

Changing Values, Political Attitudes, and Democracy in Iranian Society in the Fifth and Seventh Waves of Global Values

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction: Values, as one of culture and personality system components, have an impact on behavioral patterns and sociopolitical preferences, etc. According to Inglehart and Klingman, human societies experience three main directions of social change in the form of socio-economic development, value change, and political change, and value change is considered to precede political change. Therefore, present study compared changes in political values and democracy in Iranian society in fifth and seventh waves among two gender and age groups of the Global Values Survey in order to examine the extent of changes in two time periods and identify symptoms of these changes.

Methodology: Research method was secondary analysis and longitudinal study using existing and available data from the Global Values Survey. Data was analyzed using SPSS software to determine the trend of changes in various components of political values of different age and gender groups in Iranian society.

Results: Findings showed that as a result of increased education levels, the expansion of the media, and a relative improvement in the quality of life, modern values such as political participation, civil liberties, and individual rights have been strengthened, especially among younger generations. Also, according to results, attitudes toward religious rule have increased with age, and in the seventh wave, the age group of 50 and older has become more inclined to interpret laws by religious authorities.

Conclusions: According to the results of study, women are more inclined than men to the existence of religious values in the political system. Respect for individual human rights, which was undervalued in the fifth wave, has been significantly positively evaluated in the seventh wave, which could be a sign of an increase in individualism due to the expansion of cyberspace. This issue needs to be taken into account by those in charge when analyzing the political behavior of society members and designing cultural and social policies.

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Introduction:

The Global Values Survey, as one of the most comprehensive research projects to measure people's values and attitudes worldwide, has provided a suitable platform for analyzing these changes in different societies, especially Iran. Its data indicate the value developments of the Iranian people in the two waves, the fifth (2005) and the seventh (2020). However, there has not yet been sufficient research on the in-depth analysis of this data and the factors affecting the value and attitudinal changes in Iranian society. Examining the changes in values related to democracy and the political attitudes of the Iranian people in these two periods can shed light on the value gaps between different generations, the impact of economic and social factors on people's attitudes, and key issues such as social trust and the desire for democratic participation. This understanding can provide a clearer picture of the state of democracy in Iran. On the other hand, the socio-political contexts of Iran, such as the political developments after 2009, the protest events during the 1390s, the 1402 protests, and the economic pressures resulting from sanctions, have led to significant changes in people's attitudes towards political freedoms and social norms. Therefore, this study, using data from the Global Values Survey and the approach of theories of cultural change, social capital, and generational conflict, attempts to analyze the value changes in Iranian society in the context of these developments and present a new model of the desire for democracy and civil liberties. This article attempts to specifically study the value changes in the political system in Iran as a longitudinal study that uses data from Wave 5 and Wave 7 of the Global Values Survey to measure changes in values and attitudes in two time periods. Also, value changes among gender groups (women and men) and age groups (15-29 years, 30-49 years, and 50 years and above) are studied in both waves. The aim of this study is to understand the changes in the political value system in Iran in two time periods and among age and gender groups. The central question in this study is what have been the changes in political values and attitudes in the two periods under study? Has this cultural system undergone significant changes over time? Has the change in the cultural system among women and men been significant? Has the change in the cultural system been significant among different age groups? And basically, how can the direction of these developments be described and interpreted in terms of value-cultural convergence or divergence?

Methodology:

The present study was conducted in a documentary manner and with secondary analysis of the Global Values Survey data and was a cross-sectional study in terms of time, which examined and compared the trend of values change from the perspective of the variables; political system index and democratic values based on global values data in two time periods. For this purpose, the data of Wave 5 and Wave 7 of the Global Values Survey, which were collected in 2005-2009 and 2017-2020, respectively, and whose data were available for Iran, were reanalyzed. The cross-sectional method relies on collecting data about one or more attributes at a specific time period (Habibi, 2021) and analyzes by examining and comparing the examined periods. In the present study, considering the purpose of the research and the available data using this method, the data of two waves 5 and wave 7, each of which was prepared at a specific time period, were compared.

Results and discussion:

The results of the present study showed that changes in political values in Iranian society, like many developing societies, have been strongly influenced by the processes of modernization, globalization, and socio-economic developments. According to Inglehart's theory, increased economic development and improved living standards have paved the way

for a transition from traditional values to modern and self-expressive values. A review of fifth and seventh waves data in Global Values Survey shows that the tendency towards secular-rational values has increased among all gender and age groups. This development indicates that the value structure of Iranian society is moving away from traditional and religious patterns and has moved towards greater acceptance of individual rights, rationalism, and political participation. The aforementioned changes are not limited to the political sphere but have also affected cultural, social, and even family aspects. From a gender perspective, significant differences have also been observed. Women, especially in the seventh wave, have shown greater political participation, and this can be attributed to increased education, gender awareness, and changing social attitudes. This finding is consistent with contemporary feminist theories about women's awakening and their social activism. The change in values in Iran, especially in the political sphere, on the one hand reflects a value transition and on the other hand indicates a kind of value conflict that has emerged between generations and formal and informal institutions of society. This conflict will bring challenges in the areas of public policymaking and political legitimacy for formal institutions.

Conclusions:

Changing political values is inevitable and derived from social realities. The art of policymakers lies not in confronting these changes, but in intelligent management, creative adaptation, and creating a balance between tradition and modernity. Only in this way can society, while preserving its historical and cultural identity, follow the path of development and political participation with greater stability and coherence. Ultimately, although these changes create opportunities for the realization of democracy and the expansion of civic participation, without the alignment of official institutions, political education, and modernization of governance structures, they may lead to social divisions and public distrust. Therefore, it is necessary for policymakers to take steps to strengthen participatory institutions, accountability, and social justice with a correct understanding of value developments. In general, it can be said that Iranian society is transitioning from a society with traditional values to a society with modern and modern values. Although this process is slow and gradual, clear signs of it can be seen in people's attitudes, behaviors, and political preferences. Understanding these developments helps us to realistically outline the country's socio-political future. Democracy and individualism are very important value changes that are evident in the study of the fifth and seventh waves among members of society, and it is necessary to pay more attention to the increase in democratic symbols and institutions on the one hand and respect for individual freedoms on the other. Considering the increase in the value of religion in people over the age of 50, respect for the above two options can play an irreplaceable role in increasing the religious orientation of members of society in the current and future conditions of society through two channels: educational (the influence of parents on children) and experiential (the impact of lived experience of individual freedom on the religion orientation in middle age) of members of society.

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Authors' contributions:

The authors analyzed and reviewed the data and tables of study. Karami prepared the initial studies and Talebpour reviewed and approved final version of this article.

Conflicts of interest:

In this study, no conflict of interest was reported by the authors.