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# **A brief description of the value term and some value tests, considering the pre-and post-millennium value orientation of Romanian and Hungarian youth**



## **ABSTRACT**

*As inherent in man, the evaluation process begins at the moment of our birth and accompanies us throughout our lives. The student's value system is formed during socialisation under the influence of various factors. Family, education, and school have a fundamental role in shaping, preserving, and changing values. It is necessary to know the learner's pre-existing values, what they represent in their behaviour, actions, and words. The student's value system is reflected in their perception and way of life; it determines their relationship with the world, reflecting in their behavioural norms, activities, moral rules they follow, Etc. In the following, I undertake a short presentation of the research on Hungarian young people in Romania with the aim of preparing a kind of chronological, a thematic overview of the implemented research. I will briefly present a couple of value sociology studies; therefore, it is not new knowledge but a thematic presentation.*

## **KEYWORDS**

value system, education system, moral development of the individual, material and spiritual values, value orientation, value preference, value types, value-socialisation, value consideration, value exclusivity, axiology, ethics

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## INTRODUCTION

Value is a criterion for selecting and justifying appropriate human action to evaluate people and events. Values organise, articulate our past, present, and future, regulate the use of our physical and mental energies, delimit, and express our social belonging and social self. Values control the decisions and actions of each person and group, subordinate, juxtapose to each other. They never exist in a unique, isolated form but form an order, a system, or a hierarchy. The *top of the scale* values can be considered as *ideals*, which are absolutely positive, desirable things and conditions.

A *value system* is how specific values come together into a unified system (VASTAGH 1995). People's attitudes towards values, value creation, and value acquisition are the choice between two or more values that require the formulation of values.

Value creation is typically a free and conscious human activity, the objectification of man's subjective forces, and at the same time, man's self-realisation and self-transcendence. In their value-creating activity, men manifest themselves as a being who can transform things freely and consciously.

In everyday economic, political, and moral behaviour, the diversity of life values requires a precise definition of the concept. This is not an easy task since there is a significant gap between the experience of abstract philosophical value perceptions and research and empirical research conducted by the disciplines.

As a result of accelerated technical and social change, there is a constant change in values and value systems. There are value conflicts and a sense of general uncertainty regarding the values to be followed.

## COMPREHENSIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF VALUE, VALUE TYPES, VALUE SYSTEMS

All social sciences use the concept of value in different ways. A large number of value determinations have been made in the social sciences since the 1970s. On the one hand, values can be characterised as *subjective judgments* about a future state and, on the other hand, as *objective judgments* about the present situation. Value is what we do not have, even though we want to, what we consider essential for itself for some reason (ROKEACH 1969).

Rokeach distinguishes between the concepts of value and attitude with the aim of better understanding human action. By *attitude*, he understands the totality of different enduring beliefs about a particular object. At the same time, he refers to *values* as enduring beliefs that relate to specific behaviours or end states that are considered individually or socially desirable. Values and attitudes differ in three essential points. On the one hand, attitudes refer to specific objects, while values go beyond a specific object's relation. On the other hand, values are measures of attitudes that control not only attitudes but also actions. Finally, values are primarily preferences that apply to specific behaviours and end states. Rokeach further breaks down the theoretical categories into *instrumental* values that define dominant behaviours and *terminal* values that refer to the world's final state. Attitudes related to many thousands of specific objects can be traced back to a much smaller number of instrumental values and instrumental values to an even smaller number of terminal values (ROKEACH 1969).

According to Kluckhohn's general definition „*value is an explicit or implicit concept of what is desired, characteristic of an individual or group, and which influences which of the modes, means, and purposes of action available to them to choose.*” (VARGA 2003. 109.). „*In the process of the formation of an individual's values, his knowledge of society is integrated into these values, the values themselves are not independent of the individual's image of society and the world*” (CSATA 2005. 134.).

In many cases, the values are culture-specific. Simultaneously, there are universal, cross-cultural values of moral norms that apply to all societies and ages. For example, we can talk about religious, economic, political, etc., values. Many values can be considered cross-cultural; that is, they appear in all cultures. In this regard, SCHWARTZ (2006) starts his research by assuming that values respond to survival and well-being needs arising from biological and social interactions. Based on these, he distinguished 8 value types: *prosocial, adaptive, hedonistic, achievement-oriented, maturity-seeking, self-assertive, security- and power-oriented values*. The research covered 20 countries, 5 continents, and 8 religions.

According to the results, 10 types of values were distinguished, which can be found in all cultures: *universality* (e.g., world peace, equality, inner harmony), *benevolence* (e.g., honour, friendship, love), *traditionality* (e.g., respect for tradition, acceptance of life, humility), *conformity* (e.g., politeness, self-discipline, obedience), *security* (e.g., nation, family security, health, social order), *power* (e.g., authority, wealth, social recognition), *recognition* (e.g., success, talent, ambition), *hedonism* (e.g., enjoyment), *encouragement* (e.g., varied, exciting life, boldness), *independence* (e.g., freedom, self-esteem, creativity).

Earlier, Hankiss Elemér distinguished two types of values in his writing, *Érték és társadalom (Value and Society)*: objective and subjective values. *Objective value* is “everything that a given system (and that system can be a human organisation, an institution, a group of people, a society, or even the whole of humanity) in order to exist, function, and possibly: evolve.” Within the framework of this definition, the range of values required for a particular system will only change if the system’s environment changes, that human societies change faster than human living conditions and organisations. *Subjective value* is what a system feels, believes, judges necessary for itself, for its own existence, operation, and possibly: development. The range of these two values (objective and subjective) never overlaps. Their divergence, tension, and struggle are continuously among the fundamental factors of human-social practice and history. Because in the world of values, the law of supply and demand prevails, the values of which there are many (whatever they are vital) become conscious in man and society with very low-value intensity, of which there are few, their subjective value is much the real, objective value rises above. However, these two values interact with each other, so their future development can only be concluded by knowing each other’s relationship. (HANKISS 1977). Hankiss divided the world of values into two ranges of values (relying on traditional value theory): the range of fundamental values and the range of superior values. *Basic and life-sustaining values* are “the values that are essential for maintaining a person’s biophysical, biopsychic existence. Higher-order or life-fulfilling values are “those values that appear as surpluses compared to the previous ones, which are not directly related to the maintenance of existence, which expand and fulfil a person’s biosocial existence in a narrow sense.” (HANKISS 1977). Both value ranges are available to us in society in specific quantities.

In the absence of values, man has nothing to measure himself up to; consequently, his value’s consciousness is not built. Man is confused without norms; the order of ordinary coexistence becomes a source of grievances and tensions. The following four significant values play a significant regulatory-controlling function in social practice: the *traditional Christian value system* (for many centuries in people’s societies has allowed people to live a life rich in values, full of meaning and hope), the *Puritan-accumulating value system* (developed in the 16th – 17th centuries, which has a puritan-ascetic character, as it minimises consumption with a strict system of norms in order to accumulate goods quickly), *hedonistic consumer values* (emphasis on consumption and enjoyment, not on the accumulation of goods), *19th – 20th -century values of labour movements* (which activate forces to overthrow a given society and build a new social order). The latter three are closely related to dynamic economic progress (HANKISS 1984). It must be taken into account that the erosion and fading of norms drive people into uncertainty, into some relatively diffuse state, as it is not known whether violating or ignoring these norms makes a person guilty or not. This diffuse guilt is common worldwide, especially in rapidly evolving and transforming societies. Old norms do not work well in new situations because they have lost effectiveness, faded, and often contradict new norms (HANKISS 1986).

In their research, authors ÁGNES and GÁBOR KAPITÁNY (1983) examined the following values/value system: a *value system that preserves customs and traditions*, the main features of which are strict model-following and the existence of norms regulating lifestyle; a *bourgeois-individualist value system*, in which, in contrast to the previous one, the role of uniqueness, difference and standing out from the others is appreciated (this system is considered to be a

characteristic of the capitalist era); a *utopian-anarchist value system*, which means the denial of the existing order and material goods; a *bureaucratic value system* that demands obedience from members of society, subjecting them to a higher power, and a *socialist-communist value system*.

Group-specific norms, values, traditions, customs, and expectations function as systems regulating and controlling behaviour. Values influence social integration, employment, career choices. They are organised systematically and hierarchically, which means that claiming one value involves downgrading or rejecting another value. Values are not mere mappings of primary needs and interests. We may have values that conflict with our interests, but the tension cannot be lasting. However, complete harmony is never possible (PATAKI 1998).

Values are ideological objectification (social and culture-specific ideological objectification), which serve to express a certain quality, can simultaneously be considered self-regulatory systems of society (VÁRINÉ 1987).

LÁSZLÓ FÜSTÖS and ÁRPÁD SZAKOLCZAI researched in their study, *Continuity and discontinuity in value preferences (1977-1998)* based on the Rokeach test, based on the results of which they established that previous classical socialist values (e.g., work, peace, security, equality, Etc.) had lost their significance and importance. It was found that in the years after the regime change, values were embedded in stratification and structures. Now we can see the survival of the conditions before the regime change and the signs of adaptation to the changed conditions. Values are not the same as supra-individual norms and the consensus principles of a particular society, nor are they rooted in a person's biological or physiological (subindividual) needs. Values are mostly related to managing an individual's life, fundamental principles of life that guide human behaviour. In this sense, values can also be examined at the individual level by sociological research.

The value system is a formation that becomes stable during socialisation. This stability can be supported by the example of change, as a change can modify behaviours but does not destroy the value system behind previous behaviours (PERCHERON 1999). However, it is essential to note that during transition periods, when an individual has to adapt to a changed structure and way of life, these stable formations disintegrate.

In her study of *Value transmission and change of values*, NAGYNÉ DR. ÉVA BABICS (2006) stated that *values do not exist in isolation from each other* but are in a subordinate, superior, subordinate relationship and manage activity as a system at different levels. The carriers of values are the communities of individuals and society. Social change is always accompanied by changes in values, with the emergence of new principles, views, and ideologies. A change in the order of values can mean a change in the value's position in the hierarchical order. On the one hand, it can mean a shift in the positive or negative direction, and on the other hand, the cessation of the specified value or the appearance of a new value. Traditional values change very slowly; new values and value sets are more difficult for people to accept; therefore, the change in people's actions is slower. A set of values contains objective values that are represented by goods to the individual in the world. Some of these belong to material goods, such as goods of pleasure and utility. However, values also include those of a higher order, such as virtue, compassion, cognition, aesthetics, and love (NAGYNÉ 2006).

Values control and, at the same time, regulate the use of our physical and mental energy, delimiting and expressing our belonging and social self. At the same time, the values are related

to each other and thus form value types. We represent certain values, either as individuals or integral members of a given community, class, or society. These values, such as morality, personal freedom, determine our daily actions, lifestyles, decisions, or attitudes toward others. Social values, on the other hand, change over time. This change is reflected in the differences in values between the young and the elderly, forming many causes of intergenerational conflicts. The value system can also show differences within a specific age group. Thus, for example, people living in villages tend to represent a more traditional set of values than urban ones. However, at the same time, there may be differences in the set of values between men and women, which may be influenced by the level of schooling they completed (KAMARÁS 2008).

In the field of value analysis, we come across several definitions, which do not clearly distinguish how the value-individual-society relationship prevails.

## **FAMILY AND SCHOOL AS AREAS OF VALUE TRANSFER:**

The value system of the individual changes during socialisation under the influence of various factors: among these factors, we highlight the family and school socio-cultural environments.

The importance and irreplaceability of *the socialisation function within the family* cannot be questioned. The role of primary socialisation in the family is to introduce the child to everyday living conditions and, following specific cultural values, educate them to orient themselves in society. One of the special functions of the family is socialisation, preparing children for adult life. Parental values and parents' value transfer activities leave a mark on the child. In addition to the family, however, the school, the peer group, and the media play an increasingly important role. In many cases, in the process of value transfer, these effects are often at odds with the family's values. The peer group's impact increases, especially from adolescence onwards, when parental and school values' radically contradictory effects affect young people (SOMLAI 1997). This does not mean that parental values remain without a trace but that their impact changes over time. Parental values must "fight" with the influences flowing from the world to children and adolescents (TÓTH 1999). The difficulties of value transfer within the family are also reflected in the fact that nowadays, the system of values is confusing, and the relative value system experienced in the past has disintegrated (BUDA 2003).

In addition to *the family as a primary socialisation area*, *the school* plays an increasingly prominent role. *The school is a social institution*, so it clearly has something to do with values.

All education is value-oriented (although some dispute this). According to alternative pedagogies, the primary value is the student's individual fulfilment, and it is the school's job to facilitate this. In education with other orientations (such as denominational schools), values sanctified by tradition are set in education's goal system. Parents primarily expect school performance because they see the meaning of schooling in the value of the use of the psychic formations (knowledge, skill, ability, etc.) they mediate. That is, how much it allows their child to be successful both as an individual and as a workforce. This kind of attitude is instrumental in nature. Its essence is in this mediation, to get values and realise values in a regular school environment by literary goods and contents (subjects). Alternative schools and denominational schools, which have a developed specific value system, represent a different situation.

The starting point of institutional education is the conscious choice of values, which is suitable for directing the educational activity and serving the school's socialisation goal.

ÁRPÁD LAPPINTS (1998) considers the following value structure to be traceable from the point of view of education: *the values of biological existence*: respect for life, the ability to achieve a healthy lifestyle; *values of self-harmony, autonomy*: self-knowledge, ability to create inner harmony and stability; *values of social relationships*: the ability to form and nurture personal and social relationships; *values of social worthiness*: values related to work and literacy; the *values of a humanised society and world-view*: values related to the world, the nation, civil society.

It should be borne in mind that *the most popular values among students* are related to a harmonious and happy life and are not of material nature—for example, true friendship, family security, love, Etc. *Secondly*, the following are popular values: wealth, order, changing life, and many others. *Thirdly*, values belonging to the realm of social consciousness: tradition, national identity, power, politics, as well as others. Among the student's personal plans and ideas, learning and the professional path are often mentioned, as young people are aware of the importance of education and the value of education in their careers' success. Whether they like school or not, every student wants to get a profession and wants professional integration (LAPPINTS 1998).

The primary function of institutional education (schooling) is to help clarify students' basic attitudes: their inherited culture, the history of the people/nation/country they were born into or arrived at by the changes of their circumstances, how to relate to themselves, and society (LÁSZLÓ TAMÁS SZABÓ 2001). The stated values of the school are spontaneously incorporated into the student's personality. In educating about values, those educators are effective, who are credible, and able to identify with the values they have undertaken to convey. It is the basis of value socialisation, so following the original pattern. If the values and expectations expressed by adults are not in line with their own emotional and mental content, it loses its credibility for the child. The mystery of adequate value socialisation is that the educator knows the path that the student must take in his or her development, approaches the values, and is a credible mediator of these values. However, he or she must know them well.

High school students find it challenging to navigate the maze of values evoked by the social factors that affect them. One of the education process's outstanding tasks is to guide the development of the right value system and avoid value disruption. The value cavalcade formed due to factors affecting young people often leads to the pursuit of an inappropriate ideal or a lack of ideals, so there is a need for values to regain their relevance, their essence, to be re-evaluated and reassessed.

The value system's birthplace is society, i.e., using society as a tool. The education system, education, forms a well-defined value system, which it wants, which has a circular effect on society, re-evaluates, and transforms it. Society and the established/established value system thus interact, attributing it to the mediator role in education.

In modern society, spiritual values are often relegated to the background. Nor should the human sciences, the arts, the world of aesthetics, human emotions, and relationships be neglected as the competencies needed in technical civilisation and modern life strengthen, as they form the basis of our existence. Without them, our lives would be bleak. To continue a quality life,

it would be necessary to develop a value system in which material and spiritual values are in balance.

## **PARTIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE VALUE ORIENTATION OF ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN YOUTH BASED ON VARIOUS RESEARCH**

Studies on the values of young people undertook to present the value preferences of different youth groups. One of the directions of value system research explains the change of values with modernisation theories. In traditional societies, a unified set of values is based on hierarchies corresponding to the same needs or societies, a belief in the superiority of religious explanation, and common truths known to all. In contrast, modernity is based primarily on rationality, science, distinguishing three basic values: the systems of traditional, modern, and postmodern values. We can usually hear about the values of young people in Hungary and Transylvania in the context of the youth era transition. BOGDAN VOICU (2001) interprets the development of the values of Romanian society in a modernisation paradigm. *Bogdan Voicu's* theory of fake modernity is formulated based on the 1999 European Value Survey. Romania is a culturally partially modernised society that is continuously struggling with financial problems, but at the same time, it also has connections with postmodern cultures. It is a dream-modern society, characterised mainly by tense modernisation efforts, with constant fluctuations between traditionality and postmodernity.

As a result of contact with different cultures, postmodern elements are introduced into Romanian society's values. BOGDAN VOICU (2001) enumerates elements of *postmodern value orientations*, the low level of which proves that these values are not a direct consequence of the level of socio-economic development of Romanian society (as described by Inglehart in connection with Western societies), but only Western results of contact with the world. Regarding the orientation of Romanian society, we emphasise the authority of religious explanation in the first place. It reaches its highest value in Europe here. According to Voicu, this lies in the fact that the church, as an institution embodying social stability and individual security, lives in people's consciousness, so religious values are paramount. Regarding the attitude towards risk-taking, it can be said that Romania has the lowest measured values.

Given *the younger generation's values*, VOICU (2001) noted that there are significant differences between Romanian and Hungarian youth. At the very beginning of the value ranking are the values of family, security, and the private sphere. We can see a significant difference in religion and self-realisation. Considering Voicu's claim that *the authority of religious explanation* among the Romanian population is exceptionally high compared to other European countries, it is not surprising that faith in God is the second most important value for Romanian youth. The authority of religious explanation among the Romanian population is extremely high compared to other European countries. However, this is not surprising, as data from 1999 show that not only the adult population but an average of two-thirds of young people believe that the church offers appropriate answers to an individual's various moral and family problems. Simultaneously, while in the case of Romanian youth, self-realisation also came first, in



Hungarian youth, the values of stability, peace, and prosperity proved to be more important (VOICU 2001).

There is also a difference in the value of *tolerance*, as Hungarian young people, without exception, are more tolerant than Romanian young people in all respects. This degree of tolerance, different from that of Romanian youth, results from a minority interpretation of the situation rather than a postmodern value orientation. This is also confirmed by the fact that the level of tolerance in the case of Hungarians varies from historical region to region, i.e., in Szeklerland, which is more ethnically homogeneous, the rate of accepting answers is much lower than in inner Transylvania or Partium.

*Concern for the protection of the environment* is typical of highly educated middle-class young people living in urban environments, both in the case of young people of Hungarian and Romanian nationality. However, compared to other European countries, the concern for protecting the environment is relatively low in Romania.

Post-material value adjustment is most characteristic of the youth's early stages compared to the adult population's value adjustment. Postmaterial values are fundamentally characteristic of young age groups, but the majority can be characterised by a mixed version of the two extreme value systems.

The 15-24 age group of the Romanian population can be called the most post-materialist. Young people aged 25-34 are more likely to be of the mixed value system. The population of Romania is essentially materialist, *post-material value-orientation* is more characteristic of the early stages of youth, and the completion of studies entails varying degrees of independence, which shifts value preferences towards materialism (VOICU 2001).

The Minority Research Institute of the Minoritas Foundation conducted a questionnaire survey (October and November 2000) on a nationally representative sample of 3253 final year high school students (high school students and vocational high school students).

They tried to find out the following:

- “The social and economic situation of the students, their school conditions; and their knowledge, opportunities, and tools for mobility and modern communication (special lessons, language skills, use of internet and e-mail, driving license and credit card)”,
- students' vision, personal life strategy for further learning and future work,
- young people's perceptions of current international relations and their future development,
- students' personal relationship with politics,
- young people's values concerning society's functioning, the practice of law, everyday life, the nation, minorities, different youth cultures, and life goals.

The comparative study tried to map the vision, work, and success of students in *Hungary* and Romania, as well as the way in which family and school influence their ideas about their future and what values guide them.

It was found that students think of their own social status as being around the social average in both countries. The values of privacy, money, and friendship are paramount in both countries. Religion, on the other hand, is more important to Romanian students. There is virtually

no difference in students' values in the two countries between freedom, leisure, entertainment, property, fame, the arts, and political ranks. It was also read that when students think about their future, they do not seek responsibility or the social usefulness of their work. They prefer the material benefits, the interest and good atmosphere of the work, and the work's safety.

There is no notable difference in the ranking of preferences between high school students and vocational high school students, as well as those attending theoretical and technical high schools. Examining young people's perceptions of success and expectations about their future, they concluded that both countries are characterised by optimism rather than disappointment or lack of perspective.

The social background of secondary school students in Romania and Hungary is more favourable than average in terms of their parents' educational level and the equipment of their homes. On the other hand, students in Hungary are more satisfied with the development of their lives so far than students in Romania (ÖRKÉNY – SZABÓ 1997).

The value orientations of the Hungarian youth in Transylvania are presented in the MOZAIK 2001 research, the aim of which is to examine the value system of the young Hungarian population (15-29 years old) in Transylvania. Concerning participation in the *civil sphere*, we can say based on the MOZAIK 2001 research that Hungarian young people in Transylvania were much more members of a non-governmental organisation (e.g., political, youth, church organisations) than Romanian young people in Transylvania. Although Romania's entire population is characterised by moderate *political interest* and relatively low *public participation*, significant differences can be observed among Hungarian and Romanian youth. In the case of Hungarian young people, the values of human and freedom rights and equal opportunities occupy a better place in the rankings than in the case of Romanian young people. However, they are much less interested in politics than their Romanian counterparts. The number of those who do not consider politics important at all has increased significantly in recent years (CSATA – MAGYARI – VERES 2002).

Later, in 2008, based on quantitative surveys conducted by the National Youth Authority (ANT) and the National Minority Research Institute (ISPMN), tried to answer the extent to which the values of Hungarian and Romanian young people in Romania follow the trends typical of adult society. Romanian and Hungarian native speakers of youth research took part in the study. The scope of the Youth 2008 survey covered 16 counties of Romania: Arad, Bistrița-Năsăud, Bihor, Brașov, Alba, Harghita, Cluj, Covasna, Caraș-Severin, Mureș, Maramureș, Satu Mare, Sibiu, Sălaj, Timișoara counties. The aim of the analysis is to capture the differences in the value attitudes of Romanian and Hungarian young people. They examined the quality of life of young people, their financial situation, the problems of young people, starting a family, having children, planning for the future, and values.

Comparing with MOZAIK 2001, for example, measuring the quality of life and financial situation, it turns out that in the seven years between 2001 and 2008, there was a real consumer expansion among both Romanians and Hungarians. Most of the young Hungarians (91.6 per cent) had a mobile phone and 63 per cent a personal computer. If we compare the data with the ANSIT 2008 measurement, it turns out that Hungarian young people did not lag behind their Romanian counterparts in terms of their financial situation. They own mobile phones and

computers in equal proportions. The proportion of those with a mobile phone among those aged 18-29 rose to 94 per cent, while those with a computer jumped to 71 per cent. Their spread is partly attributable to technical progress. In the case of the intention to work abroad, a much higher proportion of Hungarian young people have already worked abroad than the average in Romania and Transylvania. Compared to the 2001 survey, it turns out that the intention to work abroad has not decreased significantly. In 2001, 41 per cent of Hungarian youth and in 2008, 38 per cent wanted to work abroad (LADÁNYI – SZELÉNYI 2006).

Further research includes a study summarising the results of a large-sample (8,000 people) youth research conducted in 2012, which also provides a comprehensive picture of Hungarian 15-29-year-olds, and an analysis made in 2016. It includes an autonomous interpretation of data from 15-29-year-olds. The volume, prepared in 2016, reviews aspects of demographic structure, family origin, family formation and childbearing, education and labour market status and life path (LEVENTE SZÉKELY 2012, 2016).

In summary, we can discuss value coexistence (post-material, material, and traditional value attitudes) in the case of both the Romanian and the young Hungarian population.

There is a widespread perception in the public consciousness that education's importance is the transmission of values. However, there is growing uncertainty as to what values we create or transmit through education. An individual's value system can be perceived in his or her lifestyle, which determines his or her relationship to the world, which can be reflected in the individual's norms of behaviour, actions, and moral rules he or she follows. The system of values forms a complex unit, but mixed, fragmented values appear in society in many cases. Therefore, material, adventurous, exciting life, trying new, various things are especially important for young people, and it is less important to follow the rules, humility, modesty, rather individualistic values emerge.

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