

Role of Values in the Development of a Sustainable Community

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Abstract—The present research examined the role of values for the development of a sustainable community. The daily life values ground sustainability in a multi-dimensional net of everyday acts of human community. The study focused on the need and development of these human values for sustainable community and healthy environment. The study involved a series of experiments centered on the development of a clean sustainable environment. It was conducted in the communities that included different types of population with varying ages(ranging from 18-70 years)in various real life settings such as: the college premises, metro platforms, public parks and colonies etc. Qualitative analysis of the data was done and themes were content analyzed. The finding revealed that values play a huge role in the building up of a sustainable and cleaner environment that was noted through people's reaction to the litters that were thrown and their different acts to its consequence. These findings have been discussed in the light of the research purpose for the concept based on the life code of values for a healthy living.

INTRODUCTION

While there has been no universally accepted definition of what a value is, in recent years a reasonably clear theoretical consensus seems to have emerged. Basically, values describe what individuals consider being important .They represent wants, preferences, desires, likes and dislikes for particular things, conditions or situations. Values describe the things that matter the most to an individual, the things that she/he will make sacrifices for in order to obtain. So, values can be defined as broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be .They are based on beliefs. Values exist, whether you recognize them or not. They can also be defined as perspectives about an appropriate course of action. If a person values honesty, then he or she will strive to be honest. People who value transparency will work hard to be transparent. Values are one important element that affects individual character and behavior towards others.

Kinds of Values

Values differ according to the culture beliefs and practices. Values are “desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of an individual or a social entity”. Different types of values are

personal, family, socio-cultural, material, spiritual and moral values. A value refers to a person's principles or standards of behavior. It is an individual's judgment of what is important in life. Examples of universal values include honesty, responsibility, truth, tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, peace and respect. Other values in life are affection, adventure, abundance, acceptance, creativity and credibility. We can speak of universal values, because ever since human beings have lived in community, they have had to establish principles to guide their behavior towards others. In this sense, honesty, responsibility, truth, solidarity, cooperation, tolerance, respect and peace, among others, are considered universal values. Moral values play the role of selective orientation elements for individuals in the world they live in (Williams, 1968). They are decoders of possible actions that allow the identification of potential gratifications and benefits which are derived from personal preferences, depending on motivation, needs and personal goals (Deth & Scarbrough, 1995).

Functions of Values

Behaviour

The relationship between values and behavior is intimate, as values create a construct for appropriate actions. Values are strong and sustainable beliefs regarding specific conducts or final states of existence, desirable as much socially as personally. It is argued that an individual's values have the tendency of grouping into value systems. Rokeach (2000) defines these systems as a resistant organization of beliefs regarding preferable ways of behavior along a continuum of importance. Values have been conceptualized as personal principles that guide us and our actions. Individuals may turn to their values when they are uncertain about what to do or when faced with a difficult situation. Values and principles are the building blocks of a just society. Institutions may do the same. Though institutions certainly have discrete purposes and different missions, it is the rare institution that is value-free. The values that guide individuals and institutions reflect our diversity in so far as the inspiration for these values may come from family, culture, faith , the law, and beyond.

Decision making

Values influence decision making as they contain a judgmental element (Parashar, Dhar & Dhar, 2004). This is the liaison between moral values and thinking styles, which describe the way an individual, obtain and process information. The orientation of an individual toward an idea, a relationship or a fact often contains an assessment the individual makes.

Importance of Studying Values

Values are important to study and understand for they aid social scientists in explaining human behaviour, are related to practical concerns as decision making, motivation, selection, communities, managerial success, and organizational context differences. While there is a growing body of research evidence and interest in values, there is still much more to learn and explore. Values have internal and external dimensions that influence attitudes. In turn, attitudes were found to influence behaviors, as the final phase in the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy. It has been found that people who have more internally oriented and less externally oriented value structures like natural foods more than other people, and these attitudes then lead to behaviors appropriate to the structure.

A value system presents what is expected and hoped for, what is required and what is forbidden. It is not a report of actual behavior but a system of criteria by which behavior is judged and sanctions applied. Implicitly or explicitly we evaluate or assign value to everything—regarding things as good or bad, a truth or falsity, a virtue or a vice. How do we know? One important means is through values. Values can be thought of as priorities, internal compasses or springboards for action—moral imperatives. In this way, values or mores are implicit or explicit guides for action, general a script framing what is sought after and what is to be avoided.

Relationship between Environmental ethics and Values

Values of self-transcendence (positively) and self-enhancement (negatively) predict general concern for environmental problems. Environmental attitudes are based on concern for self (egoistic), concern for other people (social-altruistic), and concern for plants and animals (biospheric).

Environmental ethics is the philosophical discipline that considers the moral and ethical relationship of human beings to the environment. Environmental ethics helps define man's moral and ethical obligations toward the environment. But human values become a factor when looking at environmental ethics. Environmental ethics, along with human values, make for challenging philosophical debates about man's interaction with the environment. Water and air pollution, the depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, destruction of ecosystems, and global climate change are all part of the environmental ethics debate.

Community and Values

Many norms and behaviors are established by the community. Our social networks also provide benefits, not only to ourselves, but to our community. In fact, they provide so much value that they are sometimes called “social capital.” People, communities and even companies both big and small, around the world are becoming aware that our current way of living in the short run, already for many, and in the long run, for many others, is unsustainable. After two decades of talk about sustainability and sustainable development, it appears easier to identify what is unsustainable (i.e. ecologically, socially, economically, ethically, culturally and environmentally) than to identify what it is to be sustainable. What is clear by now is that to break deeply entrenched, unsustainable patterns (assumptions, behaviours and values) requires a new kind of thinking inspired and informed by powerful learning processes that simultaneously lead to individual and collaborative action and transformation.

One way to explore the determining factors that shape environmental values is to study the life experiences that have shaped the beliefs and values of active environmentalists. She explored retrospectively what factors influenced people's environmental sensitivity, which is ‘a predisposition to take an interest in learning about the environment, feeling concern for it, and acting to conserve it, on the basis of formative experiences’ (Chawla, 1998). Not surprisingly, she found that there is no single experience that sensitizes people's awareness but a combination of factors.

Present study

This study aims to understand how students can spread awareness about values that can help in sustaining the environment. It intends to explore the opinions of people in the community about environmentalism. Values refer to an ethical precept on which we base our behaviour. The study aims to understand if there exists a discrepancy between the moral principles and the cognitions that govern one's behaviours.

Human values are the virtues that guide us to take into account the human element when one interacts with other human beings. They are the many positive dispositions that create bonds of humanity between people and thus have value for all of us as human beings. They are our strong positive feelings for the human essence of the other. It's both what we expect others to do to us and what we aim to give to other human beings (“Do unto the other what you wish for yourself”). These human values have the effect of bonding, comforting, reassuring and procuring serenity. Hence keeping these issues in mind, this study will examine peoples responses to an environmental challenge in a real life situations. Various tasks will be designed to interact with the community, college students, teachers, and elderly in different places to get a brief overview of how people react to anti-environmental act.

There are different communities working on these environmental issues such as cleanliness, over population, women empowerment etc. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is one of those influential communities been working for the cleanliness in India. Various other environmental problems such as change in climate possess a greater impact on our values. These challenges are not just scientific or technological requirements but also a human concern such as global warming.

This study proposes to understand how environmental changes affect our value system, and the probable reasons behind their cognitive and behavioural repertoire, through interactions with the community. This study intends to involve an experimental task to collect societal information while making observations.

Importance of the Present study

We live in a difficult time, where peace and human security are facing new challenges at the individual, community and global levels. In this context education emerges as a vital medium to build peace, tolerance, justice, understanding, and, cross-cultural communication – in short – the aim is to create a happier and better world! Things like the Internet, a more globalized economy, and widespread changes in climate draw our attention to events happening around the world, and with this new awareness comes some ethical questions regarding the responsibilities, humans have with respect to the care of the planet. Because of the increasing technologies and advancements, the need for sustainable environment is increasing at a high scale. The idea of sustainability is derived from science, but at the same time it highlights the limitations of science. It is used to carry moral, human, imperatives, but at the same time acquires legitimacy from identifying biospheric imperatives' beyond human societies.

In this world values influence our worldview about the environment (general beliefs), which in turn influences our beliefs about the consequences of environmental change on things we value, which in turn influence our perceptions of our ability to reduce threats to things we value. This in turn influences our norms about taking action. The theory also emphasizes that action can take more than one form: political activism, no activist political behaviours such as voting, and private sphere actions such as consumer choices and behaviours in organizations where pro-environmental policies might be endorsed. This study is important as it will help us understand how pro-environmental values can be initiated/observed and developed in the community. If there is any lack of awareness about environmental concerns despite media efforts? And what can be done to bring about a change in attitude towards these challenges. Values allow the members of an organization to interact harmoniously. Values affect their formation and development as individuals, and make it easier to reach goals that would be impossible to achieve individually.

The study will be designed with the main objectives to perceive the relationship between values and personal behaviour that in turn effects the environment, to reflect upon awareness, commitment, and importance of just actions in the community and to promote the awareness of valuing environment which is not just the place for survival but also the place where humans live and continue their wellbeing.

Design of the Study

In order to see the role of values in everyday lives, this study intends to explore how values play a role in sustaining a clean environment in the community. Different tasks will be carried out in the community involving students, community residents, teachers, passerby, metro travelers etc. Since there is a lot of emphasis on "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" hence this study intends to explore how people perceive cleanliness and their role in contributing to cleanliness. To what extent their values are reflected in their behaviors. An observation of verbal and non-verbal behaviors will be made.

Procedure

Four students would participate in group experimental tasks in the community. The task chosen for this study was that one student would throw litter in the environment, while others would either observe the reactions of the people to this action or instigate others to make a response. The list of activities is presented below with their qualitative analysis and respective learning outcomes.

Activities and Analysis

Task 1: an observation carried out outside the canteen area

Two girls threw some garbage outside the canteen area while the other two observed people's behavior and their reactions towards it.

Non-Verbal Observation: First time one girl completed ignored even when the garbage was thrown right in front of her. She looked away.

Verbal observation: Next time a girl reacted, she said "What are you people doing? Don't you have any manners? Why are you throwing paper and everything like this? I noticed you before this also but ignored but then again you are doing it. You are a literate citizen of India so act like one. Would you do the same thing if this would be your home? Act like a responsible citizen and pick it up and throw it in the dustbin."

Behavioral Intervention: To this one of us replied "If you are having a problem with it then why don't you pick it up yourself."

Behavioral Observation: She quietly picked it up and threw it in the nearby dustbin. She even insisted on never throwing garbage here and there again.

Learning Outcome: This act of hers brings forth her embedded strong values concerning the environment and she

certainly does possess a highly positive attitude towards cleanliness.

Task 2: An observation carried out in the corridor

This time garbage was thrown in the corridors.

Nonverbal observation: On the first floor corridor people noticed us but did not react. It was highly ignorant on their part to be a quite spectator of this malevolent task.

Behavioral Intervention: When the garbage was thrown on the ground floor many people again did not react. Therefore in order to make them notice such a frivolous thing, one of us shouted at the person who was throwing the garbage and politely yet firmly asked the spectators why are they quietly viewing all this and as to what make them ignore it.

Behavioral observation: A girl among them started arguing with us. She defended herself by saying "I am a part of the NSS unit and participate in the cleanliness drive held every week so you better not tell me that I don't clean my college. The one who threw it should have sense so go and ask her and not me because she having no sense has nothing to with me."

Learning Outcome: Her response shows that people expect others to pick up the litter. They think that other person's litter is beyond their area of responsibility. People rather possess a very narrow minded image of responsibility. They are shirking away from their responsibilities which portray a lack of civic responsibility. It also puts forth the fact that people need perks in order to work for their environment which is highly unethical.

Task 3: An observation outside the metro station and at the platform.

Non-verbal observation: Outside the metro station when the litter was thrown people did notice but as usual ignored. They even noticed us picking it up but may be due to time constraint or lack of interest chose not to react.

Verbal Observation: At the platform again no one reacted the first time but when the litter was thrown and picked up the second time, a group of girls commented among themselves and said that "Look there, that girl littered around and now this girl is picking it up. What a manner-less person the first one is."

Learning outcome: This time it brings forth their carelessness and a negative social appraisal.

Task 4: An observation in the walking pavement of a park.

During this observation the parking pavement of a park was littered heavily to evoke people's responses.

Verbal observation: A respectable senior citizen reacted and said "What are you doing? I have been noticing you for the past 10 minutes and you are throwing litter around like anything. Is this what you are taught at your home? Is this how you keep your home? Throwing garbage wherever you feel like. I wonder what would be the condition of your house with such kind of values."

Behavioral intervention: When he was provided with an apology, he reacted "No sorry, what sorry? What are you

doing here in the first place at this hour and that too in such clothes? Why aren't you wearing a salwar suit?"

Behavioral observation: He diverted the topic from the values concerning environment to the values that should be possessed by girls, especially being an Indian cultured girl. When he was replied with an assertive answer that the clothes are decent. He blasted saying that "Oh so you think you can wear anything. I wonder what your future might be when you are okay with wearing such clothes and even tagging them as decent. You are growing up to be a woman who needs to look after her family and therefore should be highly responsible. You should be at your home, helping your mother in household chores. Then you would not need to walk in order to exercise as you would be having so much to do around that you won't have time to even think about walking. But today's so called modernized girls like you have nil interest in household chores rather all their interest lies in hooking up innocent boys by wearing such clothes. You people don't have any interest in studying but instead studying is just an opportunity for you to trap innocent boys. I wonder what would be the condition of the family be in which you will be married and what would be the condition of your children? You, today's girls are highly irresponsible and selfish. It is because of you that the society is degrading. You don't know how to respect anyone as you always prefer to reside in your higher air of attitude thinking that the world is at your feet."

Learning outcome: His reaction portrays a very poor regard for women. It seems like the person was really frustrated due to some adversities of life and therefore he was projecting his frustration due to stress overload in an attempt to vent it out. Another reason can also be that his social rebuttal could be from his deep rooted stress. Nevertheless the respectable senior citizen did react in a positive way when it comes to his values concerning environment and his reprimand teaches a lesson of the wideness of responsibility.

Task 5 : An observation inside another park.

For this observation another park was chosen to study how people react to the act of littering around. A group of eight elderly ladies were sitting near to the place where fruit peels were thrown. I waited around the place to see their reactions.

Non-verbal Observation: One of them gave a horrible look but did not say anything. Nobody asked to pick up the litter and kind of ignored.

Behavioral Intervention: After waiting for few minutes, I went to those ladies and asked them, did they see me throwing garbage on the ground instead of dustbin? Three of them said yes. I asked them why didn't they stop me.

Behavioral Observation: They gave following reasons.

"It is you who is on the one other side had it been a boy he might have took out a gun for any kind of scolding from any of us. We prefer not to point out any other person because we do not know what the other person is capable of."

Learning outcome: She was basically scared of all the crime taking place that prevented her from speaking against any wrong thing happening in front of her.

Other one said that “I consider you to be an educated person and it should come from within yourself that you are wrong. I do not think that you need other people to scold you. That’s why I did not say anything to you.”

One of them told me about an incident that happened with her. She said that “once me and my friend scolded somebody in the park for a wrong act. The person spoke to me very rudely saying bad things about me and my family. Since then I avoid saying anything to strangers as they are very rude and are not ready to accept their faults.”

One of them said that “even if I had seen you throwing garbage I wouldn’t have stopped you because I feel it not right to scold children of your age as they are very egoistic. One cannot say anything to children at home and since you are a stranger I didn’t know how you would have reacted.”

Learning Outcome: It could be concluded from the above observation that our elderly are scared of us. It portrays the kind of regard and respect some adolescents have for their elders. Elders are there to lead us and show us the way, to correct us whenever we are or are about to be wrong but when those only elders fears to approach us who is going to correct us or show us which way to take. It is highly inappropriate on the part of teenagers nowadays to blast back at a respectable elder without giving even a second of thought as to what are they saying. If the elders are disrespected or insulted or disregarded in any sense or way whatsoever then we, the so called future have nowhere to go. Acquaintance or stranger comes after the relationship of elderly and young in which one is supposed to tell and the other to obey. Any person who crosses our path in life for even once should be first seen in the eyes of respect to be provided.

Whether the teenagers are at fault or not they should be patient enough to at least listen to what the other person is saying. Providing respect and a say in society to the elderly is nothing beyond providing their own right and denying the same is denying their right as a human altogether. They should be given space and a say in order to learn and grow.

If a child is wrong it is also the duty of an adult to correct them for once and not leaving it presuming that the right should come from within. Everyone possess a high civic responsibility or a deep concern for environment but are scared to portray them which hinders the growth and the change which is due.

Discussion

From all the above mentioned observations it can be concluded that needs of people are limited and they are involved in themselves only. People lack civic responsibility and their boundary for responsibilities is very narrow which only comprise of themselves and their families. When it

comes to cleanliness people are only concerned about their homes and not about their own state and country. It seems like people’s values regarding cleanliness dissipates or vanishes away when it comes to applying those values for the betterment of the outside environment.

Time constraints, lack of interest and high competitiveness may account for their carelessness or lack of awareness. Fear of disregard or insult may also account for their conscious ignorance. There are a few good souls who think beyond themselves but the number of ignoring people outnumbers these concerned citizens.

People should be more conscious about their environment which could be enhanced through negative social appraisal as it is not the work of any one single person but the society as a whole. We should be conscious about our society and environment. We should not chide away from our responsibilities by blaming it on other castes [caste system] rather we should broaden our horizon when it comes to our own environment. People should think and act in different ways depending upon their capacities and environmental concerns. Awareness is the most prominent step that is needed to be taken. Determination, patience and persistence is the need of the hour to bring about a change on an individual level and then gradually on a higher level. Working for perks and incentives shows the level to which a human can stoop and is a heinous crime against humanity. It was found that values are typically conceptualized as important life goals or standards that serve as guiding principles in life. As such, they may provide a basis for the formation of attitudes and act as guidelines for behaviour. That is, people consider implications of behavioural choices for the things they value. In relation to environmental problems, which often arise from a conflict between individual and collective interests, values may play an important role pro-environmental behaviour may well arise from values that transcend self-interest. Hence the study showed that values are related to cleanliness behaviour and to people’s willingness to take action to protect the environment.

During the study the we were actively involved in planning, action, observation, and reflection to improve the environment. We in all found, that the most important element in the learning environment is invisible and it is made up of values. Through this study we were able to accomplish our goals to create an awareness among people that values are not just the concepts taught to children when they are small rather they are the core structures on which our day to day activities are build upon. The study was basically done to acquire the knowledge that if environmental attitudes and environmental behaviour were related to people’s values. In the recent study it was demonstrated that values significantly contribute to the global environmental problems and clearly linked to individual’s behaviour in building a sustainable community.

Since this study was done to examine the role of values in the development of sustainable community, it was seen that values had an impact in the community. Through this study, a wide

amount of knowledge was gained that reflected to the fact that values do incorporate in the community settings and determine the way we behave in that community. Values indirectly have an impact on our decisions about the environment through their influence on norms or beliefs which in turn influences our norms about taking action in a community. The study provided an insight into the important role that values play in developing a sustainable environment by influencing individual decisions. As these individual decisions are consequential in shaping individual as well as the group behaviour with regards to the environment and community both.

This study helped us to understand **how people get affected by the environmental changes around them. For example how cleanliness affected their actions and behaviours. By interacting with the community members we were able to know that how societal values are imbibed by people around. Lastly we were able to investigate how the societal and human values are implemented in the society, particularly how values affect everyday decisions, goals and behaviours. We realized that values help to set some standards that directs and guides our actions.**

This study has important implications as it helped us to understand how values are shaped in Indian culture, and the significance and utility of the values in one's life. It also helped us understand the role that students can play in initiating a change in people's thinking patterns and concerns about the environment and motivating others towards understanding their social and moral responsibility towards the environment.

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