CHRISTIANITY AND THE VALUE ORIENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY PEOPLE

Alena Kusá[*1], Veronika Hrabačková[1] and Miroslav Sabo[2]

[1] University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 91701 Trnava, Slovak Republic
[2] Slovak University of Technology, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Radlinského 11, 813 68 Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Abstract

This research study deals with the analysis of the value orientation of contemporary people. The Christian value framework is represented by traditional values such as family, spirituality and traditions, which are analyzed in contrast with values based on individualism. The aim of the research was to determine to what extent the Christian value orientation applies to demographic groups of larger agglomerations and to what extent is this sample affected by the fact of religiosity and whether the differences in value orientation relate to age. The research sample includes 1,100 respondents aged 15 to 79 years. Compliance with the quota sampling ensures the representativeness of the research. Part of the research is the factor analysis, testing of the differences between the individual demographic variables and the results are compared with the data on religious beliefs of the population. The research results point to the fact that traditional Christian values are unchanging across age cohorts. This means that values such as family, spirituality and traditions can be considered universal in relation to the development of personality. On the other hand, we found significant gender differences. Women have higher affinity for traditional values, in contrast to individualistic values, where no significant gender differences were confirmed. Based on comparing the results of the research with statistical data about religious beliefs of the population, we can confirm that in regions with a higher proportion of religious population the affinity for traditional values is significantly higher.

Keywords: values, value orientation, religiosity, gender differences

1. Introduction

In terms of global development, today there is a lot of talk about the current lifestyle, attitudes towards life issues, individualism, and egoism. The question of connection between high material well-being and high moral and spiritual qualities remains unanswered, or leads to rather pessimistic predictions. In the analysis of the current situation, for the preservation of the Christian value system, it is important to consider peculiarities especially from the viewpoint of

_____
*E-mail: alena.kusa@ucm.sk

demographic development. The aim of the research was, on the basis of an analysis, to determine to what extent the Christian value orientation applies to demographic groups of larger agglomerations and to determine the differences between various demographic groups.

The value orientation represents an organized hierarchical system of values, which reflects the importance according to the order of the values adopted by a person or a group of people in a certain period. It is not merely a summary of personality traits, since man´s actions and behaviour are directly regulated and determined by values and value systems. Based on the theory that the behaviour determinants include both incentive and willpower components [1], and also on the theory of planned behaviour [2-4] we can point out the importance of specification of values and personal standards in the context of the research of behaviour objectives. In a similar vein, Harland, Staats and Wilke [5] found that personal standards are the determinants in the theory of planned behaviour. Direct causation between the behaviour and the personal values was also confirmed by some other research studies, for example the impact of personal values on environmental behaviour [6-10], or the theory of altruistic behaviour [11, 12]. Similar conclusions can be also drawn from other studies [13, 14]. In connection with the conclusions from these studies, our study is based on the fact that values have a direct impact on the behaviour, especially social behaviour, which may influence the life quality and social well-being of the society. Due to the scope of the study, however, we did not explore the preference of the values in the context of consumption of media products, namely in connection that is pointed out by Jenča: "the alphabetic culture, which brings information without the context, is currently overcome by the iconic culture, which adds an image to the information, creating a product without requiring a deeper thought processes. The addressee of the first product, however, is not a group of consumers expecting fulfilment of higher intellectual demands, after all, self-reflection of own influence will always be affected, in particular, by the objectives." [15] We however understand the importance of this relationship on the formation of some traditional values, which we are exploring.

In regard to values specification there are several approaches. Foundations of the most widely used theories about values were laid by Schwartz, Inglehart, Rokeach and Hofstede. Schwartz examined the correlation of 56 values across cultures [16]. The results showed that these values might be reduced to 10 basic value orientations. Rokeach divides values into two main lines: the instrumental and the terminal values. For the purposes of our study, we lean on some of the basic classifications, which determine personal values, in particular, with regard to individualistic versus pro-socially oriented. Messick and McClintock [17] empirically identified three social value orientations referred to as cooperative, individualistic, and competitive. Pro-socials tend to enact behaviours that maximize joint outcomes along with equality; individualists tend to maximize own outcomes; and competitors tend to maximize the relative advantage over other's outcomes. Individualists and competitors both have a primary concern

for own outcomes, absolutely or relatively, and are therefore considered as one group of pro-selves [18, 19]. Kučerová divides personal values into three dimensions: natural, civilizational and spiritual [20]. Natural values are divided into vital values (e.g. health, physical well-being) and social values (interpersonal relationships and relationship to oneself). Civilizational values are a tool for self-fulfilment (comfort, benefit from the social production, technology and economy). Spiritual values relate to the areas of: self-regulation (values associated with ethics and morality), self-expression (values associated with beauty and art) and self-reflection (values associated with the views of the individual, with his or her religion and philosophy).

2. Data collection and methodology

The research sample of 1,100 respondents aged 15 to 79 years was designed according to the quota characteristics, such as age, region, the municipality size, education, and household income. Quotas are based on the latest population census 2011 and represent the population of the Slovak republic. The data collection was carried out by the agency GFK Slovakia using Omnibus method. The size of the sample and the observance of quotas ensure possible generalization of the results to the population of the Slovak republic. Table 1 describes the survey methodology.

Table 1. The survey methodology.

Type of research	Quantitative representative research
Basic file	Population of SR aged 15 to 79
Sample size	1 100 respondents
Sample selection	Quota selection, characteristics: gender, age, income, education, region, size of municipality
Method	Omnibus research - personal interview
Data analysis	Multidimensional statistics

The questionnaire included 19 evaluating statements aimed at determining living preferences, which define value orientation of respondents, and basic demographic data. In order to determine the value orientations we took into account global trends as well as the diversity of attitudes towards life philosophy, whether within the family life-cycle or from a personal perspective. To detect finer variations within subjective priorities we used the ordinal evaluation range from 1 to 10 – from most important to the least important.

In order to narrow down the multidimensional attitude and to identify the basic poles of the value orientation we used factor analysis together with the method for determining the optimal number of factors with Varimax rotation with loading on the level 0.6. In terms of gender differences, we tested the significance of differences in the responses by means of non-parametric Mann-Whitney test at the level of p-value < 0.05.

3. Results

Evaluation statements that predetermine the value orientation of contemporary people were formulated with the objective to specify the basic polarizations, whereas we wanted to avoid certain abstraction, which often complicates the exactness of the results of similar studies. Therefore, we formulated the evaluation statements so that they enabled us simply to determine behavioural patterns. Although the most comprehensive system of values in the literature designed by Schwartz identifies 11, and later 10 basic value orientations, for the purpose of the study, we focused on the two antipoles: Christian value orientation versus individualism [16]. Christian value framework is presented by traditional values such as family, spirituality and traditions. These are analyzed in contrast with values based on individualism. The results of the factor analysis can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors correlation.

Common factor	Evaluation statements	Factor loading
Factor 1 Traditional values		
	To take care of the family	0.68
	To stay fit and in good condition	0.73
	To be informed about current events	0.66
	To stay young in spirit	0.78
	To stay natural	0.82
	To have time for oneself	0.73
	To keep traditions	0.75
	To be creative	0.60
	To have everything done quickly	0.66
	To stay in tune with nature	0.72
	To stay independent and self-contained	0.67
	To develop spiritually	0.56
Factor 2 Individualism		
	To be attractive to the opposite sex	0.79
	To be sociable	0.69
	To have great career	0.77
	To be popular with others	0.60
	To discover new horizons	0.59
Factor 3 Intellect		
	Permanent education	0.76
	To be well-read	0.56

On the basis of factor loadings we have identified three basic value orientations. Factor 1 merges the evaluation statements representing the values based on certain inner harmony in combination with religious values. In terms of specification of the common factor we could mention the so-called traditional values. Factor 2 Individualism is presented by values associated with certain hedonism. The basic difference between these two factors is, in particular, the type of incentive goal, which they reflect. The incentive effect of the value depends on the relative importance to the personality; therefore, it applies not only to the evaluation, but also to the selection of the final behaviour. The Factor 3 Intellect is presented by two evaluation statements, which may refer to the intellectual openness, which was described Inglehart in the theory of assumed shift from materialism to post-materialistic values, preferring freedom and self-expression to material satisfaction of needs [21]. The first two main factors: Factor 1 Traditional values and Factor 2 Individualism, in particular, can be considered as values potentially affected by the degree of religiosity. Therefore, in the following section, we will focus on possible demographic variations in these two value orientations.

Table 3. Significant differences within selected values and various demographic variables.

Demographic variables	Traditional Christian values			Individualistic values			
	To take care of the family	Spirituality	To keep traditions	To be attractive to the other sex	To be social	To have a great career	To be the popular
Region	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Size of municipality	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gender	x	x	x	x			
Age				x		x	
Marital status	x			x	x	x	x
Education				x		x	
Personal income				x	x	x	x
Household income				x	x	x	
Home typography							x
Job				x	x	x	x
Sector of work (public/private)							
Number of children				x		x	

Source: Own data processing in the R program using link Addictedtor.

When determining the values, their stability and their changes it is important to examine the differences within the scope of the demographic distribution. Several studies confirmed the demographic differences in relation to the values, but not in all cultures. When determining the hypotheses we relied on the assumption that traditional values will show significant differences, in particular, in relation to age. In similar studies, e.g. [22-24] confirm the positive relationship between age and values. Also, we started from the socio-emotional

selectivity theory [25], which claims that as people age, they perceive time as limited; therefore they prefer emotionally meaningful goals.

In our study, we tested the 12 demographic variables in relation to the selected values. Significance of the differences at the level of p-value of <0.05 can be seen in Table 3. Table 4 describes the visualisation of the test on the gender differences for tested value Family in the program R [26].

Table 4. Visualization of the test for the demographic variable Gender and value Family in the program R.

Multiple comparison test after Kruskal-Wallis		
p. value: 0.05		
Comparisons		
obs.dif critical.dif difference		
men-women 78.89381	35.91913	TRUE
> tapply (data[,variable], data[,group], mean)		
men		women
7.203666		7.922330

Significant differences confirmed with all three traditional values in terms of gender reflect that women show higher affinity for the traditional value orientation than men. On the other hand, expected differences in relation to age cohorts have not been confirmed with any of the traditional values. Likewise, variables such as Income, Number of children, and Education did not show statistically significant differences. As for the variable Marital status, significantly lower values have been confirmed in demographic groups: living alone, unmarried partners measured in relation to the value Family. When comparing between regions, the medians suggest similar differences with all three values, however, tests confirmed only a few as relevant. Within the scope of the value Family a significantly higher affinity was found in Košice, Prešov, Žilina and Trnava region. On the contrary, lower affinity was found in Bratislava and Nitra region. In terms of the value Spirituality, the lowest rates were measured in the Nitra and Trenčín region, the highest rates in the Trnava and Prešov region. In other regions, statistically significant differences have not been confirmed. As for the value Tradition, similar values to those of the value Family were measured, however, statistical significancy has been confirmed only in the Nitra region, that showed lower values compared to other regions.

In terms of testing demographic differences for individualistic values, we found several differences. The most significant difference in comparison with the traditional values showed the demographic value Household income. With individualistic values we detected a correlation, the higher the income, the higher the affinity for the individualistic values. Likewise, the demographic variable Education shows the correlation in two of four personal values: the higher the education, the higher the affinity for the individualistic values. Although within the age cohort significant differences have been confirmed with

two individualistic personal values: Attractiveness and Career, the demographic variable Marital status confirms that younger people tend to have a higher affinity: living alone or unmarried partners. An interesting finding is that the differences in the demographic variable Gender have been confirmed only with one of four individualistic values unlike with traditional values. When comparing the regions in connection with individualistic values, we cannot confirm a clear orientation on certain values. While in Bratislava region the affinity for the value Career is more pronounced, regions of Košice, Prešov and Žilina show significantly higher affinity for values Attractiveness and Social recognition.

Partial role of this research was to compare to what extent is Christian value orientation applied within the scope of demographic groups of larger agglomerations and to what extent is this sample affected by the fact of religiosity. The results of the tests on the differences in demographic groups in relation to traditional Christian values were compared with the data on religious belief of the population provided by Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic – Census of population and housing from 2010 and 2001. For comparison, we have taken into account the percentage of the population with no religion. Data by region are compared in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of the proportion of people with no religion with average median.

	Bratislava region	Trnava region	Trenčín region	Nitra region	Žilina region	Banská Bystrica region	Prešov region	Košice region
The number of people with no religion for year 2011	26.80	12.80	15.30	12.00	11.00	16.60	5.50	11.30
The number of people with no religion for year 2001	24.90	11.70	14.40	11.00	10.54	16.70	5.60	11.80
The average median for traditional Christian values	7.39	7.82	7.17	6.14	7.62	7.01	7.69	7.61

As we can see from the results, in the regions with a lower number of people with no religious belief this fact correlates with higher proportion of affinity for traditional Christian values such as family, spirituality and traditions. Certain limitations of the research showed the Nitra region, where the measured values were incomparable to values of other regions.

4. Discussion

Based on these results, we can say that while traditional Christian values are constant across age cohorts, individualistic values partially change. This means that values such as family, spirituality and traditions can be considered

universal in relation to the development of personality. Despite the different results in similar studies in some cultures, where the affinity for the values considered by the society in question to be traditional is increasing with age, in our culture, traditional values represent a strong and stable element emanating from the family and close social environment. On the other hand, we found significant gender differences. Women have higher affinity for traditional values, in contrast to individualistic values, where no significant gender differences were confirmed. In terms of gender differences, these findings duplicate the theories of gender roles [27], i.e. that women have a stronger pro-social orientation than men. However, blurring of gender differences in relation to the individualistic values, which have been previously attributed rather to men, might be a new trend in demographic changes in the current period. The differences in value orientation are influenced not only by social but also by economic conditions, in particular, in the context of different cultures. Roubal [28] calls attention to the threats of individualistic society which he considers for identity issues in the times of uncertainty and unpredictability. Similar problem is the ground of a possible competition between scientific and religious imaginary in postmodern world in the context with modern technologies and resulting ethical consequences, as described by Chiriac [29]. The results of our research show that inside the traditional Christian values, there are no differences between the demographic groups with higher and lower household income or personal income. This means that the Christian value framework is based on the long-term life orientation and is relatively stable against the changes and trends in society, even at the present time. Results comparing the degree of religiosity with the affinity for traditional values reflect the stable positioning of these values in the social structure. The regions with higher religiosity rate also show higher affinity for values such as family, spirituality and traditions.

5. Conclusion

Values play an important role in psychological and social processes. At present, the question of lasting traditional values in European culture is often raised. Especially young people miss a certain permanence and development of the spiritual dimension, which builds on traditional values. In times of change and increasing uncertainty they quickly abandon or substitute their values and it is difficult for them to deal with certain renunciation or sacrifice. Christian value system is a compact model that is stable and versatile in terms of development of personality and stands in direct opposition to the values based on individualism.

In terms of development trends, restructuring of value systems occurs especially under the influence of economic and social change. It seems also appropriate to question the differences between the socially desirable values and the values that people actually adhere to. There are several studies that reflect the current state of value systems in societies. In our research, we focused on

demographic differences, which after continuous measurement may give a broader picture of the trends in the value orientation.

References

[1] P. Gollwitzer and V. Brandstätter, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, **73** (1997) 186.
[2] I. Ajzen and M. Fishbein, *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior,* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1980.
[3] I. Ajzen, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, **22(5)** (1986) 453.
[4] I. Ajzen, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, **50** (1991) 179.
[5] P. Harland, H. Staats and H. Wilke, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, **29(12)** (1999) 2505.
[6] J. Thøgersen, Environment and Behavior, **28** (1996) 536.
[7] P. Stern and S. Oskamp, *Managing scarce environmental resources (Handbook of environmental psychology)*, Wiley, New York, 1987, 1043.
[8] P. Stern and T. Dietz, Journal of Social Issues, **50(3)** (1994) 65.
[9] P. Stern, T. Dietz, L. Kalof and G. Guagnano, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, **25** (1995) 1611.
[10] K. Van Liere and R. Dunlap, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, **8** (1978) 174.
[11] H. Schwartz, Advances in experimental social psychology, **10** (1977) 221.
[12] H. Schwartz and J. Howard, *A normative decision-making model of altruism*, in *Altruism and helping behavior: Social, personality and developmental perspectives*, J.P. Rushton & R.M. Sorrentino (eds.), L. Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale (NJ), 1981, 189.
[13] L. Axelrod and D. Lehman, Journal of Environmental Psychology, **13** (1993) 149.
[14] F. Kaiser and T. Shimoda, Journal of Environmental Psychology, **19** (1999) 243.
[15] I. Jenča, *Kultúra v médiách, média v kultúre*, in *Kultúra – priestor interdisciplinárneho myslenia 4 - Zborník z medzinárodného vedeckého sympózia,* Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, Nitra, 2005, 353.
[16] H. Schwartz, Advances in experimental social psychology, **25** (1992) 1.
[17] D.M. Messick and C.G. McClintock, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, **4(1)** (1968) 1.
[18] D.N. Sattler and N.L. Kerr, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, **60** (1991) 756.
[19] M. Van Lange and G. Liebrand, European Journal of Personality, **3** (1989) 209.
[20] S. Kučerová, *Úvod do pedagogiky antropológie a axiológie,* Masarykova univerzita, Brno, 1990, 49.
[21] R. Inglehart and W.E. Baker, American Sociological Review, **65** (2000) 19.
[22] H. Fung and S. Ng, Psychology and Aging, **21** (2006) 810.
[23] H. Fung, Y. Ho, K. Tam and J. Tsai, Personality and Individual Differences, **50(7)** (2011) 994.
[24] M. Kitayama, R. Matsumoto and V. Norasakkunit, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, **72** (1997) 1245.
[25] L. Carstensen, D. Isaacowitz and T. Charles, American Psychologist, **54** (1999) 165.
[26] R Core Team, *R: A language and environment for statistical computing,* R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, 2012.
[27] H. Schwartz and T. Lifschitz, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, **97** (2009) 171.

[28] O. Roubal, Communication Today, **3(1)** (2012) 7.
[29] H. Chiriac, Eur. J. Sci. Theol., **9(1)** (2013) 111.