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PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS - A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

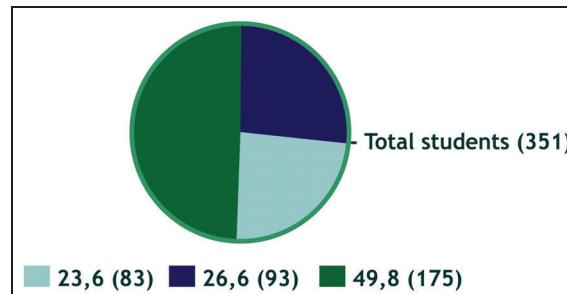
Research Objectives

The main objectives of the research are to compare the professional attitudes of first and last year social work students and, based on these findings, to make comparisons between the three populations (Hungarian, Romanian and Belgian). We find this research important because at the present time there are no established methods to detect changes in attitude that take may place during the four-year instructional period.

Institutional Participants in the Research

The following four institutions participated in the research

	Students	
	1 st Year	4 th Year
Institut Supérieur de Formation Social, Namur (Belgium)	41	42
Universitatea Babes-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca (Romania)	41	52
Barczy Gusztav Foiskola, Budapest (Hungary) & Eszterhazy Karoly Foiskola, Eger (Hungary)	88	87
Total number of students	170	181



In comparing the four participants, it is important to note that the Belgian institution has several decades of tradition in social training and education, while the Hungarian institutions have only ten years and the Romanian only eight.

Two Major Parts of the Research

1) Preliminary Research

The objectives of the preliminary research were to create an attitude scale, which was generated through a series of interviews with forty students. All students were asked what they found to be the most important aspect of social work and the scale was established based on their answers. (Note: none of these students participated later on in the principal research). The attitude scale is broken down into thirty items.

In the Principal Research, students were asked to rate each of the thirty items on their importance to the field of work on a scale of 1-5, one representing 'not important' and five representing 'very important'.

2) Principal Research

The aims of the research were to answer the following questions:

- What changes in professional attitude can be identified between first and fourth year students?
- What changes in attitude can be identified in all three groups (Hungarians, Romanian and Belgians)?
- What attitude changes are present only in one specific group?

The results were processed through factor analysis and significant changes were further analyzed.

Results of Research

Similar factors in professional attitude were found between the Hungarian and Romanian groups:

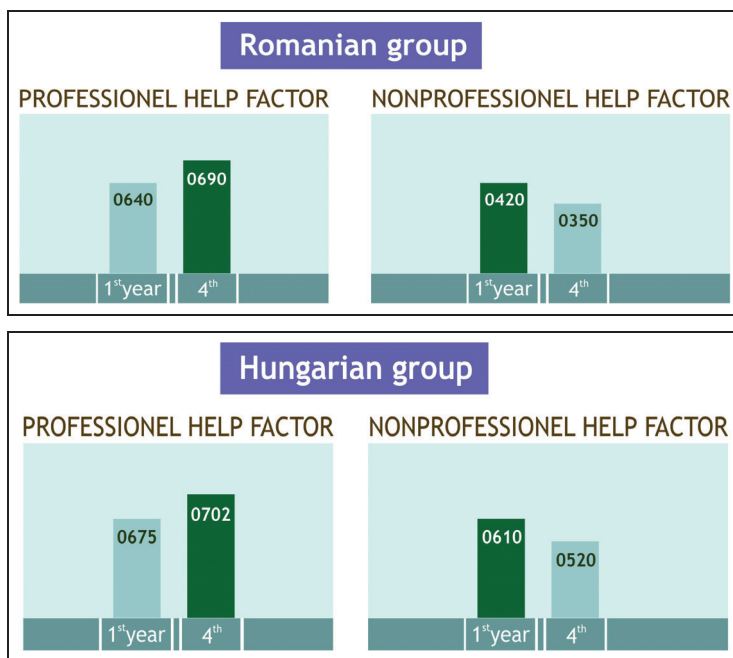
1. Professional Help Factor: This factor includes adequate professional attitudes.
2. Non-Professional Aid Factor: This factor contains attitudes that are subjective and overly emotional.
3. Client Oriented Factor: This factor contains attitudes of acceptance and detailed attention to the client.

4. Autonomous Factor: This factor contains attitudes of independence and definitiveness.

With regards to the first two types of factors, the following change can be found between the first year students and the fourth year students in both the Hungarian and the Romanian groups: the professional help factor increases in intensity and the non-professional aid factor decreases in intensity. The most important attitude changes that increased were:

1. *Hungarian Group* – professional attitudes, for example: understanding professional competence, professional discretion, professional tolerance, etc.
2. *Romanian Group* – professional attitudes, for example: attaining practical experience, genuine communication, confident atmosphere with clients, etc.

The most important attitude changes that decreased were similar in both groups: exaggerated affection towards helping the client, helping close friends and family, helping people with them requesting it or giving you permission to help, etc.



Summing up the changes in the first two factor types, we can conclude that the most important change is that the subjective and irrational professional behavior advances toward objective and rational behavior.

The autonomous factor/attitude (such as independent decision-making, objective behavior, etc.) and the client-oriented factor/attitude (such as unconditional acceptance, attention to client’s needs, etc.) increase in both the Hungarian and the Romanian groups.

During the instructional period, the client-oriented factor does not show any major changes. In the Romanian group, the factor increases slightly, and in the Hungarian group it decreases slightly.

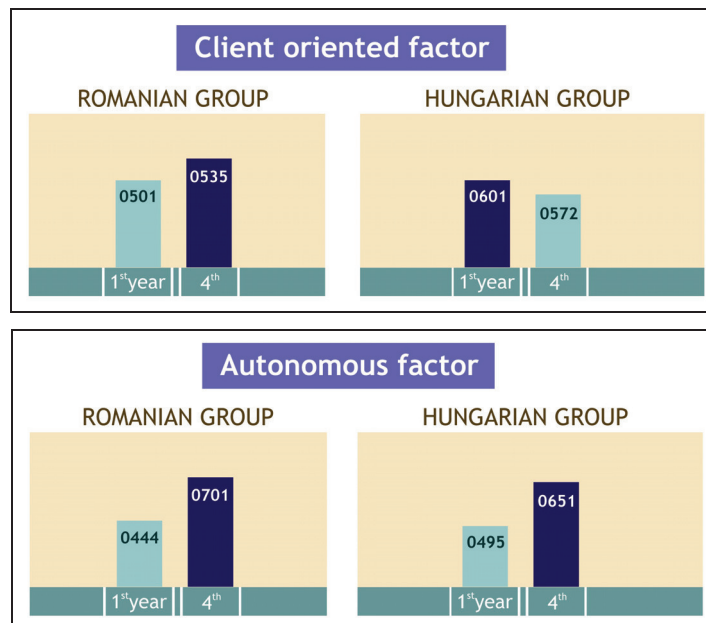
In both groups, the autonomous factor shows the most significant changes. These changes represent the responsibility and decision-making abilities that the groups foster during the four-year instructional period.

1. In the Belgian group there are four factors:

- Professional Help factor
- Non-professional Aid factor
- Autonomous factor
- Professional Objectivity factor

With the first two factors, largely the same differences can be seen as in the Hungarian and Romanian groups.

The autonomous factor is strong at the beginning of the instructional period and steadily increases in the duration of the instructional period, with greater factor weights than in the other two groups.



The Belgian group contains a strong professional objectivity factor, which is not present in the Hungarian and Romanian groups. The presence of this factor can be explained by two reasons: the traditional learning processes and the important values of Belgian society (for example: equality, justice, etc.)