrees of religious observation.

