

Original Research Article

The Choice of Career and the Self-efficacy with Bulgarian Students

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Abstract

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The concept of the study is based on the integral nature of the problem taking into account, the joint influence of personality characteristics with career choices and self-efficacy in secondary students and university students. To test the hypotheses, a diagnostic tool for exploring the features of the person known as the Big Five was used, as well as a tool for studying career choices and self-efficacy, adapted by S. Karabeliev. The survey covers the period from 2016 to 2018. The respondents are 592 university students and late-teenage students. The data are processed with SPSS – 21. According to the results obtained, the career paths in the students in Bulgaria are the aspirations for work, mostly related to people and ideas. The strongest is the orientation towards the artistic, social and research type, and the least realistic is the practical one. Differences in the scores of individual types in the hexagonal model of career aspirations are recorded, with the structure of the career profiles being an incorrect hexagon in both studied groups – secondary students and university students. The following trends have been identified in the study of variations in career preferences on the individual dimensions. Relatively more stable is the conventional type, as it differentiates significantly from gender, age, and group of surveyed respondents. The research and social type are relatively the most varied.

Keywords: Big five, Bulgarian students, Career choice, Self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Traditional concepts of career choice and career development are replaced by an understanding of a career without borders (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and a varied career (Hall, 1996). Thus, in defining the term "career", in addition to objective aspects, internal (subjective) are included. In literature, the term 'career' stands out with a multitude of meanings due to differences in the vision for its content:

✓ A profession (a mix of similar knowledge and skills obtained as a result of training or work experience and determining the ability for realization in a certain work activity); 2. A vocation (work activity of a given individual

which ensures salary or any other income); 3. A position (a mix of functions, tasks and other requirements for the individual like knowledge and skills for a particular type of work activity performed at the workplace. The position is directly related to the set of tasks that a person performs in the work environment. Therefore, there could be as many positions as the number of employees);

✓ 1. A successful advance in a professional or other activity. 2. Profession, vocation, diplomatic service. 3. ..." (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. National demarcation of professions and posts);

✓ 1. A chosen profession, activity, vocation. 2. Success in

the profession, winning a position in society or in the vocational field. 3. Diplomatic career" (Milev, Alexander and others. *A Dictionary of Foreign Words in the Bulgarian Language* / Alexander Milev, Jordan Bratkov, Bozhil Nikolov.- Sofia: Science and Art, 1978. – 896 p., 324 p);

✓ 1. The path or progress in life or history; 2. Means of living or personal development; 3. Career-obsessed – a person focused mainly on personal advancement and success in life" (Hornby, A.S., Cowie, A.P. and Gimson A.C. (1989) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 139 p);

✓ A career is an evolution of the statuses, roles, responsibilities and prestige associated with the professional life of the individual; successful advancement in professional development, which consistently changes from one type of professional activity to another, from one institutional position to another" (Tilikidzhiev, Nikolai. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology*. – Sofia: BAS, 1996. – 638 pp., 188 pp.).

✓ 1. Career as progress; 2. Career as a profession; 3. Career as a series of consistent work experiences throughout one's life; 4. Career as a lifelong role-playing experience" (Hall, D.T. (1976). *Careers in organizations*. In: Greenhaus, J., Baron, R. (2003). (5th Ed.). *Behavior in Organization*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.);

✓ Career is probably reflected in the idea of moving up in the chosen profession – earning more money, bearing more responsibility, acquiring higher status, prestige and power" (Ivanchevich and Glueck, 1989). *Career Planning and Development* (ch.14) *Foundations of Personnel: Human Resource Management* (4th Ed.). Homewood, IL: Irwin, 603 p.);

✓ A series of job-related positions, roles, activities, and experiences that one encounters" (Arnold, J. (1997). *Managing Careers into the 21st Century*, London: Chapman, 16 p.).

According to other authors, a career definition includes internal (subjective) aspects besides objective ones:

- Topics and concepts that a person develops and that make sense of the individual and his / her aspirations in relation to work "(Shein, E.H. (1990). *Career stress in changing times: Some final observations*. *Prevention in Human Services*, 8 (1), 257 p.);

- A subjectively-oriented career is defined as dominated by the attitudes, values, and perceptions that one has about the career itself" (Stephens, G.K. (1994). *Crossing internal career boundaries: The state of research on subjective career transitions*. *Journal of Management*. 20(2), 480 p.).

Research on the career and career development of employees in organizations dates back to the early years of the twentieth century. One of the first researchers was Frederick Parsons, who in his book *Choosing a Profession* (1909), considered ideas for the career development of the individual (Iskrev, Dimitar. *Professional Career – Personality Relationships: Approaches and Theoretical Views*, *Directions*, 1997, No 8, 59-68 p.).

Since the mid-twentieth century, career has generally

been defined in two directions: the first implies movement, progress, development, and the second does not accept the change of professions by a person as career development.

Until the 1950s and 1960s in the USA, the research was aimed at selecting and entering a professional field (Ginzberg et al., 1951) *Occupational choice: An approach to general theory*. N.Y.: Columbia University press.), (Super D. E. (1957) *The psychology of careers*, N.Y.: Harper and Row.), (Tiedeman D.V. and O'Hara R.P. (1963) *Career development: Choice and adjustment*. N.Y.: College Entrance Examination Board.)).

In the 1970s job specificities and factors that influence career choice and success were studied (Hall D. T. and Hall E. S. (1976) *The relationship between goals, performance, success, self-image, and involvement under different organization climates*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*.), (Holland J. L (1973) *Matching vocational choices: A theory of careers*. Englewood, Calif: Prentice Hall.), (Schein, E. H.(1978) *Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).

In career research in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus shifted to the individual in the organization as a system and the stages of career, career ladder, career plateau were studied. (Greenhaus, J. H .and Callanan, G. A. (1994) *Career Management*, Forth Worth: The Dryden Press.), (Hall, D. T. (1988) *When career plateau*. *Research Management*.), (Holland J. L. (1985) *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall.).

Some authors (VA Polyakov, SN Chistyakov, etc.) accept the dynamic characteristic of professional self-determination and the ability to choose a profession. The basis of its assessment is the idea of the three components of the self-image: cognitive – 'I know', emotionally evaluating – 'connecting', behavioral – 'acting'. The assessment of the ability to choose a profession is determined by the following indicators: introspection index; professional analysis index; the comprehensiveness index of the profession's requirements for the individual. In addition, a common indicator of the ability to choose a profession is determined by adding these indices and dividing them by three. This approach is a modification of the S. Fukuyama's F-test (Fukuyama, S. *Theoretical Foundations of Professional Orientation* / S. Fukuyama. - M.: Moscow State University Publishing House, 1989. - 108 pp. 8. Chistyakova, SN). However, it should be noted that the opportunity to choose a profession does not include the willingness of students to pursue professional intentions, which reduces the objectivity of evaluating the effects of career guidance. Most researchers believe that in terms of personal approach, the professional criterion for the effectiveness of professional self-determination is the desire for it. Of course, in the primary, secondary and high school years, only the foundations of self-determination are laid, the final formation occurs in the process of vocational training and work under the influence of a set of factors of the social

environment. However, the opinion of those scientists (A. Y. Zhurkin, S. N. Chistyakov and others) who believe that "there are a number of indicators, moral-volitional and motivational characteristics, for the formation of which a certain stage of age development is sensitive" (Methods of formation of professional self-determination of schoolchildren at different age stages: The book for the teacher / Ed. A Z. Zhurkina, SN Chistyakov. - Kemerovo: Kemerovo region. UIU, 1996. - 149 p.). If this is not taken into account, the continuity between the stages of professional self-determination is violated, which leads to the fact that a considerable part of the students still cannot reach the required level of professional readiness. Their readiness for professional self-determination is defined as a stable integral system of professionally important qualities of a person.

The choice of career as an expression of personality is reflected in J. Holland's theoretical approach, according to which personality is a product of both genetic and social psychological characteristics. This gives grounds for the study to apply methods for measuring personality type I-efficiency in the social environment. In this perspective, the basic assumption is that the personality dimensions of the Big Five and the self-efficacy of A. Bandura can have a direct and indirect effect on young people's career aspirations. The aim is to identify dominant career preferences and to determine if there are significant differences in individual aspirations. In order to achieve this goal, we go through discovering the importance of the studied personality traits and self-efficacy, analyzing the relationships between personality traits, career preferences and self-efficacy.

The survey covers the period from 2016 to 2018. The respondents were 485 young adulthood students. Data were processed with SPSS - 21.

A combination of the following basic complementary research methods is used:

The first questionnaire was created by C. Nybaken, G. Siegel, and K. Ferlatzo (Nybakken, Siegel, & Ferlatzo, 2003), adapted for and standardized for the Bulgarian socio-cultural environment by S. Karabeliova (Karabeliova, 2015). The method takes into account career preferences and is based on John Holland's theoretical model of the Big Six. The questionnaire consists of 48 statements with a four-point Likert-type rating scale. In the Bulgarian version of the questionnaire, each statement is evaluated with a four-point rating scale, ranging from "Not at all relevant to me" to "Fully applicable to me".

Examples of statements on the scale for a realistic personality type are: "It's important for me to have an athletic body", "I can usually handle things on my own", "I like to buy practical things that I can do afterwards", etc.

The second scale brings together the statements that determine the exploratory personality type. They are of the type – "I need to fully understand things", "I like conversations to be intellectually stimulating", "I am curious about how nature is arranged", etc.

The third scale contains statements that describe the artistic type of people. Examples include: "I like the beautiful setting as colors and design mean a lot to me", "I like to try new creative ideas", "When I create, I tend to pay no attention to anything else", etc.

The fourth scale defines the social type and includes statements such as: "People enrich my life and bring meaning to it", "I can often feel when a person needs to talk to someone", "People often share their problems with me", etc.

The statements in the fifth scale describe the entrepreneurial personality type. Examples of statements that apply are: "I'm sure I can do the things I want", "To be successful, you have to aim high", "I like to bargain", etc.

The statements that are included in the sixth scale describe the conventional (traditional) personality type and are, for example: "I need clear instructions to do things right", "I don't like being responsible for important decisions", "I need to know what exactly people expect of me", etc.

The second questionnaire in the Bulgarian socio-cultural environment totally confirms the five-factor structural and high-consistency of each scale (Karabeliova, Petrov, Milanov, Ivanova, 2012). The scores on the five scales range from 4 to 20, with low values (4-12) indicating: introversion, competitiveness, non-focus, emotional stability, reluctance to try again (non-response of innovation, resistance to change), while high values (13-20) show extraversion, collaboration, conscientiousness (purposefulness), neuroticism (emotional instability), openness to new experiences.

The first dimension, Extraversion, includes statements that describe whether a person is energetic, active, and fond of social gatherings or is modest and reserved.

The second dimension, Collaboration, responds to the "Orientation to Others" factor of P. Costa and R. McCree's model. The meaning of the statement determines whether people are caring, careful in their interactions with others, and cooperating, or rather seeking to compete and be competitive.

The next dimension, Openness to New Experience, describes whether a person prefers to act in an unconventional way and accepts change as a challenge, or rather is conservative, practical and prefers the familiar.

The fourth dimension, called "Purpose", corresponds to the "Good faith" factor of P. Costa and R. McCree's model. This dimension describes people as highly motivated, self-disciplined, sensitive to details, or as people with low aspirations for achievement, spontaneous in their behavior and to some extent disorganized and inconsistent.

The last dimension, Neuroticism, includes the claims. Based on the meaning of the statements, people can be described as tense and anxious or as emotionally stable, confident and coping with stressful situations.

The third questionnaire measures the self-efficacy of A. Bandura by linking a person's confidence in his or her own ability to act in such a way that his or her statements lead to the desired result. According to A. Bandura, self-efficacy is

Table 1. General career profile of surveyed respondents.

| Personality types and working environments | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|---------|----------------|
| REALISTIC | 24.1571 | 3.42836 |
| INVESTIGATIVE | 24.7403 | 3.60133 |
| ARTISTIC | 24.0918 | 3.99852 |
| SOCIAL | 24.3919 | 3.71194 |
| ENTERPRENEURSHIP | 23.1622 | 3.52665 |
| CONVENTIONAL | 26.1261 | 3.49858 |

Table 2. Correlation between personality types by the big five and career choice

| Big five and career choice | EXTRAVERSION | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|
| | RSION | AGREE | CONS | NEUROTISM | OPPENESS |
| REALISTIC | .196** | .174** | .131** | -.032 | .026 |
| | .000 | .000 | .002 | .442 | .534 |
| INVESTIGATIVE | -.077 | .094* | .138** | -.022 | .160** |
| | .060 | .022 | .001 | .602 | .000 |
| ARTISTIC | -.065 | .157** | .002 | -.052 | .078 |
| | .116 | .000 | .971 | .211 | .058 |
| SOCIAL | .024 | .397** | .065 | .210** | .222** |
| | .563 | .000 | .118 | .000 | .000 |
| ENTERPRENEURSHIP | .501** | .209** | .019 | .035 | .172** |
| | .000 | .000 | .651 | .395 | .000 |
| CONVENTIONAL | -.229** | -.032 | .519** | .217** | -.197** |
| | .000 | .437 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

related to a person's perception of his or her ability to act successfully in specific situations (Bandura, A., D. Cioffi, C. Barr-Taylor & M. Brouillard, perceived self-efficacy in coping with cognitive stressors and opioid activation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 479-488, 1988). The subjectively perceived self-efficacy can be used to predict behavior in a number of areas – cognitive functioning, coping with stressors, health-related behavior (Bandura, 1986).

First place is the career preference for the traditional type characterized by organization, systematic order, responsibility, consistency, accuracy and feasibility, but with low imagination and creativity. The desire to work in structured and familiar situations with an emphasis on human relationships and the desire to work in a team with dominant motives for helping people and a commitment to humane causes prevails. Responsibility and concern for the well-being of others is outstripped by realistic attitudes. Secondly, the preferences for the Research type, characterized by curiosity, precision and consistency, with the aim of solving abstract problems, demonstrating scientific competence and independently finding non-standard solutions in which the needs of autonomy dominant in their behavior, are ranked. Subjectively perceived self-efficacy can serve to predict behavior in a number of areas – cognitive functioning, coping with stressors and health-related behavior. Table 1

The last place is for the entrepreneurial type characterized by qualities such as self-confidence, ambition and adventurism, as well as an orientation to developing

leadership skills, a desire to overcome barriers, to meet challenges and competition, flexible behavior.

Such a choice of career types clearly distinguishes preferences for work – physical or working with people as is shown in the quasi-circular arrangement of J. Atanasu's interests, where the artistic, social and research type of person prefer to work with people, and the conventional, realistic and research type prefer technical work.

The correlation analysis shows that extroverts would prefer a career in which they feel good among large groups of people and like to attend crowded gatherings. In addition, because they are assertive, active and lively, extroverts would focus on energy-intensive entrepreneurship activities and are generally optimistic. Sales representatives are the prototype of extroverts in our culture. Table 2

Evidence shows that openness to new experiences, commitment and teamwork are the traits of people who would choose a research-based career. The profile of these personalities is associated with active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, reflexiveness to one's own feelings, pursuit of diversity, intellectual curiosity and independence of opinions and evaluations. Individuals open to new experiences are curious about both the external and the internal world and their lives are rich in new experiences. They readily embrace new ideas and unconventional values and gain experience from both their positive and negative experiences.

The alternative formulation of the five-factor model of personality often calls this trait "Intellect" and links it to the measurement of education and intelligence. Openness to new experiences is particularly closely linked to certain

Table 3. Correlation between the career choice and Self-efficacy

| Career choice and self-efficacy | SELF EFFICACY |
|--|----------------------|
| REALISTIC | .190** |
| | .000 |
| INVESTIGATIVE | .197** |
| | .000 |
| ARTISTIC | .126** |
| | .002 |
| SOCIAL | .244** |
| | .000 |
| ENTERPRENEURSHIP | .448** |
| | .000 |
| CONVENTIONAL | .021 |
| | .613 |

aspects of intelligence, such as divergent thinking, which is crucial for productivity, but it is in no way equivalent to intelligence. Some very intelligent people are closed for new experiences, and some open-minded individuals have quite limited intellectual capacity.

It may be said that those who do not want to adopt new experiences have more limited and superficial interests. Although they are conservative about social and political issues, they cannot be said to be authoritarian. Unwillingness for new experiences does not imply hostile intolerance and authoritarian aggression. These qualities are more characteristic of the extremely low values on the "Target to others" scale. A similar distinction can be made for the other pole. Open-minded individuals tend to question authority and readily embrace new ethical, social and political ideas. However, these trends do not mean that they are unprincipled. An open-to-new experience person can adhere to their own value system as consciously as a traditionalist. Many psychologists consider openness as a new attempt to be a more valuable personality trait, but the value of openness or closeness depends on the requirements of the situation, so that both those open and closed to new experiences are beneficial to society. The focus on collaborative artistic careers, like extraversion, is linked to interpersonal relationships. The directed individual is fundamentally altruistic and inclined to sympathize with and empathize with others. The opposite is the oppositional personality, who is rather self-centered and skeptical of others' intentions and prefers to compete with them rather than cooperate.

The regulatory function of self-efficacy on the overall functioning of the individual is explained by the influence of views on one's self-efficacy on four basic psychic processes – cognitive, affective, motivational and selective. Table 3

Views of high self-efficacy and belief in one's own abilities lead to the choice of tasks with higher difficulty – i.e. setting higher goals. Low self-esteem drives thinking to develop hypothetical, imagined failure scenarios. Usually in these scenarios, the focus is on personal inefficiency, weaknesses and perceived impediments. Belief in goal attainability helps to develop scenarios that incorporate more

successful action. High self-efficacy enhances analytical thinking, while low self-efficacy places emphasis on irrational thinking, which impedes proper planning and execution of actions. According to Bandura, even when well-developed skills are available, notions of low self-efficacy would prevent these skills from being adequately and successfully implemented. Self-efficacy influences learning and decision-making processes. It modifies cognitive processes: the processes of analyzing the factors that have led to definite results, as well as the processes of analyzing the expected and predictable consequences of one's actions. The subjective sense of high self-efficacy and confidence in one's own abilities will encourage efforts to fulfill their commitments, even in the face of ever-increasing obstacles or ever-increasing pressure on increasing social demands. Overcoming the ambiguities and contradictions in the information obtained requires not only good cognitive processing skills, but also persistence, whose source is a sense of high self-efficacy, regardless of career orientations. Self-efficacy strongly influences the motivational regulation of behavior through the influence of beliefs in one's own effectiveness on the processes of causal attribution. One is inclined to choose and implement these behaviors, expecting high results and believes that they can be achieved through own efforts and thanks to their own abilities.

The increase in self-efficacy is associated with an increase in goal orientation towards the task, and self-obstruction is associated with an increase in the negative aspects of perfectionism and overall perfectionism. The strongest relationships are the self-efficacy with the entrepreneurial career type. No significant relationship between traditional career type and self-efficacy is reported.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the results, the pursuit of career trajectories for students is the pursuit of work linked mainly to people and ideas. Orientation to the artistic, social and research type is the strongest, and the least to the realistic one. Differences

in the scores of the different types in the hexagonal model of career aspirations of students are recorded. Beliefs about personal effectiveness influence the level of motivation. With high motivation, people are able to put in more effort and persist in achieving the desired goals for longer periods of time. The influence of beliefs in self-efficacy also affects the regulation of affective processes – beliefs about low self-efficacy and the inability to control threat situations create high levels of anxiety and internal tension. It is understood that the obstacles that have arisen can be overcome, and if attempted, it is possible to find the optimal solution to the problem thanks to abilities and ideas.

Future studies need more research to clarify the relationship between personality traits and career interests, further exploring the role of values in career decision-making and career counseling.

Students' professional activities and professional self-determination are among the 'eternal' pedagogical issues that are of importance to each individual and to society as a whole. This is due to the very purpose of the school: to give the teenager not only the basics of science, but more importantly - to help them orientate in the world of professions, to make an informed and correct choice of 'their' future professional activity.

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