

VALUES AND VALUES TYPES DIFFERENCES AMONG ACCOUNTING AND NON-ACCOUNTING STUDENTS : A STUDY ON ITM STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to identify the differences between values and value types between accounting and non-accounting students of ITM. The research instrument used was Schwartz (1992) Values Questionnaires. It contains 56 values and was administered to final year accounting and business students in ITM. By grouping responses to the 56 values, ten value types were derived. Results of the research show that there are very few differences in values between accounting and business majors. The differences exist for three values, i.e. Mature Love, National Security and Successful. Further, none of the value types were significantly differed. More significant differences exist between responses of males and females (ten values - Sense of Belonging, Daring, Social Power, A World at Peace, Creativity, Curious, Obedient, Respect for Tradition, Social Justice and Pleasure and two value types - Self-direction and Power). Very few differences were also found between responses of students from different environmental backgrounds, age groups (Influential), academic performances (Health) and parental income levels (Broadminded and Social Justice). The interaction between the independent variables such as between major and gender were also examined. As a result, this study finds that there were more similarities than differences in values and value types within those environments. An understanding of students' values and value types is favorable to educators, administrators and businesses. It is hoped that these findings are useful in recruiting, retention, scheduling, teaching and training of students and business professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Helping businesses to survive is vital to keep Malaysia grows and prospers. Manufacturers, retailers, constructors and other industries play important roles in Malaysian economy. Thus, decision-making in choosing corporate strategy is always important, particularly during bad economic situations. If the corporate leaders are too personally- oriented, the decisions made will not incline to advantage society at large. Swindle et al. 1987 in his survey found out that the Certified Public Accountants appear to have values that are personal- oriented as opposed to social-oriented. Nevertheless, there is increasing pressure on corporate world to behave in a socially responsible manner over these recent years (Brooks, 1989). As a result, most consumers, government officials and even business executives no longer believe the famous dictum of Milton Friedman (1970) that the sole responsibility of business is to make profits (Finegan, J. 1994). However, what about the accounting professionals?

Accounting is sometimes referred to as the heart of any business organization. The role played by accountants is undeniably vital to companies. What happen to the economy now is a challenge to both accountants and managers. Traditionally,

accountants have tended to rely on a discipline based on a set of data, but this is now being superseded by analytical techniques that allow them to take a more strategic focus within the business framework. This shift in roles towards the development as an internal consultant will have a profound impact on accountants. The traditional emphasis on cognitive and technical skills will need to be supplemented with greater stress on personal behavioural skills.

Many of us may wonder about what influence our behaviour. Why do we choose a particular action rather than others? Previous studies suggest that personal values may influence behaviour as well as managerial business strategy decision (Guth and Taguiri 1965; Rokeach 1973; England 1975; Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1993; Fritzsche 1995; Wright et al. 1996). Correspondingly, the influence or leadership of these future professionals will be affected by their personal values. Nothing much can be done on how existing accountants, managers or professional alike will behave and act. In spite of that, educators' may provide guidance on favourable behavioural skills to future professionals, accounting and non-accounting majors who represents the future managers and leaders of corporate world. It is interesting to point out that, in the brave new world, education and training may be more concerned with a life-long necessity, i.e. with the upgrading of technical skills balanced with development of behavioural skills.

Motivation of Study

The Accounting Education Change Commission (1990, 308) in the United States highlighted that accounting graduates should: identify with the values of the members of the profession; be able to make value-based judgment and be prepared to address issues with integrity, objectivity, competence and concern for the public interest. This means that accounting graduates should be aware of the values of the profession. The results of a survey reported by Ahadiat and Mackie (1993) and Ahadiat and Smith (1994) further support this notion. The results indicate that recruiters in accounting profession expect accounting graduates to have traits of characters such as honesty, reliability, trustworthiness and to honour the public trust and public interest. Therefore, educators should not only teach them to be technically competent accountants but also to have moral expertise in order to fulfill their role in society.

Furthermore, values have become increasingly importance in business as evidenced by the implementation of the code of conduct by many businesses and the inclusion of values in auditing standard by auditing profession. Unfortunately, few of us make the effort of studying our own values to the point of being able to explicit and articulate about them. Although considerable research had been done on the ethical perceptions and behaviour of business students, studies pertaining to the personal values that affect such perceptions and behaviour are limited.

Research Question

A study of values is not a new phenomenon. Values are at the core of personality. They are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitude or actions. They influence the choice we make, the people we trust, the appeal we respond to and the way we invest our time and energy.

In other words, values serve as criteria for selection in action. When most explicit and fully conceptualized, values become criteria for judgment, preference and choice. When implicit and unreflective, values nevertheless perform as if they constituted grounds for decisions in behaviour. Men do prefer some things than others; they do choose one course of action rather than another out of a range of possibilities; they do judge the conduct of other men. In turbulent times, they can give a sense of direction amid conflicting views and demand.

While it is expected that most individuals in a culture will hold common sets of values, the preference ordering among these values may be quite different from individual to individual. These differences in preference ordering arise from differences in the subcultural environments of the individuals. Culture may be thought of in a 'micro' sense, i.e. factors as age, sex, race, religion, family, socioeconomy and choice of career or occupation (Rosenberg, 1957).

Examining accounting students' values by way of comparing their preference ordering with non-accounting students may benefit accounting education. The findings may provide explanations on why accounting and non-accounting students have different behaviours. The awareness of these differences may assist accounting educators to guide the students more effectively to prepare them for the accounting practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'values' may refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preference, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, needs, aversions and attractions, and many other modalities of selective orientation (William, 1968). There are various ways of defining values. Some of the definitions are discussed in this chapter. However it is very doubtful that any one descriptive definition can do complete justice to the full range and diversity of recognizable value phenomenon.

Definitions

Values

One of the more widely accepted definitions in the social science literature considers values to be conceptions of desirable that influence selective behaviour. Here, a distinction is made between what is desired and what is desirable. Values regulate "impulse satisfaction in accordance with the whole array of hierarchical enduring goals of the personality, the requirement of both personality and socio cultural system for order, the need for respecting the interests of others and of the group as a whole in social living" (Kluckhohn, 1951, p399). However, this is a very socialized view of values and it may rule out, for example, purely hedonic values.

In the broader view, anything good or bad is a value, or a value is anything of interest to a human subject (Pepper 1958, p7). Men are not indifferent to the world; they do not stop with a sheer factual view of their experience. Explicitly or implicitly they are continually regarding things as good or bad, as true or false, as virtues or vices. A comprehensive view of the total issue of valuing seems most useful to start with; more specific conceptions can then be developed for particular purposes.

Value Types

A value type, sometimes is also known as a value system in literature has been well-described by Robin William (1968),

"If and when a person's behaviour is guided over a considerable period of time by one and one value...More often particular acts or sequence of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values "

According to William, a series of clusters of values together form a person's value system consisting of a value hierarchy or priority structure based upon the relative importance of the individual values. In his later study in 1979, William further concludes that a value system is an organized set of preferential standards that are used in making selections of objects and actions, resolving conflicts, invoking social sanctions and coping with needs or claims for social and psychological defenses of choices made or proposed. He also found out that there was evidence in his study that indicated individual decisions are guided by groups of values (value systems) rather than individual values.

Survey Instruments

Values are very subjective and difficult to measure. The attempts to measure values started in the late 1920's when Allport and Vernon developed a study of values instrument and revised it in 1960 in their pursuit of studying values profiles of students in different college majors. Since 1973, most research studies on values of accounting and other business majors have used the Rokeach (1973) values survey questionnaire, which asks respondents to rank-order 18 instrumental and 18 terminal values. According to Rokeach instrumental values is a belief that *a given mode of conduct* such as honesty or courage is personally and socially desirable and terminal values is a belief that *a given end state of existence* like salvation or a world at peace is personally and socially worth striving for.

About fifteen years later, Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) constructed a theory of the universal types of values as "criteria by viewing" values as cognitive representations of three universal requirements: (a) biological needs, (b) inter action requirements for interpersonal co-ordination and (c) societal demands for group welfare and survival. They had derived conceptual and operational definitions for eight motivational domains of values: enjoyment, security, social power, achievement, self-direction, pro social, restrictive conformity and maturity.

Based on these theories, Schwartz (1992) developed and validated a values questionnaire that provides more extensive coverage of an analysis of values. It consists of 56 specific personal values that can be grouped into 10 motivationally distinct value types (illustrated by Exhibit 1). For each value, the respondent was to place the number that best rated the importance of the value as a guiding principle in his or her life. A "-1 " means that the value is opposed to the respondent's values, a "0" means that the value is of no importance, and a "1" to "7" to reflect the degree of the importance of the value with a "7" for the value of extreme importance. The use of this instrument to measure values and values types had been supported by several

studies; Schwartz (1992), Schwartz and Sagiv (1995) and Eliason and Schubot (1995).

Exhibit 1

Schwartz Values Questionnaire

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Equality | 31. True Friendship |
| 2. Inner Harmony | 32. A World of Beauty |
| 3. Social Power | 33. Pleasure |
| 4. Freedom | 34. Social Justice |
| 5. A Spiritual Life | 35. Independent |
| 6. Sense of Belonging | 36. Moderate |
| 7. Social Order | 37. Loyal |
| 8. Ambitious | 38. Broadminded |
| 9. An Exciting Life | 39. Humble |
| 10. Meaning in Life | 40. Daring |
| 11. Politeness | 41. Wealth |
| 12. National Security | 42. Self-Respect |
| 13. Reciprocation of Favours | 43. Creativity |
| 14. A World at Peace | 44. Respect for Tradition |
| 15. Mature Love | 45. Self-discipline |
| 16. Detachment | 46. Family security |
| 17. Social Recognition | 47. Unity with Nature |
| 18. A Varied Life | 48. Wisdom |
| 19. Authority | 49. Protecting the Environment |
| 20. Influential | |
| 21. Choosing Own Goals | 50. Honouring of Parents |
| 22. Capable | and Elders |

23. Honest	51. Healthy
24. Obedient	52. Accepting My Portion in Life
25. Intelligent	53. Preserving My Public Image
26. Enjoying Life	54. Successful
27. Responsible	55. Devout
28. Successful	56. Clean
29. Helpful	
30. Curious	

Findings of relevant studies

Values unlike opinion and attitudes are deep-rooted and pervasive. Rokeach (1973) states that values are determinants of virtually all kinds of behaviour that can be called social behaviour of social action, attitudes and ideology, evaluations, moral judgments and justification of self and others and presentation of self to others. The importance of values is undeniable and values are linked to ethics and central to personality and cognitive structure. They influence many facets of human behaviour (Mindell and Gorden, 1981; Pitts and Woodside, 1991). Ball Rokeach and Rokeach (1984) purport that individuals can be compared in terms of value preferences. Edward Shoenthal (1987) in his study on differences in the characteristics of CPAs and Chartered Accountants includes sex, age, training and relevancy of education as the independent variables of characteristics. He further concludes that the development of the accounting profession in any country is the results of complex interactions of many variables including culture and education. Understanding differences in values may explain the differences in characteristics of accounting professionals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based upon the results of the literature review and using Schwartz's (1992) definition of values and values types, the hypotheses to be tested are as given below:

H₀₁ : Accounting majors do not have different values from non-accounting majors.

H₀₂ : Accounting majors do not have different value types from non-accounting majors.

H₀₃ : Male students do not have different values from female students.

H₀₄ : Male students do not have different value types from female students.

H₀₅ : Specific environmental influences do not cause accounting and non-accounting students to have different values

The specific environmental influences selected in this study are,

- (a) Age
- (b) Academic performance
- (c) Parental income

Summary of Findings

Hypotheses	Results of the independent t-test at 5%
H ₀₁	H ₀₁ is rejected for Mature Love, National Security and Successful
H ₀₂	H ₀₂ is not rejected for all 10-values types
H ₀₃	H ₀₃ is rejected for 10 values (Sense of Belonging, Daring, Social Power, A World at Peace Curious, Obedient, Respect for Tradition, Social Justice, Pleasure and Creativity)
H ₀₄	H ₀₄ is rejected for Power and Self-direction
H ₀₅	(a) age- H ₀₅ is rejected for Influential (b) academic performance – H ₀₅ is rejected for Health (c) parental income – H ₀₅ is rejected for Broadminded and Social Justice

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study extends prior research by examining differences in values and value types between accounting and business majors, as well as between different genders. As a conclusion, consistent with prior research (e.g. Giacomino and Akers 1998, Baker 1976), that is there are few significant differences between accounting and non-accounting students, between male and female students, between different age groups, academic performance and parental income levels, in their individual values. These differences may due to differences in subcultural environment such as choice of future careers (Rosemberg, 1957) and backgrounds. Through learning and experiences, students sharpen their awareness of the beliefs they hold about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and normal or abnormal. They may also be stimulated to re-examine some choices and assumptions that have become habitual. Although values are often deep-rooted in our personality, they are exposed to influences from others. Therefore, the design and visions of accounting and business disciplines do have different impact upon the respective students. On the other hand, there are no significant differences in

the value types. The fact that all respondents are bumiputras, with majority is from similar ethnic group and religion may explain this result.

Generally, a study on values is quite new to accounting education in Malaysia. Future research can consider samples from other universities and professionals, successful and prominent individuals in accounting practice. The professional values shall be compared with those of accounting students. Hopefully, the findings may give accounting educators some insights into the traits of characters expected by profession and the degree to which values of these professionals are in consistent with, or different from, those of future accountants.

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