

Research Paper

Student employment and work values across borders - Comparative study of students from two Carpathian Basin universities

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Abstract

This study examines the correlations between student employment and work values among full-time students at the University of Szeged (SZTE) in Hungary and Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Sapientia, Romania) in Romania. The research aims to explore whether the propensity for employment and attitudes toward work are primarily shaped by individual value orientations or by structural factors, such as family background and the institutional academic milieu. The empirical basis of the study is a database (N=2078) compiled from two questionnaire-based surveys conducted in 2024. The analysis employs descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and a binary logistic regression model. Findings indicate that the proportion of working students is significantly higher at Sapientia (56.5%) than at the University of Szeged (29.0%). Regarding work values, work-life balance and a positive workplace atmosphere are of paramount importance to students. Based on the regression model, the intention to work is positively influenced by higher paternal educational attainment, as well as by 'stability and work-oriented' and 'socially responsible' value orientations; conversely, gender and socio-economic status did not prove to be significant predictors. The study's primary conclusion is that student employment today is no longer merely a consequence of financial necessity but a complex phenomenon determined by local factors and value systems. Our research highlights that the act of seeking employment is shaped by complex explanatory variables that should not be reduced solely to social background.

Keywords: students; work; work-values; comparative analysis

Introduction

The aim of this study is to capture students' attitudes toward work through two dimensions: firstly, via actual employment, and secondly, in relation to work values. The primary logic of our investigation is comparative in nature, as it is based on surveys of full-time students at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania⁴ and the University of Szeged⁵. The exploration of student employment is gaining increasing prominence in domestic educational research (Kocsis, 2023; Szócs, 2021); however, the phenomenon is embedded in local contexts, meaning that the study of individual universities can enrich existing knowledge with new information. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative institutional approach and in addressing the question of which factors influence students' paid employment.

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⁴ The Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania is a Hungarian-language university in Romania, operating in four Transylvanian cities: Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureș, Miercurea Ciuc and Sfântu Gheorghe. Transylvania is a multicultural region of Romania with a significant Hungarian minority and a distinct Hungarian-language higher education sector.

⁵ The University of Szeged is a higher education institution located in the city of Szeged and its region in Hungary (Csongrád-Csanád County), situated in the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plain on the banks of the River Tisza.

Student Lifestyle, Work, and Livelihood

The lifestyle of students differs significantly from the rhythm and activity structure of 'normal' society; at the same time, it can be interpreted as a balancing act between various roles and demands (Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007). Committed activities are primarily based on study-related elements, yet the expansion of employment has profoundly transformed students' lifestyles. However, time is a scarce resource (Becker, 1965); thus, a higher number of hours spent in paid work reduces the time frames available for studying (Ackerman & Gross, 2003; Darolina, 2014) and leisure activities, while also increasing the risk of attrition (Lessky & Unger, 2023). Based on both international and domestic research, it can be stated that an increasing proportion of full-time students are engaged in paid work (Curtis & Shani, 2002; Hauschildt et al., 2021; OECD, 2023; Bocsi, 2013a; Fényes, 2010; Pusztai, 2015a, 2015b; Szöcs, 2024).

The reasons are complex: on one hand, this shift can be explained by the diversification of the student body (Jancsák, 2013), as the massification of higher education has led to an increase in the proportion of non-middle-class students—for whom financing livelihood and tuition costs is less secure. On the other hand, the general rise in housing and other living costs also increases the rate of working university students (Hauschildt et al., 2018; OECD, 2023; Pusztai, 2015a, 2021). Furthermore, the motivation for employment related to future career prospects and professional development is also significant (Jackson, 2015; Szöcs, 2025). However, the university population is highly heterogeneous, and this heterogeneity is also reflected in employment patterns (Pusztai & Szabó, 2008; Pusztai, 2015a, 2015b)—for instance, the extent to which paid work aligns with a student's field of study varies by discipline. According to Hauschildt's (2024) study, this likelihood is higher in pedagogy, IT, and health sciences. Additionally, differences can be observed based on geographical and social background.

Based on data from the eighth wave of the Eurostudent research - which sampled both full-time and part-time higher education students, the student employment rate in Hungary is slightly below the international average, with 57% of students engaged in paid work during the academic term and/or the summer break. At the same time, notable differences can be observed between Hungarian and Romanian higher education students in terms of employment patterns alongside their studies, as the corresponding figure for Romania is only 36%. This suggests that combining paid employment with higher education studies is considerably more common in Hungary than in Romania. However, employment patterns during the academic year present a more nuanced picture: the proportion of students engaged in regular paid work during the study period is almost identical in the two countries (Hungary: 41.9%; Romania: 42.0%), indicating that continuous employment alongside studies is similarly prevalent in both contexts. A substantial difference emerges, however, in relation to occasional employment: while 15.0% of Hungarian students undertake occasional paid work during the academic term, this proportion is only 6.2% in Romania. Correspondingly, the proportion of students who do not engage in paid employment at all during their studies is higher in Romania (51.8%) than in Hungary (43.1%). This may suggest that more flexible, study-compatible employment opportunities—such as conventional student jobs—are more readily available in Hungary. A further important characteristic of the Hungarian data concerns disadvantaged students: among this group, 74% of Hungarian students engage in paid employment, compared to 52% in Romania, while the international average for disadvantaged students stands at 66%. This may indicate several underlying dynamics. On the one hand, disadvantaged students in Hungary may be more strongly compelled to undertake paid work due to financial necessity; on the other hand, it may also reflect the greater availability of employment opportunities for students in the Hungarian higher education context. Overall, the findings suggest that student employment is a relatively integrated component of higher education life in Hungary, whereas it appears to be less widespread in Romania. The key difference between the two countries lies not primarily in regular employment during the academic year, but rather in the availability and prevalence of flexible and occasional forms of student employment. These findings may have important implications for understanding student life strategies, financial independence, equity in higher education, and the relationship between paid work and academic performance (Eurostudent 8 database, 2024).

These comparative findings are further supported by Hungarian empirical research indicating that student employment has become an increasingly common feature of higher education participation. Several studies report rising employment rates among Hungarian university students and identify factors associated with a higher likelihood of paid work, including male gender, lower parental educational attainment, and greater financial independence from parents (Fényes & Mohácsi, 2023). Kocsis (2023) also emphasizes that working students do not constitute a homogeneous group; employment is particularly prevalent among students in

economics and information technology programmes, and among those working fewer hours, motivations beyond basic subsistence - such as professional development or gaining work experience - may also be present.

At the same time, student employment may also carry academic risks. Examining dropout intentions as a function of employment intensity, Hauschildt et al. (2024) found that among students working more than 20 hours per week, the intention to drop out reached 10% in the total international sample and 13% in the Hungarian sub-sample.

Work Values

At the same time, we may rightly suspect that motives behind the fact of employment can be explained by factors other than subsistence costs, such as students' attitudes toward work. Therefore, the concept of work values is of crucial importance for our investigation. From the perspective of the survival of any civilisation, work is of paramount importance; thus, the system of relations directed toward it forms the core of cultures (Ester, Braun & Vinken, 2006). Work values assist in the process of evaluating the results and outcomes of labour and guide individuals when choosing between various work alternatives—playing a significant role, for instance, in the process of career choice and our presence in the labour market (Bocsi, 2013a; 2015; 2025). Work values are more specific than basic human values that transcend individual life situations, yet they remain interconnected (English et al., 2018; Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999). The relationship between work values and actual employment is non-linear and non-causal, as it is shaped by both individual and broader contextual elements, such as personality traits, abilities, rational decisions, and geographical-labour market factors (Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007). Work value patterns existing prior to actual employment are shaped by labour market presence, but the system of student jobs carries an equally important causal mechanism (Bocsi, 2013b).

Assuming that work values are characteristic of specific social strata and cultures, and that the content of individual categories can be interpreted objectively, this provides scope for macro-level and comparative studies (Schwartz, 1999; Holland, 1973; Hofstede, 2008). Following Kalleberg (1977), one of the most frequently used pairs of categories is extrinsic and intrinsic work values, where the former points toward accumulation, material goods, and good working conditions, while the latter relates to self-actualisation and self-expression. In the case of high social status—and students' social status and future positions are higher than the average—the acceptance of intrinsic values tends to be more characteristic (Hirschi, 2010). Alongside extrinsic and intrinsic categories, some studies also distinguish social work values (English et al., 2018).

Upon examining university students, disciplinary affiliation can also provide an interesting background, as individual professions can be characterised by specific value spaces (Astin, 1993; Becher and Trowler, 2001). The results of value studies focusing on university students simultaneously incorporate patterns brought from home or previously fixed (Jancsák, 2012), upon which the effects of employment (Szócs, 2014; 2025) and departmental-university socialisation are layered. Research also emphasises that work values are generationally embedded; thus, current research findings yield different results compared to earlier student studies. For younger generations, items related to stimulation, self-fulfilment, and social and environmental responsibility are considered more important (Bocsi, 2024; Yang, Xie & Yu, 2026). Gender differences also frequently form the subject of investigations, pointing to variations in entrepreneurial orientation (Francesko, Nedeljkovic & Njegomir, 2022), as well as extrinsic or social dimensions—however, preferences are shaped simultaneously by background factors, of which gender is only one component (Abu-Saad & Isralowitz, 1997). Domestic research can also be found in the field of student work value studies—such as the study by Csugány et al. (2025), in the theoretical part of which the authors summarise the results of university research using Super's Work Values Inventory (where social relations, variety, and self-assertion usually rank first), and then, based on a sample of students in the field of economics, they assess a somewhat different value space that also focuses on the importance of financial aspects. Fényes et al. (2021), in a study involving students from five countries including a Hungarian sub-sample, differentiated students who were career-conscious from the beginning of their studies—who could be characterised more by extrinsic traits—from students who became conscious during their training and held more intrinsic values.

In recent decades, student employment has become an increasingly significant research topic both internationally and domestically (Hauschildt et al., 2021; Kocsis, 2024; Szócs, 2021). The interpretation of the phenomenon fundamentally follows two main approaches: the structural approach emphasises the role of social background and financial necessity, while the cultural approach highlights the significance of work-related values and attitudes (Curtis & Shani, 2002; Bocsi, 2013a; Fényes & Markos, 2022; Nghia, 2019; Pusztai, 2015a, 2015b; Szócs, 2021).

The aim of the present study is to explore whether student employment and work values (separately) can be interpreted more through individual value orientations or rather along structural factors—particularly family background and the institutional environment

Methods

Data Collection, Sample Description, and Analytical Framework

The empirical basis of our study consists of questionnaire-based data collection conducted in 2024 among full-time students at two Hungarian-language higher education institutions operating in different Central European countries: Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania⁶ and the University of Szeged⁷.

The research is based on non-probability sampling, with the sample formed through voluntary student participation. Nevertheless, the large sample size and the comparability of the two institutions allow for an investigation into the mechanisms underlying student employment. Students were informed of the opportunity to participate through multiple channels (social media, university communication platforms). The measurement instruments are similar in several respects, focusing on specific value preferences of youth, and are suitable for comparative analysis based on the variables examined in this study.

During the preparatory phase of the databases, we identified the primary variables suitable for comparison⁸. The independent variables included gender, work values, the occurrence of employment alongside studies, parental educational attainment, and the financial status of the family background, while employment alongside studies was designated as the dependent variable. We did not examine the field of study, as it was an open-ended question in one database, and in the other, the question was about faculty affiliation. Missing and distorted data were removed, followed by the harmonisation of variable names and measurement scales (for instance, five-point work value scales were recoded into four-point scales to ensure comparability). Subsequently, a work value index was constructed based on the rescaled mean scores of the 18 work value items, transformed to a common 0–1 range. Additional variables were also recoded: employment status was operationalised as a dichotomous variable, and parental educational attainment was harmonised across the two datasets. Following variable harmonisation, the two databases were merged, and the internal consistency of the work value index was assessed, yielding satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83). Finally, an institutional affiliation variable was created to enable comparative analysis (1 = SZTE, 2 = Sapientia EMTE). Table 1 presents the sample sizes for the two institutional sub-samples and the merged database.

Table 1. Sample sizes of institutional sub-samples and the merged sample.

Institution	N	%
SZTE	1037	49.9
SAPIENTIA EMTE	1041	50.1
Total	2078	100

Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

Sample Characteristics

In the database (N=2078), the proportion of males was 37.6%, while females accounted for 62.4%. Maternal educational attainment showed a more favourable profile than paternal attainment (fathers: primary – 26.2%, secondary – 41.1%, degree holders – 31.7%; mothers or stepmothers: primary – 18.5%, secondary – 41.7%,

⁶ SAPIENTIA EMTE Research 2024, Principal Investigator: Dr Andor Szócs; the research was supported by the Hungarian State Eötvös Fellowship postdoctoral grant.

⁷ SZTE Research 2024, Principal Investigator: Dr habil. Csaba Jancsák. The research was funded by the IKIKK Interdisciplinary Family R&D Centre Research Group, University of Szeged.

⁸ Gender: male=1, female=2; work values: 1=not at all important, 2=not important, 3=important, 4=very important (high potential earnings, job security, good opportunities for career advancement, work should be interesting, positive workplace atmosphere, work should provide a sense of achievement, being able to meet people, work should be useful to society, work should involve responsibility, work should not be strenuous, being able to make most decisions independently, work should provide the opportunity to help others, sufficient time for family alongside work, work should be active and varied, being able to work as part of a team, workplace should be close to home, having plenty of leisure time, workplace should be family-friendly); parents' educational attainment: 1=primary or vocational, 2=secondary (GCE/A-level, NVQ), 3=higher education (degree, PhD); socio-economic status of family background: 1=disadvantaged, 2=average, 3=favourable; employment alongside studies: 0=no, 1=yes.

degree holders – 39.2%). Regarding financial status, 2.3% of students identified their situation as disadvantaged, 56.6% as average, and 41.1% as favourable⁹. The categories for financial status were subsequently merged into two values to ensure adequate sample sizes. Comparing the two institutions using chi-square statistics, it can be stated that women are overrepresented in the University of Szeged sample ($\chi^2(1, N = 2077) = 117.331, p < .001$). In terms of paternal educational attainment, primary and higher education degrees are more frequent at Sapientia, while secondary education is more prevalent at SZTE ($\chi^2(2, N = 2056) = 276.273, p < .001$). Regarding mothers, the cell frequencies for primary and secondary education are higher than expected in the Transylvanian sub-sample, while degree holders are more frequent in Szeged ($\chi^2(2, N = 2065) = 307.782, p < .001$). The perception of financial status is also specific: more SZTE students fall into the 'average' cell, while Transylvanian students are overrepresented in the 'disadvantaged' and 'favourable' categories ($\chi^2(2, N = 2075) = 77.421, p < .001$).

Results

The proportion of employment alongside university studies is 43% in the total sample. Examining this value using chi-square statistics reveals a significant difference between the two sub-samples ($\chi^2(1, N = 2050) = 157.448, p < .001$), with considerably higher values obtained for the Transylvanian students (Sapientia – 56.5%, SZTE – 29%)¹⁰.

The profile of work values is presented in Table 2. It can be observed from the table that work values are dominated by convenience and intrinsic elements; career advancement and high earnings occupy the middle ground, while social elements are positioned at the end of the list.

Table 2. Means of work values in the merged sample (converted to a 0–1 scale, 1 signs the greater importance)

	Mean	SD
Work should not be strenuous	0.619	0.270
Work should involve responsibility	0.684	0.240
Being able to work as part of a team	0.685	0.275
Being able to make most decisions independently	0.691	0.244
Being able to meet people	0.743	0.238
Work should provide the opportunity to help others	0.749	0.251
Good opportunities for career advancement	0.750	0.252
Having plenty of leisure time	0.756	0.222
Workplace should be close to home	0.758	0.240
Work should be varied	0.763	0.227
Work should be useful to society	0.764	0.241
Workplace should be family-friendly	0.789	0.232
High potential earnings	0.792	0.202
Work should provide a sense of achievement	0.796	0.239
Job security	0.796	0.214
Work should be interesting	0.800	0.219
Positive workplace atmosphere	0.856	0.191
Sufficient time for family alongside work	0.899	0.181

Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

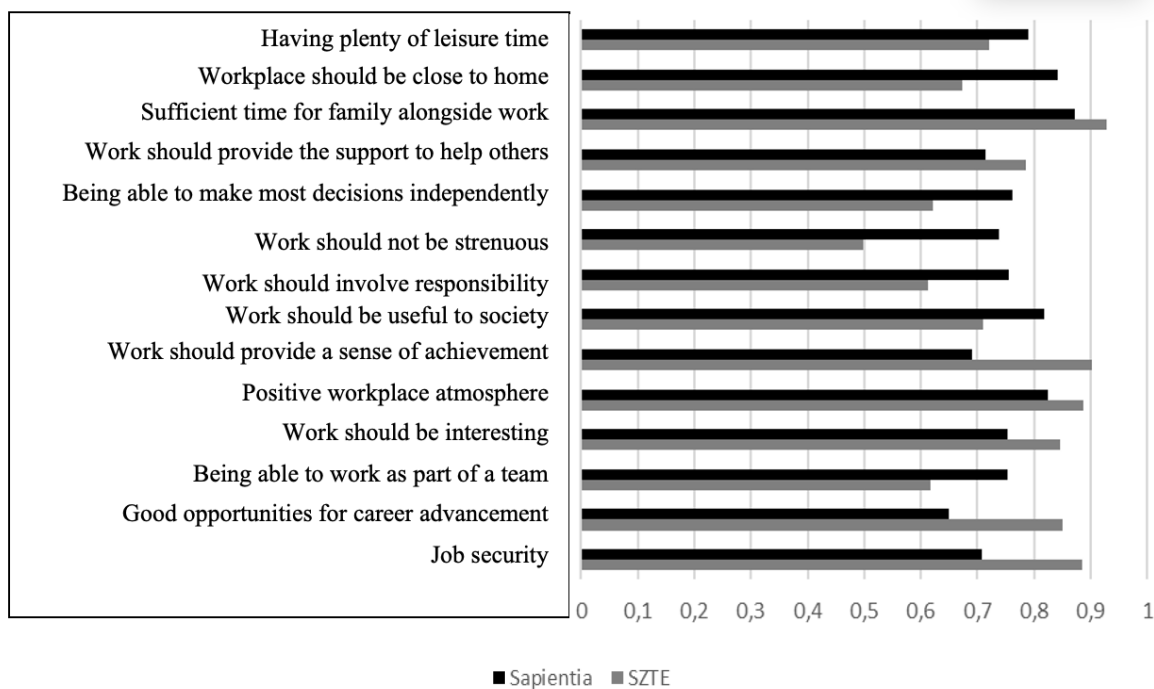
We also examined work values by comparing the two institutions using analysis of variance. Significant differences were found for almost all items (analysis of variance, ANOVA, $p < .05$), with the exceptions of

⁹ Percentages do not include missing data.

¹⁰ In addition to the binary variable (no/yes), paid employment was also examined according to the frequency of work (summer/occasional and regular employment). The results show that among students engaged in paid work, summer/occasional employment is most characteristic (SAPI: 76%, SZTE: 35%), while the rate of regular paid employment is 37% for Sapientia EMTE students and 23% for SZTE students. However, these variables are primarily suitable for descriptive comparison; their inclusion in more complex statistical models faces methodological constraints due to differing measurement logics.

'high potential earnings', 'work should be varied', 'being able to meet people', and 'workplace should be family-friendly'. These differences are presented in Figure 1. The work value domains outlined in the theoretical framework cannot be clearly attributed to one or the other sub-sample; however, job security and career advancement received higher scores at the University of Szeged.

Figure 1. Significant differences in the mean values of work value items between University of Szeged and Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania students (significant correlations)



Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

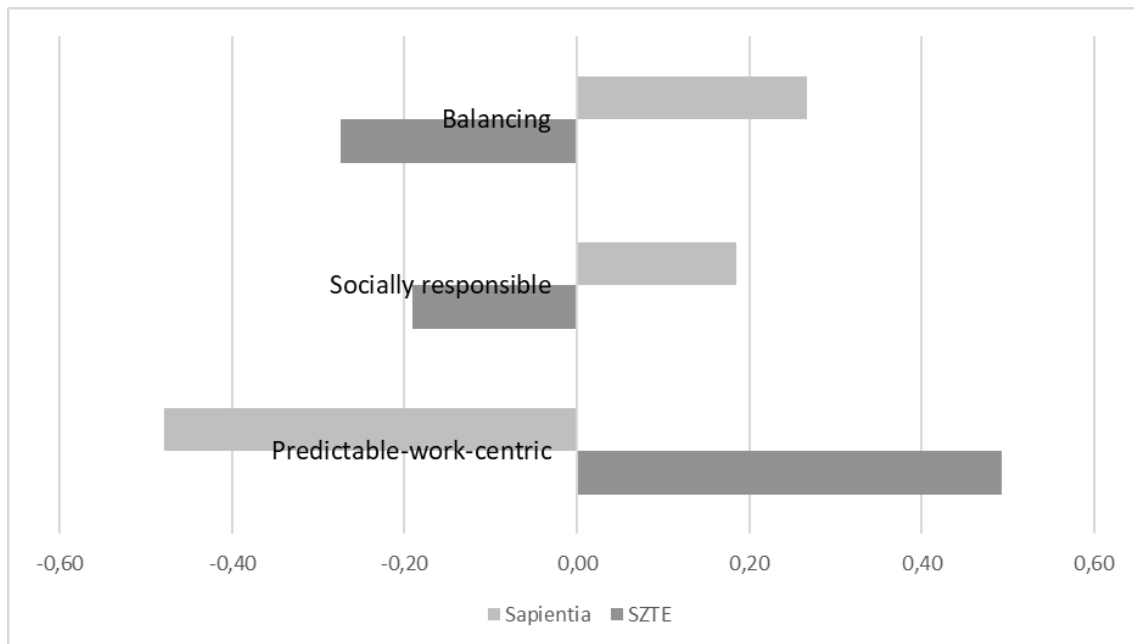
We identified factors using the work value items (Table 3). We chose the technique of factor analysis to explore latent structures in the field of work values. Using the Maximum Likelihood method with Varimax rotation, we identified three factors with eigenvalues greater than one. At the end of the procedure, 12 items were retained. The communality of each item exceeded 0.25. The total variance explained was 38.304% (which exceeds the minimum criterion of 33% recommended according to Barna & Székelyi (2004)), and the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test value was 0.805. The first factor ('predictable-work-centric') features a mix of extrinsic and intrinsic traits, all of which relate to the internal environment and atmosphere of the workplace. The second factor ('socially responsible') is composed of items related to social commitment, while the profile of the 'balancing' factor is easily interpretable (workplace close to home, plenty of leisure time, and a family-friendly workplace).

Table 3. Factor loadings of work values in the merged database

	Predictable-work-centric	Socially responsible	Balancing
Job security	.511	.038	.087
Good opportunities for career advancement	.585	.014	.045
Work should be interesting	.543	.299	.085
Positive workplace atmosphere	.487	.237	.167
Work should provide a sense of achievement	.741	.143	-.004
Being able to meet people	.237	.416	.174
Work should be useful to society	.092	.667	.198
Work should involve responsibility	-.009	.543	.211
Work should provide the opportunity to help others	.352	.490	-.018
Workplace should be close to home	-.031	.188	.746
Having plenty of leisure time	.116	.117	.590
Workplace should be family-friendly	.251	.259	.382

Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

Examining the values of the three factors by institution (analysis of variance, ANOVA, $p < 0.05$), we find that the first factor is more characteristic of students at SZTE, while the second and third factors are more prevalent among Sapientia students (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Institutional comparison of work value factors

Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

In the final step of our analysis, we performed a binary logistic regression model, with employment alongside university studies as the dependent variable. The model consisted of three steps: first, the background variables were included; in the second step, the work value factors; and in the third step, the dichotomous variable for the institutions (Table 4). The third step of the model—the inclusion of the institution—altered the previous correlations; therefore, a collinearity test was conducted. Based on the collinearity test (VIF = 1.02–1.47), no multicollinearity was present among the explanatory variables.

Table 4. The system of background factors increasing the likelihood of employment alongside university studies

	Step 1.		Step 2.		Step 3	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (0= female, 1= male)	.063	1.191	.430	1.080	.658	.956
<i>Paternal education (dummy, ref: secondary)</i>						
Primary	.086	1.230	.089	1.235	.322	1.135
Degree	.821	1.027	.285	1.139	.033	1.308
<i>Maternal education (dummy, ref: secondary)</i>						
Primary	.006	1.437	.012	1.411	.117	1.246
Degree	<.001	.690	.008	.734	.162	.845
Financial status (0= disadvantaged or average, 1= favourable)	.021	1.239	.069	1.189	.874	1.016
Predictable-work-centric value factor			<.001	.821	.003	1.249
Socially responsible value factor			<.001	1.374	.099	1.119
Balancing value factor			.022	1.146	.265	.930
Institution (0= Sapientia, 1= SZTE)					<.001	.260
Constant		-.432		-.435		.267
Explanatory power (Nagelkerke R ²)		0.038		0.065		0.119

Source: SAPI 2024, SZTE 2024 research, authors' own construction.

In the first step, maternal primary education increased the likelihood of student employment, while a maternal degree decreased it. A weaker but significant effect was associated with financial status (with a higher likelihood of employment in the case of a favourable status). In the second step, the effect of maternal education remained, the effect of financial status disappeared, and all work value factors possessed explanatory power. By including institutional affiliation, the explanatory power of the model increased further; in the final step, paternal degree, the predictable-work-centric factor, the socially responsible factor, and institutional affiliation all had an effect. For students attending SZTE, the likelihood of employment was lower, while the other three variables exerted a positive influence.

Discussion

Based on the data obtained, it can be stated that the frequency of employment is higher in the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania sub-sample than in that of the University of Szeged (56.5% and 29% – R1). Among the possible explanations, we may note that the overall rate of student employment is higher in Romania (Hauschildt, 2024); furthermore, the student population of Sapientia EMTE is far smaller than the full-time student body of SZTE, and its university faculties are located in four distinct geographical environments (cities). Consequently, individual faculties can achieve much higher levels of student engagement regarding any student-related programme or opportunity, including the efficiency of their career offices. The institutional embeddedness of students, their connections, and their presence in university life are arguably more pronounced than in the case of SZTE, which has a significantly larger student population. In addition, this difference can naturally be explained by numerous other elements that could not be explored in our research. These may include differing job opportunities, the organisational structure of student work opportunities, the activity of career offices, and the specific characteristics of the university and urban environments. A more thorough investigation of these factors would require local studies of a qualitative nature.

Based on individual items of work values, we find a mixed profile; the previously cited intrinsic, extrinsic, and social dimensions are not positioned in isolation but appear as a blend. Work-life balance, a positive workplace atmosphere, and the interesting nature of work are of paramount importance. High earnings and the intention to provide social assistance are positioned somewhat lower, while the opportunity for advancement ranks only 13th. The analysis of the factors also reveals a mixed pattern. The predictable-work-centric factor includes both extrinsic (job security, career) and intrinsic (interesting work) traits—the common element perhaps being that the clustered items focus on the workplace and the work itself in terms of location and objective. In the case of the socially responsible factor, the items extend beyond the boundaries of the workplace—primarily in the dimension of social utility. The balancing factor clearly demonstrates the priority

of family and private life. While the item-by-item comparison did not yield a specific profile, the investigation of the two institutions along the factors showed more concrete and interpretable results. For the Szeged sub-sample, the predictable-work-centric factor received significantly higher scores, while for the Transylvanian students, the socially responsible and balancing factors were more prominent. A previous study compared the work values of Romanian, Romanian-Hungarian, and Hungarian university sub-samples (Bocsi, 2015) and found that the extrinsic factor was of greater importance in the Hungarian sub-sample. Müller-Fábián (2013) conducted a comparative Romanian-Hungarian analysis focusing on work values at the Babeş-Bolyai University and concluded that the role of altruism is more important for the minority Hungarian sub-sample—a result that can be paralleled with the acceptance of the socially responsible factor. Overall, social and helping elements can be linked to minority status, just as family and time spent with family reflect a more traditional picture. Based on Hofstede's research, it can also be stated that in the case of Romania, present-orientation is stronger, which foreshadows the importance of leisure time (II).

The main lesson of the regression model is that all three groups of variables or individual variables showed a significant correlation with the fact of employment (R2, R3, R4), and the second (work values) and third steps (institutional affiliation) further increased the explanatory power of our model. The likelihood of student employment increased if the father was a degree holder, and employment was shaped by the predictable-work-centric and socially responsible orientations among the work value factors. As seen previously, these factors pertained to the workplace environment and the intrinsic value of work (as opposed to the items seated on the balancing factor). Regarding gender and financial status, no significant correlation was found. This latter finding is an important result, as it suggests that student employment is not motivated purely by financial necessity. This partly contradicts the often implicit assumption that student employment stems primarily from financial pressure. Although research results generally suggest that scarcer resources induce employment, there are also findings where better resources (e.g., higher paternal cultural capital) indirectly result in more conscious career building (Mooi-Reci, Yaish & Craig, 2025). Our research draws attention to the fact that employment is shaped by complex explanatory variables that should not be reduced solely to social background. The significant effect of the institutional variable suggests that local studies can reveal specific, unique patterns embedded in the characteristics of the institutions and their respective cities.

Limitations

The limitations of our analysis include the sampling method, as the students who completed the questionnaire do not constitute a representative sample of the institutions; however, the large sample sizes effectively demonstrate work value and employment trends at the institutional level. Several variables important for the analysis could not be included—such as the field of study variable. During the merging process, the content of certain variables might not be entirely equivalent due to the differing social contexts (e.g., the perception of financial status). Regarding employment, a more comprehensive picture could have been obtained if its alignment with the student's major had also been included in the analysis.

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