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## **The Concept of Solid Morality in the Perspective of Development**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption is able to fundamentally shake order and predictability, which are the key features of security. Law enforcement agencies are determined to maintain security and order. Therefore, any activity which intends to prevent corruption or develop the staff's solid morality is particularly important. The aim of this study is to promote the development of educational and training work in this field. The senior management has defined some basic requirements towards the staff's solid morality. The study describes the results of a survey conducted among 149 people from the police vocational schools, the Faculty of Law Enforcement of the National University of Public Service, and the police executive staff. The way the different groups view solid morality help to develop training and educational material to achieve solid morality.

*Keywords:* corruption, integrity, solid morality, *SZEMmodel*, "good policeman", motivation, education and training, student, junior staff

### **Introduction**

The concept of security (NÉMETH, 2011) is rather diversified, and covers almost every aspect of life. *Order* and orderliness are among its main characteristics, clearly leading to predictability and transparency, which are the basic conditions of subjective security. *Corruption* fundamentally shakes order by providing an opportunity for violating the written and unwritten rules of order in exchange for some consideration, giving priority to the interest of an individual to the interest of others/of the community. This is why for any law enforcement agency which is responsible for maintaining security and order any activity that is aimed at preventing corruption both at individual and organizational level is especially important. One way of achieving that goal is to strengthen the ability of individuals to resist the challenge of corruption, i.e., their *solid morality*, which is supported by all theoretical and practical research aimed at disclosing the phenomenon of solid morality.

## The research

### Research background

The concept of solid morality was introduced into law enforcement by Minister of Interior Dr. Sándor Pintér at the ministerial educational meeting in 2014. That meeting set a task of researching the psychological tools with which law enforcement agencies could combat corruption effectively and elaborating psychological questionnaires for selecting more effectively any inclination for corruption (*solid morality indicator*) (BMSZÜ/43-4/2015.). The volume of studies (MALÉT-SZABÓ, 2015a) summarising the results of the first research activities conducted in that regard within the framework of the ÁROP-2.2.17-2012-2013-0001 new public service career priority project was released partly aiming at implementing that task. In the studies the authors define solid morality and describe the *SZEMmodel* (recommended for measuring solid morality based on theoretical and practical aspects, HUNYADY-MÜNNICH, 2016). Based on the theory of planned behavior developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (AJZEN, 2005), the *SZEMmodel* emphasizes the role of the *subjective attitude*, *norm* and *behaviour control* of the individual with some other complementary components (see Figure 1) in the development of resistance to a corruption challenge, i.e., intention to behave in line with solid morality, and the prediction of the specific behaviour accordingly.



Figure 1

*Characteristics of the internal correlation of the SZEMmodel*

Source: HUNYADY-MÜNNICH, 2016: 52.

It is important to emphasize that, according to one of the basic ideas of the *SZEMmodel*, solid morality behaviour is not a congenital feature but is learnt during the development and socialization of the individual, which makes it an ability that *may be developed* and providing an excellent basis for any educational, training and further training activity.

That is how a questionnaire-based survey implemented within the framework of the respective research of the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Interior described in this study was launched to identify the subjective content of solid morality and its subjective place in the expectations for a good policeman, primarily to assist educational, training and further training activities aimed at the development of solid morality.

## Research methodology

Focusing on the primary target groups of law enforcement education, training and further training activities, in my research I addressed *students of law enforcement vocational schools, students of the National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement* (hereinafter NKE RTK) and the *members of the active police staff primarily involved in execution tasks* and most often exposed to corruption challenges. 149 people completed the full questionnaire; 37 of them were first form students of Adyliget Vocational School of Law Enforcement (hereinafter RSZK), 48 people were first-year students of NKE RTK and 64 people were official members of staff of four police headquarters. Within the total sample, 65.8% were men and 34.2% were women.

The research was conducted with a paper-based questionnaire, containing the following 5 questions:

1. *Why did you choose a career in the police/law enforcement?* (It was a multi-choice question.)
2. *In your opinion, how well will you satisfy the 'good policeman' expectations?* (Answers given on a scale of 11 degrees.)
3. *In your opinion, what characteristics must a 'good policeman' have"?* (The three main characteristics had to be defined.)
4. *In your opinion, how difficult it is to comply with the 'good policeman' requirement in everyday work?* (Answers given on a scale of 11 degrees.)
5. *What does solid morality mean to you?* (it was an open question.)

## Primary result of the research, identification of the content of the concept of solid morality

The concept of solid morality (MALÉT-SZABÓ, 2015b) appears as an opposite of corruption, just line *integrity*, in the *National Anti-corruption Programme* (2015: 5.), which refers to intactness, impeccability, incorruptibility and purity. Its description and definition may be based on a number of approaches: only on theoretical basis, relying on the processing of the technical literature (for which the SZEMmodel is an example (HUNYADY-MÜNNICH, 2016: 64–65.), or relying on the results of empirical research, focusing on the opinion of managers, the junior staff or students of educational institutions.

## Practical approach to the concept of solid morality from managers

A certain practical approach to the concept of solid morality refers to the assessment and summary of the opinions of number one managers who fundamentally determine the activities and operation of law enforcement agencies and the requirements for the staff. The following definition is an example:

*"Solid morality is a personality feature of an individual with which they accept the effective social norms (including legal and ethical norms), following them without hesitation and protecting them persistently.*

Consequently, a colleague with solid morality

- fully complies with the social norms, i.e., the written and unwritten rules indispensable for maintaining the public trust required for the operation of the law enforcement agencies in terms of personality behaviour and thinking;
- and complies with them in their professional and private life under all circumstances;
- lives their lives based on those rules and moral credo;
- and is also exempt of any actual or apparent aspect which would influence those characteristics negatively.” (MALÉT-SZABÓ–CSATÓ, 2015: 24.)

In summary, a colleague with solid morality will not hesitate in any situation where they face a moral (corruption) challenge.

### Practical approach to the concept of solid morality from the staff

Another practical approach to the concept of solid morality relates to the survey and summary of the opinions of the policeman executing tasks and most exposed to corruption challenges in most cases, as well as of the first-year vocational school and university students intending to join the police force, who are not included in the group of managers. The research described in this study is a good example of it.

According to the results, the subjective concept of vocational school and university students and policemen, who are members of active police staff about solid morality matches a great deal the opinion of the number one managers of the law enforcement agencies. On the basis of the content analysis of the responses to the open question asked from them, the most frequently mentioned contents were as follows: *I do not give in and resist temptation* (54.6%), *following social norms* (34%), and *following the norms that have become internal norms* (22.7%). These elements together almost fully cover the definition of top managers.

Table 1

*Breakdown of the content elements of solid morality in the research sample*

Subjective content elements of solid morality	Number of persons	%	Percentage ratio			Independence assessment (Chi box)
			Adyligeti RSZKI (36 persons)	NKE RTK (48 persons)	Police (56 persons)	
I do not give in	77	54.6	50	79.2	37.5	p < 0.001
Following social norms	48	34	41.7	18.8	42.9	p < 0.05
Following the norms that have become own/internal norms	32	22.7	19.4	22.9	23.2	–
Integrity	22	15.6	13.9	10.4	21.4	–

Avoiding bad	14	9.9	8.3	18.8	3.6	p < 0.05
Honesty	13	9.2	2.8	4.2	17.9	p < 0.05
Performing required tasks	13	9.2	0	8.3	16.1	p < 0.05
Solid morality also followed in private life	12	8.5	0	4.2	17.9	p < 0.01
Exemplary conduct	10	7.1	8.3	6.3	7.1	–
Following good	7	5	11.1	6.3	0	–
Persecution of crime	5	3.5	2.8	4.2	3.6	–
Choosing good even if it involves suffering	5	3.5	2.8	2.1	5.4	–

Source: Own editing

Comparing the results of the 3 research groups (see Table 1), it is clear that the strongest difference can be observed in the “I do not give in” component, which appears most frequently in the entire sample. The ability and intention of increased resistance to external negative impacts occurred by far most frequently among university students (79.2%), and the least among the policemen who are members of the active staff (37.5%). Presumably this also stems from the strong self-confidence of young people and their idea, which is most probably an actual intention at that age, that they are able and willing to resist any negative impact, bad or crime arriving from the external world. This tendency is especially strong among the university students who usually think and consider themselves more positively partly on the basis of their actual results, as they study at a university, and appears only to a moderate (average) extent among the students of the vocational school of law enforcement. The members of the active police staff who have more life and work experience are most probably aware of the limits of their own abilities and the external forces and impacts of temptation affecting them. Consequently, in their case in the content of the concept of solid morality the importance of the ability of *solid resistance* (37.5%) is only secondary to *the following social/moral norms* (42.9%), which is also associated with the highest rate of appearance of *performing required tasks and moral conduct also followed in private life* found in the research sample.

It was an interesting result that while *following social norms* appeared most rarely among university students (18.8%), the *avoiding bad* content element also appeared by far the most in that group (18.8%). Obviously, this element belongs to the social norms, just like the *following good* content element, which occurred most frequently among the vocational school students (11.1%).

### Most important characteristics of a good policeman

In order to define the 3 most important characteristics of a good policeman, the respondents had to choose from 11 characteristics in the questionnaire, each of which may be considered a basic requirement for a policeman suitable for professional service [Act XLII of 2015, Section 33; Joint Decree 57/2009 (30 September), Annex 6].

Table 2  
*Breakdown by percentage of the characteristics of a good policeman in the research sample*

<b>Breakdown in percentage of the required characteristics  of a good policeman in the individual research groups,  presented in an order, decreasing according to the ratio of their appearance</b>			
Total (149 persons)	RSZKI (37 persons)	NKE (48 persons)	Policemen (64 persons)
decisiveness (65%)	decisiveness (70%)	decisiveness (63%)	decisiveness (64%)
integrity (51%)	good problem solving ability (54%)	integrity (46%)	integrity (64%)
solid morality (48%)	solid morality (51%)	good problem solving ability (42%)	solid morality (55%)
good problem solving ability (43%)	integrity (35%)	solid morality (38%)	good problem solving ability (38%)
good conflict management (33%)	good conflict management (30%)	good communication skills (33%)	good conflict management (38%)
Total (149 persons)	RSZKI (37 persons)	NKE (48 persons)	Policemen (64 persons)
good communication skills (24%)	good physical strength (19%)	good conflict management (29%)	good communication skills (22%)
good physical strength (13%)	adequate appearance (16%)	ability of control (17%)	good intellect (14%)
adequate appearance (12%)	good communication skills (14%)	good physical strength (17%)	adequate appearance (11%)
good intellect (9%)	good intellect (5%)	adequate appearance (10%)	good physical strength (8%)
ability of control (7%)	ability of control (5%)	good intellect (6%)	other (2%)
other (1%)	other	other	kindness (2%)
kindness (1%)	kindness	kindness	ability of control

*Source:* Own editing

Table 2 summarising the respective results shows well that *decisiveness* appears most frequently (63–70%) as a characteristic feature required from a good policeman both in the total sample and in the sub-samples. It is followed by the trio of *integrity* (35–64%), *solid morality* (38–55%) and *good problem solving ability* (38–54%). Of those, integrity, which is a concept close to solid morality, is not in second place only among the law enforcement vocational school students, while solid morality is in fourth place only among the university students, but is in third place in the other sub-groups and in the whole sample. It is probably due to the participation in training and the training topics that the importance of good problem solving ability is more important than solid morality for students, although among the university students integrity was placed higher.

Analyzing everything from the aspect of solid morality, it may be concluded that for the respondents in general solid morality is of outstanding but not of primary importance together with integrity, which is a partially related concept, among the characteristics expected from a good policeman.

### **Is it difficult to be or remain a good policeman?**

It indicates compliance with social expectations and the high degree of self-confidence of the respondents that many of those who completed the questionnaires thought that they complied very well with the expectations for a “good policeman” (average = 9.29 on the scale of 11). The opinion of vocational school students reflected the highest degree of compliance, and the opinion of the university students reflected the lowest level (but even in their case the respective average was 9.02).

There was a greater difference among the research groups in the responses to the question of *how difficult it is in general to meet the expectations for a “good policeman”* in everyday work (Kruskal–Wallis test,  $p < 0,01$ ). Those vocational school students (average 7.3) and university students (average 7.83) who did not have any specific practical experience yet described it as more difficult than the policemen who already had practical experience (average 5.89).

### **Motivation for becoming a policeman**

Identifying the main motifs why young people choose a career in the police is crucial to assist any attempt to develop solid morality, because it can directly influence the full integration of an individual into the organization of the police. Table 3 presenting the results shows well that the attractive effect of the career in the police *as an assisting profession* is clearly ranked first (60%) but, in addition to the actual motivation of the respondents, the choice was also probably affected by the socially strongly desirable nature of that aspect. The *exciting aspects* of a career in the police was ranked next with an identical percentage (52%) among the vocational school and university students together with the respondents' confidence in their *suitability* for that career. It was followed by the *attraction of a police career stemming from childhood* (37%), which also occurred most frequently among the vocational school and university students (41–50%), and the career, presumably guaranteed in the police, which was important mostly for the vocational school students (37%). Contrary to the above, the *guaranteed income* (36%) which was also mentioned in a similar percentage, turned out to be most important among the active policemen (42.2%). It is an interesting aspect that almost every third respondent selected the response of “I have always liked crime series and films about crimes”. Nonetheless, 15–17% of the respondents openly stated that they did not opt for a career in the police based on their internal motivation in part or at all but as a result of a kind of passive drifting, or with the intention of following the *example of the parents*.

Analyzing the above from the aspect of solid morality, it may be concluded that while the assisting attitude, important for all, and presumably standing in the first place in terms

of social desire is likely to support the emergency and development of solid morality, in the case of vocational school and university students the especially emphasized excitement involved in police work and financial motivation, which was the strongest among vocational school students in terms of career and among the active staff in terms of guaranteed income are likely to pose a certain challenge to solid morality.

In terms of assisting educational and training work, it should clearly be emphasized that among the vocational school and university students emotion driven choices are in the first place among the motivation factors and, in the case of university students, they are also completed with the attraction of excitement and the drifting in the choice of career, indicating the uncertainty of deliberate career choice.

Table 3

*Breakdown by career motivation factors in percentage in the research sample*

Breakdown of the career motivation factors in percentage in the research groups		Number of persons	%	Percentage ratio			Independence assessment (Chi box)
		141	100	Adyigeti RSZKI (36 persons)	NKE RTK (48 persons)	Police (56 persons)	
1	I've always wanted to do something that is useful for mankind	90	60.4	80.6	64.6	46.9	p < 0.01
2	I like helping people	89	59.7	61.1	60.4	57.8	–
3	I am attracted by exciting things	77	51.7	63.9	66.7	34.4	p < 0.01
4	I thought I would become a good policeman	77	51.7	55.6	62.5	40.6	–
5	I always wanted to be a policeman from my early childhood	55	36.9	50	41.7	26.6	p < 0.05
6	A career in law enforcement is what I am looking for	55	36.9	63.9	35.4	21.9	p < 0.001
7	I was looking for guaranteed income	53	35.6	25	33.3	42.2	–
8	I have always liked crime series and films	44	29.5	22.2	43.8	23.4	p < 0.05
9	This was the only thing that I was somewhat interested in	26	17.4	16.7	25	12.5	–
10	I am attracted by the uniform	22	14.8	27.8	16.7	6.3	p < 0.05



11	I have a lot of policeman/ law enforcement employees among my friends	16	10.7	11.1	16.7	6.3	–
12	I have also been injured before	15	10.1	16.7	14.6	3.1	p < 0.05
13	My parents also work for the police	14	9.4	11.1	10.4	7.8	–
14	My parents wanted it	7	4.7	8.3	2.1	4.7	–
15	other	6	4	5.6	2.1	4.7	–

Source: Own editing

## Conclusion

As a conclusion of this paper, the practical utilization of the results should be highlighted which, apart from representing real progress in the Hungarian application of the integrity methodology, could also be especially relevant in planning educational and training work in various training institutions. The *SZEMmodel*, created as the solid morality measurement model, provided a theoretical framework for training and development. The results of this research, according to which the subjective opinions of first form law enforcement vocational school students, first-year students of NKE RTK and active policemen about the content and role of solid morality in becoming a good policeman, can indicate a direction in competence development, which is becoming increasingly important in secondary and higher education and also in the regular training of the active staff and is also aimed at the development of solid morality. This is why we consider it important to gradually integrate the results achieved so far in the practical HR activities of the police.

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Act XLII of 2015 on the Service Status of the Official Staff of Law Enforcement Agencies

Joint Decree of the Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement, Minister of Local Governments and of the Minister without Portfolio in Charge of Civilian National Security Services 57/2009 (30 October) IRM–ÖM–PTNM on the health, psychological and physical suitability of the professional members of certain law enforcement agencies, the health suitability of public employees and public servants, on the establishment of inability to perform service or earn money and on the primary health care

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