Közelkép – tanulmányok

Values of Hungarian Society at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s

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Abstract
This paper examines the value structure of Hungarian society at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s, based on data from the 9th and 10th waves of the European Social Survey, interpreted through the theoretical framework of Shalom H. Schwartz (2006, 2012). The analysis reveals that, at the aggregate level, collectivistic values with a strong social focus according to Schwartz's (2012) theory – particularly Security, Benevolence, and Universalism – occupy the highest positions in the Hungarian value hierarchy. At the same time, the relatively small differences between value means suggest the presence of value pluralism in society. To further investigate this phenomenon, cluster analysis was applied, identifying five value-based respondent groups: Indecisive, Open and Self-Directed, Value-Affirming, Collectivist, and Anomic. The findings also suggest that Hungarian society is characterized by the coexistence of multiple value systems. Socio-demographic analysis shows that the value-based clusters differ significantly in terms of age, education, settlement type, and subjective financial status.

Keywords
value systems, value pluralism, Schwartz's value theory, cluster analysis, Hungarian society, European Social Survey

Absztrakt
A magyar társadalom értékei a 2010-es és 2020-as évek fordulóján
A tanulmány a magyar társadalom értékstruktúráját vizsgálja a 2010-es és 2020-as évek fordulóján, a European Social Survey 9. és 10. hullámának adatai alapján, Shalom H. Schwartz (2006, 2012) értékelméleti keretrendszerét alkalmazva. Az elemzés eredményei azt mutatják, hogy aggregált szinten a Schwartz (2012) által társas fókuszúnak tekintett kollektivista értékek – különösen a biztonság, a jóindulat és az univerzalizmus – foglalják el a legmagasabb helyeket a magyar értékhierarchiában. Ugyanakkor az egyes értékek átlagai közötti viszonylag csekély különbségek az értékpluralizmus jelenlétére utalnak a társadalomban. E jelenség mélyebb feltárása érdekében klaszterelemzés készült, amely öt értékalapú válaszadói csoportot azonosított: döntésképtelen (Indecisive), nyitott és önirányított (Open and Self-Directed),

Javasolt hivatkozás: Benedek Dudik (2026): Values of Hungarian Society at the Turn of the 2010s… *Metszetek Társadalomtudományi Folyóirat,* 15(1): 46–71. https://doi.org/10.18392/metsz/2026/1/3

értékorientált (Value-Affirming), kollektivista (Collectivist) és anómikus (Anomic). Az eredmények arra utalnak, hogy a magyar társadalmat több, egymás mellett létező értékrendszer jellemzi. A szociodemográfiai elemzés azt is kimutatta, hogy az értékalapú klaszterek szignifikánsan különböznek egymástól életkor, iskolai végzettség, településtípus és szubjektív anyagi helyzet tekintetében.

Kulcsszavak
értékrendszerek, értékpluralizmus, Schwartz értékelmélete, klaszterelemzés, magyar társadalom, European Social Survey (ESS)

Introduction

This study explores the socio-psychological values of Hungarian society at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s. Values – both at the individual and social level – serve as the foundation of our actions, provide motivational force, and define goals, thereby influencing our fundamental decision-making processes. In doing so, they offer valuable insights for interpreting social trends and events.

Value research has been a prominent and long-standing field within both sociology and social psychology for several decades (Grünhut et al. 2019). The significance of values and their study can be captured – among other things – in their ability to make visible the guiding principles underlying human behavior, decisions, attitudes, and actions. Understanding values brings us closer to identifying the driving forces of our society, while at the same time holding a mirror up to individuals and to society as a whole.

Human communities and societies, however, are not homogeneous, monolithic structures; rather, individuals with diverse beliefs and backgrounds coexist within them simultaneously. For this reason, it can be assumed that societal value systems are characterized by fragmentation, and that no single universal, dominant value orientation necessarily prevails. In national value hierarchies, different value systems are likely to be represented; thus, in a nationwide value survey, even conflicting values may appear with nearly equal strength. This is especially the case the more divided a society is in terms of its value system (Kapitány – Kapitány 2012:109).

The paper aims to gain a more precise understanding of Hungarian society and, more specifically, of the (sub)value systems that coexist simultaneously alongside one another.

Values constitute fundamental frameworks guiding human behavior and decision-making, while also serving as important drivers of social behavior. Existing value differences may contribute to social tensions and political polarization. By identifying value-based clusters, the study seeks to uncover the underlying divisions and patterns of value pluralism within Hungarian society that may remain hidden when only broader value patterns are considered. Beyond contributing to the understanding of contemporary Hungarian society, the findings also provide a basis for future international comparative research on value structures and value-based social differences.

This research is based on the large-sample, representative surveys of the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS data collection waves provide a solid foundation for this analysis: on the one hand, value measurements have been included in every survey since 2002, making them available over a longer time span and comparable across waves; on the other hand, each wave has included a Hungarian sample.

Based on these considerations, the following research questions and objectives are proposed in this study:

(1) to examine the importance and hierarchy of Schwartzian values in Hungary;
(2) to identify and characterize groups of individuals based on their value preferences;
(3) to explore the socio-demographic characteristics of these value-based groups.

Values – Conceptual Definition

According to sociological definitions, "values are cultural principles which, at the individual level, represent cognitive manifestations of motivations related to desired states; from these it can be inferred what the individual – or, more broadly, the community – considers attainable, important, and good" (Andorka 2006:402).

Values thus also play an integrative role for groups, strata, and social classes, enabling the collective interpretation of the world around us (Csepeli 2001:132). In this way, they constitute indispensable components of both social and personal integration. The motivating and orienting force of values becomes evident: they appear to shape our general beliefs, attitudes, and norms, and through these, influence our actions (Spates 1983).

The definition also suggests that values are closely related to motivation. In the context of value theories, particular importance is attributed to Self-Determination Theory, which focuses on motivation and describes the driving forces of human behavior, as well as the internal and external mechanisms underlying actions (Ryan – Deci 2000). Although values play an important role in shaping behavior, values are not the sole determinants of behavior. Behavior and our actions are typically influenced by multiple values and motivations that interact with one another (Ságvári 2009).

Consequently, the study of value structures extends beyond the description of individual preferences, as basic values may help explain and predict social attitudes, behavioral patterns, and broader societal developments (Csák – Fényes 2025).

Schwartz's value system

The study of values has a history spanning several decades. Over this time, multiple complementary as well as competing theories have emerged in the "market" of value research.

The diversity of theories enables the development of integrative concepts, and Schwartz's approach emerged partly from this integrative ambition. His approach seeks to synthesize and reflect on the most important axiological positions of the preceding decades, including the work of Kluckhohn (1951), Morris (1956), Allport (1961), Rokeach (1973), and Inglehart (1997).

Shalom H. Schwartz (1992, 2006, 2012) aimed to map and describe culture-independent, universal basic values in his work. In characterizing human value orientations, he sought to identify fundamental values that differ in terms of motivation and are recognized across all human cultures.

My research is based on the large-sample, representative surveys of the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS data collection waves provide a stable foundation for my analysis, as value measurements based on the Shalom H. Schwartz framework have been included in every survey since 2002.

Given the theory's widespread use, methodological continuity, and resulting comparability, it is the most appropriate framework for the aims of this research. The choice of the Schwartzian approach is further supported by the fact that, in the 2020s, it represents the dominant paradigm in the field of value research (Schwartz – Cieciuch 2022).

The introduction to Schwartz's Value System

Shalom H. Schwartz (2012) identifies six main characteristics of values in his theory:

1. Values are beliefs that, when activated, become infused with feeling. They are not governed purely by rationality but are also linked to moral and emotional dimensions.
2. Values always refer to desirable goals to be attained that motivate action and encourage the pursuit of these goals.
3. Values transcend specific actions and situations. This characteristic makes it possible to distinguish values from norms and attitudes, which are typically linked to specific actions, objects, or situations.
4. Values serve as standards or criteria. They guide actions and shape our relationship to our environment, helping us determine what is good or bad, and what should be pursued or avoided. Despite this, the influence of values on everyday decision-making is rarely conscious. They usually become explicit when we are weighing something – when the consequences of a potential action or event conflict with another value that is important to us.
5. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. Intrapersonal values are organized into a hierarchy of relative importance, which determines the person's overall value system. This hierarchical feature distinguishes values from norms and attitudes.
6. The relative importance of multiple values guides action. Any given attitude or behavior typically involves multiple values; that is, actions are always shaped by the simultaneous influence of several values.

The ten basic values of the theory, along with their defining dimensions as formulated by Shalom H. Schwartz (2012), are as follows:

1. **Self-Direction**: It derives from the desire for independence and autonomy. It is characterized by independent thought and action, as well as by creativity and exploration.
2. **Stimulation**: This value derives from the need for variety and stimulation. Its motivation lies in the pursuit of novelty, excitement, and challenge. This need is likely related to the motivations underlying self-direction values (cf. Deci 1975).
3. **Hedonism**: It derives from organismic needs and the pleasure associated with their satisfaction.
4. **Achievement**: This value is related to the attainment, approval, and reward of individual and social goals. Its defining feature is the pursuit of personal success within the framework of socially accepted norms.
5. **Power**: The functioning of social institutions requires a certain degree of status differentiation (Parsons 1951). Accordingly, the core aim of the value of power is the attainment of social status, prestige, control, and dominance over people and resources. It includes aspirations for authority, wealth, and control.
6. **Security**: The primary goal of this value is the achievement of safety, harmony, and stability of society, relationships, and the self. The value of security stems from basic individual and group needs for safety (cf. Kluckhohn 1951; Maslow 1965). Some security values primarily serve individual interests (e.g., cleanliness), while others serve broader group interests (e.g., national security).
7. **Conformity**: It is characterized by adherence to social expectations and norms. Under this value, individuals restrain impulses and behaviors that could disrupt smooth group functioning. Key aspects include self-discipline, loyalty, responsibility, and respect.
8. **Tradition**: This value is expressed in the preservation and transmission of traditions, collective knowledge, beliefs, and experiences developed and maintained by groups. Its primary sources are typically culture or religion.
9. **Benevolence**: It derives from the need for smooth group functioning (cf. Kluckhohn, 1951) and the need for belonging (cf. Maslow 1965). It is most strongly expressed within the family and primary relationships. This value emphasizes concern for the well-being of others, aiming to preserve and enhance the welfare of those with whom one has close, in-group relations.
10. **Universalism**: This value can be traced back to the need to promote and preserve the well-being of all people, societies, and the natural environment, rooted in fundamental survival needs. It differs from the in-group focus of benevolence. Universalism is characterized by ideals such as tolerance, understanding, solidarity, and the protection of human and environmental well-being.

The Structure of Value Relations

Schwartz (2012) also elaborates the structure of the dynamic relationships among values. A key foundation of the proposed value structure is that any action aimed at achieving a particular value has consequences that conflict with certain values while being congruent with others. Consequently, some values are closely related in terms of goals and motivation, whereas others are in opposition to one another.

To capture these interactions, Schwartz (2012) maps the ten basic values onto two bipolar dimensions or axes, which are intended to reveal the higher-order meanings of values. On the first axis, the values of self-direction and stimulation express Openness to Change. In contrast, the values of security, conformity, and tradition represent Conservation, reflecting a more society-centered, preserving orientation.

On the second axis, the self-focused values of power and achievement are associated with the Self-Enhancement pole, emphasizing personal success and self-advancement. In the opposite direction of this dimension, benevolence and universalism are linked to the Self-Transcendence pole, reflecting a social focus and concern for others.

Thus, the two bipolar axes position all values at one of their poles, with the exception of hedonism, which Schwartz does not assign unambiguously to a single

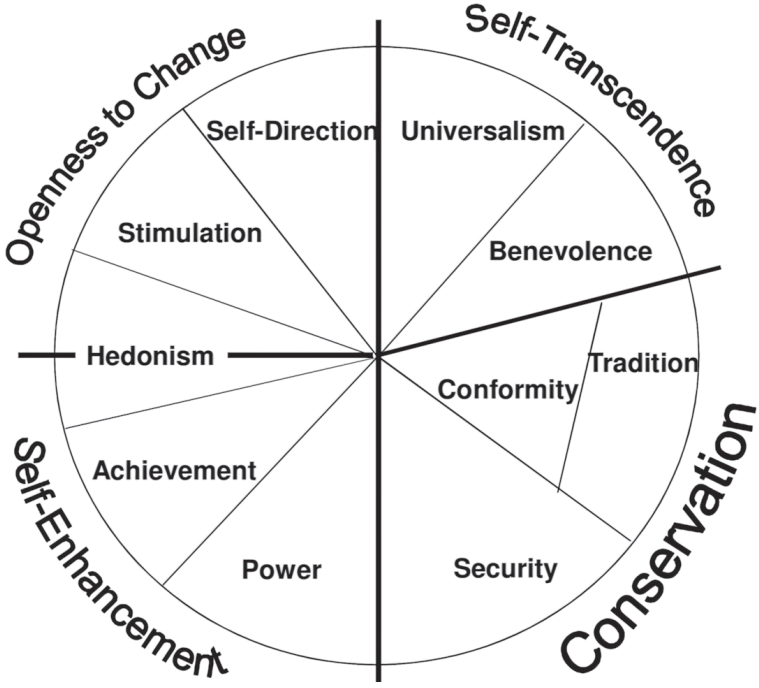

Figure 1: Theoretical model of relations among ten motivational types of value

Source: Schwartz (2012: 9)

dimension. Hedonism contains elements of both Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement.

Schwartz (2012) represents the values in his theory and the relationships among them in a circular structure, in which the bipolar axes are also displayed (Figure 1). This circular representation is of central importance to the theory, as it enables the expression of the relationships between values.

Although the theory distinguishes ten values, it assumes that they form a continuum of interrelated motivations. This motivational continuum gives rise to the circular structure.

Measuring Value Priorities

The first instrument for measuring values based on Schwartz's theory, the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), was introduced in the early 1990s. Later, as an alternative, the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) was developed to measure the ten basic values, and it is also used by the European Social Survey (ESS) in its data collection waves.

Based on this, it should be emphasized that while Schwartz's theory of values is grounded in a social psychological perspective, its methodological approach is characterized by large-sample, comparative designs and the use of quantitative techniques (Bodor et al. 2022: 29).

Schwartz (2012) also proposed a framework for describing the dynamics of relationships among values. In his theory, certain values are in conflict with one another (e.g., benevolence and power), while others are compatible (e.g., conformity and security); however, values are structured in a similar way across culturally diverse groups. According to the theory, this suggests that human motivation has a universal organizing principle.

Although the nature and structure of values may be universal, individuals and groups differ significantly in the relative importance they assign to them. This implies that individuals and groups possess different "priorities" and "hierarchical arrangements." Thus, the relative importance of shared basic values is determined

Regulating how one expresses personal interests & characteristics **Personal Focus** ↕	***Self-Enhancement*** Achievement Power	***Openness to Change*** Hedonism Stimulation Self-Direction
Social Focus ↕ Regulating how one relates socially to others and affects them	***Conservation*** Security Conformity Tradition	***Self-Transcendence*** Universalism Benevolence

Figure 2: Dynamic underpinnings of the universal value structure

Source: Schwartz (2006: 49)

individually and varies from person to person, making us distinct, heterogeneous individuals (Schwartz 2012).

Schwartz (2006) further notes that the first five values in the theory – self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power – are more individualistic and self-focused, whereas the second five values – security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism – carry a more collectivistic, society-focused meaning (Figure 2).

Research Questions

The overarching aim of this study is to provide a value-based understanding of Hungarian society in the early twenty-first century. The primary research question concerns the dominant values present in Hungarian society at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s.

In addressing this question, the study examines not only the hierarchy of values – the relative ordering of values within the value system – but also the value preferences of the population, understood as the relative importance assigned to individual values. Accordingly, both the structure and the perceived importance of values are analyzed and interpreted.

At the same time, societies are unlikely to be characterized by a single dominant value orientation. Therefore, if indications of value pluralism can be identified, an additional objective of the study is to investigate value-based subgroups within the population through the recognition and analysis of value clusters.

Thus, the paper also seeks to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of value-based subgroups of Hungarians as a secondary aim of the research.

A third research question concerns the relationship between the value structure of Hungarian society and the pan-cultural value structure proposed by Schwartz and Bardi (2001). More specifically, the study strives to identify similarities and differences in the hierarchy of values, focusing on the relative positions occupied by individual values within the overall value system.

Methodology

The study employs a quantitative secondary data analysis approach to investigate the value system of the Hungarian population. This approach relies on the use of existing datasets and enables the systematic reanalysis of previously collected data from a new analytical perspective.

The empirical analysis is based on publicly available value-related data from the European Social Survey (ESS), a large-scale, representative cross-national survey conducted since 2002. The measurement instrument applied is the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), which is grounded in Schwartz's theory of basic human values.

Since societies are unlikely to be characterized by a single dominant value orientation, the analysis also strives to identify distinct groups of individuals with differing value preferences. To this end, cluster analysis is employed to uncover value-based subgroups within the population. In a subsequent step, cross-tabulation analyses are used to explore the characteristics and socio-demographic characteristics associated with cluster membership.

The study utilizes data from the 9th and 10th waves of the European Social Survey (ESS), collected at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s. The two survey waves are combined to increase the number of respondents, thereby providing a more precise representation of Hungarian society and enhancing the statistical robustness of the analyses. Since the objective of the study is not to investigate temporal change but rather to provide a comprehensive picture of the value structure of Hungarian society during this period, the combined dataset is treated as representing a broader socio-historical period rather than two distinct points in time. This approach is further justified by the relative stability of basic human values over time (Csepeli 2001; Ságvári 2009) and improves the reliability of the cluster analysis by reducing the likelihood that smaller value-based groups remain underrepresented.

Pan-Cultural Values Across Societies

The pan-cultural value hierarchy was established empirically through the analysis of samples drawn from 56 countries (Schwartz – Bardi 2001). Based on their findings, the ten universal values can be arranged in the following order of importance. The three highest-ranked values are benevolence, self-direction, and universalism. The middle section of the hierarchy is occupied by security, conformity, achievement, and hedonism. The lowest-ranked positions are held by stimulation, tradition, and power.

To explain the observed pan-cultural value hierarchy, Schwartz and Bardi (2001) identify three fundamental requirements of human nature and social functioning. The authors argue that these requirements, ranked according to their relative importance, provide a particularly relevant framework for understanding the universal ordering of values observed across societies.

1. The most important requirement is the promotion and maintenance of cooperative and supportive relationships among members of primary groups. Without such relationships, group life would be characterized by conflict, thereby threatening the group's survival. Consequently, the most critical focus of value transmission is the development of commitment to positive interpersonal relationships, identification with the group, and loyalty toward its members.
2. Positive social relationships alone, however, are insufficient to ensure the survival and well-being of societies, groups, and their members. Individuals must also be motivated to invest time, physical effort, and intellectual

resources in productive work, problem-solving, and the generation of new ideas and technical innovations.
3. To a certain extent, the satisfaction of self-oriented needs and desires is also necessary. The suppression of self-oriented aspirations may lead to frustration and a reduced willingness to contribute to collective goals. Therefore, from a societal perspective, it is important to legitimize self-oriented behavior to an extent that does not undermine the interests of the group.

Compared to the pan-cultural value hierarchy, substantial differences can be observed in the Hungarian data. These differences are discussed in the following section.

Values of Hungarian Society at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s

In this section, the value structure of Hungarian society from the 9th (2018) and 10th (2020) waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) is examined and interpreted. Table 1 presents not only the ranking of values measured by the European Social Survey, but also the number of respondents (N), the mean importance scores, and the standard deviations (Std. Deviation). In addition, it is indicated whether a given value is classified, according to Schwartz's framework (2006, 2012), as a society-focused, collectivistic value or a self-focused, individualistic value.

In analyzing the data in the table, it is necessary to consider both the rankings and the mean scores simultaneously (Schwartz – Bardi 2001). The standard deviation values further expand the interpretive framework. The means presented in the table are based on a scale ranging from 1 to 6, where 1 represents the lowest level of agreement, and 6 indicates the highest level of agreement – thus the perceived importance of the given value.[1]

To assess the comparability of the ESS 9 and ESS 10 datasets, independent-samples t-tests and effect size calculations were performed for all ten Schwartz values. Although statistically significant differences were identified for nine values, the corresponding effect sizes were uniformly small (Cohen's *d* ranging from 0.084 to 0.302), with self-direction showing virtually no difference between the two waves ($d = 0.002$), and only three values reaching the threshold typically interpreted as a small effect ($d > 0.2$). These results indicate a high degree of stability in the value structure of the Hungarian population and support the methodological decision to merge the two survey waves for subsequent analyses.

[1] In the original ESS analyses, lower scores indicate stronger identification with the values; however, in the present analysis, the scores were reverse-coded to facilitate easier and more intuitive interpretation.

Table 1. Values of Hungarian Society at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s

ESS 9–10: Hungarian sample			
Values	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Security (social focus)	3476	4.74	0.94
Benevolence (social focus)	3472	4.66	0.89
Universalism (social focus)	3477	4.54	0.81
Self-Direction (personal focus)	3476	4.47	0.92
Hedonism (personal focus)	3474	4.27	0.98
Tradition (social focus)	3473	4.22	0.94
Achievement (personal focus)	3475	4.05	1.09
Conformity (social focus)	3476	4.05	0.94
Power (personal focus)	3477	3.66	1.04
Stimulation (personal focus)	3476	3.58	1.12

Source: Edited by the author

In the Hungarian sample, a total of 3,459 valid responses were received to the value-focused questions of the ESS 9th and 10th waves, of which 1,643 originated from the 2018 data collection and 1,816 from the 2020 data collection. Within the sample, the proportion of the working-age population – defined as respondents aged 65 or younger – is 73.9%.

At the turn of the 2010s and 2020s, the values considered most important by the overall population belong to the collectivistic (social focus) category. The highest-ranked individualistic (personal focus) value is Self-Direction, which appears in fourth place. It can also be observed that the difference between the mean scores of the top four values is approximately three-tenths (0.3) on the six-point scale of Schwartzian values, indicating a strong clustering of values at the top of the ranking.

These are followed by Hedonism (4.27) and Tradition (4.22), with nearly identical mean scores. Slightly behind them, but still with very similar levels of support, are Achievement (4.05) and Conformity (4.0486 ≈ 4.05). The last two positions in the value ranking are occupied by Power and Stimulation.

Beyond the ranking itself, a dominance of collectivistic values can be observed in the first half of the table. Among the most important individualistic values are Self-Direction and Hedonism. Across the sample, standard deviation values are around one (min. 0.81, max. 1.12), suggesting a degree of variation in respondents' evaluations of value importance. This is not surprising given the large sample size and the diversity of respondents representing the entire population of the country.

The highest level of agreement – indicated by the lowest standard deviation – is observed in the case of the collectivistic values Universalism and Benevolence.

In contrast, the highest standard deviation values are associated with the individualistic values Stimulation, Achievement, and Power.

Based on the results of ESS 9–10, an approximate difference of one unit can be observed between the most important and the least important values (4.74–3.58 = 1.16). Examining the highest and lowest values, no value appears to be uniformly rejected. Even the value of Power, which is ranked last, has an importance score of approximately 3.6 when rounded, indicating that respondents still consider it relatively important rather than insignificant.

There may be several reasons for this kind of "narrowing" of values. On the one hand, it is possible that society has entered an anomic state (Durkheim 1952), in which values lose their meaning, or at least their importance decreases and attitudes toward them become characterized by indifference. This assumption is somewhat contradicted by the fact that even attitudes toward the least important value tend to be positive.

However, it should also be noted that the PVQ, by using an even-numbered scale and thus eliminating a neutral midpoint, forces respondents to make a choice. As a result, respondents' positive or negative orientations toward a given value become more explicit, and even those who might otherwise be undecided are placed in a decision-making situation.

In addition, for certain values, a certain "compression" can be observed within the sample – by which this writing means the relatively small differences between mean values. This is particularly evident in the pairs of Achievement and Conformity, Hedonism and Tradition, as well as Universalism and Self-Direction.

On the other hand, it is also possible that multiple value systems coexist simultaneously within Hungarian society. The existence of value pluralism seems to be supported by the relatively high level of "support" for all values measured in Hungary; even the value of Power, which ranks last, still has a relatively high score.

In some respects, this is not surprising, since when examining value rankings, we obtain a picture of society as a whole, in which individual value responses largely disappear and only the aggregated overall pattern becomes visible. In a national value hierarchy, different value systems are represented, and thus even conflicting values may occupy similar positions. This is particularly characteristic of societies that are more divided in terms of their value systems (Kapitány – Kapitány 2012: 109).

In my opinion, the argument for value-based fragmentation and value pluralism in society appears to prevail. Value pluralism itself can have multiple meanings. One interpretation is that society – or specific subgroups within it – may simultaneously regard multiple, different, even conflicting values as (nearly) equally important. At the same time, it may also mean that different values are present across different groups within society (Kapitány – Kapitány 2012).

Based on my assumption, different groups consider different values to be important. This conclusion is drawn from the relatively "compressed" value structure and the comparatively high standard deviation values. In order to test this assumption, a cluster analysis is conducted in order to demonstrate the presence of value pluralism and to explore the value-based characteristics of different groups.

Values of Hungarians at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s Compared with Pan-Cultural Values

Table 2. Values of Hungarian Society Compared with Pan-Cultural Values

	Pan-cultural sample	ESS 9–10: Hungarian sample
No.	**Values**	**Values**
1.	Benevolence (social focus)	Security (social focus)
2.	Self-Direction (personal focus)	Benevolence (social focus)
3.	Universalism (social focus)	Universalism (social focus)
4.	Security (social focus)	Self-Direction (personal focus)
5.	Conformity (social focus)	Hedonism (personal focus)
6.	Achievement (personal focus)	Tradition (social focus)
7.	Hedonism (personal focus)	Achievement (personal focus)
8.	Stimulation (personal focus)	Conformity (social focus)
9.	Tradition (social focus)	Power (personal focus)
10.	Power (personal focus)	Stimulation (personal focus)

Source: Edited by the author

The most important values in both hierarchies are socially oriented values. However, while the pan-cultural hierarchy places benevolence, self-direction, and universalism in the top three positions, the Hungarian sample ranks security first, whereas in the pan-cultural hierarchy it is located only in the middle range, in fourth or fifth place. This suggests a stronger emphasis on stability, safety, and predictability in Hungary. Apart from the atypically high position of security, no major differences can be observed among the highest-ranked values, which indicates substantial overlap with the broader pan-cultural value hierarchy.

Unlike in the pan-cultural hierarchy, where conformity is located in the middle range, it ranks only eighth in the Hungarian value hierarchy. The positions of achievement and hedonism differ only modestly between the two hierarchies. The role of tradition is considerably more pronounced in the Hungarian sample, ranking sixth, substantially higher than in the pan-cultural value hierarchy. The relatively low ranking of conformity may indicate a weaker emphasis on adherence to social expectations and norms. By contrast, the elevated position of tradition suggests that the preservation of cultural customs and established ways of life remains more important in Hungary than in the average pan-cultural context. These trends seemingly contradict each other, further emphasizing the importance of the cluster analysis.

The evaluation of power is largely similar to the pan-cultural pattern; however, rather than occupying the last position, it ranks ninth in the Hungarian sample.

Likewise, stimulation remains among the least important values, but in the Hungarian hierarchy it occupies the final position. The low ranking of both power and stimulation indicates limited support for status-seeking and novelty-oriented goals. This pattern suggests that Hungarian respondents place greater importance on stability and social connectedness than on risk-taking, excitement, or social dominance. Beyond the ordering of values, the table also indicates that collectivist values (with social focus) are generally more prominent than individualist values (with personal focus) in the Hungarian sample. Among the individualist values, only hedonism is ranked higher by Hungarian respondents than in the pan-cultural value hierarchy.

Value Clusters of Hungarians at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s

This paper identifies value-based respondent groups using the Hungarian responses from the ESS 9th and 10th waves. The tool for dimensionality reduction – and for defining the groups – is cluster analysis, which results in relatively homogeneous groups that are at the same time clearly distinguishable from one another (heterogeneous) (Simon 2006).

Given the large sample size of the dataset (approximately 3,500 respondents), the K-means clustering method is applied during the group formation process. In the classification, the standardized variables of the ten universal values defined in the Schwartz (2012) model are used, thereby ensuring the appropriate formation of value-based groups.

The analysis justified the formation of five clusters. Along each variable, the means differ significantly from one another, and the distribution of F-values is also balanced, not exceeding a twofold difference relative to each other. As a result, the findings are statistically interpretable.

The identification of five clusters may appear unconventional; however, alternative cluster solutions, including four- and six-cluster models, did not produce adequately differentiated and statistically interpretable group structures. Therefore, the five-cluster solution is retained as the most robust and methodologically sound representation of the data.

The distribution of cases also supports the creation of five respondent groups: the smallest cluster includes 529 individuals, while the most populous has 934 members. The number of iterations was relatively high, in line with the large sample size; SPSS required 52 steps to generate the final cluster structure.

The clusters were interpreted and labeled based on the characteristic value responses of their members. It is important to note that, due to standardization, the value means in the cluster analysis are interpreted in terms of their deviation from the overall mean.

The resulting clusters were labeled as follows: (1) indecisive, (2) open and self-directed, (3) value-affirming, (4) collectivist, and (5) anomic (Table 3).

Table 3. Cluster Centers of Value-Based Respondent Groups in Hungary

Value dimension	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Security (social focus)	–0.54	0.34	0.63	0.58	–1.27
Conformity (social focus)	0.03	–0.61	0.74	0.27	–0.92
Tradition (social focus)	–0.14	–0.63	0.72	0.56	–0.96
Benevolence (social focus)	–0.46	0.27	0.72	0.43	–1.34
Universalism (social focus)	–0.49	0.29	0.76	0.39	–1.33
Self-Direction (personal focus)	–0.22	0.68	0.70	–0.64	–0.94
Stimulation (personal focus)	0.19	0.41	0.55	–1.18	–0.41
Hedonism (personal focus)	–0.16	0.55	0.75	–0.67	–0.94
Achievement (personal focus)	0.02	0.38	0.85	–1.01	–0.80
Power (personal focus)	0.28	–0.04	0.72	–0.86	–0.69

Source: Edited by the author

Characteristics and Interpretation of the Clusters

The following section presents the cluster groups, their socio-demographic characteristics, and their value-specific profiles. The results of the methods and analyses described here are presented within subunits dedicated to each cluster. The description begins with an overview of the methods applied.

Cross-tabulation Analysis

To explore the socio-demographic characteristics of the groups, each cluster has been subjected to separate cross-tabulation analyses, incorporating the following background variables: gender, age, level of education, type of settlement, and subjective financial status.

To facilitate easier interpretation, the interval scale variable of age has been transformed into a four-category ordinal variable, grouping respondents into the following age ranges: 0–29, 30–40, 41–59, and 60+. Similarly, the 14-category variable measuring educational attainment was also recoded into a four-category ordinal variable. The resulting categories are primary education, vocational qualification, secondary education and tertiary education. In order to better understand the clusters, it is also important to examine the distributions of these background variables within the full Hungarian sample. Regarding gender distribution, 40% (1,405 individuals) of respondents in the full Hungarian sample are male, and 60% (2,105 individuals) are female. In terms of age distribution, 16.5% (580 individuals) of respondents belong to the 0–29 age group, 14.2% (497 individuals) are between

30 and 40 years old, 33.3% (1,170 individuals) are between 41 and 59 years old, and 36% (1,263 individuals) are aged 60 or above. Concerning educational attainment, 19.1% (672 individuals) of respondents have primary education, 30.2% (1,061 individuals) have a vocational qualification, 36.1% (1,266 individuals) have completed secondary education and 14.1% (496 individuals) hold a tertiary degree. In terms of place of residence, 38.2% (1,342 individuals) live in a farmstead or village, 35% (1,229 individuals) in a small town, 3.4% (120 individuals) in a suburban area, and 23.2% (813 individuals) in a large city. Regarding subjective financial status, 4.1% (143 individuals) report living in very difficult financial conditions, 24% (843 individuals) struggle with financial difficulties, 59.5% (2,090 individuals) feel they can make ends meet, and 9.2% (324 individuals) report living in comfortable financial conditions.

Table 4. Value Clusters of Hungarians at the Turn of the 2010s and 2020s

Indecisive			
	N	average	SD.
SD.	806	4,26	0,59
BE.	806	4,25	0,61
SE.	806	4,23	0,63
UN.	806	4,14	0,54
HE.	806	4,12	0,67
TR.	806	4,09	0,65
CO.	806	4,07	0,64
AC.	806	4,07	0,63
PO.	806	3,95	0,68
ST.	806	3,79	0,77

Open and Self-Directed			
	N	average	SD.
SD.	603	5,09	0,58
SE.	603	5,06	0,67
BE.	603	4,90	0,61
HE.	603	4,81	0,70
UN.	603	4,77	0,57
AC.	603	4,47	0,83
ST.	603	4,04	0,93
TR.	603	3,63	0,79
PO.	603	3,62	0,89
CO.	603	3,47	0,81

Value-Affirming			
	N	average	SD.
SE.	934	5,33	0,54
BE.	934	5,29	0,52
UN.	934	5,15	0,48
SD.	934	5,11	0,57
HE.	934	5,00	0,63
AC.	934	4,97	0,65
TR.	934	4,90	0,63
CO.	934	4,74	0,67
PO.	934	4,41	0,84
ST.	934	4,19	0,99

Collectivist			
	N	average	SD.
SE.	587	5,28	0,65
BE.	587	5,04	0,62
UN.	587	4,85	0,56
TR.	587	4,74	0,80
CO.	587	4,30	0,92
SD.	587	3,88	0,92
HE.	587	3,62	0,94
AC.	587	2,95	0,99
PO.	587	2,76	0,92
ST.	587	2,26	0,79

Anomic			
	N	average	SD.
SD.	529	3,61	0,81
SE.	529	3,54	0,86
BE.	529	3,47	0,80
UN.	529	3,46	0,68
HE.	529	3,35	0,80
TR.	529	3,32	0,77
CO.	529	3,18	0,78
AC.	529	3,17	0,82
ST.	529	3,12	0,89
PO.	529	2,95	0,80

Source: Edited by the author

Abbreviations: SE: security, CO: conformity, TR: tradition, BE: benevolence, UN: universalism, SD: self-direction, ST: stimulation, HE: hedonism, AC: achievement, PO: power.

Indecisive

Considering the standardized variables, the value judgments of this cluster are the most difficult to interpret. Most values have lower scores compared to the averages of the full Hungarian sample, although the differences are not substantial. The most notable deviations are observed in the values of Security, Benevolence, and Universalism, which are approximately 0.5 standard deviations below the overall sample means. This is particularly striking, as these values are among the most important in the full sample.

Compared to the overall sample, lower mean scores are also observed for Tradition, Self-Direction, and Hedonism. In contrast, the values of Power and Stimulation show slightly higher scores than the overall average, despite typically appearing in the lower ranks of Hungarian value hierarchies. Meanwhile, Conformity and Achievement display mean scores that are almost identical to those of the full sample.

A clear trend emerges from this pattern of value differences, which also gives the cluster its label: values considered important in the full sample receive lower relative scores in this cluster, whereas lower-ranked values receive relatively higher

scores. As a result, there is a marked "narrowing" in the cluster's value means – the difference between the most and least important values is only (4.26–3.79 =) 0.47 points on the six-point Schwartz scale, which is notably low.

In parallel, there is also a significant "compression" of values. This results in a value structure centered around the mean, in which differences between value judgments are barely discernible. Although even the least important value falls within the positive range of the scale, the differences compared to other values are so small that it is difficult to identify a clear value hierarchy within this group. Overall, this does not lead to a substantial reordering of the value ranking compared to the full sample.

In terms of the dispersion of values, a relatively balanced pattern emerges. The lowest standard deviation is observed for Universalism (0.54), as is the case in the other clusters and in the overall sample as well. The highest standard deviation is found for Stimulation (0.77). For values belonging to the same cluster, lower standard deviation values can be observed compared to the national sample.

The cluster consists of 806 individuals, making it the second-largest group in this analysis. Among its members, 481 are female (60%) and 325 are male (40%). The group is predominantly composed of representatives of older generations: 70% (567 individuals) are over the age of 40, and 33% (266 individuals) are aged 60 or above. The distribution by educational attainment is similar to that observed in the full population: 14.3% (115 individuals) have primary education, 34.7% (279 individuals) have a vocational qualification, 39.5% (317 individuals) have completed secondary education (with a school-leaving certificate), and 11.5% (92 individuals) hold a tertiary degree. In terms of place of residence, however, individuals living in smaller settlements are more prevalent; only 33% (266 individuals) of the group live in large cities or their metropolitan areas. Regarding income conditions, a larger proportion of the group evaluates their situation positively: 71% (559 individuals) report living comfortably on their income, while 29% (226 individuals) experience some degree of financial difficulty.

Educational attainment, place of residence, and subjective financial situation all differentiated membership in the Indecisive cluster (all χ^2, $p < .001$). The cluster was most frequently associated with respondents possessing intermediate levels of education, as vocationally educated individuals (adjusted residual = 3.0) and secondary school graduates (adjusted residual = 2.2) occurred more often. By contrast, respondents with only primary education (adjusted residual = –4.0) or tertiary qualifications (adjusted residual = –2.4) were less prevalent. A similar pattern emerged with regard to residential context. Membership was concentrated among individuals living in large cities (adjusted residual = 3.6) and suburban areas (adjusted residual = 3.1), whereas residents of small towns (adjusted residual = –2.0) and rural villages (adjusted residual = –2.5) were represented at lower-than-expected rates. Differences were also observed across financial categories. Respondents reporting that they were coping on their present income were more frequently represented in the cluster (adjusted residual = 2.0), while those experiencing severe financial difficulties (adjusted residual = –2.6) and those living comfortably on their income (adjusted residual = –3.1) appeared less frequently.

Overall, these findings indicate that the Indecisive value profile is most characteristic of individuals occupying intermediate educational and financial positions within an urban environment.

Open and Self-Directed

For the members of this group, values associated with Openness to Change and Self-Transcendence on Schwartz's (2012) bipolar value dimensions are of primary importance. On Schwartz's circular representation, these values form a clearly identifiable continuum, the coherence of which is only disrupted by the above-average score of Security. As a result, both individualistic and collectivistic values play a central role for individuals in this group. Compared to the averages of the full Hungarian sample, the most important values for this group are Self-Direction and Hedonism, followed by Stimulation and Achievement, all of which are individualistic values. These are followed by the collectivistic values of Security, Universalism, and Benevolence. Relative to the full sample, the group assigns less importance to Power and shows a more rejecting attitude toward Conformity and Tradition.

The phenomenon of "narrowing" is less characteristic of this cluster's value responses; the difference between the most and least important values is 1.62, which is higher than in the full sample. This is due both to the increased importance assigned to certain values and to the devaluation of others. However, this is not accompanied by a complete rejection of the less important values; even Conformity, considered the least important, still falls within the positive range of the scale. Based on this and on the absence of "compression," it has been concluded that individuals in this cluster display an open yet critical attitude, which is well reflected in the group's label.

The standard deviation values are somewhat higher than in the previous cluster. The lowest dispersion is observed for Universalism (0.57) and Self-Direction (0.58), while the highest is found for Stimulation (0.93) and Power (0.89).

The cluster consists of 603 individuals, including 273 men (45%) and 330 women (55%). Compared to the previous cluster, the age distribution is more balanced across different age groups: 47% (285 individuals) are under 40, while only 19.6% (118 individuals) are over 60. In terms of educational attainment, members of this group are somewhat more highly educated than the average of the full Hungarian sample. Within the cluster, 12.5% (75 individuals) have primary education, 27.9% (168 individuals) have a vocational qualification, 41.7% (251 individuals) have completed secondary education (with a school-leaving certificate), and 17.9% (108 individuals) hold a tertiary degree. Members of this group predominantly live in urban environments; only 33% (198 individuals) reside in villages. Regarding financial conditions, respondents tend to evaluate their situation positively: only 22% (129 individuals) report experiencing financial difficulties to some extent, while 78% (453 individuals) are able to live without financial hardship.

Significant differences in Open and Self-Directed cluster membership were observed across all examined socio-demographic variables (Pearson Chi-Square

values range between 0.001 and 0.003). A greater proportion of men than women belonged to this cluster (adjusted residuals = 3.0 and –3.0, respectively). Age emerged as a particularly strong differentiating factor: respondents aged 18–29 (adjusted residual = 8.1) and 30–40 (adjusted residual = 4.1) were concentrated in the cluster, whereas individuals aged 60 years and above were represented at substantially lower levels than expected (adjusted residual = –9.1). Educational attainment also displayed a clear pattern, with secondary school graduates (adjusted residual = 3.0) and respondents with tertiary education (adjusted residual = 3.0) occurring more frequently within the cluster, while those with only primary education were less frequently represented (adjusted residual = –4.6). Residential differences were likewise apparent: membership was more common among residents of large cities (adjusted residual = 4.2) and less common among individuals living in rural villages (adjusted residual = –3.0). In terms of subjective financial situation, the cluster was disproportionately composed of respondents living comfortably on their present income (adjusted residual = 4.8), whereas individuals reporting financial difficulties appeared less frequently than expected (adjusted residual = –3.4). Taken together, the Open and Self-Directed cluster was characterized by a relatively young, predominantly male, urban, and well-educated population exhibiting above-average subjective financial well-being.

Value-Affirming

The label "Value-Affirming" refers to the remarkably high scores assigned to values by members of this group. Individuals in this cluster attributed higher scores to all Schwartzian values compared to the overall societal average, with deviations ranging between 0.55 and 0.84 standard deviations. There is no clear pattern in the evaluation of values, as both individualistic and collectivistic values show a roughly equal increase in their scores. Relative to the overall sample, the value considered most important by group members is Achievement, while the least important is Stimulation – both belonging to the individualistic category.

The difference between the most and least important values is 1.14, which is almost identical to the result for the full Hungarian sample. This indicates a slight "narrowing" of the value structure, although the phenomenon of "compression" is only limited within this cluster. Not surprisingly, both the most important value (Security, mean score: 5.33) and the least important value (Stimulation, mean score: 4.19) have the highest mean scores among all clusters at their respective positions.

In this cluster, the standard deviation values are the lowest, indicating the least variation in value responses, which is not surprising given the generally high, near-maximum scores. The value of Universalism stands out with an exceptionally low standard deviation (0.48). The highest standard deviations are observed for Stimulation (0.99) and Power (0.84), but apart from these, the standard deviation does not exceed 0.67 for any value.

This is the largest cluster, with a total of 934 individuals. Among its members, 40% are male (372 individuals) and 60% are female (562 individuals). In terms of age

distribution, 35% (324 individuals) of the members are aged 40 or younger, while 29% (268 individuals) are aged 60 or above. Regarding educational attainment, members of this cluster are somewhat more educated than the average of the full Hungarian sample: 14% (129 individuals) have primary education, 25% (231 individuals) have a vocational qualification, 39% (363 individuals) have completed secondary education (with a school-leaving certificate), and 22% (208 individuals) hold a tertiary degree. The distribution by place of residence is very similar to the overall sample: 40% of respondents live in villages or farmsteads, while 60% reside in towns, cities, or metropolitan areas. In terms of subjective financial status, members of this cluster are also somewhat more optimistic than the overall sample: only 18% (164 individuals) report financial difficulties, while 82% (747 individuals) are able to make ends meet without major problems.

Membership in the Value-Affirming cluster was significantly associated with age, educational attainment, and subjective financial situation (all χ^2, $p < .001$), as well as with place of residence, although this association was weaker, it remained statistically significant (χ^2, $p = .023$). Younger respondents aged 18–29 (adjusted residual = 2.5) and those aged 41–59 (adjusted residual = 2.4) were overrepresented, whilst individuals aged 60 years and above were underrepresented (adjusted residual = −5.2). The cluster was particularly common among highly educated respondents (adjusted residual = 8.5) and, to a lesser extent, those holding a secondary school diploma (adjusted residual = 2.0), while the presence of individuals with only primary education (adjusted residual = −4.8) or vocational qualifications (adjusted residual = −4.4) were less noticeable. Residential differences were less pronounced, although residents of suburban areas were less likely to belong to this cluster (adjusted residual = −3.0). Financial circumstances displayed a clear gradient: respondents coping on their present income (adjusted residual = 4.5) or living comfortably (adjusted residual = 5.8) were overrepresented, whereas those reporting financial difficulties (adjusted residual = −7.3) or severe difficulties (adjusted residual = −3.7) were underrepresented. In socio-demographic terms, the Value-Affirming cluster appears to represent a relatively young and advantaged segment of society, characterized by higher educational attainment and greater financial security.

Collectivist

A clear pattern emerges in the value judgments of the fourth cluster. Compared to the overall Hungarian sample, collectivistic values are considered more important, while individualistic values are regarded as less significant. The deviation is particularly pronounced in the negative direction: the values of Stimulation and Achievement fall more than one full standard deviation below the overall societal average, and this more negative evaluation is also characteristic of the other individualistic values. It is noteworthy – though understandable given that collectivistic values already have relatively high scores in the full sample – that their scores do not increase as much as the individualistic values decrease. The values

considered most important by this group, namely Security and Tradition, are 0.57 and 0.56 standard deviations above the overall societal mean, respectively. The smallest deviation from the overall average is observed for Conformity (0.27 standard deviations).

The phenomenon of "narrowing" does not apply to this cluster at all. The difference between the most and least important values is extremely high, at 3.02, making it the largest difference observed among the Hungarian clusters. This can be attributed, on the one hand, to the increased valuation of certain values – particularly Security, Benevolence, and Universalism – and, on the other hand, to the systematic devaluation of individualistic values. This is also reflected in the unusually low absolute scores of some values, such as Stimulation (2.26), Power (2.76), and Achievement (2.95). Among the individualistic values, Self-Direction has the highest score (3.88). Due to these exceptionally large differences in scores, features of "compression" do not appear in this cluster.

At the same time, the standard deviation values are higher than in the previous clusters. The lowest dispersion is observed for Universalism (0.56) and Benevolence (0.62), while in five cases the standard deviations exceed 0.90.

The cluster consists of 587 individuals, of whom 181 are male (31%) and 406 are female (69%). Members of the Collectivist cluster are typically from older generations: only 12% (69 individuals) are aged 40 or younger, while a significant majority, 62% (361 individuals), are aged 60 or above. In terms of educational attainment, the cluster is composed largely of individuals with lower levels of education compared to the full sample. Among its members, 30% (178 individuals) have primary education, 37% have a vocational qualification, 27% have completed secondary education (with a school-leaving certificate), and only 6% hold a tertiary degree. Regarding place of residence, 41% (243 individuals) live in villages or farmsteads, while 59% (344 individuals) reside in settlements with a higher administrative status. Compared to the full Hungarian sample, the proportion of individuals experiencing financial hardship is somewhat higher in this group. A total of 7% (40 individuals) face serious financial difficulties, and a further 35% (198 individuals) report experiencing financial problems. Meanwhile, 54% (306 individuals) live without significant difficulties, and 4% (25 individuals) report living in particularly comfortable financial conditions.

Significant variation in Collectivist cluster membership was observed across all examined socio-demographic characteristics. While gender, age, educational attainment, and subjective financial situation emerged as strong differentiating factors (all χ^2, $p < .001$), place of residence exhibited a weaker, yet statistically significant, association with cluster membership (χ^2, $p = .024$). Women were more likely to belong to this group than men (adjusted residuals = 4.9 and –4.9, respectively). Age emerged as the strongest differentiating factor: respondents aged 60 years and above were heavily concentrated in the cluster (adjusted residual = 14.3), whereas younger individuals aged 18–29 (adjusted residual = –9.1), 30–40 (adjusted residual = –4.9), and 41–59 (adjusted residual = –3.8) were less frequently represented than expected. Educational differences followed a similar pattern, with primary-educated (adjusted residual = 7.6) and vocationally educated

respondents (adjusted residual = 3.5) appearing more often in the cluster, while those holding secondary school diplomas (adjusted residual = –5.2) or tertiary qualifications (adjusted residual = –6.1) appeared less often. Large-city residents were less likely to belong to this group (adjusted residual = –3.2). Financial circumstances also distinguished cluster membership: respondents experiencing financial difficulties (adjusted residuals = 3.7 and 6.1) were more prevalent, whereas those coping on their present income (adjusted residual = –4.2) or living comfortably (adjusted residual = –4.5) were less prevalent. The Collectivist cluster is characterized by an older, predominantly female, less educated, and financially disadvantaged population, suggesting that this value profile is particularly typical of the oldest generation in Hungarian society.

Anomic

Individuals in this cluster are characterized by indifference and pessimism toward Schwartzian values. In all cases, their evaluation of the importance of values falls below the average of the full Hungarian sample; moreover, the largest deviations are also observed in this group. The greatest differences in value judgments appear in the lower support for Benevolence (−1.34 standard deviations) and Universalism (−1.33 standard deviations) compared to the societal averages. Notably, these are precisely the values that belong to the Self-Transcendence dimension in Schwartz's theory (2012), emphasizing a society-focused orientation based on cooperation within primary groups and supportive relationships, and which consistently rank among the most important values both cross-culturally and in Hungarian value hierarchies. Another atypical feature of this cluster is the devaluation of Security (−1.27 standard deviations). A similar trend can be observed for the other values as well, with deviations ranging between −0.80 and −0.96, except in the case of Power (−0.69) and Stimulation (−0.41). Thus, the smallest deviations are found for values that already occupy lower positions in the value hierarchy of Hungarian respondents.

The phenomenon of "narrowing" is strongly present in the value judgments of this group. The difference between the most and least important values is extremely low, at 0.66, making it the second lowest among the clusters. In the anomic group, the most important value is Self-Direction, with a score of only 3.61, while the least important value is Power, with a mean of 2.95. The "compression" of values is also pronounced. As suggested by the group's label, this may indicate a form of indifference toward values or the surrounding world, as all values are located near the midpoint between the positive and negative ends of the scale, making clear value judgments difficult to discern from the responses. For this reason, the group could also be described as "indifferent." The standard deviations of the values range between 0.68 (Universalism) and 0.89 (Stimulation).

This cluster has the smallest number of members, with 529 individuals, of whom 44% are male (230 individuals) and 56% are female (299 individuals). Within the cluster, 29% (150 individuals) are aged 40 or younger, while 42% (222 individuals) belong to the older age group of 60 years and above. In terms of educational

attainment, 31% (165 individuals) have primary education, 30% (158 individuals) have a vocational qualification, 31% (163 individuals) have completed secondary education (with a school-leaving certificate), and 8% (42 individuals) hold a tertiary degree. Regarding place of residence, 45% (238 individuals) live in villages or farmsteads, while 55% (290 individuals) reside in settlements with a higher administrative status, typically small towns (197 individuals). In terms of subjective financial status, members of this cluster report a less favorable subjective financial situation than the full sample: 9% (45 individuals) face serious financial difficulties, and 34% (171 individuals) report experiencing some level of financial hardship. Meanwhile, 53% (268 individuals) are able to make ends meet without major difficulties, and 5% (24 individuals) report living in comfortable financial conditions.

Significant differences in Anomic cluster membership were observed across all examined socio-demographic variables. The magnitude of these associations varied, with age displaying a relatively weaker relationship with cluster membership (χ^2, p = .011), while educational attainment, place of residence, and subjective financial situation emerged as more strongly differentiating factors (all χ^2, $p < .001$). Respondents aged 60 years and above were overrepresented in this cluster (adjusted residual = 3.3), whereas those aged 41–59 were represented less frequently (adjusted residual = –2.0). A pronounced educational gradient was identified, with individuals possessing only primary education being concentrated in the cluster (adjusted residual = 7.6), while respondents holding secondary school diplomas (adjusted residual = –2.8) and, in particular, tertiary qualifications (adjusted residual = –4.4) were less strongly represented. Differences were also detected according to place of residence: rural villagers were present in the cluster at higher-than-expected rates (adjusted residual = 3.3), whereas residents of large cities were present at lower-than-expected rates (adjusted residual = –4.8). A comparable pattern was observed with respect to subjective financial situation. Individuals reporting severe financial difficulties (adjusted residual = 5.7) or financial difficulties (adjusted residual = 5.0) occurred more frequently within the cluster, while those reporting that they were coping on their present income (adjusted residual = –4.4) or living comfortably (adjusted residual = –4.0) occurred less frequently. Overall, the Anomic cluster was characterized by an older, less educated, predominantly rural, and financially disadvantaged population, suggesting a close association between this value profile and socio-economically vulnerable segments of Hungarian society.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the value structure of Hungarian society at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s using the theoretical framework of Schwartz's (2012) theory of basic human values and data from the 9th and 10th waves of the European Social Survey. Three research objectives were formulated: (1) to examine the importance and hierarchy of Schwartzian values in Hungary, (2) to identify and characterize value-based groups within the population, and (3) to explore the socio-demographic characteristics of these groups.

Regarding the first objective, the findings indicate that Hungarian society is characterized by the predominance of collectivistic values. Security, benevolence, and universalism occupy the highest positions in the national value hierarchy, while two individualist values, stimulation and power, receive the lowest levels of support. Comparison with the pan-cultural value hierarchy proposed by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) reveals substantial similarities in the prominence of socially oriented values, but also notable differences. Most importantly, security occupies a considerably higher position in Hungary than in the pan-cultural pattern, while tradition also receives relatively stronger support. These findings suggest that stability, social cohesion, and the preservation of established ways of life remain particularly important within the Hungarian context.

The second objective concerned the identification of value-based subgroups. The cluster analysis revealed five distinct value profiles: Indecisive, Open and Self-Directed, Value-Affirming, Collectivist, and Anomic. The existence of these clusters supports the assumption that Hungarian society cannot be adequately described by a single dominant value orientation. Instead, multiple value systems coexist simultaneously, indicating a substantial degree of value pluralism. While some groups emphasize openness, autonomy, and self-development, others are characterized by strong collectivistic orientations or by a generally low commitment to all value dimensions.

The third objective focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the identified value groups. Significant differences were observed across the clusters with respect to age, educational attainment, place of residence, and subjective financial situation. The Open and Self-Directed and Value-Affirming clusters were associated with younger, more highly educated, urban, and financially advantaged respondents. In contrast, the Collectivist and Anomic clusters were characterized by older, less educated, and economically more vulnerable individuals. These findings suggest that value orientations are embedded within broader social and structural conditions and are also related to respondents' positions within society.

The results contribute to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary Hungarian society by demonstrating that value diversity exists not only between societies but also within them. The identified value-based groups highlight the importance of moving beyond aggregate value hierarchies and considering the heterogeneity of value orientations present in the population. Since values influence attitudes, preferences, and behavioral tendencies, the revealed patterns may also help to explain broader social and political divisions within society.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the analysis relies on cross-sectional survey data and therefore does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn. Second, the study focuses exclusively on Hungary and does not include a direct international comparison. Third, although the cluster solution proved statistically robust, alternative classification approaches may yield somewhat different group structures. Future research could extend the analysis by examining value change over time, conducting comparative analyses across countries, and investigating the relationship between value orientations and specific social, political, or behavioral outcomes.

These findings suggest that Hungarian society at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s is characterized by the coexistence of multiple value systems, with collectivistic values occupying a dominant position at the aggregate level. At the same time, substantial differences between value-based groups demonstrate that value pluralism remains a defining feature of contemporary Hungarian society.

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