The Dynamics of the Relationship between Humor and Benevolence as Values

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Abstract: This study provides significant information regarding the descriptions and definitions of values revised by Schwartz in 2012, where values can be displayed on a circular continuum of motivational dynamic relationships. One 46 items online questionnaire (assessing the perception of values) was administered to 220 participants from the West side of Romania. The 46 items instrument presented a strong internal consistency (an alpha coefficient of .839). This study provides information regarding the inter classes dynamic associations between benevolence as a self-transcendence value and humour as an openness to change value. Findings and conclusions are discussed.

Keywords: *humour; benevolence; dynamic relationship; values theory.*

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1. Introduction

Creating an axiological complex system, values are classified based on: general values; specific values as regard to a sociopolitical system; values that are based on a certain culture or ethnicity; values that are based on large, average and small social groups; and individual values (Ilut, 2004). It is postulated in literature that values can affect the decisions one person makes from a professional and relational point of view (Dughi, Bran, & Ignat, 2016) and his morally, based on a specific cultural, social and professional contexts at different levels of individual development.

From the individual-society relationship perspective, one of the significant explanations given to the concept of value is offered by Kluckhohn (1951), the value being an specific or latent, original conception for one person or a characteristic of a group (of what is acceptable), which can determine the choosing methods, means and goals of one's actions (Inglehart, 1997). Rokeach (Sacara, 2006) describes values as resistant assumptions about a specific way of conduct or a convinced goal of existence that guides one's judgments, actions, attitudes, and analogies of specific situations or objects. The author captures in this description both the social aspects of values (which refer to the way of conduct and a behavioral goal in the situation of the individual's association with the objects or particular positions in the social environment) and the individual aspect of values (in the shape of resilient beliefs as personality traits).

Schwartz (2011) has developed a value theory geared towards two dimensions of individual and cultural values. From the first perspective the author distinguishes 10 main values:

Power: Social position and influence, authority or control over individuals and resources.

Achievement: Individual accomplishment by the proof of one's skill as regard to social guidelines.

Hedonism: Comfort and sensual fulfillment in one's life.

Stimulation: Adventure, innovation, and provocation for oneself.

Self Direction: Autonomous cognition and behavior - selecting, building, investigating.

Universalism: Awareness, tolerance comprehension, gratitude and preservation for the wellbeing of all individuals, for nature and for life itself.

Benevolence: Protection and improvement of the wellbeing of individuals with whom one is in repeated private connection.

Tradition: Appreciation, recognition, engagement and approval of the norms and beliefs that one religion or conventional culture supplies the one self.

Conformity: Abstinence of behaviors, tendencies and motivations inclined to distress or impair other individuals and disrupt social beliefs or standards.

Security: Protection, tranquility and balance of the society as a whole, of friendships and relationships of one self.

From cultural perspective, the theory developed by Schwartz (1992, 1994) indicates three bipolar, conceptual features of culture that express different answers to each of the three difficulties that all societies may deal with:

- egalitarianism vs. hierarchy;
- harmony vs. mastery;
- autonomy vs. embeddedness

Schwartz (Roccas & Sagiv, 2017) refined this theory and states that the values are ordered from each other on a circular motivational continuum. Their placement on this continuum is made as regard to the conflict or compatibility between the individual's ambitions. Thus, the more closely related the values and the correlations between them, the closer these values are. And the less correlated, the more distant they are in this two-dimensional space. According to this revised order, 18 values are highlighted: 1. Self-directing Action; 2. Self-directing Thought; 3. Achievement; 4. Power Dominance; 5. Power Resources, 6. Hedonism; Face, 7. Conformity-Rules; 8. Conformity-Interpersonal, 9. Security-personal; 10. Security-Societal; 12. Benevolence-Caring; 13. Benevolence-Dependability; 14. Tradition; 15. Universalism-Tolerance; 16. Universalism-Concern; 17. Universalism-Nature; 18. Humility.

2. Methodology

Our research group has designed the national project Identitatea Nationala a Tinerilor Romani, with the goal to profoundly comprehend the motion of national identity features and individual/ personal values between young individuals situated in the West region of Romania. Among the first inquiries of this study was the recognition of the possible association among benevolence as a self-transcendence value and humor as an openness to change value, both included in the anxiety free values, the first one being aligned to the social aspect and the second being oriented to the individual

aspect, as regard to the theory developed by Schwartz (2011). In light, an online questionnaire was designed with the aim to collect descriptive information and general assumptions and perceptions about one's national identity and values.

Beginning from three axes, described by Schwartz's (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 2006), such as: hierarchy/ egalitarianism, conservatism/ autonomy and mastery/ harmony, a 46 item instrument was developed. The developed questionnaire contained the following values (scales): self-determination (represented by: 1st, 2nd and 3rd items), stimulation (represented by: 5th, 6th and 7th items), hedonism (represented by: 8th, 9th and 10th items), achievement (represented by: 12th, 13th and 14th items), power (represented by: 16th, 17th and 18th items), security (represented by: 20th, 21st and 22nd items), conformity (represented by: 23rd, 24th and 25th items), tradition (represented by: 27th, 28th and 29th items), benevolence (represented by: 30th, 31st and 32nd items), universalism (represented by: 33rd and 34th items), humor (represented by: 36th, 37th and 38th items), trust (represented by: 40th, 41st and 42nd items), health (represented by: 44th, 45th and 46th items) and a dissimulation scale (represented by: 4th, 11th, 15th, 19th, 26th, 35th, 39th and 43rd items). The participants were given the information that they were engaging in a research regarding values. The confidentiality of data has also been granted and participants were asked to answer (on Google Forms platform) on a Likert scale from 1 to 6 the level of importance of the they give to the item, where one (1) represents less important and six (6) represents very important. Within this study, 220 participants responded to the developed instrument and the data was collected between November 2018 and December 2018, by distributing it on the internet communities, for willfully and voluntarily participation.

The hypothesis of this study states that benevolence and humor are in a curvilinear relationship. For the verification of the proposed hypothesis, based on curvilinear regression investigation for curvilinear results, SPSS (Version 20) a curvilinear regression analysis was used, where humor was the DV and benevolence was the IV.

Our present investigation has been developed on a random cohort of participants (N=220) from the West region of Romania, were 17.3% participants belonged to the males gender and 82.74% participants belonged to the females gender. The participants of this study come from both rural 42.7% and urban 57.3% contexts, having a level of education such as: 50% high school, 35.5% of bachelor and the least representative, 14.5% master education.

3. Results

Driven from the descriptive data analysis, it can be concluded that the leading perceived value of the participants of this study is intellectual autonomy. In the data analysis process, features such as intelligence ($m=5.57$) and creativity ($m=5.26$) being perceived as extremely significant were identified. Decreased scores that were identified to values such as pleasure with an $m=4.97$ and excitement and exciting life with a $m=5.04$ can illustrate a decreased interest towards the affective autonomy. Divergent to autonomy one can find conservatism, with participants perceiving this value as less important, were social order ($m=4.81$) and respect for traditions ($m=4.43$) presented the lowest scores. As regard to conservatism, a specific dimension of this value, i.e. security, presented an increased result ($m=5.52$).

The alpha Cronbach coefficient of the developed instrument presented a score of .839, implying that the items of the questionnaire have an increased internal consistency.

There is an equation representing Cronbach's alpha, such as a function of items' number and the average inter-correlations of the total number of items. In this light, formula for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is shown:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

N indicates items' number, c-bar indicates the average inter-item covariance among the items and v-bar represents the average variance.

In addition to calculating the alpha coefficient, we have investigated the dimensionality of the scale, using the Principal Component Analysis.

Table 1. PCA results

Component	TVE					
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.278	22.345	22.345	10.278	22.345	22.345
2	5.312	11.548	33.892	5.312	11.548	33.892
3	3.165	6.880	40.772	3.165	6.880	40.772

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4	2.600	5.651	46.423	2.600	5.651	46.423
5	2.050	4.457	50.880	2.050	4.457	50.880
6	1.843	4.007	54.886	1.843	4.007	54.886
7	1.528	3.322	58.209	1.528	3.322	58.209
8	1.452	3.156	61.365	1.452	3.156	61.365
9	1.366	2.969	64.333	1.366	2.969	64.333
10	1.281	2.785	67.118	1.281	2.785	67.118
11	1.118	2.431	69.549	1.118	2.431	69.549
12	1.035	2.250	71.799	1.035	2.250	71.799
13	.951	2.068	73.867			
14	.856	1.861	75.728			
15	.807	1.755	77.483			
16	.784	1.703	79.186			
17	.750	1.630	80.817			
18	.642	1.396	82.212			
19	.632	1.373	83.585			
20	.597	1.297	84.882			
21	.589	1.280	86.162			
22	.551	1.198	87.359			
23	.504	1.096	88.455			
24	.451	.981	89.436			
25	.427	.929	90.365			
26	.378	.822	91.187			
27	.367	.797	91.984			
28	.346	.752	92.736			
29	.320	.697	93.432			
30	.304	.660	94.092			
31	.283	.614	94.707			
32	.272	.591	95.297			
33	.253	.551	95.848			
34	.234	.508	96.356			
35	.226	.492	96.848			
36	.215	.466	97.314			

37	.205	.445	97.760
38	.166	.362	98.121
39	.157	.341	98.462
40	.146	.317	98.779
41	.134	.292	99.071
42	.121	.263	99.334
43	.088	.191	99.525
44	.087	.189	99.714
45	.071	.155	99.869
46	.060	.131	100.000

In Tab. 1, the total VE output has been included, where it can be depicted that the Eigen score for the 1st factor (10.278) is almost two times as large as the Eigen score for the second factor (5.312). These results can indicate that the scale items are unidimensional, the 1st factor explaining 71% of the total variance.

For the verification of the proposed hypothesis which states that that benevolence and humor are in a curvilinear relationship, a curvilinear regression analysis was utilized. A curvilinear association can be explained as an association between 2 or more variables that can be graphically depicted as a U shape contour or inverted U shape line (Balas Timar, 2014). When 2 variables expand in the same time until they range to a particular point (+ association) afterwards one expands meanwhile the second diminishes (- association) or the other way around, can represent a case of curvilinear relationships (Balas Timar, 2014).

In order to portray curvilinear results, this type of association can be recognized in a figure by a Scatterplot, by selecting supplementary 2 illustrations of the regression contour: 1. Linear model (M1) and 2. Quadratic model (M2). The Scatterplot illustration represented in Fig. 1 shows the curvilinear association between benevolence on the X axis and the humour, showed on the Y axis. Within this study, a number of 220 young individuals participated, coming from the West region Romania.

Figure 1. Linear and quadratic estimation of benevolence (benevolenta) and humour (umor)

We have computed a high positive relationship between benevolence ($m=4.86$, $SD=0.91$) and humor ($m=4.49$, $SD=0.981$) with a $r=.304$ significant at a $p<.01$, allowing the study to advance with the curvilinear regression investigation (Balas-Timar, 2014).

In order to tests the curvilinear relationship, a curvilinear regression investigation is proposed, the DV being benevolence, and the IV being humor in step 1 and in step 2 humor as DV and squared humor as IV.

It can be observed in Tab. 2 the results of the 2 models: the 1st the linear model M1 and the 2nd the curvilinear model M2. Like observed in M1, the model that presumes a linear association, benevolence is responsible for 8% of the variance in humor ($F=22.154$ significant at a $p<.01$). As for M2, the model that presumes a curvilinear association, benevolence is responsible for 25% of the variance in humor ($F=49.021$ significant at a $p<.01$).

Table 2. The association between humor and benevolence as personal values, model summary, ANOVA and coefficients

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.304 ^a	.092	.088	.873	.092	22.154	1	218	.000
2	.509 ^b	.260	.253	.790	.167	49.021	1	217	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), humor

b. Predictors: (Constant), humor, sqrt_humor

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.866	1	16.866	22.154	.000 ^b
	Residual	165.970	218	.761		
	Total	182.836	219			
2	Regression	47.451	2	23.725	38.028	.000 ^c
	Residual	135.386	217	.624		
	Total	182.836	219			

a. DV: benevolence

b. P: (Constant), humor

c. P: (Constant), humor, sqrt_humor

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.589	.277		12.976	.000
	humor	.283	.060	.304	4.707	.000
	(Constant)	-2.012	.838		-2.401	.017
2	humor	3.004	.392	3.224	7.655	.000
	sqrt_humor	-.313	.045	-2.948	-7.002	.000
	(Constant)					

a. DV: benevolence

As it can be observed in the processed results, the standardized Beta coefficients ($\beta=0.304$; $\beta=3.224$, $\beta=-2.948$) own significance at $p<.05$ providing a high consistency to both models. Transforming β coefficient's symbol from plus to minus can mean the fact that outcome increases in the contrary way, confirming that the association between benevolence and humor as values is curvilinear. The supplementary additional anticipating volume of 17 %, included by adding the squared humor which is responsible for the curve in the regression line, illustrates the curvilinear association between the two values, benevolence and humor.

The present curvilinear association proves that ultimate features, greatly decreased and greatly increased levels of humor, can influence the benevolence level (negatively). Regular levels of humor can cause an increased level of benevolence value prioritization. Therefore a too humoristic individual and a low humoristic individual can have a decreased level of benevolence viewed as a self-transcendence value, as regard to an individual with regular humoristic value prioritization that is correlated with an increased level of benevolence.

4. Discussions and conclusions

Individuals of all ages, gender, ethnicity and cultures respond to humor. Most individuals are able to experience humor, be amused, smile or laugh at something perceived as being funny (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

The types of theories attempting to explain the existence of humor are usually based on psychological studies, which consider the humor-induced behavior to be very healthy for the individual (Ruch, 2010). For instance, the benign-violation theory, postulates that humor can occur when something seems out of place or threatening, but at the same time seems acceptable or safe (McGraw, Warren, Williams, & Leonard, 2012); for example, humor can be used as a method within a social context by diminishing the sensation of feeling awkward or uncomfortable from social interactions. It is also stated in literature that humor can associate with some positive personality characteristics (Ruch, 2010).

The present study provides data to interclass dynamic associations between benevolence as a self-transcendence value and humor as openness to change value. The curvilinear association proves that ultimate features, extremely decreased and greatly increased levels of humor, can seriously cause the benevolence value, in a negative way. Regular levels of humor can cause an increased level of benevolence value prioritization.

Since the present study has its limitations, participants are 220 young individuals from Western Romania, supplementary analysis is required with the future purpose of expending these results to larger population.

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