Original Paper

Gender Difference in Social Value Orientation of Pre service Teachers: The Case of Northwest University, Kano, Nigeria

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Abstract

Social values bind society together as they are critical for interaction between individuals and institutions. This study aimed to examine gender differences in the Social Value Orientation of Pre-Service Teachers at Northwest University, Kano State, Nigeria. The research employed a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised 2,282 students. A stratified random sampling technique was used, based on a table for determining sample size, resulting in a sample of 330 students, including 140 males and 190 females. The data collection instrument used in the study was an adopted questionnaire titled Social Value Scale (HVS). The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured, and a reliability coefficient of 0.63 was obtained. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics to determine any significant differences in Social Value Orientation based on gender. The findings indicate that while students generally prioritize pro-social values, individualistic and competitive tendencies are also present. However, no statistically significant differences in Social Value Orientation were found based on gender. The study concludes that students exhibit similar preferences and orientations toward social values regardless of gender, emphasizing the importance of gender-neutral approaches to values education.

Keywords

Values, Social Value Orientation, Gender, Pre–Service Teachers, Values education

Introduction

Values are a set of beliefs or principles that guide behavior, attitudes, and choices. They also influence how individuals interact with others and the world around them. Values can manifest in various forms, including moral, cultural, societal, personal, and professional values. The values held by an individual are influenced by factors such as upbringing, culture, religion, and personal experiences. They help individuals determine what is meaningful and important in their lives and serve as a framework for decision-making and prioritizing actions.

Bolarin (2005) observed that values embedded in the social life of Nigerians include hard work, dignity of labor, respect for elders, hospitality, public-spiritedness, respect for authority, respect for the sanctity

of life, honesty, and truthfulness. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2004) described Nigeria as a nation with cultural and ethnic diversity, with a value system derived from the people's religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. These values include respect for elders, honesty, dignity, cooperation, conscientiousness, self-control, and morality. Value systems vary across cultures, religions, and individuals, shaping identities and worldviews. They influence how people prioritize goals, behave in relationships, approach work, handle conflicts, and make ethical decisions.

A social value system refers to the set of beliefs and principles that guide individuals' behavior, decisions, and interactions within a society or community. These values often encompass concepts such as honesty, respect, compassion, fairness, and responsibility. They can vary significantly across cultures and are shaped by factors such as religion, traditions, and social norms. As observed by Vieyt (2022), social values are shaped by social change, institutions, cultures, and cultural beliefs. They provide ambiguous yet essential guidelines that help individuals and communities behave responsibly within the social system. According to Schwartz (1994), a strong social value system is crucial for maintaining order, fostering cooperation, and promoting individual and societal well-being, as it influences priorities, decision-making, and the social fabric of a community.

Johnston (1992) identified characteristics of places recognized for their social values. These places provide traditional connections between the present and the past, serve as essential reference points in a community's identity, influence community behavior and attitudes, and function as gathering spaces for collective action. From this perspective, educational institutions are fertile ground for nurturing social values. Consequently, the values and social values held by teachers and prospective teachers are critical in any attempt to instill desirable values in future generations.

A social value system shapes how individuals perceive themselves and others, as well as their moral judgments and decision-making processes. It influences how people prioritize values such as equality, justice, freedom, fairness, compassion, honesty, respect, and cooperation. These values form the foundation for social norms, ethics, laws, and policies within a society.

This study is anchored in Social Role Theory, propounded by Eagly in 1987. The theory suggests that gender differences in behavior arise from social roles and expectations rather than inherent biological traits. It argues that females are often socialized to be more communal, cooperative, and empathetic, making them more aligned with pro-social orientations. In contrast, males are more likely to be socialized toward competitive and self-oriented behaviors, aligning with individualistic or competitive Social Value Orientations (SVOs). This theory is relevant as it explains how societal expectations shape gender-based differences in social values.

This study employs the Social Value Orientation typology proposed by Van Lange et al. (1997), which categorizes individuals into three orientations: pro-social, individualistic, and competitive. Pro-social behavior refers to actions that benefit others or society as a whole. It is often divided into three categories: Proactive pro-social actions – motivated by self-interest, often linked to status enhancement

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within a group, reactive pro-social actions – performed in response to a specific situation and altruistic pro-social actions – intended to help others without expecting anything in return. However, some philosophers question whether pure altruism exists, suggesting that seemingly selfless actions may have underlying motivations.

Individualistic behavior or individualism refers to the tendency of individuals to prioritize personal goals over group interests. Competitive behaviors are characterized by the motivation to achieve superiority over others. Although traditional stereotypes suggest that males are more competitive, recent research presents a more nuanced picture. Therefore, this study aims to explore the interplay between gender and social value orientation among pre-service teachers to inform value education and reorientation programs.

Previous studies have produced divergent findings. Riaz and Ijaz (2016) found that female students were more religiously observant than their male counterparts in a university setting in Pakistan. Ali and Bagheri (2019) found that while both male and female students in Iran held strong Islamic values, significant differences existed in their interpretations and applications of these values.

Aycan et al. (2010) explored gender differences in social value systems among university students in Turkey, highlighting the impact of cultural and religious norms on the values held by male and female students. Similarly, Haddad and Smith (2018) examined the social value system of students in Islamic educational institutions and found significant differences in the values held by male and female students.

This study seeks to determine the pattern of social value orientation among students and extend the conversation on gender differences in social value preferences among prospective teachers. Pre-service teachers are students enrolled in colleges of education or university faculties of education in pursuit of teaching certification. The focus on pre-service teachers is significant because they are being prepared to teach at the basic and secondary education levels. At the basic education level, learners are still in their formative years, and the influence of schools and teachers' value orientation is substantial. This is also the stage at which value-related subjects such as social studies and civics are taught.

Beyond teaching value-related subjects, every teacher serves as a moral compass, exerting a significant influence on learners, whether consciously or unconsciously. Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping an educational system's success.

This study is guided by one research question and one hypothesis.

Research Question

The research questions were formulated to direct the study as follows: -

What is the social value system pattern among Islamic studies students in Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Kano?

Hypothesis

There is no significant differences of Islamic studies student of Yusuf Maitama Sule University on the biases of gender.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design to investigate gender differences in the social value system of pre-service teachers in Northwest University, Kano Nigeria. The population for this study will be comprised all 2282 students in the Faculty of Education.

Stratified random sampling was used to select a sample that is proportionate to the gender distribution in the population. This method will ensure that both male and female students are adequately represented in the sample, allowing for meaningful comparisons to be made.

Table 1. Table of Sample Size

	Population	Sample
Number of male students	784	140
Number of female students	1498	190
Total Number of students	2282	330

Source: Academic Planning, NWU (2024)

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a researcher designed structured questionnaire containing items related to the social value system. The questionnaire was designed to capture the specific social values and beliefs held by the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, The first seetion enquired about the responses demographic or personal data while the second sections -were in line with the study objeetives, aimed at providing answers to the research questions. The items probe into the respondents social value orientations concerning preferred jobs, spouse, community, friendship, and government. The instrument was a Liker-type summated rating scale which has statements about the variable being measured and provided a set of response options. The response options include Agree =3, Disagree = 0 and Neural= 1. The higher the scores, the more intense the individual orientation to the value.

Participants were required to respond by placing a tick at the appropriate column. The questionnaires was personally administered by the researcher after seeking the consent of the Faculty Dean and the consent of the respondents. The respondents were informed of the objectives of the study and the significance of it. They were also informed that they could decide to participate or not participate in the study. They can as well pull out any time they deem fit. Data collection was conducted in a manner that ensures the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, standard deviation and t-test. Frequency count and simple percentage were used to analyze the demographic information provided by the respondents. Frequency count and simple percentage were also used to answer the research question on the pattern of social value orientation of the respondents. Inferential statistics (t-tests) was used to compare the means of different groups.

Results and discussion

Research question one: What is the social value system pattern among pre-service teachers in Northwest University, Kano?

The tables below will show which social value orientation is prevalent:

Table 2

Social Value Orientation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pro-social	203	61.5	61.5	61.5
Individualistic	72	21.8	21.8	21.8
Competitive	55	16.7	16.6	16.6
Total	330	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, 2024

Hypotheses one: There are no significant differences in the social value orientation of pre-service teachers in Northwest University on the bases of gender.

Table 3

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit
Male	140	1.35	.72	328	1.50	1.96
Female	190	1.29	0.97			

Source: Field work, 2024

The mean score for males is 1.35, while for females it is 1.29. The difference between the means is small. Standard Deviation in the male group (SD = 0.72) has less variability in their scores compared to the female group (SD = 0.97). The t-calculated (1.50) is compared to the t-critical value (1.96) at 328 degrees of freedom (DF). Since t-cal (1.50) < t-crit (1.96), the difference is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance level. It can therefore be concluded that there is no significant difference between social value orientations among the pre-service teachers on the basis gender.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that among the three social value orientations (SVO) investigated, pro-social behavior was the most prevalent among pre-service teachers. This aligns with the findings of Megana et al. (2024), who reported robust pro-social abilities and high rates of helping tendencies in 12-month-old children. The study documented helping behavior among infants beyond what was previously recorded.

Furthermore, the findings of this study corroborate those of Trang Vu Thu et al. (2021), who investigated the prevalence of pro-social behaviors among the Vietnamese population during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study reported a high prevalence rate of pro-social behaviors at 75.3%, with teachers/lecturers and medical staff exhibiting the highest levels of pro-social tendencies.

The second finding of this study indicates that there was no significant difference in the social value orientations of pre-service teachers based on gender. This aligns with the study by Jefferys (2014), who investigated the role of gender and social value orientation in adolescent trust and trustworthiness. The study reported that although boys were more trusting than girls, there was no significant gender difference in trustworthiness or pro-social orientation.

However, the second finding of this study does not align with the findings of Svetoslava (2019), who reported gender differences in social orientation. That study indicated that women scored higher on social values than men. Among the value orientations examined, self-orientation and material orientation were found to be more pronounced.

Additionally, the findings of this study contrast with those of Riaz and Ijaz (2016), who found that female students were more religiously observant than their male counterparts in a university setting in Pakistan. Similarly, Ali and Bagheri (2019) found that while both male and female students in Iran held strong Islamic values, there were significant differences in their interpretations and applications of these values.

Conclusion

This study investigated the prevalent social value orientation among pre-service teachers at Northwest University, Kano, Nigeria. It also examined gender differences in social value orientation among pre-service teachers. The findings indicate that students generally prioritize pro-social values, although individualistic and competitive tendencies are also present. However, no statistically significant differences in social value orientation were found based on gender.

The study concludes that students exhibit similar preferences and orientations towards social values, regardless of gender, emphasizing the importance of gender-neutral approaches to values education. Other factors, such as religion, culture, and social background, may play a more significant role in shaping social value orientation than gender.

This suggests that greater attention should be given to socio-cultural factors rather than gender in values education and value reorientation programs. As such, the theory that females naturally align with

pro-social orientations while males are more competitive may need to be reconsidered.

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