

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN ADOLESCENTS CAREER

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**Abstract:** *Current research conducted among adolescents shows that they have relatively little knowledge about occupations, labor market and their requirements. The professional options field is limited, with adverse implications on future career that may be marked by unrealistic choices, dissatisfaction, frequent job changes and unemployment. To have any chance of success, the opportunities in favor of choice and career decision options must be multiplied. Thus, an investigation of the career decision-making process for adolescents was initiated on 60 high-school students from a socio-humanities high-school in Brasov. During the investigation, the characteristics of career decision-making process were identified and analyzed. It was found that adolescents participating in the investigations are sociable, energetic, assertive and willing to engage in competitive situations. They have interests oriented towards business and administration fields. The vocational profile corresponds with the followed specialization, supporting the correlation between their professional choices and interests that define them. Teenagers should be encouraged to explore and inform, thus developing autonomy in career decision making. The too strong influence of family or of any structures with significant relevance to the adolescent life can destroy this autonomy and can lead to the inability to gain experience in decision making. With a specialized support the adolescent practices the career decision making process, winning the best both autonomy in choosing the optimal alternative due to information and self-confidence, fighting for his own professional development.*

**Keywords:** *career counseling, career decision, autonomy, personality and professional interests, professional development.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In adolescence there is a tendency for extension of the social secondary stage through education and training institutions. Thus, the occupational decision is delayed due to labor market instability, to obsolescence of initial training package and to the bad correlation of educational offers with top professions requirements. (Jigău, 2003). The teenager is looking to break free from routine tasks that are time and energy consuming and to dedicate himself to creative professional activities. As Ursula Şchiopu said (1997) adolescence is the period in which important decisions for the development of the person are taken and future plans are made. For example, when choosing a professional trajectory, adolescents must decide what type

of school they want to follow, what tests to give and what specializations would be useful for their professional evolution.

Recent years research on adolescence have shown that these features depend mostly on type and quality (authenticity) of family relationships, on school and group of friends, on the social and cultural context in which the adolescent develops himself. Demand of highly qualified labor force imposes the school extension and young people are more and more faced with the situation to delay becoming a productive adult. In the contemporary society, the teenager is considered adult when he becomes independent, including financially. Solving this task is extremely difficult in some cases, given the strong interdependence between career and financial independence. Since the

labor market is constantly changing, the demands in education are increasingly high; there are situations where financial independence can be won only at the end of adolescence. Therefore, we may say that any person can have a career, not just those who successfully exercise a particular profession. (Jigău, 2001).

## 2. DECISION-MAKING IN CASE OF ADOLESCENTS

To have any chance of success, favorable decision career opportunities must be multiplied. Knowing the skills and interests, the teenager will take realistic decisions when

choosing the suitable specializations and their corresponding professions. As free as it seems, this process is conditioned by the employment offer and by the development degree of labor market and economic life. The world is constantly changing professions. Complex movements in the world are making the career decision tensed and difficult. The best choices are those that are consistent with the adolescent's interests, skills and personality types. This was one of the reasons for initiating the investigative approach in this paper. 60 students attended from a socio-humanities high school in Braşov, aged between 17 and 20, the average age being 17.85 for boys and 17.41 for girls.

Table 1 Mean age of adolescents by gender

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.d	Gender	N	Mean	S.d
Age	60	17	20	17,56	0,74	Feminine	39	17,41	0,54
						Masculine	21	17,85	0,96

Participants were involved in a decision-making process to identify the best alternative careers. The stages of decision-making process were: problem awareness, reflected in the interview, self-evaluation, which consisted in assessing the initial knowledge level of motivational issues, personality traits and professional interests, exploration, accomplished by application of accredited psychological tests and of labor market exploring strategies and implementation, where clarifications about personality knowledge and professions that fit in line with this were produced.

## 3. RESULTS INTERPRETATION

After statistical processing of recorded data, we found that:

- in terms of profession they want to choose in the future, teenagers opt in 20% for those professions in social sciences (sociologists, counselor, psychologist), followed by 13.3% as attorney, lawyer, judge;
- adolescents approach the career decision-making more intuitively (71,7%) than rationally (28,3%). The intuitive style focuses on emotions, imagination and

spontaneous decisions, yet accepting responsibility for own decisions. Open, curious, with wide interests, spontaneous and adaptable, the intuitive postpones decision to learn as much information as possible. Although intuitive decision is made based on a rich information support, he loses opportunities due to delays. These individuals speak easily about career alternatives they may have but they can just as easily change their decisions in a short time.

Following self-assessment shows that teens are eager to coordinate activities and to be opinion leaders. The exploration moment confirms that adolescents are described by friendly, open mind and extraversion. Analysis of personality traits scores obtained on boys and girls show distinct interesting differences. Thus, girls have significantly higher scores than boys in friendly factors ( $m_{girls} = 234,74$ , S.d. = 23,98 and  $m_{boys} = 222,81$ , S.d. = 28,81) and conscientiousness ( $m_{girls} = 226,08$ , S.d. = 26,57 and  $m_{boys} = 217,95$ , S.d. = 32,77). Girls, as compared with boys, focus more planning and organization, being persons who prefer to work under well-established plans, with clear and precise objectives. They are confident, generous and jump to the aid of others.

In contrast, boys have higher mean for the emotional stability factor ( $m_{\text{girls}} = 206,33$ , S.d. = 29,42 and  $m_{\text{boys}} = 212,29$ , S.d. = 37,29) demonstrating a better management of impulses and reactions. They are more emotionally stable and calm; they don't lose their temper in front of problematic situations. In case of the business factor there are significant differences between girls' and boys' averages. Therefore, the girls' mean values are greater than the boys' ( $m_{\text{girls}} = 54,43$ , S.d. = 8,95 and  $m_{\text{boys}} = 49,28$ , S.d. = 14,26), proving a better planning and organization of activities.

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation for business

2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage Information about professional interests				
	gender	N	mean	S.d.
JVIS_business	feminine	39	54,43	8,95
	masculine	21	49,28	14,26

These differences between groups of participants may suggest the existence of some dissimilarity at the level population. To determine the statistical significance of these differences we used the t test for independent samples.

Table 3 Differences of mean values for business

2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage Information about professional interests - teenagers						
	Levene Test		t Test			
	F	p	t	df	p	Mean value differences
JVIS_business	5,08	0,02	1,50	28,70	0,14	5,150

Comparisons made using the t test show that we don't have significant differences in the Business factor, between boys and girls,  $p > .05$ , which reinforces the idea that girls and boys similarly perceive this factor. Professions in this field are selected and correspond to girls and boys, almost equally. In case of Science and mathematics factors, which include social sciences, the average value differ between boys and girls ( $m_{\text{girls}} =$

22,00, S.d. = 9,60 and  $m_{\text{boys}} = 23,43$ , S.d. = 13,67 ), the boys' mean value being higher than the girls' one. They dominate through the openness towards physics, chemistry, biology, girls being more oriented towards social sciences and mathematics. Girls can do well with the statistical analysis applied in different fields and with mathematical models needed in design. Boys do better in design, construction and equipment testing. With higher scores, boys demonstrate self-control, are quieter, stable and hard to incite. These people value the opportunity to pursue peace and intellectual interests and they are oriented towards accumulation of diverse knowledge from as many domains as possible. Numerous studies from specialized literature (Ahrens, & O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993; O'Brien, Friedman, Wulff & Steitz, 1999) examined influences that occur on adolescents' decision-making process, by gender. The results of these studies say that boys teenagers have an inspiration more inclined for career than girls'. The weight of parents' influence on children in the process of career decision-making can be decisive. Behavioral patterns related to work can be taken without any change by children. The more various forms of specializations they come across the more personalized these models become. Adolescents' involvement in various professional activities can change behavioral patterns taken from parents. In most cases, the family remains the major part in shaping options for a certain career for adolescents. The career counselor must verify the family's point of view in the adolescent's decision-making process so as not to enter into contradiction with him. Knowing the family option, and linking it with the adolescent's and with what fits him, career decision acquires positive valences in the professional development.

Teenagers that are in various stages of career decision making have different perceptions about self-confidence in taking the right decisions. Mau (2000) founds in his research that American teens learn to take their own decisions about their professional future and that adolescents in Taiwan relate to their family expectations and community they

belong to when taking them. It is less common for Taiwanese adolescents to go to work before graduation and therefore, the lack of experience will make the decision making process more difficult.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

There are teenagers who still do not know what field of activity would be suited for them, which leads us to start career decision making process earlier in order to learn more about him and the world of professions. In this situation, the main purpose of a career counselor is to know the characteristics of decision-making process and to adapt them to those they work with. Living in a dynamic labor market, teens must deal not only with identification a sure occupation or profession but they must also be prepared for change. Flexibility and adaptation should be predominant features of today's adolescents throughout the career decision-making process.

Even if development of decision-making processes hasn't come to an end, only the first four specific stages in the career decision being presented, adolescents participating in our investigation have made clear the options for career choice and have come to know some of the decision-making process characteristics. The other stages of decision making will be analyzed during future investigations that will start in February, 2012. Also as a continuation of our investigation an extension of knowledge and of the factors influencing career decision-making will be approached. In conducting our investigation ethical rules on confidentiality, on adolescents' participation in terms of informed consent and on the use of licensed psychological tests have been followed. The results of our investigation can provide a support in understanding adolescents' decision-making process in order to take realistic career decisions. Not all individuals follow the same career pattern. Some have a quick start in professional life; others delay the decision-making process very much. Everyone should know better when to take a career decision and to find information on career and professional fields of their choice. Individual

ability to take career decisions and choose a certain professional field is built in close dependence to the correct processing of information about themselves and the world of professions. (Silvaş, 2009). The success of a decision lies in selecting information, in the use of those strategies that can help individuals make good choices out of an excessive supply of alternatives. (Tatu, Gherasim, 2006). Entering the labor market is according to the level of training. Currently, only a qualified labor force can be competitive on the labor market. This requires investment in education and science. EU countries cooperate closely to develop education and to face all obstacles and challenges. Lisbon strategy focuses on learning throughout life and promoting research and development. Individuals must become active in the working field, to adapt to labor market changes and to be able to take decisions quickly and efficiently.

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