

RECEPTION OF VALUES AMONG STUDENTS

Dănuț-Vasile JEMNA*, Mihai CURELARU**

Abstract

In order to develop the higher education system, it is important to know the way in which students embrace values. This study presents a range of results obtained following a scientific research on the manner in which students from the university embrace the instrumental, terminal and religious values as well as the relationship existing among these values. The study was conducted in December 2008 on the basis of a statistical sampling survey among the students of the "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iasi. The research highlighted results that confirm a series of hypotheses that meet the typology of the young generation's social life in Romania after 1990. This paper also shows several unexpected outcomes that need the attention of the educational system as well as the accomplishment of new scientific research in this field.

Key words: values, instrumental values, final values, religious values, students

JEL classification: I 20, I 23, Z 12

1. Introduction

The concept of value comes more frequently in the spotlight of research and appears in an increasing number of theoretical and practical scientific researches from very different areas: economy, sociology, psychology, arts etc. In all these studies an important challenge was that of defining the concept of value. The researchers have given definitions to the notion of values in accordance with the perspectives they used. All these definitions can be grouped in two broad categories: the traditional vision and the modern vision. From the viewpoint of the traditional vision, the value is a preference that determines the change: the value is an explicit or an implicit conception referring to what is desirable, influencing the selection of manners, means and goals of an action [Kluckhohn, 1951, 395]. According to Kluckhohn and to the traditional vision, values are hierarchised. With this goal in mind, in order to establish different degrees of generality of the conceptions regarding what is desirable, the author uses the term "value orientation". If applied to the religious value, such an orientation focuses on the personal disposition which determines the relation with all the religious experiences, practices and explanations.

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Another important author that supported the traditional vision is Milton Rokeach. In order to define the values, not only does he emphasize the idea of choice, but also that of persistence in time. According to Rokeach's perspective, "a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" [Rokeach, 1973, 5]. In the light of his traditional vision, Rokeach believes that values are organized in a value system understood as "an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" [Rokeach, 1973, 5]. In his opinion, the values undergo slow changes in relation to the changes within a person. The values are undertaken by means of the socialization and internalization processes. Ultimately, all these are hierarchically organized, according to the importance given by each person in the elaboration of goals and in relation with the whole system of values [Rokeach, 1973, 5].

The working definitions met at various authors highlight a series of characteristics of values: these have a strong social basis, they are not directly noticeable, they refer to the personal and/or social preference, to the persons' behaviour, attitudes and goals and they have a relative stability in time. All these features represent at the same time difficulties that stand in the way of studying the values.

In the last years, the studies on values have recorded an outstanding development in multiple fields of research. The new theoretical and practical developments outstrip the traditional vision and consider that values are not organized in a strict hierarchical system. On the contrary, these approaches show that the individual uses values in very diverse circumstances, as an integrated system, where all values are equally important [Rossteutscher, 2004]. An example of this type of approaches is represented by Shalom Schwartz's approach. He highlights the great importance of values in the establishment of a person's life principles and their trans-situational character [Schwartz, 1996, 1]. Schwartz elaborated a structured model of values that contains two polar dimensions: openness to change vs. conservatism and self enhancement vs. self-transcendence [Schwartz, 1992]. Undertaking a synthesis of the results obtained, Schwartz proposes as a working paradigm a model that comprises an articulated system of values, relying on several socio-demographic variables, on some social behaviours, attitudes and opinions [Schwartz, 1996, 2].

In more recent studies, the focus falls on the relation between values and culture and it is highlighted the fact that in a society the most important values lie at the foundation of norms that govern its fundamental institutions [Schwartz, 1994 and Inglehart, 1997].

In the studies conducted on values it was also highlighted their relation with the religious aspect. Rokeach is one of the first authors that conducted such research [Rokeach, 1969, 2-23, Rokeach, 1969, 24-38]. Of the results obtained, Rokeach brought to light a series of characteristics regarding the reception of values for groups of persons that lie at diametrically opposite ends as far as the religious aspect is concerned. He discovered that the persons with a high level of religiosity adhere more to values such as obedience, salvation and forgiving, while the less religious persons believe in values such as pleasure and independence.

There is another category of researches that were conducted on homogeneous groups of populations such as students. These studies highlighted the relation between values, the level of religiosity and traits of personality as well as the social involvement of the students [Heaven, 1990, Hadden, 1963, Perkins, 1992, Gari, 2005]. The results of these researches enabled the identification of certain types of correlation among values, the level of religios-

ity, the options and subjects' social involvement. Taking into account these studies, we believe that a research field is represented by the manner in which students receive the values and their impact on the educational system.

The studies conducted on values and the religious in Romania are rather scarce and they have been usually undertaken after 1990 [Sandu, 1996, Voicu, 2007, Stan, 2007]. These studies highlighted some characteristics of the Romanian society, on the one hand revealing the specific of a country going through transition, and, on the other hand describing the specific of a country where some values considered traditional stand the test of time and the processes of social change.

This paper analyzes the adherence of students to values, their level of religiosity as well as the correlations among values and the religious.

The study on values existing among students has at its foundation the traditional vision and the distinction that Rokeach makes between two types of values that are functionally inter-connected. These types of values are: instrumental values, that refer to manners or ways of behaviour and terminal values, that refer to goals of existence [Rokeach, 1973, 7]. The instrumental values are classified according to Rokeach into two groups: moral values that deal with persons' interaction and competence values that have a personal character. Between the instrumental and the terminal values we can establish correspondences, either on distinct values, either on sets of values. When studying the values, by means of this classification, we can analyze how an instrumental value can lead to the distortion of one or several other terminal values and also, how a set of instrumental values can change a terminal value [Rokeach, 1973, 8].

In his study on values, Rokeach used a sampling survey where he presented the two dimensions of the values (instrumental values and terminal values), each having 18 values for each group. The task of the subjects under research was to hierarchize the 18 items, for each dimension, according to the importance in their life. In the present study we rejected the idea of hierarchising the items and we opted for their scaling, according to certain models offered by the speciality literature.

When analyzing the level of religiosity we used the speciality literature within which we have identified three instruments of measurement more frequently employed in the study of the religious: the revised measurement scale of the religious motivation of Gorsuch and McPherson [Gorsuch, 1989], the measurement scale of the religious orientation of Francis [Francis, 2007] and the religiosity scale containing 20 items of Joseph and DiDuca [Joseph, 2007]. Through their combination, we have obtained our own measurement instrument that will be presented below.

2. Methodological aspects

The study has at its foundation a statistical sampling survey conducted among the student population within "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iasi.

2.1. The Sample

In the conducted research we have used as a method the proportionally stratified or the representative survey [Jemna, 2005, 126-133] among the student population of the "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iasi. The survey was conducted during December 10-20, 2008. The sample was obtained by means of the stochastic selection among the layers that distrib-

ute the faculties' students in 3 groups: Economics, Humanities and Sciences. The sample met the weighting of each group of the total students studying in the university: 41% from Economics, 42% from Humanities and 17% from Sciences. The sample volume is of 462 subjects, and the subjects were selected from the IInd year students, undergraduate level, Bologna system in order to ensure a high level of homogeneity (we can consider that these subjects are more accustomed with the system, culture and student values).

2.2. The Sampling Survey

For the collection of data about the reception of values among students a sampling survey containing two sections was applied. The first section focuses on the measurement of students' adherence to the instrumental and terminal values. In the survey from this paper, we kept the basic dimensions as well as the order and form of the items, while the measurement was made by means of a 6 step scale (from 1 representing of very little importance to 6 meaning of very great importance in life). The decision to use this instrument was taken due to Moore's studies [Moore, 1975, 405-408] and Rankin and Grube's studies [Rankin, 1980, 233-246]. In these studies the two assessment procedures are compared: the ranking procedure and the rating procedure. In their researches, the authors show that there are not significant differences between the two types of measurement. At Moore's suggestion [Moore, 1975, 405], we preferred the scaling, this one being easier to be applied to the survey's subjects. The scaling also brings considerable advantages as regards the quantity of information and the possibility of data processing.

The second section constitutes a survey of religious values that contains a set of 28 statements. For each of the statement the respondents can offer a score from 1 to 6 for their degree of agreement with these statements (1 means total disagreement and 6 means total agreement). The survey was built in order to measure four dimensions of the religiosity: the preoccupation (or the importance) given to religion, the convictions (the beliefs), the emotional involvement (the religious feeling) and the guidance by God. Each dimension was turned operational through 7 items and the subjects' answers are requested on six steps' scales attached to these items (from 1 meaning total agreement to 6 meaning total disagreement). In the survey, the items resulted from operationalization were mixed.

2.3. The Variables

The survey section about instrumental and terminal values allows building a numerical variable for each and every item, meaning as a whole 36 variables. These ones have their variation field within the interval (1; 6). Moreover, for each set of values from the two survey sections, three variables were built, each of them summing up the score obtained by every respondent for the instrumental, terminal and religious values (Instrum_value, Terminal_value, Religious). The reliability test conducted for the data obtained by each survey enabled the calculation of the total score for each group of values. After the testing the following results were obtained for Cronbach's Alpha: 0.881 for instrumental values, 0.907 for terminal values and 0.978 for religious values. The scores obtained for the variables built on the basis of instrumental and terminal values range within the interval [18, 108], and for the variable that measures religiosity the variation interval is [28, 168].

3. Presentation of results

As follows we present a synthesis of the results obtained in the research, after the analysis of data collected during the survey.

3.1. Reception of religious values

In order to measure the level of religiosity, a numerical variable (*Religious*) that totals the scores awarded by the students to the 28 items was built. This variable has the minimum value 28, which shows the lowest level of religiosity among students and the maximum value is 168 and indicates the highest level of religiosity of the students.

The descriptive statistical results concerning the religiosity level are presented in Table 1. The average level of the variable shows a high religious level of the students, the average value being punctually estimated by the score 122.47. This average value is representative for the student population, fact also confirmed by the value of the variation coefficient equal to 0.267, calculated by means of the average and of Standard deviation. For a level of confidence of 0.95, the confidence interval that covers the population's average from which the sample was taken is the following: (119.49; 125.46).

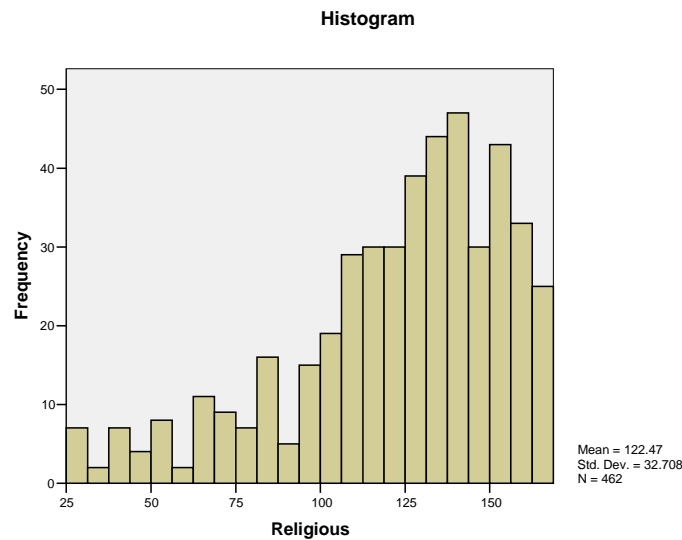
Students' distribution according to their religiosity level (Figure 1) is asymmetric to the right and shows a high inclination of students towards religious values. Quartile 1 has the value 107, which shows that 25% of the students awarded to the religious values a total score in the interval (28; 107), and the rest of 75% awarded a score within the interval (107; 168).

The explanation for such a receptivity of religious values among students can be interpreted by means of the cultural tradition of Romanians. The opinion surveys constantly indicate that in Romania the institution in which the Romanians have the highest confidence is the Church. At least at the level of opinions, the Romanians think themselves as religious people while other speciality studies should indicate how much of this adherence is translated in the social life.

Table no 1. Descriptive statistics for religious values

Descriptives			Statistic	Std. Error
Religious	Mean		122,47	1,522
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	119,48	
		Upper Bound	125,46	
	5% Trimmed Mean		124,67	
	Median		131,00	
	Variance		1069,798	
	Std. Deviation		32,708	
	Skewness		-,967	,114
	Kurtosis		,418	,227

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of the survey results



Source: chart done by the authors on the basis of the survey results

Figure no. 1. Students' distribution according to the religiosity level

3.2. Reception of instrumental values

For each variable used in the measurement of the degree of reception of instrumental values the following descriptive statistical indicators were calculated, the average and the standard deviation being presented in Table 2. The analysis of the indicators shows that the students gave the lowest average score, in order, to the following three values: *Obedient (dutiful, respectful)*, *Forgiving (willing to pardon others)* and *Imaginative (daring, creative)*. The highest average scores were given, in order, to the following three values: *Responsible (reliable)*, *Clean (neat, tidy)* and *Polite (courteous, well-mannered)*. This type of embracing instrumental values is very interesting and can be interpreted in correlation with the present social context of Romania.

Firstly, the polarity *Obedient – Responsible* can be distinguished, being related to the recent history of Romania. Students seem not to trust anymore the value of submission that underwent such a dramatic contamination during the communist era transmitting nowadays only negative connotations to the young generation. For the higher education system, it is important to receive this signal and to make an effort to rehabilitate the meaning of this fundamental value during the educational period. At the opposite end, the responsibility value seems to have become an option of the young educated generation in Romania contrasting with what presently happens in the public area, and representing a potential solution for the rejuvenation of the Romanian society. As regards this option, the university should take action and guide this value in order to make the educational process more efficient.

Secondly, we notice a poor reception of the value forgiving among students. This could also be related to the recent history of Romania, but it seems to conflict with the high adherence of students to the religious values. An explanation for this incongruity remains to be discovered through the analysis of the relation between instrumental and terminal values, as well as through conducting other speciality research.

Thirdly, we should signal the poor reception among students of the creativity value. It is difficult to find explanations for this position of students towards this essential value in the educational process. This option is definitely a signal that should worry the academic environment where the students get trained.

Table no. 2. Mean and standard deviation for each instrumental value

Value	Mean	Std. deviation
Obedient	3.690	1.376
Forgiving	4.325	1.200
Imaginative	4.537	1.142
Helpful	4.593	1.135
Courageous	4.721	1.073
Loving	4.721	1.206
Logical	4.771	1.014
Cheerful	4.842	1.053
Independent	4.898	1.035
Intellectual	4.950	0.936
Ambitious	4.955	1.039
Honest	4.961	1.053
Capable	5.039	0.942
Open Minded	5.041	0.982
Self-Controlled	5.045	1.033
Polite	5.113	0.993
Clean	5.286	0.984
Responsible	5.305	0.924

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of survey results

3.3. Reception of terminal values

As in the case of instrumental values, we undertook a classification of the reception of terminal values according to the average score recorded at the level of the student sample (Table 3). A first observation that could be done regarding the average scores of these variables is that these are relatively high (higher than 4.5), which shows that the students adhere in a high level to the terminal values. The lowest average score is obtained, in order, for the following three values: *A world of beauty (beauty of nature and arts)*, *Salvation (saved, eternal life)*, *An exciting life (a stimulating, active life)*. The highest average score, in order, is obtained by the following three values: *Family security (taking care of loved ones)*, *Happiness (contentedness)* and *Freedom (independence, free choice)*.

It is not at all surprising that in the top of terminal values we find again the value family as, in the Romanian society, most of the sociological studies show that family represent one of most important traditional values. In the context of the present Romanian society and its recent history, the high adherence to the values happiness and freedom is easy to explain.

Table no. 3. Mean and standard deviation for each final value

Value	Mean	Std. deviation
A world of beauty	4.543	1.197
Salvation	4.647	1.444
An exciting life	4.708	1.096
Pleasure	4.840	1.100
Social recognition	4.857	1.083
National security	4.872	1.142
A world at peace	4.909	1.175
A comfortable life	4.911	1.009
Equality	5.089	1.094
True friendship	5.277	1.008
Mature love	5.279	1.059
Inner harmony	5.286	0.975
Self-respect	5.323	0.919
Wisdom	5.338	0.830
A sense of accomplishment	5.370	0.933
Freedom	5.400	0.805
Happiness	5.444	0.841
Family security	5.528	0.819

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of the survey results

At the opposite end, it is surprising to ascertain that among students, the value *exciting life*, even with a high score, remains one of the last values the students opt for. The choice for the value *salvation*, even though being placed on the last positions, seems to enter into conflict with the high adherence to students' religious values. Nevertheless, the value *salvation* is scaled in relation to the system of the other terminal values, for which the students gave higher scores. It is also a mystery the placement on the last position of the value *beauty*. A possible explanation would be the pragmatic influence of the present society and the difficulties that the young in general and the students in particular face in finding paths for material and professional accomplishment. No matter what the source of influence, such a placement of the value *beauty* on the last position by students can raise questions regarding the implications on their training process.

3.4. The relation between the religious and the instrumental and terminal values

After the separate analysis of the statistical distributions built by means of the variables used in the survey, it was analyzed the relation between the religious and the instrumental and terminal values.

3.4.1. The correlation between the religious and the instrumental values

The statistical analysis between the variable that measures the religiosity level and the 18 variables that measure the adherence to instrumental values led to the following results:

- the religiosity level is explained significantly by the adherence degree to the following 6 instrumental values: *Ambitious, Open Minded, Clean, Helpful, Cheerful, Obedient*. The regression coefficients of the multiple linear regression model that explain the correlation between the religious and these variables are presented in Table 4;
- of the 6 variables, the variable *Open Minded* correlates negatively with the dependent variable Religious and has the highest relative contribution to the explanation of the religiosity level. The higher the adherence of a student to the value *Open Minded*, the lowest his level of religiosity and the other way round (the estimated value of the regression coefficient is -7.15).
- within the regression model, the variable *Obedient* has the most important direct or positive contribution when explaining the religiosity level of the students, although we showed that it is the variable within the group of the 3 variables with the lowest score given by the students to the instrumental values. This result suggests that for students the value obedience is connected rather with the religious, while as regards the instrumental values, that is values related to ways of achieving goals, obedience does not have the same importance any longer;
- the variable *Forgiving*, that is also less embraced by the students of the instrumental values, does not have a significant influence on the religiosity level.

Table no. 4. Regression coefficients for religious and instrumental values

Model		Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
13	(Constant)	47.490	9.725		4.883	.000
	Ambitious	5.682	1.393	.181	4.081	.000
	Open Minded	-7.159	1.502	-.215	-4.765	.000
	Clean	4.656	1.593	.140	2.924	.004
	Helpful	3.406	1.364	.118	2.496	.013
	Cheerful	4.474	1.238	.165	3.615	.000
	Obedient	5.836	1.056	.246	5.526	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Religious

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of the survey results

3.4.2. The correlation between the religious and the terminal values

The statistical analysis of the relation between the variable that measures the religiosity level and the 18 variables that measure the adherence to the terminal values led to the following results:

- the religiosity level is explained significantly by the adherence degree to the following 6 terminal values: *An exciting life, Equality, Family Security, Freedom, Salvation, Social recognition*. The regression coefficients of the multiple linear regression model are presented in Table 5;
- the variables *An exciting life* and *Freedom* are negatively correlated with the variable *Religious*. The more active the students are and the more they value freedom, the less religious they are and the other way round;

- the variable that has the most important contribution to the religiosity level is the variable *Salvation*, that is listed among the three instrumental values the least valued by the students.

Table no. 5. Regression coefficients for religious and terminal values

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
13	(Constant)	40.512	8.513		4.759	.000
	An exciting life	-3.170	1.057	-.106	-2.999	.003
	Equality	4.308	1.131	.144	3.810	.000
	Family security	5.003	1.636	.125	3.058	.002
	Freedom	-4.847	1.607	-.119	-3.017	.003
	Salvation	13.379	.847	.591	15.788	.000
	Social recognition	2.329	1.100	.077	2.116	.035

a. Dependent Variable: Religious

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of the survey results

3.4.3. The correlation between the religious and the instrumental and terminal values

After the analysis of the way in which the 36 variables measuring the adherence to the instrumental and terminal values determine the students' religiosity level, the following results were obtained:

- only 9 of the 36 variables have significant influence on the religiosity level, of which 4 are instrumental values: , *Open Minded*, *Courageous*, *Obedient*, and 5 are terminal values: *An exciting life*, *Equality*, *Family Security*, *Freedom*, *Salvation*;
- in the model obtained, according to data from Table 6, there are the same terminal values having significant influence on the religiosity level that are preserved, while when referring to the instrumental values there were some changes: the variable *Courageous* appears as a significant variable and the variables *Clean*, *Helpful* and *Cheerful* fall in the category of the non-significant statistical variables;
- three variables are negatively correlated with the religiosity level: two are terminal values (*An exciting life*, *Freedom*) and one is instrumental (*Open Minded*);
- the variable *Salvation* has the highest contribution in explaining the students' religiosity level.

Table no. 6. Regression coefficients for religious, instrumental and terminal values

Model		Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
28	(Constant)	30.932	8.696		3.557	.000
	An exciting life	-3.202	1.017	-.107	-3.147	.002
	Equality	4.041	1.078	.135	3.749	.000
	Family security	4.606	1.552	.115	2.967	.003
	Freedom	-4.454	1.580	-.110	-2.818	.005
	Salvation	12.383	.825	.547	15.017	.000
	Ambitious	4.340	1.050	.138	4.135	.000
	Open Minded	-4.468	1.175	-.134	-3.801	.000
	Courageous	3.323	1.073	.109	3.097	.002
	Obedient	3.367	.768	.142	4.383	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Religious

Source: calculations done by the authors on the basis of the survey results

For the regression model which is formed of the 9 explanatory variables and the religiosity level the following results are viable:

- the multiple correlation ratio is 0.766 and the multiple determination ratio is 0.587 (the independent variables explain the variance of the religiosity level in a 58.7% proportion);
- the Fisher test shows that the correlation ratio is statistically significant for a confidence degree of 1%;
- as the Student test shows, the regression coefficients for the 9 variables are statistically significant ($sigt = 0$);
- the residual variable meets the hypotheses of the traditional regression model: the average is non-significantly different from zero, normality, homoskedascity, independence.

In other words, the econometric model that has the regression coefficients presented in Table 6 allows the explanation of the variance of the religiosity level by means of the variation of the 9 variables under quality statistical circumstances.

4. Conclusions

The study conducted on the adherence to the religious, instrumental and terminal values of the university students as well as on their correlation has brought about some conclusions that could be grouped in two categories: conclusions that confirm specific expectations and hypotheses about the behaviour of the young generation in the Romanian post-communist society and unexpected conclusions that give birth to questions, calling for new speciality studies in this area.

The students from the University of Iasi preserve a set of characteristics specific to a subject that takes part in a transition process, where one can notice the inertness of certain traditional values which are very important considering their identity, as well as the reaction to some negative effects of the old system. Thus, the students feel a strong attachment to values such as politeness and tidiness (of the instrumental values), family and happiness (of

the terminal values), but they have a certain reaction towards obedience and forgiving that they perceive in the poorest manner. At the same time, within the framework of the Romanian society and a long cultural and religious tradition, the students claim a high level of religiosity.

It is surprising to discover at the student population under analysis that terminal values such as beauty and an active life, as well as the instrumental value creativity are poorly represented. Such a situation raises questions concerning the way in which the reception of these values influence the educational process, as well as questions about the sources of influence on the students that determine such a reception (the social space, the pre-higher education). It is also unexpected that values such as forgiving and redemption, that hold a strong religious resonance, are the poorest embraced values, of the instrumental and terminal values. This situation can suggest that students think of the religious as a distinctive problem that deals less with their goals in life as well as with the means to attain these goals (phenomenon specific to the secularism).

When the religious is analyzed in relation with the instrumental and the terminal values, we notice that the values forgiving and redemption play the most important role in explaining the religiosity level of the students. It should be mentioned that the religiosity level negatively correlates with values such as *An exciting life*, *Freedom* and *Open Minded*. This aspect is not surprising as it confirms the hypotheses met in the speciality literature about the religious orientation. Still, it remains to be analyzed why the students do not appreciate the values submission and forgiving of the instrumental values group associating them with the religious.

The research undertaken raises new questions and can open new practical and theoretical research directions. The research mainly shows that studies should be conducted to highlight the relation between the students' opinion and behaviour, as well as about the relation between the religious and the social life, the extent to which a high adherence to religious values has or does not have implications on the social life. From the perspective of the academic education it is also important to study the way in which the students' poor adherence to values such as obedience, creativity, an exciting life and beauty has direct implications on their education.

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