

Analysis of Determining Factors in Making the Decision To Become a Professionally Trained Physical Therapist in North-Eastern Romania

Dan Iulian Alexe^a, Gabriel Talaghir^b,

^a "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, 157 Mărășești Street, Bacău, Romania

^b "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, 47 Domneasca Street, Galați, Romania

Abstract

The provision of alternatives when making a decision, their evaluation, and the selection of the best one represent stages of the actual decision-making process. These stages are influenced by the effects determined by certain more or less objective factors. The decision to act belongs directly to the person, based on the analysis of the influence of these factors, but also of the "convenient" or "priority" solutions.

This research aimed to analyze the importance of certain factors that have influenced the decision of 186 candidates who chose to be trained professionally as physical therapists at the universities in North-Eastern Romania (Bacău, Suceava, Iași), during the main admissions in the summer of 2016. The subjects were inquired using a 12-item questionnaire before the admission examination, their involvement being voluntary.

In regards to the important factors, the statistical analysis has shown average values many times above the values of other analyzed factors. One can conclude that in North-Eastern Romania, for the candidates for the main admissions of 2016, the determining factors in making the decision to train as physical therapists were, mainly: living near the university, the attraction of a successful profession with future perspectives, the good name of the study program or of the university, and the advice of their friends and family.

Keywords: profession, physical therapist, decision, factors

9. Introduction

Generating and evaluating alternatives when making a decision and selecting the best options are stages of the actual decision-making process. These stages are influenced, sometimes more, sometimes less deeply by the effects determined by certain more or less objective factors.

The quality of a decision regarding career choice is significant both for the individual and for society (Gati, Krausz, Osipow, 1996), but the indecision in choosing a career is influenced, in part of the population, by their lack of education, social role models, etc. Such problems regarding one's indecision in choosing a career path were highlighted by Slaney (1988).

Choosing a profession depends on social context, factors that govern each person's life, on each person's goals, but also on the sustainability of the profession (finance, being able to satisfy certain needs, etc.).

Professional literature discusses the causes of one's indecision in choosing a career path (an aspect defined by some as being a central problem of career psychology - Fouad, 1994), causes related to the alternatives emerging when making a choice. These alternatives seem to represent, at least theoretically, decision factors that can influence an adult person's future.

Making a decision in choosing a career path, beside certain characteristics (the person who makes the decision, their alternatives, aspects to be considered for comparing or assessing the alternatives), could have unique features (Gati & Fessa, 1996): the number of potential alternatives (number of professions, universities, study programs, potential employers), the quantity of information for each alternative, aspects to analyze from the point of view of the individual (the duration of the studies, the type of interpersonal relations, the degree of independence), but also the uncertainty caused by the individual's current and future preferences, or by the nature of future career paths (Gelatt, 1989).

Choosing a career is a complex process that involves a global approach of the person who wants to make a decision regarding a certain career path (Jigau, 2007), but the identification and understanding of the difficulties people can face during their decision-making process could have significant practical implications for their future quality of life (Gati, Krausz, Osipow, 1996).

In regards to this research, for some of the admission candidates, the career decisions have a deeply subjective motivation, their choice or preference for a certain profession being influenced by their personality type, the objectivity of their self-assessment, etc. (Constantin et al. 2008).

10. Materials and Methods

10.1. Research Purpose and Hypotheses

This research aimed to determine the importance of certain factors in making the decision to be trained professionally as a physical therapist, in the case of candidates during the main admissions at the universities in North-Eastern Romania that have the specialization "physical therapy and special motor skills". Starting from the premise that the final choice belongs to the candidates, the following **hypotheses** have been proposed:

- knowing the economic situation of North-Eastern Romania, could one presume that home is one of the main factors that influence the candidates' decision to choose a university, to train as physical therapists?
- knowing the influence that certain categories of people can have in directing and guiding the young people towards a certain career path, could one presume that the influence of family and social circles is considerable in the candidates' decision to choose to train as physical therapists in North-Eastern Romania?

10.2. Research subjects

The subjects were 172 candidates (72 males, 100 females) who chose to be trained professionally as physical therapists at the universities in North-Eastern Romania (Bacău, Suceava, Iași), during the main admissions in the summer of 2016. The subjects expressed their agreement to participate in this research. The age distribution (N=172) of the subjects was as follows: 18 y.o. - 20.93%, 19 y.o. - 42.44%, 20 y.o. - 8.72%, between 21-25 y.o. - 12.79%, between 26 - 30 y.o. - 7.56%, between 31 - 40 y.o. - 5.81%, between 41 - 50 y.o. - 1.74%.

Out of the 109 subjects (63.37%) aged between 18 and 19, 88.07% (96 subjects) have graduated high-school in the summer of 2016, right before the main admissions that were the basis of this study.

10.3. Research methods and instruments

The main research method was the questionnaire-based inquiry. The research instrument was an adapted questionnaire composed of 12 items, applied either before the admission examination (Bacău, Suceava), or after it (Iași). The questionnaire items comprised either choosing certain answers from a list, or writing other options than the ones presented, or freely expressing certain arguments that formed the basis for the subjects' decision.

In order to determine the complexity of the subjects' decision-making process or indecision, there was no specification at any of the items of how many answers can a person choose, leaving that to each individual's choice.

11. Results

The analysis of the first item asking the subjects directly to say why they have chosen to study physical therapy allowed the following observations:

- for 5.72% of the subjects, the decision was based on the fact that they already work in the therapeutic field (nurses), and they wish to deepen their knowledge (the need to perfect their skills, the need for personal development);
- for 21.51% of the subjects, the decision to train as physical therapists was based on their "attraction for this field";
- "passion for sport" was another reason on which 5.81% of the subjects based their decision;
- "the desire to help people" represented for 18.02% of the subjects the main reason to decide for this career path;
- 13.95% of the subjects think that the profession of physical therapist suits them;
- according to 8.14% of the subjects, physical therapy studies would ensure "good employment";
- the rest of approximately 27% have stated other reasons, but since neither of these reasons were not over 2% individually, they were not taken into consideration.

The analysis of the human factor as possible determining factor in making the decision to become a physical therapist, for the subjects (item 4), envisaged the determination of the role played by the parent, brother or sister, colleague, teacher, neighbor, friend, or college professor. Thus:

- for 25.58% of the subjects (Fig. 1), the "parent" represented the person who advised or guided them to choose the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills";
- for 28.49% of the subjects, the "friend" was the one who had a major influence in their decision to study "physical therapy and special motor skills";
- for 9.30% of the subjects (Fig. 1), the "brother or sister" was the person who influenced their decision to follow this career path;
- for 5.81%, it was their "study colleague";
- for 9.30% it was a "pre-university teacher", and for 3.49%, it was a "college professor";
- the "neighbor" answer was not chosen by any of the subjects, and the various combinations of multiple criteria represented 18.03%.

The percentages above were analyzed strictly considering the mentioned criteria; however, there were subjects who chose two, three, even four answers, which indicates possible higher values for the analyzed criteria.

In total, for 36.67% of the subjects, their family (parent, brother or sister) represents the main and only factor that influenced their decision.

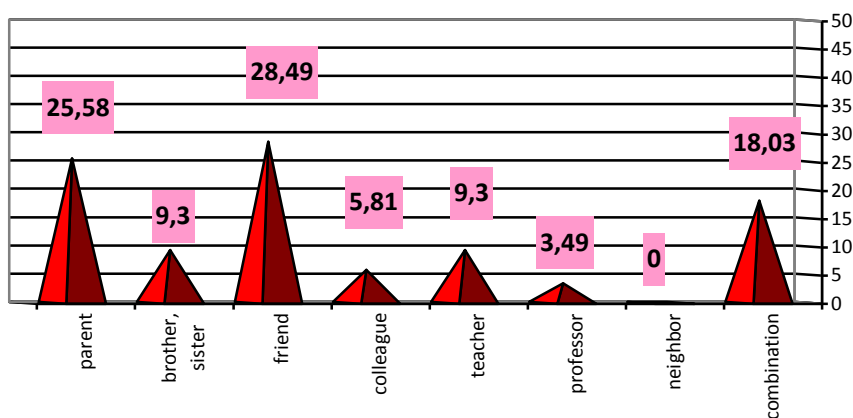


Figure 1. Percentage of the influence of the human factor in the subjects' decision to train as physical therapists

After the subjects were asked to state the human factor arguments that have influenced their decision to choose physical therapy as their career path (item no. 4), the following were observed: for 11.63% of the subjects, the main argument was that the physical therapy profession means "good employment", while for 9.88% the renown of the university was a strong argument. The facts that physical therapy is a "wanted" profession and can offer "professional satisfactions" represented good arguments for 7.56% of the subjects. For 6.98% the human factor argument was represented by "successful profession" when it came to choosing the undergraduate study program. The financial gain ensured by the practice of such a profession represented the argument that convinced 10.47% of the subjects to choose this program.

It must be said, however, that 29.07% of the subjects did not want to state any arguments.

Items 6 and 7 envisaged the determination of the closest university to the subjects' home (What is the closest university to your home), and the possible connection between home and choosing the university where they can study "physical therapy and special motor skills".

Thus, for 48.26% of the subjects, "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacau was the closest university to their home. For 33.72%, "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iași was closer to their home, while for 5.23%, "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava was closer. The universities of Brașov, Bucharest, Galați, Constanța are closer to the homes of 12.79% of the subjects.

The analysis of the data has shown that for 40.62% of the subjects (Fig. 2), the distance between their home and university represented a factor in choosing the university where they would enroll in the program "physical therapy and special motor skills", while for 59.38% this distance was not an important criterion.

In trying to determine the alternative career paths and also the subjects' indecision to enroll in the program "physical therapy and special motor skills", their decision to enroll in multiple universities or multiple study programs was also analyzed. For that there was item no. 8.

Based on the data, 20.93% of the subjects have enrolled also in other universities than the ones where they were inquired, or in other study programs than "physical therapy and special motor skills". Out of the 36 subjects (20.93%), only 3 have enrolled to be trained as physical therapists, the rest of 33 (19.18% - Fig. 3) have enrolled, as an alternative

to physical therapy, in other study programs (such as: veterinary medicine, agriculture, geography, occupational therapy, pharmacy, journalism, psychology, etc.).

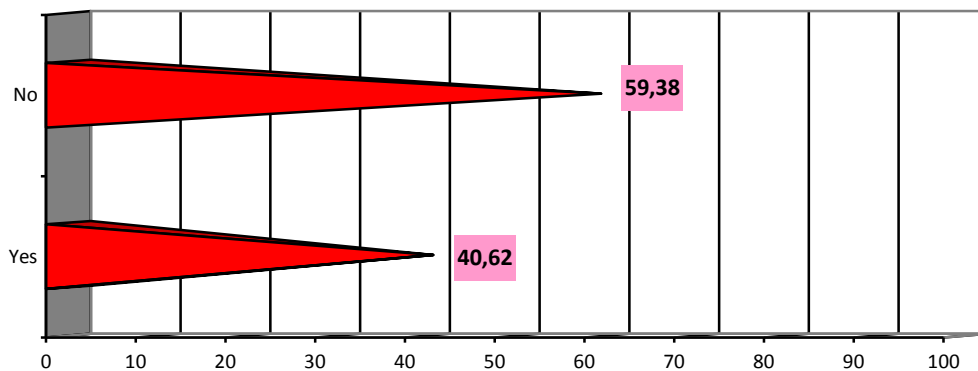


Figure 2. Percentage of the influence of the relationship between home and university in the subjects' decision to train as physical therapists

Figure 1 shows the choice for enrolling in only one study program, physical therapy, in 79.08% of the subjects.

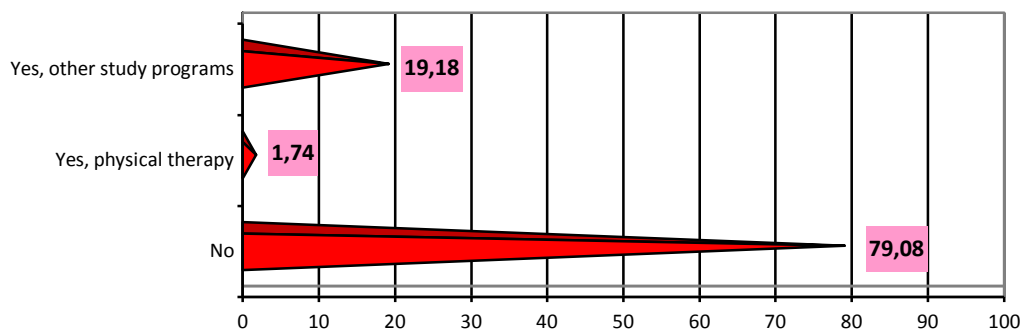


Figure 3. Percentage for item no. 8

"Have you applied to other universities in this admission session of July 2016? Please specify the university and the study program."

In order to determine whether the fame or good name of the university has represented a decision factor for the subjects, whether their decision to become a physical therapist was a firm one, and also to verify the validity of the answers given to items no. 6 and 7, the items no. 10 and 11 were created.

Thus, item 10 observed the subjects' opinion in regards to their motives for choosing one of the three universities in North-Eastern Romania. Out of the 172 subjects, 82 (47.67%) have chosen the university where they have enrolled because it was closer to their home, while 56 subjects have chosen it because of its renown (32.56%). The rest of 19.77% of the subjects have chosen the university for other reasons (they knew people who offered lodging, so financial reasons, they had friends in the cities where the universities were, they had jobs in those cities, or they went to high school in those cities, etc.).

Item no. 11, "If the University of Bacău/Iași/Suceava had not offered undergraduate studies in physical therapy, would you have gone to another university, or would you have still chosen the University of Bacău/Iași/Suceava?" allowed the observation of the subjects' decision for the city of that particular university (probably based on either the renown of the university or it being closer to home, as previously mentioned). The analysis of the data shows the following:

– 69.77% of the subjects (N=120) would have enrolled in the same study program (KMS in Fig. 4) if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills". This percentage indicates a clear decision for this career path made by the 120 subjects;

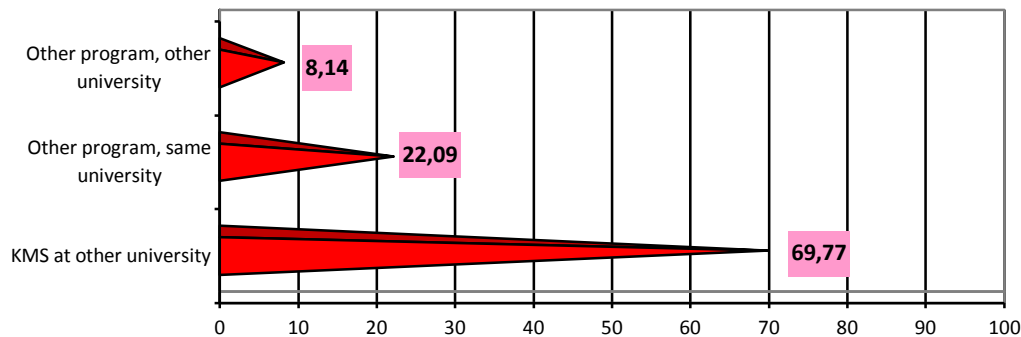


Figure 4. Percentage for item no. 11

– 22.09% of the subjects (N=38) would have enrolled in the same university but in another study program if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills". This percentage can indicate multiple aspects that can be considered causes in making a certain choice: their home close to the university represented a criterion in choosing the undergraduate studies; these subjects were indecisive in regards to their training as physical therapists, or other factors have influenced their opinion (finances, parental support, etc.);

– 8.14% of the subjects (N=14) would have enrolled in another university and another study program if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills".

In order to determine the possible orientation of the candidates toward another Romanian university, thinking that the university where the subjects have enrolled and have taken an admission examination (Bacău, Iași, Suceava) would not have in their curriculum the program "physical therapy and special motor skills", the last item of the questionnaire was created (item 12).

After analyzing the options for each university included in the research (Iași, Bacău, Suceava), the following aspects were determined:

- 23.91% of the subjects who have chosen "Al.I. Cuza" University of Iași would have enrolled to study physical therapy at "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, 32.61% would have enrolled at "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, 8.69% at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, 15.28% at a university in Cluj, 8.69% at one in Bucharest, the rest at other universities;

- 2.17% of the subjects who have chosen "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău would have enrolled to study physical therapy at "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, 65.28% would have enrolled at "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iași, 7.61% at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, 8.69% at a university in Brasov, 6.52% at one in Bucharest, the rest at other universities (Constanța, Cluj, Oradea);

- 14.71% of the subjects who have chosen "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava would have enrolled to study physical therapy at "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, 52.94% would have enrolled at "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iași, 5.88% at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, 11.76% at a university in Cluj, 2.94% at one in Bucharest, the rest did not specify.

The results of the research have emphasized that for the categories of factors with weight, the statistical analysis has shown average values many times above the values of the analyzed factors.

12. Discussions

The engagement to act belongs directly to the person, but the decision making process will be very much influenced by the analysis of the role played by society in the individual's value system. Some people make decisions easily, at least apparently, while others experience difficulties in making career related decisions, asking for help (to family, friends), based on the analysis of the influence of factors, but also of the "convenient" or "priority" solutions.

This research highlighted especially the fact that a large portion of the subjects took into consideration the arguments or advice of their close ones (parents, brothers, friends), but also the distance between their home and the university. This aspect could be interpreted as both a convenient solution for some subjects in making a decision regarding their career path, and as a slight indecision regarding the decision to follow a clear path.

13. Conclusions

One can conclude that in North-Eastern Romania, for the candidates for the main admissions of 2016, the determining factors in making the decision to train as physical therapists were, mainly: living near the university, the attraction of a successful profession with future perspectives, the good name of the study program or of the university, as well as the advice of their friends and family.

In other words, it can be said that the decision to train in a certain profession was based, for these subjects, on a limited series of factors: belonging to a social group (family, friends), depending on a more or less stable financial state (home, successful profession), and the notoriety of the alternatives (the image or renown of the university where they might study, the renown of the study program that would help them build a career).

Acknowledgment

The article is the equal contribution of the authors.

References

1. Constantin, T., Macovei, E.-I., Orza, A., Nechita, V., (2008), Implicarea motivațională; operaționalizare și primele studii de validare a unei scale standardizate, *Analele științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, Psihologie, Tomul XVII.*
2. Fouad, N. A. (1994). Annual review 1991-1993: Vocational choice, decision-making, assessment, and intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45*, 125-176.
3. Gati, I., Garty, Y., & Fassa, N. (1996). Using career-related aspects to assess person-environment fit. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*, 196-206.
4. Gati, I., Krausz, M., Osipow, S.H., (1996), A Taxonomy of Difficulties in Career Decision Making. In *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1996, vol.43, no.4, 510-526;
5. Gelatt, H. B. (1989). Positive uncertainty: A new decision-making framework for counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36*, 252-256.
6. Jigau, M., (2007), *Consilierea în carieră*, Editura Sigma, București;
7. Slaney, R. B. (1988). The assessment of career decision making. In W. B. Walsh & S. H. Osipow (Eds.), *Career decision making* (pp. 33-76). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.