

## Value preferences and requirements of the students attending the regional boarding secondary schools

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to reveal the preferences and requirements of the students attending the Regional Boarding Secondary Schools (YBO) concerning the values contain in the educational program of the social studies course. The study was designed within the framework of phenomenology which is among the qualitative research methods. The participants of the study are 79 eight grade students attending a regional boarding secondary school in the Turkey. The data of the study are collected through a survey questionnaire with two parts which contains open-ended items. The data were analysed using the descriptive and content analyses. The findings of the study show that the participants do not differ based on gender and the socio-economic background of their families. The frequently preferred values by the participants are found to be attaching importance to the family unity, honesty, sympathy and patriotism. Another finding is that the participants do not provide a clear justification for each of the values they preferred. This suggests that it is difficult to establish a justification for the value. However, requirements value justifications are analyzed, it is seen that students they express the definition of value, its importance and the expectations of having this specific value.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Values refer to people's desired goals that are important to them and guide people's lives. It is possible for people to determine their life, actions, goals and ideals individually and to ensure compatibility with them in their life as long as they have certain values. Reaching a rich and deep personality and having an inner world for people can only be measured with their values. Therefore, it is possible to argue "It is the values that make people human" [1]. The values are first discussed in a scientific way in 1918 by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, and it was asserted that the most frequent factors create the values [2]. Values that guide the behaviours of people to a certain extent vary from one society to another and identify the life of individuals who are in the process of socialization. Values that an individual has are related to how he describes others, events or objects [3]. There are certain topics that are still discussed such the definition of values, their origins, whether or not values are relative or absolute, the importance ranking of values, who should protect values in what ways, importance of values for individual and community life and the proper method to be followed in order to teach individuals to internalize values [4].

Values are ranked among themselves according to the meaning they carry. A sequenced set of values based on their importance creates a system that determines value priorities, and cultures and individuals can describe their value priorities with such systems. In addition, values are subject to changes over time. There may be changes in value priorities, especially to meet the needs that arise over time [5]. When we look at the values that shape the life of Turkish people, it is seen that it is a mixture of traditional values and the values of industrial society. Among the values that are important in our culture the following traditional values are seen: caring for the family, religion, religiosity, patriotism, philanthropy, solidarity, army, and indulgence, and the following values are also seen as a result of industrialization: science, individualism, competition, skepticism and innovation [6]. In values education the focus is on the dimension of acquisition of certain values rather than on the making sense of values and the background of the preference over the values. Ranking of the values for individuals is closely related to their age, gender and educational background of parents. In other words, some personal characteristics of individuals significantly affect their preferences over values [7]. Socialization process is very effective in value development. Values education for the child, which starts in his immediate environment continues at school [8]. In this respect, the school is a living and learning area built on values. Like every individual and society, every school has its own values or develops its own values over time. Individuals who continue their lives in accordance with the value patterns can create the values of the society and the school they are members of and even change their values with the values of the society and the school [9].

Regional boarding schools (YBO) are part of the ministry of national education. The other goal of the YBOs is to provide compulsory education for primary school students who have completed the 4th grade and cannot be included in primary schools through mobile education due to the fact that they live in regions that do not have a school or have merged classrooms with students or schools are closed due to lack of students [10]. Therefore, boarding schools have certain distinctive characteristics which make them different from other types of schools [11]. In the latter type of schools, students get education in regular class hours. However, in boarding schools' students stay at schools' day and night which is radically different educational condition [12]. Hofman [13] argues that there are less studies about boarding schools due to the fact that such schools are not given so much importance. However, the culture of the school is an effective factor in the formation of the values that form the heart of the culture. Considering that value judgments which are based on the idea of what is good and what is bad are formed through the culture that individuals gain from their immediate environment [14, 15], it will be appropriate to carry out a study on values using a sample of students attending YBOs.

The importance of value in terms of school (institution) culture has led to numerous scientific studies on value preferences. There are many such studies. For instance, Bacanlı [16] analysed the value preferences of undergraduate students. Yıldırım [17] examined the value preferences of in-service history teachers. Bacanlı, Akgül and Akgül [18] studies the differences between individuals' value patterns and their value preferences. Karatekin, Gençtürk and Kılıçoğlu [19] dealt with the value hierarchy among the students, pre-service social studies teachers and teachers. Acun, Yücel, Önder and Tarman [20] investigated the importance of the values contained in the education program of basic education fourth and fifth grades for teachers and parents. Çelikkaya and Yılmaz [21] studied the expectations of teachers, students and parents from values education. Kundakçı, Gümüş and Yılmaz [22] dealt with the connections between the value preferences and professional values among the senior nursing students. Fidan [23] analysed the value preferences of pre-service classroom teachers in regard to their future plans for values education. Keskin [24] examined the value classification of teachers.

Social studies course play a significant role in transferring the values to students. In the educational program for the social studies courses (2018) the values are defined as the basic units of our personal characteristics and the source for our inner power to deal with problems that we come across in our daily life. More specifically, educational systems attempt to produce individuals who acquire certain major values. There are 18 values to be taught in the education program of the social studies course in the school year of 2017/2018. The education program of the social studies courses in the school year of 2017/2018 there are eighteen values to be taught [25]. These values must be given by associating them with the acquisitions within the learning areas until the education program of the social studies course is completed. Therefore, those students who completed the seventh grade are expected to acquire these values. It is recognised that those secondary students who attend regional boarding schools are not analysed in terms of the values they have. The aim of the study is to reveal the preferences of the students attending the eighth grade of the Regional Boarding Secondary Schools (YBO) concerning eighteen values contained in the educational program of the social studies course.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Model of the study

This research is a qualitative research to determine the preferences and requirements of boarding region secondary school students regarding the values contained in the educational program of the social studies course. Qualitative research is a method that provides tools to better understand individuals' experiences, feelings and thoughts [26, 27]. The starting point of qualitative research is social and cultural points. It generally attempts to examine a specific subject from various perspectives and understand it in depth [28]. Phenomenology which is one of the qualitative research techniques was used in the research. Phenomenology enables us to focus on the facts about which we do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding. Phenomenology is a proper research method especially for the studies aiming to investigate things such as events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts and situations in the world we live in [29, 30]. In this study, the meanings that boarding school secondary school students attached to the values were tried to be uncovered.

### 2.2. Participants

The participants of the study are 79 secondary students attending the eighth grade of a regional boarding school in Turkey during the spring semester of the school year of 2018-2019. They were selected by the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling techniques. In the criterion sampling method, the situations to be chosen are expected to be rich in terms of information load [31]. Therefore, since the 8th grade students are expected to complete the acquisitions related to eighteen values included in the education program of the social studies course, the study group was formed with these students.

The characteristics of the study group are: There are 38 females (48%) and 41 (52%) male in the participant group. Concerning the educational background of mothers, the following information is found: illiterate (4%), primary school graduates (38%), secondary school graduates (47%) and highschool graduates (11%). The fathers of the participants are found to have the following educational background: no illiterate, primary school graduates (20%), secondary school graduates (47%), high school graduates (32%) and university graduates (1%). There was no mother of the participants who work as agriculture laborer or craft. The rate of those who work as worker and self-employed is 1%. The rate of those who are house wife is (89%). Fathers are found to have the following occupational status: agriculture laborer (23%), worker (16%), craft (11%), civil servant (14%) and self-employment (30%). The rate of unemployment among the fathers of the participants is found to be (3%). The families of the participants live in different places as follows: 27% in villages, 23% in towns, 21% in districts and 14% in cities.

### 2.3. Data collection tools

The data of the study are collected through the administration of a survey questionnaire with two parts which contains open-ended items. The first part of the questionnaire includes items about the socio-demographical status. The second part contains eighteen values included in the educational program of the social studies course. The participants were asked to rank the values based on the importance of these values to them. They were also instructed that if they thought a value not included in the list was also important to them, they could add it to the list. In addition, the students were asked to write down the requirements why they preferred the values to justify their preferences.

### 2.4. Data analysis

The data obtained were analysed using the descriptive and content analyses. Descriptive analysis is summarizing and interpreting the data according to predefined themes. The main purpose of the descriptive analysis is to present the obtained findings to the reader directly in an interpreted manner [29]. The descriptive analysis was used to evaluate students' top five preferences regarding eighteen values contained in the educational program of social studies course. During the analysis of the data, it was seen that some participants expressed two values together in one item. Based on the reviews of the experts expressing more than one value together was considered to be incomprehensibility, and therefore, such answers were not included in the analysis. This situation caused the total number of values to change.

The questionnaires administered to the participants were coded based on the gender of the participants. Therefore, those of female students were coded as for instance FS1, and those of male students were coded as for instance MS1. As stated above the participants were asked to justify their preferences over the values in the form of statements. The data gathered were examined using the content analysis. Content analysis is a technique that provides access to concepts and themes by analysing the data in detail [29]. Each of the justification statement for the values was classified, and then, the themes were developed in accordance with similarities and differences. These were reviewed by two authors and interrater agreement was calculated using the following formula:  $[\text{agreement} / (\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}) \times 100]$ . The interrater

agreement was found to be 90% indicating the reliability of the coding process. Because it is reported that interrater agreement coefficient which is higher than 70% produces a reliable coding and analysis process [32].

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Findings on students' ranking of the values

Frequencies and percentages related to the general order of these preferred values are given in Table 1. Table 1 shows that of eighteen values contained in the social studies course program the participants preferred seventeen. The value which was not preferred by the participants is that of aesthetics. The most preferred value is found to be the value of honesty with the rate of 62%. It is followed by the values of patriotism and sympathy (56% and 54%, respectively). Mutual trust is the basis of the value of honesty. Values are one of the effective elements of revealing the universal perspective. Since value systems create a hierarchy as upper, equal and lower levels, the values can a function based on another value, not alone. Therefore, students participated in the study can relate values in this context. Based on the order of importance the participants selected five values. The findings about the top five values preferred by students are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Frequency and rate of the values

Values	Frequency (f)	Rate (%)	Values	Frequency (f)	Rate (%)
1.Honesty	49 (25M, 24F)	62	10.Independence	14 (10M, 4F)	18
2.Patriotism	44 (32M, 12F)	56	11.Solidarity	14 (5M, 9F)	18
3.Sympathy	43 (22M, 21F)	55	12.Helpfulness	14 (4M, 10F)	18
4.Caring for family unity	42 (20M, 22F)	53	13.Diligence	12 (5M, 7F)	15
5.Freedom	34 (15M, 19F)	43	14. Peace	11 (7M, 4F)	14
6.Honesty	49 (25M, 24F)	62	15. Savings	10 (5M, 5F)	13
7.Respect	31 (17M, 14F)	39	16.Sensitivity	4 (1M, 3F)	6
8.Fairness	29 (19M, 10F)	37	17.Being scientific	2 (2M)	3
9.Equality	21 (9M, 12F)	28	18.Aesthetics	0	0
Total				388	100

Table 2. The first five values preferred by the participants

Rank of the values	Values	F	%
The most preferred value	Caring for the unity of family	27 (11M, 16F)	35
The second most preferred value	Honesty	10 (8M, 2F)	13
The third most preferred value	Sympathy	13 (6M, 7F)	16
The fourth most preferred value	Sympathy	10 (6M, 4F)	13
The fifth most preferred value	Patriotism	18 (15M, 3F)	23
Total		78	100

As can be seen in Table 2, the participants selected the value of caring for the unity of family with the highest rate 35%. The second most preferred value by the participants is to be the value of honesty (13%). The third and fourth most preferred value is sympathy (16% and 13%). The fifth most preferred value is found to be patriotism with the rate of 23%. The most preferred values vary based on the gender of the participants. Table 3 shows the first five values that are preferred by the male and female students.

Table 3. First five values that are preferred by the male and female students

Rank of values	First five values that are preferred by the male students			The first five values preferred by female participants		
	Values	f	%	Values	F	%
The most preferred value	Fairness	14	30	Caring for the unity of family	15	38
The second most preferred value	Honesty	8	17	Sympathy	6	15
The third most preferred value	Sympathy	6	13	Sympathy	7	18
The fourth most preferred value	Honesty/Sympathy	6/6	13	Freedom	6	15
The fifth most preferred value	Patriotism	13	27	Honesty/Freedom	5/5	14
Total		47	100		39	100

As can be seen in Table 3, first value that is preferred by the male students is fairness with the rate of 30%. It is followed by the value of caring for family unity (24%), by the value of honesty (17%) and the value of sympathy (13%). Table 3 shows that the female participants selected the value of caring for

family unity as the most frequent one with the rate of (38%). It is followed by the value of sympathy with the rates of 15% and 18%. The fourth most preferred value by them is the value of freedom with the rate of 15%. The fourth most preferred value for the female participants is the values of honesty and freedom (each 14%).

Figure 1 shows that female and male students have different preferences over the values. The most preferred value for the male students is the value of fairness and it is the value of caring for the unity of family for the female students. On the other hand, the value of freedom is one of the first five most preferred values for female participants which are not among those of the male students. Similarly, the value of patriotism which one of the first five most preferred values for male participants is not included in top ten values of the female participants. As stated above, patriotism is found to be the most significant value for male participants.

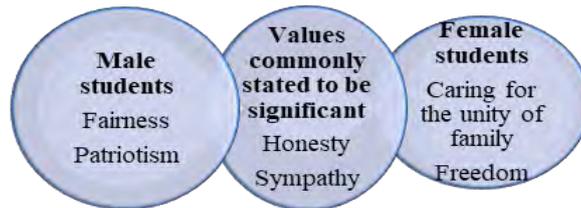


Figure 1. First five values stated to be significant by female, male students and those commonly stated to be significant

**3.2. Findings on the justifications of the students in regard to their preferences over the values**

The findings on the justifications of the participants concerning their preferences over the values show that there are such justifications only for sixteen values out of eighteen. Since the aesthetic value was not preferred by any student, there is no the requirements statement for this value. Figure 2 shows the first five values preferred by the participants. Figure 2 indicates the first five values preferred by the participants. These values are caring for the unity of family, honesty, sympathy and patriotism. The justifications of the students in regard to these values are grouped under the subthemes and categories. Sub-themes in regard to the preference over the value of caring for the unity of family are presented in Figure 3.

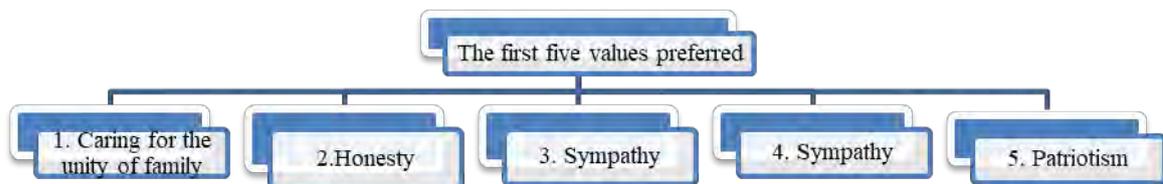


Figure 2. The first five values preferred by the participants

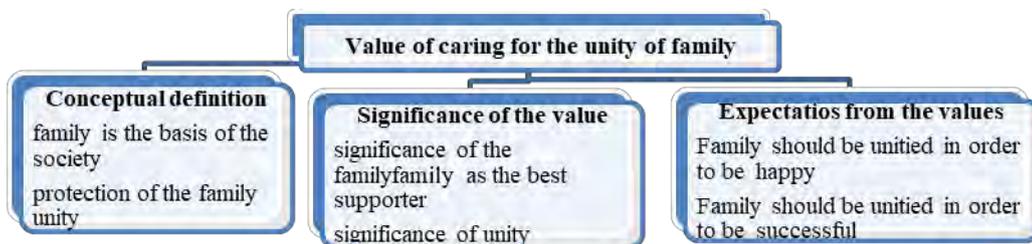


Figure 3. Sub-themes in regard to the preference over the value of caring for the unity of family

Of those 42 students who preferred the value of caring for the unity of family twenty students provided a justification for their preference. Figure 3 indicates that the related themes in regard to their justification are the conceptual definition, the significance of this value and their expectations from this

value. One of the students coded FS58 who justified her preference over this value through providing a conceptual definition states “*Because the family is the smallest unit of society.*” As stated above some students justified their preference over the value of caring for the unity of family using its significance. Students stated that family unity should be given importance to be family, to be happy, to be successful and to be strong. For instance, FS44 argues “*I love my family because I care about them...*” Another student coded FS56 suggests “*Family is life. It is very significant.*” A male participant coded MS64 states “*Family is our best supporter.*” Another student coded FS9 points out “*We cannot achieve anything without them. It is very important for me.*” FS4 indicates the significance her family for her stating “*I love doing everything together with my family.*” The participants also provided their expectations as requirements for choosing this value. Sub-themes and categories in regard to the preference over the value of honesty are described in Figure 4.

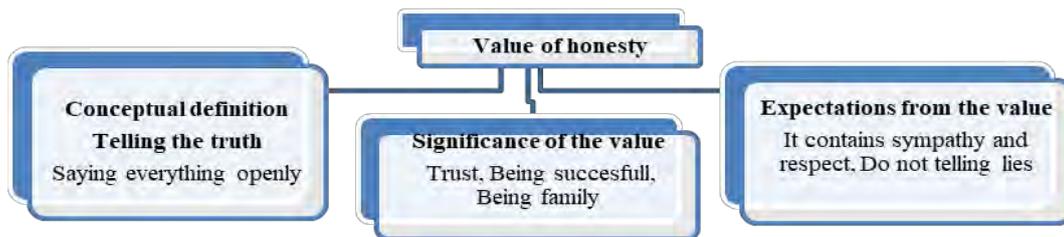


Figure 4. Sub-themes in regard to the preference over the value of honesty

There are forty-nine students who preferred the value of honesty. Of them eighteen students provided a justification for their choice over this value. Figure 4 illustrates that the themes about the value of honesty include the conceptual definition of this value, the significance of the value and the expectations from this value. Two of the students who explained their choice giving the conceptual definition of this value, MS3 and MS15, suggest that honesty is “*telling everything openly.*” As stated earlier some participants justified their choice over this value focusing on its significance. Students argued that honesty is important for trust and integrity. For instance, MS68 suggests that honesty is needed to “*trust other people.*” and FS18 indicates that honesty is significant to “*trust the people she meet...*” As mentioned above some participants used their expectations to account for their choice over the value of honesty. For instance, the student coded MS59 states “*A dishonest person lies a lot.*” The sub-themes and categories related to the requirements why the value of sympathy is preferred by the participants are shown in Figure 5.

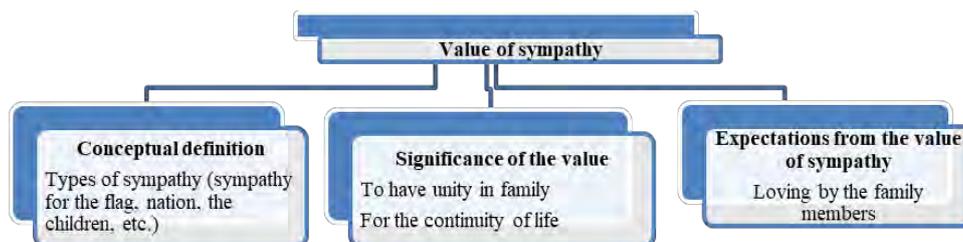


Figure 5. Sub-themes in regard to the preference over the value of sympathy

There were 43 students who preferred the value of sympathy. However, of them only 11 students provided a justification for their choice. As can be seen in Figure 5 the themes concerning the value of sympathy include the conceptual definition of this value, the significance of the value and the expectations from the value of sympathy. One of the students who accounted for their choice over this value using the conceptual definitions coded FS6 stated “*I like younger children.*” and the other one coded MS59 indicates “*I like my homeland, my nation and my flag...*” Some students also used the significance of this value to explain their choice over the value of sympathy. One of the student coded FS54 who used her expectations to account for her choice over the value of sympathy states “*Because I want my family to have love.*” Figure 6 presents the conceptual definition and the significance of the value of the patriotism which are used by the participants to justify their preference over this value.

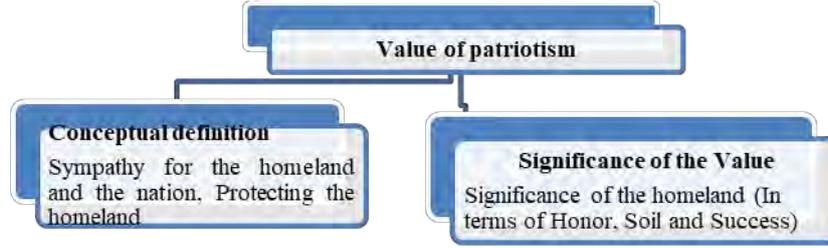


Figure 6. Conceptual definition and the significance concerning the value of the patriotism

Of 44 students who preferred the value of patriotism only thirteen provided a justification for their choice. Figure 6 indicates that there are several themes about the meaning about the value of patriotism and its significance. The justifications of the students MS4, FS12, MS13, MS14 and MS67 employed conceptual definitions stating that this value refers to the sympathy for the homeland and another student MS5 used also a conceptual definition suggesting that it refers to the sympathy for the homeland and the nation. The importance of patriotism is the requirements why these students prefer the said value. For instance, MS16 reports “*Homeland is the most important thing to me in life.*”

The participants were asked to prefer five values among eighteen values covered in the education program of social studies course. The findings show that of eighteen value seventeen were preferred by the participants. None of the participants preferred the value of aesthetic. This finding is consistent with the finding reported by Acun, Yücel, Önder and Tarman [20]. In this study it is found that families, teachers and even preservice teachers were not interested in the aesthetic value. Gökay and Demir [33] suggest that arts education should be given importance at schools to improve the value of aesthetic. On the other hand, Aladağ, Kuzgun and Kuşçuoğlu [34] conclude that activities and practices regarding the value of aesthetic are not sufficient in the courses of life sciences and social studies. The teachers stated that the aesthetic value is a value that should be gained from an early age. Therefore, the fact that the aesthetic value was not preferred by any participant in the study suggests that the mentioned practices are similar in the school where the study is carried out. Another less preferred value by the participants is the value of being scientific. This finding is also consistent with the previous findings. For instance, Sarı [35] found a similar result in the study with a sample of pre-service teachers. In the study of Katılmış, Ekşi and Öztürk [36] it is found that organizing educational activities in scientific oriented character education programs integrated with 7th grade Social Studies course acquisitions increase the interest in the value of being scientific.

The first five values that are preferred most are found to be caring for the unity of family, honesty, sympathy and patriotism. The fact that the students participated in the study live away from their families seems to be the requirements why they put emphasis on the value of giving importance to family unity. Sağlam and Tunar [37] in their study about the significance of family unity and tendency to tolerate found that children living with their parents regard the family unity much more significant. In the study by Tay and Yıldırım [38] with a sample of the parents on the values intended to be acquired in the social studies course, the value of giving importance to family unity was among the top five values. The resulting situation indicates that value transfer is a process that begins in the family and continues at the school. Honesty, love and patriotism that are basic values are among the top five values of students. In the study carried out by Topal [39], it is revealed that more activities are carried out in schools regarding the basic values. The results of the study show that six out of ten basic values are mostly discussed in the courses. For instance, Türkkahraman [40] points out that there are higher core values in society than others. Therefore, it is once again revealed that family and school culture affect students' value preferences. In the study, although it was stated that students could express new values apart from the current eighteen values, only one student could express a new value, namely the value of sympathy for flags. In this case, it can be said that students have a value perspective within the limitations of the framework of family and school culture.

Whether gender affects value preference is examined in the study. Although the results do not reveal a significant difference based on the gender of the participants, it is shown that there are some minor differences in their preferences. Among the top five values, it is seen that male students prefer core values such as fairness and patriotism, and female students prefer cultural and universal values such as giving importance to family unity and freedom. The core values of sympathy and honesty are the common values in the first five preferred values by male and female participants. This finding is consistent with that of Rokeach [41] who argued that that men and women prefer the same values in the ranking of the most and least important values. Schwartz and Rubel [42] and Schwartz and Lifschitz [43] analysed the relationships between gender and value preferences and concluded that women attach more importance to goodness and

universality than men because of their innate characteristics and that men due to their nature focus more on power and success-oriented values than women. In the study of Ersoy [44], it is revealed that men prefer values that contain power and nationalism and women prefer values that emphasize freedom. Therefore, it is seen that some values may be different in terms of gender, but common preferences can be created through education considering the core values.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study aims at uncovering the value preferences of the students attending the eighth grade of a regional boarding school and at analysing their justifications over the values. The data of the study are collected through the administration of a survey questionnaire with two parts which contains open-ended items. The first part of the questionnaire includes items about the socio-demographical status. Of them 38 were female and 41 males. They were mostly from families with lower socio-economic status. This situation overlaps with the aim of the regional boarding school to provide education to the children of low-income families in places where there is no educational opportunity. Moreover, the fact those students' places of residence are generally limited in terms of educational opportunities such as villages, towns, and towns, and it also coincide with the mission of these schools. Another dimension of the study is that students can express their rationale for preferring values. When the data was evaluated, it was found that no justification could be expressed for each preferred value. This suggests that the meaning of values is unknown or cannot be expressed. When the requirements for preference for the first five values are analyzed, conceptual definitions, elements that express importance and expectation are revealed. Therefore, for YBO students, the meaning of value, its personal and social significance, and its contributing elements were considered as requirements to prefer value.

Based on the findings of the study it is possible to offer the suggestions: 1) The reasons affecting the situation can be revealed by conducting studies on the values that are not preferred by the students or at least the preferred values. 2) It is found in the study that the requirements for value preference by students are not written in detail. Accordingly, experimental research or long-term action research can be carried out to make them much clearer.

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