

# General Individual Values of Indian Government Servants: What Lies Beneath?

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*Indian government servants are being increasingly criticized of inefficiency, ineffectiveness and corruption. Of the many reasons being cited one repeated with almost unbroken continuity and, perhaps most forcefully, is “dilution of the values of government servants”. Despite this, one could hardly find any authentic study aimed at understanding the value structure of Indian government servants. This paper attempts to identify a common need structure underlying the values of Indian government servants.*

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## Introduction

People are found to attach more importance to the values they can readily attain and lessen the importance of values whose pursuit is blocked (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). In case of values that concern material wellbeing and security, a reverse movement is noticed, i.e their importance is more forcefully felt when they are blocked (Inglehart, 1997).

Life circumstances are one of the most potent tools in creating opportunities or constraints in pursuing or expressing some values as compared to others. Therefore, life circumstances are also found to be greatly instrumental in deciding which values are adopted by people. Work plays an important part in the creation of life circumstances of a person. A given job provides a certain degree of freedom of choice, freedom of decision, level of responsibilities, creativity, risk, variety of possible benefits, security etc. And in doing so, a job creates opportunities or constraints in pursuing or expressing of some values and rejection of others. It is therefore reasonable to expect that two different types of jobs would create different life

circumstances, which, in turn would press, pull and motivate their respective employees towards different sets of values. This also means that two similar jobs must pull the employees towards similar set of values or that those in the same job will find themselves pulled towards similar set of values. Though, this argument cannot be automatically extended to mean that the employees in one particular job will have an exactly uniform set of values, it does indicate towards the possibility of a common need structure underlying these values.

In this paper our focus is on the government servants. The possibility of a common need structure underlying the values of government servants, however, emerges not only because of the above argument of life circumstances, as we just proposed, but from a completely different but, perhaps, equally, if not more, compelling and scientific argument. This argument is contained in the theory of "Public Sector Motivation". As we shall note from the detailed literature review later, there is ample evidence of a unique set of intentions to make social change and shape those policies which might affect the society, for which one joins public service (Perry et.al, 2010). Given this "unique set of intentions" amongst those who join the public service, it might be natural to suspect that there is a common need structure underlying the values of those who join public service.

### **Literature Review**

The roots of the study of values have traditionally been found in the study of

axiology. These roots can be traced back to the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in the form of virtue ethics (Hosmer, 2003; Jackson, 1996; O'Hear, 2000). In recent times, however, the concept of values has been extensively examined at a more earthly level. Rescher (1969:5) describes values as "...things of the mind that are to do with the vision people have of 'the good life' for themselves and their fellows...". Values have been linked with moral ideology by Wright (1971: 201), which he said was concerned with "...beliefs about what is wrong and the values that define the positive goals in life". In his seminal work on values, Rokeach (1973) defined that values are "enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence" and these transcend specific contexts. This apart, the values also define and re-define our sense of self and enhancing our self-esteem (Milton, 2004; Rokeach, 1973; Watson, 1994). In fact, Meglino and Ravlin ((1998: 356). cite from the work of Kluckhohn (1951) to argue that human always experience a need to validate or confirm their values "...any actions that are inconsistent with these values will result in feelings of guilt, shame, or self-depreciation...Thus; individuals will exhibit value-related behavior in private in order to avoid negative internal feelings"

The above review of the literature deals with "Personal Values" in general. They do not differentiate between personal values as general values and work

values. Therefore, before exploring the literature deeper, we identify the difference between these two types of values. From general values we refer to such values which are “generally” relevant in life circumstances and which are not restricted to or relevant in specific life domains only. The “work values” are a more appropriate example of the latter. Nord et al (1990) has defined work values as end states that guide individuals work related preferences that can be attained through the act of working. Therefore, values like ‘avoidance’ ‘making a living’ and ‘gaining status’ are examples of “work values”. Attitude towards or orientation with regard to work is central to work values. On the other hand, values of achievement, power, benevolence, materialism and self-expression etc. which manifest themselves in general life circumstances of persons and which are not restricted to merely work circumstances are more appropriately referred as general values. In the following sections we undertake a review of some important conceptualizations of “general values”.

**Attitude towards or orientation with regard to work is central to work values.**

There are many conceptions of values. One of them is offered by Rokeach (1973). Vinson et.al (1997) state “Rokeach constructed a model which posits that beliefs, attitudes, and values are all organized together into a functionally integrated, cognitive system. Within this system, beliefs represent the most

basic element and may be considered simple propositions, conscious or unconscious, and may be inferred from what a person says or does”. They further state “In this model, a value is viewed as a single belief which guides actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence”. Rokeach identified two broad categories of values: instrumental values and terminal values. The former of these are beliefs about the desirability of various modes of conduct and the later are beliefs about the desirability of various end-goals of existence. Many studies used Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) (Braithwaite & Law, 1985; Feather, 1991). This is an instrument designed by Rokeach to operationalize the value concept. It is an instrument for measuring personal and social values

In more recent development, Schwartz (1992) identifies 10 values, referring to the motivation that underlies them i.e power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. Some of these values are compatible (e.g., conformity and security) but some of them contradict one another (e.g., benevolence and power). This compatibility and contradiction amongst values is what is referred to as “Structure of values”. The conception of value in the theory of Shwartz contains six main features: (1) Values are beliefs linked inextricably to affect. (2) Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action. (3) Values transcend specific actions and situations. (4) Values serve as standards or criteria. (5) Values are ordered by im-

portance relative to one another. (6) The relative importance of multiple values guides action. So far as the relation between these values is concerned, Schwartz proposes organization of these values along two bipolar dimensions. One dimension contrasts 'openness to change' and 'conservation' values and the other dimension contrasts 'self enhancement' and 'self-transcendence' values. The first dimension reflects a conflict between emphasizing independence of thought, action, and feelings and readiness for change and emphasis on order, self-restriction, preservation of the past, and resistance to change. The second dimension indicates a contrast between emphasis on concern for the welfare and interests of others and values that emphasize pursuit of one's own interests and relative success and dominance over others (Schwartz, 2006).

Inglehart proposes yet another conception of general values. The post-war unprecedented levels of prosperity and a sense of security of survival is said to have produced an intergenerational value change. This change is observed to be gradually transforming cultural norms of advanced industrial societies. One of these value changes, which has the support of documented evidence, is proposed by Inglehart (1977, 1990). Inglehart (1977) has used psychological needs theory (Maslow, 1954) in developing his concept of materialism and post materialism. The concept explains the way in which political values rise out of individual needs during the process of socialization. The materialists of Inglehart (1990) have physiological

needs and post materialists have self-actualization needs. Inglehart concept of materialism-post materialism is obtained as a single continuum. The two extremes are (a) those choosing all materialist values and (b) those who choose all post materialist values. Those choosing a mix of materialist and post materialist values are placed in the mid of the continuum. Inglehart's view has been challenged on the ground that materialist and post materialist values define two quite distinct dimensions. Endorsement of one does not necessarily preclude endorsement of the other. The challenge has also come from Hellevik (1993) who proposes two dimensions (a) change versus stability and (b) outer versus inner-oriented. In this tradition, it is further argued that materialism-post-materialism is a diagonal through this two-dimensional space. Materialism represented the desire for stability and being outer-oriented, while post materialism represented the desire for change and being inner-oriented.

**Materialism represented the desire for stability and being outer-oriented, while post materialism represented the desire for change and being inner-oriented.**

The above discussed post materialism, however, itself is one of the many aspects of a broader process of cultural and overarching value change towards emancipation of humans. Two dimensions can be identified in this emancipation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). The first dimension is along traditional-secular-

rational values axis and the second is along survival- self-expression values axis. Self-expression values are reflective of an emancipative orientation. These values tend to be humanistic and anti-discriminatory. They emphasize tolerance of diversity and are appreciative of wide basing of decision making by way of progressive integration of demands for participation in such decision making about economic and political aspects of life. People espousing such values are, therefore, expected to be more supportive of individual liberties and human rights.

### **Public Sector Motivation (PSM)**

Public Service motivation (PSM) first appeared in the essay “The Motivational Bases of Public Service” (Perry & Wise, 1990). As already indicated, PSM arises out of beliefs that there is a unique set of intentions to make social change and shape those policies which might affect the society, for which one joins public service (Perry et.al, 2010). These motives, which can be classified as rational, norm-based and affective, provide a good background against which the values of government servants can be examined. This apart, four dimensions of PSM (Perry, 1996) help in bringing further clarity in the matter. These dimensions are: attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest and civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice. Needless to say that these dimensions indicate towards possibility of altruistic and pro-social nature of government employee motives. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) further

strengthen this possibility as they report the association of the construct of PSM with altruism and refer to it as “general, altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind”. Adding strength to the argument, Francois (2000) has defined PSM as providing “effort out of concern for the impact of that effort on a valued social service” and Vandenabeele (2007) refers to PSM as “the beliefs, values and attitudes that go beyond self- interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate”. Thus a general pro-social inclination of the government servant is evident. In fact, LeGrand (2003), while articulating his research on PSM and altruistic motivation states this in most explicit manner “it is hard to dispute the view that altruistic motivations are prevalent among the providers of public services”.

**The PSM continues to forcefully and significantly explain the being of a person in public service.**

Research in recent times have broadened our perspective on public service values much beyond PSM and this includes, role of values in the public service (van Wart, 1996; 1998; Kernaghan, 2003), role of moral and ethical values in the public service (Tsirogianni & Gaskell, 2011) etc. nonetheless, the PSM continues to forcefully and significantly explain the being of a person in public service.

## **Sample**

The possibility of common need structure underlying the values held by employees of government sector has been examined using the data relating to the Schwartz values as captured in the fifth round of World Value Survey 2005 (World Value Survey, 2005). The WVS is an investigation into the impact of changing values on social and political life the world over. It is undertaken by a network of social scientists at leading universities around the world. These surveys indicate what people want out of their lives and what are their beliefs.

World Value Survey is being extensively utilized to analyze the relationship between values and many other phenomena. For example, Knack and Keefer (1997) have used the survey to build a social capital index. Guiso et al. (2002) have used the survey for studying religious beliefs, socioeconomic attitudes, trust in government etc. Swamy et al. (2001) have explored a relationship between gender and corruption tolerance. MacCulloch and Pezzini (2002) utilized this survey for studying the degree of freedom of the country and the religious beliefs of citizens. Delhey and Welzel (2012) have studied the issue of trust in out groups. Liman & Bond (2010) studied the role of individual secularism societal development in the promotion of life satisfaction using this survey.

The current release of the WVS 2005 captures responses from as many as 77,000 respondents from 54 countries all over the world, on a whole spectrum

of issues including demographic data, values, political beliefs, opinion relating to religion, corruption, goal in life, trust etc.

This paper aims to identify the common need structure underlying the general values of government servants, therefore data pertaining to only government servants of India was utilized. This apart, some ambiguous cases were dropped and finally data pertaining to 143 respondents was utilized for the paper.

## **Measures**

To capture 10 basic values of Schwartz, the WVS uses a 10 item survey, where each item captures one basic Schwartz value. The nomenclature of these 10 items in the WVS 2005 is V80, V82, V83, V84, V85, V86, V87, V88 and V89. The items are reproduced below:

- V80- It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative; to do things one's own way (Self Direction)
- V81- It is important to this person to be rich; to have a lot of money and expensive things"(Power)
- V82-Living in secure surroundings is important to this person; to avoid anything that might be dangerous (Self Security).
- V83- It is important to this person to have a good time; to "spoil" oneself (Hedonism).

- V84. It is important to this person to help the people nearby; to care for their well-being (Benevolence).
- V85. Being very successful is important to this person; to have people recognize one's achievements (Achievement).
- V86. Adventure and taking risks are important to this person; to have an exciting life (Stimulation).
- V87. It is important to this person to always behave properly; to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong (Conformity).
- V88. Looking after the environment is important to this person; to care for nature (Universalism).
- V89. Tradition is important to this person; to follow the customs handed down by one's religion or family (Tradition).

The responses to these items varied from-very much like him (1), like him (2), somewhat like him (3), a little like him (4), not like him (5), or not at all like him (6).

## Results & Discussion

To identify the underlying structure in the general individual values of the government employees their responses to the 10 items in the WVS 2005 which measured Schwartz values were Factor analyzed. Of the options available, as per Tabachnick and Fidell (1989), the goal of Principal Component Analysis is to extract maximum variance of factor loading by making higher loading higher, low

ones lower for each factor. We may expect this method to result in more clearly interpretable factors. Therefore this method was used for extraction of factors.

The factor analysis was run with Varimax rotation and factors with Eigen values >1 were retained. On the first run, one variable, V88 (Environment) was found to be having Communality much lower than the acceptable level of 0.5 (it was 0.283) therefore it was dropped and the analysis re-run. In the second run, all the variables had acceptable communalities but variable V86 (Risk) had a complex loading as it loaded with approximately similar strength on all factors. Therefore it was also dropped and the analysis run for the third time with remaining 08 variables. The results were now satisfactory. All communalities were satisfactory. The rotation converged in 5 iterations and resulted in three factors (factors with Eigen value >1 were retained). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.636. The Bartlett's test, which tests the hypothesis that correlation matrix is an Identity Matrix, was significant (App. 195.007). This indicates that the factor model as a model of analysis is acceptable. The results are in Table I.

For the government employees value structure with three factors emerged. These factors are: (1) "Benevolence-Conformity - Achievement", (2) "Hedonism- Power-Security" & (3) "Tradition-Self Direction". The results depicting the total variance explained by each factor is in Table 2.

**Table 1** Factor Loadings for Schwartz Values for Government Employees

	Factors		
	1	2	3
Benevolence	<b>.822</b>	.007	.005
Conformity	<b>.771</b>	.117	.137
Achievement	<b>.556</b>	.102	.463
Hedonism	.268	<b>.791</b>	.063
Power	-.280	<b>.718</b>	.379
Security	.086	<b>.700</b>	-.245
Tradition	-.008	.046	<b>.818</b>
Self Direction	.369	-.095	<b>.681</b>

### The First Factor

The first factor contains the three values of “conformity, benevolence and achievement”. The value of conformity originates from the need of individuals that smooth interactions and group functioning are maintained. It emphasizes self-restraint in everyday interaction, usually with close others (Schwartz, 2012) to avoid violating social expectations. The other value in the factor i.e benevolence, also derives from the requirement of smooth group functioning (Williams, 1968) and need (orgasmic) for affiliation (Maslow, 1965). The third value in the first factor is achievement. For achievement values the defining goal is personal success (Schwarz, 2012). It is defined by Schwartz as demonstrating competence in terms of prevailing social standards, thereby obtaining social approval. Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) also emphasize this requirement of social approval as they suggest “what constitutes achievement may vary across cultures, but whatever is so defined will be the basis for social recognition and admiration”. It is thus clear that all the three values in the first fac-

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There is another commonality among the three values of the first factor. This commonality is the goal for preserving and enhancing welfare of others. While the value of benevolence by its very definition would tend to achieve this goal, the value of conformity also, albeit indirectly, is inclined to preserve welfare of others as it tend to restrict impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. This leaves us with the third value, achievement. For understanding what achievement means to a government servant it is imperative to understand their unique motivation. At this stage, we recollect that in our literature review we have found that a person joins public service with a unique public sector motivation. The review also brought out clearly that “it is hard to dispute the view that altruistic motivations are prevalent among the providers of public services” and that, in the context

of the government servant being public service motivated, also has a deep general, altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). It is therefore clear that all the three values, in the context of

government servant, have an inclination for preserving and enhancing welfare of others. The factor therefore represents a common need structure underlying employees values and this can be rechristened as “Prosocial Needs: Affiliation and Social Welfare”

**Table 2 Total Variance Explained by the Three Factors**

Component*	Total Variance explained. Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.348	29.347	29.347
2	1.569	19.618	48.964
3	1.196	14.950	63.914

\*Only those components with initial Eigenvalues>1 have been included.

### The Second Factor

The second factor (Hedonism-Power-Security) explains approx 19% of variance.

Hedonism values derive from organismic needs of pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself. Theorists from many disciplines (Freud, 1933) mention hedonism. It is therefore natural that those who value this pleasure would want an environment where this could be preserved. The defining goals of security as a value are harmony and stability in relationships, society and self. This goal is associated with the value of security. Therefore a coupling of security and Hedonism into one factor is not unexpected. The value of power which appears in the factor is also not antithetical to the needs originating the values of Hedonism and security. The defining goal of power is control or dominance over people and resources. It is because of

this control that one is in a position to ensure greater stability and harmony (reflecting in his values of Hedonism and security) in his life.

Thus the combination of value of power, Hedonism and security is clearly understood. It may, however, be noticed that while the first factor emphasized on the need of social ecosystem in government servants, the second factor underlines the importance of needs of the Self. As such we name this underlying factor as Pro-self needs: Control, Stability & Pleasure

### The Third Factor

The third factor is Tradition-Self Direction. This factor seems to be combining two oppositely natured values. The defining goal for self direction is independent thought and action and for tradition the defining goal is respect and acceptance of one's cultural and religious

customs and ideas. The former seems to be trying to cut the fetters and the latter seems to be respecting the fetters.

To resolve a seeming conflict we explore a little deeper into the value self direction. The value of self direction derives from interactional need for autonomy and independence (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). Alkire (2005) indicates that self determination theory (SDT) fruitfully distinguishes autonomy from individualism and that autonomy "...is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressure to think and act in certain way; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards". A person can be autonomously independent or autonomously dependent. An autonomously dependent person may welcome others influence and good advice and an autonomously independent person tends to resist any external influence. Therefore a person high in "self direction with autonomously dependent inclination" might resist social pressure to think and act in ways merely because tradition or religion decrees that way. But he may autonomously welcome an influence from the tradition.

In the context of Indian bureaucracy, this amalgamation of tradition and self-direction becomes clearer as we realize that India is a secular republic. Indian bureaucracy has to abide by the Constitution and not by any custom driven or religious belief in discharge of its official duties. The Constitution of India is a modern document with progressive outlook on even conservative issues like caste, creed and sex. But at the same

time it does not prevent the government official from practicing his religious belief in personal life. In fact this right has been enshrined as the fundamental right in the Constitution itself. Apart from these statutes, conscious, practical efforts have been made to train the government servants in differentiating between personal religion and official duties by way of conduct rules etc. These practices over the last 65 years since Independence seem to have trained the bureaucracy into exercising self-direction in the matters of tradition and not succumbing to an indoctrinated interpretation of the traditions.

The fact that self-direction and tradition have amalgamated in the third factor, indicates clearly that stimulating thoughts about tradition in a government servant also automatically stimulate thoughts about exercising self-direction in the matter. Therefore this factor represents a constant effort on the part of the government servant to strike a healthy and life giving balance between tradition and modern thorough self-direction. Therefore we can name this third factor as Need for Balance: Submission and Deliverance from Customs.

### **Conclusion & Implications**

Three factors emerged from the Schwartz value analysis of government employees. These are: Benevolence-Conformity –Achievement, Hedonism-Power-Security; and Tradition-Self Direction.

The first factor has a distinct social focus with emphasis on social welfare

and seeks social affiliation and approval for achievement against such social welfare standards.

The second factor, in contrast, has an inward focus and expresses a need for pleasure, security and stability which it tends to perpetuate with its control and mastery over people and resources.

The third factor derives largely from the peculiar circumstances in which the Indian government servants have functioned since the Independence and very rich traditions which draw from a history of over 2500 years. This factor reflects the felt need for reinterpreting the tradition in the light of modern education and best practices and adopting only that which is life giving, healthy and permitted by statutes.

Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. People decide what is good or bad, justified or illegitimate, worth doing or avoiding, based on possible consequences for their cherished values (Schwartz, 2012). Therefore an understanding of the common need structure underlying the values of government servants can help in understanding some of the general tendencies in the bureaucracy. For example the second factor Hedonism-Power-Security may explain the prevalence of corruption in the bureaucracy despite the public service motivation for which a government servant is said to have joined the public service.

Similarly the common need structure underlying the values of government ser-

vants may also be helpful in understanding what policy interventions could be undertaken so as to ensure better implementation by the government servants. For example the first factor Benevolence-Conformity-Achievement indicates that such circumstances need to be cultivated that a government employee while implementing such policies/programs feels his need for social affiliation and approval being met if he successfully implements the policies/program. Merely materialistic rewards might not be sufficient enough to motivate him for implementing such policies in letter and spirit. There are a number of meticulously conceived government programs/policies pending efficient and effective implementation. Some very potential policies/programs have failed just because of inefficient implementation. The first factor identified in this paper may help in devising motivational interventions to take care of this problem in future.

The third factor, tradition-self direction is helpful in understanding how exposure to modern education, continuous training and unbending commitment to progressive ideas by way of highest statues (constitution) could help weaning away citizens from indoctrinated interpretation of traditions and helping them adopting only that which is human, good and life giving. This has implications beyond the bureaucracy and can, perhaps, be utilized for developing policies with similar objectives for those communities in the nation which have been kept at margins and far away from the mainstream due to lack of any consistent in this regard.

### Limitations & Future Scope

There are however limitations to this study. In this paper the data base for Schwartz values has been collected from World Value Survey, 2005. In this, each value was captured utilizing one item. This instrument has been utilized by a number of studies conducted round the world and the same have been referred to in this paper but one may like to conduct the same study utilizing the longer version of Schwartz value questionnaire as well. In our study we have arrived at the three common need structure underlying the values of government servants in India. We have also tried to explain the existence of these factors but studies also need to be conducted to understand the reason behind these factors. For example, one may like to understand why two opposite oriented values like tradition and self direction amalgamate into one factor. Our explanation in this paper can be used as a hypothesis and the suggested study could test the hypothesis.

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