



Analysis of values of adolescents in Salesian educational schools in southern Spain

Análisis de los valores de adolescentes en centros educativos salesianos del sur de España

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Abstract

The hierarchy of values of each subject determines their actions and decisions, adolescence being a key stage for the construction of identity. Thus, the axiological choices of young people will define who they are and will influence their sociocultural coexistence. The present work focuses on analysing the hierarchy of values in adolescent Spanish students, as well as examining whether there are significant differences in their perceptions as a function of the gender variable. A descriptive transectional design is used to analyse the axiological hierarchy of a sample of 248 students from Salesian schools in southern Spain during the academic year 2018/2019. The axiological information was collected using a standardized instrument. The results indicate the participants' favourable assessment of the categories of affective, moral and individual values in the study, while the worst considered were those related with the values of political participation and intellectual. Moreover, significant differences were obtained in the gender variable, women being those who reflect a greater perception of satisfaction scoring higher in all categories. The study concludes that adolescents prioritise values that improve affective relationships, moral coexistence and their identity development. Furthermore, the difference by gender underlines that personal experiences and the characteristics of the context generate different perceptions of values, with axiology having to be worked on in all educational levels.

Keywords: Social values, moral values, education, adolescence, identity, educational models.

Resumen

La jerarquía de valores de cada sujeto determina sus acciones y decisiones. Siendo la adolescencia una etapa clave para la construcción identitaria, las elecciones axiológicas de los y las jóvenes definirán quiénes son e influirán en la convivencia sociocultural. Este trabajo se centra en analizar la jerarquía de valores en estudiantes españoles adolescentes, así como verificar si existen diferencias significativas en sus percepciones en función de la variable sexo. Se utiliza un diseño transeccional de tipo descriptivo para analizar la jerarquía axiológica de una muestra de 248 estudiantes de centros educativos salesianos del sur de España durante el curso académico 2018/2019. La información axiológica se recogió mediante un instrumento estandarizado. Los resultados indican una mejor valoración de las categorías de valores afectivos, morales e individuales por parte de los participantes en el estudio, mientras que las peor consideradas han sido las relacionadas con los valores de participación política e intelectuales. Asimismo, se obtienen diferencias significativas respecto a la variable sexo, siendo las mujeres quienes reflejan mayor percepción de agrado al puntuar más alto en todas las categorías. Se concluye que la población adolescente prioriza los valores que mejoren las relaciones afectivas, la convivencia moral y su desarrollo identitario. Además, la diferencia por sexos subraya que las experiencias personales y las características del contexto generan diferentes percepciones respecto a los valores, siendo preciso trabajar la axiología en todos los niveles educativos.

Descriptor: Valores sociales, valores morales, adolescencia, identidad, educación, modelos educativos

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a key moment in people ranging from ten to nineteen years old (World Health Organization, 2018). This stage is characterized by a transition between childhood and adult life, in which there are countless changes affecting all spheres that make up the human being (physical, psychological, biological, intellectual and social), giving rise to a process of constant learning and adaptation where the adolescent population begins to use the personal and social resources at their disposal (Gaete, 2015; Nieto, 2013; Tesouro et al. 2013).

The transformations that occur during this stage are very important, since physical changes, such as the maturation of cognitive structures, and cognitive changes, such as the improvement of abstract thinking, favor in adolescents the development of own reflections. This fact makes it easier for the adolescent to be when there is an inner process in which the person understands who he/she is and who he/she wants to be (Salas, 2017).

On the other hand, it is also during adolescence that people construct the scale of values that will define their actions and behavior and, consequently, their future as adults (Marín-Díaz & Sánchez-Cuenca, 2018; Villegas, 2018). This scale is built on the experiences of the person and the context in which he/she is immersed, since the individual is constantly generating ideas that enable him/her to understand and give meaning to the reality (Genç, 2018). In this sense, we can define values as those ideas that guide the actions of people who form society (Martín-García et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2020; Oña et al. 2013; Pérez, 2019; Schwartz, 2012; Spellini et al., 2010). Values allow people to interpret their reality (Gervilla, 1988; Valiente et al., 2020), being able to learn and give relevance to all the facts that make their lives more pleasant and positive (Dewey, 1952). Similarly, these allow individuals to reject decisions or actions that they consider may have negative consequences for their experiences or

people they care (Bolívar, 1995; Camps, 1990; Expósito, 2018).

These elections, which influence the construction of the scale of values that begins in adolescence and which agree with the process of identity formation (Ruiz & de Juanas, 2013), make the person unrepeatable and unique (Splitter, 2020), because he/she lives in a constant transformation that allows to evolve and adapt to the reality of the context in which the individual is (Claes, 2011; Ibáñez, 2013; Smith et al. 2012). For this reason, values in adolescence are very interesting for the scientific community. In this regard, several investigations have deepened the axiological component in this age group (Bueno et al., 2016; González-Gijón & Soriano, 2017; Ortega & Blanco, 2017; Pandya, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2019; Van Krieken, 2019).

In this sense, we can affirm that people are in a permanent evolution-learning process, because we need to contribute meaning to the different events that occur in our everyday reality (Moreno, 2014; Rageliené, 2016). For this reason, identity of people is built on the decisions that they make based on the experiences lived, being necessary to consider the different environments in which individuals are immersed (Carrera et al., 2015). For this reason, the agents and contexts in which the person interacts in a meaningful way are especially relevant to the holistic development (Peppler et al., 2020). Key agents include family, school, peer group and media (Collet, 2020). Each of the possible scenarios, determined by the agent and context in which he/she interacts create situations in which the adolescent acquires essential learning for his/her identity development. It is therefore very important that there is a harmony between the messages transmitted from each of them, since the cooperative work between these actors will have an impact on the balanced and positive development of adolescents, as well as on their personal and social well-being (Garreta, 2015; Páez, 2015; Vázquez & López, 2014).



Making a brief analysis into the educational work of each agent, we emphasize family as the most suitable place for primary socialization (Kirby, 2020) by constituting an environment in which children are valued by how they are, without being judged (Van Petegem et al., 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2010). Second, the peer group is a key emotional support for adolescents by helping to promote their emotional and social development (Nesi et al., 2018; Smith, 2018), in addition to influencing the acquisition of new behaviors or reinforcing existing ones. Thirdly, the media are present in the daily reality of people, having a notable influence on the identity of adolescents by constituting ideal experiences and models to imitate (Córdova et al., 2019; Cabero et al., 2010). Finally, the role of the school, being the first formal agent through which children access to society, thus the school is the setting in which adolescents spend most of their time (García et al., 2018; Ponce & Sarmiento, 2017).

Focused on the school, by its special role as a socializing agent (Bobbert, 2017) and influential in the identity formation of adolescents, it is necessary to take into account that it is made up of multiple aspects that define and give meaning to it (Agudelo et al., 2019; Colomo, 2015; Colomo & Gabarda, 2019; Muñiz et al., 2020). In this research we will highlight the pedagogical center model, which collects the ideal of the institution where norms, values, attitudes and behaviors that guide the educational-axiological practice are presented, which are elements that will influence the identity of people.

Specifically, for our research, we have focused on the Salesian pedagogical-axiological model developed by Don Bosco. It presents a proposal based on promoting love, faith and peaceful coexistence among people (Carazzone, 2013), transmitting positive values that do not only contribute to improving the immediate reality of adolescents, but also to favoring the construction of a better society (Zaballos, 2003; Rodríguez & Iglesias, 2018). This model revolves around the education-religion bino-

mial (Escalante, 2014), promoting the integral formation of all from a Christian conception of life, the person and the world (Buccellato, 2008), reflecting on the pedagogical foundations of its proposal (Cian 2004; Delgado, 2005; Graciliano 2013; Salazar, 2013; Turriago, 2014): a) family educational environment, promoting love and trust through games, school and church; b) reason, religion and affection, understanding love as the element that sustains the educational relationship between the student and the teacher; c) joy, study and piety, considering hard work as an action that must be dealt with joy by the many positive aspects it brings; (D) Don Bosco's holiness, health and wisdom, which are elements that students must always keep in mind; e) premise of "good citizens and honest Christians", underlining the role of education as a key factor in working towards the defense of the fundamental rights of all people.

Therefore, we are faced with a pedagogical proposal in which students are the protagonist of their learning process, betting on values such as humanity, effort, justice or companionship, favoring the development of people and a more free, tolerant and fraternal sociocultural context. Considering all the above, this paper aims to know the hierarchy of values for a sample of students from Salesian educational institutions in southern Spain. In addition to this objective, it is also intended to verify whether there are significant differences in the categories of values according to the gender variables.

2. Methodology

2.1. Methodological approach

The research is quantitative and descriptive. The design is non-experimental, as no manipulations have been performed on the studied variables. The collection of the information was carried out using a standardized tool, with the aim of quantifying and analyzing statistically the



value perceptions of adolescents in the selected Salesian centers.

2.2. Sample

The sample under study consists of 248 students (N=248) from Salesian centers in southern Spain (Autonomous Community of Andalusia) at the end of the school year 2018/2019. This is a sample intentionally selected (not probabilistic). The distribution of students according to gender is 127 women and 121 men, which is equivalent to 51.21 % and 48.79 % of the sample, respectively. The students belong to the stage of Compulsory Secondary Education, specifically to the 3rd grades (48.79%) and 4th (51.21 %), with a mean age of 14.86 years.

2.3. Instrument

The adapted values test (Gervilla et al., 2018), developed by the Research Group (HUM-580) “Emerging Values, Social Education and Educational Policies” of the University of Granada, has been applied for collecting the information. Their choice is based on the possibility of recording the axiological assessments of adolescents with respect to terms and words linked to different categories of values, thus being able to know the relevance assigned to each category, which allows to establish hierarchies and comparisons between participants. It is based on the Axiological Model of Integral Education proposed by Professor Gervilla (2000), in which the global concept of the human being revolves around three main dimensions: A) as an animal with emotional intelligence; b) as a being who has freedom to decide; c) openness or relational nature of humans. These dimensions give rise to eleven categories that make up the test: body, intellectual, affective, individual, moral, esthetic, social, political participation, ecological, instrumental and religious participation. Each of these categories is made up of a total of 25 words on which the perception of pleasure or displeasure

is expressed through a Likert-like scale, in which the responses fluctuate between 2 and -2 points, with very pleasant (2 points), pleasant (1 point), none (0 points), unpleasant (-1 points) and very unpleasant (-2 points). For interpreting the data, the results of the categories of values will reflect the summation of the 25 terms that make up the data, establishing the score between 50 and -50 points.

With regard to the instrument quality criteria, the parameters of validity and reliability have been taken into account. The validity of the content is guaranteed by applying the instrument in several previous investigations (Álvarez & Rodríguez, 2008; Cámara, 2010; Cívico et al. 2019; 2020; González-Gijón et al., 2019). In terms of reliability, it was obtained by means of Cronbach alpha coefficient, which reflects the internal consistency of the test, obtaining a result of 0.96, i.e., high reliable.

2.4. Data procedure and analysis

For collecting the data, the centers were contacted and a meeting was held. Once the characteristics of the investigation were explained, the information was collected by distributing the physical test among the sample of participants. After collecting the information, the analysis of the data was carried out with the SPSS program in its version 25. In this regard, the following tests were carried out in response to the objectives set out. On the one hand, descriptive statistics were obtained from the test response (mean, standard deviation and maximum/minimum values). On the other hand, Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test was used to check significant differences according to gender variables (to check heterogeneity in the assessments of two independent samples based on gender), because data in the normality and homocedasticity analysis (Table 1) did not conform to normality in both variables (Levene test, significance greater than 0.05 ($p \geq 0.05$) in 9 of the 11 categories, there were 2 that were not compatible with the application



of parametric tests; and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with Lilliefors significance correction, contemplating 11 categories for each gender, a significance level lower than 0.05 was obtained ($p \leq 0.05$) in 14 of the 22 possible cases, eliminating parametric testing.

Table 1. Results of the parametric assumptions for the gender variable

Hierarchical value	Gender	Levene		Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
Body	Man	0.454	0.501	0.112	0.001
	Woman			0.112	0.000
Intellectual	Man	0.062	0.803	0.093	0.012
	Woman			0.077	0.062*
Affective	Man	0.001	0.975	0.152	0.000
	Woman			0.137	0.000
Individual	Man	0.211	0.647	0.068	0.200*
	Woman			0.116	0.000
Moral	Man	3.914	0.049	0.115	0.000
	Woman			0.162	0.000
Esthetic	Man	10.727	0.001	0.065	0.200*
	Woman			0.055	0.200*
Social	Man	0.187	0.666	0.062	0.200*
	Woman			0.112	0.000
Political participation	Man	0.008	0.928	0.092	0.014
	Woman			0.076	0.071*
Ecological	Man	0.161	0.689	0.100	0.005
	Woman			0.102	0.003
Instrumental	Man	2.334	0.128	0.079	0.061*
	Woman			0.069	0.200*
Religious	Man	1.227	0.269	0.089	0.021
	Woman			0.149	0.000

*= $p \leq 0.05$

3. Results

Table 2 shows the hierarchy of student values in the Salesian centers selected for the research. To do this, the range of -50 and 50 points has been applied, as previously explained.

By analyzing the maximum and minimum scores presented by students for each category of values, we can emphasize that they all have reached a maximum score of 50 points, which means that at least for one student, all words in a category have been perceived as very pleasant. Regarding



the minimum scores, political participation, ecological and religious participation value categories have obtained -50 points, meaning that at least one student has considered all the values of those categories to be very unpleasant. Very close to this

perception is the category of intellectual values with -46 points. It should also be emphasized that the minimum score for all categories is in negative range, with none remaining in the lower score on the positive range.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Values	Abbreviation	N	Minimum value obtained	Maximum value obtained	Average	DT
Body	COR	248	-4	50	29.04	8.62
Intellectual	INT	248	-46	50	12.50	15.43
Affective	AFE	248	-4	50	38.56	9.51
Individuals	IND	248	-6	50	33.54	10.20
Moral	MOR	248	-1	50	35.17	10.90
Esthetic	EST	248	-30	50	19.37	13.64
Social	SOC	248	-30	50	27.01	13.49
Political participation	PP	248	-50	50	14.66	14.28
Ecological	ECO	248	-50	50	27.20	17.28
Instrumental	INST	248	-1	50	28.42	10.70
Religious	REL	248	-50	50	23.55	21.96

By focusing on the means obtained in each category, we can see that the affective values (38.56), followed by the moral values (35.17) and the individual values (33.54) are the ones that are best considered by students of the Salesian centers, placing them as very pleasant. On the contrary, those categories of values that have received a lower score are political participation (14.66) and intellectual participation (12.50), nevertheless being considered pleasant. These means show that there is a general positive perception of the different categories that make up the instrument. Although no category has been set as the subject of study for in-depth analysis, it stresses that the opinion on religious values is placed in the eighth position (23.55), closer to the categories of social values (27.01) and ecological values (27.20).

Regarding dispersion among the categories in which the responses are more hete-

rogeous, there is greater variability between the perceptions and assessments of students, finding ecological values (17.28) and religious values (21.96). By contrast, the categories of body values (8.62) and affective values (9.51) are those that show the greatest homogeneity in the student's responses, reflecting the least variability among their opinions.

Once descriptive statistics have been analyzed, we will focus on checking whether there are significant differences in our sample based on the variables gender and school. In this sense, Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare means of independent samples, confirming that there are significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) between the students according to the variables analyzed.

Table 3 below shows those categories in which significant differences have been found depending on the gender variable.



Table 3. Significant differences depending on gender

Values	Gender	N	Average	DT	Sig.
Body	Man	121	28.45	8.55	0.132
	Woman	127	29.60	8.68	
Intellectual	Man	121	11.31	15.64	0.247
	Woman	127	13.63	15.21	
Affective	Man	121	37.43	9.61	0.034*
	Woman	127	39.63	9.32	
Individuals	Man	121	32.70	10.49	0.121
	Woman	127	34.35	9.90	
Moral	Man	121	33.19	11.69	0.006*
	Woman	127	37.06	9.76	
Esthetic	Man	121	14.93	14.75	0.000*
	Woman	127	23.60	10.97	
Social	Man	121	24.13	13.76	0.001*
	Woman	127	29.76	12.67	
Political participation	Man	121	11.90	14.32	0.015*
	Woman	127	17.29	13.79	
Ecological	Man	121	26.88	18.00	0.853
	Woman	127	27.50	16.63	
Instrumental	Man	121	28.10	11.51	0.909
	Woman	127	28.73	9.91	
Religious	Man	121	16.82	22.67	0.000*
	Woman	127	29.97	19.23	

*= $p \leq 0.05$

As can be seen, categories like affective, moral, esthetic, social, political participation and religious values present significant differences in terms of gender. It should be noted that women score higher in all categories than men, thus reflecting a greater perception of pleasure. In this sense, it is particularly noteworthy the difference in religious values (16.82 points for men and 29.97 for women, which practically reach the perception of very pleasant versus a low pleasant score for men) and esthetic values (14.93 points for men per 23.60 women), obtaining differences of 13.15 points and 8.67, respectively.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Focusing on the results, a clear preference is observed for the categories of affective, moral and individual values. The position of affective values over the others agrees with Martí-Vilar and Palma (2010), Abella et al. (2017) and Benedicto (2017), being these values an essential element for the personal well-being of individuals (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). For its part, the relevance of moral values coincides with the studies of Gonzalez-Gijón and Soriano (2017) and González-Anleo (2017), both studies



underlining the importance that young people attach to leading a morally dignified life. As for the importance of individual values, we are faced with a category related to the development of identity building and personality, a reality also reflected in the study by Elexpuru et al. (2013).

Because of the characteristics of the sample, students of Salesian centers with religious ideals, it must be emphasized that the category of religious values is placed in eighth position, obtaining a pleasant perception by the students. This fact does not agree with the results of other investigations (Gobernado, 2003; Gervilla, 2002; Elzo, 2006) in which religious values are not well valued, or there is no difference between the responses of students from religious and non-religious centers. In this way, the influence of the Salesian model and the experience in religion is positively observed in the hierarchy of participating students, agreeing with Bowie and Revell (2018), who emphasize the importance of positive previous experiences in religion, and contradicting the thesis that religion is a mere cultural reference for young people (Benedicto, 2017; López-Ruiz, 2017).

Political and intellectual participation are the categories of values that are in the last positions in the axiological hierarchy.

With regard to the category of values of political participation, the research by López-Ruiz (2017) and González-Anleo (2017), shows that adolescents do not consider politics an interesting topic since it is not addressed to their near reality, thus their indifference towards this topic in their lives. If we look at the category of intellectual values, it is remarkable that although studies like that conducted by González-Anleo (2017), they show that for 92.1% of adolescents consider school as very important to their life, however our sample places it in the last position, agreeing with the study of Civico et al. (2019). One of the reasons that can lead to this less positive perception is a disappointment with the way teaching process is presented today, which is linked to academic qualifications and the lack of

commitment and responsibility toward school obligations (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017; Baburkin et al., 2016).

In relation to the second objective of the research, significant differences have been found in relation to gender. These differences are in the categories of affective, moral, esthetic, social, political participation and religious values in which significant differences have been found, agreeing with different studies such as those of Angelucci et al. (2009), Bart and McQueen (2013) or Singh (2017). In this case, it should be noted that the scores of women have been higher than men with respect to the categories of values analyzed, as in the research by Abella et al. (2017) and González-Gijón et al. (2020). This fact confirms that, in spite of the same pedagogical-axiological model, the experiences lived by the participants (in their different dimensions and with the different agents) and the characteristics of the context (cultural, political participation, economic, religious, etc.), there are different interpretations and perceptions of the importance of values for each gender, coinciding with studies that underline the influence and determination of the context in the reality of people (Colomo & Aguilar, 2019; Colomo & Gabarda, 2019).

Regarding the limitations of the study, if we want to generalize about the results of the values of the Salesian students, we need to increase the sample of participants, avoiding at the same time restrictions such as the exclusive consideration of the 3rd and 4th secondary education courses and the incorporation of students from all over Spain. Another limitation lies in the instrument, since it would have been very interesting to combine the test with interviews that would allow to investigate more deeply the axiological concepts of the students, favoring the critical and reflective thought about their choices and the motivations, experiences or circumstances that lead to form their axiological hierarchy.

Therefore, in relation to future research, we emphasize the addition of interviews to students to reflect on the assessments made



and explain their responses. We also consider the possibility of increasing the study sample, including adolescents from Salesian centers in different countries. In addition, we consider the inclusion of other sociodemographic variables related to the family typology, the social class, the intention of taking higher studies, among others. In this sense, we consider it appropriate to know the axiological hierarchy of teachers, as key elements in the transmission of values to the students and examples and models of behavior, so it would be good to implement the test to them as well.

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