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PERSONAL VALUES, SOCIAL VALUES, SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PSYCHOLOGICAL HALLMARKS OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND HEALTHY, HABITABLE SOCIETIES

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Abstract

The creation of healthy, peaceful, inclusive, and habitable societies depends not only on economic development, political institutions, technological advancement, and physical infrastructure but also on the psychological qualities and value orientations of the individuals who constitute society. Personal values, social values, self-efficacy, and self-esteem represent important psychological resources that influence how individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, respond to challenges, participate in collective life, and contribute to social integration. Drawing upon the theoretical contributions of Schwartz's theory of basic human values, Bandura's social cognitive and self-efficacy theories, Rosenberg's conceptualization of self-esteem, Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory, and related perspectives on psychological well-being and social cohesion, this article examines the interconnected roles of these constructs in building healthy and habitable societies. It argues that personal values provide internal standards for individual conduct, while social values establish shared expectations necessary for cooperation, tolerance, justice, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. Self-efficacy strengthens individuals' confidence in their capacity to act meaningfully, whereas healthy self-esteem supports dignity, psychological stability, and constructive social participation. However, when these psychological resources are deficient or distorted, societies may experience alienation, intolerance, aggression, dependency, exclusion, corruption, low civic responsibility, and weakened social trust. The article proposes a Values–Efficacy–Esteem–Integration (VEEI) framework to explain how psychologically empowered and value-oriented citizens can contribute to sustainable social integration and national development. It concludes that building habitable societies requires simultaneous investment in institutions, human character, psychological empowerment, and shared social values.

Keywords: personal values, social values, self-efficacy, self-esteem, social integration, psychological well-being, habitable society, social cohesion, national development.

INTRODUCTION

A society may possess roads, industries, universities, hospitals, sophisticated technologies, and elaborate political institutions and yet remain psychologically unhealthy, socially fragmented, and difficult for its citizens to inhabit peacefully. Material development alone cannot guarantee social harmony. Sustainable development must also involve the psychological and moral development of the people who inhabit society.

This proposition that “sustainable development must also involve the psychological and moral development of the people who inhabit society” rests upon the understanding that development is fundamentally about human beings rather than material structures alone. Economic growth, infrastructure, technological advancement, and strong institutions are indispensable, but their sustainability ultimately depends upon the psychological capacities, moral values, behavioural dispositions, and social responsibilities of the people who create, operate, protect, and transmit them to future generations.

This human-centred understanding of development is consistent with the Human Development Approach associated particularly with Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1990) fundamentally broadened the meaning of development beyond economic growth by arguing that human development concerns the enlargement of people's choices and the creation of conditions in which individuals can develop their capabilities and lead productive and creative lives. From this perspective, economic resources are important not simply because societies can accumulate them, but because they should enlarge people's opportunities to live meaningful and dignified lives.

Sen's (1999) capability approach similarly challenges the assumption that development can be adequately measured by wealth alone. Development should expand substantive human freedoms and people's capabilities to become and accomplish what they reasonably value. Consequently, a society may experience economic expansion while remaining developmentally deficient if its citizens continue to experience exclusion, humiliation, fear, powerlessness, corruption, discrimination, or denial of meaningful opportunities.

The psychological implication is significant: development should transform both people's circumstances and their capacities to function effectively within those circumstances.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides another important foundation for this argument. Bandura (2001) conceptualizes human beings as agents capable of intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection. People are not merely passive recipients of social conditions; they are simultaneously influenced by social systems and capable of influencing those systems. Bandura consequently argues that people are both “producers as well as products of social systems.”

This insight has profound implications for sustainable development. If citizens are producers as well as products of society, then the psychological qualities of citizens become developmental resources. Self-efficacy, resilience, self-regulation, personal responsibility, critical thinking, empathy, cooperation, and collective efficacy influence how people respond to social challenges and whether they become passive observers or active contributors to societal improvement.

Development must therefore empower people psychologically to believe:

“I have the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the improvement of my society.”

A nation characterized by widespread psychological helplessness, hopelessness, cynicism, distrust, and resignation may possess considerable natural and material resources while remaining unable to mobilize its human potential effectively. Conversely, citizens possessing personal and collective efficacy are better psychologically positioned to innovate, solve problems, build institutions, participate civically, and cooperate toward shared developmental objectives.

However, psychological capacity without moral orientation is insufficient.

A highly intelligent, confident, resilient, and efficacious individual can employ those psychological capacities either constructively or destructively. Competence can build institutions, but competence can also manipulate them. Intelligence can solve societal problems, but intelligence without integrity can equally create sophisticated forms of corruption and exploitation. Leadership confidence can inspire society, but confidence without moral restraint can become authoritarianism.

This is why sustainable development requires the integration of psychological competence with moral character.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is relevant in this respect because it emphasizes the development of increasingly sophisticated forms of moral reasoning, particularly reasoning involving fairness, rights, duties, justice, and principled judgment (Kohlberg, 1981). Moral development enables individuals to move beyond decisions determined exclusively by fear of punishment, personal advantage, group loyalty, or social approval toward more principled consideration of justice and human welfare.

Schwartz's theory of basic human values similarly demonstrates that values function as guiding principles that influence people's evaluations, priorities, and behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). Values such as benevolence and universalism orient individuals toward concern for others and broader human welfare, while values influence how people balance personal interests against collective responsibilities.

Thus, development becomes sustainable when citizens increasingly ask not merely:

“What can I gain from society?”

but also:

“What responsibility do I have toward the society from which I benefit?”

This transition from entitlement alone toward reciprocal social responsibility is fundamental to building a habitable society.

The relationship may consequently be expressed as:

Psychological Development + Moral Development → Responsible Human Agency → Ethical Citizenship → Stronger Institutions → Social Trust → Social Integration → Sustainable Development.

This argument also finds support in the human-development literature. The UNDP's human-development approach emphasizes

that development should expand the richness of human life rather than simply the richness of the economy. It focuses on developing people's abilities while creating opportunities through which those abilities can be exercised. Similarly, Stewart (2013) emphasizes that individuals do not flourish independently of social institutions and communities; human flourishing depends partly upon the character of the social environments within which individuals live.

Therefore, sustainable development involves a reciprocal relationship:

Healthy people contribute to healthy institutions, while healthy institutions create conditions that enable people to flourish.

This reciprocal understanding prevents the argument from placing the entire burden of development upon individual character. Poverty, inequality, unemployment, corruption, weak institutions, discrimination, and exclusion cannot simply be attributed to deficiencies in individual morality. Structural conditions matter profoundly. Nevertheless, structures are created, administered, maintained, challenged, and reformed by human beings. Sustainable development therefore requires simultaneous transformation of persons and institutions.

This can be represented as:

Transform the Person ↔ Transform the Institution ↔ Transform the Society.

Neither direction is sufficient independently.

A society that develops infrastructure without developing responsible citizens may discover that its infrastructure is vandalized, mismanaged, or corrupted.

A society that develops advanced technology without ethical consciousness may employ technology for misinformation, exploitation, surveillance, fraud, or social manipulation.

A society that expands education without cultivating integrity may produce highly educated individuals who use knowledge to manipulate weak institutions.

A society that creates democratic institutions without psychologically developing tolerance, civic responsibility, and respect for opposing views may retain democratic structures while practising intolerance.

Similarly, a society that develops economic opportunities without strengthening social responsibility may increase wealth without necessarily increasing justice, inclusion, or social cohesion.

Consequently:

Development without psychological empowerment can produce dependency.

Development without moral development can produce sophisticated exploitation.

Development without social values can produce individual prosperity alongside collective fragmentation.

Development without strong institutions can frustrate even psychologically empowered and morally responsible citizens.

Sustainable development therefore requires an integrated approach involving capability, character, agency, institutions, and opportunity.

From the perspective of the present article on personal values, social values, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, this argument becomes particularly important. Healthy self-esteem gives individuals a sense of dignity; self-efficacy provides confidence that meaningful action is possible; personal values provide internal standards for behaviour; and social values connect personal behaviour to the welfare and dignity of others.

The developmental pathway may therefore be conceptualized as:

Healthy Self-Esteem → Personal Dignity

Self-Efficacy → Psychological Agency

Personal Values → Character and Self-Regulation

Social Values → Responsibility Toward Others

Dignity + Agency + Character + Social Responsibility → Social Integration and Responsible Citizenship

Responsible Citizenship + Just Institutions → Healthy, Habitable and Sustainable Society

The fundamental proposition is therefore that development must occur both around people and within people. Development around people provides roads, schools, hospitals, industries, technologies, laws, institutions, security, and economic opportunities. Development within people cultivates self-worth, efficacy, integrity, empathy, responsibility, tolerance, resilience, moral reasoning, and commitment to the common good.

One without the other produces incomplete development.

A sustainable society consequently requires more than citizens who are educated; it requires citizens who can use education responsibly. It requires more than powerful leaders; it requires leaders capable of exercising power ethically. It requires more than economically successful individuals; it requires individuals who recognize obligations toward the wider society.

Thus, the central argument may be summarized:

“The ultimate sustainability of national development depends not only on the quality of the structures a society builds, but also on the psychological capacity, moral character, social values, and responsible agency of the people entrusted with building, managing, protecting, and transmitting those structures to future generations.”

Sustainable development should therefore be understood as a simultaneous investment in human capability, psychological empowerment, moral character, social responsibility, and institutional quality. A nation becomes genuinely developed not merely when its physical environment improves, but when its people increasingly possess the psychological capacity and moral orientation to create, preserve, share, and continually improve the conditions necessary for human flourishing.

Healthy societies require individuals who possess a positive sense of personal worth, confidence in their ability to solve problems, respect for others, commitment to fairness, tolerance of diversity, responsibility toward the community, and willingness to contribute to the common good.

This suggests that social integration is not merely a political or sociological process. It is also profoundly psychological.

Four concepts are especially relevant to this psychological dimension: personal values, social values, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Personal values influence what individuals consider important and morally desirable. Social values provide shared standards through which people regulate relationships and collective behaviour. Self-efficacy influences whether individuals believe they possess the capacity to act successfully, confront difficulties, and contribute meaningfully to society. Self-esteem concerns the individual's evaluation of personal worth and dignity.

When these dimensions are positively developed, they can contribute to psychologically stable individuals who are capable of cooperating with others, tolerating differences, resolving conflicts constructively, participating productively in society, and respecting institutions.

The central argument of this article is therefore that healthy and habitable societies are partly products of psychologically healthy, socially responsible, value-oriented, and efficacious individuals.

Understanding Personal Values

Values represent enduring beliefs about what individuals consider desirable, important, worthwhile, or morally appropriate.

Schwartz conceptualizes values as guiding principles that influence attitudes, choices, evaluations, and behaviour. Values therefore operate as internal psychological compasses. They help individuals determine what should be pursued, avoided, defended, or sacrificed for.

Personal values may include honesty, integrity, responsibility, discipline, compassion, courage, diligence, respect, fairness, and commitment to excellence.

These values become very important because society ultimately expresses itself through individual behaviour.

Corruption does not occur independently of individuals.

Violence is enacted by individuals.

Discrimination is practised by individuals.

Likewise, justice, compassion, honesty, tolerance, innovation, and service are expressed through individual conduct.

Consequently, the quality of society is partly determined by the values that individuals internalize and translate into everyday behaviour.

A person who values integrity is more likely to resist dishonest opportunities.

A person who values human dignity is less likely to dehumanize others.

A person who values responsibility is more likely to consider the consequences of personal behaviour for other members of society.

Personal values therefore constitute an important foundation for responsible citizenship.

From Personal Values to Social Values

Personal values become socially transformative when they are connected with values that enable people to live peacefully with others.

Social values are shared principles that regulate relationships between individuals and groups. They include justice, tolerance, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, solidarity, responsibility, honesty, peaceful coexistence, inclusion, respect for diversity, and commitment to the common good.

A society cannot remain stable where individuals insist exclusively upon personal interests without recognizing obligations toward others.

This distinction is important.

Personal values ask: "What kind of person should I become?"

Social values ask: "How should I relate to other people so that we can live together?"

A healthy society requires both.

Personal integrity without social responsibility can become individualistic.

Social ideals without personal integrity can become slogans.

Therefore, individual character and collective values must reinforce each other.

The relationship may be expressed as:

Personal Values → Responsible Behaviour → Shared Social Values → Trust and Cooperation → Social Integration → Healthy Society.

Social Values and the Habitable Society

A habitable society should not be understood merely as an environment in which people can physically survive. It should be a society in which people can reasonably pursue meaningful lives with dignity, security, opportunity, belonging, and hope.

Such a society requires social values capable of regulating competing interests.

Justice enables citizens to believe that similar standards apply to everyone.

Tolerance allows people with different beliefs and identities to coexist.

Respect protects human dignity.

Cooperation enables individuals and groups to pursue shared objectives.

Accountability ensures that power carries responsibility.

Compassion prevents vulnerable members of society from being abandoned.

Without such values, social relationships become dominated by suspicion, competition, domination, exclusion, and conflict.

Thus, values are not merely philosophical ideals; they have practical consequences for the habitability of society.

Contemporary Scholarly Perspectives on Personal and Social Values in Building Healthy and Habitable Societies

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that the health and habitability of a society depend not only upon economic prosperity, physical infrastructure, political institutions, and technological advancement, but also upon the values that individuals internalize and the values that societies collectively

reinforce. Personal and social values influence how people understand themselves, relate to others, respond to differences, exercise freedom, use power, resolve conflicts, and contribute to the common good.

From the perspective of Schwartz's theory of basic human values, values function as broad motivational principles that guide people's judgments and behaviour. Contemporary applications of the Schwartz framework continue to distinguish values such as self-direction, achievement, security, conformity, benevolence, and universalism. Of particular relevance to a healthy society are benevolence and universalism. Benevolence emphasizes concern for the well-being of people with whom one has close relationships, whereas universalism extends concern toward humanity more broadly, including equality, understanding, tolerance, and protection of people and nature.

Recent scholars therefore enables us to distinguish between two complementary dimensions:

Personal values answer:

"What principles should guide the kind of person I become?"

Social values answer:

"What principles should guide the way we live together?"

Personal values such as integrity, responsibility, self-discipline, diligence, honesty, courage, empathy, and respect influence individual character and behaviour. Social values such as justice, equality, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, inclusion, trust, mutual respect, and concern for the common good provide psychological and moral foundations for collective life.

A healthy society requires an interaction between the two.

Personal Values → Character → Responsible Behaviour

while

Social Values → Shared Expectations → Cooperation and Social Cohesion.

Together:

Responsible Individuals + Shared Prosocial Values → Trust → Cooperation → Belonging → Social Integration → Healthy and Habitable Society.

Recent social-cohesion scholars strongly supports this relationship. Contemporary research conceptualizes social cohesion around such elements as inclusive identity, interpersonal and institutional trust, and cooperation for the common good. These qualities are particularly significant because a society becomes difficult to inhabit when individuals cease to trust one another, groups withdraw into antagonistic identities, and citizens no longer believe that cooperation across social boundaries is possible.

A recent scoping review of social cohesion and social well-being similarly associates stronger community cohesion with trust, belonging, social connectedness, and community assets, while segregation and social disorder are associated with weaker connectedness and well-being. This suggests that social values should not be regarded as abstract moral ideals. Values become practically developmental when they generate behaviours that enable people to trust, cooperate with, respect, and live peacefully alongside one another.

Recent research also provides an important insight into **prosocial values**. Studies distinguishing benevolence from universalism suggest that these values operate at somewhat different levels. Benevolence concerns care for people within one's immediate interpersonal relationships, while universalism extends moral concern beyond one's immediate circle toward wider humanity.

This distinction is particularly important for plural societies.

Benevolence may teach:

"Care for your family, friends, neighbours, and community."

Universalism extends the principle:

"Recognize that people outside your immediate group also possess dignity and deserve fairness."

A healthy society needs both.

Benevolence without universalism can potentially remain restricted to "our people." Universalism encourages the moral circle to expand beyond family, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, region, or social class.

Thus, a genuinely habitable society requires individuals capable of saying:

"I value my own group without devaluing yours; I can protect my identity without denying your dignity."

This insight becomes especially important in societies characterized by ethnic, religious, political, regional, or socioeconomic diversity. Social integration does not require people to abandon their identities. Rather, it requires shared values sufficiently strong to enable people with different identities to coexist, cooperate, and pursue common objectives.

Recent research connecting values with identification with all humanity strengthens this argument. Evidence across different national contexts indicates that endorsement of universalistic values is positively associated with identification with humanity beyond one's immediate social group. This suggests that values can help expand psychological identification from narrow in-group consciousness toward broader human solidarity.

However, contemporary scholars also provides an important caution: we should not assume that every socially desirable value automatically produces every desirable outcome.

Large-scale research using European Social Survey data has found, for example, that benevolence and universalism can relate differently to subjective well-being and social participation. Benevolence showed positive relationships with life satisfaction and

happiness, whereas universalism displayed more complex associations. Both were associated with some attitudinal dimensions of social capital, such as trust, but their relationships with actual social activity differed.

This is theoretically important.

It suggests that healthy societies cannot simply compile a list of attractive values and assume that possessing them will automatically produce social integration. Values operate within particular institutional, cultural, economic, and interpersonal environments.

Therefore, values must become behaviour.

Justice must become fair treatment.

Tolerance must become peaceful coexistence.

Integrity must become honest conduct.

Empathy must become concern for others.

Responsibility must become accountability.

Equality must become nondiscriminatory institutions.

Solidarity must become willingness to support others.

Respect must become recognition of human dignity.

This leads to an important proposition:

A value becomes socially transformative when it moves from what people profess to what people repeatedly practise.

There is another contemporary insight particularly relevant to the idea of a habitable society: value congruence. Cross-national research involving more than 54,000 participants across 29 countries found relationships between the fit of individuals' values and the values prevalent in their societies or regions and multiple dimensions of well-being. Importantly, however, the relationship differed according to the type of value involved.

This suggests that people do not experience their values in isolation. They inhabit what might be called a value environment.

An individual may personally value honesty but operate within an institution where corruption is normalized.

A person may value merit but live within a system where favouritism determines opportunities.

A citizen may value tolerance while political actors repeatedly reward division.

A young person may value hard work while observing that connections rather than competence determine advancement.

Under such conditions, a psychological conflict develops between personal values and socially rewarded behaviour.

Consequently, building a habitable society requires more than teaching good personal values. Institutions themselves must create environments in which socially constructive values are modelled, protected, rewarded, and normalized.

This allows us to distinguish three levels of value development:

Level One – Personal Values:

What individuals believe and internalize.

Level Two – Social Values:

What communities collectively regard as desirable standards for coexistence.

Level Three – Institutionalized Values:

What governments, schools, courts, workplaces, religious institutions, families, and other organizations actually practise and reward.

Sustainable social integration requires reasonable consistency among all three.

Where society teaches honesty but rewards corruption, there is value contradiction.

Where society preaches equality but practises discrimination, there is value contradiction.

Where institutions proclaim merit but practise nepotism, there is value contradiction.

Where political leaders preach national unity but mobilize ethnic hostility for political advantage, there is value contradiction.

Such contradictions can weaken trust because citizens gradually learn to distinguish between **professed values and operative values**—between what society says it believes and what its institutions actually reward.

Thus, the contemporary scholarly understanding of values can be synthesized into the following developmental pathway:

Personal Values → Character Formation → Prosocial Behaviour

Social Values → Trust + Cooperation + Inclusive Identity

Institutional Values → Fairness + Accountability + Equal Opportunity

When these three levels reinforce one another:

Character + Trust + Fair Institutions → Social Cohesion → Social Integration → Psychological Well-being → Healthy and Habitable Society.

Conversely:

Value Contradiction + Distrust + Exclusion + Institutional Injustice → Alienation → Social Fragmentation → Conflict → Unhealthy Society.

The implication is that a healthy and habitable society cannot be created simply by asking citizens to become morally responsible. Neither can governments assume that legislation alone will produce social cohesion. There must be a reciprocal relationship between personal character, shared social values, and institutional behaviour.

Therefore, the development of values should begin in the family, be reinforced through education, demonstrated by religious and community institutions, normalized in workplaces, responsibly communicated through media, and visibly practised by political and institutional leaders.

The central proposition may consequently be stated as follows:

“A healthy and habitable society emerges when personal values develop responsible individuals, social values enable people to live constructively with others, and institutions translate those values into fair and trustworthy social practices.”

Contemporary scholars therefore invites us to move beyond understanding values merely as things individuals **believe**. Values should also be examined according to the relationships, institutions, behaviours, and social environments they produce.

In this sense, the ultimate test of a society's values is not simply what appears in its constitutions, religious teachings, school curricula, political speeches, or national slogans, but **how people actually treat one another and how institutions treat the people entrusted to them.**

Bandura and the Psychology of Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura introduced self-efficacy as a person's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes.

Self-efficacy does not simply mean optimism.

It involves the psychologically grounded belief:

"I possess the capacity to act, persevere, learn, overcome obstacles, and influence outcomes."

People with stronger self-efficacy are generally more willing to undertake challenging tasks, persist when difficulties arise, recover from setbacks, and invest effort in achieving objectives.

This has profound social implications.

A society composed of individuals who believe they possess little capacity to influence their circumstances may gradually develop dependency, resignation, apathy, and helplessness.

Expressions such as:

"Nothing I do will make any difference."

"The system can never change."

"There is no point trying."

may reflect weakened personal or collective efficacy.

Conversely, people who believe that they can contribute meaningfully to their communities may be more willing to participate in problem-solving, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, education, community service, innovation, and democratic processes.

Thus:

Self-Efficacy → Initiative → Persistence → Problem-Solving → Productive Participation → Societal Development.

Self-Efficacy and Responsible Citizenship

Self-efficacy is particularly important for citizenship.

Healthy societies do not require passive populations that expect governments or institutions to solve every problem. They require citizens who perceive themselves as participants in societal development.

An efficacious citizen asks:

"What can I contribute?"

rather than merely:

"What can society give me?"

Such psychological agency can manifest through entrepreneurship, volunteering, professional excellence, community development, political participation, environmental responsibility, educational advancement, and social innovation.

Bandura's concept of collective efficacy extends the argument further.

When communities develop the shared belief that they can work together to solve common problems, social cooperation becomes more likely.

Collective efficacy replaces:

"Someone should solve this problem"

with:

"Together, we can address this problem."

This psychological transformation is important for community development and national progress.

Understanding Self-Esteem

Self-esteem generally refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth.

Rosenberg's influential conceptualization emphasizes the person's general attitude toward the self.

Healthy self-esteem allows individuals to recognize their dignity and worth without requiring superiority over others.

This distinction is essential.

Healthy self-esteem says:

"I have worth."

Unhealthy superiority says:

"I have worth because I am better than you."

Healthy societies need citizens who possess the first orientation without falling into the second.

People who possess balanced self-esteem are generally better positioned to receive criticism without complete psychological collapse, acknowledge personal limitations, respect the dignity of others, and establish healthier social relationships.

Self-Esteem, Dignity and Social Relationships

Individuals who possess a stable sense of personal worth may be less dependent upon humiliating or dominating others in order to feel significant.

Conversely, fragile self-esteem can sometimes produce defensive behaviour, hostility, excessive sensitivity to criticism, status competition, or dependence upon external validation.

This has implications for leadership, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion.

A leader whose sense of worth depends entirely upon praise may perceive legitimate criticism as personal attack.

A citizen whose identity depends upon ethnic superiority may require the degradation of another group in order to preserve personal or collective self-worth.

Healthy self-esteem, therefore, should be connected with respect for the equal dignity of others.

A psychologically healthy orientation is:

"I matter, and you matter too."

This provides an important psychological foundation for social integration.

Social Identity and the Need for Belonging

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory demonstrates that individuals derive part of their identity from membership in social groups.

People belong to families, ethnic communities, religions, professions, political groups, nations, and many other social categories.

These memberships can provide belonging, meaning, security, and pride.

However, difficulties arise when positive self-esteem becomes dependent upon degrading an out-group.

The distinction between:

“We are valuable”

and

“We are valuable because they are inferior”

is psychologically and socially significant.

Healthy social integration requires forms of identity that allow individuals to remain proud of their particular heritage while recognizing membership within a wider human and national community.

Therefore, strong personal identity should coexist with inclusive social identity.

Personal Values, Self-Esteem and Ethical Behaviour

Personal values and self-esteem interact in important ways.

A person whose self-worth depends primarily upon material possessions, status, political access, or public recognition may become vulnerable to behaviours intended to preserve those external symbols.

By contrast, when self-esteem is anchored partly in integrity, competence, service, meaningful relationships, and personal dignity, individuals may be less dependent upon socially destructive measures of success.

This becomes important in societies where wealth is sometimes admired without adequate consideration of how it was acquired.

If social recognition is given primarily to material success regardless of ethical behaviour, young people may gradually learn that:

“What matters is becoming wealthy, not how wealth is obtained.”

Healthy societies should therefore connect social recognition with **character, contribution, competence, creativity, integrity, and service**, rather than material accumulation alone.

Values and Corruption

Corruption is frequently treated primarily as an economic or institutional problem. However, it also contains a psychological and value dimension.

A person who misappropriates public resources has made a value judgment—implicitly or explicitly—that personal benefit is more important than public responsibility.

Therefore, anti-corruption strategies cannot depend exclusively upon prosecution.

Institutions must certainly enforce laws, but societies must also cultivate values that make corruption psychologically and socially unacceptable.

This requires consistency across the family, education system, religious institutions, workplace, media, community, and government.

A society cannot teach children honesty while publicly celebrating individuals whose unexplained wealth appears to contradict the same value.

Thus:

Values taught → Values modelled → Values reinforced → Character formed → Behaviour repeated → Social culture established.

Self-Efficacy Versus Learned Helplessness

Social integration can also be undermined when citizens develop a pervasive sense of helplessness.

Where individuals repeatedly encounter unemployment, corruption, institutional failure, insecurity, discrimination, or exclusion, they may begin believing that effort is meaningless.

This resembles what Seligman's work on learned helplessness helps illuminate: repeated experiences of uncontrollability can weaken motivation to act.

A healthy society should therefore create structures through which citizens experience that legitimate effort can produce meaningful outcomes.

Educational achievement should create opportunities.

Hard work should have reasonable rewards.

Entrepreneurship should encounter enabling institutions.

Lawful complaints should receive attention.

Votes should matter.

Competence should matter in appointments.

When people repeatedly experience such connections between effort and outcome, self-efficacy is strengthened.

Personal Values and Social Integration

Social integration refers to the processes through which individuals and groups develop meaningful participation, belonging, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence within the broader society.

Integration does not require uniformity.

People do not have to abandon religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or ideological differences.

Rather, integration requires establishing sufficient shared values to enable diversity to coexist without producing permanent hostility.

Personal values contribute to this process when individuals internalize tolerance, empathy, fairness, responsibility, and respect.

These values enable individuals to disagree without dehumanizing each other.

They permit competition without hatred.

They allow diversity without fragmentation.

Thus:

Social integration is not the elimination of difference; it is the psychological and institutional capacity to live constructively with difference.

Self-Esteem and Social Inclusion

Social exclusion can damage psychological well-being because human beings possess fundamental needs for belonging and recognition.

Individuals who repeatedly experience rejection, humiliation, discrimination, stigmatization, or marginalization may develop feelings of worthlessness, resentment, or alienation.

Healthy societies should therefore create environments where individuals can experience dignity regardless of social status.

This does not mean eliminating differences in achievement or responsibility. It means ensuring that social differences do not become excuses for denying fundamental human worth.

Inclusion communicates:

“You belong.”

Justice communicates:

“You matter.”

Opportunity communicates:

“You can contribute.”

Together, these psychological messages strengthen social integration.

The Role of the Family

The family is one of the earliest environments in which values, self-esteem, and self-efficacy develop.

Children learn from how adults speak, resolve conflict, treat neighbours, relate to people from other groups, respond to failure, use resources, and exercise authority.

Families therefore provide early models of honesty, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, discipline, and respect.

Parents who encourage children appropriately can strengthen self-efficacy.

Homes that communicate unconditional human dignity while maintaining responsible standards can support healthy self-esteem.

Thus, nation-building begins partly in the psychological environment of the home.

The Role of Educational Institutions

Schools and universities should not merely transmit information.

They should also cultivate psychologically empowered and socially responsible citizens.

Education should develop critical thinking, confidence, moral reasoning, tolerance, cooperation, problem-solving, creativity, resilience, and social responsibility.

An educational institution contradicts its developmental purpose when it teaches integrity theoretically but practises favouritism, corruption, discrimination, or nepotism institutionally.

Students learn from institutional behaviour as much as from textbooks.

Educational institutions must therefore become laboratories of the social values they expect graduates to carry into society.

Religious and Moral Institutions

Religious institutions exert considerable influence over values, moral reasoning, identity, and social behaviour.

Their contribution to healthy societies becomes strongest when they model compassion, integrity, justice, peace, responsibility, tolerance, and respect for human dignity.

Religious identity should not become an instrument for hostility toward those outside the group.

Faith communities can contribute to social integration when they help adherents develop strong moral convictions while simultaneously respecting the humanity and legitimate rights of those who believe differently.

Leadership and Psychological Modelling

Leadership has substantial influence upon personal and social values.

Citizens observe which behaviours leaders reward, tolerate, condemn, or practise.

Leadership therefore has psychological consequences beyond policy.

When leaders model integrity, citizens receive one lesson.

When corruption produces prestige, they receive another.

When merit determines appointments, young people learn that competence matters.

When nepotism determines advancement, they may learn that relationships matter more than excellence.

National leadership must therefore understand that public behaviour constitutes social education.

A leader is not only administering today's society; he or she is modelling behavioural possibilities for tomorrow's citizens.

Media and the Formation of Values

The media environment has become another powerful institution of psychological socialization.

Television, film, music, advertising, online influencers, social media, and digital platforms continually communicate images of success, attractiveness, status, power, morality, and belonging.

Media can strengthen healthy values by celebrating creativity, service, integrity, resilience, and social contribution.

It can also weaken social values when violence, dishonesty, exploitation, excessive materialism, or dehumanization are glamorized.

Media literacy therefore becomes important for psychologically healthy societies.

Citizens should learn not merely to consume media but to critically evaluate the values communicated through it.

Toward a Values–Efficacy–Esteem–Integration Framework

Drawing upon the arguments developed in this article, a Values–Efficacy–Esteem–Integration (VEEI) Framework is proposed.

The framework contains four interconnected psychological foundations.

Values

Individuals develop personal integrity and shared social standards concerning justice, honesty, dignity, responsibility, tolerance, and service.

Efficacy

Individuals develop confidence that their responsible actions can produce meaningful outcomes.

Esteem

Individuals develop healthy self-worth without requiring the humiliation or exclusion of others.

Integration

Psychologically secure and socially responsible individuals participate constructively across group differences and contribute to collective life.

The framework may therefore be represented as:

Healthy Personal Values + Shared Social Values → Ethical Orientation

Self-Efficacy → Agency and Productive Participation

Healthy Self-Esteem → Dignity and Psychological

Stability

Ethical Orientation + Agency + Dignity → Social Trust and Cooperation

Social Trust + Cooperation → Social Integration

Social Integration → Healthy, Peaceful and Habitable Society

The VEEI framework therefore proposes that societal development should address both external institutions and internal psychological resources.

Implications for National Development

The psychological development of citizens should become a legitimate dimension of national development policy.

Governments frequently invest in physical infrastructure while giving less attention to the psychological and moral resources required to sustain those infrastructures.

Yet roads can be vandalized.

Institutions can be corrupted.

Public resources can be stolen.

Technologies can be misused.

Democratic structures can be manipulated.

What determines whether development survives is partly the character, efficacy, and social orientation of the people operating within those systems.

Therefore:

Institution-building without character-building is incomplete development.

Similarly:

Empowerment without values can produce sophisticated misconduct, while values without efficacy can produce morally concerned but socially powerless citizens.

Healthy development requires both.

Recommendations

Families should deliberately nurture healthy self-esteem, responsibility, resilience, empathy, and respect for others from childhood.

Educational institutions should integrate character education, social-emotional competence, civic responsibility, critical thinking, and psychological empowerment into learning.

Governments should strengthen merit-based institutions so that citizens can see meaningful relationships between effort, competence, integrity, and opportunity.

Religious and community organizations should promote values that strengthen human dignity and social coexistence rather than sectional superiority.

Media institutions should recognize their role in shaping social values and give greater visibility to constructive models of achievement and citizenship.

Leadership development programmes should include self-awareness, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, resilience, empathy, self-efficacy, and social responsibility.

National policies should also promote social inclusion because persistent marginalization can undermine both self-worth and identification with the wider society.

Finally, citizens themselves must recognize that society is not something external to them. Every interpersonal interaction, professional decision, civic choice, and ethical action contributes in some measure to the psychological environment others inhabit.

Conclusion

Healthy and habitable societies are built not only through laws, institutions, infrastructure, and economic resources but also through the psychological resources of their citizens.

Personal values provide internal standards for behaviour.

Social values make peaceful coexistence possible.

Self-efficacy empowers individuals to act rather than surrender to helplessness.

Healthy self-esteem enables people to recognize their own worth without denying the worth of others.

Together, these qualities provide important psychological foundations for social integration.

The central argument of this article may therefore be summarized as follows:

A healthy society requires people who know what they value, believe they can contribute, recognize their own dignity, respect the dignity of others, and understand that individual flourishing is inseparable from collective well-being.

Consequently, social development must move beyond constructing better environments for people toward developing better-equipped people for those environments.

The pathway may be represented as:

Healthy Values → Healthy Self-Worth → Psychological Agency → Responsible Relationships → Social Trust → Social Integration → Habitable Society.

Ultimately, a nation becomes genuinely habitable when its citizens can confidently say:

“I have worth. You have worth. I can contribute. You can contribute. Our differences need not to divide us, and together we can build a society in which everyone has a legitimate place.”

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