

DIFFERENCES IN PREFERRED VALUE STRUCTURE BETWEEN ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS

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Abstract

The article's main purpose is to present the value structure of adolescents. The period of adolescence is significantly important in an adolescent's life in terms of the formation of the value structure. The structure of values firmly directs adolescents to choose their lifestyle and shows the direction of personality motivation. The preference for specific values is influenced not only by the adolescent's personality, but also by his interests, needs, attitudes, and various events in his life. The research sample consisted of Slovak adolescents (N=335, girls N=205, boys N=130). The average age was 16.3 years. Our interest was focused on gender differences in the structure of values, measured using the Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ, Schwartz, 2003). The results showed a difference in preferred value structures (statistically significant) between girls and boys. Girls scored higher in the values of self-direction, universalism, openness to change, and self-transcendence.

Keywords: *Adolescents, values, the structure of values, gender.*

1. Introduction

Values play a fundamental role in everyone's life. They are formed and shaped in the process of socialization and acculturation, influencing us throughout our lives. The author Prunner (2002) understands the value in its three meanings - value as a quality of things, on which human efforts are oriented (aimed at satisfying human needs), value as a positive appreciation of the object of human ties (relations), and value as a general criterion based on which various objects are evaluated. All the values preferred by an individual do not have the same weight and meaning for him. According to Duffková (2008), the basis for an individual's value orientation is the set and system of values accepted, recognized, and preferred by him/her - the value orientation itself is then a certain ordering of values expressing what a person prefers and what he/she considers to be significant or more significant than others. The developmental period of adolescence is particularly important in the process of value formation, especially in terms of adolescent identity formation. The value structure directs adolescents in their choice of lifestyle, motivates them to form aspirations and goals, but also the choice of means for their fulfillment, and thus influences the formation of their personality. At the same time, the preference for particular values is influenced not only by the personality of the adolescent, but also by his or her interests, needs, attitudes, and various events in his or her life, and of course by the media and social groups. Value orientation changes and develops throughout life. Due to the development and maturation of the individual during ontogeny, but also, for example, due to the impact of various events that occur in the course of his or her life, shifts in the ranking of values, but also more serious changes (for example, in connection with the stages of a person's life or due to the impact of a strong, traumatic experience) occur.

Our research aimed to find out what values and value orientations are preferred by adolescent boys and girls in Slovakia.

2. Method and research sample

The research sample was composed of 335 Slovak adolescents (N=335, girls N=205, boys N=130) aged from 14 to 18 years (AM=16.3). To detect the values and value orientation of searched sample, we have used PVQ (Portrait Value Questionnaire) an abridged version of a 56-item Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 2003). The questionnaire consists of 21 characters persons and the task of participants was to indicate at a 6-point categorical scale (1. very much like me, 2. like me, 3. somewhat

like me, 4. a little like me, 5. not like me, 6. not like me at all), how much they resemble given portraits. Given portraits of people surveyed ten values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security (the value of the first order). Ten values were possible to combine into four levels higher (2nd order – value orientations). These are Self-Enhancement, Self-Transcendence, Openness to change, and Conservation.

Table 1. Reliability coefficients for the 1st and 2nd order values of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ).

Values - 1 st order	Amount of items	Cronbach's α	Values - 2 nd order	Cronbach's α
Power	2	0.64	Self-Enhancement	0.72
Achievement	2	0.69		
Universalism	3	0.44	Self-Transcendence	0.50
Benevolence	2	0.56		
Hedonism	2	0.71	Openness to change	0.58
Stimulation	2	0.49		
Self-Direction	2	0.45		
Tradition	2	0.31	Conservation	0.43
Conformity	2	0.60		
Security	2	0.56		

3. Results

When we look at the differences in the representation of each value in terms of gender, we see that between boys and girls, the differentiation in the representation of values in adolescents is statistically significant at the 0.1% and 5% levels of significance in the values: *universalism* ($t=-3.39$; $p=0.001$) and *self-determination* ($t=-2.42$; $p=0.016$).

Table 2. Differences in value characters (*t*-test) of adolescent boys ($N=130$) and girls ($N=205$).

Values	AM Boys	AM Girls	T	P
1st order				
1st order				
Universalism	4.73	5.03	-3.39	0.001
Benevolence	4.98	5.11	-1.40	0.163
Conformity	3.81	3.64	1.29	0.197
Tradition	4.18	4.10	0.75	0.456
Security	3.98	4.11	2.75	0.423
Power	3.67	3.53	-0.97	0.330
Achievement	3.98	3.94	0.35	0.729
Hedonism	4.98	5.15	-1.61	0.108
Stimulation	4.09	4.21	-0.85	0.397
Self-Direction	4.73	4.98	-2.42	0.016
2nd order				
Self-Transcendence	4.85	5.07	-2.92	0.004
Self-Enhancement	3.83	3.73	0.74	0.460
Conservation	3.99	3.95	0.455	0.650
Openness to change	4.06	4.78	-2.08	0.039

The aforementioned differences were also reflected in the level of 2nd order values, which means that statistically significant differences in the representation of values emerged between boys and girls in *self-transcendence* ($t=-2.92$; $p=0.004$) and *openness to change* ($t=-2.08$; $p=0.039$) (Table 2).

We observed an increase in values in favor of girls compared to boys in the value of *universalism*, i.e., understanding, appreciation, tolerance, inner harmony, and protection of society and nature. The increase in the structure of girls' values was also shown in *self-determination*, i.e. the need to be independent, to invent new things all the time. In terms of preferred value orientation, it is clear that the difference in terms of gender in adolescent girls showed an increase in *self-transcendence* (formed by universalism and benevolence) and *openness to change* (formed by hedonism, stimulation, and self-determination).

The highest represented value in girls is *hedonism* (characterized by joy and enjoyment of life). The value of *benevolence*, i.e. willingness to help, and being loyal to one's friends, emerged as the second-highest represented value for girls. The third value for girls was *universalism*.

For boys, the values of *benevolence* and *hedonism* were equally highly represented. In the second place, the values of *universalism* and *self-determination* are also equally highly represented. As can be seen, both girls and boys prefer the same values in the first three places, but girls score higher in them.

4. Conclusions

Not only for psychology but also for the field of pedagogy, especially in its practical aspect in educational practice, the knowledge of values and value orientations of adolescents is a key area. One of the, in our opinion, essential tasks of the educator is, within the educational aspect during the educational process, to influence the value system of the pupil in the sense of its formation.

The period of adolescence is particularly important in the life of an adolescent precisely in terms of the formation and shaping of the value structure. We aimed to find out the preference of values and value orientation of Slovak adolescents in terms of gender differences.

Based on the measurements found, girls most prefer the values of hedonism, benevolence, and universalism. Thus, for girls it is important to rejoice and enjoy life, they prefer the willingness to help and to be loyal to their friends, and they value understanding, tolerance, inner harmony, and protection of society and nature. For boys, the preference for the top-ranked values was similar to that of girls, only they were arranged in a different order and with a lower value for their scores. The values of benevolence, hedonism, universalism, and self-determination showed the highest scores for boys.

In the context of gender, we see significant differences in the representation of the 1st order values, namely the values of universalism and self-determination, in favor of higher values for girls compared to boys. Girls more than boys prefer understanding, appreciation, tolerance, inner harmony, and protection of society and nature, but also the need to be independent and to invent new things all the time. The above differences between boys and girls also translated to the level of 2nd order values, namely the higher values of self-transcendence and openness to change in girls.

Various influences from the side of society, whether in terms of the influences of small or large social groups, constantly confront a person's value system with various alternatives, external pressures of different nature, and social changes, which also have a great impact on young people and the educational system. In line with Poliaková (2013), we think that education should be a process of personality cultivation. The formation of values and value orientation of pupils is undoubtedly an important part of it.

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