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Hungarian Nationality Ethnic Minorities Living in Poverty and Social Exclusion in Ukraine

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Abstract. The purpose of the article is to give an overall description of the situation of Hungarian minority households with children in Ukrainian villages. The region is a marginal area both economically and geographically, being in a peripheral position with little attention falling upon it and even less of the development sources. Furthermore, there is a lack of information on welfare benefits, and no direct statistical data are available on the characteristics of the social policy system.

As for the total lack of prior statistics on poverty, this essay is meant to be exploratory to show the area's poverty features, focusing on the children. By the use of combined data collection, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, we gained information by questionnaire surveys of about 253 children in 139 households. There were carried out 23 exploratory interviews as well. The core of our analysis is the specific labour market situation, the earning opportunities, and forms of employment that provide for livelihoods for the households with children. Besides the backwardness of the area studied in the research, the strategies and life situations that characterize the Transcarpathian Hungarians are also presented, which are beyond the known European forms of poverty.

Keywords: Transcarpathian Hungarians, households with children, poverty, deprivation, job market, income acquisition, atypical work forms

Introduction

In our study, we explore the situation of minority Hungarian households with children in Ukrainian villages, primarily through the characteristics of the poverty and the exclusion of the families living there. According to the most recent census

data available in Ukraine (2001), the number of Hungarians living there is 151,500, thus being the second largest minority group in the country (Molnár–Molnár 2005). The newest available SUMMA 2017 survey (demographic survey of Transcarpathian Hungarians) estimates the Hungarian population to be 131,000, which indicates a population loss of 13.7% in the region. The majority (73.8%) live at a distance of up to 20 kilometres from the border with Hungary (Gyémánt 2011). The majority of the Hungarian population of the Transcarpathia region lives in villages (63.6%), while, for example, the Russian minority communities live predominantly in urban areas (Braun et al. 2010). Educational levels have improved since 2001, and Hungarian institutions of higher education in Transcarpathia have a huge role in that. Based on SUMMA 2017 data, 16% of the population has at least a bachelor's degree, while the percentage of those not finishing elementary school is under 1% (Tátrai et al. 2018). In the area inhabited by Hungarians, the only livelihood insurance sector is agriculture. One of the most important reasons for this is that the large industrial companies have gone bankrupt and, as a result, many people moved back to the villages (Baranyi–Balcsók 2004). In some Hungarian-populated settlements, this could be up to 100 percent. The peripheral labour market position has an adverse impact on the employment-generated income that can be obtained locally (Sik 2015). The population of the settlements in such a situation is forced to keep up themselves and their families from illegal work. Safe livelihood in many cases is provided by the proximity of the Hungarian border (Gyémánt 2011).

Viewed from the capital, the region is a marginal area both economically and geographically, being in a peripheral position with little attention falling upon it and even less of the development sources. In recent years, the acceptance of work immigration has increased among the Hungarians; this strategy plays a significant role in livelihood security. At the same time, a wide range of livelihood strategies has emerged at the crossroads of legal and illegal, formal and informal solutions (Kovály et al. 2017). According to The World Factbook released by the Central Intelligence Agency (2010), 24.1 percent of Ukraine's population lives below the poverty line, but in this aspect detailed data are not available in the country's statistics. Also, there is a lack of information on welfare benefits, and no direct statistical data are available on the characteristics of the social policy system.

Transcarpathia is the poorest area of the Carpathian Basin; it is in a marginal position compared to Ukraine as a whole. In terms of standard of living, according to information provided by the Bureau of Statistics of Ukraine, in 2012, 22.3 percent of the population lived below the established pension minimum of 1,042.42 hryvnia (UAH) in Subcarpathia. The GDP fell by 7% in 2014 and by more than 10% in 2015. Food prices have multiplied, while wages and pensions have increased by only 8-10%. Inflation was enormous: 24.9% in 2014, 43% in 2015, and 12% in 2016. In Subcarpathia, the average wages were significantly lower than the Ukrainian average wages. According to the Ukrainian Bureau of Statistics, the average monthly salary

in Subcarpathia on 1 January 2016 was 3,419 hryvnia (UAH), while the Ukrainian average was 4,362 hryvnia (UAH) (Kovály et al. 2017).

In the absence of recent data, the regional characteristics of the area can be inferred from the findings of the Carpathian Panel 2007. This survey was carried out by Eleonóra Molnár and Ildikó Orosz in Transcarpathia on a sample of 350 persons, using a multistage random sampling method at household level. According to their results, the average monthly salary of the active age employees is 767 UAH, while the inactive persons earn 446 UAH (Molnár–Orosz 2007).

The officially estimated unemployment rate in Transcarpathia was 10.2% in 2017, which is similar to the Ukrainian average (9.6%). At the same time, analysts consider that hidden unemployment is the most serious problem in both Transcarpathia and Ukraine. According to the most conservative estimates, the unemployment rate should be three to four times higher, i.e. about one in four. A value of 30-40% most closely reflects reality (Kovály et al. 2017).

The question of language use is a further disadvantage, basically defining the living conditions of the Hungarians in Ukraine. In Ukraine, the Ukrainian language is the language of official affairs in Hungarian-speaking areas as well. As the majority of the Hungarian minority does not speak the Ukrainian language, there is an insurmountable difficulty in solving the simplest everyday situations, let alone office affairs, employment, and healthcare or school affairs.

The infrastructural supply of the Hungarians of Transcarpathia is extremely incomplete. The construction of a fixed natural gas system was made back in the Soviet era, but its development stopped after the regime change. The later developments were concentrated on Ukrainian villages, so there are also settlements covered by our research where there is still no natural gas. The drinking water system is not built at all in 77% of the settlements, and only 13% can be considered completely solved. Sewerage is even worse: 82% of the respondents do not have access to a built network. Refuse collection can be considered to be solved for 65 percent, and for 25 percent it is completely missing (Darcsi 2008).

During the 2001 census in Transcarpathia, 1.1 percent of the population (14,004) declared themselves as having Roma ethnicity. Two-thirds of them speak Hungarian as their mother tongue, and in the case of rural Gypsies this exceeds even 80 percent. The proportion of the unemployed is extremely high among them as well. Geographically speaking, they live in specific parts of villages or towns, mostly in "camps" (Gypsy settlements), in segregated conditions, away from centres and the otherwise scarcely accessible institutional services. The infrastructural services of their own settlements do not reach them, so there is usually no fixed water supply, gas supply, or sewerage where all these are otherwise available in the given settlement (Braun et al. 2010). Local Gypsy groups differentiate their groups according to their self-identified categories, which is accepted and used by the local non-Gypsy population as well. According to these, three groups within the local

Gypsy population can be identified as follows: the uppermost layer is the *uci*, i.e. the wealthy, rich group of Gypsies; the middle layer is the *váci*, the adobe bricklayer group, including traditional Gypsy craftsmen and other physical workers; the lowest and poorest layer is the *döci* group of carrion eaters – they are the ones who consume even the bodies of the fallen animals (Loncsák 2015).

The Complexity of Poverty

The constellation of poverty and wealth is at the core of interpreting and understanding the distribution of inequalities in a society and the different advantages and disadvantages that stem from them (Csepeli et al. 1992). Traditional societies relied on a deterministic interpretation of this dichotomy; to quote the authors: "it was dependent on assuming societal causes" (Csepeli et al. 1992: 21). In contrast, modern societies which put emphasis on individual performance as well as on individual freedom and responsibility have shifted towards a focus on individual causes for explaining privileged versus disadvantaged positions in society. Individual lives are increasingly determined by key prerequisites to a good life. Life chances are more and more dependent on accumulated knowledge, cultural and social capital. Childhood is the most dominant life stage in this, and one of the most impactful factors are interactions between parental and social investments during childhood (Esping-Andersen 2008).

Scholars have categorized and interpreted the complex phenomenon of poverty in multiple ways, viewing it as a social fact that cannot be seen solely as an objective state; it is also a social construction created by members of a given community. Any concept that has ever been established to describe and explain poverty has its own social history, embedded in particular political, economic, and social processes that were present at its inception. Thus, some researchers, dependent on their leanings, have used specific paradigms to support their ideologies (Silver 1996). At the same time, poverty and its manifestations are difficult to interpret outside of a given social environment. We could argue that concepts and devised paradigms to explain poverty are largely shaped by the political culture, social structure, dominant ideology, and social policies of a given society. Therefore, it is a strenuous job to provide an accurate definition which is demonstrated by the arguments above. As a result, it is not extraordinary to have different concepts of poverty simultaneously. Different definitions of poverty lead to distinct versions of poverty to discuss. This does not mean that we do not have – even if not comprehensive – scientific theories regarding poverty.

To mention a sole author, Szalai (2002) distinguishes between temporary and long-term poverty by categorizing the poor into two categories: those poor in income, who are struggling to earn a decent living, and the truly underprivileged, i.e. the marginalized

and excluded, living in absolute poverty. The poor in income group exists because of "simple" distribution issues; either because incomes in certain segments of the labour force fall under the level that is necessary for everyday sustenance or because incomes lose some of their value. This group of the poor still belongs to the majority of society because once their income increases they can restabilize their position and return to the spheres ruled by the majority. The truly underprivileged and excluded are in a completely different situation as they have either never had those ties to society or they have lost them, and so they cannot reintegrate themselves into society. What the socially excluded have in common is a long history of poverty, potentially spanning decades, and the extent of their poverty is extreme and absolute (Szalai 2002).

Various discourses about poverty are generated by varying beliefs regarding the nature and extent of poverty as well as the sources of social inequalities and long-term unemployment. These tend to follow modernization patterns. Variations in the definitions and social histories of poverty also lead to methodological deviations in the indicators and measurement of the phenomenon in each country as well as to different practices in social policy and different philosophical principles behind them. As a result, guided by varying social realities, countries can have not only a distinct interpretation and measurement of poverty but different terms to refer to it as well. This study explores types of poverty, their causes and correlations among households with children in Hungarian villages in Transcarpathia.[2]

In our analysis, due to the general and extreme levels of poverty experienced by households with children in the region, we were unable to apply relative poverty measurement techniques. Therefore, the results of our research are presented on the basis of the deprivation characteristics of the examined population using the European Union's *At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion* (AROPE) indicator system.

Research Methodology

In our exploratory research, we examined the quality of life, the forms of poverty and social exclusion of households with children in villages inhabited by Hungarians. For this, we used both quantitative and qualitative data survey tools. The quantitative data survey methodology was based on the joint application of two questionnaires.[3] The first questionnaire asked about the structure, income, employment opportunities, housing situation, social support systems, and subjective well-being of households. With the second questionnaire, whose purpose was to collect data about children,

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[2]   In this study, we rely on our own works published in Hungarian: Czibere–Loncsák–Gégény (ed.) 2017; Czibere–Loncsák 2018.

[3]   We relied on the classic questionnaire used in research studies on children's poverty and children's chances, developed by the Hungarian Children's Chances Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and we adapted and supplemented it with questions related to the area.

we measured the fulfilment of the physical needs of children (nutrition, clothing, developmental toys and devices, etc.), their state of health, their physical and mental state of development, the chances of access to kindergarten care, school performance, services available in schools, and parental aspirations for children's future and their further education. A separate questionnaire was completed for each child in the households visited. The presentation of children's poverty is not a purpose of our present study. The qualitative research supplemented the results of questionnaire surveys, in which 23 interviews were made with Gypsies and non-Gypsies. Data collection took place in 2016.

Sampling

During the sampling process, we encountered methodological difficulties due to the almost complete lack of regional and local population data. Population and settlement-level data for the surveyed area and the selected settlements were available only from the 2001 census, and there were no household or age-group distributions or other information beyond settlement size. During the selection of settlements, we kept in mind that the settlements were inhabited by Hungarians to a great extent (above 50 percent) and, secondly, that there were three settlements that represented a typical category in the region. Apart from the central town of the region (Beregovo), the villages play a decisive role. The villages fall into three types according to the number of inhabitants: those with 500 to 1,000, those with 1,500 to 2,000, and those with about 3,000 inhabitants. Research sites were selected based on these categories.

Since we did not have reliable population data, we could not determine exactly how many polls would be required in the selected settlements or basically what the population was in the settlement or what the number of households with children would be, and so we visited the region's key intelligence expert on local issues, who had a "volunteer mediator"[4] role between the local population and the Ukrainian authorities, institutions, and providers in the three selected settlements and acted as their personal agent for managing their official affairs. For this reason, this person had important information about villagers and households with children. Due to the lack of municipal statistical data, the questionnaire data collection would not have been possible without our local assistant's information in this area. In each of the three settlements, we sought out homes with children based on street plans prepared

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4   "The mediator carries out the task that the local government or its organs in European countries would have. In everyday life, this means that the mediator speaks the official language, knows and understands the rights and laws, and occupied an official position during the Soviet era, so he knows the system, and the system knows him. He provides people with information about the benefits and entitlements that are available to them 'on a courtesy basis' as well as does the submitting of official applications and documents for a minimum remuneration. He does, in one person, the handling of official affairs, not just in the field of social care, for the people living in the settlement and some surrounding settlements" (Loncsák 2015 – authors' translation).

by our informant. In the majority of the cases, the respondent was the mother or the closest adult relative of the children who was in the house when we were there. For each child in the household, a separate questionnaire was also completed. Data were collected from 139 households and 253 children altogether (*Table 1*).

Table 1. *Number of questionnaires per settlement*

Settlement	Settlement 1 3,147 inhabitants	Settlement 2 1,502 inhabitants	Settlement 3 752 inhabitants	Total
Household questionnaires	96	25	18	139
Children questionnaires	181	40	32	253
Total	277	65	50	392

Source: Data collected by the authors

According to the quantitative results, primary education can be considered as the highest (29.4%) level of educational attainment in almost one third of the households, but the proportion of upper secondary education – but not yet graduate – (45.3%) is outstandingly high, and, within this, the rate of secondary vocational education is similarly high (32.4%). Higher education is present only in 8.6 percent of the households. In almost half of the households, we found family members with at least secondary education, but the number of graduates is extremely low. We presupposed that the level of educational attainment would have an impact on poverty, but this linkage did not prove effective due to the general poverty of households in the settlements surveyed.

The qualitative data collection was done based on expert sampling. The 23 exploratory interviews took place in one single selected settlement, 3 of the interviews were made with local decision makers (church leader, volunteer mediator, a civilian supporter of Gypsy families), and 20 with people affected by poverty. The interviewees were selected on the basis of two main criteria. On the one hand, we looked for households and families where the breadwinner did not have a secure income and, on the other hand, we interviewed people who self-identified as poor. This secondary criterion ultimately proved to be a more important selection factor on the spot than a secure income because the inhabitants of the settlement live in such a deep poverty that the majority of the population do not have a secure income, and so almost the same level of extremely low standard of living is present among the people living there. Out of our interviewees, 10 were of Gypsy[5] and 10 of non-Gypsy origin. The interviews supported, supplemented, or provided a more detailed explanation of the results of our questionnaire survey.

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5   We considered Gypsies those who were held as such by the mediator.

The Living Standard and Deprivation Features of Households

The Structure of Cohabitations

In the households that were interviewed, the three-to-six-person cohabitation is typical, while households with two persons are not so typical. In the majority of the 139 households, one (45.3%) or two children (33.1%) are raised, and in one in five households there are three or more children.

As for the features of the family structure, more than half of the family members live in an extended family (53.6%), i.e. among the household members living together there are other adult family members besides the children and their parents. These are forced coexistences, where parents allow their adult children to continue living with their own family after being married.

Housing Conditions of the Households

Bad housing conditions and housing poverty can lead to a persistent stagnation of the situation of people living in poverty and is one of the strongest factors of passing on poverty. That was the reason we studied the housing conditions of the families visited, in which we asked about the furnishing, comfort level, the physical condition of the apartments, and the quality of the living environment. According to our results, the comfort of families with children is extremely low. There is a separate kitchen in almost every building, but only 64 percent of households have their own bathroom, and there is a flush toilet in only every second house (47 percent). Drinking water supply is critical. Only 18.7% of households have access to water supply, while the rest of the households needs to solve the problem of water access themselves (the drinking water network is not properly built in the Hungarian villages examined in our research). This also means that four-fifths of households use non-drinking water for their cooking, cleaning, or washing needs. Gypsies live in segregated, estate-like conditions. They own their apartments, part of which is brick-built with one or more rooms built after the great flood of 2001. The houses are damp, mouldy, the plaster is falling off, and the doors and the insulation are missing. Typically, there is no bathroom or flush toilet. The lack of utilities is solved with different techniques. According to their statements, electricity is the most important thing, its payment being a primary need. The problem of the heating and of drinking water can be easily solved by alternative methods. Firewood is picked from the forest, while drinking water comes from drilled wells or asked for from residents on the street if there happens to be no water in their own well.

Deprivation Features

When designing our research, we wanted to measure the relative poverty level (based on income level) among households with children, and we wanted to make a difference between the poor and the non-poor households according to the dimensions examined. However, because of the circumstances described above, mainly due to the generally widespread poverty, we could not measure the poverty level by the income level, and, consequently, we could not identify separate groups. Therefore, we decided to distinguish between groups of households with children in the three settlements on the basis of consumption poverty (deprivation).

The Europe 2020 Strategy Indicators (Európai Bizottság 2010) identify the broadest possible range of those at the risk of poverty and social exclusion. The complex poverty and exclusion index (AROPE – At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion) defined that those people are exposed to the risk who live in either income-related poverty or in poor or low-skilled households (work-related poverty) or people with severe financial deprivation (they suffer the lack of at least four out of nine consumer items for financial reasons). Accordingly, 8.1% of the total population in the European Union (EU) is severely deprived (reference year: 2014). Their highest rate is in Bulgaria (34.2%) and the lowest in Sweden (0.7%) (KSH 2016). In the EU, the biggest difficulty for the population is to cover unexpected expenses (37.3%) or a one week's rest (34.3%). In Hungary, 16.2% of the total population – twice the EU average – is severely deprived (reference year: 2015) (KSH 2016). Similarly to the EU results, the biggest difficulty for the Hungarian population is to cover unexpected expenses and to finance a one week's vacation, but, concerning half of the population, their rates are much higher than the EU rates in both cases. No data had been collected for these contexts in the area under our review, so there was no prior information on the proportion of people living in risk of poverty and exclusion or on the status of those affected.

Households in financial deprivation were identified by the deprivation index formed from the variables in the database. Households (and those living in them) were considered deprived if they were affected by at least three of the nine dimensions of financial deprivation (AROPE – At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion), and they were considered seriously deprived if they were affected by at least four of the nine dimensions:

1. they have arrears of loan repayment or any payment in relation to their home;
2. lack of adequate heating of their dwelling;
3. lack of cover for unexpected expenditure;
4. failure to consume meat, fish, or equivalent nutrition every two days;
5. lack of yearly one-week out-of-home holiday stay;
6. not having a car for financial reasons;
7. not having a washing machine for financial reasons;

8. not having a colour TV for financial reasons;

9. not having a telephone for financial reasons.

Depending on the deprivation index, half of the households with children were deprived, and almost two-thirds of the deprived (69.6%) were seriously deprived. Considering all households, 34.8 percent of families are seriously deprived, indicating extremely critical levels of poverty.

In 52% of deprived and seriously deprived households, there is no active workforce with declared income; for them, even the most unpredictable occasional work and the social benefits for children are decisive. Families in such circumstances live in complete insecurity and financial vulnerability, most of them lacking any savings (88.5%). In addition to the poverty of consumption, there was considerable financial uncertainty for them. In the case of nearly two-thirds of the respondents, it happened in the past year that they had spent all their money before the end of the month. Poor financial situation also entails indebtedness. When examining the indebtedness of households with children, we asked whether they had any debt and, if so, where it came from. Indebtedness affects 26.6 percent of households with children. The debt structure has a specific composition: it is primarily determined by the complexity of the consumption structure of the households surveyed. Debtors mostly fall into 1 to 3 categories, most notably due to gas or electricity billing, shopping debts, and family/friend/acquaintance debts.

Based on the responses from the supplementary interviews, we identified three categories of income in the households: those who live only on aid, those who live mostly on aid, and those who live only on occasional work. For those who live only on aid, there are more factors that make their livelihoods more difficult: e.g. persistent illnesses, large number of children, steady lender's loans, illiteracy, and poor housing conditions. This category appeared only among our Gypsy respondents. The category of people who live only on occasional work is common to both groups in that they do not have adequate housing conditions either, but the Gypsies included in this category also have debts towards the usurer. In families with occasional work and aid, aid (primarily maternity allowance for children) provides some kind of constant security. Upon payment, this is usually taken directly to the village store as they have been buying on credit for a whole month. In this system, the shopkeeper keeps track of the amount of the aid and that of the expected income according to which shopping can be done in advance in a given month.

> Well, it's good for us, here is this supermarket, Ildikó runs it, and I get everything there on credit, and then when the child benefit arrives, we pay it back. It's always okay in the end, and now she trusts us; even as much as 600 or 700 hryvnias are collected, and then, when the child benefit arrives, we give it back, and then if something is still missing or we need soap or washing liquid, then we go and she adds it to the list. It's good for her as well as for us;

> there is more of all this in the shop, she wouldn't sell all in one, and so she gives it to us, and you never forget to give the money. (a non-Gypsy woman with 6 children, day-labourer)

The interviews also revealed that the structure of expenditures is relatively uniform, the main feature of which is shifting consumption to meet the physical needs. Most of the interviewees' money is spent on food, and there are also those who have their medicines among their major expenses, or they spend their money on clothing if there is any left.

> Well, on food and clothes if there is any [money] left; if nothing is left, then what is possible to go without, we go without. The food is important here, the clothes are okay what they have. The food, it's necessary to buy it, everybody knows this. (a non-Gypsy woman with 3 children, day-labourer)

According to our results, non-Gypsy respondents can devote more to clothing, and in their group we find more families who invest in a household economy, do livestock farming to improve their livelihoods, or have started cultivating plants. We also asked our interviewees what they could afford to spend the most on. Among the Gypsy respondents, there were also some who could not afford even the one-time hot meal a day.

> Not so much, it happens that I don't eat for days, just this and that… Well, I make these simple soups, and I have just bought in Rózsika's shop this ... it's cheap. Well, dear, I can do what I can do, not much. (Gypsy woman with 2 children, housewife)

It appears with both Gypsy and non-Gypsy respondents that they cannot eat meat for 2 to 3 days.

> When we have money, we eat, when we don't have, we don't eat. (a Gypsy woman with 3 children, day-labourer)
> Well, sometimes, not always, we don't have money for food; we are used to this; when we don't have money, we don't have it. This is how we are used to it, but we eat hot meal every day. (a non-Gypsy woman with 1 child, day-labourer)

Those who cannot afford either food or clothing are lacking durable consumer goods as well; however, in homes where there was electricity, there was always a TV set. Among the respondents, a new warm coat for winter, the fridge, the freezer, the stove, and in many cases seasonal footwear were also considered a luxury item

and also a shortage, which was equally characteristic of our Gypsy and non-Gypsy interviewees. Around festive days, gifts cannot be afforded by the interviewed families; we found interviewees who take this as a natural situation, but there were also persons who were ashamed of this.

> Well, as for presents, we can't afford them [smiling, showing pity], especially not in the winter, for Christmas. Last year again, he came home [the breadwinner man, who works farther away, not in the village], like always by Christmas time, but he can never bring money. Then, if he finds something to do, we are happy if we have enough for food every day. (non-Gypsy woman with 3 children, housewife)

> We don't give presents, we eat; we try to arrange that we can eat enough at that time. There are also Gypsies here who don't go to Moscow, they live here, weaving baskets, they work a lot in winter so that they have enough to eat. (non-Gypsy man, with 1 child, day-labourer)

The Labour Market Situation: Opportunities and Forms of Earning Income

Forms and Characteristics of Doing Work in Households with Children

Officially Registered Work

What determines the wealth of households is how jobs are distributed among the households of the region, that is, their labour intensity. Individual labour market activities have different welfare implications. The magnitude of these welfare impacts depends heavily on the distribution of existing jobs among the households. It is very common that the basic unit of welfare indicators is not the individual but the household, regardless of the fact that the labour market statistics generally relate to individuals. Households with very low labour intensity belong to the most vulnerable groups in society. As they are less integrated into the labour market, their earning capacity is the worst, and therefore they live in poverty or at risk of poverty.

In order to explore the employment situation and labour market characteristics of the examined families with children and households, we asked the active members of the households whether they were currently working or whether they had worked in the past 12 months, and, if so, how much time they had spent working. On the basis of the answers, we created a work intensity scale.[6] The labour intensity indicator

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6   In order to determine the labour intensity of households, the working time of all working-aged people in the households (18–59 years) was compared for the last 12 months with the

may range between 0 and 1, in which 0 means that no one worked in the surveyed household during the period under review, and 1 means that everyone worked full time in the whole reference year. Households in which working-age adults worked in the reference year less than 20 percent of their total labour potential (i.e. a labour intensity value of up to 0.2) were considered to be very low in work intensity.

In order to determine the extent of the presence on the labour market, we considered the activities performed as an employed person (full-time employees) and those performed as an occasional worker as separate categories. In the following, we describe the results obtained: we present separately the primary labour market participation and then the results including the occasional work as well. Our results refer to the working time of people aged between 18 and 59; however, we also had cases of below 18- and over 59-year-old family breadwinners.

The data show that almost half of the active adult family members of households with children were not present at all in the primary job market during the year preceding the questionnaire (*Table 2*). Households with the highest work intensity, whose members worked almost all year long, but at least two-thirds of the year, account for only 15.5 percent of the households surveyed.

Table 2. *Labour intensity of households (without casual work)*

Labour intensity indicator	Number of households	%
0	55	47.4
0.1–0.33	10	8.6
0.34–0.66	33	28.4
0.67–1	18	15.5
Total	116	100

Source: data collected by the authors

It is clear from the detailed breakdown that in terms of labour intensity there are two large groups of people living in the examined Transcarpathian Hungarian villages. Active-age adult members of one group have no relationship with the primary job market (47.4%), while members of the other group worked just in half of the year (0.5 labour intensity, 21.9%).

Occasional Work

If we take into consideration the occasional work as well, the labour intensity of the households and the amount of time spent working increase. Thus, the labour market of the region is significantly determined by the world of occasional work. According to the results of *Table 3*, the number of households with zero work intensity drops by

theoretically workable time.

more than half (from 47.4% to 22.0%), and the number of households with second and third thirds increases. Particularly noticeable is the significant increase in the ratio of households in the highest third, which has more than doubled compared to the previous situation (from 15.5% to 36.4%). In other words, with the involvement of occasional work, the former labour market characteristics change. Considering occasional work, one of the dominant groups of households includes households with a working intensity of 0.5 (working for at least half a year) (26.3%), the other significant group being 1.0, i.e. full-time employed households throughout the entire year. The third determining group continues to be represented by the zero intensity households (19%). If we add the very low work intensity (up to 0.2) households to the latter, then one-quarter of the households surveyed are still excluded from the labour market, having no labour-based income.

Table 3. *Labour intensity of households (including casual work)*

Labour intensity	Number of households	%
0	26	22.0
0.1−0.33	10	8.5
0.34−0.66	39	33.1
0.67−1	43	36.4
Total	118	100.0

Source: data collected by the authors

According to the results, there is very low employment in the households surveyed, and the distribution of work among households is very uneven. Although comparative statistics are not available in Ukraine, according to Eurostat's 2016 results, the proportion of low work intensity population in Hungary in 2015 was approximately 10 percent (in the previous years, it exceeded 12 percent), which is very high compared to the results of the Visegrád countries (below 8 percent in all countries) (EUROSTAT 2016). Compared to this, the number of households with low labour intensity is critically high in the Hungarian villages in Transcarpathia. This is also a serious problem as the local welfare system or the lack of it cannot compensate for the resulting impoverishment processes.

Commuting and Mobility

In order to explore commuting and mobility opportunities as well as social relationships, we investigated how far workers travel from their home for work opportunities. According to the results, adult members of households with children are not mobile: they live in a closed system of villages and/or in nearby villages. Most of them work in their own village, but, as we have seen before, a very large part of the households do not have a working family member, so commuting is

naturally absent in their case. Individuals working in nearby villages or small towns do not move away from their village significantly either, and this does not allow them to expand their relationship capital or to improve the quality of their social relationships. This situation affects a very high percentage of the households surveyed, almost 70 percent. To a lesser extent, though, there occurs also the phenomenon of employment abroad: in 15 percent of the households with children, there is a family member working abroad. First of all, Russia and Hungary are the two target countries for labour migration.

The lack of labour market mobility functions also as a kind of self-segregation in the examined region, as a result of which the phenomenon of isolation of a disadvantaged minority group takes place. Families living here are not motivated by the lack of technological development or the lack of production capacity for migration, either. Regarding our question as to whether respondents like to live here or plan to move away, they almost unanimously answered that they are very keen on living in their village and almost no one plans to move out.

Ethnic and territorial segregation significantly hinders the establishment of labour market relationships. As there is an insufficient number of external labour market links (lacking bridge-like relationships) which could bring new job opportunities in the families of the respondents, the relationships within their own communities is intensified. This situation preserves poverty and increases the social distance from better-off communities.

According to our interviews with decision makers, the atypical forms of employment in the region are decisive. Although they are irregular, they can be well-organized day by day. Most of these people can join the day-to-day work, which is the main form of employment in the region, and it characterizes urban settlements and villages as well. This type of work appears in two forms: local and foreign day labour. Local day labour is mainly focused on the given settlements and the surrounding villages, involving low wages and day-to-day physical work, and they mean mostly agricultural auxiliary work. Regarding day labour abroad, two target countries are dominant: Hungary and Russia. Work in these countries means mainly construction-related auxiliary work. Due to the proximity of the border, there are other atypical, often illegal, work types such as the transport of passengers across the border, smuggling of fuel and goods, or smuggling of stimulant goods (e.g. cigarettes). The responses, however, show that these risky affairs do not bring financial security or a steady income either, and the risk of getting caught is very high.

The most serious problem of our interviewees is the lack of local job opportunities. One consequence of this is the migration of people (labour migration). In the families, mostly men are forced to look for work opportunities in another country. According to our interviewees, at the beginning of the process, this means mostly the commuting of men between the family and the remote workplace, but later on, in many cases, it also involves permanent resettlement.

Typical activities among the respondents are traditional handicrafts for both Gypsies and non-Gypsies. Such a typical work for gypsies is basket weaving, sun-dried brick-making, eaves making, and sewing for non-Gypsies. A separate income-generating technique has emerged for the event when they cannot go for day labour, and there is no other casual work in the neighborhood either: in such days, they collect metal pieces from landfills and take them to the nearby urban centre.

> The poorer gypsies are the basket weavers, the brick-makers, there are the day labourers, and others who don't do work; we know which of them are more skilled at land work, which of them move better; they go to collect corn or potatoes, they collect cucumbers here in Vári, and go to do planting. And then, when the time is over, when there is nothing to collect in the fields, no agricultural work, then they go to the landfill and then look for metal … these gypsies go there and collect the metal pieces, they dig into the ground, they like to disappear there in the holes. (decision maker)

There are also situations when non-Gypsies do metal collection as well, men and women alike. This is a hard physical work, but there are families who have only this type of work as their only chance to survive. Other sources of income among the poor include the sale of seasonal products: they mentioned nuts, mushrooms, and wood in this respect. There are also other special ways of making money, one of which is to share child allowance between parents even if one of the parents is no longer living with the family. This is the case, for example, when parents do not live together and the father not only pays no alimony but feels he is entitled to receive his share of the child's subsidies from the mother every month. And the mother in question does not complain about it, saying "they are his children too" (a Gypsy woman with 9 children, housewife).

It is also a special livelihood business that some people build wells somewhere in a public area, making use of the lack of drinking water in the neighbourhood, or rather of the lack of wells, and then ask money from the poor in exchange for water and, although it is a minimal amount, it provides them with constant earnings.

As another income source, we should note the usury system, which basically determines the life of those with Gypsy origin, but it also appears among the non-Gypsy population. Among our subjects, there are some who are currently in debt, and there are some who are always in debt. Those who work abroad in the summer usually do not undertake any work in their settlement or in its neighbourhood during the winter, and so they are forced to indebtedness in order for their family not to starve. Then, in the summer, when they are back to work, they repay the loan. However, there were also people who could not afford to pay anything above the interest, as generally 20 to 30 or even 100 percent interest is charged on the loans.

> Well, how long does it last what we earn? Well, it happens that we earn a lot, lots of money, and it happens we earn nothing… With what we earn, when we come back home, we buy food for the winter, as long as it lasts, then we run out of all our food, then we take loans and we again go to Moscow in the summer, and though he takes interest on it, in the summer we give it all back; maybe they give it for 25 or 30[%]. (man of Roma origin with 1 child, day labourer)

If they cannot pay the loan back, then another amount will be accumulated again the next year, which they can only partially repay, creating an irreversible process of indebtedness from which they cannot quit. To my question why they still take it, a poor Roma-born responded with the following:

> Not to take it? And then they would be starving? If we didn't take it, there would be nothing to live on when there is no money. Of course, they don't mind, those who give it… They are not interested from where it will be paid back, and those don't mind either who take it that they will have to give back more than half of it on top; the only important thing is that they get the money because there is no money for food! You need to think, only get as much as you can pay back. Month after month you only work so that you can eat. (man of Roma origin with 1 child, day labourer)

According to gender, there are very significant differences in labour market participation. Women are housewives, the wage-earning work is done almost exclusively by men, and with several interviewees we saw that, in addition to men, adolescents or older children too had some income-earning activity. We also encountered a family where the child was the bread-winner in the family. These children are mostly the children of semi-literate or illiterate parents who, even if they are very talented, are forced to work for the family rather than do their studies. Child labour is not an unusual phenomenon in the area, being a general and accepted problem, especially for older children. Most of the work they do is also day labour.

> My problem was not that I would not go on to study, I did want to, I didn't go because when I left school, being 18 years old, my mum and dad were not able to work, they were both ill, so I was the only bread-winner. If I had gone to study, they would not have given me money, they would not have had enough to live on, I would not have been able to support my mum and dad [about to start crying]. This was the reason I could not go on with schools! No money to pay my costs, no money to live on, and I would not have been at home, either. I had no other way than to choose work… (non-Gypsy man with 1 child, day labourer)

Men form a much more mobile social group than women, who are stuck in housework and work around the house and in the village. Their roles are complemented by managing everyday life situations. This separated lifestyle for both genders – beyond physical burdens – also involves serious mental and partnership problems, which, according to the interviews, often result in the families being completely disrupted.

> … the men go away for seasonal work with a work visa, they go further away from their families, for a month at a time. And so, they also get alienated from their families, and many families are broken as the father is elsewhere, the mother is at home with the children, and the money he earns needs to be carefully spent by the mother and the family so they can support themselves. (volunteer mediator)

Another serious burden is that a very large group of people respond to the constant uncertainty caused by the problems with regular alcohol consumption. Alcoholism is reported to be an everyday phenomenon and has become accepted in the settlements investigated. According to the interviewees, it works as a "self-defence mechanism", which serves to alleviate the psychological burden and solves the fear from everyday difficulties and vulnerability.

Conclusions

Our study aims to demonstrate the standard of living of the Hungarians in Ukraine, especially with regard to the poverty of families with children. In our introduction, Hungarians in Ukraine are presented on the basis of available statistics and census data, giving attention to the socio-demographic, fundamental economic, social, and political characteristics of the region and to the peripheral labour market situation thereof. So far, there has not been conducted any systematic research in the region on the measurement of poverty. Thus, our investigation was primarily an exploratory study with the aim of identifying the poverty of households with children. We worked with both quantitative and qualitative methods where we encountered difficulties due to the lack of data in the region or the complete lack of reliable statistical records. These were addressed by region-specific solutions, what is explained in detail in the methodological section. In the questionnaire study, we examined 139 households and 253 children, while during the qualitative procedure 23 exploratory interviews were made.

The lack of basic infrastructural facilities of the examined settlements determined the comfort level of housing and housing poverty. The partial absence of natural gas and drinking water or the complete lack of drainage and waste management do

not create the opportunity for a life without deprivation. In families with children, the average number of children is 2, but people typically live in extended family forms, primarily because of the better allocation of costs. Household poverty was mostly perceived by our deprivation attributes. According to the deprivation index, half of the families with children live in poverty, and nearly three-quarters of these families can be classified into the category of the seriously deprived.

In the examined area, atypical employment possibilities have become typical. There are few employers in the region, and the jobs they offer can usually be filled by speakers of Ukrainian. Because of the lack of job possibilities in the region, the level of education has no detectable effect on the employment of the workforce even among those with a higher level of education. Seemingly, commuting could mean a way out, an alternative, similarly to foreign employment, which male members of families sometimes choose as their life strategy.

We typified the forms of work and measured the labour intensity of households. There is a very low employment level in the households surveyed, and the distribution of work among the households is very uneven. We distinguished between those who are officially registered as employed, those who are engaged in occasional work, and those with other alternative earning solutions. A quarter of the households were almost completely excluded from the labour market, and this brought about strategies such as the sale of seasonal products, metal collection on landfills, cross-border livelihood activities, or the usurious scheme.

In our study, we provided a brief insight into the marginal living conditions of the Hungarian households with children, living in minority in Ukraine, into the rural everyday life of the closed and isolated population, and into the characteristics of the constraints of life forms brought about by the lack of social security.

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About the System of Prejudices among the Hungarian Youth in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine

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Abstract. This study is focused on the relationship between the youth and other social groups based on the data of the GeneZYs 2019 study. The study asked 15–29-year-olds from four countries regarding how appealing or unappealing they feel 24 different social groups. Research results show that several social groups, e.g., homosexuals, migrants/refugees, skinheads, drug users, are especially perceived as relatively repulsive/distasteful by the youth of the studied countries. Starting from theoretical and empirical antecedents, the author presumed that the low level of openness among the youth could be explained by several factors such as socio-demographic background, religiosity, value orientation, and sources of information. Based on empirical results, the author takes an analytical approach on the population under study. The goal of the study is to exceed the level of a partial analysis and to explore a typology while redefining the relationship between the motivation factors of prejudices. The hypotheses were partially confirmed. Compared to the author's expectations, the typology of young people based on their attitudes towards otherness seems to be harder to explain. Three groups were identified: a smaller one which feels others being appealing, a larger one with a neutral attitude towards others and which sympathizes less with Hungarian groups than the average, and a medium-sized third group which dislikes otherness. From the characterization of the groups, one can discover that among those who dislike otherness, the overrepresented categories are: men, young people from rural areas, those who finished secondary education level, those economically active, young people from Ukraine, atheists, those who did not study abroad, people who suffered from discrimination experiences, young people with regional Hungarian and/or Hungarian identity, people who are not satisfied with the national economy and interethnic relations, and those who see the future in a pessimistic way.

Keywords: prejudices, youth/young people, minorities, typology analysis

Introduction

The study of prejudices with academic objectivity is very difficult because beliefs of everyday life can hardly be described by scientific terms. Therefore, a prejudice study does not exist without evaluation; such a study usually supposes that there is somebody who can make the proper judgment. People with prejudices thus become stigmatized; they turn into the object of the prejudice (Erős 2005: 374). Erős's idea highlights one of the main methodological problems of the prejudice studies, which is rarely reflected by the majority of authors.

According to the results of sociological studies on youth from the past few years, the social distance perceived by Hungarians outside Hungary towards different other groups is relatively large (Papp Z. 2008; Sólyom 2007, 2012, 2013). Several surveys conducted in the past two decades confirmed that the low level of tolerance can be caused by various factors, i.e.: value preferences, religiosity, models of interpersonal communication, and media consumption factors (Balassa 2007; Molnár 2011; Murányi–Szabó 2007; Örkény–Váradi 2010; Sólyom 2009, 2011).

The present study tries to answer whether there are differences between the 15–29-year-old Hungarian young people living in different countries (i.e. Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine) regarding their acceptance or rejection of other social groups and their relation to otherness.

The ethnic composition of the studied societies is changing, so that analysing the relation to otherness and its explanatory background has a permanent relevance. Additionally, in the ever more diversified societies, it is necessary to redefine the coexistence patterns. According to the demographical projections until 2032, in certain settlements of Harghita and Covasna counties from Romania – but probably also in some other regions outside Hungary –, the proportion of Gypsies will be close to 50% of the entire population, while among first-grade pupils it will reach 50–80% (Csata–Kiss 2007). Thus, young generations' relation to otherness is extremely important during the expected changes in ethnic composition. The author suggests that the Hungarian youth from the Szeklerland region (i.e. Harghita and Covasna counties from Romania) can be characterized by a minority status compared to the population of the country, but inside the region they experience their identity as a majority, which does not seem to favor their solidarity towards otherness. The results of the surveys conducted in different periods contradict each other in this regard (Kiss et al. 2008: 16, Sólyom 2013).

The socializing role of the media in Hungary does not enhance solidarity among different minorities. In the last few years, one can easily identify signs of dispersion of opinions related to migrants/refugees and homosexuals. Some local events from Harghita and Covasna counties can be quoted here as examples for the manifestations of intolerant attitudes towards otherness: e.g. in the summer of 2016, a scene was staged at the local festival of the village of Kommandó (Comandău,

Covasna County), or a video was recorded at the carnival in Oroszhegy (Dealu, Harghita County) in 2017.[1] Such materials showcase how pupils are acting in scenes where the rejection of refugees takes place.[2] Fragmentation of the political élite and its contradictory standpoints regarding the regulation of domestic partnership among same sex people is another local, regional characteristic.

In the meantime, due to the politics of the Hungarian government – which supports Hungarians outside Hungary –, there are growing chances for Hungarians outside Hungary to be rejected by homeland Hungarians. In Hungarian–Hungarian relations, this social distance is not a novel phenomenon. The auto- and hetero-stereotypes "have been abundantly fuelled by the labelling of Hungarians from Transylvania as Romanians; this has been experienced since the regime change, and it can be outlined in connection with the failed referendum of 2004, or it can be illustrated even with facts pertaining to current politics" (Papp Z. 2012: 110 – author's translation). The institution of double citizenship enriches the identity with new elements, or even a new identity is about to take shape, but "these will be part of the minority identity structure: although they are present as possibilities, they do not entirely overwrite the former approaches. As a consequence, the bilateral Hungarian–Hungarian prejudice system subsists" (Papp Z. 2014: 149 – author's translation). Therefore, double citizenship does not yield adjustment in everyday experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, the young generation will probably get involved into situations (e.g. by learning, working abroad) where they can gain personal experiences about otherness. Based on the simplified version of the contact hypothesis, these personal experiences will probably moderate the relation to otherness originating from the stereotypes learnt from family, school, peer-group, and mass media.

The present study compares the prejudices of young adults living around Hungary. In November 2015, 2,697 Hungarian young adults were asked to answer on a scale from 1 to 5 as to what extent they find antipathetic or sympathetic the members of 24 different groups. In the first part of the study, certain theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches will be in focus, which can be used as starting points in the second part, during the analysis.

Theoretical and Empirical Antecedents

Tolerance, Prejudices, and Social Distance: Local Particularities

We can find multiple approaches about the relationship of the social distance and prejudices. According to one of them, social distance can be perceived as

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1   See the audiovisual material AV1 from 00:58 to 03:58.
2   Several articles appeared in the mass media about these events; see the audiovisual materials: AV2, AV3.

an indicator of the level of prejudices. "The main psychological condition of the prejudicial way of thinking is the delimitation of own group (in-group) and out-groups. (…) The social distance between the own group and the different out-groups can be determined based on the interactions between the group members, and thus one can conclude about the level of prejudices towards out-groups and the level of discriminative orientations" (Fábián–Sik 1996: 382; author's translation). A study on the methodological problems of prejudice studies from Hungary and the international literature draws attention to the fact that "the terms of prejudice, discrimination, social distance, xenophobia, or hostility towards Gypsies are not separated from one another" (Erőss–Gárdos 2007: 20; author's translation).

Prejudices, stereotypes, and generalized everyday life experiences can be enumerated among the factors behind social distance, which serve to measure tolerance. However, the answers given to hypothetical situations are not suitable to identify these.

On the relation towards Gypsies and Jews, several Hungarian studies confirmed that regarding the former the society can be characterized by a homogenous attitude, while in the latter case the classic social psychological approaches can be applied, i.e. prejudices correlate with political orientation, value system, and party preferences (Erős 2005). Attitudes towards Gypsies generally differ from attitudes towards other minorities because in the Hungarian society there is a "consensus" in this regard, independently from the respondents' level of education (Székelyi et al. 2001: 33). Based on the results of the 2007 Carpathian Panel, prejudices about Gypsies do not differ even by political preferences (Papp Z. 2009). Anti-Semitism does not correlate with social stratification; it is independent from financial and cultural background or socio-economic status (Balassa 2007, Kovács 2014, Hann–Róna 2015).

These tendencies are perhaps valid among the Hungarian youth from the neighbouring countries as well, and the sympathy/antipathy towards Gypsy and Jewish social groups will probably be independent from the socio-demographic background.

In 2015, a sample group of the 16–29-year-old NEET (not in employment, education, or training) youth was surveyed in two southern developmental regions of Romania about negative discrimination as a factor which threatens social integration. Reference made to the study is justified by the procedure adopted during the analysis. The authors adopted three indicators to measure the acceptance/rejection of eight different social groups. They counted the number of situations when respondents behaved tolerant and intolerant towards the listed groups. The indicator of social distance measured the average of the rejection situations towards the groups; based on these, intolerant, tolerant, and so-called neutral attitudes were delimited. Young adults with a medium level of qualification were less acceptant than those with a low level of education; boys, rural dwellers, those without children and with a higher income were more dismissive than the others (Plăeşu et al. 2015: 83–84).

The Relation between Communication, Information, Value Preferences, and Prejudices in the Analyses

Molnár studied the role of socio-cultural characteristics and media consumption played in prejudicial attitudes on a national sample of high school students from Hungary. Her results fit in the former empirical antecedents: "boys who live in a less urbanized area come from a family with a low level of education, study in vocational schools, and are not religious seem to be more intolerant towards their peers belonging to different out-groups" (Molnár 2011: 79 – author's translation). Related to the age, the author found the same tendency as Bădescu and his co-authors among Romanian high school students: the level of rejection towards other groups is intensified among younger generations (Bădescu et al. 2010). Based on these analyses, it is possible to formulate hypotheses about the linkage between prejudices on the one hand and the socio-demographic factors, religiosity, and media consumption on the other.

Sőrés explored the role of the Internet in shaping the groups of extreme right among the university students in Debrecen. She identifies a committed group and an inquisitive one that differ from each other based on origin, media consumption, value system as well as their relation to otherness. Boys who come from families with low educational level, prefer financial values, consume mass media intensively, and definitely reject otherness belong to the committed group. The inquisitive group comprises young people who come from families with a higher level of education who prefer postmaterialistic values and who can be characterized by openness towards others; they integrate only certain elements of the extreme right into their value system (Sőrés 2012). Partially similar results were found by Varga among university students in Debrecen (Varga 2012). Value system, political orientation, and the use of the Internet as factors contributing to the relation to otherness will also be analysed in this study.

Methodological, Analytical Considerations

Based on Erős's (2005) approach, this chapter lists a few methodological pitfalls which we may face while studying prejudices, and it will focus on certain studies whose methodological apparatus is going to be considered during the analysis. Certain methodological problems are generally valid for other studies as well, i.e. the limitations of the questionnaire as a measuring tool in studying actions since answers given to hypothetical situations cannot identify everyday life experiences, the so-called conformity of the respondents during a survey, etc.

Trap Situations

The majority of classic theories are normative, but descriptive approaches have also emerged recently (Erős 2007). The difference between the two types of approaches is not so striking – certain authors use both without reflection. According to some psychological approaches, prejudices originate from the human nature: "Stereotypes are cognitive maps that help us simplify our highly complex social world. (…) Prejudices, after all, guarantee that 'we' will compare favourably to 'them'" (Shields 2014: 21). Thus, prejudices help "navigation" but hinder cohabitation, cooperation and widen the gaps inside the society.

Based on the empirical results of the international literature of social psychology (Brown 1995 – qtd by Erős 2005), the hard-line, firm stereotypes with negative connotations became off-colour; they have partially disappeared from the communication and got into the category of taboo. But they have not necessarily been refined. They were switched to softer, latent, and encoded attitudes, which are hard to measure by the former tools (Erős 2005, Kovács 2007). In Hungary, based on studies realized during the first decade of the 2000s, it looked like – compared to the nineties – the manifest rejection of the Gypsies decreased after 2000, and, besides the "old-style" one, there appeared a more presentable, latent rejection (Balassa 2007). So, in the nineties and the early 2000s, there emerged a politically correct discourse, which, however, did not mean a change of attitudes, but taboos aggravated their measurement. At almost the same time, starting from the 2010s, mass media channels have been telling about series of murders against Gypsy people. In 2008 and 2009, nine murders took place in four settlements of Hungary, which resulted in six deaths and the injuries of further fifty people (Szénási 2016). In the last decade, reverse tendencies can be noticed both in Hungary and in certain other areas of the European Union and in the United States of America: the presentable discourse is changed by a politically lesser correct one. It is questionable to what extent was the studied population affected by these changes.

Social-Historical Impregnation and Context

Beréti and Tóth set out from the results of an international comparative phone-based survey conducted in 2008 in eight countries, which concentrated on six prejudice types (Zick et al. 2011). The strongest prejudices were measured in Poland and Hungary, and, while in Europe the rejection of other groups increases with age, the rejection of otherness in Hungary is the most accentuated among the 16–22-year-old youth (Beréti–Tóth 2014). The authors tried to explain the dispersion of the mentioned attitude on the basis of the historical differences between the western and eastern part of Europe, especially in the light of the events of the 20th century. However, finally, they explained the attitudinal differences between eastern and

western countries with the specific life conditions from these countries. The Hungarian coordinators of the comparative study agree with Bergman in that "the attitudes are determined by social memory independently from the proportion of the Jews in the given societies" (Örkény–Váradi 2010: 35 – author's translation). Several other studies concluded that the heritage of feudalism and socialism, the dictatorships and democracies as socialization contexts favour trust towards other people and institutions, responsibility, risk-taking, and autonomy perceptions (Mihăilescu 1996, Voicu 2006). However, Székelyi and her co-authors contradict the idea according to which in the case of changing the life conditions the differences in the attitude of the eastern and westerns societies are relatively moderate. "One can barely hope for the growth of general tolerance in a society, even upon the completion of illusory goals such as increased general cultural/educational level of the improvement of life conditions" (Székelyi et al. 2001: 35 – author's translation).

György G. Márkus started out from the same already mentioned international comparative study conducted in 2008, and he similarly considers the social historical impregnation as a potential explanation of prejudices. In addition, he draws attention to the fact that prejudices "superimpose on the political gaps" (G. Márkus 2012: 80 – author's translation). Based on the result of G. Márkus (2012) and Sőrés (2012), we assume that the political orientation and the value system are connected to the perception of otherness, and so rightists and those who prefer financial values perceive other ethnic communities as more unappealing.

A striking rejection of migrants is especially characteristic of citizens with fewer personal experiences with strangers. The usual trend is that personal experiences do not enhance but demolish stereotypes (contact hypothesis) (Örkény–Váradi 2010). It is questionable to what extent this tendency can be sustained after the wave of refugees experienced by Hungary between 2014 and 2016 and its representation in the media. Örkény and Váradi identify countries characterized by structural prejudices and value-guided, ideology-based prejudices. They analyse the differences between such countries based on the level of general prejudices and the dimensions of prejudices. The differences can be strongly captured by delimitating a strongly prejudiced, a medium, and a prejudice-free group, and then they tone the picture: based on the four dimensions of the prejudices, they divide the inhabitants of these countries into five cluster groups[3] (Örkény–Váradi 2010: 31 – author's translation). The mentioned procedures can also be useful in comparing the Hungarian youth from the neighbouring countries.

The results of a national survey from Romania conducted in 2012 among 1,691 Romanians (of which 703 were from Transylvania) show that less Romanians from Transylvania than from the other regions support the measures adopted by the

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3   1. prejudicial with all the groups; 2. strong anti-Semitism, average xenophobia, and poor racism; 3. medium; 4. only xenophobe; 5. without prejudices (Örkény–Váradi 2010: 40 – author's translation).

Hungarian state to help Hungarians in Romania (Kiss–Barna 2013: 65–67). Based on the attitudinal difference between Romanians from Transylvania and the whole population, we can presume that multicultural environments, personal experiences, chances of contact between groups facilitate acceptance on the individual level, but on the group level they can even enhance prejudices and stereotypes, depending on competition, context, and minority/majority status (Balassa–Kovács 2010).

According to the classical version of the contact hypothesis, "only the cooperative and competition-free relations of actors with equal status and those who are not role-guided have impact on reducing prejudices, especially when the relation receives normative confirmation/reinforcement from important resources – institutions, personalities, based on widely accepted norms" (Balassa–Kovács 2010: 100 – author's translation).

Regarding the empirical testing of the contact hypothesis, we can quote the study of Chen, which analysed the role of study experiences in the perception of social distance of American students who had spent a period of time in China. The study confirmed that learning about other cultures, everyday interactions, and personally experienced diversity accompany a more inclusive and open attitude (Chen 2007). Another study that focuses on contact hypothesis was realized in the spring of 2013 as a phone-based survey among the 13–18-year-old youth from five Balkan countries. Milosevic analysed the social distance perception of youth towards five groups. The most rejected groups proved to be the sexual and ethnic minorities, and the least ones were people with disabilities and the poor. Youngsters from Kosovo were the least open, while the youth from Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina were the most open-minded. "A positive effect of the contacts on social behaviour was confirmed towards different groups: homosexuals, psychiatric patients, racial and ethnic minorities" (Herek–Capitanio 1996 – qtd by Milosevic 2015: 416). Further research made a typology of contacts based on the quantity and quality of interactions, i.e.: "time spent accompanied by out-group friends, disclosure to out-group friends, inclusion, friendship circle, number of friends, or feeling closeness to out-group friends" (Davies et al. 2011 – qtd by Milosevic 2015: 416).

Several empirical analyses from the international literature confirmed the role of contacts in information flow, in the out-groups' heterogeneity, and in forming the attitudes, trust, opinions, and actions. In more conservative societies, it is more usual to see minority groups as homogenous and to prefer more repulsive attitudes. The cognitive change provoked by interactions can reduce rejection. "In postwar societies, it is expected that national identification could be associated with in-group favouritism and distance from minority groups" (Milosevic 2015: 417). The studied youth from the Balkan regions confirmed the tendencies of the international literature. "Frequent contacts with members of minority groups were proved to have direct and indirect positive correlation mediated through perceived out-group heterogeneity with increased social acceptance, while stronger national identification correlated

negatively with social acceptance of minority groups" (Milosevic 2015: 424). In the present study, the number of friends on Facebook and their heterogeneity can be used for testing the contact hypothesis although the number of friends is not an indicator of friendships, but it indicates somehow the network of the youth. The strength of national identity can be correlated with prejudices.

The already mentioned study of Balassa and Kovács delimits the role of context and contacts in Hungarian settlements with mixed population and on a national sample of adults. According to their results, the context enhances the impact of contacts – namely, personal relations among members of different ethnic groups reduce prejudices, and this impact will be enhanced if the relations are formed in an ethnically mixed settlement (Balassa–Kovács 2010: 110). They concluded that mixed environments and personal relations both enhance sympathy towards minorities but do not reduce the willingness of using stereotypes. The use of positive stereotypes does not contribute to the demolition of group borders, rather it facilitates increasing social distances (Balassa–Kovács 2010: 110–111). It is a question to what extent these phenomena observed in Hungarian settlements with mixed population characterize the regions of my study. A settlement with mixed population represents an entirely different group of study in places with double identity (Hungarian and Swabian, Hungarian and Slovak) and where everybody uses the Hungarian language as compared to places where group borders are more accentuated.

Structural Factors

In analysing the level of xenophobia occurring during the 1990s in Hungary, Csepeli and Sik identify three types of behaviour: acceptant, dismissive, and selective acceptant. They highlighted the role of incorporated and objectified cultural capital in forming the mentioned attitudes (Csepeli–Sik 1995 – qtd by Fábián–Erős 1996). In a study on causality connections of hostility to Gypsies, Fábián and Erős underlined authoritarianism as a factor transmitting the socio-demographic characteristics. Based on their research results, religiosity favours more tolerant attitudes among the youth (Fábián–Erős 1996). Murányi confirmed not only the connections between prejudices and religiosity but the connections between prejudices and belonging to a certain denomination. However, such relations appeared sometimes inversely, inconsequentially in different studies. On the whole, the studied Reformed youth are more prejudicial to otherness than their Catholic peers. According to the author, this can be explained by the regulative and permissive role of the denominations (Murányi 2004).

Balassa tries to answer why respondents reject certain groups while they accept others. She builds up explanatory models by regression path analysis that helps researchers to find out what combination of factors motivates prejudicial attitudes in the first place. She made use of discrimination analysis to explain the differences

between the groups created by cluster analysis. She concluded that those who discriminate against each group can be characterized by a low social status, anomie, social frustration, and lack of information. The rejection of only certain groups is ideologically embedded in some cases; in other situations, the reason is dissatisfaction with the own situation (Balassa 2007).

Hypotheses

The origins of the hypotheses were discussed during the theoretical and empirical antecedents presented above. In the international socio-psychological literature, the study of connections between authoritarianism and prejudices had a significant carrier in the past half century. Csepeli, Fábián, and Sik analysed the role of four main factors in the acceptance/rejection of foreigners and Gypsies: "1. socio-demographic variables; 2. socio-psychological variables; 3. contextual variables regarding migration; 4. political variables" (Csepeli et al. 2006: 472 – author's translation). Similar to this and with regard to the first group of factors, the first hypothesis of the present study suggests that, besides age, level of qualification, and income, settlement type and occupation can also be connected with the relation to other groups. From the second group of factors, a separate hypothesis will be formulated about religiosity; the subjective material situation is classified into the socio-demographic background. Regarding value preferences, a separate hypothesis will be similarly stated. Several studies confirmed that dissatisfaction with the macro-, micro-economic and the political situation, i.e. the so-called social frustration can be connected to changes in the acceptance of otherness (Csepeli et al. 2006, Balassa 2007). Similarly, the study on connections between prejudices and anomie, alienation, and loneliness may be regarded as a classic one. Political interest, evaluating how democracy functions, and one's own political orientation can be related to the acceptance of other groups. Based on the model tested among the adult population of Hungary, only those with the highest level of qualification proved to be tolerant (both in terms of manifest and latent xenophobia). Furthermore, "the autonomous role of dissatisfaction, certainly attached to the relative deprivation, was demonstrable in developing xenophobia" (Csepeli et al. 2006: 481 – author's translation).

The hypotheses of the study are the following:

H1. The differences in prejudices can be motivated by the socio-demographic factors – material and cultural background, age, and settlement type. Those coming from less favourable material and cultural background, from rural settlements and younger respondents probably accept less otherness.

H2. Acceptance of otherness could be associated with institutional religiosity: religious young people are more tolerant.

H3. Media consumption, online communication, and otherness: use of new information sources favours selective perception.

H4. Interest in politics, evaluation of how democracy functions, own political orientation, and acceptance of otherness are connected to each other: those who show interest towards politics and who are rather satisfied with the way how democracy functions perceive the other groups as more appealing, whereas those who place themselves to the right perceive the other groups as being unappealing.

H5. The value system and the prejudices are in correlation with each other: those who prefer postmaterial values perceive the other groups as more appealing, while those who prefer material values perceive the other groups as more unappealing.

H6. Contact hypothesis: the experiences from abroad lead to a more positive attitude, and the ethnic heterogeneity of the online acquaintances favours an acceptant relationship with otherness.

Analysis and Discussions

The present study compares the prejudice of youth living around Hungary based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study. In November 2015, 2,697 Hungarian young people were asked on a scale from 1 to 5 to what extent the members of 24 different groups are antipathetic and sympathetic for them. The groups are enumerated in *Table 5* included in the *Appendix*. There are groups perceived as deviant, majority nations, Hungarians from Hungary and the neighbouring countries, other nations and minority groups. The analysis was based on multivariate methods, i.e. regression analysis, cluster analysis, and discriminant analysis.

Prejudices Based on Socio-Demographic Characteristics (H1)

The most unappealing groups are judged by society as being deviant; this includes homosexuals, drug consumers, skinheads, and refugees/migrants. Secondly, the politicians, the upstart, and Gypsies are perceived as unappealing. At the same time, the perception of the most ungrateful groups is the most heterogeneous based on the standard deviations of every control variable. Of the entire sample, the Hungarians from Transylvania are the most sympathized. On the second place, we can find the Hungarians from Hungary followed by Hungarians from other neighbouring countries.

We can find regional differences among the youth. However, based upon this, we can only make a careful statement that the Hungarian youth from certain countries acts more openly towards otherness. It seems that the young people of Serbia are the most tolerant, but further analysis, evidence, and explanatory models would be necessary in order to support this assertion.
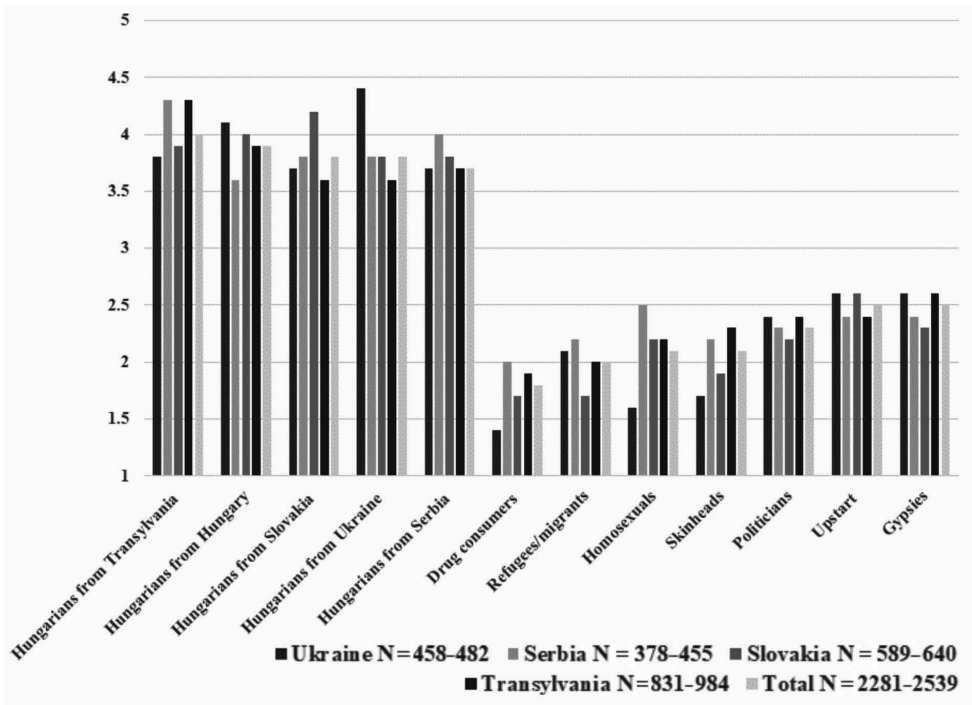
Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Figure 1. *The most appealing and the most unappealing groups in the perception of young people (means, 5 – very sympathetic, 1 – very antipathetic)*

In the following, we will discuss the results of the test of the hypotheses on the entire sample, not regionally.

Young people judge most groups differently based on the level of qualification. Those with the highest level of qualification perceive Hungarians from the neighbouring countries, the majorities of the societies, the other nations, and the "deviant" groups as more sympathetic than their peers. Hungarians from Hungary, Gypsies, politicians, and church authorities are perceived more positively by those with the lowest level of qualification as compared to other groups based on the level of education.

The evaluation of certain social groups differs based on the young adults' occupation. Gypsies are perceived as more sympathetic by those who neither study nor work. The other ethnic groups, homosexuals, skinheads, and the upstart, are judged more positively by young adults who work and study.

The opinions of the youth from rural and urban settlements differ regarding most of the groups. Hungarians from Hungary, Slovakia, and Ukraine, politicians, church authorities, and Gypsies are more sympathized by rural dwellers while other groups by the urban ones.

Age makes a significant difference only in the perception of a few groups, so that there are no generational gaps in attitudes towards otherness. Similarly to age, differences based on gender can be found in the case of only a few groups. Differences are the most accentuated in the perception of homosexuals, i.e. men sympathize more with drug consumers and Russians, while women perceive more positively the other enumerated groups.

The poorer the respondents are, the more they sympathize with the Gypsies. The relatively poor young people perceive the upstart as antipathetic. The other groups are more liked by those living in favourable material conditions.

The tendencies from the comparison of means are not univocal enough referring to the socio-demographic background. The hypothesis of projection or scapegoat – according to which the rural youth coming from a less favourable material and cultural background show a more negative attitude towards other groups than their peers – was not confirmed. For instance, rural dwellers with a lower level of education and less favourable material situation sympathize more with Gypsies. The groups perceived as deviant by the society are judged more positively by urban dwellers that work and study and have a higher level of education.

Prejudices Based on Religiosity, Media Consumption, Political Orientation, Value System, Experiences from Abroad, and Experiences with Discrimination (H2–H6)

The connection between institutional religiosity and tolerance has been hypothesized. Belonging to a denomination is not connected significantly with the sympathy thermometer; thus, the contradictory results of Murányi (1999) can neither be confirmed nor infirmed among the studied youth. Those who follow the rules of the church perceive otherness more sympathetic in general. So, religious observance and the preference of religious values favour sympathy towards otherness. At the same time, religiosity is connected to the level of education; therefore, those with a higher level of education are overrepresented among both who follow the rules of the church and the atheists. The impact of the two variables (level of education, religiosity) will be analysed in the explanatory model.

Based on Melican and Nixon's approach (2008), it was hypothesized that online sources favour selective perception. The results can neither confirm nor infirm that printed and online media consumption is connected to greater openness or that it favours selective perception.

Requesting Hungarian citizenship is connected to the perception of certain groups. The majority of the 14 groups are more sympathized by those who claimed Hungarian citizenship. Exceptions are Romanians, Gypsies, and Hungarians from Slovakia. The differentiating power of double citizenship was analysed in regional

samples, too. Majority nations are more sympathized by those young adults from Ukraine and Transylvania who did not claim double citizenship.

Political interest and satisfaction with democracy are connected only to the perception of a few social groups, and the correlation coefficients indicate poor relations. Young adults who are less satisfied with democracy perceive otherness as more unappealing.

Self-placement on the political left–right scale seems to be more strongly connected to the perception of otherness. Rightist youth sympathize less with majority nations and with groups perceived as deviant. Rightists – who have probably a stronger national identity than their peers – sympathize more with Hungarians from Hungary and the neighbouring countries as well as with church authorities. They perceive all other groups as more unappealing than their peers.

The approach of the contact hypothesis tested by Chen – according to which the experiences from abroad favour the perception of otherness (Chen 2007: 70–71) – was analysed among Hungarian youth from the neighbouring countries as well. Those who have accumulated both study and work experience sympathize less with Hungarians from Hungary. Those who studied or studied and worked abroad sympathize more with Jews, Hungarians from the neighbouring countries, refugees/migrants, homosexuals, drug consumers, and Russians. Thus, it seems that the study experience accumulated in another culture as well as the study and work experiences together are connected with a more positive relation to otherness.

More than half of the youth studied or worked in Hungary. More than 75% of those who named the country where they had studied earned experience in Hungary. Those who studied in Hungary perceive Hungarians from Hungary as significantly less sympathetic; therefore, the simplified version of the contact hypothesis was infirmed in their case. 40.7% of those who mentioned the countries where they had worked were in Hungary. Those who studied in Hungary sympathize more with Hungarians from the neighbouring countries as well as with Jews, Russians, homosexuals, and drug consumers. Those who have accumulated work experience in Hungary sympathize less with Romanians, refugees/migrants, homosexuals, and skinheads, but they perceive Hungarians from Ukraine and Gypsies as more sympathetic. It seems that the study and work experiences lead to different attitudes regarding homosexuals, but other factors may also play a role in this question.

The author assumed that negative experiences related to minority status and experiencing negative discrimination because of nationality enhance solidarity with other minority groups. 53% of the youth have this kind of experience. It seems that those who have experienced discrimination perceive Hungarians more positively and other groups more negatively, so that solidarity emerges selectively related to their own ethnic group. The way majority nations are perceived is probably also due to their discriminative actions experienced by the youth due to their national identity. The standard deviation is the highest in the case of Gypsies, and those

who have been discriminated perceive Gypsies as more unappealing. In this case, it is not very feasible that they have experienced discrimination from Gypsies. A more plausible explanation could be the reverse effect of the Gypsy-supporting discourses present in the public sphere.

In order to develop explanatory models for testing the hypotheses, aggregated indicators were needed from the previously analysed variables.

Model-Building Attempt for the System of Prejudices

Using the socio-demographic variables and the other factors formulated in the hypotheses, we tried to explain the attitude towards the groups perceived as being deviant. Among the previous works in the literature, we can read about approaches which define and mention homeless people, homosexuals, drug consumers, and skinheads as groups perceived by the public opinion as being deviant (Székelyi et al. 2001: 5). Similarly, Murányi analyses drug consumers, skinheads, and homosexuals as groups which can be characterized by deviance (Murányi 1999). Starting from these, the groups perceived as the most unappealing by the youth were included in one principal component: homosexuals, drug consumers, skinheads, and refugees/migrants. A principal component was created from the groups perceived as being the most deviant.

Table 1. *The principal component of the groups perceived as deviant (explained variance 54.8%)*

Variables	Factor scores
Homosexuals	0.794
Drug consumers	0.755
Skinheads	0.720
Refugees/migrants	0.687

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Certain factors contribute to a small extent to the explanation of prejudices. Those who consider success and goal achievement as being important proved to be more prejudicial, and, inversely, those who are less success-oriented are more tolerant towards otherness. Those who support the legalization of soft drugs and marriage between homosexuals sympathize more with the groups perceived by the public opinion as deviant. Those who support the limitation of citizens' rights when fighting terrorism and who expect from migrants to accept and adapt to local culture can be characterized by antipathy towards homosexuals, drug consumers, skinheads, and refugees/migrants.

The older the respondents are, the more probably they perceive the above mentioned groups as sympathetic. Those with a low level of education act more

tolerant with the groups perceived as deviant. The more rightist the respondents identify themselves politically, the more they evaluate the so-called deviant groups as antipathetic. Sympathy regarding politicians, the upstart, the Gypsies, and other nations shows a strong correlation with sympathy towards the enumerated groups. Tolerance towards other groups determines the acceptance of the groups perceived as deviant. Those who have better English language skills are more acceptant towards groups perceived as more unappealing by the majority.

Therefore, it seems that material situation, settlement type, religiosity, media consumption from printed and online sources, the heterogeneity of Facebook friends, and ethnic discrimination are not in causal relation with the perception of the least sympathetic group.

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of the regression analysis in terms of sympathy towards the groups perceived as deviant. The dependent variable was the principal component presented in *Table 1*. The independent variables were: year of birth, level of qualification, English language skills, self-placement on the political left–right scale, and principal components created from other nations (Chinese, Jews, Germans, Americans, Russians), the second ungrateful group (politicians, newly rich, Gypsies), legalization (of soft drugs and marriage of homosexuals), restrictions (expectations from migrants to accept the culture, values of the receiving country and limitation of citizens' right when fighting terrorism), and success orientation (five values were included: 1. to be able to take, buy what you want; 2. to reach your objectives; 3. success, 4. the right to conduct, to decide; 5. money).

Table 2. *Sympathy towards the group perceived as deviant – linear regression model (explained variance 37.6%)*

Variables	Beta
success-oriented	−0.120***
legalization	0.346***
restriction	−0.080**
year of birth	−0.080*
sympathy for other nations	0.222***
sympathy for the second ungrateful group	0.234***
self-placement on the political left–right scale	−0.095***
English language skills	0.130***
qualification	−0.090*

Level of significance: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Analysing the question on the regional level shows (*Table 3*) that if the regional differences are included in the model, the explained variance will somewhat increase, but age, level of education, and English language skills will be lost as

explanatory factors. Thus, in this model, the youth from Ukraine and Slovakia perceive the so-called groups as much more unappealing than their peers.

Table 3. *Sympathy for the deviant group – linear regression model (explained variance 40.5%)*

Variables	Beta
success-oriented	−0.132***
legalization	0.335***
restriction	−0.072**
relation to other nations	0.211***
relation to the second ungrateful group	0.224***
self-placement on the political left–right scale	−0.075**
Ukraine	−0.191***
Slovakia	−0.175***

Level of significance: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

In the regression model, opinions in support of legalizing soft drugs and marriage between homosexuals played the role of the most decisive factor.

Attempt at Creating a Typology

I have tried to identify types with cluster analysis based on the attitudes towards the social groups organized into principal components. We identified three main types difficult to interpret: a group which considers everybody appealing with a small number of cases, a neutral one which perceives their own communities as less sympathetic with a large number of cases, and a third one that considers otherness as unappealing with a medium number of cases.

Men, rural dwellers, those with a medium level of education, the economically active, the youth in Ukraine, the atheists, those who did not study abroad, who experienced discrimination, who have regional Hungarian and/or Hungarian identity, who are not satisfied with the economic situation of the country as well as with the interethnic relations, and who think pessimistically about the future are overrepresented among those who perceive otherness as unappealing. Tables 6 and 7 from the *Appendix* present the characteristics of the cluster groups and cluster centres.
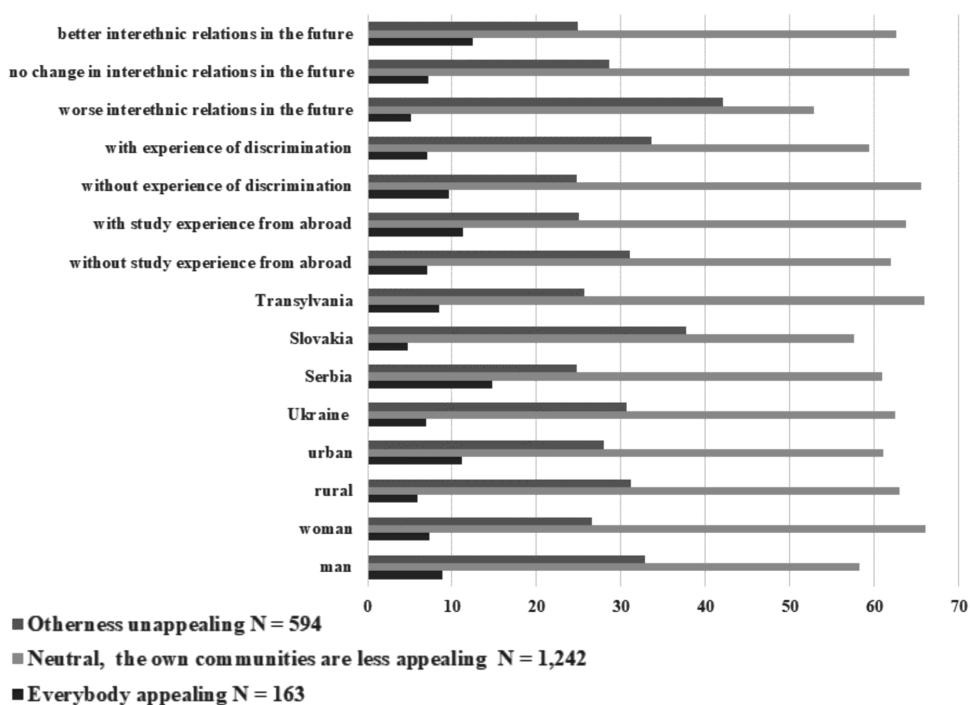
Figure 2. *Characteristics of the cluster groups based on the sympathy "thermometer"*

The group which perceives everybody as appealing can be characterized by a more favourable income situation than others. This seems to contradict the result that the economically active are overrepresented among those who perceive otherness as unappealing; however, this variable should be treated carefully as it includes not only their own money but also the received allowances. The created types differ from the point of view of the state language and English language skills. Preference of the Hungarian as a value is connected with rejection of otherness. The heterogeneity of Facebook friends and the existence of a higher proportion of majority young people among their acquaintances are more characteristic in the group which sympathizes with otherness.

Table 4. *Characteristics of the cluster groups based on the sympathy "thermometer" (significant relations, means)*

		Total sample N = 1,999	Everybody appealing N = 163	Neutral, the own communities are less appealing N = 1,242	Otherness unappealing N = 594
Foreign language skills (1 – not at all, 6 – mother tongue)	State language	4	4.4	4	3.8
	English	2.9	3.4	2.8	2.7
National values (1 – not at all, 5 – very important)	Hungarian as identity	4	3.9	3.9	4.1
Functioning of democracy (1 – unsatisfied, 10 – satisfied)	Satisfaction	4.3	4.5	4.4	3.9
Self-placement (1 – left, 7 – right)	Political	4.6	4.4	4.4	5
Composition of Facebook acquaintances (%)	Hungarian	75	68	75	76
	Majoritarian	21	26	20	20

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

I have tried to explain the types with the help of the functions determined by social status and opinions–competences (tables 5–13 can be found in the *Appendix*). The monthly income and the principal component created from the religious values played the role of status variables. On one pole of the line of the first function, there are those characterized by a favourable material situation, high income, and a lower level of religiosity, while on the other pole there are the religious youth with less favourable material situation. The other function is similar to the first one, and its capacity to discriminate is lower; its range covers the section between religious young adults with moderate financial status and their non-religious peers with extreme financial situation. The main difference between the two functions is that the first one is more strongly determined by the financial situation while the second one by religiosity.

Among the groups delimited based on the sympathy thermometer, those with higher income sympathize more with all other groups, while the less religious youth perceives otherness as more unappealing.

The results show that 46.5% of the cases can be successfully classified by this function. The explained variance is not so high, but it is still better than estimating with the modus, without the discriminant function.

The function of opinions and competences was formed by five elements: the first and the third ones are principal components. The first one includes the opinions regarding the legalization of soft drugs and marriage between homosexuals; the second one includes the self-placement on the political left–right scale; the third one contains opinions referring to the limitation of citizens' rights; the fourth one

comprises the work experience from Hungary; the last one includes the English language skills. The first function is strongly determined by the rejection of legalization, rightist political orientation, and limitation of citizens' rights. Thus, on one end of the line, there are placed those who would not legalize soft drugs and marriage between homosexuals, the rightist young people who would support the limitation of citizens' rights when fighting terrorism, who would expect from the migrants to accept our culture, and who do not speak English well. On the other end of the line, there are the young adults with opposite opinions, who speak English better. The other function is strongly determined by work experience from Hungary, English language competences, and self-placement on the political left–right scale. On one end of the line, there are the rightist young people who have worked in Hungary, who speak English better, and who agree both with legalization and the limitation of rights, while on the other end the leftist young people are placed who have not worked in Hungary, have a poorer command of English, and do not agree with either legalization or limitation. Rightist political orientation is a determining factor of both functions; the composition of functions is quite heterogeneous, but these opinions do not exclude each other.

The rightist youth who do not support legalization and who would prefer the limitation of citizens' rights perceive otherness as unappealing, while those less rightists who support legalization and oppose limitation judge each group as more appealing. Young adults who speak English and have worked in Hungary perceive each group as more appealing.

Thus, 44.2% of the cases were classified successfully, which is less than the explained variance of the former function but significantly more than the modus.

By including the four discriminant functions in the analysis, two more functions were formed. On one pole of the first function, there are the rightists, non-religious youth who do not support legalization, who prefer limitation, who speak English less well and have lower income. On the other pole, there are the young people who have worked in Hungary, can speak English better, have higher income, and have more liberal attitudes. The determining elements of the second function are language competences, work experience in Hungary, and favourable material situation. On one end of the line, there are the less religious youth with higher income, good English skills, with work experience in Hungary, while on the other end the religious ones with lower income, poor English skills, and no work experience in Hungary.

The created two functions indicate that those who perceive otherness as unappealing do not prefer liberal values and are less religious, while young adults who have higher incomes, better English skills, and work experience in Hungary judge each group as more sympathetic. Based on these results, the affective component of the attitudes can be partially explained by opinions, certain elements of the social background, and certain competences. All in all, 42.6% of the cases were successfully classified with the two functions.

Conclusions

The hypotheses were only partially confirmed or infirmed based on the results. Connections were successfully proved regarding the variables mentioned in the hypotheses, but there is much room for improvement when it comes to building up the explanatory model and the type creation results.

The results show that there can be found regional differences among the youth. However, it can be affirmed only carefully that Hungarian young people from the analysed countries behave themselves more open towards otherness. It seems that young people from Serbia are the most tolerant, but further analyses, evidence, and explanatory models would be needed in order to support this affirmation.

The relation of the youth with otherness cannot be constrained between the frames formed by the hypotheses, i.e. the socio-demographic background, religiosity, value preferences, relation to politics, and media consumption do not determine the attitudes towards other groups. At the same time, one can read these types of tendencies and explanations in the literature. Thus, it remains a question whether the models confirmed in the case of the adult generation are less sustainable in the case of new generations, or the author's competences limit the analysis and explanation of the results.

One of the possible explanations which can be outlined from the results of the present analysis is that similarly to the Hungarian adult population, where there is a consensus regarding hostility to Gypsies (e.g. Székelyi et al. 2001) and about the fact that anti-Semitism cannot be described by characteristics of social background (Balassa 2007, Kovács 2014, Hann–Róna 2015), the attitudes of the Hungarian youth from the neighbouring countries towards otherness cannot be sufficiently explained by hard indicators. The hypotheses probably should be reformulated, and a future study should concentrate on softer variables such as communication topics in socialization environments. The author considers that family, school, and peer group continuously play – to various extents – the role of pattern transmission in forming the attitudes of the youth, but their effect does not emerge through cultural, material background, settlement type, etc. but through the content of interactions. In order to explore the latter ones, qualitative methods seem to be necessary besides quantitative tools. One has to pay attention to several dimensions of prejudice both with quantitative and qualitative methods besides the affective component of the attitudes: the antecedents from the literature offer patterns in this sense.

The differentiated analysis of the impact of context and contact could be a proposal of a further research, in which the paper of Balassa and Kovács (2010) can represent the starting-point. Thus, the independent and connected effects can be measured. For this reason, the delimitation of heterogeneous and homogenous settlements is necessary in the sample as well as a more targeted inclusion of contacts in the analyses.

In order to analyse the role of the minority status – as a factor of enhancing solidarity towards otherness –, a comparison with majority and Hungarian young people would be extremely needed.

Therefore, certain narrower segments of the socio-demographic background still explain partially the affective component of the attitudes, but they do not offer enough tools to draw the profile of young adults who accept or reject otherness. Probably, a diversity and complexity of profiles characterizes all of the young people belonging to the three groups (acceptance, neutral behaviour, and rejection).

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Audiovisual Materials

AV1 = https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F8I2RUwi1w (27.03.2017).

AV2 = Szilágyi N., Sándor: *Én ember szeretnék maradni, ha nem nagy baj.* http://www.maszol.ro/index.php/velemeny/68240-szilagyi-n-sandor-en-ember-szeretnek-maradni-ha-nem-nagy-baj (27.03.2017).

AV3 = Tamás, Gáspár Miklós: *Farsangi videó Oroszhegyről.* http://tgm.transindex.ro/?cikk=1245 (27.03.2017).

Appendix

Table 5. *How sympathetic or antipathetic are the people belonging to the following groups? (means, 5 – very sympathetic, 1 – very antipathetic)*

	Ukraine N = 458–482		Serbia N = 378–455		Slovakia N = 589–640		Transylvania N = 831–984		Total N = 2,281–2,539	
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD
Romanians	3.0	0.8	3.4	0.9	3.3	0.9	3.3	0.9	3.3	0.9
Slovakians	3.1	0.7	3.3	0.8	2.8	0.7	3.0	0.7	3.0	0.7
Serbians	3.0	0.6	3.0	0.8	2.9	0.7	3.0	0.6	3.0	0.7
Ukrainians	3.2	1.0	3.1	0.7	2.9	0.6	3.0	0.6	3.0	0.7
Hungarians from Hungary	4.1	0.8	3.6	1.0	4.0	0.9	3.9	0.8	3.9	0.9
Gypsies	2.6	1.1	2.4	0.9	2.3	1.0	2.6	1.1	2.5	1.1
Jews	2.7	0.8	2.9	0.9	2.7	0.8	2.8	0.8	2.8	0.8
Germans	3.1	0.8	3.4	0.8	3.1	0.7	3.3	0.8	3.2	0.8
Chinese	2.9	0.7	3.0	0.8	2.8	0.7	3.0	0.7	2.9	0.7
Hungarians from Transylvania	3.8	0.8	4.3	0.8	3.9	0.8	4.3	0.8	4.0	0.8
Hungarians from Serbia	3.7	0.8	4.0	0.8	3.8	0.8	3.7	0.8	3.7	0.8
Hungarians from Slovakia	3.7	0.7	3.8	0.8	4.2	0.8	3.6	0.8	3.8	0.8
Hungarians from Ukraine	4.4	0.7	3.8	0.8	3.8	0.8	3.6	0.8	3.8	0.9
Unemployed	3.0	0.8	3.1	0.8	2.9	0.7	2.9	0.8	2.9	0.8
Refugees/migrants	2.1	1.0	2.2	1.0	1.7	0.9	2.0	0.9	**2.0**	1.0
Homosexuals	1.6	0.9	2.5	1.1	2.2	1.0	2.2	1.0	**2.1**	1.1
Skinheads	1.7	1.0	2.2	1.0	1.9	1.0	2.3	1.0	**2.1**	1.0
Drug consumers	1.4	0.7	2.0	1.1	1.7	0.8	1.9	0.9	**1.8**	0.9
Upstart	2.6	0.8	2.4	0.9	2.6	0.8	2.4	0.9	2.5	0.9
Politicians	2.4	0.9	2.3	0.9	2.2	0.8	2.4	0.9	**2.3**	0.9
Russians	2.9	0.9	3.1	0.9	3.0	0.8	2.9	0.8	2.9	0.8
Church authorities	3.5	0.9	3.0	1.0	2.9	0.8	3.0	0.9	3.0	0.9
Americans	3.1	0.8	3.0	0.9	2.9	0.9	3.2	0.9	3.1	0.9

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Note: The value of N is changing based on the valid answers in every table (minimum–maximum).

Table 6. *Cluster groups created based on the sympathy "thermometer" (cluster centres)*

Variables	Everybody appealing N = 167	Neutral N = 1,298	Otherness unappealing N = 605
Groups perceived as deviant	1.09395	0.25731	−0.77390
Hungarians from the neighbouring countries	0.95159	−0.26078	0.23915
Majority nations	1.98069	0.04653	−0.61837
Other nations	1.81492	0.10494	−0.73488
The second unappealing group	1.05684	0.33774	−0.98055

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 7. *Characteristics of the cluster groups based on the sympathy "thermometer" (significant relations, percentage per row)*

		Everybody appealing N = 163	Neutral, the own communities are less appealing N = 1,242	Otherness unappealing N = 594
Gender	man	8.8	58.3	**32.8**
	woman	7.3	66.1	26.5
Settlement type	rural	5.9	63	**31.2**
	urban	**11.1**	61.1	27.9
Region	Ukraine	6.9	62.5	**30.6**
	Serbia	**14.7**	60.9	24.8
	Slovakia	**4.7**	57.6	**37.7**
	Transylvania	8.4	65.9	25.7
Qualification	elementary	6.9	67.6	25.5
	secondary	7.3	58.8	**34**
	higher education	**10.9**	63.6	25.5
Occupation	economically active	8.3	57.9	**33.8**
	economically inactive	7.7	63.6	28.7
	unemployed	8.5	63.7	27.8
	student	7.9	66.5	25.7
Religiosity	he/she follows the rules of the church	9.8	67.2	23
	on his/her own way	7.9	61.2	30.9
	not religious	5.8	63.5	30.8
	atheist	**12.1**	48.3	**39.7**
Study experience from abroad	no	7.1	61.9	**31**
	yes	**11.3**	63.8	25
Experience of discrimination	no	9.6	65.6	24.8
	yes	7	59.4	**33.6**

		Everybody appealing N = 163	Neutral, the own communities are less appealing N = 1,242	Otherness unappealing N = 594
Primary identity	regional	9.8	61.4	28.8
	regional Hungarian	8.4	61.4	**30.3**
	Hungarian	**4.2**	58.8	**37**
	citizenships	8.4	66.1	25.1
	inner region	7.4	61.8	**30.9**
	country	7.7	72.3	**20**
	European	**14.1**	57.8	28.1
	other	7	71.9	**21.1**
Economic situation in the last ten years	worse	6.8	66.8	26.4
	no change	6.8	66.8	26.4
	better	**10.7**	62.2	27.1
Standard of living in the last ten years	worse	7.6	59	**33.4**
	no change	8.5	66.2	25.2
	better	7.0	62.8	**30.2**
Personal situation in the last ten years	worse	9.4	54.2	**36.4**
	no change	7.0	65.7	27.3
	better	8.3	62.7	29
Interethnic relations in the last ten years	worse	**4.8**	53.9	**41.4**
	no change	8.1	66.2	25.7
	better	**12.4**	61.8	25.8
Economic situation in the future	worse	6.2	55	**38.8**
	no change	6.4	67.6	26
	better	**12.7**	61.9	25.4
Standard of living in the future	worse	6.1	57	**36.9**
	no change	7.1	65.8	27.1
	better	**11.9**	63.1	25.1
Personal situation in the future	worse	5.5	51.6	**42.9**
	no change	7.3	63.4	29.3
	better	9.3	63.5	27.2
Interethnic relations in the future	worse	5.1	52.8	**42.1**
	no change	7.2	64.1	28.6
	better	**12.5**	62.6	24.9

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 8. *Status functions. Discrimination analysis, structure matrix*

	1	2
Monthly income	0.932	0.363
Religious values	−0.489	0.872

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 9. *The position of groups delimited based on prejudices on the status functions*

	High income	Religiosity
Everybody appealing	0.329	0.066
Neutral, the own communities are less unappealing	−0.050	0.045
Otherness unappealing	0.012	−0.111

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 10. *Functions determined by opinions and competences. Discrimination analysis, structure matrix*

	1	2
Legalization (drugs and homosexuals)	−0.702*	0.395
Self-placement on the political left–right scale	0.599*	0.525
Limitation of citizens' rights	0.520*	0.237
Work experience from Hungary	−0.072	0.574*
English language skills	−0.212	0.529*

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 11. *The position of groups delimited based on prejudices on the functions of opinions and competences*

	Rightist, against legalization, pro-limitation	Worked in Hungary, good English skills, rightists
Everybody appealing	−0.541	0.379
Neutral, the own communities less sympathetic	−0.104	−0.111
Otherness unappealing	0.378	0.107

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 12. *The functions determined by the status and opinions–competences. Discrimination analysis, structure matrix*

	1	2
Rightist, against legalization, pro-limitation	0.882*	−0.016
Religiosity	−0.276*	−0.137
Worked in Hungary, good English skills, rightists	−0.161	0.766*
High income	−0.147	0.643*

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Table 13. *The position of groups delimitated based on prejudices on the functions of opinions and the status*

	Not liberal, not religious	Favourable situation
Everybody appealing	−0.463	0.347
Neutral, the own communities less sympathetic	−0.088	−0.088
Otherness unappealing	0.311	0.089

Source: author's computation based on the dataset of the GeneZYs 2015 study

Everything Changes… More or Less. Opinions about the Post-Pandemic World among Ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania (Romania)

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Abstract. The analysis presents some of the results of an online survey regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, which was undertaken among ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania. The survey was based on a convenience sample and was realized between 16 and 26 April 2020, so during a specific period of the lockdown. Among others, the questionnaire asked the respondents about the degree in which the post-pandemic world would change. The answers to the question show that nearly three quarters of the respondents think that the world will not change at all or it will suffer only minor changes. Those who are more prone towards seeing a totally or a majorly changed world are in a minority. We assume that this situation could reflect a wishful thinking in front of an uncertain context. The regression analysis showed that respondents' opinion regarding the change can be only marginally predicted by the selected independent variables. Men, those holding materialistic values, are significantly less convinced that the world will suffer major/total changes. On the other hand, trust in several institutions raises the odds of formulating the opinion that the post-pandemic world will be considerably changed.

Introduction

> "I'm afraid of everything that the contagion can change. Of discovering that the structure holding up civilisations I know it is nothing but a house of cards. I'm afraid of annihilation, but also of its opposite: that fear will eventually pass without leaving any trace of change behind." (Giordano, 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a series of previously unknown experiences: the lockdown, including the closing of schools, full- or part-time working from home settings associated with the fear of an unknown enemy have turned life upside down throughout the world. Such events legitimate to talk about a social change and, indeed, scholars agree that the pandemic will result in some sort of changes (see the summary of Nistor et al. 2020). Some of these changes are already occurring (online teaching, the transformation of the office, closing of national borders, etc.); however, we can only speculate if such changes mean a permanent societal transformation, or, as the pandemic ends, life will return to its normal course. According to the words of Giordano (2020), what is sure for now is that normality is suspended, but nobody knows for how much time. In such uncertain times, not only experts are those who try to elucidate how the post-pandemic world will look like, but also everyday discussions gravitate around this topic.

How will the world be after this unique worldwide event? Among many other questions, this was one that we addressed to the respondents of an online survey which investigated the ways in which ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania confronted with the pandemic and with the associated lockdown. The survey was realized between 16 and 26 April 2020, i.e. in a period when Romania was in lockdown. In that period, Romanian citizens, including ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, were highly aware of the health risks of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, respected the measures and constraints imposed by the authorities, and speculated about a possible date when relaxation measures are going to take place. Several surveys show that once the lockdown ended (as of 15 May 2020), citizens became more anxious and they started to question not only the measures taken by the authorities but also the existence of the virus itself (e.g. IRES 2020). Possibly, our respondents' view on the post-pandemic world could have changed since April 2020 and, consequently, the present analysis should be read as a purely explorative endeavour which looks at the future from a specific moment of the past.

After a short review of a sort of a pandemic-related social change and of the individual determinants of openness to change/resistance to change, we will present the methodology of the survey and then the results of an ordinal logistic regression analysis, which tried to elucidate those individual-level variables which could shape respondents' view on the post-pandemic world.

Social Change in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Social change is one of the basic concepts of sociology, so it is not a surprise that one can find very many definitions of it.[1] Some of these definitions are very general, while others try to accentuate some measurable patterns of social change. Johnson (1960: 626) describes social change as "the change in the structure of a social system; what have been stable or relatively unchanging changes". In this approach, change is an abstract construct, and it refers to "some" new patterns of social systems. Vago's (1999) approach of social change is, however, more specific as it defines change as an intentional or unintentional, qualitative or quantitative transformation of the social system. In the author's view, change can be characterized (and measured) by the following patterns: identity (i.e. what is changed in the social phenomenon, i.e. attitudes, social practices, etc.); level of change (e.g. micro-, meso-, or macro-level changes); duration (is the change occurring only in the short-term or is it a long-term transformation?); direction (does the change result in decline, development, or progress?); magnitude (marginal, major, evolutionary changes), and rate (is the change slow, fast, continuous, etc.?).

Far from being exhaustive, we mention that one of the earliest approaches on social change is that of Tönnies (1887/1983): the author described a major social change, i.e. the transformation of the traditional society (Gemeinschaft) into modern society (Gesellschaft), and focused on several specific manifestations of the social organizations and practices, such as the dissolution of community ties, the replacement of religious worldview by rationality, the widespread of urban livelihood and industrial production, etc. The transformation of modern societies into postmodern societies is another example of major social change. As Lyotard (1984) contends, postmodernity is an era of constant change: it refers to a condition where former positivist thinking is continuously questioned and meta-narratives become outdated. The author emphasizes also that much of the postmodern condition is due to technology and artificial intelligence: technology becomes widespread and allows the acquisition of knowledge and information by virtually everyone. Such transformations were then described as information society (i.e. a society where the production is based on information goods (Masuda 1981) and where, due to the availability of information and communication technologies, individuals will adopt new practices in virtually every domain of their lives) or network society (Van Dijk 2006). These societal changes were approached also from the viewpoint of the transformation of values. Inglehart's (1977, 1990) thesis about the value shift from materialist (i.e. surviving) to post-materialist (e.g. self-expression) values reveals a cultural change which occurs on the basis of a series of societal transformations in terms of institutions and social

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1   The works of Boudon (1991), Sztompka (1993), Sanderson (2007), and Vago (1999) are illustrative for the many approaches on social change.

practices (e.g. economic prosperity, absence of war, spread of the service economy, rising level of education, etc.).

Others approached social change through specific sound concepts. Fukuyama (1992) referred to "the end of history", a concept through which the author contended that social change can be linked not only to long-term phenomena of transformation but also to specific events. Thus, the fall of the Berlin Wall marks the end of the history as such and signals the spread of liberal democracy. McDonaldization is quoted by Ritzer (1993) as a metaphor for globalization, i.e. a major macro-social change resulting in the homogenization of life (e.g. production, consumption, cultural norms, etc.). Risk society is another famous term (Beck 1992), which refers to a society that is continuously dealing with hazards as by-products and obsolete conditions of the modern industry, technology, and globalization.

Such major works describe various facets of social change: in each of them, social change represents a major social phenomenon which is linked to substantial transformations, whether we are speaking of knowledge production and distribution, industrial production, the organizations of social and political institutions, etc. As we have summarized elsewhere (Nistor et al. 2020), since the beginning of the pandemic, several international think tanks have been preoccupied to find answers to the question whether the pandemic will result in social change. Experts agree that the pandemic will result in some sort of change; however, there is little data on approaching the change in Vago's (1999) terms, i.e. in the form of measurable, pivotal elements of change. Thus, there is much speculation about whether these changes will occur only on the short term or will result in long-term transformation, whether they will mark the end of an era or will be only short-term manifestations of specific practices and attitudes. Some of the possible changes are already taking place no matter we are speaking about the strategies and fears of adaptations to a previously unknown virus and disease, social distancing, the wearing of face masks, online teaching and working arrangements, travel-related re-arrangements, etc. It remains, however, a question if these changes will be part of our lives in the post-pandemic world as well.

Since the pandemic is far from the end, researchers base their opinions on previous events (e.g. the 2008 economic crisis) or on those already occurring changes which could shape the nature of future transformations. One of the frequently invoked changes is the "rebirth of the nation-state". As Allen et al. (2020) contend, the pandemic has resulted in specific national-level approaches, but much of these were coherent in the sense that states temporarily closed their borders in order to stop the spread of the virus through international travels. In this sense, the pandemic can be interpreted as the crisis of globalization, and so it allows to envision a world in which national boundaries, national solutions will reborn. The authors also emphasize that many of the national-level decisions are questionable in their democratic nature, so it is even possible that the pandemic will result in

the birth of new democratic forces, in the re-accentuation of the human rights, etc. The authors of *Politico* (2020) consider that the pandemic will "end the world as we know it". Among the many elements of change, the thinkers invited to debate on the post-pandemic future consider the following: the end of traditional workplace (i.e. the spread of remote working and home office settings); the change of the eating out practice in the context of consumers' lack of trust and social distancing initiatives; the reconsideration of the importance of sustainable production and consumption practices (i.e. local food, local commerce); the accentuated spread of the online consumption; changes in transportation (more bikes, less air travel, the reconsideration of health and safety in the case of airports, urban transportation, etc.); the recognition of the importance of health experts, online services, etc.

Dartnell (2020) also considers that the pandemic "will certainly change the world". The author sees the possible long-term changes mostly in connection with the workplace: the classic office, the regular 9–17 working schedule will be replaced by more flexible working arrangements and home office practices. These then will result in less harsh urban traffic but also in the drop of prices of the urban properties since remotely working employees will be tempted to move in the much comfortable and liveable suburbs, but the author is quite reserved in what regards the possible positive environmental impact of the pandemic. However, others, such as Monbiot (2020), Lányi (2020), etc., see a good opportunity in the pandemic in reversing the negative environmental effects of the current socio-economic arrangements: they argue that once the pandemic ends we must come out from our comfortable bubbles and see the multiple connections between climate change – food supplies – and diseases, and, consequently, both individuals and institutions must act in order to reverse climate change.

Zografos (2020) argues that the pandemic showed some critical problems and vulnerable groups: e.g. the exploitation of migrant workers and their unhealthy living arrangements, the need to invest in medical care, gender inequalities (e.g. mostly women are the care workers in hospitals and other care institutions). Therefore, the post-pandemic world will need to achieve social changes that enhance solidarity, end exploitation and structures of privilege. The same needs are accentuated by the UN (2020) as well.

Friedrich Naumann Foundation's (2020) essay contest in the Czech Republic asked youngsters to envision the post-pandemic world. The laureates of the contest expressed their doubts whether the changes will bring long-term transformations; however, they agreed that such transformations will impact the economic life (crisis, lower wages, unemployment) and social values (the re-emergence of the importance of family, personal development, education, and health). They also expressed their hope that the post-pandemic world would result in more environmentally-friendly behaviours as the lockdown showed the importance of spending time in natural surroundings.

Other authors are less enthusiastic regarding the post-pandemic changes or see the post-pandemic world in a negative way. Kiss (2020) considers that once the pandemic ends the world will go on as usual. The author bases his argument on the previous 2008 economic crisis, which, although showed the vulnerability of the capitalist system, did not change the structuring and functioning of the capitalist and profit-centred economic arrangements. Walker et al. (2020) assess that the post-pandemic world can create new inequalities between citizens both in terms of geopolitical locations and in terms of their immunity (e.g. those who are not infected, who are immune, or who are infected), the case of the so-called "immunity passports" being illustrative in this respect.

Only a short review of these possible scenarios suggests that there is no clear agreement about the post-pandemic world, and it is debatable whether there will be changes and, if yes, whether these transformations will be for the better or, on the contrary, will deepen current societal problems. Thus, for now, it remains largely at the level of individuals and of their experiences how they currently feel about the post-pandemic world. Consequently, we can speculate about the role of several individual-level characteristics which can shape people's view of the post-pandemic future.

Openness to Change vs. Resistance to Change

Change always results is some sort of stress and uncertainty; there are opinions that resistance to change is a natural reaction of mankind (Kotter 1995). Studies on human values showed a more nuanced picture. For instance, Schwartz's (1992) theory on basic human values describes ten universal, cross-culturally valid (i.e. pan-cultural) values: benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, conformity, security, and tradition. These values can be found in each culture; however, individuals are not similar in the importance they give to the ten values, that is, there are specific axiological hierarchies between individuals which then might result in inter-cultural specificities. From the viewpoint of the topic of our analysis, two are particularly important of Schwartz's values: security (i.e. valuing the safety and stability of social contexts and of self, e.g. order, social security, risk avoidance, etc.) and stimulation (i.e. excitement, novelty, adventure, e.g. daring, exciting, adventurous life, etc.) (Schwartz 2003, Nistor–Iluţ 2011). Obviously, people are not similar in the importance they give to security and stimulation, and, as far as values can "serve as criteria of choice between variants of actions" (Nistor–Iluţ 2011: 336), it becomes obsolete to expect different attitudes towards the post-pandemic changes. Unfortunately, our survey did not measure any of Schwartz' values; however, the questionnaire included the classic Inglehartian

index on materialist/postmaterialist value orientations,[2] which allows to measure a linkage between the attitudes towards the post-pandemic changes and value orientation (Inglehart 1971, 1990; Inglehart–Abramson 1994). According to Inglehart and Baker (2000), postmaterialist, i.e. self-expression values, illustrate individuals' freedom and openness to economic and physical security (i.e. materialist values), wherefore we can presuppose a positive relationship between the degree of post-pandemic change and the underlining values, i.e. those who give priority to survival values will envision no or little change, while those who give higher priority to pos-materialist values will envision a changing post-pandemic world.

Studies taking place in organizational settings showed a nuanced picture, assessing that individuals do not react similarly to changing situations: while some people are more comfortable with uncertainty, see in change an opportunity, and thus consider change as a form of challenge, others react negatively to the smallest transformations, they feel threatened, anxious and are reluctant to changes (Wanberg–Banas 2000). Thus, there were revealed two contradictory profiles: those who are open to change (i.e. are willing to support change and have a positive attitude towards it and those who are resistant to change (Hofstede 1980, Wanberg–Banas 2000).

Besides the role of the values, there were revealed specific factors which shape people's attitudes to change. The cognitive adaptation theory contends that openness to change is dependent upon individuals' self-esteem, optimism, and perceived control (Taylor–Brown, 1988), that is, those who have high self-esteem are more optimistic about the future and think that they can have some sort of control over the change, so they are more open towards transformations. Others emphasize that, besides the individual-level specificities, there are organizational contexts which may favour/hinder people's attitude towards change. Thus, it was revealed that trust can be an important structuring force: those who trust their superiors and colleagues are more open towards change (Chawla–Kelloway 2004, Grama–Todericiu 2016). Job/financial insecurity is also important: those who feel that organizational change will have a negative impact on their employee status are reluctant to change (Iverson 1996, Dent–Galloway Goldberg 1999, Chawla–Kelloway 2004). Those who feel informed about the change or are participating in the process of change are more open towards it, and so are those who report change-specific self-efficacy (Wanberg–Banas 2000).

It was also shown that besides values people's reaction to change is two-dimensional: attitudinal and behavioural (Chawla–Kelloway 2004), that is, people can have a psychological acceptance/rejection towards change, and they can also manifest

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2   Respondents are asked to select which of the following are the most important for them: a) Maintaining the order of nation; b) Giving the people more say in important government decisions; c) Fighting rising process; d) Protecting the freedom of speech. Then, they are asked to indicate which out of the four options is the second most important for them. Then, respondents are grouped as follows: materialistic (a + c), post-materialistic (b + d), and mixed (other combinations).

specific behaviours that reflect their attitudes to change. In our study, we examined only the attitudinal level, i.e. what the respondents' perception was about the post-pandemic changes. Change was taken on an abstract level, and so respondents had to decide on a 1–4 scale the degree of change they assumed would happen in the world once the pandemic ends. Our respondents were ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, Romania, i.e. from a context which is not particularly favourable for openness to change. Previous studies documented that, according to the Schwartz's values, Romanians' as well as Hungarians' most important value is security (i.e. to live in secure surroundings and the government to ensure their security), while stimulation (i.e. looking for new things, openness to adventures) ranks the last out of the ten values (Nistor–Iluț 2011). Other studies reported that Romania reveals a traditional, materialistic value structure (Voicu 2007). Gavreliuc (2011) shows that on the basis of the Hofstede cultural inventory Romania has low openness to change (it scores 30 on a 1–100 scale). Referring specifically to ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, various studies have shown that even the younger exponents of this population attach high importance to the values of security and stability (e.g. Kiss et al. 2008).

Our study was an explorative endeavour in the sense that we did not formulate hypotheses. However, on the basis of the aforementioned literature, we presupposed some specific results and raised the question as to whether the majority of the respondents will envisage a post-pandemic world in which only minor changes will occur or one which will not be changed at all. We also envisioned that those who show postmaterialistic values are economically better-off, feel that they have some sort of control over changes (i.e. have financial provisions), have greater trust in institutions and others, show change-related self-efficacy (i.e. better health, economic provisions, better information-processing ability), and will be more open-minded about change.

In terms of the literature on values, we also left room for the question as to whether younger individuals (Vaillant 2002, Robinson, 2013), male respondents (Hinz et al. 2002, Robinson 2013),[3] those living in urban settings and have higher education (i.e. it may enhance self-efficacy and control over change) will consider that the world will suffer substantial changes.

Methodology

The analysis is based on the results of a survey undertaken among ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, Romania, between 16 and 26 of April 2020. This was a specific period of the lockdown, meaning that the country was in an emergency state, leaving one's home was permitted only for several reasons (e.g. work, grocery

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3   The data on the role of gender, openness to change, and security are rather inconsistent or show limited differences (Schwartz–Rubel 2005).

shopping, medical assistance), schools were closed, and an important part of the population was working from home. It was unclear when relaxing measures were going to happen, so insecurity was a general feeling. Thus, survey results are relevant considering only that specific period. Since then, many different emotions have come to the surface and a great number of events succeeded one another, and thus further studies on populations' attitudes towards the pandemic resulted in different outcomes (e.g. IRES 2020). Besides the specific timing of our study, another specificity refers to the ways in which data were collected. We did not use probability sampling, and so the survey was based on convenience sampling and the questionnaire was distributed online, mostly through social media and other platforms (e.g. the website of our university, some media platforms, etc.). This means that the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Hungarian ethnicity living in Transylvania, so they reflect only the opinion of those who self-selected themselves to respond to the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was fully completed by 1,269 respondents. Two-thirds (74%) of the respondents are from urban settings, and 58% of them are from Covasna and Harghita counties (i.e. the two counties which concentrate the majority of the ethnic Hungarian population living in Transylvania), while those having a university degree (66%) and women (80%) were overrepresented in the sample. The average age of the respondents is 37 years old. Half of the respondents are married, one quarter of them lives with a partner, and another quarter are single. 56% of the respondents have children, and two-thirds of the parents have children below 18 years of age. The economic status of the respondents shows that 66% are employed or are entrepreneurs, 15% are students, 16% are inactive, and the remaining part of the respondents are day workers or have part-time jobs. Half of the respondents have a monthly income between RON 2,000 and 4,000 (approx. 420–810 EUR). All in all, it can be stated that the respondents resemble a middle-class profile: urban respondents with university degrees and privileged economic situation, mostly with children. These patterns coincide also with the general profile of active Internet users, which is not a surprise as being an active Internet user is usually the sine qua non criterion for answering online surveys (Lefever et al. 2007).

The questionnaire addressed different issues in connection with the pandemic: e.g. how the respondents spent their time during the lockdown; their participation in home office activities and opinions about home office; attitudes towards the online school/home schooling; division of domestic labour during lockdown; trust in people and institutions; economic problems and arrangements; subjective health, health understanding; challenges of the lockdown; fears concerning the pandemic and other risks; opinions about the forthcoming world, etc.

The analysis below presents the results of the survey regarding this last question, i.e. how respondents see the post-pandemic world, more specifically how they appreciate the magnitude of change the world will suffer. Do they think that the

world will remain the same, will change drastically, or will there be some sort of minor/major changes? Thus, the question investigated the magnitude of change (Vago 1999) on a 1–4 scale (1 – the world will remain the same, i.e. no change at all; 2 – the majority of things will remain the same, i.e. minor change; 3 – the majority of things will change, i.e. major change; 4 – the world will change completely, i.e. total change).

As change was considered in an abstract sense, we presupposed that the answers might reflect not only what respondents know or think about the post-pandemic world but also how they would like the post-pandemic world to be (i.e. wishful thinking). On a very general level, we presupposed that those who were reluctant to changes or did not have resources (e.g. education, finance, self-efficacy, etc.) were more scared of a social change and they might project these fears onto the answers, preferring a world which would not change or would suffer only minor changes. On the contrary, those who are more open about changes in general or possess certain resources will be more open to changes. The question under research (i.e. the dependent variable) was asked in the context of a broader online questionnaire which dealt with other specific questions related to the pandemic. Thus, there is possibility for a multivariate analysis.

The dependent variable is an ordered variable, so we relied on ordinal logistic regression. We estimated two models: one which investigated the influence of several socio-demographic variables and a second one which added several other predictors to the first model, i.e. axiological orientation, self-efficacy, and trust.

The first model included only socio-demographic variables: age (categorical), gender (dummy), education (categorical), residence (dummy), presence of children (dummy), and income (measured with a proxy categorical variable). Regarding this last variable, we mention the following: instead of the declared income, we opted for the variable of whether respondents had financial provisions. This was motivated on the one hand by the relatively large number of missing responses to the question regarding last month's income and, on the other hand, by the fact that, on the basis of the cognitive adaptation theory (Taylor–Brown 1988), we considered the existence of provisions as a good indicator for the perceived control over change, i.e. those having financial provisions being more open about change since they have sufficient resources to avert the eventually negative outcomes of change. This option can be sustained by empirical data as well since there is a high multicollinearity between income and financial provisions.

Besides the socio-demographic variables, the second model included the following predictors: subjective health (categorical), ability of processing information related to the pandemic (dummy),[4] value orientation (categorical), interpersonal trust (2-factor scores: i.e. trust in closely related people, trust in foreign people), and

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4   Thus, having financial provisions (included in the first model), good subjective health, and the ability to process information regarding the pandemic (both included in the second model) were considered indicators of self-efficacy and personal control over change.

institutional trust (4-factor scores: trust in repressive institutions, trust in public non-repressive institutions, trust in international organizations, trust in the media).

We measured change-related self-efficacy and control over change by three variables: having financial provisions, subjective health, and ability to process information related to the pandemic. Thus, we presupposed that financial resources as well as a good health condition and knowing one's way around the huge amount of information related to the pandemic are protective factors against change (cf. Wanberg–Banas 2000). Trust was introduced based on the rationale that those who perceive more social and institutional support might be more open to change (Iverson 1996; Wanberg–Banas 2000). Value orientation reflected the rationale that the attitude towards change may reflect value orientations, meaning that those who are oriented towards security will be less open to changes.

Albeit the selection of the variables was based on several considerations of the literature, we did not aim to rigorously test hypotheses. Our sole aim was to explore whether the selected variables have any influence in shaping respondents' attitudes towards the magnitude of post-pandemic change. Deciding not to test the hypotheses was also motivated by the already mentioned fact that the question of post-pandemic change is a very much open question: no one knows the nature of this change (the rate, the magnitude, etc.), and there are only speculations and individual interpretations. Thus, all we can do is to see whether any of the selected variables has a particular influence on the ways in which respondents' see the post-pandemic world. Another argument for skipping the rigorous hypotheses and their testing is the nature of our sample: we work on a convenience, non-representative sample, which is not quite favourable for testing hypotheses. So, even if one finds significant or non-significant relations, they must be interpreted much more as indicative of further working hypothesis rather than the situation on the ground.

Results of the Analysis

Firstly, we present the descriptive statistics on the frequency of the responses to the question regarding the magnitude of change ("do not know" options were treated as missing values). The graph below shows that 1,210 out of the 1,269 respondents of the survey formulated an opinion about the question. The majority of them (i.e. 70%) think that the pandemic will leave the world unchanged or will have only a minor impact on the world. As we mentioned before, we explored change in an abstract sense, so we do not know what change meant for the respondents. In any case, in seeing the post-pandemic world from a typical period of the lockdown (as of April 2020), when respondents experienced a lot of fear, anxiety, and new life arrangements, we may suspect that responses also reflect the wish for the re-arrangement of things, i.e. a kind of self-deceiving optimism (Krizan–Windschitl 2009).
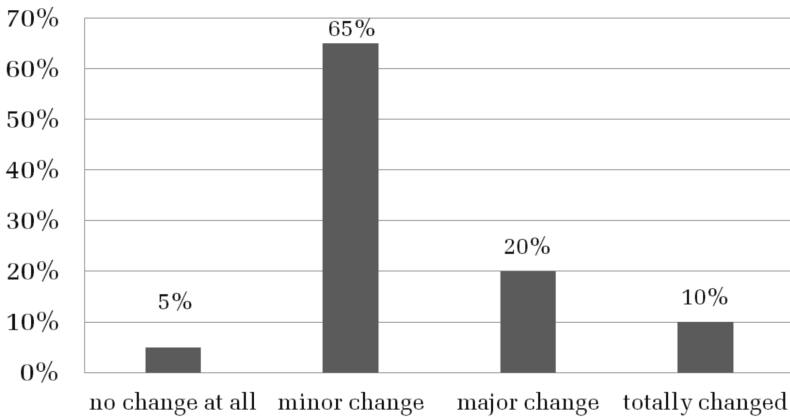
Figure 1. *Opinions regarding the extent to which the world will change after the pandemic* (N = 1,210)

As we mentioned elsewhere (Gergely et al. 2020, Nistor et al. 2020), bivariate analysis did not signal important differences. The youngest respondents (those below 25 years of age) were a little bit more prone than other age-groups to see a more changed world after the pandemic. That is, 36% of the respondents from the youngest age-groups thought the world would become completely changed or would suffer major changes, and this was the highest percentage of pro-change attitudes across the age-groups. With regard to gender, we found that women were more prone to see complete or major post-pandemic changes compared to men (31% vs. 20%). In terms of education, the results showed that those with higher education were the most sceptical about changes (27% vs. 33% in the case of those having medium-level education and 34% in the case of those with low education). Albeit not extraordinarily harsh, such differences are a bit surprising because (except the case of age-groups) they are against literature's considerations regarding openness to change.

Indeed, the fact that men and those with higher education levels are more sceptical about post-pandemic changes could signal a counter-intuitive tendency in the light of the literature. However, it can also be interpreted as a wishful thinking or, on the contrary, as a form of manifestation of fear as those who opt for a major or complete change might do this because they want the world to be better, more favourable for them (e.g. those with low levels of education, young people, or even women), while those who opt for only minor changes might do this because of their reluctance to change, their fear, or maybe their more sceptical attitudes. Unfortunately, these are only speculations, and more grounded responses could be traced only on the basis of further research. In any case, we were interested in seeing how the attitudes about the post-pandemic world will behave in a multivariate analysis. For this purpose, we constructed an ordinal logistic regression model. In this model, the dependent variable was represented by the degree of change, while independent variables were

introduced based on the above mentioned considerations of the special literature in what concerns the determinants of the openness to change.

The following table summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression with beta estimates. Statistically significant effects according to the Wald test are marked with the * sign.

Table 1. *Ordinal logistic regression on the opinions regarding the magnitude of post-pandemic change*

	Model 1	**Model 2**
	Estimates	**Estimates**
Age (reference: 55+)		
> 25	0.102	0.013
26–34	-0.647	0.184
35–44	-0.168	-0.200
45–55	-0.264	-0.240
Male	-0.484**	-0.647*
Education (reference: upper)		
Low level	0.263	0.323
Medium level	0.156	0.124
Provisions (reference: large amount)		
Without provisions	0.182	-0.105
Small amount	0.262	0.237
Rural residence	-0.165	-0.121
With children	0.064	-0.043
Subjective health (reference: excellent)		
Acceptable		0.532
Good		0.090
Easily handles information		0.253
Values (reference: postmaterialist)		
Materialist		-0.494*
Mixed		
Interpersonal trust (in-group)		-0.092
Interpersonal trust (out-group)		-0.001
Institutional trust in:		
Repressive institutions		0.175*
Public institutions		0.166*
International institutions		-0.053
The media		0.046
	Chi² = 19.347; df=11, p < 0.05 Nagelkerke R² = 0.022	Chi² = 37.764; df = 23, p < 0.05 Nagelkerke R² = 0.066

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.005

The results of the regression are quite frustrating: through the variables which we included in the model, we succeeded to explain only a very small part of the variations of the dependent variable. As the Nagelkerke R^2 values show, the socio-demographic variables explain only 2.2% of the variance in the opinions regarding the magnitude of post-pandemic changes. As we added other variables (values, self-efficacy, various forms of trust), the explanatory value of the model became only slightly better, i.e. 6.6%. As seen from the models, there are only three types of variables which seem to significantly determine the opinions regarding the post-pandemic changes. Compared to women, male respondents are significantly less predisposed to envision major or complete changes after the pandemic ends; compared to the reference category, the odds of male respondents of holding the opinion that the world would not suffer major changes after the pandemic ends are $e^{-0.647}$, i.e. 0.52. Another variable which significantly influences the opinions on the post-pandemic change is axiological value orientation. Compared to those who have postmaterialistic value orientation, the respondents who hold materialistic values are significantly less predisposed to envision major changes. Several forms of trust also seem to have a significant influence: those who have higher levels of trust in repressive institutions (i.e. the army, the police, the judiciary system, etc.) as well as those who have greater trust in other public institutions (i.e. government, health, education institutions, etc.) are significantly more predisposed to envision major changes in the post-pandemic world.

We interpret the low explanatory power of the models together with the limited number of variables having significant influence on dependent variables on the basis of two facts. The first one is connected to the limitations of the convenience sample, which implies a set of self-selection biases: women were overrepresented in the survey, which can be an explanation for the gender-based differences in the rating of the magnitude of change; it could also happen that certain profiles (e.g. those who were more prone to see a world which would not suffer major changes) were more comfortable with the topic of the questionnaire and thus self-selected themselves for responding to the survey. This issue also raises the question as to whether or not we must be very strict in looking for variables with statistically significant influence. In a non-representative sample revealing several tendencies, often is enough in order to raise some further working hypotheses and in order to outline some possible answers. The second issue is linked to the ambiguity of the question regarding the post-pandemic world. As we have already shown in our short review, even experts and think tanks find difficult to formulate a concluding standpoint about the post-pandemic world. Thus, it is not a surprise that our respondents who are representative for a general public cannot be clearly structured in specific profiles regarding their opinions on the magnitude of change. That is, respondents expressed their opinions on an ambiguous question in a turbulent context, which practically does not have any clear point of reference.

Once we look at the variables which have significant influence on the dependent variable, we can reveal both some easily explainable and some surprising results. Thus, it comes as not a surprise that those who have materialistic values are more prone to hold the opinion that the post-pandemic world will not suffer major changes. As already shown, the content of the materialistic value orientation presupposes the preference for survival values, for the security and stability of contexts (Inglehart 1990, Inglehart–Baker 2000). It was also shown in the literature that materialistic/postmaterialistic value orientation is quasi congruent with the conservation/openness dimension of Schwartz's value structure (Dobewall–Strack 2013). Therefore, it is perfectly plausible to expect that people with materialistic values are resistant to change in their attitudes and vice versa.

The literature regarding openness to change also showed (mostly on the basis of organizational contexts) that trust is a variable which enables openness to change. The rationale is that people who trust the organization and/or their colleagues are more convinced that the change will result in positive outcomes (e.g. Chawla–Kelloway 2004, Grama–Todericiu 2016). More or less, our results seem to replicate these findings: those who have greater trust in specific types of institutions (i.e. repressive and public institutions) hold the opinion that the world will suffer major changes. A no-far-to-seek explanation for this result is that both repressive and public institutions have important duties in ensuring the crisis management of the pandemic. During the lockdown, people could witness the efficient power of the repressive institutions (i.e. controls, fines) as well as the overpowering and transformation of other public institutions (e.g. the government, health and educational institutions). It is, however, surprising that interpersonal trust or trust in other types in institutions, e.g. international institutions or the media, do not have a significant influence on the dependent variable. This finding possibly shows all those ambiguities which people have witnessed during the pandemic: neither fellow citizens nor the media or international institutions were able to deliver clear messages about the future, so trusting them was not enough for formulating a clear opinion on the post-pandemic changes.

Neither the subjective rating of personal health condition nor the capacity of handling COVID-19-related media information was able to significantly shape the opinions on the post-pandemic global change. We presupposed that such variables can be considered indicators of self-efficacy in the context of the pandemic-related changes, wherefore we can interpret the findings in the sense that in the context of an ambiguous change specific self-efficacy is not enough to/cannot explain the openness to change.

As already shown in our two-variable analysis (Gergely et al. 2020, Nistor et al. 2020), the majority of the socio-demographic variables do not make a major difference regarding the dependent variable. The sole significant influence comes from the part of gender: compared to women, male respondents are significantly less

open towards change. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) concluded that the influence of gender on openness to change is rather inconsistent; so, along this line, the result is not surprising. However, there are also data which suggest that men are more open-minded about change (Hinz et al. 2002, Robinson 2013), and in the light of such data our results are surprising. We could also interpret the results to mean that women's openness to change resembles in fact their fear from a major, overwhelming change. This may as well be an explanation as women (especially mothers) have already been overwhelmed by those changes which the pandemic has brought about: our results showed (Gergely et al. 2020, Nistor et al. 2020) that female respondents were responsible for the home schooling of children, and thus they experienced an overflow of domestic duties, thus facing an entirely new situation.

Conclusions

We started the analysis with a quotation from Italian author Paolo Giordano (2020). In his recent essays on the pandemic, the author expresses the view that he is afraid both of the changes the pandemic could bring about and of the possibility that the pandemic will leave the world unchanged. This is a view which expresses all those ambivalences which characterize the public discourse around the issue of post-pandemic transformations. Some people hope that the pandemic will change for the better our behaviours and attitudes towards other people or towards the environment. Others, however, are afraid of any change and hope that the world will remain the same as before the pandemic and soon we will return to our comfortable bubbles.

In our analysis, we tried to empirically respond the question of how the post-pandemic world will look like. For this purpose, we relied on a convenience-sample-based online questionnaire, which was applied among ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, Romania, in a very specific period of the lockdown, i.e. in April 2020. The respondents were asked to answer the question regarding the magnitude of the changes the world would suffer once the pandemic ends. The results showed that the large majority of the respondents considered that the world would suffer only minor changes or would remain, after all, unchanged. Such opinions could be illustrative for wishful thinking, for self-deceiving optimism (Krizan–Windschitl 2009), meaning that in the context of turbulent, uncertain, and uncomfortable times people hope that such events will finally end, and the course of life will return to normal.

The attitudes about change can be researched also from the viewpoint of the openness to change/resistance to change perspective. In this respect, the literature has plenty of evidence which suggest that there are individual differences in people's openness to change. Much of this research emphasized the role of values (e.g. Shwartzian, Inglehartian), but the studies from organizational contexts also showed the importance of other factors, e.g. self-efficacy or trust. Following this

line of research, we raised the question as to whether there are specific variables which can shape in a statistically significant way our respondents' opinions about the post-pandemic change. The results of the regression analysis showed that being male and holding materialistic values raise the odds of considering that the world will not suffer major changes, i.e. reluctance to change. On the other hand, trusting repressive and internal public institutions makes people to be more open towards change. While the influence of the axiological variables and that of trust resemble the considerations of the literature, the effect of gender is quite interesting. It can be explained by the overrepresentation of women among the respondents, but it might also signal that women who were overwhelmed by the many extra tasks (home schooling while working from home, extra domestic duties) the pandemic caused in their lives, and thus have already experienced the pandemic-related changes (Gergely et al. 2020; Nistor et al. 2020), showed a more realistic view on the post-pandemic world as well.

It is also interesting that those variables which could represent a protective factor (self-efficacy) in situations of risks and uncertainties (i.e. having financial provisions, good health and being able to process the pandemic-related information) proved to have no significant influence on the dependent variable. Obviously, such counter-intuitive findings can be explained by the many biases of the non-representative convenience sampling, but they can also be a signal in the direction that the pandemic-related changes are so abstract and unconceivable that individual-level protective factors seem to be not enough in shaping the openness/reluctance to such a huge change.

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Embeddedness or Marginalization? Aspects for Analysing the Local Embeddedness of Innovative Agricultural Enterprises in Szeklerland

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Abstract. Relying on an interview-based research carried out in the Szeklerland region (Romania), the present study investigates the social embeddedness patterns of innovative agricultural initiatives existing in rural areas. The analysis covers three areas: structural embeddedness patterns of local scale, practical initiatives strengthening social embeddedness, and ideas of innovative actors on their future role within the local community. The innovative agricultural actors included in the analysis are local agents who attempt to position themselves and their activities on a local scale amidst diffuse and constantly changing conditions. The specific forms of embeddedness under scrutiny here indicate that innovative actors and practices form part of the local community mostly on the structural level, functionally making their presence felt to a lesser extent.

Keywords: embeddedness, innovative agricultural enterprises, Szeklerland

Introduction

The issues around the social embeddedness of economic undertakings have long been subject of professional analyses (Polányi 2001, Granovetter 1985); a separate branch of such analyses concerns the enterprises operating in rural areas (e.g. Hinrics 2000, Jack–Anderson 2002). According to Jack–Anderson (2002: 468): "embeddedness, identified as the nature, depth, and extent of an individual's ties into the environment, has recently been commented upon as a configuring element of general business process". The term embeddedness is a keyword in social sciences

and could be used to describe and understand the individual's activity in the field of economy (Dudek 2016: 206). In connection with the appreciation of rural areas and with the new rural development paradigm (Van der Ploeg 1994, Van der Ploeg et al. 2000, Murdoch 2000, Ward 2002, OECD 2006, Bosworth–Willett 2011) gaining ground, the investigation of the issues around social embeddedness also extended to the examination of innovative agricultural enterprises (Dudek 2016, Lombardi et al. 2015, Gezelius 2014, Aldrich–Cliff 2003, Boonstra et al. 2011, Commandeur 2006, Schifani et al. 2016, Cederholm–Johansson 2019, Müller–Korsgaard 2018, Kietavainen 2013, McKeever et al. 2014, 2015, Fischer–Burton 2014).

The term social innovation in the agriculture is frequently used in the context of rural development, where "the social is presented as a core element of innovation, also in the sense of engaging society in developing new solutions" (Bock 2012: 59). From this point of view, the innovative agricultural actors in our study are agricultural entrepreneurs, young farmers whose activities are innovative in content (new agricultural production) and technology (Biró 2016: 13).

As regards enterprises operating in the region of Szeklerland, there have not been launched any regular research programmes so far on the social embeddedness patterns of enterprises. In this region, the number of innovative agricultural initiatives has increased dramatically during the past decade. Seeing the novelty of these innovative initiatives in the context of the region's social and economic environment logically raises the need for a research on the processes and patterns of social inclusion.

Pro Agricultura Hargitae Universitas Foundation and WAC – Centre for Regional and Anthropological Research, both organizations operating in Miercurea Ciuc, have been engaged in projects on agricultural innovation processes in Szeklerland since 2011 (Biró–Magyar 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, Biró 2017). Along the lines of the already mentioned series of research projects as well as based upon the analysis of the interview series made with the innovative agricultural actors, our analysis examines the relationship between innovative initiatives and the immediate, local social environment. In rural areas, as it is the case of the region under investigation, there is a prominent question as to whether novel agricultural enterprises can generate actual social innovation on a local scale or within the region. We believe that analysing the development of local-scale embeddedness processes can partially address this question. We examine those attempts and patterns of embeddedness in the local communities that function in the objectives and practices of novel agricultural enterprises. Based on relevant literature and on the specificities of the research context, the study summarizes our research results in three areas as follows: local-scale structural embeddedness, practical embeddedness, and ideas of innovative actors on their future role within the local community.

Theoretical Aspects: Embeddedness in Rural Context

Approaches on the economic processes and development possibilities of rural areas often touch upon innovative initiatives that are based on local conditions and values, prioritize health promotion and environment protection in product manufacturing, and aim at creating and operating short supply chains during their sales processes (Van der Ploeg et al. 2000, Murdoch 2000, Ward 2002, Shucksmith 2010). Analysts as well as policy-makers expert on the subject, public figures, and media actors alike treat these innovative agricultural enterprises very often as bottom-up initiatives. It might be also worth considering Floysand and Sjoholt's (2007) line of argument, who point out the fact that innovative agricultural actors operating in rural environment find themselves in a new situation as global processes interfere with the rural environment. It follows that, on the one hand, the activities of these actors are realized at the meeting point/intersection of the global and the local, while, on the other hand, the innovative actors must position themselves outwards as well as inwards. They do not merely function as production sites/ production depots in the rural medium, but they intend to make an impact on the immediate environment. They consider essential that the rural environment accept and appreciate their innovative activities, and they also endeavour to develop forms of cooperation with their environment. This means that for innovative agricultural enterprises operating in rural environments social embeddedness is more than an immediate economic benefit, and the extent and manner of embeddedness make an inherent part of the operation of businesses. Therefore, it can be concluded that if we are to look into the modus operandi and the social role of the innovative agricultural enterprises operating in rural areas, then we must necessarily take embeddedness under scrutiny.

In relation to the social embeddedness of enterprises, Polányi (2001) highlighted that all economies are embedded into some sort of network, economic or non-economic institution through their personal relationships. In his frequently cited work, Granovetter (1985) also emphasized the importance of social embeddedness as well as the fact that economic activity is determined by those relationships of the actors that are determined/shaped by their environment. In this context, several such approaches were elaborated later that make possible the description of economic actors' attitudes and that call attention upon other forms of embeddedness besides the structural one, such as cognitive, cultural, political, temporal, network-related, or institutional embeddedness (e.g. Uzzi 1997, Jack–Anderson 2002, Zukin–DiMaggio 1990).

Nowadays, there is a great number of professional analyses dealing with the social embeddedness of agricultural enterprises operating in rural areas, and there are several typologies in circulation (for an overview, see Dudek 2016). Jack and Anderson (2002) divide the process of embeddedness into three parts:

understanding the nature of the structure, enacting or re-enacting this structure, and maintaining both the link and the structure. Under this approach, embeddedness is a development process where mutuality, authenticity, knowledge, and experience are determined in a social space (Zahra 2017). Social embeddedness is highly essential from the point of view of entrepreneurial performance as well since it is a mechanism that helps the entrepreneur in identifying the resources in a socialized environment (Hansen 1995, Hite 2005). This approach goes beyond the short-term profit maximization, and it looks at groups and relationships in perspective (Aldric–Cliff 2003). According to Uzzi (1997), embedded enterprises and entrepreneurs have a competitive advantage against their counterparts that are not embedded. Social context, informal clusters provide entrepreneurial attitude with a moral framework: entrepreneurial processes enjoy a broader support. At the same time, some authors (e.g. Gedajlovic et al. 2013) claim that embeddedness has its own price, which is not favourable in all of its aspects: this includes, for instance, danger of closure, tension during cooperation, resulting in psychological pressure on the entrepreneur.

The issues around the social embeddedness of innovative agricultural enterprises can be associated with the appreciation of rural areas, with the new rural development paradigm gaining ground and with the view coming increasingly to the fore that attaches more importance to an agricultural enterprise operating in the rural area and making its début as an innovation in the rural context than it would to a simple economic activity (Van der Ploeg et al. 2000, Murdoch 2000). We believe that Zahra's (2007) argument may be of crucial importance: regarding innovative agricultural enterprises, it understands the formation of the various patterns of social embeddedness as a development process. Today's professional approaches on studies dealing with the social embeddedness of innovative agricultural enterprises offer useful perceptions and methodological starting-points for the analysis of agricultural innovation processes in Szeklerland as well as for the elaboration of development policy ideas pertaining to this process.

The Regional Context

The following chapter is based on more than two decades of research materials of WAC – Centre for Regional and Anthropological Research in Miercurea Ciuc, especially on household surveys (2004, 2011) and the Szeklerland Foresight Programme (2008). The results of these research programmes on rural competitiveness issues are summarized by Biró and Magyar (2013).

Szeklerland is a rural area situated in the central part of Romania, has no administrative boundaries, and is made up of small towns – with 10–50,000 inhabitants – and their catchment areas. As for the region, several historical, socio-historical, political, and public policy definitions and descriptions have been

worked out that emphasize the antecedents of the region's historical independence, its ethnical character (a great proportion of the inhabitants are Hungarians), and its specific development potential. Nevertheless, the description of the region's current situation and its social processes is quite incomplete. There are several versions in circulation regarding the size of its territory (Harghita and Covasna counties and part of Mureş County) and its population (a frequently used number in this respect is 600,000), while very strong ambitions have been formulated in the area of regional identity building in the past one-one and a half decades. In what follows, we will make an indicative presentation of the regional characteristics that are particularly important to our research topic.

Traditionally, the small-scale, subsistence family farming is typical of the region; more than 50% of the families are still landowners today and are running a farm as a principal or secondary activity. The size of the landed property is of a few hectares per family, and the fragmentation of the estates is a typical phenomenon for all families. This land tenure system was administratively terminated by the collectivization completed in Romania in the year 1962. Starting from the mid-1960s, the government established industrial enterprises in the region, and a substantial part of the population became industrial workers. Subsequent to the 1989 regime change, the individual land tenure system terminated in 1962 was restored, and the small-scale, self-sustaining agricultural activities affecting the overwhelming majority of the families were revived. Most of the families with land ownership carry out farming activities besides maintaining other jobs, the most important function of family farming activities being conversion into money; marketing is of an occasional nature, while product range and production technology undergo minor and very slow changes. In this sector, the process of land consolidation is extremely slow, the function of the land leasing system is minimal, and the forms of associations and cooperative societies are numerically negligible. Only a small number of operational farmlands have sprung up (for a more detailed overview of the topic, see: Laki–Biró 2001, Biró 2006, 2019).

In the context briefly outlined above, the past decade has seen a considerable number of novel agricultural enterprises that in their composition and modalities of operation as well are fundamentally distinct from the earlier, family-scale farming practices that are a dominant feature of the region. We consider it important to emphasize that this is not an internal innovation process. External factors stimulating innovation initiatives are of several types – these will be mentioned only briefly. The last decade can be marked as the period when such professional and public policy themes as well as institutional initiatives made their appearance on the regional level that encourage or support the production and distribution of local products. One part of such initiatives is organized in the context of economic enterprises (e.g. the so-called *Góbé* products), while some other part of them is realized through network or cluster support programmes operated by public institutions (see, for instance:

Szekler products or the *Agro Sic* programme). These processes are not independent from the global trends that are in connection with the appreciation of rural areas, developments grounded on endogenous conditions, the expansion of environmental awareness, a growing demand for healthy foods, and in general the new rural development paradigm and neo-endogenous development policy initiatives. It is partly through institutionalized knowledge transfer processes (university education, operation of the regional project élites, national and regional policy themes, support programmes for innovative target groups) and partly through individual/occasional experiences abroad that such knowledge has an impact on the regional development practices in the area and, linked to them, on agricultural innovation.

Indirectly, however, certain regional factors also contribute to the increasing appreciation of the role played by agricultural innovation processes. One significant reason for this is that the traditional model of the self-sufficient small family farms still prevailing to date does not offer opportunities for the further development of those open for innovative solutions. In the context of traditional family farming practices, those aspiring to move forward are constantly searching for new forms and operating models, first of all in response to examples and incentives coming from outside the region. The launching of small-scale and novel initiatives is implicitly supported by the fact that the extremely fragmented land tenure system characteristic of the region does not promote the broader expansion of operational farming. The consolidation process of local identity structures may be considered as a further incentive, providing an enabling framework for agricultural innovation experiments based upon endogenous values. The experience of recent years shows that regional consumer demand too has by today become supportive of innovative initiatives.

The space between traditional self-sustaining family farming model and operational farming has been serving as a spawning ground for an ever-growing number of innovative agricultural initiatives. We are talking about the production of produces and the use of production technologies that were previously missing altogether or merely existed as ancillary activities in regional farming practice (i.e. cultivation of medicinal plants, fruit farming and processing, rose cultivation, snail farming, mushroom growing, cheese making, worm farming, raising of small livestock, Mangalitsa farming, etc.). Furthermore, the manner of knowledge acquisition, the applied production technology, and marketing practices are worth mentioning as novel components. Innovative enterprises are substantially different from operational farms too, whose primary focus is on the quantity and profitability of production. They also significantly differ from the traditional family farming model, which is still typical of more than half of the households in the region and which is characteristically grounded on people's own knowledge on the one hand and marked by keeping distance from business/marketing aspects and practices on the other.

The key attributes of regional agricultural innovation initiatives are as follows:

– The necessary professional knowledge for starting a business is usually acquired from outside the region.

– Basically, they wish to make use of local, endogenous conditions and resources.

– They are committed to food safety, health promotion, and the protection of natural assets.

– They are open to professional, technological, and other types of modernizations.

– Production is not their sole interest as they also keep business considerations in view.

– They are also willing to share their knowledge and experiences with their immediate environment.

– Professional relationship management and image building are also incorporated into their activities.

– Greater entrepreneurship and business considerations are not among the top priorities as sustainability and utilization of local values take precedence.

– As a rule, they are explicitly connected to a local community (locality).

– For the time being, we may witness only a few such initiatives per settlement, some of them giving home to not more than one or two such innovative enterprises.

The juxtaposition of the farming model that is traditionally characteristic of the region and the innovative initiatives strongly indicates the difference and distance between the two types of farming practices and not the least the fact that innovative initiatives represent a significant challenge for local society. The extent of the difference between the two types of farming practices has a marked impact on the process of innovative enterprises' social embeddedness, and, in their view, it makes the examination of these processes justifiable.

Methodological Aspects

Our research results are grounded on eighty semi-structured interviews realized in the Szeklerland region between 2011 and 2019 as well as on personal fieldwork experiences within the framework of the research programme of Pro Agricultura Hargitae Universitas Foundation and WAC – Centre for Regional and Anthropological Research (Biró–Magyar 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). The main topics and aspects of the data collection work and analysis were the following:

– circumstances in which the activity started (when it started, what effect or incentive it took, how it started, what were the conditions initially);

– individual and family farming experiences, learning history in the education system;

– acquisition and status of professional knowledge required for an innovative initiative (agricultural technology and other professional knowledge, managerial knowledge, endogenous/local knowledge);

– relationship to the immediate environment;

– network connections;

– positioning practice of own activity (content, methods, procedures and tools for positioning one's own activity, positioning activity, product, personality, work process).

– use of subsidies (national, county, local banks and the type, role, and effect of subsidies in farming);

– what the interviewee considers to be an important problem or topic to be solved (regulation, administration, national or regional policy, local program, learning, etc.);

– progress scenarios (area, activity, conditions, timeframe);

– opinion on the situation in the region: the situation and opportunities of young agricultural entrepreneurs in the Szeklerland region.

The current analysis considers the relationship of the initiative/enterprise with the immediate environment. When conducting the interviews, we asked about the relationship between the given initiative/enterprise and the local community and the path this relationship had covered from the very beginning. Innovative agricultural actors are incessantly preoccupied with questions around the attitude local society has towards them. As postulated by Gergen and Gergen (2001), narratives created under these circumstances are considered such narratives of the self that members of the innovative group generate and maintain in relation to their own immediate environment. In these contexts, the creation of narratives takes place with the aim of projecting the further development of this relationship, pursuing the justification of their own activities, and maintaining the already established structural relationship (Gergen–Gergen 2001: 80). As a rule, such narratives – as the authors highlight – are guided by events and can be considered rather social than individual processes. This last remark also points to the fact that the structure of these narratives is determined by conventions related to the creation of texts of this nature. Inter alia, one of its essential constituents is the existence of "valued endpoint" (Gergen–Gergen 2001: 80–81), which presumes some sort of summarizing/closing evaluation regarding the given relationship.

In the situations under our consideration, prioritizing the narratives of the self is warranted by several factors – first of all, that innovative actors do not merely recognize that they differ in several aspects from their immediate environment, but they consciously seek ways of experiencing diversity or of materializing this diversity for their environment. In this way, for instance, they produce other products than local farmers do, build their activities on other (external) knowledge, use different technologies, hold other norms and values important, and so on. At the same time,

they enhance and publicly display this otherness in texts, attitude, clothing, etc. As a consequence, the manifestation and interpretation of the relationship with the local environment is constantly on the agenda. Besides that, what also brings the interpretive practices of the own activities and situation to the fore is the fact that in some cases members of the local community are acting distant and express some reservations and criticisms regarding the new initiatives, and this is yet another experience that leads to forced interpretation in the camp of the innovative actors.

Regarding the narratives of the various patterns of embeddedness in the local society, we found that the interview subjects do not only speak about how they integrate into the local environment, into the natural and social conditions but also touch upon their attempts in terms of their relationship or cooperation with the local community and what results or lessons these attempts have entailed. What is more, they often venture to give voice to their expectations and proposals on social embeddedness.

Professional works on economic actors' social embeddedness suggest multiple levels of analysis. A highly useful review study in this regard is Michal Dudek's (2016) work, where the author distinguishes four major types of embeddedness as suggested by a closer inspection of the approaches found in the specialized literature: cognitive, structural, cultural, and political embeddedness. The author's own model of interpretation – based on the results of a rather comprehensive research programme carried out in Poland – includes eight factors. The various approaches and typologies call attention to the complex and dynamic nature of the embeddedness processes, to the fact that embeddedness is such a complex development process wherein the evolution of mutuality, authenticity, knowledge, and experiences is shaped by the given social space (Zahra 2007). Our study presents the patterns of embeddedness on a local scale. However, based on the performed fieldwork, we can identify two factors that account for the possibility and importance of local-scale analysis. One of them is the prominent role of localities that arises from their particular, socio-historical antecedents, while the other one stems from the nature of the examined innovative initiatives: these agricultural innovations are small-scale initiatives, are in their early development phase, are in many ways only slightly formalized, and consider in many respects the local context as the most important operating and reference environment.

Results

Based on relevant literature and the research context, in the region under our examination, there are three analytical themes that seem to be expedient on the local level: local-scale structural embeddedness, practical initiatives, and ideas of innovative actors on their future role within the local community.

Local-scale structural embeddedness refers to those coincidences, common points, and operating modes between the family farming model predominantly present in these local societies on the one hand and the innovative initiative on the other that tone down the strangeness of the new initiative and make this new initiative part of the local milieu. The issues of practical initiatives and programmes refer to those instances of cooperation or collaboration opportunities that the innovative agricultural actor develops or intends to develop with the local society. The third form of social embeddedness is that part of the discursive practice which concerns the innovative actors' future role.

Patterns of Structural Embeddedness

The relationship between innovative agricultural actors and the local society includes several components that either implicitly or explicitly indicate that the specific innovative initiative belongs to the local society as well, forms part of it. In what follows, mainly based on Dudek's (2016) and Zahra's (2007) work and embeddedness typologies presented below, we will present six components of this kind.

There are several features of innovative initiatives that can be found in the locally dominant family farming models too and that convey the message that new initiatives are not novel or uncommon in every respect, but they share resemblances with the well-known and already adopted local models. Some of the characteristic examples suggest that a novel initiative can be in certain respects interpreted as part of the local society: farming dimensions (size of the territory, farm buildings, machinery, etc.) are similar to those of family farms; the majority of the workforce in innovative enterprises is ensured by the family members; they function in the same local physical and social space; relationship with the local community does not change completely; it is typical of innovative enterprises as well that they do not show rapid and notable increase in wealth. Detecting such similarities is essential with regard to embeddedness since these will help members of the local community to find reference points for the interpretation of new initiatives. These patterns of embeddedness are not outcomes of conscious actions, and they suggest for the local community that the specific innovative agricultural enterprise partly belongs to the local society, forms part of it, and is not completely unfamiliar to it.

It has previously been suggested that innovative actors attach importance to self-definition, to describing their novel activities, and to placing emphasis on the local-scale unique character of their personality. Activities of self-definition contribute to their differentiation from the local environment, to their display of "otherness". It is a rather intriguing development, however, that they link this self-definition to elements that form an integral part of the local context, that pertain to locality, and that are known by members of the local society. Typical examples and solutions are:

– They point out that the legacy of the parents (ancestors) must be preserved, must be carried on, and their activity can also be seen as the continuation of the parents' activities. They express these as their conviction ("one should not let go to waste what the parents have earned"), or they evoke specific assets (they retain land ownership and livestock passed down from their parents and make use of the inherited farm buildings).

– They stress their belonging to the given settlement, emphasizing that they were born there, and they work towards its benefit.

– They argue that they wish to build the novel initiative on the exploitation of conditions and values available in this region, in this settlement.

– Sustainability is underlined as a priority issue for them in operating the enterprise, which thus takes precedence over quick profit-making ventures, just as safe operation does over economic growth.

– They point out that they do not wish to be markedly different, to become separated (apart from the fact that they have different products and apply a distinct production technology as well).

An essential element of local-scale embeddedness is the tendency that innovative agricultural actors describe themselves as models to be followed for the local society. It is important for them to show an example in issues such as respect for the land, love of the natural environment, healthy lifestyle, ensuring self-sufficiency, technological modernization, self-education, etc. They are convinced that the venture they have chosen is a useful and beneficial solution in this social environment and that others too should fall in line behind them – and this shift does not cover farming practices alone but attitudes and assumed value systems as well.

The vast majority of innovative actors strives to assume or would at least want to lay claim to a leading role on the local level. Obviously, this is just an informal role – for now, this acts more often as part of the self-definition than something experienced in everyday practice. The narrative construction of the leading role is reflected in taking pride in their activities, in the authenticity and novelty of these activities, and thus in quasi positioning themselves above the local society.

Efforts made towards social embeddedness are also indicated by the fact that interview subjects believe that knowing one's immediate environment is important. Although they acknowledge dismissive and distanced attitudes as well, they ascribe them to a lack of knowledge or unfounded hostility and treat them as temporary negative phenomena. They identify or even interpret the barriers standing in the way of local embeddedness.

They resort to specific methods in dealing with arguments related to the regional relevance and the timeliness of organic farming. Only a minor share of these arguments represents the more widely circulating and trendy explanations (protect the environment, have healthy foods, etc.). The larger part of the reason is fuelled by the local context, and with this course of action they try to link the new initiative

to the local society. It is not their parents' but their grandparents' practices that they bring forward as a background for their activities since these ancestors would practice nature-friendly farming, "without the use of chemicals". Reference to the earlier "natural" state as well as linking this earlier state with today's values support the social embeddedness of innovative initiatives.

Practical Patterns of Embeddedness

Initiatives establishing or strengthening social embeddedness are diverse in terms of content, form, systematicity, size, aims, and sustainability alike. As we have earlier indicated, these initiatives are based upon the innovative agricultural actors' personal attitude and resources.

Some of the typical examples are as follows:

– Providing occasional or permanent job opportunities for members of the local community and emphasizing in this context that this practice aims at helping the locals.

– Initiating and developing forms of production cooperation with families that are willing to adopt the innovative actors' production technology as well as the supervision thereof.

– Using own resources to organize local events that are structured along the principles and values assumed by the innovative agricultural actor. These may be programmes specifically related to the entrepreneur's field of activity, but they can also venture to take on a broader context.

– Providing occasional or regular counselling for the local family farms in issues of technology or on launching new enterprises. One type of such assistance is when it is the representative of the innovation him-/herself who undertakes the activity, while in other cases s/he takes on this task upon request. In both aforementioned versions, the innovative actor's willingness comes to the fore, showing that s/he is ready to perform such tasks or comply with requests of this kind and is happy to contribute.

– Knowledge transfer, instruction upon occasional requests or even in an organized or institutionalized form.

– Providing professional technology service on an ad-hoc basis or regularly for farmers engaged in a similar field of activity.

– Using the name of the settlement in sales and marketing activities. This is an especially valuable assistance for such small, marginalized settlements that are not known for any other local values or events.

– Appearance at the local product market.

The examples listed above clearly show that the innovative actor is the key figure of such initiatives whether s/he him/herself undertakes to launch the programme or acts upon request or solicitation. It is also quite apparent from the list that

these initiatives are occasional in nature and not institutionalized. With very few exceptions, they do not fit into the local institutions and their programmes. The unique and temporary nature, however, does not detract from the social role and usefulness of these initiatives as the evaluations produced by the local community consider the innovative actors' personality and activity altogether as a frame of reference, not only the concrete event or programme in itself. The assessment of all such specific initiatives is integrated into the local knowledge base developed in relation to the innovative agricultural actor. Therefore, local embeddedness may also be consolidated if the innovative actor employs only one or two persons, gets into contact with the locals sporadically, and gives lectures or advice on rare occasions. In what concerns the development of local embeddedness, it is not the quantity or variety of the initiatives that counts but the fact that the local community perceives this sort of attitude on the part of the innovative actor. By way of such cooperation, the innovative agricultural actor becomes part of the local identity (Uzzi 1997, Zahra 2007).

Expected/Future Role in the Local Community

Regarding the further development of local-scale social embeddedness processes, the innovative actors' standpoint and further engagement ideas are of great importance. So far, there has not been launched any regional professional programme or institutional initiative that would deal with supporting the innovative actors' social embeddedness. Speaking on a local scale, it partly falls on the local society to carry these embeddedness processes forward by gradually reducing the estrangement generated towards innovative initiatives and increasing openness and willingness to cooperate. However, this supposes a passive and inclusive role, and it will only lead to real changes if the agricultural actors themselves act as agents, seek cooperation, and initiate programmes. The question "Would you personally undertake some sort of role in the settlement to promote the greater penetration of agricultural innovation?" evoked meaningful and firm answers from most interview subjects, the manner of their responses being also highly indicative of the fact that such questions cannot catch them off guard, and they will have no difficulty answering them.

The responses clearly indicate that they are fully aware of their own role as a local élite, that they possess a certain knowledge and have an experience that might be essential for their environment. We will find no answers along the lines of "I cannot help" or "I am not suitable for or capable of such achievements". Whenever they distance themselves from assuming such roles or express some reservations regarding this type of engagement, they claim that they have a busy schedule, make mention of earlier negative experiences, or argue that there is no real need for such engagement to take place.

Summary

Based on a set of interviews, the present study was an attempt at addressing the analysis of the relationship between innovative agricultural initiatives and the immediate social environment, examining in three areas the relationship of innovative agricultural actors and the local society. Relying on relevant literature criteria, analysing the development of embeddedness processes proved to be an appropriate method to answer the question as to what attempts and patterns of embeddedness in the local communities function in the objectives and practices of novel agricultural enterprises in the Szeklerland region. The study presented three local-scale embeddedness patterns as follows: structural embeddedness, practical embeddedness patterns, and the interview subjects' opinion on their future engagements.

Considering the region under scrutiny, the social embeddedness of the innovative agricultural initiatives is an experimental, transitory process. Embeddedness comprises a variety of patterns, but these are mere attempts in nature, carrying no features of institutionalization, and their effectiveness is uncertain. Nevertheless, the greater part of embeddedness processes develops in the wake of the innovative agricultural actors' initiatives and activities, the local society taking on a passive role in this respect. As a result, the innovative agricultural initiatives partly belong to the local society and are partly considered to be foreign elements, having a marginalized status from a local perspective. Another important conclusion of the study is that narrative practice plays an important role in the analysed target group. Considering the variety and frequency of the narratives, the studied agricultural actors are agents who make efforts towards positioning themselves and their activities on the local scale amidst diffuse and constantly changing conditions.

The concrete forms of embeddedness under analysis point to the fact that innovative actors and practices make part of the local community rather on the structural level, while functionally their presence is evident to a lesser degree. Innovative agricultural actors exert influence on their environment both expressly and implicitly. This state of affairs applies to knowledge (transfer) and attitude alike.

In terms of regional development, the studied innovative group's most important feature that also requires further, more detailed analysis is that the members of this group operate on the interface of global processes and local structures; more specifically, they are the very creators of this interface by virtue of their activities, attitudes, principles, and values. Further essential areas of analysis in this region are as follows: exploring the structural and personal barriers of embeddedness, carrying out a detailed examination focusing on the creation and operation of self-image, and investigating the processes of change with regard to community attitudes.

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Narrative Child Protection in Hungary. The Importance of Knowing the History of the Families in Need in the Social Work with Children[1]

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Abstract. The study is reflecting on the nature and features of social work with families with children, attempting to discuss social work as assistance and apprehension and to detect whether there is any causal link between the efficiency of social work and the narrative approach and the "unstoried", "faceless" condition of the families. We argue that professional attitude aimed at providing child protection support is not possible without knowing the story of families with children. Without a helping attitude, no real social work is possible, and thus the client remains invisible and faceless in the process of child welfare or child protection interventions. Besides the actual situations of story-based intervention in social work (micro level), narrativity is also important for the transparent and adequate functioning of the system (mezzo level); moreover, it can become a factor of paradigm shift in social and political discourse on social work and its target groups (macro level). The study is based on the research entitled *Child Protection Trends Supporting Children's Well-Being* carried out within the Research Scholarship granted by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2017–2020). The research focused on the family concept of child protection professionals and their views of the clients that can be deducted from this concept. The research also examines the notion and functions of the family from the viewpoint of children, young people and their parents

as well as the professional attitudes and interventions determined by these perceptions. Research results show that due to the diversity and complexity of the problems of families in the purview of the child protection system one cannot reflect on professional solutions along types of problems. Successful functioning and efficient child protection rely rather on revealing individual and specific needs. All this indicates that child welfare and child protection work is possible only if built on personal stories.

Keywords: knowledge, specificities of assistance, family concept, child protection, Hungarian child protection system

Introduction

In our study, we reflect on the nature and specificities of social work, more precisely of the work with families with children and child-protection-related activities. We attempt to approach social work with families with children as an activity of providing help and knowledge. We also examine how getting to know the "narrative" of a family can contribute to the success of child protection interventions. It is important to note that the theoretical framework is based on the specificities of social work as a discipline and a field of practice. From this approach, we are gradually narrowing our focus to child protection. We argue that it is not possible to adopt a helping attitude without knowing the situation and history of the client.

In child protection, theoretical approach is important, but it is even more important to set out from a theory that can be put into practice as well. In accordance with this conviction, the first part of the study briefly outlines the referred theoretical background and connections.

The second part of the study presents the results validated by fieldwork in social work with families acknowledged in their uniqueness and reacting to their manifested, individual needs. The study is based on the research entitled *Child Protection Trends Supporting Children's Well-Being* carried out within the Research Scholarship granted by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2017–2020). The research focused on the family concept of child protection professionals and their views of the clients that can be deducted from this concept.

Thus, the first part of the study examines the possible connections between assistance, knowledge, and the efficiency and success of social work, and then we argue in favour of the importance of narrativity/story-based child protection on the micro, mezzo, and macro level. In the next part of the study, we reveal the most important findings of an empirical research in terms of family concepts. On the basis of the research results, we examine the way how leaders and professionals of child protection and the children, young people, and their parents themselves interpret the term and functions of family.

Basically, we ought to have as a starting point the fact that the social field has an extensive knowledge on the character and features of assistance; the courses and various trainings also prepare us for the acquiring and deepening of the needed competences, while practical knowledge and experience gained during practice is built on this knowledge. Our focus is on the invisibility and facelessness of families and professionals, a feature prevailing despite all this complex knowledge. We invite professionals to a common reflection, our aim being to initiate and carry out a dialogue regarding the renewal of social work and, more specifically, of the child protection approach.

Social Assistance Based on the Real Knowledge of Families with Children

One can reflect on parenting on a theoretical level, but one cannot work with parents on an abstract level. Individual parents, individual children, and thus individual needs are the subjects of social work, so child protection must acknowledge the importance of individual needs. Social work can be described only partly on the basis of norms, theories, and presumptions. When reacting to social problems, a helping attitude is not a guarantee for efficiency and conformity. The uniqueness of each case, i.e. family, children, etc., can be accessed and acknowledged if we get closer to see the details. Therefore, social work itself or child protection professionals working with families with children literally have to go close to the family, meaning that they need to be present. Besides this de facto presence, they need to get to know the history and ongoing stories of the parents and children, i.e. of the entire family. That is the only way they can see the "face" of the family and give adequate professional answers to real and not to presumed needs.

The Features and Distorting Elements of Social Work

In what follows, we examine the possible connections between assistance, cognition, and the success and efficiency of social work. We assume that providing help is distorted by several factors. Therefore, it can occur that providing help does not target the family and its members in their uniqueness and their needs, but it reflects on abstract, theorized needs and expectations, which might be foreign to that family or at least which are irrelevant for them.

The classification of social work as providing help might cause difficulties whenever the term of help is used indiscriminately in everyday language.[2] All

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2   In the common use of the word help, the lack of own interest, own advantage or benefit is self-evident. In scientific use, help and assistance are overlapped to a certain extent but are not interchangeable (see Smih et al. 2016).

this can be conceived even as an oxymoron. The result of social work, in a first approach, is an advantage ensured to another person without any surplus effort on the part of the latter, and thus it can be considered an act of providing help. However, in practice, the existence of such advantage might be questionable. Social work as an activity directed towards the individual does not result in a benefit for the individual in all cases. Benefit can be interpreted as an advantage experienced by the individual (real or perceived need) and as an advantage not experienced as such by the individual but which, despite this fact, is considered an advantage by others (presumed or normative need). The satisfaction of the normative need can differ from the real need. Providing help in a professional framework implies a relationship burdened by diverse external rules and obligations, where it is not always the client who defines their needs. In practice, professionals, experts, and politicians might "know better" than the clients what the latter "do need in fact" (Krémer 2009: 207). In such cases, it is the intervenor who classifies the action as providing help.

Help can differ depending on persons and situations, and it is not always an attitude originating from altruism. It might entail aspects linked to dominance, that is, to a position of power as well. Nevertheless, helping might result in shared or personal material gain and could allow the avoiding of certain damages; yet, in such situations, personal interest is also detectable (Smith et al. 2016). Contrary to the help driven by the desire to control a certain situation or by the wish to acquire material, relational, or personal gain, empathy and identification can also entice to help. Although the views of researchers differ regarding empathy as a motivational factor, they do agree on the role of identification (Levison–Manning 2012: 1738). According to Fromm (2002), the minimum of identification is the identification with *the shared human core* (authors' emphasis). The differences in talents, intelligence, and knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men. In order to experience this identity, it is necessary to penetrate from the periphery to the core. If I perceive in another person mainly the surface, I perceive mainly the differences which separate us. If I penetrate to the core, I perceive our identity, the fact of our brotherhood (Fromm 2002: 295). To experience this identity of the human core, knowledge, which in fact can be distorted by multiple factors, is indispensable, and it implies connectedness with the other. To put it with other words, it implies a relationship, which allows for the acknowledgement of identities, i.e. for identification.

For example, a social worker motivated by the desire of a personal reward cannot adequately identify with the members of a family he/she should assist since his/her knowledge is not aimed at the other, wherefore they can identify only with their own needs or burdens. In fact, they perceive only the burden in providing help and often see themselves too as victims (Papp–Rácz 2016).

The process of acquiring knowledge can imply mistakes, so-called distortions[3] as well (Fincham–Hewstone 2007). The bias can refer to the identification of the reasons of an act/condition, to the traits of the observed person, or to the likelihood of future acts/conditions. From the perspective of the present study, such a relevant bias according to Fincham and Hewstone (2007) is the so-called attribution error, i.e. attribution bias, when the observer ascribes a certain behaviour to internal reasons or to an inclination. One of the explanations to the most common attribution error is control, more precisely the feeling of having control. The behaviour of the other appears to be more controllable if the behaviour is attributable to permanent personality traits; moreover, (future) events related to the person in question also seem more controllable.[4]

Advantage, value, good, and rightful are not only terms with a subjective content but are also culturally determined.[5] The belief of the social worker regarding advantage, good, or rightful can be different from the client's views. Such difference is significant in itself only if it has an influence on the actual work of the social worker. The professional manifestations of the social worker can be traced back to the ideas, beliefs, values, and norms defining the majority culture. Besides an imperceptible impact, legitimate constraint is also a feature of the dominant culture (Katz 2011). Professionals in social work might find motivation in a view concerning a benefit, which is, however, not good for the client or does not represent any benefit for the clients, wherefore such an activity cannot be considered a helping attitude. This can be avoided only if social workers manage to become aware of the cultural differences and their impacts. In turn, this awareness implies the acknowledgement (discovery) of the cultural embeddedness of themselves and of the other (the client).

The Importance of Personal Relationships, Narrativity, and Knowledge in the Helping Process

"Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (Sarbin 1986: 8). Consequently, this structure is the organizational principle of cognition. Action (planning, creating, loving, hating,

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3   Or partiality: there is a case of partiality when the observer systematically distorts an otherwise adequate procedure (for example, by applying it in excess or not applying it to a sufficient extent; Fincham–Hewstone 2007).

4   A well-known example to this is blaming a person for the negative life events they went through. Something bad happened to them because they are like that, and they deserved it. It could not happen to them (i.e. to the observer) because they are not like the other. Distortion or bias is manifested in the same manner on the group level: the members of the majority group link the success of one of their members to internal causes, while the success of a member of a different group to external factors (Fincham–Hewstone 2007).

5   In this context, culture is the totality of the distinct, shared norms, ideas, values, and opinions regarding life accepted/professed by the members of a society, which have a regulatory power concerning certain attitudes (Rubin–Chung 2006).

remembering, etc.) is also organized along narratives[6] (Hardy 1968), and thus narrativity is the structuring principle of actions as well (Sarbin 1986). From this perspective, human beings are narrative beings defining themselves and others through stories and manifesting themselves in stories.

According to narrative psychology, human beings construct themselves in narratives, and not in a logical or scientific manner.[7] We attempt to know ourselves and our environment in narratives. Expression and interpretation are indispensable aspects of a narrative. Interpretation always implies a certain (among others, linguistic) context. This context can differ from person to person, wherefore it is not sufficient to know only the story but is also essential to acknowledge the environment and those conditions in which the story unfolded; moreover, we have to know the language transmitting it (Kaposi 2002). Thus, knowledge has to be centred both on the story and on the context to which it is connected. Interpretation has to be as close as possible to the reality of the narrator and listener.

In the process of apprehension, the attributional bias and the narrative are manifested in the causality paradigm.[8] But this paradigm is a category for the interpretation of social work, not only a social psychology concept. Regarding social work, this could mean two things. On the one hand, the need to know the absolute truth can be dropped, especially in the form of the cognitive-deductive-logical mode of knowing. On the other hand, one should allow space for the experiment in the sense that knowledge in social work should be focused on stories. Taking into account that a story always implies a personal relationship, it is directed on the relationship itself. Stories and the relationships they display include the story and relationship of the client and social worker. Without being aware of this story and relationship, social work is not possible.

A social worker has to succeed in various roles (counsellor, administrator of social issues, advocate, partner, etc.). These roles can be contradictory, and this inconsistency results in the uncertainty of roles and thus hesitancy in action (Asquith et al. 2005). Contradiction can be dissolved (at least partially) only if there is a basic value serving also as a principle, which can balance the activity of the social worker. One such perhaps less questioned basic value is the importance of personal connection.

Practice based on personal relationship is not a novelty in social work, but it is difficult to consolidate it as a counterbalancing principle of managerialism[9] despite

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6   Narratives are texts with temporal and causal aspects, which account events (Hoshmand 2005). In the context of child protection, narrativity refers to the knowledge of personal stories.

7   According to Bruner (1990), the other basic mode of cognition is the paradigmatic or scientific-logical thought.

8   "Paradigm means the totality of thoughts, views, values and methods accepted by each member of a society or in a stricter sense of a scientific community" (Varga 2003: 10).

9   Managerialism is an ideology consisting in organizational solutions and techniques of control, which consolidate this ideology. Its inadaptive functioning is indicated, among others, by

the fact that both the theory of attachment and research in neurology confirmed the causal link between personal relationship and individual development (Trevithick 2014). The theory of psychoanalysis also holds that past experiences have an impact on present-day behaviour and attitudes (Ruch–Turney 2010). A personal relationship is needed in order to be able to acknowledge these experiences entirely and to establish the connection with the present-day attitude and condition. Being aware of the client's history is important in social work because in lack of this condition the current situation cannot be understood. If it cannot be understood, clients' needs cannot be identified either. In the case of a wrong diagnosis of needs, intervention cannot be planned in an adequate manner, and thus it will not be able to achieve its goal. Through the narrative approach, one can avoid the critics against social work based on personal relationship, which considers that it focuses only on the psycho-dynamics of the individual, and neglects the social, political, and economic context (i.e. unemployment, racism, poverty, etc.). The narrative-based approach is able to avoid all the extremes outlined above as far as it aims to identify and apply the psychic and external resources in a balanced manner tailored to the individual.

Through a recent event accounted in a story, one can discover what is happening *now* to the client (micro level). Past events are relevant at most for a deeper understanding. The significance of this approach is given by the fact that the identification of the responsibility and thus of the obligation to act is not one-sided. Past and present events highlight not only what those problems of the clients' are about which social workers cannot do anything but also what those problems are which can have a solution. On the other hand, they reveal those aspects too which are linked to the larger (social, economic, political) contexts and which are outside of the individuals' control.

By applying the story-based approach, needs (client) and the connected intervention spots (state) as well as the responsibility and possibilities of the affected persons can be properly identified. Through this, personal relationship can be established, and managerialism can be balanced by adjusting intervention to the actual situation at the level of help provision or, in the context of our topic, at the level of child protection, which, according to the above described argument, can be labelled as mezzo-level social work. In other words, the narrative approach would represent a humanistic managerialism, more precisely, an individual-centred social work including management-like elements.

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the following: everything and everybody is subordinated to serving the goal, and the relation between goal and tool is reversed, the tool turning to be the goal (i.e. standards, protocols, indicators); the individual falls out of this process, and the social worker (in the context of our topic) does not work with the client but on the client; the skills and values making the profession specific depreciate or are reassessed; the feeling of uncertainty, coupled with the feeling of losing goals and values, intensifies; the content is subordinated to the process, and thus quality is detached from the essence of social work and would have little importance in efficient intervention (Kováts 2011: 482–497).

In relation with the state and the society (i.e. with social policies), stories can be tools for sensibilization and paradigm shift (macro level). It is circuitously slow to have an impact on the society and on politics in terms of sensibilization and paradigm shift through theories, standards, and protocols. It is faster and simpler with consequences and preliminaries.[10] The latter can be displayed in numbers and especially intervention costs and, besides these, especially by stories. Stories are often more efficient tools for shaping social and political mentalities than theories or aspects of cost efficiency. However, stories can be truly dangerous or useful for politics. It is not primarily theories on social work (like this study) or numbers (the costs of an intervention, the number of people requesting care or having access to care, etc.) that lead to the losing, acquiring, or keeping of political power (votes) but the stories that can be linked to these theories or numbers. Society and the individuals constituting it can be addressed through stories. Any fact, even if true and significant, reflected in a number or in a scientific study, can have little impact on the voter, on the society. However, the same fact transmitted through a story can mobilize large masses (see the impact of tragic events with high media coverage).[11] Thus, a story is decisive not only on the micro level (in the relationship between the client and the social worker) but on the (social and political) macro level as well.

In what follows, building on the significance of social work as manifested in stories, we will examine the family concept of professionals and clients as it is reflected in the contemporary practice of the Hungarian child protection system. We argue that the family concept basically determines the direction of the interventions since it influences how the target groups of child protection are approached.[12]

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10   Shaping theories and introducing them to decision making is a time-consuming process. The clear formulation of the possible impacts and causes of a measure (which can be relevant from the perspective of politics as well) can be linked to researches, theories, etc.; however, any event which gains a wide publicity can influence decision-making processes faster than the theory which substantiates the same measure.

11   At this point, we do not argue against the mechanism of action of scientific theories but in favor of acknowledging the importance of narrativity in decision making.

12   In the sociology of the family, many theories attempted to provide a definition to the concept of the family (Czibere–Molnár 2015). In the field of child protection, first of all the family ecology theory appears to be relevant; according to this theory, society does not prescribe the behaviour of the family members; however, it does determine certain settings for family members. The economic, educational, religious, social, and cultural institutions also have their own influence on the life of family members (Bronfenbrenner 1979). On the level of child protection as a social subsystem, this concept is interlinked with its social embeddedness (Rácz 2017).

Analysis of the Family Concept from the Perspective of Different Child Protection Actors

The Context of the Research

Research conducted in the last two decades regarding the Hungarian child protection system[13] was concerned about a particular area or issue of the child welfare and child protection system, i.e. the participation in the educational system of children in state care, their drop-out from professional schools (Hodosán–Rácz 2009), and the overview of the factors facilitating and impeding higher education with relation to the support system of young adults (Korintus et al. 2011). Multiple research studies examined the overrepresentation of Roma children in specialized care and removal from the families for material reasons (ERRC 2007, Darvas et al. 2016). There were attempts to develop tools for measuring and testing the efficiency of the specialized child protection care (Rubeus Association 2017), and a new trend is the development and introduction of child resilience assessments (Homoki–Czinderi 2015). The preliminaries to the present research are given by three research studies aiming at the analysis of the professionalization of child protection and at the interpretation of the incorporated parental roles (Rácz 2012, 2017; Papp–Rácz 2016). It is important to note that no research was carried out on the family concept of the child protection system either on international or on domestic level although several international studies examine the response to individual needs in connection with complex assistance, and such studies have largely shaped our thought on the presented issue (Karageorge–Kendall 2008, Fernandez 2014).

Methodology

The aim of the research entitled *Child Protection Trends Supporting Children's Well-Being* carried out within the Bolyai János Research Scholarship granted by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2017–2020) is to examine the views of people working in the child protection system (employees of child welfare and special care institutions and services and foster families) on the primary and secondary target group of child protection. The research also examined how children, young people, and their parents view child protection interventions aiming at the well-being and protection of children as well as the operational mechanisms of the system.

A major topic of the research is the concept of the family, aiming to understand the way how managers, professionals, and clients interpret the concept of the

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13 On the structure and operational features of the system, see, for example (in English): Rácz (2015, 2017). On the historic overview of the changes of the values the system is built on, see: Rácz–Bogács (2018); for the presentation of the actual situation of the child care system in the light of the latest statistical data, see Balogh et al. (2018).

family, and the professional treatment methods determined by these concepts. The research consisted of a quantitative and a qualitative part. First, we carried out an online questionnaire-based survey in November–December 2017 with the aim to examine the family concept of professionals serving in managerial positions within the child protection system. We were interested in understanding the way how they define the term of family and how they describe the families confronted with various child protection problems. The survey targeted two fields of child protection: 1) management of child welfare services and centres and 2) management of special care institutions and networks. Within the qualitative part of the research, individual interviews were conducted with professionals and decision makers working in different segments of child welfare and child protection (8 persons), and focus-group interviews were organized on specific topics with professionals, children and youth, and their blood parents (8 groups).

In the quantitative part of the research, we asked the managers of the institutions to submit one questionnaire per institution; for this purpose, we requested answers on the part of a general manager, a manager of a care-providing unit, and a substitute manager. In our view, the professional mentality of the managers determines and represents the principles of professional operation prevailing in the institution.

There are a total number of 197 family and child welfare centres in Hungary, as many as the number of districts in the country. 51 questionnaires were returned, representing a 26% response rate. Regarding territorial division, we did not receive back questionnaires but from one county. There are 749 family and child welfare services, 244 of which filled in the questionnaire. The response rate was 33%. In the case of services, we received information from all 19 counties. The list provided by the Ministry of Human Capacities indicated 74 child protection units, 20 territorial branch offices, 42 foster care networks, and 12 care home managing units. Regarding the foster care networks and care homes, this means 551 units (headquarters and locations). Due to the centralization of the child care system in 2014, the questionnaire targeted only central institutions and territorial branch offices[14] even if the establishments themselves have much more managers. Even so, special care units sent back 87 questionnaires. If we do not take into account those institutions which answered from several of their units, we received answers from 50 institutions, and thus the response rate from the entire sample is 68%.[15] Among the 74 institutions, some are maintained by the state and some by churches and by non-governmental organizations.

Thus, 382 questionnaires were returned in total though in the case of some of the questions not all answers could be interpreted. The questionnaire consisted of four sets in each of the three areas investigated: data referring to service

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14   In this sense, it targeted the top managers of the branch offices.
15   15 institutions sent back questionnaires from several units; in total, 37 questionnaires were sent in surplus.

providing, attitudes regarding professional functioning, the interpretation of the family concept, and the development trends in child protection. The two latter sets consisted of open questions, asking the managers to explain with their own words what they meant by the term family or how they would describe the target groups of child protection.

In the qualitative part of the research, individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Hungarian professionals, each of 1 or 1.5 hours. The aim of the interviews was to reveal the actual situation and the future development trends of the child welfare and child protection system. The professionals we addressed are experts involved in the development of the Hungarian child protection system, in methodology development, and in decision making. In their case, the interview attempted to reveal what important changes occurred since 1997, when the Child Protection Act still in force was introduced, how they see the present situation, what structural deficiencies they perceive, and in their view how is the concept of family interpreted in the domestic practice. It is to note that the design of the research does not ensue from the narrative, story-based approach presented above, in the sense that conducting narrative interviews was not among our goals since we wanted to explore the family concept and views of the system of many actors. In this specific case, we reflected throughout the actual research work on what the theoretical context could be which should delineate the development of the Hungarian child protection system as well. Additionally, 8 focus group interviews were conducted on specific topics in the capital and other locations, with 3–6 participants each. These were discussions of 1.5 or 2 hours. The groups consisted of the following participants: 1) employees working in child welfare services, 2) employees working in child protection specialized care, 3) employees working in the child welfare and child protection system (relying on the cooperation between the two systems), 4) children included in the child welfare basic care (aged 14–18), 5) children in child protection care (aged 14–18), 6) young adults living in child protection who are provided after care (aged 18–25), 7) families in the purview of child protection (parents who live with their children), and 8) families who live separately from their children (parents whose children live in state care). In the case of each group, the aim was to inquire about the views on the child welfare and child protection work, about the situation of distinct child protection target groups, what the issues are that the system can respond to, and what deficiencies the different actors perceive. In their case as well, a few child protection notions were discussed, first of all in order to see how they interpret the concept of the family from their own perspective. In this study, we discuss only the interpretation of the family concept by presenting the views of the various actors.

The Family Concept of the Managers

For the purposes of the present study, we highlight only one question from the questionnaire-based research – namely, the characterization of the family concept. To this question, we received 328 interpretable answers.

With regard to the present-day conditions in Hungary, the responding child protection managers interpret the concept of family as a complex unit. The complexity of the answers indicates that the managers of the child protection system have for the most part a nuanced view on the role, task, and functioning of the family as a social unit, and we can find only a few simplified, schematic views. At the same time, the answers are extremely diverse, refer to multiple areas, and interpret the concept of family along many functions. When evaluating the answers, it can be stated that the managers of child protection institutions considered and defined the concept of the family along the functions of the family on the one hand and taking into account the nature of the unity and links between the individuals constituting a family on the other.

When interpreting the provided family definitions (328 interpretable answers), the following table summarizes the three major themes obtained.

Table 1. *The interpretation of the family concept by managers (N = 328)*

The major theme in family definitions	Distribution of professionals (persons)	Distribution of professionals (%)
Emphasis on household based on blood, legal, or economic relationships	149	45.4
Emphasis on psychological need, emotional attachment	101	30.8
Emphasis on social function	78	23.8

Source: authors' data based on the research findings

As seen from the table, the three major themes in the definition of the family were the following: 1) answers emphasizing *the household based on blood, legal, or economic relationship* typically attempted to define the members of the family, i.e. mother/father/parents/children/grandparents/people living together, and they emphasized the blood or legal relationship existing between them, i.e. own children/adopted children/spouses, etc.; 2) answers stressing upon *the psychological need or emotional attachment* identified family with a unit-providing protection, safety, and a community based on affection; 3) answers *outlining social function* were given by those who defined family as, for example, the scene ensuring the socialization of a child.[16]

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16   Coding was rendered difficult by the fact that a significant part of the answers was overlapping in terms of the categories. We included the answers in one of the three groups on the basis of the

The Family Concept of Child Protection Professionals and Decision Makers

Child protection professionals called attention to the fact that, while the functioning and mentality of child protection is grounded by a legal act, which is highly esteemed yet originating from the 20th century, the families and children the child protection system is preoccupied with are basically very different in many aspects, displaying typical 21st-century features. In consequence, child protection follows social changes with delay, and this has an impact on the views about the family as well. During the past two decades, the features of the families and the individuals constituting them transformed at an increasing pace, and new types of problems arouse on which specialist services could not reflect in time and in a properly complex manner. The definition of the family basically builds on the image of the nuclear family and on well-behaved children with normal needs of care.

The professionals argued that there is a need for a service system which is more tailored to the needs of children and families; such system should be flexible and able to create an environment for establishing efficient relationships and thus a proper context for child upbringing:

> A certain framework is needed, regulation is needed, but this legal system would not be able to manage and solve the issues in institutions [...] this rigorous framework could represent the harsh challenges of life and at the same time the personal kindness of people working in it, their openness to relations, the importance of human relationships, and it could give back to children the faith in all this [...]. (national-level methodological expert, child protection theoretician, Budapest)

Professionals think that the care provider first of all has to map their own material and human resources, the available services on the one hand and has to create a clear and detailed view of the target group, of the families and children in their range of clients, and of their social, material, and relational situation and specificities, which can differ in space and time, on the other hand. Assistance, case management, and the selection of services can be organized only with a clear knowledge of these factors and along the individual features of each case:

> So, there is need for an evaluation on what colleagues I have [...] what families I have, what children I have, together with these colleagues how I can address these children, what results I can have, nothing else. I need to do this consciously, and I have to register these; we have documents at our disposal, required both in child care and special care, nothing else. Thus,

most emphasized element or the statement defining the term in the first place.

there won't be any exaggerated expectation, and there is a conscious social work on one side, namely in basic child care. On the other side, there is a purposeful educational work [...]. (national-level methodological expert, Budapest)

When giving a definition to the concept of family, professionals working on field set as a starting point the reference to the classic family model and the alteration from that. In their view, the family is a close-knit community which allows for arrangements based above all on emotional and only secondarily on economic connections.

When trying to identify the features of the client typical for basic and special care, the respondents approached the issue from the perspective of the lack of the basic values of a close-knit community: lack of emotional bonds, the insufficiency of attachments conferring safety. Respondents refer to addictions, first of all to alcohol and drug abuse and gambling addiction as general phenomena, but the mental illness of parents is considered typical as well. An important conclusion outlined from the viewpoints of the professionals is that in the case of dysfunctional families the deficit of transmitting norms leads to the reproduction of this dysfunctionality throughout several generations.

> [...] Well, the difficult material situation, the lack of family relationships, [...] so, the fact they have nobody to turn to. Then, there aren't models in the family, rules to follow, like I get up in the morning, I work; so, for example, the kid doesn't see this from the parents. (mixed group of child welfare and child protection professionals, Hajdú-Bihar County)

The approach interpreting family not as a static entity but as a process deserves special attention. The family members need to work continuously on themselves and their relationships in order to keep the process – in fact, the family – functional. This is a family concept centred on the active individuals who continuously reflect on their relationships and on themselves, are able to learn and to develop:

> […] being a family is a process lasting for a very long time, with different people brought together by life either because they are partners or because they are in a parent–child relationship. […] Family is a life-long process in which one has to learn a lot of things and do many things to keep it like this. (group of child welfare professionals, Budapest)

The Family Concept of Parents in the Purview of and Included in the Child Protection System

When asked how they would describe a typical family who is already in contact with child welfare or specialist care service, respondents indicated general family problems linked, for example, to child upbringing, or difficulties experienced by themselves or observed in their environment. It is striking though that the existence of material problems, even poverty, is indicated outstandingly among the reasons.

> Well, in my opinion, there must be a problem or a conflict in that family. Not necessarily of that type we had; so, it doesn't need to be a very messy case, it can be simpler than that, like the kid became stubborn and isn't willing to learn. [...] Or another possible reason can be, for example, their material situation. (parent provided with child welfare service, Budapest)

They stated that after a child is removed from the family, the life but especially the attitude and values of the parents start to change. The crisis caused by the removal can be also stimulative; in fact, those who did not experience it in their own lives envisage that the shock would have a powerful, shaking effect. Such situation implies fear as well, and it is also frequent that the parents are not inclined to prevent or avoid such a crisis, and thus the family falls apart, and the removal of children becomes inevitable. However, such extreme situations can represent also preventive solutions in child welfare:

> I think that this would make them appreciate more the relationship, to give more value to the time spent together with the child. As we know, this could shed a new light on the relationship they had before [...]. (parent provided with child welfare service, Hajdú-Bihar County)

In defining the concept of the family, the parents included in the child protection system emphasized the priority of the child's interests. The main consideration refers to providing the daily livelihood and making the family functional on an everyday level in an economic sense, but it is also noticeable that they consider the child of a family in a crisis situation rather as a victim.

> [...] We work to provide for our children [...] children are the most important, only then it's us. We wish that, for example, the two girls to be in a good family [...] because they don't deserve the situation in which we are now. (parents provided with child welfare service, Hajdú-Bihar County)

All this could also point to the fact that parents provided with child welfare service are aware of their families' problems and acknowledge the importance of child welfare services in providing better opportunities for the future of their children.

The Family Concept of Young People in the Purview of Child Protection and Included in the Child Protection System

Youngsters in the purview of or already included in the child protection system clearly distinguish between the biological family and the unit functioning as a family, where the most important features of the latter are undoubtedly mutual attachment, emotional bond, and affection. Among the most important functions of the family, they mention mutual help, concern, protection, and care:

> Well, family starts with the person who raises you up, pays attention, who gives you love and care. So, there's no point in calling me, I do have a mother who gave birth to me but then threw me away, she's not my family, she won't ever be, not even my mother. (young adult, Hajdú-Bihar County)

Their firm opinion is that the responsibility of having children relies on the parent, and this responsibility does not come to an end with care but is a life-long undertaking. Those who are not aware of this or assume to have a child despite knowing that they do not have a real possibility to rear them are not considered a parent by the interviewees.

When discussing about dysfunctional families and the position of children in such families, the youngsters repeatedly advanced a specific thought. The point in that was that the neglecting, even endangering, abusive family background brings in certain respects a benefit for the child turned victim: the difficult conditions, abuses, and the inaptitude of parents ultimately make children become more resilient.

Young adult respondents' opinion on children living in the child protection system can be outlined along a cleavage. Their answers reveal that they think children growing up in institutions are in much worse situation than those living with foster families. They describe children placed in homes as "sad", "disappointed", and "irresponsible". In turn, they considered that children living with foster parents were more sensitive and mature compared to their peers living in institutions.

Conclusions

In our study, we argue that any help can be meaningful, if only is adapted to the individual, to the client acknowledged and experienced in their individuality. The prerequisite to ensuring quality intervention is the relationship and identification

to a certain extent with the other. Helping the other implies knowing them. Without knowledge, the client remains faceless, their history or struggle would be invisible. The proper way of helping, besides professional self-consciousness and reflexion, could be an unbiased process of acquiring knowledge, its tool being the knowledge of the history of families with children in the process of social work.

Narrative (story-based) approach and practice can be applied as an efficient balancing tool of a helping attitude prevailing in a personal relationship interlinked with managerialism (i.e. humanistic managerialism). Nevertheless, narrativity can become a factor of paradigm shift in the social and political discourse on social work and child protection. All this implies on macro, mezzo, and micro levels the knowing of the individual and their acknowledgement as a unique personality. Our research results show that normality cannot be regarded as an absolute value in child upbringing, in family structure, in the roles of the parents, and in the way we think about family. There is not a single normality easy to define, and therefore one cannot deduce a singular family concept with clear delimitations and features. However, this nuanced approach which takes in consideration the various facets of a family definition is entirely missing from the present-day functioning of the Hungarian child protection system. According to professionals, this contradiction can be addressed by designing specific case managements which start from the actual case, and the choice for services is preceded by the exhaustive mapping of those circumstances in which the child and the family are living.

For an efficient, participatory child protection facilitating social inclusion, it is important to have an overall view on the prevailing political will. That is, one must be aware of the social, economic, and cultural development trends, of the views of the political decision makers about childhood, and of the connection between child welfare and child protection. In other words, social services need to know to what extent children and their families represent a value in the society (Rácz 2017, Rácz–Bogács 2019). It is of outmost importance to lay the child protection system on new grounds along personal histories and to assess new trends building on the acknowledgement of parenthood and family. Child protection relying on stories, revealing individual destinies and giving importance to knowing the client, where families have a face and thus individual needs, interprets family through the system of relationships, cognition, and identification. Any professional working with a family with children must be present, i.e. they must be interested in knowing the history of the family. That is the only way they can see the "face" of the family and provide adequate professional reactions to child protection issues.

Research results show that child protection professionals typically see the concept of family as a complex unit. They assign multiple functions to the family, which can be seen as a positive aspect also from the perspective of case management. According to the view of the actors of child protection, being part of a family or being in a social unit which is functioning as a family is a dynamic process implying many

actors, the central aspect of it being development and learning and the willingness to do something for each other. Yet, this implies an entirely different child protection approach on the level of everyday practice. According to the interviewed professionals, the families already in the purview of the child protection system are confronted with so complex problems that defining the type of these problems and developing methods to address them can be conceived with reservations. The key of successful functioning and efficient child protection thus relies in the individual needs assessment. In our argumentation, this implies that child welfare and child protection work are possible only with families having their own personal stories.

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Burnout and Depression in Medical Assistants in State-Owned Healthcare Institutions in Romania

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Abstract. Similarly to other countries in the Eastern European Region, the situation of medical assistants in Romania is fairly difficult. Due to the lack of personnel, health professionals are typically overwhelmed with work. The Quality of Life Research Centre at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania conducted a non-representative survey among medical assistants in Romanian state-owned healthcare institutions. The sample size is 312 Romanian and Hungarian speaking nurses from six counties. The present study problematizes the mental health of medical assistants, more precisely burnout and depression, along demographic, social, and labour market features. The determinants of burnout and depression are being searched for among these structural and situational variables, and their controlled impact is being assessed with linear regression. Results indicate an excessive risk of burnout and depression for nurses with lower-qualification working in outpatient care. Differences in the mental health of medical assistants echo to a large extent social inequalities, so that controlled for covariates, household income has a significant impact upon burnout and depression. From demographic agents, the protective effect of partnership is outstanding, and the number of supportive relationships is a protective factor of its own right against both burnout and depression. Female assistants are more at risk for depression but not for burnout, whereas workload increases the risk of burnout but not of

depression. The analysis takes sides of the distinctness of burnout and depression. Although both syndromes are largely influenced by social features, burnout seems to be more situationally influenced whereas depression more structurally affected.

Keywords: healthcare professionals, nurses, burnout, depression, WHO-5 Well-Being Index

Introduction

Healthcare personnel, software developers, athletes, and lawyers are identified among professions at high risk of burnout and depression (Bria et al. 2014). The reasons for considering healthcare personnel to be a high-risk profession for these syndromes are work overload and emotionally overwhelming work. Burnout rates among healthcare professionals are higher than in the general population (Shanafelt et al. 2012). As a result, healthcare professionals' health-related quality of life is lower than the average, and it is even lower among those who reported higher levels of burnout (Suñer-Soler et al. 2012). For instance, in Hungary, the prevalence of medium-level burnout among medical assistants is as high as 35% (Ádám et al. 2015). By the same token, in the European nurse population, an increase of only one patient per nurse increases the mortality risk by as much as 7% (Zander et al. 2016).

In Romania, like in all service societies, medical assistants (nurses) are one of the largest professional groups. This is so even in spite of the fact that compared to 1990 the number of medical assistants decreased by 25%, with a dramatic loss between 2007 and 2012. In the meantime, the number of patients increased by 12%, which led to an increase of 40% in the service duties (Rotilă et al. 2014). The workload of healthcare professionals is immense: 1,000 patients benefit from 2 physicians and 4 nurses (Bria et al. 2013). One in four medical assistants performs unpaid work, more than half of them constantly work overtime, 40% of assistants claim that their overtime work remains unpaid either by financial remuneration or with free days, and 21% had not benefitted from a vacation in the previous five years (Rotilă et al. 2016). Although in 2018 and 2019 substantial financial benefits were offered for healthcare personnel in the state-owned units, the extensive workload is still typical.

A recent Romanian study assessed higher levels of burnout among personnel in state-owned hospitals than in private units (Makkai 2018). Our analysis proposes to identify the determinants of burnout and depression in medical assistants employed in Romanian state-owned healthcare units. These determinants are being searched for among occupational, social, and demographic features. By identifying the employee groups that are most at risk, the authors are hoping to contribute to the improvement of their situation.

Theoretical Aspects. Burnout Models

The most commonly employed measure for burnout is without doubt the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). One of its versions (MBI-HSS) is intended precisely for workers employed in health and social services. Maslach and Jackson (1986: 1) first defined burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind".

The psychometric properties of the three-dimensional MBI-HSS became the target of criticism due to three considerations (Loera et al. 2014). First, its construct validity has been questioned since the late 1980s, when analyses pled for a one-dimensional model, i.e. for the reconceptualization of the inventory to regard only emotional exhaustion as the essence of burnout, while accomplishment and depersonalization to be considered only related variables to burnout (Koeske–Koeske 1989). Other scholars argued for a two-dimensional construct which includes exhaustion and depersonalization (Green et al. 1991), even specifically among healthcare professionals (Kalliath et al. 2000), or for a global burnout factor and a specific personal accomplishment factor (Mészáros et al. 2013). In several empirical studies, the components of the burnout scale cross-loaded on multiple factors that compromised the integrity of this widely used measurement tool. Second, the reliability of the instrument was questioned (Wheeler et al. 2011). Third, there might be a cultural bias in the MBI: it was developed in the North-American context, so that the instrument's different behaviour in other samples may be caused by the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the samples (Maslach et al. 2001). For instance, North Americans may be more likely than Europeans to give extreme answers to items or to express cynicism, and the initial items may have lost something from their original meaning during translation (Ziegler–Bensch 2013).

The Job Demands-Resources Model of burnout underpins the conceptual framework of an alternative measurement tool for the Maslach Burnout Inventory, namely the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. In this European model, examples for job demands implying costs are work overload, heavy lifting, interpersonal conflict, and job insecurity, whereas job resources are feedback, job control, and social support (Demerouti et al. 2001). The core of burnout is fatigue and exhaustion, with the addition that these are attributed to specific domains or spheres in the person's life. One such domain is work and a more specific domain is client work (Borritz et al. 2005). The questionnaire entails three sub-dimensions: personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. The three scales are used independently in accordance with the populations being studied and the theoretical questions being elucidated.

A further well-established explanation of burnout is the Conservation of Resources Theory, i.e. the COR (Hobfoll 1989, Hobfoll–Shirom 1993). When

individuals experience a loss of resources, their response is to limit the impact of that loss through energy conservation. Stress occurs either when resources are threatened or when resources are lost or when individuals do not obtain the return they were hoping for from the resource investment. The aim of individuals is to protect themselves from resource loss, so that employees are the most sensitive to work-related stress that threatens their resources. The Shirom–Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM), designed to assess the definition of burnout according to the Conservation of Resources Theory, entails the dimensions of physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness.

Lastly, the existential psychodynamic perspective offers an insight into the background of career choice and, implicitly, to the emergence of burnout. According to Malach-Pines (2000), people choose an occupation that enables them to replicate significant childhood experiences, and they try to find existential significance through their work. Burnout occurs when individuals experience a failure in their existential quest, and it is related to the lack of control, which, in turn, has its origin in the childhood experiences of lack of control.

Healthcare Professionals' Burnout, Depression, and Their Consequences

The literature is inconclusive as to whether burnout and depression are the same or distinct constructs, and there is evidence for both views (Bianchi et al. 2015, Koutsimani et al. 2019). The fact is that emotional exhaustion, the core component of burnout, is positively correlated with depressive symptoms (Bianchi et al. 2013, Ahola et al. 2014). Burnout and depression appear to share a common biological basis (Bakusic et al. 2017), and the symptoms of burnout are similar to those of depression (Tizón 2004).

Other studies reveal that burnout and depression do not overlap with each other (Bakker et al. 2000, Toker–Biron 2012). The decisive argument for this is the fact that burnout is work-related and situation-specific, whereas depression is context-free and pervasive (Freudenberger–Richelson 1980, Maslach et al. 2001).

In spite of the above uncertainties, it is a fact that burnout is one of the early indicators of depression in Hungarian healthcare professionals (Ádám et al. 2015), and both syndromes are endangering mental health, so studying them in the population of medical assistants is the more important as its consequences are detrimental in several respects.

Healthcare professionals' burnout and depression are basically discussed with regard to three major outcomes: health professionals' mental and physical health, workplace victimization in the form of verbal or physical aggression from patients and their relatives, and the worsening quality of care for patients.

Psychiatric morbidity is closely related to burnout (Visser et al. 2003), and having high levels of burnout leads to a deterioration in health both physically and mentally, but even stronger mentally. However, the causal relationship still needs some investigation as it might be the case that healthcare workers with low perceived health show symptoms of burnout as manifestations of their general symptoms or that several causes are simultaneously responsible for the increase of burnout scores and worsening health – e.g. in Spain nurses have worse perceived health than physicians (Suñer-Soler et al. 2012).

Aggression from patients and their family members seems to be an occupational hazard among medical assistants, most frequently among younger professionals. In Hungary, one third of all hospital incidents involve medical assistants as victims, which is almost five times the rate which occurs among medical doctors (Harmat–Czárán 2008). Verbal aggression is very common, but every fourth or fifth nurse experiences physical aggression and injury on the part of patients (Irinyi–Németh 2017). Similar victimization rates were reported in Italy (Luciani et al. 2016). It is important to mention that in both countries nurses reporting high levels of burnout, fatigue, and stress are more likely to become victims of aggression (Luciani et al. 2016, Irinyi–Németh 2017).

Spanish and Italian studies argue that, in general, the incidence is higher in large hospitals, especially in services such as accident and emergency and psychiatry (Gascón et al. 2009, Luciani et al. 2016), and in spite of the high rates of victimization reporting it to the authorities is still very scarce (Luciani et al. 2016). Studies on workplace victimization in Romania are scarce. However, the one existing so far, conducted at the emergency care unit in a central hospital, reveals that healthcare professionals consider that exposure to violence is part of their job (Gal et al. 2013).

Burnout and depression influence work performance in a negative way. According to the vast majority of research studies, poor mental well-being in healthcare personnel measured with a wide range of definitions induces worse patient safety. The poor patient safety outcomes consist first and foremost of medical errors (Hall et al 2016). In the case of Romanian nurses, a recent study showed that burnout mediated the relationship between job demands and quality of care (Spânu et al. 2013).

Besides the bad quality of care provided by burnt-out healthcare staff, there are further detrimental effects of this syndrome on the health system due to the high rates of poor work ability associated with it as well as due to the increase in sickness-related absenteeism and high staff turnover. These consequences were assessed for Hungarian healthcare professionals (Pálfi et al. 2008). In Sweden, a longitudinal study revealed the connection between exhaustion and reduced work ability (Glise et al. 2010). Globally, mental disorders are the second largest cause of illness and of incapacity to work, and in the first decades of the twenty-first century their relative share increased in the global burden of diseases, particularly in the upper-middle- and high-income countries (Rehm–Shield 2019).

The Determinants of Burnout and Depression in Medical Assistants. Variable Selection

The departure point for the selection of variables to be included in the analysis consists of the findings of previous international and Romanian studies on the topic. In the literature, the predictors of burnout and depression are grouped into psychosocial, organizational, and occupational factors. However, meta-analyses highlight occupational factors as the strongest (Alarcon 2011, Johari–Omar 2019) determinants of burnout, so that the below description of the variable selection rationale starts with presenting empirical evidence for the primacy of labour-market-related determinants.

To start with, the predictors of burnout in previous empirical research in different countries are summarized. First and foremost, as revealed by meta-analysis in several countries and healthcare settings, burnout is related to both physical and emotional fatigue originating from long working hours and excessive workload (Zubairi–Noordin 2016). The lack of personnel typical for Romanian healthcare system renders the workload of employees even more serious (Rotilă et al. 2014, 2016) and predicts high levels of burnout for personnel.

Then, there is evidence for the differences among the various levels of burnout that relate to the activity domain. In the United States, Shanafelt et al. (2012) measured the highest rates of burnout among physicians at the front line of care access such as family medicine, general internal medicine, and emergency care. A recent Spanish study assessed that emergency care unit workers are more susceptible to burnout, whereas the syndrome is present to a lesser extent in the specialized outpatient care units (Palenzuela et al. 2019). Among Hungarian medical assistants, those working in intensive care have the highest scores for burnout, followed by nurses in long-term care. Active ward nurses show the lowest scores for burnout (Pálfi et al. 2008). To date, until the present study, there has been no empirical material on Romanian nurses with regard to activity domain and burnout scores.

Among occupational determinants, the precariousness of the contractual status is less researched; however, it is confirmed that it predicts burnout (Gonçalves et al. 2019; Zarei et al. 2019).

Next to organizational determinants, there are demographic characteristics to impact upon burnout. Surprisingly enough, the length of employment relationship, which strongly correlates with age, behaves contrary to rational expectations. Thus, burnout is higher among young employees, whereas more experienced professionals are less likely to show severe burnout symptoms. In the United States, Maslach et al. (2001) and Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) assessed the negative correlation of burnout and organizational tenure (age) in human service work. The meta-analysis of Brewer and Shapard (2004) also indicated that in some sectors in the United States there was a small negative correlation between employee age and emotional

exhaustion, one of the components of burnout. Older healthcare professionals have better burnout scores in Hungary (Ádám et al. 2015), in Palestine (Hamdan–Hamra 2017), and in Iran (Zarei et al. 2019).

There are three main explanations for the negative association between organizational tenure and burnout scores. Firstly, at a younger age, horizons may be uncertain and job security lacking. Secondly, those who suffered from burnout at a younger age may have dropped out from their job and changed their career trajectory (Randall 2007). Thirdly, older workers may have learned to minimize their burnout risks to manage occupational stress, and they gained self-confidence over time. Thus, longer employment relationship increases self-efficacy (Deutsch et al. 2015). Career advancement also increases their job satisfaction, and adaptation to work environment renders older nurses more resistant to burnout (Zarei et al. 2019).

The relationship between gender and burnout is inconclusive. In Hungarian medical assistants, male gender is a risk factor for burnout (Ádám et al. 2015), whereas in Iranian professionals it is not (Zarei et al. 2019). The possible gender difference in burnout may reflect differences in roles and occupations (Schaufeli–Greenglass 2001).

Single health professionals are more likely to suffer high levels of burnout. In Iran, their risk ratio is about three times higher than for married people (Zarei et al. 2019). In the United States, unmarried health sector workers (especially men) seem to be more exposed to burnout than those married (Schaufeli–Enzmann 1998). According to the evidence of a meta-analytic study, family background serves as a protective factor against burnout in several countries and healthcare settings (Molina-Praena et al. 2018).

Social support works against burnout. An empirical study rooted in the model of Job Demands-Resources conducted among Irish midwives concluded that the relational resources of employees predicted work engagement and high levels of motivation, which, in turn, decreased burnout (Freeney–Fellenz 2013). Bridgeman et al. (2018) argue that social support prevents burnout in the United States healthcare professionals. The association is revealed in further countries and healthcare settings by meta-analytic studies (Molina-Praena et al. 2018). In Hungary, parenting medical assistants have fewer burnout complaints than childless ones with similar social and organizational profile (Ádám et al. 2015).

There is a social gradient with respect to burnout. Greek healthcare professionals with higher levels of education and income reported less burnout (Tachtsoglou et al. 2018). In the present study, socioeconomic status is measured by a series of items including educational level, organizational tenure, and income.

Further causes for burnout were found to be relationship with co-workers and lack of autonomy and control, which operate in the developing country of Pakistan (Zubairi–Noordin 2016) and in the developed countries as well, e.g. the United States (Bridgeman et al. 2018). Negative work-home interface is detrimental for

burnout in Portuguese health professionals (Gonçalves et al. 2019) and in Swiss health workers (Häusler et al. 2018).

In most burnout models, the syndrome is closely related to work, whereas depression is context-free (Freudenberger–Richelson 1980, Maslach et al. 2001). Accordingly, among predictors of burnout, studies found less occupational and more social and demographic features.

In the general Irish population, research reveals the lack of a substantial age effect in depression (Delaney et al. 2017). However, in the special population of Pakistani healthcare professionals, older assistants have more favourable depression scores (Waqas et al. 2015).

The role of gender in depression is a well-established fact, women having more depressive complaints than men. The gender difference in depression measured with the CES-D 8 questionnaire is significant in 25 European countries (Van de Velde et al. 2010a). However, there are important variations among countries, and gender differences in depression are the largest in some of the Eastern and Southern European countries and smallest in Ireland, Slovakia, and some Nordic countries (Van de Velde et al. 2010a). In the Irish population, depression measured exactly with the same WHO-5 scale as to be used in the present study did not reveal gender differences (Delaney et al. 2007). To look closer at the specific population of healthcare professionals, males reported to have fewer depressive complaints than women in a Pakistani healthcare population (Waqas et al. 2015), but, surprisingly, among Hungarian medical assistants, male gender was a risk factor for depression (Ádám et al. 2015).

In both genders, lower risk of depression is associated with marriage and cohabiting with a partner (Van de Velde et al. 2010b) and with social support in general (Delaney et al. 2007). Just as in the general population, partnership is undoubtedly beneficial and protective against depression in healthcare professionals, too. Among Hungarian nurses, those having a partner account for less depressive symptoms than those who are divorced, separated, or single (Ádám et al. 2015, Deutsch et al. 2015).

Although to a lesser extent than burnout, depression is reported to be affected by some occupational factors such as: job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and achievement in an Australian sample of maternity nurses (Rodwell–Munro 2013); occupational stress and work engagement in Indian populations of medical doctors and assistants (Kumar et al. 2018); authentic leadership in Irani healthcare providers (Rahimnia–Sharifirad 2014).

To sum up, in both burnout and depression research, there are predictors which are either universal and unequivocally confirmed or work differently, often contradictorily in different healthcare settings. The novelty of the present analysis is that it assesses the determinants of burnout and depression at the same time, on the same sample of Romanian nurses, and thus fruitfully contributes to the debate on the origin of both syndromes.

The aim of the statistical analysis below is to identify the key determinants of burnout and depression among medical assistants in Romanian state-owned healthcare units. Keeping in mind the wide range of the above listed risk factors, the study includes those variables that have primacy in influencing burnout and depression and that were technically allowed for by the relatively restricted data. The analysis includes the same alleged predictors for both syndromes.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, a standardized questionnaire was used. The tool was first compiled by the Semmelweis University (Faculty of Health Sciences Research Group), Budapest, and entails standardized items for various measurements (Vingender et al. 2018). Romanian data were collected in the winter of 2017–2018 on a non-representative sample of 312 Hungarian- and Romanian-speaking medical assistants from six Romanian counties (Mureş, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Bihor, Harghita, Covasna). Classic paper-based questionnaires were completed at the workplace of the respondents, i.e. large state-owned hospitals and primary care units, with the permission and support of the national organization of medical assistants (OAMGMAMR). With the Hospital Board of Directors' approval, department chiefs were asked for authorization to administer the questionnaire to the nurses. The introductory text explained the aim of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the anonymity of the data collected.

Based on the arguments described in the literature review on the existing burnout measures, our research group tested a self-compiled, standardized, one-dimensional measurement tool for burnout. The Hungarian questionnaire was translated into Romanian language, too. Validation of the Romanian questionnaire took place with the forward-backward translation process, and experts produced the final version of the translation to make sure that the questionnaires in both languages are assessing the equivalent construct with an equivalent metric.

The questionnaire aimed at obtaining information on mental health with two indicators: a self-compiled burnout scale for measuring burnout and the WHO-5 well-being scale for depression (WHO 1998). Burnout was assessed with 15 items as follows: I have no mood to work; I am blue; I feel hopeless; I feel left alone; I have self-esteem problems; I feel anger; I experience inner anxiety; my behaviour is uncontrolled; I need to smoke; I need some alcohol; I need some tranquillizer; I don't even know who I really am; I have no plans; I have no future; I am not interested in others. The answer possibilities assess the frequency of these symptoms on a 4-point scale: never, once a month or less, a few times a month, almost every day. From the answers given to the questions, a non-weighted summated rating was

used ranging from 0 to 45, where the higher numbers represent more numerous and more frequent burnout complaints.

The WHO-5 has been found to have adequate validity in screening for depression, and it has good construct validity as a one-dimensional scale measuring well-being in general populations (Topp et al. 2015). The scale was assessed using non-weighted summated rating, according to the indications of the World Health Organization, the score 0 representing the worst and 100 the best imaginable well-being, that is, less depressive symptoms. Although, certainly, these scale scores do not replace a medical diagnosis, they do indicate the main tendencies in mental health.

A reliability test was performed on the questionnaire items for both scales. Cronbach's alpha values indicate that both the burnout and the depression (well-being) scales are good measurement tools in terms of internal consistency. The measure of internal consistency for Likert-type scales showed that the burnout scale attained good reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$) and the WHO-5 scale even excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.94$). All items included in the analysis appeared to be worthy of retention as the deletion of none of them would have resulted in an increase of the internal consistency of the measure.

Descriptive statistics are used to reveal the burnout and depression scores of medical assistants across the working hours, activity domain, organizational tenure, length of the working relation, gender, partnership status, and the number of intimate social relations. Two-variable analysis (analysis of variance) reveals associations between assumed determinants on the one hand and burnout and depression scores on the other, whereas linear regression is called upon to assess the explanatory power of variables one by one, adjusted for the effect of all other covariates. The aim is to explain differences in the level of burnout and depression across important inequality variables.

The regression model searches among possible occupational, socioeconomic, and demographic determinants that significantly explain burnout and depression. These explanatory variables are: working hours, activity domain, income, age, gender, partnership status, and number of intimate social relations. In the explanatory model, the categorical variable activity domain was transformed into dummy variables. Organizational tenure is replaced with income because it largely correlates with it, and the measurement level of income (deciles) is more adequate in the regression model. Age is used as a proxy for the length of working relation due to methodological considerations, the former being a continuous variable better suited for linear regression.

During the regression analysis, the best fitting and most parsimonious causal model was found, using the variable selection procedure. Following standard procedure (Kleinbaum et al. 2007), the model was first simplified leaving out the non-significant interaction effects one by one. Thereafter, an automated variable selection algorithm was called upon. Since gender and age are *a priori* important

in health research, they remained in the regression model throughout the whole model-building procedure. Apart from these two, the remaining variables were sorted out. Enter selection was used, the threshold being set at 5% for inclusion and at 10% for exclusion. The final model was subjected to multicollinearity diagnostics, monitoring the VIF and tolerance indicators.

Sample Characteristics

Typically, the female workforce is engaged in medical assistance activities, so it is not a surprise that 92.5% of the respondents are women and only 7.5% men. The age of the respondents ranges from 21 to 59 years. Most of them finished nursing professional school, one third have a university BA degree in nursing, and only a small minority obtained an MA. Most respondents work in the inpatient care (58.5%), others in outpatient care units (19%), in primary care (16.3%), or home care (6.2%). Our sample entails nurses (48%), specialized nurses (25%), head nurses (21%), and nurse technicians (6%). Typically, nurses work in several shifts in their main jobs (62.3%), and every ninth of them has a second job, too. This implies high workload and an increased burnout risk.

Results

In the sample of medical assistants, the mean value on the burnout scale is 12.37, while the mean value on the WHO-5 scale for depression is 68.28 points. To assess the two-variable associations between alleged determinants and mental health, analyses of variance are performed, which reveal the differences in the average number of burnout and depressive symptoms by workload (working hours), activity domain, organizational tenure, length of employment relationship, gender, partnership status, and social integration.

Table 1. *Two-variable associations of the burnout and depression scores with occupational, socio-economic, and demographic variables in medical assistants. N = 308. Analysis of variance (ANOVA)*

Category	Mean score on the burnout scale (0–45)[1]	Mean score on the WHO-5 scale for depression (0–100)[2]
Total sample	**12.37**	**68.28**
Shorter work time	10.27	67.00
Regular work time	16.13	71.20
Longer work time	14.44	70.53
ANOVA	F = 5.750, p = .004, Eta squared = .101	F = .680, p = .509, Eta squared = .011
Primary care	9.80	71.73
Outpatient service	13.57	61.60
Inpatient service	12.52	73.24
Home care	10.00	48.00
ANOVA	F = 1.867, p = .032, Eta squared = .051	F = .272, p = .603, Eta squared = .002
Nurse technician	9.45	70.22
Nurse	13.72	67.20
Specialized nurse	11.72	70.15
Head nurse	11.24	68.44
ANOVA	F = 2.39, p = .021, Eta squared = .047	F = .333, p = .801, Eta squared = .007
Working relation ≤ 1 year	12.79	74.66
1–3 years	12.67	65.55
4–10 years	14.67	62.00
11–25 years	11.84	69.25
More than 25 years	10.75	71.00
Statistics of the ANOVA	F = 2.39, p = .043, Eta squared = .062	F = 2.391, p = .05, Eta squared = .062
Male assistants	11.47	66.00
Female assistants	12.46	68.48
ANOVA	F = .316, p = .575, Eta squared = .02	F = .272, p = .603, Eta square = .02
Single	13.06	68.36
Partnered	8.93	69.20

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1   The bigger the number, the higher the burnout scores, i.e. the more numerous and the more frequent the burnout complaints.

2   The bigger the number, the better the well-being, i.e. the less depressive symptoms.

Category	Mean score on the burnout scale (0–45)[1]	Mean score on the WHO-5 scale for depression (0–100)[2]
ANOVA	F = 7.536, p = .007, Eta squared = .623	F = .798, p = .066, Eta squared = .000
Has nobody to rely on	12.54	66.12
Has at least one person to rely on	12.11	70.46
ANOVA	F = .214, p = .847, Eta squared = .001	F = 6.847, p = .017, Eta squared = .147

For both measures of mental health, female assistants score somewhat worse than males, yet the differences are not significant. Singles report decidedly more burnout complaints than partnered nurses, and those socially isolated who have nobody to rely on have worse depression scores, i.e. they score lower on the WHO-5 scale.

Workload is significantly associated with burnout but not with depression. Analyses reveal the advantage – i.e. lower burnout scores – of nurses with shorter work time, but those performing in regular work time have the most burnout complaints. No further disadvantage of those working overtime is detected.

Systematic differences between categories reveal the disadvantages of the following groups: non-specialist medical assistants working in the outpatient care and not complete beginners but with an experience of 4 to 10 years in the profession. Sporadically, there are some further outliers; however, these associations are not systematic or are contradictory to the two indicators of mental health. For instance, home care assistants account for quite bad depression but also rather favourable burnout scores. However, their small number in the sample does not allow for generalization. Medical assistants working in the primary care (family practice nurses) are better-off with respect to both burnout and depression than the rest.

As far as the length of working relation and burnout are concerned, there seems to be no linear association between the two. Among those working for 1–3 years and 4–10 years in healthcare, the average burnout scores are higher, so that long years spent in healthcare seem to be protective against burnout. Further research is needed to clarify why exactly nurses with an employment relationship of 4 to 10 years have the worse mental health. Some mediatized scandals of the Romanian health system date back to the time of the career start of these health workers, and these might have led to considerable scepticism of the nurses towards their work. However, a more detailed analysis is needed in this respect.

Differences in organizational tenure are considerable. Medical assistants who perform healthcare work but are not specialized in a specific domain have even worse mental health scores than the auxiliary personnel not directly involved in caring activities. Specialization is largely related, however, not equal, to education and length of employment relationship and is reflected by income.

Two-variable analysis results do not yet allow for far-reaching conclusions. In order to identify the agents that influence mental health adjusted to all covariates, two linear regression models are called upon, one for burnout and one for depression, which measure the pure impact of explanatory variables one by one, controlling for other effects.

Table 2. *The determinants of burnout and depression. Linear regression, N = 301*

Explanatory variables	B	p	β	B	p	β
	Burnout[3]			Depression[4]		
Household income (deciles)	-0.157	0.000	-0.148	0.246	0.000	0.248
Partnership status (single – partnered)	-0.673	0.000	-0.146	3.173	0.000	0.205
Number of intimate social relations	-0.489	0.012	-0.073	0.989	0.000	0.056
Number of working hours	0.077	0.037	0.187	0.192	0.069	0.065
Gender (man – woman)	0.117	0.052	0.022	-0.717	0.002	-0.042
Age	0.006	0.615	0.013	0.032	0.432	0.018
Activity domain: inpatient service vs. home care	0.042	0.213	0.156	0.087	0.223	0.892
Activity domain: outpatient service vs. home care	0.721	0.000	0.137	0.721	0.324	0.087
Activity domain: primary care vs. home care	0.022	0.431	0.082	0.031	0.331	0.121
Constant	10.55	0.279		67.10	0.198	
	Adjusted R^2 = 0.112; F = 19.727; p = 0.000			Adjusted R^2 = 0.089; F = 16.322; p = 0.002		

The regression models are significant; the included occupational and socio-demographic explanatory variables account for 11% of the total variance of burnout symptoms (adjusted R^2 = 0.11) and for 8.9% of the variance of depression (adjusted R^2 = 0.089). The explanatory power is not too strong. However, this is an impressive result, especially if one considers that mental health is largely biologically and genetically determined.

On the basis of the absolute Beta (b) values, it can be stated that there are significant differences in the variables' effect upon mental health. That is, in the case of burnout, the most important explanatory variable is the number of working hours (standardized b = 0.187), followed by household income (standardized b = -0.148) and partnership status (standardized b = -0.146). The number of intimate social relations also contributes to the inequalities in burnout scores among medical assistants. From

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3　Bigger numbers mean more symptoms.
4　Bigger numbers mean better well-being, less depressive symptoms.

the activity domains included as dummy variables, assistants working in outpatient healthcare settings have significantly worse burnout scores than the home care professionals chosen as reference category (standardized b = 0.137).

For depression in general, the impact of financial status measured by income deciles is by far the strongest explanatory variable (standardized b = 0.248). All other conditions being the same, the largest difference in the depression score of two people is located in their income differences. Moving upwards on the income scale, the well-being score measured on a 0 to 100 scale increases by as much as 0.246 units (unstandardized B = 0.246) compared to a person of the same age, gender, partnership status but being only one income level lower.

Income is by far the best predictor for depression: it explains in itself the biggest part of the variance of mental health. The second is partnership status (standardized b = 0.205). Irrespective of the legal status of a partnership, its positive impact upon mental health is impressive and significant: living with a partner increases mental well-being by as much as three units (unstandardized B = 3.173), which implies a decrease in the depressive symptoms. Further, the number of intimate social relations is good for mental health. Last, gender in itself also impacts to some extent upon depression, so that controlled for all covariates, women have slightly worse mental health (unstandardized B = -0.217). Age in itself has no linear impact upon either burnout or depression scores.

Discussion

The novelty of this study is that it measures the pure impact of occupational, social, and demographic determinants upon the mental health of medical assistants. This professional group is heterogeneous by nature, however, being more uniform than healthcare professionals in general, including medical doctors and administrative staff, too, which most studies focus on.

Work-related features were introduced in our regression model in order to assess the impact of occupational hazards on mental health as the existing literature pleads for the primacy of occupational factors in determining especially burnout, but to a large extent depression as well (Alarcon 2011, Johari–Omar 2019). Indeed, among the occupational predictors, the number of working hours has the strongest impact upon burnout, but not upon depression. This finding might be new evidence for the debate on the overlap of burnout and depression in favor of distinguishing the two syndromes. Further, working in the outpatient activity domain was found to significantly impact upon burnout scores and to have quite a strong predictive power. However, activity domain is not related to depression.

As expected, our data sheds light on the strong social gradient of both syndromes. In accordance with the established knowledge on general populations (Hudson

2005, Molarius et al. 2009, Hailemichael et al. 2019) and on healthcare professionals (Tachtsoglou et al. 2018), socio-economic status is a strong determinant of mental health: it is the second strongest determinant for burnout and the strongest one for depression. Those living on higher income report of the best mental health with respect to both burnout and depression. There is an inverse association between income and mental health: the higher the income decile a respondent belongs to, the less burnout symptoms he/she reports of, and the better his/her depression scores are. Each income category extracts 0.148 points from the burnout scores and adds 0.246 points to the WHO-5 well-being scale approximating depression (values of B for the respective scales). Considering two persons on the extreme poles of wealth, the difference in their depression scores is an impressive (10-1)*0.24 = 2.25 points on a 100-point scale. Our analysis measured socio-economic status not only by income but by organizational tenure as well. With all measurements alike, differences are revealed in burnout and depression, which are attributable to socio-economic inequalities among medical assistants.

Then, being partnered improves mental health (standardized b = -1.146 and 0.205) by decreasing the number of burnout symptoms and increasing mental well-being considerably. The impact of partnership on health irrespective of marital status has already been identified in general populations by previous research (Sántha 2016). For medical assistants, it has been demonstrated that partnership and family serve as protective factors against burnout and depression (Ádám et al. 2015, Deutsch et al. 2015, Zarei et al. 2019, Molina-Praena et al. 2018).

Social integration significantly contributes to the improvement of both mental health indicators. In these models, social integration is measured by the number of intimate social relations. As far as the predictive power of social connections are concerned, studies indicate that people with high socio-economic status have more social resources and the number of their supportive friendships is higher (Chang–Goldthorpe 2004), i.e. their social integration is stronger. However, a paradox was also pointed out – namely that among women with low resources social connections may actually increase the levels of mental illness symptoms since for them such ties entail role strain and obligations (Kawachi–Berkman 2001).

For the medical assistants participating in our study, social support ties are vitally important: intimate social relations contribute to mental health by decreasing burnout and depressive symptoms. Linear regression assesses the predictive power of social integration in itself, adjusted to the effect of other variables, and the results show that all other conditions being the same an increase by one unit in the number of friends – put simply, one friend more – decreases the number of burnout symptoms by as much as half a scale point (unstandardized B = -0.489) and increases the WHO-5 score with one scale point (unstandardized B = 0.989), thus enhancing mental health considerably. The negative impact of social isolation upon mental health is in line with the findings of the vast majority of studies (Delaney et

al. 2007, Freeney–Fellenz 2013, Deutsch et al. 2015, Bridgeman et al. 2018, Molina-Praena et al. 2018).

Our findings reinforce part of the well-established knowledge in gender health research, according to which women report more depression complaints than men (Waqas et al. 2015). Gender has a small but significant impact upon depression, the mental health of women assistants being slightly worse compared to that of men (unstandardized B = -0.717). As for burnout, the literature is quite inconclusive in this respect as there are both findings that suggest more burnout symptoms among male assistants (Ádám et al. 2015) and studies that report similar burnout levels for both genders (Zarei et al. 2019). In Romanian medical assistants, when all occupational and social features are controlled for, gender does not influence burnout.

Summary and Conclusions

Our results are consistent with those revealed in international surveys, i.e. there are differences in mental health across education levels (in our case, measured by income), the number of working hours, and activity domain. Nurses in outpatient services report more burnout symptoms and worse mental health than those in other domains. Non-specialist medical assistants are disadvantaged compared to those specialized or holding head positions and even compared to the less skilled nurse technicians who are not in the front line of care activities. In Romania, for reasons worthy of future investigations, nurses employed for 4 to 10 years are the most exposed to burnout and depression.

Our analysis reveals a social gradient largely related to occupational and socioeconomic situation as well as to social capital variables. Partnership status and social capital reduce the number of burnout symptoms but have an even more beneficial impact by preventing depression in healthcare professionals.

This study brings some new evidence to the view that burnout and depression are two distinct syndromes as their determinants coincide only partly. Whereas burnout is more related to occupational factors such as extensive workload and activity domain within the healthcare system, depression is more strongly impacted by socio-economic status and, to some extent, gender. Although both syndromes are largely influenced by social features, burnout seems to be more situationally influenced whereas depression more structurally affected.

This study aimed at identifying structural and personal determinants of burnout and depression among nurses in Romanian state-owned healthcare institutions. There are, however, further important mediators such as work satisfaction, self-efficacy, control over work, or negative work-life interference. Our analysis does not consider these mediators for two reasons: First, due to theoretical considerations because we were aiming at finding the pure background variables not influenced

by other factors and, second, due to technical issues as some of these plausible determinants were not measured by the questionnaire, or their measurement did not occur with standard scales.

One further limitation of the analysis is that in the data collection procedure hospital units were not differentiated as the questionnaire included only a question related to the wider activity domain of nurses. The cross-sectional survey design only allows for careful causal inferences between determinants and mental health.

Acknowledgment

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Collaboration and Networking in Adult Education and Training. A Case Study

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Abstract. The article discusses the analysis of the available resources in the *Pro Educatione Network of Adult Education and Training*. The study unveils the provided human resources, economic potential, organizational capacities and relationships as well as the surplus by the network of the 15 adult education organizations. The results show that networking brings access to different resources for network members. Half of the network member organizations affirm intense relationships, i.e. they often call for the collaboration of network member organizations for their adult education and training programmes, and significant co-creation activities are taking place. Despite the fact that several network member organizations have limited resources for the operation of adult education, they achieve significant efficiency; in other words, they can reach out to a considerable number of adult learners through their education and training programmes. The analysis identified passive, moderately active, and very active network members. It also identified areas with deficits in networking.

Keywords: network, adult education and training, collaboration, network development

Introduction

Different types of actors (public institutions, higher education institutions, NGOs, public education institutions, companies and enterprises, etc.) provide adult education and training programmes in general (Darrenwald–Merrian 1992), nationwide in Romania (Vintanu 1998), and in Szeklerland (Kiss 2009). The adult education and training programmes are extremely varied; the criteria for quality and professional contents prevail very differently in these programmes. In Romania, the strategic and legal-administrative frames of adult education have been established by a network of public institutions and subordinated bodies (Hatos–Berce 2012). The key operator of the field is the council/authority (CNFPA/ANC), which manages the accreditation of adult education and training programmes according to a given

methodology. The aim of this actor is to also get involved into the analysis of trends and changes in the field of adult education; it also initiates debates and defines priorities in the field. These, however, function on central, decisional-executive level; the regionally subordinated bureaus of this council/authority appear as appliers of the accreditation methodology, while they neglect the professional "hosting" of the field. On the local or regional level, one might meet actors who undertake the role of professional hosts (who initiate research, debates, networking, strategic planning and organization, elaboration of own quality assurance frameworks, etc.) in one segment or several related areas of adult education (e.g. social care), but this is not a very common characteristic of the field. Adult education providers – running either accredited or non-accredited programmes – act rather individually, and competition can be traced to various extent (Sava 2008, Papp Z. 2005, Kiss 2009).

The Institutio Pro Educationem Transilvaniensis Association (Pro Educatione) – Network of Adult Education and Training[1] was founded in 2011 in the social environment described above. It filled and continues to fill a collaboration gap in church-related adult education and training. According to its mission, it "guides the network member organizations' work with professional standards, providing them theoretical and empirical knowledge, and supports their work in spiritual, intellectual, and material respects" (Organizational Strategy: 2).[2] 15 organizations – church-related adult education providers – have joined the network, and several external (regional, national, international) professional relations have been established during the past years. There are regular programme offers for network member organizations (meetings, further education, joint projects). Besides these, there are jointly elaborated adult education and training programmes offered by the network for target groups of the local society. Network meetings are held for the network member organizations' representatives, staff, and delegates and represent opportunities for professionals' lifelong education and relationship development. In addition, these meetings are collective self-reflection processes, which also serve continuity and change in the network (Alke 2018). The adult education and training programmes offered to society aim to have social effects such as promoting and facilitating adult learning from several aspects.

In 2019, a survey was carried out among the 15 network member organizations, in the context of which we assessed their human resources, organizational frameworks, economic potentials, relationships and collaborations, and the perceived surplus provided by the network. The following analysis presents the results of this research.

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1   It unites the Christian adult education and training providers of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia. Territorially, it covers a broad area in Transylvania; the member organizations of the network offer adult education programmes in the Szeklerland area, i.e. in Harghita, Covasna, and Mureş counties of Romania.

2   Author's translation.

The Network and Its Adult Education and Training Practice

Pro Educatione calls itself an adult education network. The literature defines adult education as a "complex of activities aiming towards the conscious and purposeful development of adults in which emphasis is placed on the cultivation of determined competences. In a narrower meaning, adult training is the – usually officially recognized – professional training, further education, and retraining of adults" (Benedek et al. 2002: 163).[3]

Within the adult education programmes provided by the network, most attention is given to the development of professional competences (planning of adult education and training, organization and management, development of trainer and lecturer competencies, etc.) – the network member organizations' staff and delegates get further education in these fields. On the other hand, trainings both aiming to cultivate predetermined competences in a given profession and to answer the social needs of the population have priority among all adult education and training content initiated by the network member organizations when it comes to the internal support of the programmes. However, over the years, non-formal education programmes have also become popular in the network.

Table 1 presents the network member organizations' adult education programme options (types), based on our own categorization. It can be seen that there is a relatively low number (36) of formal, long-term trainings (that offer nationally recognized diplomas)[4] compared to the short-term non-formal adult education offers (104 in total), which are not necessarily recognized with diplomas. Continuing the above definition, adult education is somewhat broader, more comprehensive than adult training and can expand to more areas of adult life besides the professional career. As per the UNESCO Convention's definition, in adult education, adults "further develop their skills, enrich their knowledge, perfect their technical and professional competences, or retrain themselves in a new direction" (Farkas 2013).[5] Essentially, the Pro Educatione network has adult education and training programmes in both respects.

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3   Author's translation.
4   For example, trainings that are between 120 and 360 hours long.
5   Author's translation.

Table 1. *Network member organizations' adult education and training offer (year 2018)*

Network member organizations[6]	Accredited programmes[7]	Non-accredited programmes[8]		
	Formal[9]	Non-formal[10]		
		Long-term	Short-term	Informal[11]
CaritasRURAL	7	0	7	3
CaritasSCHOOL	6	2	3	0
CaritasSOCIAL	0	0	6	1
FamilyPASTORAL	0	0	9	2
BibleSOCIETY	0	0	4	11
KolpingFAM	0	0	1	8
HelpingSISTERS	0	0	0	5
PastoralBUREAU	0	1	1	4
ScoutORG	0	1	0	0
St.GellértFOUND	0	0	6	3
ÁradatASSOC	0	3	12	3
HálóASSOC	0	1	1	6
KalotASSOC	2	9	2	1
YouthPASTORAL	0	3	1	1
BibliodramaASSOC	0	1	3	0
Total	**15**	**21**	**56**	**48**

Before presenting the results of the survey on these 15 organizations, I shortly overview the development of adult education and training in Romania, and I will outline some conclusions regarding the role of networking in the case of adult education provider organizations.

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6   All the organizations of the Pro Educatione network are non-profit and non-governmental organizations.

7   Adult education and training offers providing nationally recognized diplomas.

8   Adult education and training programmes that do not offer nationally recognized diplomas; however, they can issue a certificate of participation or a locally/regionally recognized diploma.

9   For example: training of home care professionals, acolyte and lecturer training, team leader training, method-specific bibliodrama training, computer-based graphic designer training, hospital nursing assistant training, professional beekeeper training, development of entrepreneurial competences, etc.

10   For example: fruit tree pruning, bibliodrama assistant training, development of entrepreneurial competences, production of matured cheese, biblical theologist training, pre-marriage training courses, scouting basics for adults, mental health training, abuse prevention training, further training for caretakers of mentally disable persons.

11   For example: spiritual retreats, conferences, summer camps, meditations, pilgrimage, sacral art programmes.

The Social History of Adult Education and Training

National Situation Report

The changing economic structure that followed the regime change made the participation in the labour market extremely difficult for the Romanian population during the '90s. Very few have managed to quickly and durably find their place on the labour market (Biró–Laki 2001), masses being forced to continuously seek out alternative adaptation methods to succeed (Sandu 1999, Schifirneț 1997). The lack of training and competences necessary to cope with the changing economic system proved to be an impeding factor in this situation. The educational system could not really find answers to these problems, the adult education system being only able to slowly and partially solve the challenges. According to Papp Z. (2005), especially between 1990 and 1994, but in fact during the entire period of the 90s, adult education meant the training of unemployed persons and reintegrating them into the labour market. Later (around 2001), besides "adult education", there appeared new denominations as well such as "lifelong learning", while by the year 2004 a more holistic interpretation of adult education had evolved besides the professional training of unemployed persons. Consequently, a regulation for the accreditation of adult education and training was established.

According to Sava (2008), these latter changes have taken place due to the urge of legal harmonization duties of the EU pre-accession period. The institution managing the registration and accreditation of adult education and training programmes was created.[12] Sava has made a first analysis of the registrations made in the first year, from which she concluded that: adult education and training is no longer the instrument for the elimination of unemployment but rather a business (Sava 2008). On the national level, there is created an appropriate adult education system, which is, however, not yet followed by a corresponding social interest. A qualitative study conducted within leaders of adult education and training institutions came to similar conclusions: adult education and training initiatives are more enterprise-like in their operation (Papp Z. 2005), but the adult education and training system is practically unexploited. Szeklerland (and several other rural regions as well) fall behind the national average when it comes to the use of learning opportunities offered by the adult education and training system (Biró–Blága 2019).

Following the country's accession to the European Union in 2007, adults and organizations involved in adult education were given the opportunity to call for funds (within the EU Lifelong Learning Programme) for supporting adult education and learning. At certain levels and to a certain extent, this system had an inspirational/motivational effect in adult education and training: more adults took part in trainings, non-government organizations obtained support for their

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12   http://site.anc.edu.ro/.

adult education projects, and public and higher education institutions ran applied research projects in the field of adult education. The adult learner and lifelong learning received more focus. Participation is, however, still not high enough to exploit/utilize the system to the maximum.

Based on the Adult Education Survey's (AES) 2017 dataset,[13] 1.1% of Romania's population between ages 25 and 64 took part in adult education and training at the time of asking or within a period of 4 weeks before it. With this value, the country is almost in the last place at the EU level (the EU average in 2017 was 10.9%). Romania's situation is somewhat more favourable when it comes to asking (from the same population between the ages of 25 and 64) if they took part in any adult education programmes in the last 12 months. According to the 2016 AES survey, this ratio is at 7%, which continues to be the lowest in the EU (where the average of the 28 countries is 45.1%). As regarding participation in adult training pertaining to work or job-related activities, the result is more favourable: 60.9% took part in such programmes, while the EU average is 69.7%. Based on AES information, job-related learning is more characteristic of people above the age of 45 (compared to younger age-groups), among highly educated people, while women have a higher participation ratio than men in adult education in Romania.

Regional Characteristics and Specificities That Affect Adult Education

Szeklerland, located in the middle of the country, is a rural region where social changes happen both as a result of external effects and due to endogenous initiatives. When external constrains or pressures decrease, certain rehabilitation processes set in motion; and with all of these the internal social patterns get reorganized (Biró 2013). If we approach the regional adult education and training practices from an institutional development point of view, we can see that during the one and a half decade after the regime change, regional institutions experienced the plurality of contexts as well as the variety of opportunities (Oláh 2006: 8).[14] Strengthening pragmatism in institution leadership, conscious activities aiming towards gaining the support of the local society, the dynamisms of certain fields, the latent tensions and competitions, the more complex tacit knowledge, and advanced experiences were observed. All these have developed as the result of autonomous learning processes since in lack of management trainings the institutions served as their own schools (Oláh 2006).

An analysis of adult education and training programmes accredited between 2004 and 2008 was conducted in Harghita County in 2009. In this period of time, a total of

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13   https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Adult_learning_statistics.

14   Oláh conducted a research among cultural institutions, and his study provides relevant information for adult education as well.

151 adult education and training programmes were accredited. 36% of organizations/ institutions applying for accreditation were companies, 29% were non-governmental organizations, and 35% were budgetary institutions[15] (Kiss 2009). 71% of the accredited adult education programmes were professional training programmes[16] (the remaining part was made up of introductory or specialization training programmes). In what regards their contents: the majority of them were so-called technical-industrial professional training programmes pertaining to a certain industrial field, but the ratio of language and info-communication competence trainings was also significant, and so was the ratio of trainings pertaining to the service sector. The survey was repeated in April 2011, and the results were as follows: the need for accreditation of adult education and training programmes was increasing; mostly companies and enterprises continued to hold accredited trainings (42%). The number of adult education and training programmes pertaining to the service sector was growing (Kiss 2019). Besides the accredited adult education and training programmes, a wide offer of non-formal further education and training was present and available for adults in the region.

Moving from the institutional side to the consumers' side of adult education, we present excerpts from regional household surveys (Biró–Laki 2001; Centre for Regional and Anthropological Research – Working Paper, 2005). These surveys – conducted in both rural and urban areas – showed that half of the interviewed population no longer considers themselves competitive in the labour market with the competences and professional knowledge they currently have. In addition, 33% consider that with their current professional knowledge and experiences they have at best moderate chances in the labour market. After studying background variables, researchers concluded that the regional society is forced to learn. The survey further predicted the increasing number of people recognizing the necessity/compulsion of learning.

Another survey conducted in Harghita County discovered the different aspects of adult learning. The summary of research results states: younger age-groups with a high level of education and living in urban environments and women are generally more actively engaged in adult learning activities, and their ratio of participation in adult learning is increasing (Kiss 2011). Learning motivations are mainly existential and interest-based, while learning needs are diverse. Participation in adult training is successful since the obtained knowledge, the diploma, or the relationships formed during trainings can be put to good use. These are favourable experiences that can give an impulse to adult learning. Respondents' future plans to participate in adult education try to comply with labour market requirements.

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15   This distribution follows the national tendency, where 51% of accredited training programmes were run by companies and enterprises, 20% by non-governmental organizations, and 29% by budgetary institutions (Sava 2008) in the same period of time.

16   Adults' professional training in accordance with national regulations can take the following forms: introductory training, professional training, further training (perfection), specialization, and retraining.

Networking in Adult Education and Training. A Few Empirical Results

Lately, the intensification of collaborations between adult education providers can be observed, while the collaborations between adult education and other non-government actors, businesses, or cultural organizations have also become widespread in Europe in the last two decades (Alke 2018). In the following, I will present excerpts from research studies carried out among adult education and training organizations participating in networks. According to a survey conducted in Denmark (where 35 non-governmental organizations were connected within a network), the organizations had very high expectations regarding networking (Ostergaard 2005). Besides the intention to increase organizational capacity, the main reasons for joining the network were obtaining information and building relationships. Most of these organizations had no previous network collaboration experience, so they could not really assess the real costs of networking. Researchers found that the main factors that made networking attractive were relevant topics and professional content and results/information usable in the foreseeable future. Since most organizations expected the satisfaction of their informational needs and the development of their organizational capacities from networking, researchers believed that joining the network was a strategic decision for these organizations (Ostergaard 2015).

Alke (2018) researched an adult education and training network located in Germany, which connected 45 organizations. Based on this research, the author points out the following: the successfulness of joining a network depended greatly on the dedication of the operators and the quality of the relationships between them. Trust was a key factor, through which collective identity and stable bonds were formed. The author worked with the notions of stability/continuity and flexibility/change. Network collaborations (that Alke saw as learning opportunities) might be the creators of stability/continuity and at the same time indicators of the network's level of flexibility/change. The research showed that network collaborations happen on a broad spectrum: from administration to the elaboration of education content, further education of employees, lobbying activities, representation of interests, funding, marketing activities, etc. Organizations used the network to fulfil their own missions and activity plans; network membership and the system of relationships formed through networking were integral part of the organizational self-image. The network maintained and reproduced itself via collaborations and strengthened its common identity. Besides organizational reflections, a collective self-observation was also operated at the network level and was implemented among the developments. According to the author's conclusion, both stability/continuity and flexibility/change could be observed in the collaboration culture of adult education organizations.

According to another survey conducted in Australia, adult education institutions face, on a global level, the need to change their wide educational offers into a narrower one, targeting a more specific market slice (Clayton et al. 2008: 13). Organizational culture and structure are the driving forces behind organizational survival during times of change, especially in a world and environment where change is the status quo. The ability of how fast an organization can make steps to be profitable in a competitive environment is a key organizational tool. This also requires that, instead of being hierarchical and bureaucratic, the organizational structure needs to be flat, organic, and network-like (Clayton et al. 2008). One result of the mentioned research is that the more independent training organizations are from the state, the more necessary it is for them to become resilient enterprises. In most organizations, leaders and managers learn this entrepreneurial attitude, so their organizations become more similar to an innovative enterprise. It is advantageous for these organizations to form a network or take the shape of a matrix – i.e. to have hybrid organizational structures (Hunter 2002) because in this way they can be more efficient.

According to Hunter (2002), structural dimensions may and must be changed for the better achievement of goals. In reality, structural changes can take away attention and energy from real goals and tasks. Although network organizations deem change to be basically positive (like something bringing additional income or that can be seen in organizational performance), adaptation to change is not experienced in the same way by these organizations.

Results of Our Empirical Research

Human Resources of Network Member Organizations

We analysed how many full-time employees, part-time workers, and contracted external collaborators and volunteers organizations have. Through this, we reveal a part of the adult education organizations' human capital. The human resources are of key importance for organizational initiatives and implementation but also for obtaining a competitive advantage (Becker–Gerhart 1996). The number of employees is a decisive factor in organizational capacity, and the external collaborators and trainers represent the professional relationship network of an organization. Volunteers represent the capacity of adult education and training to be presented as a social value for which people can stand for. Volunteers can be silent partners in adult education (Sandlin–Clair 2004) or can be social entrepreneurs (Clayton et al. 2008): people who "are dedicated to an innovative idea triggering social change, and have the entrepreneurial instinct to achieve it" (Szigeti 2003: 12).[17]

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17   Author's translation.

Table 2 presents the state of human resources of the Pro Educatione network member organizations. Compared with data from *Table 1*, we can observe a correlation between the number and length of adult education programmes and the human resources available by organizations. Network member organizations operate with an average of 2.9 employees. Organizations with more employees than the average have complementary activities (usually services) besides their adult education offers (e.g. they engage in counselling, write applications, etc.). Furthermore, their long-term, high-fee, accredited courses outline a business-like character. In comparison, organizations with only 1-3 employees are more active in organizing non-formal adult education programmes (in most of them, community-building appears to be a key element). In the case of three organizations, we also found a significant number of contracted external collaborators besides the employees. These organizations offer adult education programmes on a broad spectrum, i.e. from short-term non-formal to long-term accredited courses. Two organizations neglect to engage volunteers for their activity; they are rather market-oriented in their adult education practices. Where non-formal adult education dominates, there is a significant volunteering human resource.

Table 2. *Human resources of the Pro Educatione network member organizations*

	Employees	External collaborators	Volunteers
ScoutORG	2	4	20
YouthPASTORAL	4	0	40
CaritasRURAL	9	1	0
St.GellértFOUND	1	0	3
HálóASSOC	2	0	85
KalotASSOC	2	60	3
ÁradatASSOC	2	25	36
CaritasSCHOOL	9	15	0
HelpingSISTERS	2	2	5
BibleSOCIETY	1	4	30
PastoralBUREAU	1	4	12
FamilyPASTORAL	4	0	35
KolpingFAM	2	2	40
BibliodramaASSOC	0	6	10
CaritasSOCIAL	189	5	325
Total	**230**	**128**	**644**

Organizational Frameworks and Documents

With the questions belonging to this section, we intended to reveal how formalized the network member organizations' operation is. Framework papers are preconditions and definers of organizational structure, the combination of these papers indicating more complexity and structured ways of implementing the strategy (Antal 2009). When competitive pressures and demands for accountability appear, the existence of well-applicable framework documents are preconditions for professionalism (Hwang–Powell 2009). "Towards a growing knowledge orientation points the tendency of more frequent use of strategic plans, independent financial audits, and quantitative programme evaluations which help to measure and formalize the activities of non-profit organizations" (Dobrai–Farkas 2010: 898). Theses of contingency theory are applicable; the optimal organizational structure depends on contingency factors. We see Pro Educatione network member organizations as actors whose organizational structures have evolved conform to their environment.

The results showed that there are marked differences between the network member organizations when we check the documents framing and supporting organizational operation. In church structures, there are cases where adult education and training programmes work under the aegis of certain church bodies (for example: parishes). In the case of two network member organizations, we found that they do not have an independent legal person (this is the reason why they do not adopt own organizational rules of procedures and annual financial balance sheets). After these basic operational documents, we think the organizational strategy is of key importance. As data show, two-thirds of the network organizations have this document; so, they use this methodology "by which a specific roadmap is recognized for growing a doable, coherent and strong business or organization" (Hall 2013: xi).

The lack of organizational strategy of a few actors points to an environmental characteristic, meaning an organizational developmental delay that appears in several respects in church-related environments and which means the operation of simple organizational structures (Mintzberg 1981). Activity planning, budget planning, and reporting relate to professional content and provide the basics for accountability. In this respect, network member organizations appear to be more skilful (budget planning is maybe a field where joint practice could foster catching up with some actors). At half of the organizations, we found the functioning of an "own" quality assurance system. Such systems originate from the organizations' external "parent" organization (or from a collaboration with an important partner), from whom the organizations learn and take over knowledge.

Economic activities can be interpreted as actions to create support structures (financial backgrounds) for organizations. These are quite rare in the network. Where such activities exist, income is generated through training services, exchanges of

experience, giving lectures, participation in various projects, training courses, real-estate leasing, and product sales (e.g. book sales).

To conclude, there are certain areas where organizations of the network can learn from each other and can help each other in order for the fundamental requirements of professional operation to be created (where these are missing) and in order to achieve further development (where these are needed).

Table 3. *Organizational framework documents*

	A – Strat.	B – Rules.	C – Qualit.	D – Econ.	E – Legal P.	F – Balance	G – Budg.	H – Act. P.	I – Rep.
ScoutORG	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
YouthPASTORAL	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
CaritasSOCIAL	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
St.GellértFOUND	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
HálóASSOC	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
KalotASSOC	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
ÁradatASSOC	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
CaritasSCHOOL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
HelpingSISTERS	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
BibleSOCIETY	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
PastoralBUREAU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FamilyPASTORAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
KolpingFAM	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
BibliodramaASSOC	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
CaritasRURAL	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1

Notes: A – Organizational Strategy, B – Rules of procedure of the organization, C – Quality assurance, D – Economic activities, E – Legal Status/Person, F – Annual Balance, G – Budget Planning, H – Activity Plan, I – Reporting.

Economic Aspects and Potentials

Researchers agree on the tendency that the financial resources of the non-profit sector are becoming scarce (Capozzi et al. 2003), while they meet the increasing pressure coming on the part of for-profit or state institutions (these become competitors – Ryan 1999), supporters, media or target groups (Burt–Taylor 2000, McHargue 2003). They will come under pressure to perform higher-quality work from less resource, an impetus to learn the conscious management of knowledge (Farkas–Dobrai 2009). The success of NGOs is determined by sector-specific characteristics.

Considering the management of financial capital by the network member organizations, we reflect on two variables: project budgets and the origins of their funds. We think project budgets are indicative of the experience of organizations in running small-scale or large-scale adult education projects, while the origins

of their funds speak about their knowledge and practice of fundraising via grant applications. In the questionnaire, we defined threshold values (these are rather internal indicative values, based on our practical experiences in the financial management of adult education projects in our environment): budgets for adult education projects larger than EUR 5,000 and budgets for adult education projects larger than EUR 10,000. Results confirm that the majority of adult education and training programmes operated by network member organizations fall into a low-budget category. Four out of the 15 organizations reported having recently project budgets larger than EUR 10,000 for adult education.

All organizations practice fundraising, all of them used to apply for funds available within the country. Application for foreign funds is also in practice; only two organizations have no experience in this regard. As regards the financial resources available for adult education and training, the contribution of participants/adult learners is significant. Furthermore, foreign supporters and external/international resources are also important, being in service and support of adult education. The field of economic resources and potentials is wider and more complex; these two variables highlighted only two patterns of financial knowledge management.

Table 4. *Project budgets and the origin of funds (where organizations apply for)*

	Project budget larger than EUR 5,000	Project budget larger than EUR 10,000	Applies to national/ domestic funds	Applies to international funds
ScoutORG	1	0	1	1
YouthPASTORAL	1	0	1	1
CaritasSOCIAL	1	1	1	1
St.GellértFOUND	0	0	1	1
HálóASSOC	1	1	1	1
KalotASSOC	1	1	1	1
ÁradatASSOC	1	0	1	1
CaritasSCHOOL	1	1	1	1
HelpingSISTERS	0	0	1	1
BibleSOCIETY	0	0	1	1
PastoralBUREAU	1	0	1	1
FamilyPASTORAL	1	0	1	1
KolpingFAM	0	0	1	0
BibliodramaASSOC	0	0	1	0
CaritasRURAL	0	0	1	1

The Social Network of Adult Education Organizations

When mapping the social networks that adult education organizations have, we were interested in the ratio of relations with organizations having similar and different profiles and the origin (domestic or foreign) of their partner/collaborator organizations. Based on the answers, we can say that the Pro Educatione network member organizations are in intense professional relationships with domestic adult education providers. Half of the organizations report about collaborating with actors having similar profiles. This is an indication regarding the fact that segments of adult education are collaborative and complementary to each other. In a previous chapter, we mentioned the competitive character of the field. This result rather explains cooperation and even co-creation activities with professional purpose that have a potential to lead to joint competitive advantage. Half of the network member organizations mention collaborations with partners outside of the field of adult education. According to their evaluation, these seem to be impactful collaborations, meaning partnerships in different activities, usually in the fields of community development, counselling, rural development, youth support, pastoral work, and social care. These are possibilities for adult education providers to enlarge their professional fields, for knowledge acquisition, for serving as background support or promotion of knowledge production.

Considering the origin of partner organizations in the network, the practice of collaboration with foreign partners is rather an untapped potential. Ten organizations reported having such connections, but only a few actors practised collaboration in adult education projects more intensively, on a regular basis. Others keep the relationships rather formal, on a protocol level. The survey revealed that the relations with professional partner organizations and sponsors were deemed to have a lesser degree of importance. The most votes were given to the organizations' relationship with adult learners.[18] Similarly to adult learners, external collaborators (trainers, lecturers, and professionals) were of high importance within the social capital of network member organizations.

Furthermore, we asked network member organizations to evaluate the relationships they have within the network. Based on the answers, we can confirm several relationships that are considered intensely active. Most actors reported, however, a dormant type of relationship (being present for each other but not active or manifest enough). This indicates that there is still space for encouraging further collaborations within the network.

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18 We asked network member organizations to estimate how many adult learners they reached through their adult education and training programmes in 2018. Each organization reported about hundreds of participants, indicating that about 11,000 persons/adult learners attended in total the courses and trainings offered by the network member organizations.

The Perceived Surplus Provided by the Network

We measured the surplus provided by networking by asking the organizations to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 6 to what degree they felt that material gain, relationship growth, professional knowledge generation, community development, and lobbying activities were taking place within the network. We calculated the average value of the answers provided, and so we obtained that organizations consider lobbying for common goals the most accomplished task (the average value of this item is 4.55). In our interpretation, this result shows that the network has strength in representing common values and goals and has the potential to intervene in the interest of Catholic adult education. Relationship growth is the second highly rated item (average: 4.36), meaning that networking is a real chance for creating, cultivating, and utilizing professional relationships. The growth of professional knowledge (average: 4.27) is also a well-traceable realization and result of networking. Networking in practice leads not only to increased visibility and social capital but to better performance as well. Community development is an item that also received better rating (average value: 4.18), an outcome that shows the added value of networking in the forming of a professional community.

The lowest rating was given to the growth of material capital (average value: 3.18). The support of network member organizations in material respects is a tertiary aim in the organizational strategy. There are advances in this field as well; however, this is a segment that is desired to be more efficient. In overall, we can say that networking is perceived as access to different types of resources.

Finally, we asked network member organizations about their satisfaction with the network's joint projects and activities. On a scale of 1–5, the average value was 3.8. Three organizations expressed their complete satisfaction. Others mentioned the need for higher degrees of professionalism – namely: they expect quality assurance guidelines; learning and development opportunities personalized for each organization; they require more lobbying activities. Furthermore, organizations expect more intense relationships, further common programmes and projects, more openness for sharing of professional content, the stimulation of accounting and reporting, and more intensive participation in meetings. Additionally, there are financial/material expectations as well, in the context of which the need for the development of support structures was expressed.

Conclusions

The article discussed the available resources in the Pro Educatione Network of Adult Education and Training. As we have seen in the multi-actor field of adult education, it is a challenge being the professional "host" of the field. The national context of adult education provides complex and multiple structures that prove to be unexploited by social demands. Besides this, the regional context is characterized by social barriers and disadvantages specific to rural regions. The Pro Educatione Network of Adult Education and Training is filling a gap in two respects: one is related to organizational development (the network is a background support of developmental incentives for adult education providers), while the other refers to the social behaviour related to adult education and responds to the educational demands and needs of the society.

Our study conducted on the network unveiled that where and when network member organizations have more human resource at disposal, they offer adult education programmes on a broad and formal spectrum, while those in shortage of human resource are more likely orientated towards small-scale, non-formal educational offers. Network member organizations are in advanced progress towards an adequate level of formalization, setting up the conditions of accountability. In economic terms, networking turns out to be a stabilizer in competition and a pressure to intensify learning in financial management. Social relations and connectedness are more intensively realized. Internal collaborations result in professional co-creations, while networking contributed to the evolution of intensive professional hubs (Barabási 2013). The external relations (considered mainly protocollar relations) prove to be channels to knowledge and projects. We consider that the network member organizations are efficient in their ability to reach out to a considerable number of adult learners (over 11,000 people) each year through their education and training programmes. While networking means extra efforts for organizations (Alke 2018), it is an environmental effect that shapes the evolution of organizational development (Mintzberg 1989). Network member organizations describe the surplus provided by networking mainly as access to different types of resources.

The analysis identified very active, moderately active, and passive-dormant relationships among network members, revealing also areas with deficits in networking. Dormant relationships together with the needs for professionalism and future orientation are challenges to be addressed. Meanwhile, networking in adult education proved to bring about organizational development, collective advances, and even competitive advantages in professional respects.

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The Digital Space Dimension in Education. A Review on a Pilot Research

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Abstract. Following a short review on the importance and challenges of digital education, we review some of the findings of a study which we conducted on the basis of an online survey among students of the teacher-training programme at the University of Debrecen (for the purposes of a pilot project) in 2019. The 75 respondents were between 18 and 23 years of age and mostly students of humanities and natural sciences. The survey is obviously not representative, its function being to serve as a ground of a pilot survey to further our work and to extend it to other universities. Among others, the results show that 62.7% of the students learnt the use of digital tools by self-improvement; the majority of future teachers (85.3%) are willing and motivated to use ICT tools in the context of education. The question regarding the importance of reading in a digital world showed that almost each of the respondents considered reading to remain an important activity. In order to make reading attractive, respondents emphasized the need to renew compulsory literature and to use digital tools for reading.

Keywords: digital education, ICT tools, teacher training

Introduction

In current days, the devices of the digital world can be found in nearly all fields of life. The effects of these gadgets have changed our communication, information processing, administration, shopping and other habits, not to mention the ways in which we search for information. Therefore, it can be stated that gadgets interweave with our daily lives. Education cannot be excluded from this paradigm shift. There is an extensive amount of literature, both international and national, that highlights this phenomenon and its effects.

In our world, education requires the role of a modern teacher, which implies the use of digital tools. However, turning to digital education brings a lot of problems to teachers (McGarr–McDonagh 2019, Rokones–Krumsvik 2014). There is not enough effort put in the development of digital competence, and digital education is not up-to-date, so that students did not receive the proper knowledge in their education.

Digital competence is one of the eight key competences and refers to the confident and critical usage of the full range of digital technologies for information, communication, and basic problem solving in all aspects of life (Digital Agenda Scoreboard 2015). Digital literacy comprises a set of basic skills, which include the use and production of digital media, information processing and retrieval, participation in social networks for the creation and sharing of knowledge, and a wide range of professional computing skills. ICT covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit, or receive information electronically in a digital form (UNESCO 2018).

Digital competences differ across generations, i.e. across baby boomers (born between 1944 and 1964), Gen X (born between 1965 and 1979), Gen Y (born between 1980 and 1994), and Gen Z (born between 1995 and 2015) (Dani 2013).

 In this study, we will focus on a narrower aspect of the digital world – namely, the digital space used by the teachers of the future, the development of digital competence, the composition of the current teacher-training curriculum –, with particular emphasis on information and communications technology (hereafter ICT) and on the question of how digital dimension affects reading as an activity. Our research is based on a pilot study in which we asked students of the teacher-training programme at the University of Debrecen to answer the following questions:

1. Does the current teacher-training programme prepare the teachers to the correct, appropriate, and conscious use of ICT tools? Also, how the development of digital competence is present in the curriculum?

2. What opportunities do digital tools give to teachers in order to bring younger generations closer to reading?

The goal of the research was to get a broader picture on the digital competence of the teachers who take part in higher education. During the research, I contacted students through electronic questionnaires. The respondents take part in the teacher training of the University of Debrecen. I collected my data for 2 months, and then I evaluated the results, which were compared with the results of other countries' research studies and which showed that respondents' digital competence was not enhanced by either public or higher education.

Digital Competence

We consider competence to be a complex system of knowledge, skills, abilities, personality traits, and attitudes that enables its owner to act efficiently in different situations, i.e. to solve complex tasks. Nowadays, digital presence does not depend on ICT tools but rather on knowledge, skills, and attitude. Thus, it is not the existence or lack of digital tools that stands in the middle of our questionnaire (though it was asked from students in the pilot study) but the ability and intention to use these digital tools. In other words, it is important for a future teacher to use these tools during the teaching process. According to the European framework, digital competence can be divided into 5 fields: information, communication, content creation, security, and problem solving (*A digitális kompetencia értelmezésének európai keretrendszere* 2013: 3–11).

The Hungarian education policy attributes a special significance to digital competence – thanks to which it is present within the 8 key competences marked by the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (hereafter NCC). According to NCC, digital competence means the use of information technologies and the content that can be accessed through them, which relies on skills and activities while also presupposes high-level logical abilities. All of this requires critical thinking, information management skills, and algorithmic thinking. In the case of digital competence, knowledge of the Internet and electronic communication are to be highlighted as well as the rules of information handling, Internet usage, critical thinking, and creativity (*Nemzeti Alaptanterv* 2012: 10654–10655). Thus, in public education, all students need these skills, abilities, knowledge, and attitude, and they also have to improve these. Let us suppose that the teachers who teach them possess these skills, abilities, knowledge, and attitude and make use of them in daily educational practice.

In connection with digital competence, we must mention the role of the generation: in the current public education, the digital immigrant teacher is confronted with the digital native students, and this situation is not symmetric at all. This situation is also true for the young teachers – however, as they are part of generations Y/Z, they have the competence of a digital native person – because the development of digital tools has accelerated to such an extent that the constant change can only be followed through the constant development of competence.

The fact that the European Commission displayed the Digital Agenda of Europe (DAE) in May 2010 is also strongly connected to this. This action plan and strategy is intended to boost the development of the EU's economy and spread the achievements of the digital age at all levels of society between 2010 and 2020. It aims to create sustainable economic and social benefits through a unified digital market based on high-speed and super-fast Internet and collaborative applications (Digital Agenda of Europe 2011). With all these objectives in mind, the DAE report of 2015 is particularly surprising, according to which 40% of Europe's population does not

have an adequate level of digital competence and, within that, 22% (a surprisingly high number) do not use the Internet regularly. It is somewhat reassuring that in the yearly reports these percentages do change year after year, but they still have not reached the expectations (Digital Agenda 2015).

One of the main pillars of DAE is "the spread of digital literacy, abilities, and equal opportunities". The plan also provides help to local initiatives to connect to significant European resources, thus making the question of digital literacy an important imperative in every country. At the national level, this is only possible if governments have a digital renewal strategy and they implement that immediately. If digital abilities do not spread fast enough in Europe, then the other important goals of the DAE will not be reached either.

The Digital Agenda specifies the conceptual frame of digital competence as follows (Borbély 2013: 120):
1. Access to ICT:
    – computers,
    – Internet,
    – smart phones,
    – tablets.
2. Personal competences, skills for basic usage/handling:
    – basic proficiency of computer usage,
    – basic proficiency of Internet usage.
3. Active applications relevant for life situations:
    – work/profession,
    – learning (LLL),
    – communication,
    – social connection,
    – free time,
    – social network.
4. Personal attitudes:
    – critical, conscious usage;
    – responsible usage;
    – legal and ethical viewpoints;
    – confident usage;
    – creative usage.

If we project the competency framework to higher education, it could be concluded that the current curriculum model of the teacher-training programme supports the first environmental factors – namely: in higher education, access to ICT is provided as the computer infrastructure and Internet access are adequate at the University's faculties, institutions, departments, and libraries. Personal competencies and skills for basic usage are also supported in higher education: without these, the students cannot handle the university email system, NEPTUN, and e-learning interfaces. The

active applications relevant for life situations are also permanent factors in the field of higher education. However, in the case of personal attitudes, there is still work to be done: they do not put enough emphasis on improving these attitudes in the curriculum model.

Due to the increasingly fast-paced technology, 5% of existing professions are replaced every 5 years, and professions that can be pursued/practised without the knowledge of info-communicational technologies are decreasing in every 2 years with another 5%. In 10 years' time, the acquired professional knowledge becomes obsolete. The rapid development of information technology (IT) radically transforms our entire society, and only those can prevail in this changing world who can understand these changes. Two factors can be considered as the key to success – digital literacy and the conscious usage of info-communication techniques (Zóka 2011).

In the light of this, it is especially important to project these facts and the changes generated by them to the profession of teachers – namely: the teacher of the future cannot be successful without the ability of digital literacy and conscious use of ICT tools. This does not mean that young teachers can only be "good and successful" educators and instructors if they have these abilities but that they consciously and adequately place their "digital pencil case" in their teaching methodology.

From the perspective of our topic (with special regard to the fact that in the current dual teacher-training system students choose the library science teacher programme in increasing numbers), I find the representative survey of EFOP application frameworks conducted in 2018 – that measured 21st-century Hungarian librarians' competencies with a focus on digital competence – very important. That survey measured the digital competence of the respondents in basic, intermediate, and advanced level across 5 dimensions of the framework of DIGCOMP: information, communication, content creation, security, and problem solving.
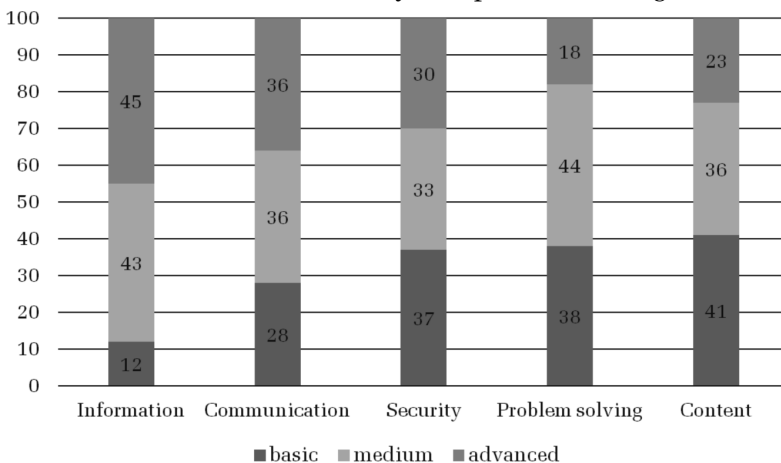
Source: Borbély (2018)
Figure 1. *Librarians' digital competences (%)*

As *Figure 1* shows, questions were asked to measure the components defined in the framework of digital competence, the result of which shows the definitive knowledge of the information component which, compared to the other levels and competence components, shows the highest ratio. Problem solving yielded the lowest percentage on the advanced level, which could be caused by the inadequate use and lack of technology and innovation. The content component reached the highest rate on the basic level, which is possible because it has recently become one of the most basic digital competencies in librarianship. The improvement of this field will be important in the following years to help our librarians advance from the basic level. Security is not the main profile of a librarian, wherefore it can be said that the knowledge of the respondents in this competence is dispersed (Borbély 2018). The data of this survey are relevant for our study because the Library Science Teacher Programme (together with the IT librarian programme) is run in Hungarian higher education exclusively by the Faculty of Informatics at the University of Debrecen. This means that the curriculum model of the subject is strongly consistent with the Faculty's field of study: the IT block receives a special importance, so that the students can acquire information processing, descriptive markup language, database management, networking, multimedia, and webpage editing skills, and this definitely means an advantage for them.

The digital competence framework specifically made for teachers has already been released. The DigCompEdu specifies six areas of development (professional environment, developing and shaping digital resources, managing the use of digital tools, evaluation, improving the independent capacity of students, improving the digital competence of students) and 22 elements of competence (DigCompEdu 2017). We cannot forget the transversal function of digital competence from the point of view of education: it provides help to improve other competencies, for example, improving skills such as mother tongue, foreign languages, mathematical and other science skills, also in the strengthening of communication.

Digital Literacy

Digital (computer) literacy consists in the improvement of those abilities that allow the user to take advantage of the possibilities provided by their computers, e.g. word processor, table manager, and the knowledge of other user-based software, applications. The knowledge of the Internet is also strongly connected to this, just as the importance of multimedia tools. Besides this, we interpret traditional knowledge as an umbrella term for the synthesis of computer and information literacy. In an info-communicational society, the knowledge and acquisition of the so-called digital literacy is indispensable. Without that, we cannot keep up with the constant improvements. Its broad definition connects different concepts of literacy marked by collocations/phrases.

The components of digital literacy are: literary literacy (reading), documentation literacy (use of forms), numerical literacy (creating spreadsheets), language literacy (use of foreign language), and computer and Internet literacy (how to use ICT (Zóka 2011)). Computer-related skills and abilities are important components of this knowledge, not to mention the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). The latter is specifically prominent because digital literacy often receives a narrower interpretation in Hungary, which only wants to be aware of the use of ICT. In current teacher-training programmes, the use of ICT tools formally appears in each university, some universities having separate IT blocks. However, in many places, the appearance of electronic learning environments in the educational materials is only theoretical, which can be so because of the lack of infrastructure or teaching resources.

ICT

The use of IT tools at a social level is very important, as we have already indicated above. They offer many opportunities; thus, they have a bigger role not only in the field of economics but in education as well. ICTs are a combination of tools, technologies, organizational activities, and innovative processes that make communication, information processing, information flow, storing of information, and encryption easier and more effective (Molnár–Kis-Tóth 2015).

Some of the tools and equipment created during the course of scientific and technological development (e.g. printing press, projector, computer, etc.) were introduced into education with some delay following their invention. To apply ICT in education, proper device partners are required: more computer rooms, digital devices, and maintenance. ICT education implies to offer proper background to schools, so that teachers learn how to use these tools; they also have to be motivated and provided with continuous training. But not only schools, teachers also have to be prepared for the innovation, that is, the proper use of ICT tools (Taddeo et al. 2016).

Generational Issues in the Digital World

Many (typically in social studies and humanities) studies and scientific articles address the different aspects of generational change. According to these, the names of these generations are also colourful: veteran, baby-boomer, Generation X, Y, Z, Alfa, millennials, Net Generation, Internet generation, Bit Generation, etc. In this study, we will use the commonly accepted Generation X, Y, and Z expressions,

or Bit Generation,[1] which is a collective expression for generations Y and Z. Our approach is motivated by the Hungarian professional literature, which prefers these denominations and separations of the generations, on the one hand, while the digital native and digital migrant approach also use these expressions, which makes our choice plausible, on the other hand.

As we noted above, the following question often comes up in public education: Who has the advantage in the information society, the digital immigrant teacher or the digital native student? This approach will slowly expire because students in higher education, that is, prospective teachers will already be digital natives themselves. Thus, in theory, the tension in the digital dimension is slowly fading away. However, ICT-related problems continue to exist as far as digital literacy, which is essential for education, is not clearly equal with the naturalness of using e-tools. Another aspect of high importance to us is the aspect of teaching students to be literates: how do prospective teachers imagine educating their future students to become ICT literate? In generational connotation, teachers are part of Generation Y or Z, while students already belong to Generation Alpha.

The digital literacy characteristics for particular generations are summarized in *Table 1* below (Dani 2012).

Table 1. *The digital literacy of generations*

	Baby boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
	Digital migrant		**Digital native**	
			Bit Generation	
The need to access information quickly	average	accelerated	accelerated	immediate access
Being up-to-date	very important	important	very important	of central importance
The competency of information	very important	important	important	disinterested
Further education	it does not matter	less important	important	important
Life-long learning	not important	less important	important	very important
"Big picture" (literacy, lexical knowledge, wide horizons, open-mindedness, refined mind)	very important	important	not important	does not matter
linear reading or hypertext	linear reading	linear reading and hypertext	less linear reading, more hypertext	mostly hypertext
active or passive reading	passive	passive	active	active

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1   The expression of Bit Generation was first used by Erzsébet Dani (2013) in her article titled *E-létezés és hiperfigyelem.*

	Baby boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
	Digital migrant		Digital native	
			Bit Generation	
Belles-lettres	high percentage	high percentage	decreasing	fading
Professional literature	high percentage	high percentage	high percentage	medium percentage
Use of e-books	not typical	not really typical	typical	strongly typical
Critical attitude	strongly advanced	advanced	average	undeveloped
Use of digital media	contacting others	entertainment	learning, entertainment, communication	communication, entertainment, learning

Source: Dani (2012)

The table speaks for itself (however, it does not contain reading data),[2] and in the context of our survey it is thought-provoking, just like the following fact: after finishing school, the still reading generations' intention of reading has plummeted. We can rightly ask the question: how can teachers motivate students to read if they are not frequent readers themselves? We plan to have a large-scale national research in the future, in which we will try to address this question as well, and then reflect on the results.

The Middle Ground

In the context of our topic, we define the use of ICT tools in teacher-training programmes and the courses of the curriculum models that focus on digital competence, as the middle ground. The basic professional modules ensure the acquisition of expertise. At present, there is no such independent module in the teacher-training programme. The basic professional modules provide the acquisition of professional skills. The pedagogical-psychological module and/or professional methodology could be the most suitable choice to develop digital competences and to master the use of ICT tools at a high level. The former includes the practical lesson titled *ICT in Education.* This is the only class that contributes to the digital competencies of a teacher while also dealing with digital devices (mostly with interactive whiteboards).

The professional modules (as indicated above) do not contain classes that would deal with these. Occasionally, professional methodology deals with the digital toolkit for a few hours, but this is not a common practice. We need to highlight the teacher-librarian training that – because of the already mentioned reasons – emphasizes IT-related subjects (at the IT Faculty, informatics module with 24 credits) – not specifically for education technology purposes, but nevertheless they contribute to the improvement of (the above mentioned) components of digital competencies.

2   More detail on this in the study of Dani (2012).

In the course of our research, we made a survey to contact current students of the teacher-training programme at the University of Debrecen (for the purposes of a pilot project). The 13-question survey (for primer information acquisition) was sent out to the students attending different years of college with different majors as subject pairs, via the Internet. All responses were evaluable. The 75 respondents were between 18 and 23 years of age and mostly students of humanities and natural sciences. The questions were of various types: selective closed, partially, and fully open questions. The survey is obviously not representative, its function being to serve as a ground of a pilot survey to further our work and to extend it to other universities.

In one of the questions, we were curious about the way students learned the use of the given/listed digital devices. The answer was not surprising: 62.7% learnt by self-improvement. Our data show also that the majority of future teachers (85.3%) are willing and motivated to use ICT tools in the context of education (*Figure 2*).
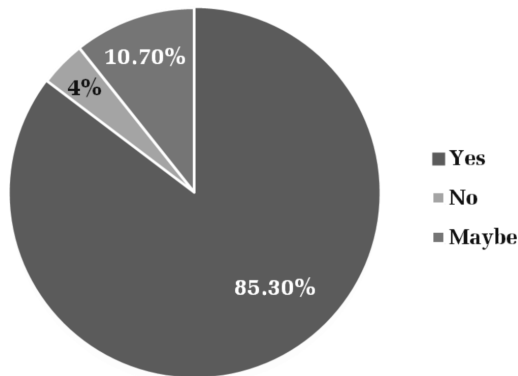
Figure 2. *Willingness for the use of digital materials in education among future teachers (N = 75)*

Looking at the future, this is a very good starting point as all we need is an infrastructure in public education and creativity to make classes more colourful with digital devices. A large percentage of current teachers are not adequately familiar with these techniques, and they are only starting to familiarize themselves with them. In many cases, students can handle a given digital device better than the teacher.

Our results show that 76% of the respondents can use the interactive whiteboard, which is a very good rate considering the distribution of respondents based on their college years and that the subject of ICT in education is only taught during the fourth semester.

Future teachers would use projectors, interactive whiteboards, and Internet during classes. E-book and the overhead projector received the least amount of votes. The reason behind this could be that not a lot of schools have e-book readers, and, even if they do, they are available only in a small amount, so that students use

them in groups and for group projects. Thus, Hungarian public education does not have the adequate infrastructure yet. Also, the projector has replaced the overhead projector. However, the overhead projector is still used by many teachers for certain task types and demonstrations.

In an open-ended question, we asked the respondents whether they use ICT tools in class with pleasure/willingly? Among others, they gave the following answers:

> Yes, because it makes the class more colourful and smoother. The student can remember better if I demonstrate the given material.

> No. They are surrounded by digital devices all day, and in classes these [instruments] do not grab their attention anymore. It depends on the teacher whether they can take advantage of the possibilities given by ICT tools. Students perceive that by using ICT they are not actually studying.
> Maybe. Once during a survey, I asked the students whether a good teacher uses a lot of ICT tools or not. Half of the class answered that it is good to have these gadgets in class; however, classes can be just as good without them. However, I think they [students] like using them.

The majority of the answers show that in the opinion of future teachers the students have been born into a digital world, and new technologies make students become more motivated; ICT tools are interesting and attract attention, so that future teachers feel the need to integrate them in teaching. Thus, it seems that, indeed, the competencies of the current as well as future teachers have changed during the years (Zóka 2018).

The answers for the open question starting with "digital devices in the process of learning…" were mostly positive; they can be seen summarized below:

> They can be useful if, e.g., in the absence of a library, we can read through electronic databases or collect professional literature. It can be a starting point because of the easier, faster, and more effective search. However, digital devices can distract the attention from the task.

The students we asked see different opportunities in digital devices. We received very imaginative and creative answers as well. Overall, they share the view that the use of visual devices is a great help in raising and maintaining attention and that they help the process of learning.

> We can give creative tasks to the students. There are several opportunities for digital devices to improve the skills of students, especially in the case of language teaching.

Personally, I would replace the books with tablets and e-books. It would be cheaper for the country and for the families as well. Books can be uploaded and we can forget the "I left it at home" excuse. Not to mention that while the student is in public education these tools should be replaced once or twice because of depreciation. In this way, there would be no need to spend billions a year on printing textbooks that students would barely open.

What I see is that we have not been taught how to use them, and the majority of current teachers cannot use them either because we receive theory-based education and training, and not practical skills. This is reflected at places where it is taught to teachers. However, the situation is much better now than it used to be, but we still must catch up.

Following the questions on ICT technologies, I proceeded with offering questions about reading and about the topic of how to teach people to become readers. Almost 100% of the respondents find this activity very important. According to my fellow students, the main avenues for educating readers are the renewal of compulsory literature and experimental education. The Project Gutenberg (i.e. a library of over 60,000 free e-books, being the oldest digital library in the world) received the least amount of votes, but it might be because students were not aware of it in spite of the fact that the Project Gutenberg can be used in literature classes (Gonda–Molnár 2019).

Among others, the following excellent ideas were given to motivate reading:

I would give them texts on topics that interest them. I think this is the first step in making them love reading. Their tasks would be to do different projects that cannot be done without reading. I would not give them Mór Jókai but, for example, Laura Leiner.

In primary school, I would not force them to read relatively difficult pieces of literature, like *A kőszívű ember fiai*, but youth novels like *Harry Potter*. In this way, when they go to high school, they would be filled with experiences and a desire to read which would help them to read more, to understand, and enjoy more difficult works.

My last question was about linking ICT tools and reading: how they would solve the cooperation of these two VMIs. The following illustrative answers were given:

I would consult with my colleagues who teach Hungarian about what kind of reading they are currently doing that could be integrated into the IT class. Those who have not read it yet, they might get a feel for it. Furthermore,

> I would also explain the wide range of opportunities they have to read without carrying a book. (Even if that's not the best way to read.)

> Reading has to be a positive experience, and we do not necessarily need ICT tools for that to happen.

> I would not represent a primary standpoint. I still believe in paper-based reading as that is the true form of reading. Reading an article on the Internet is different from reading it on paper. However, readings on the Internet can be accessed faster and on any topic that I want. The search is faster, but I also read a lot of other things I do not want to.

At the intersection of the two question blocks, we can draw the following conclusion: future teachers find the use of ICT tools highly important. In their judgment, neither public education nor higher education provides the basic IT and digital competence foundations that would prepare them for the activities they consider important. And what is surprising is that a digital native university student (who would gladly use ICT tools at classes) handles the question of reading as a priority, stating that educating younger generations to become readers is an excessively important task. However, in achieving this, digital devices only mean an initial help: the true, in-depth reading and understanding (for now) can only be imagined within the Gutenberg galaxy.

Instead of Conclusions: Teacher-Training Programme in the 21st Century

For a few years now, the Hungarian teacher-training programme has been dressed in a new-old robe; from split training to full-time training. The undivided teacher-training programme with two majors, which was introduced in 2013, lasts 4 + 1 and 5 + 1 years, in which the new + 1 year is a novelty compared to the pre-Bologna system. The students spend one academic year after the theoretical-practical phase as an independent, coherent individual training phase on school grounds. This period is really about practice: young teacher candidates teach classes and engage in the teaching process in a school environment and therefore gain experiences that they can use in the future. In this period, university students are in constant connection with their professors and can ask for help and guidance from them. In the so-called "follower" methodical course, they can work together with their active methodology teachers from their major and minor subjects.

2019 is the year when the students who started their education in this system will graduate. The new system (in an almost natural way) carries all the "childhood

diseases" because they do not yet have any experience in this field. These anomalies appeared during the systemic operation, which makes the work of education organization and education harder. The students who participate in the 1.0 version also played an experimental role, but they also helped to bring the problems of this system to the surface and demanded solutions. From these, the following question arises: what is the quality of education? It is not our job to answer this question, and we do not want to, either. However, it is an important moment in our field of research because we are looking for the answer to the following question: Does current higher education equip prospective teachers with the highest levels of digital competence to send them to teach an age-group whose members are no longer first-generation digital natives? Based on my personal experience as someone who participates in a full-time teacher-training programme, I can confirm that our insight into the digital world is inadequate during our training. As I mentioned earlier, according to the curriculum, a single subject addresses this topic; it is called *ICT in Education*, in the course of which we master the use of smart/digital boards, for which higher education institutions should provide adequate infrastructure. In our opinion, it would be a great improvement in the future if students were acquainted with the digital possibilities of the given science within the framework of professional methodology. This has already appeared in other countries, for example, in Germany.

Our study concentrated on current teacher-training programmes and (also) on the digital competence of teachers. Our aim was to measure the level of digital competence of future teachers and to elucidate what they think about whether digital devices should appear in education and what the pros and cons of this opportunity are for the future. Nowadays, we can hear a lot about this topic and what trends are emerging in education, to which the new National Core Curriculum will also contribute.

As the survey proves, a lot of question surfaces about the system of teacher training and also about digital competence. This pilot study opened further research directions as well. One direction would be to examine the components of digital literacy individually. Besides that, a larger survey would be necessary that would extend the research on a national level.

Acknowledgment

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