



EDITORIAL

Values Under the Influence of Various Contexts: Cross-Cultural Reflections

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How are food preferences related to the moral imperatives of everyday behavior? How does schoolgirls' and schoolboys' intelligence differ, and what determines these differences? Why are the virtues described by Aristotle relevant to employers in India? What does the obligatory wearing of a hijab tell us about the position of women in a society? What are the socio-cultural motivations of women to become oocyte donors?

In all honesty, I would probably never be thinking about these and many other issues if they were not the subjects of articles selected for publication in our journal. In today's world, as always in human history, our everyday behavior and perception of reality are determined, perhaps unconsciously, by numerous socio-cultural contexts. What is acceptable in one location may be completely unacceptable in another one. The failure to understand each other may stem from the influence of contexts, which fact eludes human perception. However, it is reflection upon reality that is the main purpose of scientific search, since it aims to elucidate the causes and origins of contextual peculiarities. Critical reflection makes it possible to penetrate into the nature of different cultures, become aware of their values and traditions and, if not share, then accept them. The possibility of such acceptance is raising many debates, which our journal seeks to promote. The articles in the current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* reflect upon various shifts in educational policies, managerial strategies, moral choices, etc., as well as the growing intricacy of contextual influences.

The main subject of the ARTICLE *Fluid Intelligence Test Scores Across the Schooling: Evidence of Nonlinear Changes in Girls and Boys* by Tatiana N. Tikhomirova, Artem S. Malykh, and Sergey B. Malykh (Russia) is intelligence as a significant predictor of educational achievement in all school subjects. The research is based on a cross-sectional study of more than 1500 primary, secondary, and high public school students (boys and girls in

equal proportion). The authors' aim was (a) to examine changes in fluid intelligence test scores through all years of schooling from grades 1 to 11; (b) to analyze sex differences in fluid intelligence test scores for each year of schooling, as well as in fluid intelligence changes across schooling; (c) to investigate relationships between the year of schooling and schoolchildren's ages, and corresponding independent and joint influences on changes in fluid intelligence. According to the authors, "the analysis reveals that, despite a strong correlation between grade and schoolchildren age, grade is a more important factor in shaping changes in fluid intelligence during schooling". In addition, the authors make a lot of interesting and fruitful conclusions about differences between boys and girls in the terms of intelligence development at different ages.

Israel Kibirige (South Africa) in the ARTICLE *Short Learning Programmes for Skills Development Beyond COVID-19* elaborates on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, on the quality and quantity of all levels of education. Today, the education system is faced by the demand to produce adept individuals capable of meeting unprecedented changes. Moreover, such individuals are expected to have sufficient knowledge and skills in the field of Information Communication Technologies (ICT). Short Learning Programmes (SLPs), which have been recognized in South Africa and other countries as an important educational component, could be a "panacea for producing empowered individuals to respond to unequivocal employment demands". The author uses the Capability Approach Theory (CAT) and Critical Realist Theory (CRT) as theoretical frameworks to clarify several issues regarding SLPs.

In the ARTICLE *Representing the Powerful Principle of Virtue Ethics: Commitment at Workplaces*, Mitashree Tripathy (India) analyzes the concept of virtue ethics, which, unlike other moral theories that primarily focus on the morality of action, "chiefly emphasizes the morality of character" or, in simple words, is focused "on being good or bad". Such traits of character as loyalty, trust, kindness, courage, honesty, patience, etc., encourage individuals to act morally, and are usually urged by the society to be practiced. However, the concept of virtue varies from one context to another depending on cultural traditions, social practices, professional requirements, gender, age, and the like. According to the author, the commitment at a workplace can be considered as a virtue, which improves interpersonal connection and social bonding, and thus stands equal along with other moral features, including honesty, sincerity, civility, dedication, competence, courtesy, tolerance, etc. Mitashree Tripathy poses the question: "Does there exist a drawback of commitment, or in other words are there any limitations to commitment?", and, after observing various forms of commitment (continuance, affective, normative, and blind), concludes that this phenomenon has both pros and cons.

Wajeeha Brar Ghias and Syed Zaheer Abbas Kazmi (Pakistan) in the ARTICLE *In the Eyes of the Beholder: Leaders' Personality and Courageous Followership* observe that Pakistan is ranked low in terms of institutional performance due to the high level of corruption and a lack of transparency. Therefore, "courageous followership is a type of behavior that develops the capacity of a manager to speak

up against unethical practices and make them partners with leaders”, which “not only challenges unethical practices, but also makes individuals support their leaders by assuming responsibility, serving the leader, and taking part in the transformation”. In order to answer the research question “What type of the personality of a leader encourages proactive courageous followership behavior”, the authors use a sample of 190 Pakistani private school leaders working in 30 top private schools as regular employees. The authors hope that courageous followership as a proactive form of followership with dimensions of assuming responsibility, taking part in organizational transformation, challenging the wrongdoings of leaders, etc., could enhance the overall culture of transparency in Pakistani institutions.

In the ARTICLE *Moral Foundations of Dietary Behavior and its Linkage to Sustainability and Feminism* by Benedikt Hackert, Liliith C. Voeth, and Ulrich Weger (Germany), ethical reasons (e.g., animal welfare, environmental concerns, world hunger) as the main motivations for becoming a vegetarian or a vegan are discussed. The authors underline that “in general, it becomes obvious that vegetarians, vegans, and meat eaters differ significantly in their attitudes towards animals and their moral consideration”, and pose the overarching question: What are the moral foundations for ethical diet change? In the study, two surveys are presented. In the first survey (511 participants from social networks and internet forums in Germany), moral-foundations-profiles (MFP) of vegans, vegetarians, and meat eaters, and the score of their individualization are investigated; in addition, the authors aim to determine the impact of diet type on other areas of everyday life and consumption (e.g., sustainable behavior, fair trade buying, donations). The second survey (159 participants from social networks and internet forums in Germany) explores to which degree vegans, vegetarians, and meat eaters support feminism as an ideology that aims for social justice.

Irina G. Polyakova, Dmitry O. Mazurov, Elvira E. Symanyuk, and Aleksandra Yu. Khramtsova (Russia) in the ARTICLE *The Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on Oocyte Donors' Motivations and Disclosure Decisions*, draw attention to the growing demand for mentally and physically healthy oocyte donors in Russian fertility clinics. In Russia, similarly to many other countries, In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatment with donor eggs is considered one of the most efficient assisted reproductive technologies. At the same time, egg donation as a complex phenomenon fraught with ethical concerns remains largely underexplored in research literature. The study aims to examine the motivations of Russian oocyte donors and existing barriers to donation, as well as the key socio-cultural factors that affect the potential donors' decision to donate or not. The research is based on 16 semi-structured interviews, in which women displayed a diversity of motivations.

In the ARTICLE *Social and Economic Factors of Violence against Women in the South of Moldova: Identification, Estimation, and Mechanisms of Elimination*, Elena V. Bazueva (Russia) points out the high rate of violence against women in Moldova using the data from one of the settlements in Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia. In the article, social and economic factors that influence violence against women are outlined and classified, namely: limited opportunities for women to realize their

economic rights in the regional labor market; a high level of patriarchalization of the population's consciousness; a lack of effective mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in the region, as well as a lack of coordination between the ministries and state departments responsible for the implementation of a gender equality policy. In the light of the recommendations given by the UN and EU, Elena proposes several projects that might be useful for preventing gender-based discriminatory practices.

The ARTICLE *Patriarchal Language Evaluation of Muslim Women's Body, Sexuality, and Domestication Discourse on Indonesian Male Clerics Preaching* by Eva Leiliyanti, Dhaurana Atikah Dewi, Larasati Nur Putri, Fariza, Zufrufin Saputra, Andera Wiyakintra, and Muhammad Ulul Albab (Indonesia) is based on the assumption that language is a storehouse of cultural ideas. Consequently, power inequalities and related discrimination in Islamic clerics' patriarchal language about Muslim women's bodies, sexuality, and domestication in Indonesia could be revealed by text-oriented discourse analysis. According to the authors, "language can be manipulated to produce linguistic coverings coupled with verb choice to influence causality attributions, offering tools to apply discrimination while masking reality and reducing perceived conflicts of interest". The study aims to compare and evaluate the scope of the patriarchal language of Muhammadiyah's, Nahdlatul Ulama's, and Salafi's clerics in their preachings posted on YouTube regarding these women's discourses. In particular, the authors discuss the role of hijab in Islamic discourse in Indonesia.

In the ARTICLE *The Concept of Mladostarchestvo as a Tool for Criticizing Religion in Modern Russia: An Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies*, Eugene I. Lyutko and Alexey I. Cherny (Russia) note that the term *mladostarchestvo* [the concept referring to young elders] is one of the most notable and widely used concepts "in the context of spoken language, journalism, and discussions on the net". Moreover, this term could also be placed among quite rare "elements of critical rhetoric applied exclusively (or almost exclusively) to the priesthood" in the Russian Orthodox Church. The relevance of a critical interpretation of the term is proved by the very fact of its popularity in today's discussions in the sphere of religion. The authors aim to reconstruct a history of this concept; their methodological approach is based on the study of rhetoric strategies and functioning of such a concept as *mladostarchestvo*.

The RESEARCH NOTES section contains the study *Perceived Discrimination of Old Settlers in Sikkim* by Bhasker Malu, Santhosh Kareepadath Rajan, Nikhita Jindal, Aishwarya Thakur, and Tanvi Raghuram (India). The article explores the racial minority of old settlers in Sikkim, a northeastern state merged with India in 1975. The main problem with the old settlers is their status of outsiders in Sikkim, "since they are not part of the indigenous ethnic groups and belong to various mainland Indian communities". Consequently, despite the long history of settlement, they still are not considered domiciles and are ostracized from availing many of the welfare facilities. The authors argue that old settlers in Sikkim are discriminated as a minority or a non-dominant group, and stress the need for a deeper analysis of the perception of such discrimination and its reasons. The research is based on a sample of eight men and three women out of old settlers' total number of less than 3000. The authors reveal 13 basic themes, two organizing themes, and one global theme of discrimination.

The BOOK REVIEWS section contains three reviews. The first is of Ivan Strenski (2022). *Muslims, Islams, and Occidental Anxieties: Conversations about Islamophobia* by Elena A. Stepanova. She pays particular attention to Strenski's concern about the possibility of tolerating contradictory opinions, when the opposing sides are convinced of their own truth, which is surely applied not only to the possibility of a mutual understanding between Islam and Western cultures, but also to many other cases. Second, Olga F. Rusakova, Ekaterina G. Gribovod, and Yan Yu. Moiseenko in the review of V.V. Lapin, A.I. Miller (Eds.). (2021). *Simvolicheskie aspekty politiki pamiati v sovremennoi Rossii i Vostochnoi Evrope* [Symbolic aspects of the politics of memory in modern Russia and Eastern Europe] note that several Russian research centers have focused on producing the public discourse of the politics of memory following the global trend in viewing memory studies as an increasingly interesting research field and an effective strategy for interpreting the past. In the third review of the Priest M.V. Legeyev (2021), *Bogoslovie Istorii kak Nauka. Metod.* [Theology of History as a Science. Method], Andrey V. Lavrentiev argues that the author's intention is to form a new direction of scientific and theological thought, which, in his opinion, is the theology of history.

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections, or book reviews.

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