

**RESEARCH ARTICLES**

**Students' values and their Mental Health During Pandemic<sup>1</sup>**

**Los valores de los estudiantes y su salud mental durante una  
pandemia**

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## Summary

Values are widely studied concept by many researchers trying to explore how basic values influence the way individuals think, feel and behave (Durkheim, 1964; Weber, 1958; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 1992; Smith & Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz, 2006; Williams, 1968). Values are playing crucial role in the formation of individuals' personality and this influence can be better explained by the components of these values which consist of how student perceive the reality, what they know, how they feel and the way they react to various situations. Taken together these components help to form certain attitudes toward different objects, other people and situations and serve as a basis for students' motivation. Therefore, by influencing the attitudes and motivations of individuals values are having various consequences. The current study attempted to understand some of the psychological consequences of values on students' mental health. The results of the study show that there are value differences for male and female students. In addition, the degree of anxiety and depression was assessed, and statistical analysis of the data shows that females are more anxious ( $F=0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and depressed  $F=8.04$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) compared to male students and these differences were found to be statistically significant. Conformity, tradition, universalism, and power values were greater for females compared to males and these differences were statistically significant. Self-direction value was found to be more important to male students compared to female students and the difference was statistically significant. These findings lead to the conclusion that values that are having greater importance for females could be one of the factors contributing to their level of anxiety and depression while values being important for male students could be the factor helping them to cope with stressful situations. The development of further research would be suggested to explore the contribution of certain values to the level of anxiety and depression for students with more diverse and large sample.

**Keywords:** values, mental health, student population, gender

## Resumen

Los valores son conceptos ampliamente estudiados por muchos investigadores que tratan de explorar cómo los valores básicos influyen en la forma en que los individuos piensan, sienten y se comportan (Durkheim, 1964; Weber, 1958; Hitlin y Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 1992; Smith y Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz, 2006; Williams, 1968). Los valores juegan un papel crucial en la formación de la personalidad de los individuos y esta influencia puede explicarse mejor por los componentes de estos valores que consisten en cómo el estudiante percibe la realidad, lo que sabe, cómo se siente y cómo reacciona ante diversas situaciones. En conjunto, estos componentes ayudan a formar ciertas actitudes hacia diferentes objetos, otras personas y situaciones y sirven como base para la motivación de los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, al influir en las actitudes y motivaciones de los individuos, los valores tienen diversas consecuencias. El estudio actual intentó comprender algunas de las consecuencias psicológicas de los valores en la salud mental de los estudiantes. Los resultados del estudio muestran que existen diferencias de valor para estudiantes y estudiantes. Además, se evaluó el grado de ansiedad y depresión, y el análisis estadístico de los datos muestra que las mujeres están más ansiosas ( $F = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) y deprimidas  $F = 8.04$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) en comparación con los estudiantes varones y estas diferencias. Los valores de conformidad, tradición, universalismo y poder fueron mayores para las mujeres en comparación con los hombres y estas diferencias fueron estadísticamente significativas. Se encontró que el valor de la autodirección es más importante para los estudiantes varones en comparación con las estudiantes y la diferencia fue estadísticamente significativa. Estos hallazgos llevan a la conclusión de que los valores que están teniendo mayor importancia para las mujeres podrían ser uno de los factores que contribuyan a su nivel de ansiedad y depresión, mientras que los valores que son importantes para los estudiantes masculinos podrían ser el factor que les ayude a afrontar situaciones estresantes. Se sugiere el desarrollo de más investigaciones para explorar la contribución de ciertos valores al nivel de ansiedad y depresión para estudiantes con una muestra más diversa y amplia.

**Palabras clave:** valores, salud mental, población estudiantil, género.

## Introduction

Values are one of the central concepts in social sciences (Durkheim, 1964; Weber, 1958; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 1992; Smith & Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz, 2006). The crucial role values play in various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other related disciplines is undeniable. As the world is becoming more diverse by having more dimensions for this diversity values are widely used to understand individuals, communities, groups that have different cultural backgrounds, to explain changes that take place over the time as well as discuss attitudes and behavior having different motivational bases.

During the past century researchers and scientists did not have a consensus in regard to the concept of basic values, their content, structure and methods to study them what made the application of the values not quite possible (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). However, the recent developments in the field of theory and methodology of studying basic values recovered the application of values (Smith & Schwartz, 1997).

According to Schwartz 's theory of basic values (1992) there are ten basic values considered to be universal for people from different cultures. These values are different from one another based on motivational basis they have and goals they express. Basic values are having the dynamic relations taking place among them. Some of these values are in harmonious relations with one another (e.g., conformity and security, benevolence and universalism, power and achievement, stimulation and self-direction) while other values are in conflicting relations (stimulation and conformity, power and benevolence). These relations between basic values either in a form of compatibility or conflicting relations constitute the structure of values. This structure of values is similar in groups having diverse cultural backgrounds and this, in turn, leads to understanding that basic values and their structure are universal and since various values are having different motivational basis it can be suggested that human motivations are organized in a certain way which is universal for all people. It also needs to be stated that basic values can share the same nature and have universal structure, however, the importance attached to these values by different individuals and/or groups will be different. This explains the different hierarchies of values for individuals and/or groups, in other words, different levels of priorities attached to different values (Schwartz, 1992, 1994).

## Literature review

There are certain things in our lives we consider being important while others are not and these are our values that help us to define what is important/unimportant for us. Each individual over his/her lifespan develops various values (e.g., power, conformity, hedonism,

benevolence, self-direction, etc.) and based on the context, being culture, the importance attached to each of these values is different for different individuals (Schwartz, 1992). Two people can hold the same values but with different degrees of importance attached to them and as a result we will observe different behavior and attitudes toward the same object of evaluation. Even though there are basic universal values shared by different cultures, the way people interact, communicate, relate to one another, social expectations they are trying to meet, social norms and other variables make the degrees of importance different for values in different cultures.

According to Schwartz's value theory (1992, 2006) there are six main features shared by values:

- 1) Values are beliefs that are tightly connected to feelings. If security is an important value for an individual, he/she feels bad if this value is being threatened, his/her security is threatened and feels happy and satisfied when can enjoy it.
- 2) Values express desirable goals and these goals motivate individuals to act in a way that would help them to achieve these goals. Therefore, values are having motivational basis for behavior.
- 3) Values go beyond specific actions and situations what makes values distinct from social norms and attitudes. For norms and attitudes to guide actions and behaviors of people they need to be specific to situations, for values to guide actions this is not important.
- 4) Values guide our actions serving as criteria for evaluation. Individuals are facing various choices they needs to choose from and the final decision is being guided by the values held. Using their values as criteria for selection individuals evaluate various actions, other people, situations, etc. as being important or unimportant, desired or not desired. Individuals' choices are based on possible consequences for their important values that they can anticipate and act accordingly. Based on the consequences for the values individuals make decisions to do something or avoid doing it and the influence values have on daily choices made by individuals are mainly subconscious. Individuals become aware of their values when they are about to act of make a judgment in way that is not consistent with important values.
- 5) Values are having a certain structure where they are ordered based on the degree of importance attached to them. Based on this structure of the values individuals are having a system of priorities they set for their lives, relationships, interactions with others and being characterized by these priorities. The hierarchy of values make them distinct from attitudes.
- 6) Multiple values are guiding actions and behaviors by having relative importance. In daily life situations multiple values can guide the same behavior/action, in other words, once the action gets performed, any behavior takes place these can have certain

consequences for more than one value. For example, attending a family gathering would express the goals promoted by conformity and tradition values while being in conflict with hedonism and stimulation values. Values are getting activated when there is a relevant context for them on one side and when they constitute a high degree of importance to the individual as an actor in a given situation (Schwartz, 1992, 1996).

These six features stated above characterize all values, these are the features all values share in common. However, values are also having features that make them different from one another. These are goals being expressed by a certain value and motivational basis for action (Schwartz, 1992, 1996). According to values theory there are ten values that are classified based on their motivational basis. Since these values are stemming from universal needs of humans and help individuals to cope with these requirements for human existence. These are the biological needs of individuals as organisms, needs for social interactions as well as needs for survival. It would be difficult for individuals to deal with these needs alone. From evolutionary perspective, connecting and sharing with others will help people to meet their needs which increase the chances of survival. It is crucial for individuals to set goals to meet their needs, share their goals with others and connect with them, collaborate with others to achieve the set goals. With the help of values individuals set and then express their goals and communicate these goals to others (Schwartz, 1992, 1996).

Below each out of ten basic values are defined based on the goals expressed by these values.

#### Self-Direction

Expressed goal: The choices individuals make, things they create and explore using independent thought and action. This value is grounded in biological need for control (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Deci, 1975), tendency toward autonomy and independence while interacting with others (e.g., Kluckhohn, 1951; Kohn & Schooler, 1983).

#### Stimulation

Expressed goal: to achieve excitement, novelty, life with challenges and opportunities. Stimulation value is motivating individuals to based on a need for stimulation so that they can achieve an optimal positive level of activation in contrast to threatening activation (e.g., Berlyne, 1960).

#### Hedonism

Expressed goal: achieving pleasure, emotional satisfaction for oneself. This value is associated with the satisfaction of biological needs and as a result of satisfying the needs pleasure is being experienced. Hedonism was mentioned in various theories. The main principle in psychoanalysis, behaviorism is hedonism.

#### Achievement

Expressed goal: achieving personal success as a result of performing in a competent way defined by social standards. While trying to meet biological needs for survival it is crucial for individuals to act in a competent way that would help them to access resources and competent performance is important for groups to achieve the objectives leading to their goals. The role of culture and social approval need to be mentioned as well. The demonstrated competence emphasized by achievement values needs to be related to existing cultural standards and be socially approved.

Power.

Expressed goal: to achieve control and dominance over other people and/or resources by gaining high social status and prestige. Existing social institutions create circumstances that lead to the different social statuses acquired by individuals. The dominance and submission were studied as dimensions of interpersonal relations taking place within or between cultures (Lonner, 1980).

Security

Expressed goal: to achieve safety, stability, harmony in the society, in the relationships and within oneself. This values is rooted in a biological need to belong, to feel safe and secure. Individuals attempt to achieve security for self, their family members, friends, and others with whom these individuals identify themselves with.

Conformity

Expressed goal: the goal is to comply with social expectations and norms, to refrain from acting in a way that would upset others, would violate social norms and expectations. This value is grounded in the need for having smooth interactions with group members, others and promote group functioning.

Tradition

Expressed goal: achieve the state when one respects, is committed to, and accepts the traditions, customs, belief and ideas provided by a given culture or religious group. Coming together as a group individuals interact and communicate with one another in a certain way and as a result of it they develop shared practices, form beliefs, ideas that reflect their experiences as a group. These are treated as group traditions and customs group members need to value. Traditions are crucial factors that promote the group's solidarity and help the group to survive. Two values which are conformity and tradition share quite close motivational basis. Both values express the goal of complying with expectations imposed by other individuals, society, social groups. The only difference is in the object the compliance is expected to take place to. In the case of conformity value individuals comply with concrete people (their parents, teachers, managers, etc), however, in the case of tradition value one complies with more abstract things being cultural norms, beliefs, religious ideas, etc.

Benevolence

Expressed value: trying to promote and preserve the welfare of people with whom one identifies with, people from the same group, in-group members. The need underlying this value is the desire to promote group functioning and belong to the group. Individuals that attach importance to this value become concerned for the welfare of others by trying to be helpful, act responsibly, be loyal. It can be concluded that benevolence promotes social relations that are cooperative and supportive. This feature makes benevolence similar to conformity value. However, the motivational base for these two values is different. While benevolence value is based on internal motivation to act in this way, conformity value is based on motivation to avoid negative consequences for oneself.

#### Universalism

Expressed goal: to understand, appreciate and try to promote the welfare of all people, nature. The underlying biological need is to survive. Over the time as people become aware of others who are not their extended primary group members, or become aware of the scarce natural resources they realize the danger associated with inability to accept and treat justly others who are different from them and the life-threatening situation caused by the failure to protect natural resources. This value encompasses concern for other people in the world and a concern for the nature (Schwartz, 1992, 1996).

In addition to explaining basic values it is crucial to understand the dynamic relations taking place between these values and the structure of these relations. According to values theory the structure of value relations is based on the fact that behaviors to achieve the goal expressed by one value result in consequences that are in conflict with some values while consistent with other values. Achievement value can be considered as an example in this regard. While trying to achieve goals expressed by achievement value behavior is compatible with power value but is in conflict with benevolence value which expresses the goal of enhancing the welfare of others (Schwartz, 1992, 1996).

As it is shown in Figure 1, values are having the circular structure that represents the relations between these values which can be conflicting or complying relations (Schwartz, 1992, 1996). Since conformity value and tradition value do share the same motivational basis they are placed in the same slice. The circle is divided into four quadrants each representing a certain dimension common for several values. One of these dimensions is "openness to change" and values within this quadrant are in conflict with the values from "conservation" dimension. Other two conflicting dimensions are "self-enhancement" and "self-transcendence" and values grouped under these dimensions are in conflict with one another. Hedonism value is placed in between the dimensions "openness to change" and "self-enhancement" since this value has the elements of both dimensions.



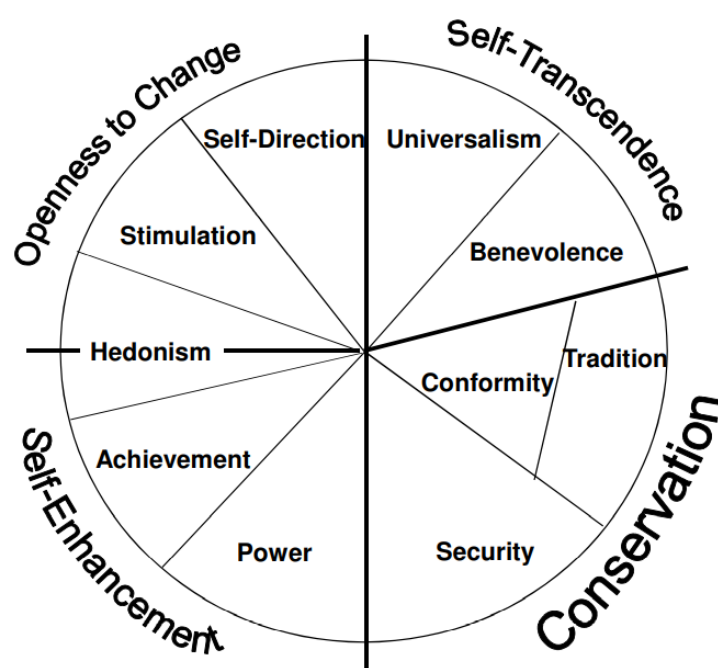


Figure 1. Ten basic values and theoretical model of relations among them (Schwartz, 1992)

According to values theory there are ten basic values, however, this can also be presented as a continuum of value motivations that are related to each other and this continuum makes it possible to represent structure of the values in a circular pattern. The shared motivational bases of adjacent values were used to explain the continuum.

- a) Power and achievement – dominance, superiority and esteem
- b) Achievement and hedonism – self-satisfaction
- c) Hedonism and stimulation – achieving emotional pleasure
- d) Stimulation and self-direction – internal motivation to explore new things
- e) Self-direction and universalism – using one's judgement and level of comfort with diversity
- f) Universalism and benevolence – superiority of selfish interests and enhancement of others
- g) Benevolence and tradition – being devoted to in-group members with whom one identifies with
- h) Benevolence and conformity – behavior which is consistent with norms and promotes close relationships with others
- i) Conformity and tradition – favoring social expectations to the detriment of self
- j) Tradition and security – safeguarding existing social norms, beliefs, arrangements to make life more certain and predictable



- k) Conformity and security – safeguarding relations by protecting order and harmony of these relations
- l) Security and power – gaining control over relationships and resources to escape or overcome threats/dangers (Schwartz, 1992, 1996).

To conclude, values are having a certain structure that can be represented in a circular pattern. This is possible since values at a basic level based on motivations that make them related to one another. According to this circular structure of values, the closer any two values are placed in the circular structure in any direction the more similar the motivations these values are based on and the more remote values placed the more conflicting motivations they express. Perceiving values as having a circular motivational structure does have an implication to understanding of the ways these values relate to other factors/variables, being gender, age, etc. This shows an integrated approach to explaining the relations this set of values have with other factors (attitudes people hold, actions, etc.).

After providing discussion of theory of basic values and motivational basis they express, it is crucial to consider various consequences of actions individuals perform while trying to achieve values of great importance to them. Although these actions are having social consequences, practical consequences, the purpose of this paper is to look at the theories on psychological consequences of these actions.

Values that are placed in the top quadrants of the circle in Figure 1 (these are: achievement, stimulation, self-direction, hedonism and power) basically motivate individuals to regulate the way they express their personal characteristics and interests. Values that are shown in the bottom quadrants (these are: conformity, tradition, security, universalism, benevolence) basically motivate individuals to regulate the way individuals relate to others and influence their interests. Studies showed that there are correlations between values that are attached priority to and worries about social issues (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000). This study was having samples from Israel, Germany, and Russia where respondents were asked to report their values and the level of their worries in regard to such social problems as hunger, poverty, nature preservation, environmental crisis, wars, intergroup conflicts. In all samples of the study researchers were able to find strong correlations between universalism as one of the basic values and worries about social problems (mean  $r = .49$ ). Study also showed that the mean correlations between other socially-focused values and people's worries about social problems were positive and significant. Logically thinking, the values related to power, dominance, self-centeredness would have negative correlations with worries about social problems and it was found in the study as well (mean  $r = -.37$ ). Study also showed that the mean correlations of other values related to power and dominance were also negative, but not significant for self-direction value (Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000). According to this study it is clear that there are links

between values and anxiety and these links help to understand other relations within this value structure.

According to Schwartz, if we look at two sides of this circle, left side and right side, it will show us the way how values from different sides of this circle help to deal with anxiety which is mainly taking place when social and physical world is perceived as uncertain. Values on the left side of this circle (conformity, tradition, security, power) motivate people to conform by trying to achieve a goal to avoid possible conflicts that can take place in case of non-conforming actions; to follow the existing order, beliefs and traditions; or to try to actively control threat and danger. While values on the right side of this circle such as hedonism, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, and stimulation are associated with less anxiety triggering motivations. When it comes to achievement value, researchers noted that this value is having both motivations: on one side, trying to meet social standards and expectations which, in case of success, would help to control anxiety, on the other side, confirm his/her sense of competence (Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000).

Being guided by such values as conformity, tradition, security and power individuals become busy trying to act in a way that controls and diminishes their level of anxiety and as a result of it they have less psychological resources to help and support others. Being guided by such resources as hedonism, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, and stimulation individuals have more freedom from anxiety and, logically, more psychological resources to help others, however, it may not be sufficient to support maintaining the welfare of others.

Approaching values from motivational perspective it can also be concluded that values placed on the left of Figure 1 are more likely to express extrinsic motivation. Actions individuals take based on these values may have a goal of getting social approval and rewards (self-enhancement) or a goal of being consistent with the social expectations in order to avoid punishments in case if not meeting these expectations (tradition, conformity) or a goal of feeling protected and safe (security). Basically, these values will control the behaviors of individuals based on external rewards and punishments. Values placed on the right side of the circle mainly activate behaviors that are rewarding in itself. For these values there is no need for external approval or sanctions to motivate behaviors. By simply exercising autonomy, competence, and relatedness individuals become motivated by what they experience in the process (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

By applying values theory and possible psychological consequences of actions guided by these values to students will assist in developing knowledge of the relationships between values held by students and their state of mental health. Students, because of their age, are among risk groups for developing mental health issues. Therefore, timely provision of necessary not only reactive but also proactive services by educational institutions would help to meet increasing demand for these services by students and universities. The need for these services

were always there and has enormously increased due to uncertainty world is experiencing recently because of Covid-19 pandemic. Provision of mental health services is needed not only to support students with their mental health issues but also it is in interest of education institutions for achieving academic success and retention. By being equipped with the knowledge of possible predictors of student mental health educational institutions would be in a better position to set appropriate services as well as incorporate this knowledge into academic curricula.

According to studies concerned about students and their mental health the student population is more vulnerable to life stressors compared to their peers in general population who are not students (Blanco, Okuda, Wright, et al, 2008). Students, in addition to social demands of their daily life situation, face academic demands as well (Andrews & Wilding, 2004, Eisenberg, Gollust, & Golberstein et al, 2007; Schwartz, 2006). Academic workload demands students to manage their learning, time, and social relationships. Broadly approaching students fall into the 17-25 age group. During these years individuals are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. This age group constitutes the period of high-risk for onset of some mental disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (World Health Organization, 2008; Kessler et al, 2005; Adams & Moore, 2007).

Mental health of students, the way they take care of their mental health, how seek help with mental health issues makes it necessary to look at the context in mental health. Mainly the studies concerning mental health in the literature come from traditions of Western countries (Gopalkrishan, 2018). Even though western traditions are prevailing in the literature it is important to consider cultural values and traditions that explain how different cultures influence the way individuals show symptoms, share their symptoms with others, ways they cope with it and openness to ask for help and seek treatment (Eshun and Gurung, 2009). This makes the current study quite informative in terms of bringing the knowledge about basic values of student population and the way these values influence their mental health in Azerbaijani culture.

According to Maercker et al. (2009, 2015) ten basic values by Schwartz can be grouped into two groups: group of traditional values (security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism) and group of modern values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power). These two groups can also be presented as basic cultural value orientations in the field of mental health research. Values that are put into the group of traditional values express goals for achieving collectivism, submissive self-restriction, protection, stability and preservation of existing traditions. The group of modern values express goals for achieving personal success and satisfaction, dominance over other people or resources. It was found that values that are called modern can play protective role while individuals face stressful situations, however, the values that are called traditional would predict the increased level of stress while experiencing stress (Maercker, et al., 2009, 2015). This finding was not consistent with the

widely spread assumption made by some researchers that traditional values such as conformity, security, etc. would better predict stress resilience and healthy way of dealing/coping with stressful situations compared to modern values that were thought to negatively affect mental health state (Graham, 2010; Kleinman & Good, 1985). Depending on the values students attach importance to in the process of getting education their state of mental health can also change. If students attach more importance to traditional values they would be more prone to experience stress and anxiety, while students who would attach importance to modern values would deal with the stress in a more productive way.

### Research hypothesis

This study aims at investigating the following assumptions in an Azerbaijani sample of university students:

H1: There are statistically significant differences of the level of anxiety and depression for male and female students;

H0: There are no gender based differences for the level of anxiety and depression;

H2: Traditional values such as conformity, tradition, security, benevolence, and universalism should be more pronounced in females compared to male students;

H0: There are no gender based differences of values students attach importance to;

### Materials and methods

Online questionnaires were developed and distributed among university students in capital city of Azerbaijan, Baku. All questionnaires were administered in English language since students who were asked to participate in the study were the students studying their majors in English language. Data were anonymous, respondents were not asked to put any identifiable information. The data collection took place during November-December, 2020. The demographic characteristics of the study sample are shown in the table (See: Table 1). As it is seen from the table more female students (59.25%) participated in the study compared to males students (40.75%). Students from different age groups took part in the study and the prevailing age group was 15-19 (68.65%) and 20-24 (28.84%).

Table 1. Demographic feature of the study sample

		Frequency	Valid percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	male	130	40.75
	female	189	59.25
<b>Age</b>	15-19	219	68.65
	20-24	92	28.84
	25-29	2	0.63
	30-34	4	1.25

	35-39	2	0.63
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During the study various tools were used to collect data relevant to the purpose of the study. Online questionnaire contained questions to get information about demographic features of the study (age, gender). Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) was added to the online questionnaire with the purpose of assessing the level of depression among student population. To assess the level of anxiety among students Generalized Anxiety Disorder – 7 (GAD-7) was added to the online questionnaire. In addition to these, to get data about basic values of study sample the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), a male and female versions of PVQ that contained information about some portrait values and also standards specific to male/female adult population (Schwartz et al., 2011). For this part of the online questionnaire study participants were instructed to compare themselves to the person the statement described in the item and identify the degree of the similarity. Study participants were presented with Likert Scale to assess the degree of similarity.

## Results

Running statistical analysis of the data, first anxiety mean differences for different genders were computed and compared. As it is shown in the table, there are mean differences for anxiety among males ( $\mu = 11.82$ ) and females ( $\mu = 14.24$ ). Analysis showed that these differences are statistically significant ( $F=0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (See: Table 2).

Table 2. Anxiety and gender. Independent Samples Test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Anxiety score	Male	130	11.82	5.56	0.24	0.000
	Female	189	14.24	5.68		

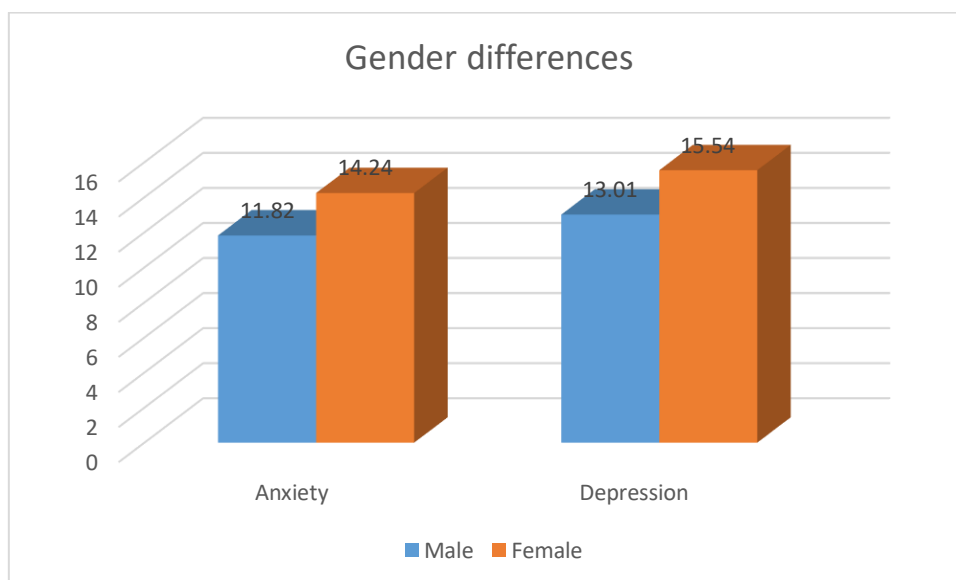
Then depression mean differences for different genders were computed and analyzed. According to the table the depression mean is higher for females ( $\mu = 15.54$ ) compared to the depression mean for male participants of the study ( $\mu = 13.01$ ) (See: Table 3).

Table 3. Depression and gender (independent samples test)

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	F	Sig. (2-
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				<b>Deviation</b>	<b>tailed)</b>
<b>Depression score</b>	Male	130	13.01	5.50	8.04 0.000
	Female	189	15.54	6.38	

F=8.04 (p< 0.001)



To check another hypothesis of the current study the relationships between the gender and ten basic values were tested. The dependent variable was one of the ten basic values and the independent variable was gender (See: Table 4).

Table 4. Gender and Values.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance
Conformity	Male	130	0.11	0.61	0.84	(p≤0.001****)
	Female	189	0.35	0.68		
Tradition	Male	130	0.90	0.89	2.61	(p≤0.01***)
	Female	189	1.18	0.80		
Benevolence	Male	130	-0.15	0.63	0.28	ns (p>0.05)
	Female	189	-0.29	0.60		
Universalism	Male	130	-0.14	0.70	10.69	(p≤0.001****)
	Female	189	-0.41	0.56		
Self-direction	Male	130	-0.51	0.78	21.72	(p≤0.05**)
	Female	189	-0.46	0.49		
Stimulation	Male	130	0.15	0.87	0.11	ns (p>0.05)
	Female	189	0.06	0.82		
Hedonism	Male	130	-0.21	0.85	1.27	ns (p>0.05)

	Female	189	-0.30	0.79		
Achievement	Male	130	-0.13	0.79	0.30	ns (p>0.05)
	Female	189	-0.15	0.81		
Power	Male	130	0.52	1.00	0.12	(p≤0.05**)
	Female	189	0.79	1.00		
Security	Male	130	-0.28	0.56	0.03	ns (p>0.05)
	Female	189	-0.34	0.56		

According to the Table 4 there are mean differences for males and females for ten basic values. For conformity, tradition, universalism, and power values means are greater for female participants of the study compared to male participants and these differences were found to be statistically significant. Self direction value mean is higher for male students compared to female students and this difference is also statistically significant. Mean for benevolence, hedonism, achievement and security value means are higher for females compared to males, but these differences haven't found to be significant. Stimulation value mean is higher for males but this is also not statistically significant difference.

The study attempted to explore the relationships of values of students in Azerbaijan with the gender of student participants of the study as well as their score on anxiety and depression scales. Study findings are consistent with the values theory which states that values are in dynamic relations with one another what helps to form a structure for the values. According to values theory some values have harmonious relationships, for example, conformity and security, benevolence and universalism, power and achievement, stimulation and self-direction values. Other values are having conflicting relations, these are stimulation and conformity, power and benevolence. Consistent with this idea the findings of the current study showed that females have higher conformity, tradition, universalism, power values which were found to be statistically significant. Females were also having higher means for benevolence, hedonism and security, however, these differences were not found to be statistically significant. For male participants of the study mean was greater for stimulation (difference wasn't statistically significant) value and self-direction (p≤0.05\*\*) value. Also, the findings show that while stimulation value mean is greater for male study participants, their conformity value mean is low. This is showing consistency with the values theory on the structure and dynamic relations between basic values. According to values theory these values are universal and the consistency of findings of this study with the values theory is another example of universal character of the values and their structure.

Another finding of the study shows that female students attach greater importance to conformity, tradition, universalism and power values and report being more anxious and



depressed, while male study participants attach higher importance to self-direction and report being less anxious and depressed compared to female participants of the study.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Based on the conducted literature review (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Smith & Schwartz, 1997, Schwartz, 1992; Schqartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000) it can be concluded that basic values are universal and shared by diverse groups of people, communities, cultures, states that have shared beliefs, experiences, life circumstances. However, the degree of importance people attach to values vary across the cultures. Existing cultural, religious beliefs, traditions, life-styles of people, experiences influence the degree of importance individuals attach to different values. Even within one single culture individuals may vary based on which values they consider being more important/less important based on their demographic features such as gender and social expectations they experience from the side of community/society because of these features. The findings of the current study are consistent with values theory showing that study participants hold these universal values, however, with different degrees of importance based on their gender. It was found that there mean differences for genders for all 10 basic values.

Consistent with the study hypothesis (H1) study findings showed that female students have higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to the same age group of male students, the difference was found to be statistically significant. Null hypothesis was rejected. The second hypothesis of the study also was proved by the findings of the study. The statistical analysis of the data showed that traditional values such as conformity, tradition, security, benevolence, and universalism are more pronounced in female students compared to male students. Differences for conformity, tradition, universalism values were found to be statistically significant. For security and benevolence values the means were higher for female students but were not statistically significant. We can conclude that the second hypothesis was also proved, null hypothesis was rejected.

Female students were found to be more anxious and depressed and having higher means for traditional values while male students were found to be less anxious and depressed while having higher means for some of the modern values such as stimulation and self-direction values, however, differences for stimulation value were not found to be statistically significant. These findings are consistent with values theory of Schwartz showing that such values as conformity, tradition, security and power express motivations of conforming and following the existing beliefs, meeting expectations and by doing so to achieve a goal of avoiding possible conflicts that can arise in cases of not following these values. For the study participants the means for all these four values were greater than the means of these values for male study participants, and the differences were statistically significant, except for security value. These values are associated with more anxiety triggering motivations what, in turn, in addition to other

possible factors leading to the high level of anxiety and depression in females, could be used to explain it. While values such as hedonism, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, and stimulation are associated with less anxiety triggering motivations. Male participants of the study had higher means for self-direction and stimulation values, however, the differences for stimulation value was not statistically significant. We can assume that having low means for traditional values and high means for two of the modern values, in addition to other possible factors that this study did not have a purpose of studying, make males less anxious and depressed, or, in other words being more resilient toward stressful life situations.

The findings help us to understand different mental health needs of students showing that there are statistically significant differences between the means for anxiety and depression scales for males and females. On the other side, this study attempted to link mental health state of students to their values and helped to understand that traditional values, being more specific, conformity, tradition and power values for Azerbaijani student population are associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression, while modern values, being stimulation and self-direction values that were found to be higher for males compared to females are more associated with resilience to anxiety and depression triggering situations/factors.

This study has various limitations that prevent us from discussing the study findings as being widely applicable to the whole student population in Azerbaijan. One of the limitations is the sample of the study, since the study participation was on a voluntary basis, it was not possible to form relevantly similar sample sizes from different universities, that would help us to make comparisons between students based on where they study. Other factors that could also be potential contributors to the level of anxiety and depression of students were not studied in this research. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct further study that would address the limitations of the current study and help to further explore the links between students' values and their state of mental health.

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