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## A Comparative Study of Value Orientation with Reference to Age and Socio-Economic Status among People of Aligarh Town

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### **Abstract:**

*The present study examines the relationship between value orientations and psychological traits with special reference to age and socio-economic status among residents of Aligarh town. Values act as guiding principles that influence human behavior, decision-making, and social interaction. This research adopts a value-based approach to understand psychological traits through six dimensions: cosmopolitanism–localism, scientism–fatalism, venturesomeness–non-venturesomeness, progressivism–traditionalism, democratism–autocratism, and empathy–non-empathy. The study utilizes a correlational, multivariate research design, involving a sample of 60 participants divided into four groups based on age (adults and senescents) and socio-economic status (high and low). Data were collected using standardized scales and analyzed using Duncan's Range Test. The findings reveal significant differences in value orientations across groups, highlighting the combined influence of socio-economic status and age in shaping psychological traits.*

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**Keywords:** *Value Orientation, Psychological Traits, Socio-Economic Status, Age, Cosmopolitanism, Scientism, Empathy.*

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### **Introduction:**

Human behavior is shaped by a complex interaction between psychological traits and social structures. Values serve as a bridge between internal dispositions and external social realities, guiding actions, beliefs, and attitudes. Value orientations express psychological traits such as rationality, empathy, and risk-taking ability, making them measurable and analyzable. These guiding principles, whether explicit or implicit, are characteristic of individuals or groups and influence the selection of available modes and ends of action (Atif et al., 2022). In

this context, understanding how value orientations are shaped by demographic variables such as age and socioeconomic status is critical for understanding their differential impact on individual and collective psychological profiles. This study therefore investigates the nuanced interplay between age, socioeconomic status, and specific value orientations, providing insight into the determinants of human psychological frameworks. Specifically, it seeks to investigate how varying socioeconomic backgrounds and distinct age cohorts manifest differences in value dimensions such as

cosmopolitanism, scientism, venturesomeness, progressivism, democratism, and empathy, thus offering a more granular perspective on psychological trait formation. Such an examination is critical for discerning the mechanisms through which societal structures and life course stages modulate individual psychological endowments. This investigation is particularly pertinent given the established evidence regarding value stability and change across the lifespan (Boehnke, 2019).

The present study focuses on understanding how age and socio-economic status (SES) influence value orientations. Socio-economic status dictates access to resources, education, and opportunities, whereas age signifies developmental changes and life experiences. Together, these variables significantly shape individual value systems. For example, some values, like self-transcendence and conservation, tend to go up as people get older, while self-enhancement values tend to go down (Smallenbroek et al., 2023). This pattern suggests a developmental trajectory in value priorities, where the emphasis shifts from individualistic pursuits to those that benefit others or uphold established norms. Moreover, research indicates that value priorities differ significantly between younger and older individuals, with younger demographics often prioritizing openness and older demographics prioritizing conservation values (Leijen et al., 2022).

### **Review of Literature:**

The concept of value orientation has been widely discussed in social psychology and sociology. According to Kluckhohn (1976), value orientation is a generalized and organized conception influencing behavior. Parsons (1976) underscored its function in preserving coherence between personality and culture. Schwartz characterizes values as principles that direct individuals toward desirable objectives, categorizing them into dimensions such as self-enhancement versus self-transcendence, which indicate the prioritization of personal interests over the welfare of others (Sargisson et al., 2020). Schwartz's framework further delineates these values into 10 basic personal values, grouped into four higher-order dimensions: Openness to Change, Self-Enhancement, Conservation, and Self-Transcendence (Korotayev et al., 2023). The framework posits a dynamic opposition between certain value types, such as the contrast between conservation values, which uphold tradition and stability, and openness to change values, which prioritize independence and novelty (Russo et al., 2022).

Prior research demonstrates that socio-economic status impacts attitudes, motivation, and social engagement, whereas age influences maturity, emotional regulation, and adaptability. Research has also shown that higher socio-economic groups tend to exhibit more rational, progressive, and democratic values, whereas lower socio-economic

groups may show traditionalism and fatalism. Concurrently, value priorities are considered relatively stable after childhood, yet societal events, aging, and life events can instigate shifts in an individual's value system over time (Leijen et al., 2022). For example, unplanned life-altering catastrophes or normal life cycle events like entering or retiring from the workforce can significantly alter value systems (Vecchione et al., 2016). This aligns with findings suggesting that while certain values, such as self-transcendence, remain relatively stable across the lifespan, others, like conservation and openness to change, exhibit significant age-related shifts (Vega-Tinoco et al., 2024).

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To compare value orientations between adults and senescents.
2. To examine differences in value orientations based on socio-economic status.
3. To identify dominant and dormant value orientations.
4. To analyze the interaction effect of age and socio-economic status on psychological traits.
5. The study aims to enhance our comprehension of psychological behavior based on values.

### **Hypotheses:**

The study formulates multiple hypotheses based on group comparisons.

Key hypotheses include that adults with high socio-economic status will show higher progressive value orientations than those with low socio-economic status; senescents will differ significantly from adults in value orientations; and socio-economic status will significantly influence value orientation across all six dimensions. A total of 36 hypotheses were tested across six value dimensions. These hypotheses specifically examine how age-related differences are reflected in values such as self-transcendence, conservation, openness to change, and self-enhancement, while also considering the subtle impact of socioeconomic factors on these developmental trajectories (Smallenbroek et al., 2023). This all-encompassing method makes it possible to fully understand how different stages of life and social stratification work together to shape the complex structure of human value systems. This study contributes to the literature by exploring the complex interplay between age, socioeconomic status, and the prioritization of values, offering insights into their bidirectional relationship with well-being and civic participation, particularly within older populations (Vega-Tinoco et al., 2024).

### **Research Methodology:**

The present study adopted an ex post facto research design, which is particularly suited for investigating the naturally occurring relationships between age, socio-economic status, and value orientations without any experimental

manipulation of variables. This approach was complemented by a correlational framework to explore the associations among these factors and a multivariate analysis structure to account for the complexity of multiple dependent variables simultaneously. Such a methodology enables a comprehensive examination of how developmental stages and social strata interplay to shape psychological traits, aligning with the study's objectives to discern group differences and interaction effects.

The independent variables were clearly delineated as age—categorized into two groups: adults (typically representing mid-life stages) and senescents (older adults)—and socio-economic status, stratified into high and low levels based on access to resources, education, and opportunities. The dependent variables encompassed six key value orientations, assessed on bipolar continua to capture contrasting psychological tendencies: Cosmopolitanism versus Localism, reflecting global versus parochial outlooks; Scientism versus Fatalism, indicating rational versus deterministic worldviews; Venturesomeness versus Non-venturesomeness, denoting risk-taking propensity; Progressivism versus Traditionalism, highlighting forward-looking versus status quo preferences; Democratism versus Autocratism, pertaining to participatory versus authoritarian inclinations; and Empathy versus Non-empathy, measuring concern for others. These dimensions provide a

nuanced framework for understanding value priorities, consistent with established theories in social psychology.

The sample comprised a total of 60 participants, purposefully divided into four equidistant groups of 15 individuals each to facilitate robust group comparisons within a 2x2 factorial design: adults with high socio-economic status, adults with low socio-economic status, senescents with high socio-economic status, and senescents with low socio-economic status. This stratification ensured balanced representation across age and SES categories, enhancing the generalizability of findings within the targeted demographic, particularly from the Aligarh region, as noted in subsequent suggestions.

The Value Orientation Scale and the Socio-Economic Status Scale were used to collect data. The Value Orientation Scale uses structured items to measure six value dimensions, and the Socio-Economic Status Scale uses a variety of indicators, such as income, education, and occupation, to group participants. Chauhan, N. S., and Bharadwaj, R. created these tools, which are reliable and culturally appropriate for use in India.

For hypothesis testing and post-hoc group comparisons, Duncan's Multiple Range Test was employed as the primary statistical technique. This method, used after analysis of variance or multivariate ANOVA, made it possible to accurately identify significant differences between the four groups for all 36 hypotheses covering the six value orientations. This

gave empirical support for the idea that developmental and socio-economic factors affect value systems.

### **Results and Analysis:**

The results from Duncan's Multiple Range Test revealed that adults with high socio-economic status exhibited the highest levels of cosmopolitan orientation, characterized by a pronounced openness to global perspectives, cultural diversity, and adaptability in social interactions. This group did much better than the other three groups: adults with low SES, senescents with high SES, and senescents with low SES. The p-values for all pairwise comparisons were less than 0.05, which indicates that there were significant differences in this value dimension. The strong influence of socio-economic status on openness and adaptability was evident, as higher SES individuals consistently displayed greater cosmopolitan tendencies, likely due to enhanced access to education, travel, and diverse informational resources that foster a broader worldview beyond local parochialism. On the other hand, people in the low SES groups, no matter how old they were, tended to be more localist, which means they valued their immediate community ties and traditional values more. This could be because they had fewer opportunities in life and were less exposed to different cultural stimuli (Giouvanopoulou et al., 2023).

In the Scientism versus Fatalism dimension, senescents with high SES

demonstrated the highest scores in scientism, reflecting a robust preference for rational, evidence-based thinking over deterministic or superstitious outlooks. This pattern indicates that prolonged life experience combined with elevated socio-economic exposure cultivates a more analytical mindset, enabling older high-SES individuals to prioritize scientific reasoning in navigating life's uncertainties. Duncan's test further substantiated significant intergroup differences, with rational thinking markedly increasing as a function of socio-economic status; low-SES groups, irrespective of age, leaned more toward fatalistic orientations, highlighting how resource disparities shape cognitive styles and worldviews. Conversely, the analysis of the Venturesomeness versus Non-venturesomeness continuum indicated that younger cohorts, particularly adults with high socio-economic status, reported significantly higher venturesomeness scores, implying a greater propensity for risk-taking and embracing novel experiences compared to their older counterparts and those with lower SES (YILDIRIM & Han, 2023).

Across the six value orientations, socio-economic status emerged as the dominant factor in shaping progressive and rational values, consistently driving higher scores in dimensions such as cosmopolitanism, scientism, venturesomeness, progressivism, and democratism among high-SES participants. Age, on the other hand,

exerted a nuanced influence on emotional maturity and empathy, with senescents generally displaying greater stability and interpersonal concern, though sometimes tempered by traditionalism in low-SES contexts. The interaction effects between SES and age produced diverse and multifaceted value patterns, as validated by comprehensive statistical tables from Duncan's Multiple Range Test applied to the 36 hypotheses; these analyses confirmed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in all dimensions, illustrating how developmental stages and social stratification interactively mold psychological traits and value priorities.

#### **Discussion:**

The findings indicate that value orientation is not static but evolves through socio-economic exposure and life experiences. Individuals with higher SES demonstrate greater cosmopolitanism, rationality, and democratic orientation due to better access to education and information. Age plays a role in emotional growth and stability. Older people tend to think more deeply, but they can also be more traditional. The interaction between SES and age creates diverse psychological patterns, confirming that values are socially constructed rather than purely individual traits. This aligns with established research illustrating that demographic factors, such as age and gender, alongside socioeconomic conditions, profoundly influence the formation of value orientations and future

perspectives (Shu et al., 2024). Post-materialist values, often associated with younger, more educated, and politically liberal demographics, tend to correlate with higher socioeconomic status, underscoring a societal shift from purely material concerns to self-expression and quality of life in advanced economies (Giouvanopoulou et al., 2023; Peterson & Tollefson, 2024). This suggests a complex interplay where economic security enables a focus on higher-order needs, thereby shaping a progressive value system that prioritizes societal well-being and individual fulfillment over mere subsistence (Sargisson et al., 2020). Furthermore, cultural values, ranging from traditional to secular-rational, also significantly correlate with these progressive shifts, influencing digitalization-related variables and overall societal development (Jamalova, 2024).

#### **Conclusion:**

This study conclusively demonstrates that value orientations are significantly influenced by socio-economic status and age, with SES emerging as the dominant factor shaping progressive, rational, and cosmopolitan values. Higher SES individuals, across age groups, exhibited markedly elevated levels of cosmopolitanism—characterized by openness to global perspectives and cultural diversity—scientism, venturesomeness, progressivism, and democratism. These patterns are likely driven by enhanced access to education,

travel, and diverse informational resources, which broaden worldviews and foster adaptability beyond parochial localism, as evidenced by significant differences in Duncan's Multiple Range Test (all  $p < 0.05$ ) (Giouvanopoulou et al., 2023). In contrast, lower SES groups, irrespective of age, leaned toward localism, fatalism, and traditionalism, reflecting constrained life circumstances and limited exposure to external stimuli that prioritize immediate community ties over broader horizons (Shu et al., 2024). Age contributes a nuanced influence, particularly enhancing emotional depth, maturity, empathy, and social responsibility, with senescents displaying greater stability and reflective thinking. However, this maturity is often tempered by traditional orientations in low-SES contexts, highlighting the interactive effects of developmental stages and social stratification in molding multifaceted value systems. Younger adults with high SES, for instance, showed peak venturesomeness, underscoring a propensity for risk-taking and novelty that diminishes with age (YILDIRIM & Han, 2023). The research validates value-based frameworks, rooted in theories from Kluckhohn and Parsons, as robust tools for studying psychological traits, providing empirical rigor through comprehensive analyses of 36 hypotheses. Ultimately, promoting scientific reasoning, empathetic interpersonal concern, and democratic values is essential for societal development. By mitigating socio-

economic inequalities and expanding access to formative experiences, societies can nurture post-materialist shifts toward self-expression, quality of life, and secular-rational orientations, aligning with global patterns where economic security enables higher-order priorities.

### **Recommendations:**

Educational programs should be strategically designed to promote scientific reasoning, progressivism, cosmopolitanism, venturesomeness, and democratism, counteracting the localism, fatalism, and traditionalism prevalent among lower socio-economic status groups. By integrating curricula that emphasize exposure to diverse global perspectives, rational inquiry, and innovative thinking—mirroring the value advantages observed in higher SES individuals—these programs can bridge disparities in value orientations, fostering adaptability and forward-thinking mindsets essential for societal advancement, as socio-economic development tends to push societies toward secular-rational values regardless of cultural heritage (Giouvanopoulou et al., 2023). Policies must prioritize addressing socio-economic inequalities to cultivate balanced value systems across age and SES groups, mitigating the dominance of survival-oriented traits like fatalism and parochialism in resource-constrained contexts. Targeted interventions in education, income redistribution, and access to informational resources can

enable lower SES populations to shift toward post-materialist priorities of self-expression, quality of life, and environmental concern, aligning with patterns where economic security unlocks higher-order needs and progressive orientations (Peterson & Tollefson, 2024; Sargisson et al., 2020; Shu et al., 2024). Future research should extend beyond the Aligarh region to encompass diverse geographic, cultural, and economic contexts, enhancing the generalizability of findings on SES-age interactions in value formation and identifying region-specific moderators. Mixed-method approaches are recommended to yield deeper psychological insights into the dynamic interplay of developmental stages, social stratification, and value evolution by combining quantitative techniques like Duncan's Multiple Range Tests with qualitative explorations of lived experiences.

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