

# PROFESSIONAL VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** Social values are acquired in the socialization process and become, over the course of life, elements that influence decisions that we make and behaviors in certain situations. Similarly, professional value makes us appreciate jobs or evaluate some of the tasks we have. With the Inventory of Professional Values Scale, D. Super, we investigated the set of professional values that young people (graduates or students) have. Data analysis concludes that variables such as gender, high school profile, the environment (rural or urban), or student or graduate status do not induce changes in the perception of values like intellectual stimulation, achievement, and independence.

**Key words:** professional values, D. Super inventory, students' professional values.

## Introduction

The constantly moving society, the social changes that occur year by year, are factors that bring about changes in social and individual values. In this dynamic process, the most affected are young people. Many young people choose to go to college, in order to increase their employment opportunities after the graduation, but also to develop on a relatively stable and future career path.

Values are beliefs seen by individuals as standards that guide people and their way of behave in the groups and in the society in general. They are cognitive structures, but they also have behavioral and affective dimensions. Values are developed at the individual level but are modified and determined by the cultural frameworks in which the person is active (Rokeach 1973).

We can talk about relatively stable values when individuals can "feel" and identify how it influence their behavior. Having a set of values, individuals organize and rank them in relation to the importance they attribute (Brown, 2002).

According to Zamfir & Vlăsceanu (1993) the values, from a sociological perspective, are regarded as a system of preferences that can be found at

individual, community or even society level. They have a role to guide how individuals define their goals and how they will achieve them. Having a cultural determination, it is transmitted and formed along the socialization process.

The concept of value is an ambiguous concept that has generated and continues to generate heated academic discussions (Wuthnow, 2008). There is no single definition of value/ values because in the same semantic area there are terms such as attitudes, norms, interests, ideals (Iluț, 2004; Rotariu & Iluț, 1997). Pattison (2004) also emphasized that concepts like preferences, choices, desires, or even standard goals or visions are used instead of the concept of value in the economic and management areas. Psychology sometimes uses as a substitute for the concept of value notions as attitude or belief and in sociology value is replaced by terms as norm or judgment.

On the topic of this study, namely professional values, one can recall the studies conducted since the middle of the last century (Strong, 1943; Super, 1973; Holland, 1973). There are also more recent studies covering both professional values as whole and more specific professional contexts in which they can manifest (Cheung & Sterling, 1999, Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2005, Rassin, 2008, Pallini, Bove & Laghi, 2011, Valutis, Rubin & Bell, 2012, Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016).

Around the 1970s, the number of studies on professional values increased, with the addition of instruments to measure them. One of the most important contributions is Donald Super's Inventory of Professional Values (WVI), which can easily be correlated with professional results. Donald Super (1973) considers that professional values are a subsystem of the individual's value system by referring to aspects of professional activity that are more or less desirable (Chelcea, S., 1994).

## **Methodology**

In this study, we aimed to explore the set of professional values of young people both from the general perspective and from the perspective of comparisons of different categories of subjects. In order to measure the professional values of young people, we used Donald Super's Professional Inventory of Values (1970). Although the inventory was used in Romanian (Chelcea, 1994) we initially translated this inventory and compared the translations with the existing one. The inventory contains 45 items, and three items are grouped together. Therefore, the inventory of professional values identifies 15 professional values:

1. Altruism, items 2, 30, 31: gives the individual the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others by focusing more on social services.
2. Aesthetic, items 7, 20, 41: allow the individual to contribute to the enhancement the beauty of the world and society and to create aesthetic objects. Artistic

interests are associated with aesthetic values. 3. Intellectual Stimulation, items 1, 23, 38: provides the individual with the opportunity to learn continually and to have autonomous reflections. 4. Achievement item 13, 17, 44: expresses the orientation of individuals towards tangible results, gives individuals a sense of satisfaction. 5. Independence, items 5, 21, 40: value associated with the professions that allow the individual to organize and plan their program and the work. 6. Prestige, items: 6, 28, 33: value that reflects professions that exert and enforce respect, highlighting the interest in professions involving business relationships. 7. Management, items: 14, 24, 37: refers to planning and organizing the work of others. 8. Economic return, items: 3, 22, 39: this value reflects well paid jobs. 9. Security, items: 9, 19, 42: reflects the professions in which the individual has the certainty of keeping the job. 10. Surroundings, items: 12, 25, 36: refers to satisfactory working conditions. 11. Supervisory relationships, items 11, 18, 43: value that reflects work directed by a fair supervisor, who establishes good relationships with employees. 12. Associates, items: 8, 27, 34: work activities that offer good relationships with colleagues. 13. Way of life items: 10, 26, 35: value associated with activities that allow also having the desired lifestyle. 14. Variety, items: 4, 29, 32: value that reflects the diversity of work. 15. Creativity, items: 15, 16, 45: values associated with work that allows making new things. The Inventory of Professional Values requires respondents to appreciate the importance of 45 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not important, 2 less important, 3 somewhat important, 4 important, and 5 very important.

## Results

Although data has been gathered and analyzed for all of the 15 professional values outlined above, we chose, for the purposes of this study, to present three of them. These may be classified as extrinsic motivations in job evaluation but it also represent values that we consider that are different in relation to other age groups. In other words, they would be assessed differently by the young generation.

Within the "Intellectual Stimulation" the number 1 statement: "There are always new problems to solve", there are significant differences between the item "Very Important" and the rest. Individuals who consider the intellectual challenge at work to be very important are 9.8% and the rest of the opinions are divided: important: 26.5%; somewhat important: 29.5%; less important: 20.5%; not important: 13.6%. At the second item of value: Intellectual stimulation (Take part, at work, intellectual challenges), individuals consider this very important (very important - 32.6%, important - 34.8%). Only 5.3% of young people questioned evaluate intellectual challenges as not important. 38.6% of

respondents consider it important to be intellectually stimulated, and 9.8% find intellectual stimulation as the less important aspect in workplace.

**Table 1**  
**Intellectual stimulation mean comparison between different categories of respondents**

	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	Sig (p)	
Female	74	4,39	0,64	0,49	130	0,62	p>0,05
Male	58	4,16	0,89				
Natural sciences	70	4,70	0,73	1,84	130	0,07	p>0,05
Social and humanistic sciences	62	3,82	0,72				
Urban	85	4,52	0,64	1,29	130	0,19	p>0,05
Rural	47	3,87	0,92				
Student	71	3,89	0,81	1,82	130	0,07	p>0,05
Graduate	61	4,75	0,62				

As a result of the data analysis, we can see that there are no significant differences in perception of the "intellectual stimulation" value, depending on the category of questioned young people. Both women (N=74, M =4.39, SD =0.64) and male (N=58; M = 0.16; SD =0.89) considered important intellectual stimulation at work,  $t(130) = 0.49$ ,  $p = 0.62$ . This result may be due to the continuing need to accumulate new knowledge, especially at the beginning of the career.

There are no significant differences depending on the graduate specialization of high school (Natural science, N = 70, M = 4.70, SD = 0.73, Social and Human Sciences, N = 62, M = 3.82, SD = 0.72). Graduate specialization does not induce differences in the perception of intellectual stimulation as value at work or in the future career.

Whether they come from the urban areas (N = 85, M = 4.52, SD = 0.64) or from the rural one (N = 47, M = 3.87, SD = 0.92) they gave similar importance to intellectual stimulation.

Regarding on the current professional status (student or graduate), we do not notice any significant statistical differences for the value intellectual stimulation,  $t(130) = 1.82$ ;  $p = 0.07$ ;  $p > 0.05$ . Both students (N = 71; M = 3.89; SD = 0.81) and graduates (N = 61; M = 4.75; SD = 0.62) perceive this value in

a similar way. Considering the relative homogeneity of the respondents group, whether they are still students or graduates, they are aware of the continuing need for professional development.

**Table 2**  
**Achievement mean comparison between different categories of respondents**

	N	Mean	Sd	t	Df	Sig (p)	
Female	74	4,47	0,56	0,30	130	0,76	p>0,05
Male	58	4,33	0,97				
Natural sciences	70	4,87	0,73	2,08	130	0,04	<b>p&lt;0,05</b>
Social and humanistic sciences	62	3,89	0,68				
Urban	85	4,54	0,74	0,74	130	0,46	p>0,05
Rural	47	4,17	0,76				
Student	71	4,35	0,69	0,26	130	0,80	p>0,05
Graduate	61	4,47	0,81				

According to the test for independent samples t test,  $t(130) = 0.30$   $p = 0.76$ , there are no significant differences in value “achievement” regarding gender (female -  $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ; male-  $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ). The mean value obtained is quite high for both two categories of respondents compared. Attitudes about professional success and successful career are not gender-based, both women and men want to progress professionally at least at the beginning of their carrier.

There are significant differences regarding the appreciation of professional success between the respondents who graduated different high school specializations ( $t = 2.08$ ;  $df = 130$ ). In this case, it can be considered that those who have graduated a real profile ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) and valued higher professional success want their professional results to be visible and that work to lead to concrete results. This can influence the younger professional career of the younger one. On the other hand, those who graduated humanistic profile high school ( $M = 3.89$ ;  $SD = 0.68$ ) probably formed a different career view with wider perspectives on the world and on professional tasks. They consider that achievement such an important professional value.

There are no statistically significant differences between individuals who live in rural and in urban areas ( $t = 0.74$ ;  $p = 0.46$ ). This variable does not affect the way of thinking about achievement. At least in the case of achievement or professional success, respondents from urban areas ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) and rural ones ( $M = 4.17$ ;  $SD = 0.76$ ) are quite similar.

We note that there are no significant statistical differences between the mean of students responses ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and the mean of graduates ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). Both categories of individuals perceive professional success (achievement) in a similar manner.

The next set of statements (5, 21, 40) reflects the value: independence at work. After analyzing the answers, we can see that this value is important for individuals. The highest percentage (37.9%) was "very important" on the statement number 5: "You have the freedom to set your own pace of work". Many of the questioned individuals attach great importance to the other two statements: "Take your own decisions" and "Be your own boss."

**Table 3.**  
**Independence (value) mean comparison between**  
**different categories of respondents**

	N	Mean	Sd	t	Df	Sig (p)	
Female	74	4.20	0.88	0.58	130	0.56	$p > 0,05$
Male	58	4.50	0.93				
Natural sciences	70	4.26	0.93	0.32	130	0.75	$p > 0,05$
Social and humanistic sciences	62	4.42	0.89				
Urban	85	4.46	0.88	0.67	130	0.50	$p > 0,05$
Rural	47	4.11	0.95				
Student	71	4.37	0.92	0.14	130	0.89	$p > 0,05$
Graduate	61	4.29	0.89				

According to the previous table, it can be noticed that the mean calculated for the women answers was  $M = 4.20$ ; and the mean of male responses was  $M = 4.50$ . Analysing the results of the independent t test,  $t(130) = 0.58$   $p > 0.05$ , it can be concluded that gender does not induce significant differences in the perception of independence at the workplace.

We have not discovered significant differences in perceiving independence as value regarding to the specialization in which the respondents

graduated the high school. According to the t test for independent variables ( $t = 0.32$ ;  $df = 130$ ), the significance threshold ( $p = 0.75$ ) is also greater than 0.05 in this case. Thus, there are no significant differences between those who have graduated a natural science profile ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) and those who have graduated high school within a social or humanistic profile ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). Individuals with different specializations perceive this value (independence regarding organization of time and work) in similar manner.

It can also be seen that actual status (student or graduate) does not induce changes in the mode as the respondents perceive values. Whether they are students ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) or graduates, already having some professional experience ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), regarding the individual planning of their own program, there are no significant differences,  $t(130) = 0.14$ ;  $p = 0.89 > 0.05$ .

## Conclusions

This research aimed to highlight the professional values of young people today. To identify these values Donald Super's Inventory of Professional Values has been used as a research tool. It contains 45 items, every three of them combined as mean make up a value, thus resulting 15 professional values. The interviewed young people were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the importance of each statement. 132 young people aged 19 to 35 years were questioned, of which 56.1% are female and 43.9% are males.

Based on means comparisons, it was found that in most cases there were no significant statistical differences between respondents' answers. The variables considered for making comparisons: gender, high school specialization, background and student or graduate status did not induce changes in the perception of the three professional values presented.

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