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Aspects Regarding Adolescent's Indecision On Career Choice

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Abstract

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This paper presents the results of one research about adolescent's decision/ indecision regarding career choice. Teenagers indecision regarding career choice is influenced by some variables such as: self-efficacy, parental involvement, locus of control, and also by personality factors such as: extraversion and neuroticism/ emotional instability.

When pupils with external locus of control have to take a decision, they show a high level of confusion and become undecided in choosing a vocational path. Externalist people have the tendency to see life as being determinate by chance and often they do not find a reason to get involved in taking the decision. On the other way, teenagers with a high level of internal locus of control are spending more time to analyze the situation and this is why they are more decided in future decisions.

This research show that not so enthusiastic adolescent's that face difficulties in communicating with other people and have problems in imposing their point of view or options in front of others (parents and teachers, for example) have the tendency to face higher difficulties in adequate career choice to follow in the future.

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Keywords: Indecision, career, locus of control, extraversion, neuroticism/ emotional instability.

1. Introduction

This paper has the main objective of investigating some aspects regarding adolescent's indecision in career choice at the end of high school. Indecision in career choice is a variable which influences the process of opportunities identification in finding and developing a personal career that can confer to a teenager (future-to-be adult) the desired personal, professional and social status.

Specialized studies from scientifically field about decision/ indecision level in choosing the desired career associate it with individual features (recognized and rated skills level of the person in question; personality characteristics; aspirations and expectations; interests for certain professional fields; self-esteem and confidence in its own forces; thinking style etc).

The authors whom studied indecision in career choice (the variables which can explain or support it) and the consequences of indecision chronicity regarding career, used as methodological approaches multivariate studies based on regression analysis or, not so often, on testing certain hypotheses about causal models, with the help of different strategies. Explanatory models were either partially tested (for example the socio-cognitive model of career developing, proposed by R. W. Lent and his contributors), or proved to be very difficult to operationalize and test in scientific terms.

One of the most consisting models of career developing was proposed by the American psychologist J. L. Holland. Together with this model we have some classical models which were the foundation for developing and revising new approaches (for example, the model of professional interests proposed by D. E. Super, or the one generated by E. K. Strong). There were some approaches that had a short time influence on research and practice for career development field (for example, the model proposed by E. Ginzberg and his contributors, or the one theorized by A. Roe). None of these models focused on career indecision issue. Without a specific remark to “career decision/ indecision” expression, Lent, Brown and Hackett (1995) offered an understandable and comprehensive approach for personal (individual), contextual and particular factors that influence someone’s career choice behaviour.

2. Working Hypotheses

Taking into consideration factors that influence indecision in career choice, we formulated the following working hypotheses:

1. For adolescents, indecision in career choice negatively correlate with perceived self-efficacy.
2. For adolescents, indecision level in career choice negatively correlate with the degree of parental involvement in career decision process.
3. Externalism (as polar facet of locus of control) positively correlates with adolescent’s indecision in their decision regarding career choice.
4. For adolescents, indecision in career choice positively correlate with emotional instability level (neuroticism).
5. Adolescent’s indecision regarding career choice negatively correlate with extraversion, agreeableness, intellectual openness and conscientiousness level.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study participants. Socio-demographic and educational features

At our study participated 198 adolescents, all of them pupils in the 12th grade of high-schools from Timisoara.

The distribution of pupils according to *gender* variable was relatively balanced: 104 girls and 98 boys. Their ages were between 18 and 19.

The participants were from the following profiles: *Philology* – 58 pupils (29,29%); *Mathematics-Informatics* – 52 pupils (26,26%); *Biology-Chemistry* – 50 pupils (25,25%); *Social Sciences* – 38 pupils (19,19%).

The participants were asked to indicate the persons with whom they were living at home (either parents, or other legal supporter). From the study participants 134 (67,68%) were living with both their parents, 36 (18,18%) only with one of the parents (the other one was either deceased, or divorced), 22 pupils (11,11%) were living with one of the parents (the other one was living abroad) and 6 pupils (3,03%) had other situations (they were living with their grandparents, relatives etc.).

3.2. Instruments and research evidences

Our study used the following instruments and research evidences:

- *The Career Decision Scale – CDS* (Osipow, 1983) which has 19 items and it is used to measure indecision level in career;
- *Career Decision Self-Efficacy – Short Form. CDSE-SF* (Taylor and Betz, 1983) which has 25 items and it is used to evaluate the level of confidence in personal competences regarding identification and development of relevant information in taking one decision for personal career;
- *Parent Career Behaviour Checklist – PCBC* (Keller and Whiston, 2008) which has 24 items grouped in two scales;
- *Career Locus of Control Scale – CLCS* (Millar and Shevlin, 2007);
- *Big Five Inventory – BFI* (O. P. John, E. M. Donahue and R. L. Kentle) which has 44 items assigned to five major personality factors:
 - a). *Neuroticism* (items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34 and 39 – from Romanian working version);
 - b). *Extraversion* (items 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31 and 36);
 - c). *Agreeableness* (items 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37 and 42);
 - d). *Intellectual openness* (items 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 41 and 44);
 - e). *Conscientiousness* (items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38 and 43).

Table 1 show the number of items and the α –Cronbach coefficient values for Romanian version of the questionnaires that students have completed.

From the α –Cronbach coefficient values listed in the table it can be seen a very good level of internal consistency for the scale we used to evaluate the *decision* (indecision level) regarding career choice, the scale through which we measured *self-efficacy* level in career choice, and also the scale we used to evaluate *parents behaviours* oriented to career choice by the children. For the scale we used to evaluate *locus of control* in career choice, the α –Cronbach coefficient values indicated a good internal consistency.

Table 1. Internal consistency of used instruments and evidences

| Scale/ Questionnaire | Items number | N | α –Cronbach |
|--|--------------|-----|--------------------|
| Decision scale in career choice | 16 | 198 | 0,91 |
| Auto-efficacy evaluation scale in career choice – short form | 25 | 198 | 0,91 |
| List of parents behaviours oriented to career choice by the children | 24 | 198 | 0,94 |
| Locus of control evaluating scale in career choice | 20 | 198 | 0,82 |
| Inventory for evaluating the big five personality factors – scale for neuroticism evaluation (N) | 8 | 198 | 0,76 |
| Inventory for evaluating the big five extraversion factors (E) | 8 | 198 | 0,71 |
| Inventory for evaluating the big five personality factors – scale for agreeableness evaluation (A) | 9 | 198 | 0,53 |
| Inventory for evaluating the big five personality factors – scale for intellectual openness evaluation (O) | 10 | 198 | 0,70 |
| Inventory for evaluating the big five personality factors – scale for conscientiousness evaluation (C) | 9 | 198 | 0,74 |

On the other way, for the scales through which we evaluated the big five personality factors, internal consistency values were a little big lower, especially for *agreeableness* factor. This situation is explained by the following fact: the value of α –Cronbach coefficient decreases with reducing items number for one evidence. Still, the values we gathered indicate a satisfactory internal consistency of BFI inventory scale, justifying the use of children scores obtained at these scales in our descriptive and inferential data processing and analysis.

3.3 Procedure

The sets formed from five questionnaires (the instruments we presented in previous paragraphs) were completed by children during some meetings. The questionnaires administration was conducted collectively.

4. Results and discussions

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics indicators for the study variables, through which we followed testing predictive models in career choice indecision among teenagers.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics indicators for the study variables

| Variables | <i>m</i> | <i>s</i> | min | max | skewness | kurtosis | K-S ^{1,2} |
|---|----------|----------|------|------|----------|----------|--------------------|
| Indecision in career choice | 32,60 | 10,04 | 16 | 58 | 0,23 | -0,74 | 0,90 |
| Self-efficacy in career choice | 92,86 | 14,00 | 53 | 125 | -0,32 | 0,09 | 0,59 |
| Parents involvement degree in career choice | 17,20 | 18,32 | 24 | 110 | -0,21 | -0,19 | 0,47 |
| Locus of control in career choice | 50,02 | 11,23 | 24 | 77 | 0,04 | -0,17 | 0,77 |
| Neuroticism | 2,66 | 0,73 | 1 | 4,50 | 0,52 | 0,01 | 1,06 |
| Extraversion | 3,52 | 0,64 | 1,88 | 4,88 | -0,20 | -0,39 | 0,79 |
| Agreeableness | 3,79 | 0,54 | 2,50 | 4,90 | -0,21 | -0,81 | 1,06 |
| Intellectual openness | 3,97 | 0,45 | 2,89 | 4,89 | 0,17 | -0,65 | 0,93 |
| Conscientiousness | 3,78 | 0,60 | 1,78 | 4,89 | -0,73 | 0,95 | 0,88 |

¹ Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for checking normality distributions

² All the values of K-S Test were statistically insignificant

The first observation is that the distribution of all variables has not deviated significantly from normality (as indicated by K-S Test values). Although, *skewness* indicator values show a tendency for asymmetry to the left of scores distribution for *neuroticism* variable (that means adolescent's have the tendency to obtain moderate or slightly down scores). *Conscientiousness* variable showed a more evident tendency to be asymmetric to the right.

On the other way, the scores adolescent's obtained for *indecision in career choice*, *parent's involvement degree in career choice*, *neuroticism* variables covered almost the whole picture of possible values, a fact revealed also by relatively big values of standard deviation.

Table 3 presents the variable comparison according to *gender* (made with t-Student Test for individual groups) and also the effect size values (calculated with J. Cohen¹ formula).

Table 3. Comparison according to *gender* variable

| Variables | Groups | N | m | s | t-Student | d-Cohen |
|---|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Indecision in career choice | Boys | 94 | 31,70 | 9,30 | -0,85 | 0,17 |
| | Girls | 104 | 33,42 | 10,69 | | |
| Self-efficacy in career choice | Boys | 94 | 93,08 | 13,93 | 0,14 | 0,03 |
| | Girls | 104 | 92,67 | 14,19 | | |
| Parents involvement degree in career choice | Boys | 94 | 76,12 | 19,09 | -0,55 | 0,11 |
| | Girls | 104 | 78,17 | 17,72 | | |
| Locus of control in career choice | Boys | 94 | 50,06 | 12,05 | 0,03 | 0,01 |
| | Girls | 104 | 49,98 | 10,58 | | |
| Neuroticism | Boys | 94 | 2,40 | 0,69 | -3,25 ** | 0,69 |
| | Girls | 104 | 2,88 | 0,71 | | |
| Extraversion | Boys | 94 | 3,53 | 0,68 | 0,08 | 0,02 |
| | Girls | 104 | 3,52 | 0,62 | | |
| Agreeableness | Boys | 94 | 3,98 | 0,46 | 0,12 | 0,02 |
| | Girls | 104 | 3,97 | 0,45 | | |
| Intellectual openness | Boys | 94 | 3,91 | 0,59 | 1,90 | 0,41 |
| | Girls | 104 | 3,69 | 0,49 | | |
| Conscientiousness | Boys | 94 | 3,72 | 0,72 | -0,82 | 0,19 |
| | Girls | 104 | 3,83 | 0,47 | | |

¹ *d-Cohen coefficient shows the effect size indicator for averages comparison between two independent groups, lots or samples, averages scored for the same characteristic, evaluated through the same method. J. Cohen, the author who proposed this indicator and theorized about the effect size, suggested the following guidelines for interpreting the significance of d-coefficient value (Cohen, 1992): 0,20 – low level; 0,50 – medium level; 0,80 – high level.*

The average comparison of the variables we measured in our study taking into consideration *gender* revealed just one statistically significant difference between boys and girls, namely at *neuroticism* personality factor: girls had the tendency to obtain, per average, significant higher scores than boys [$t(92) = -3,25$; $p < 0,01$]. Other researches show that female subjects have the tendency to obtain higher scores at scales and inventories that measure associated features with N factor (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Costa, McCrae and Rolland, 1998; Terracciano and McCrae, 2001; Hyde, 2005).

Table 4 presents the average comparison of the variables we measured in our study which teenagers from the four already mentioned high-school profiles obtained. The comparison was realized using *One-Way ANOVA* Test.

Table 4. Comparison according to *high-school profile* variable

| Variables | High-school profile | m | s | F | η^2 |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Indecision in career choice | Philology | 32,85 | 12,05 | 0,23 | 0,008 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 32,95 | 9,99 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 32,84 | 8,02 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 30,61 | 10,63 | | |
| Self-efficacy in career choice | Philology | 94,85 | 12,45 | 0,16 | 0,005 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 92,39 | 15,45 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 92,48 | 12,85 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 93,55 | 17,87 | | |
| Parents involvement degree in career choice | Philology | 74,62 | 22,22 | 0,88 | 0,029 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 78,30 | 18,03 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 75,00 | 14,03 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 83,00 | 19,85 | | |
| Locus of control in career choice | Philology | 48,11 | 11,56 | 1,05 | 0,034 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 51,08 | 12,70 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 52,12 | 9,31 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 46,88 | 11,39 | | |
| Neuroticism | Philology | 2,56 | 0,76 | 1,11 | 0,036 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 2,90 | 0,83 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 2,62 | 0,48 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 2,57 | 0,85 | | |
| Extraversion | Philology | 3,69 | 0,65 | 1,98 | 0,063 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 3,37 | 0,58 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 3,38 | 0,62 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 3,70 | 0,67 | | |
| Agreeableness | Philology | 3,98 | 0,50 | 0,13 | 0,005 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 3,92 | 0,47 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 4,00 | 0,47 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 3,99 | 0,37 | | |
| Intellectual openness | Philology | 3,91 ¹ | 0,60 | 2,86 [*] | 0,080 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 3,89 | 0,48 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 3,52 | 0,52 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 3,85 | 0,50 | | |
| Conscientiousness | Philology | 3,79 | 0,69 | 0,60 | 0,020 |
| | Mathematics-Informatics | 3,64 | 0,57 | | |
| | Biology-Chemistry | 3,81 | 0,47 | | |
| | Social Sciences | 3,88 | 0,69 | | |

* $p < 0,05$

¹ Significantly higher than adolescent's average from Biology-Chemistry high-school profile

² Significantly lower than adolescent's average at Social Science high-school profile

High-school profile variable had a significant effect only on intellectual openness among teenagers.

High-school profile had a statistically non-significant effect on teenagers scores they obtained at indecision in career choice, although adolescent's who were studying at Social Sciences had the tendency to show the lowest level of indecision (in comparison of all the four high-school profiles mentioned), and the ones from Mathematics-Informatics showed the highest level.

Correlations between measured variables

Association relationships between variables taken into consideration were highlighted through Bravais-Pearson linear bivariate correlations (table 5).

Table 5. Correlations between our study variables

| Field | Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---------------------|---|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|----|
| Career choice | Indecision in career choice | - | | | | | | | | | |
| | Self-efficacy in career choice | -0,47** | - | | | | | | | | |
| | Parents involvement degree in career choice | -0,33** | 0,43** | - | | | | | | | |
| | Locus of control in career choice | 0,58** | 0,45** | 0,25* | - | | | | | | |
| Personality factors | Neuroticism | 0,46** | 0,30** | 0,30** | 0,39** | -0,17 | - | | | | |
| | Extraversion | -0,23* | 0,32** | 0,29** | -0,12 | 0,38** | -0,18 | - | | | |
| | Agreeableness | -0,18 | 0,36** | 0,34** | 0,28** | 0,28* | 0,30** | 0,32** | - | | |
| | Intellectual openness | -0,30** | 0,31** | 0,32** | -0,17 | 0,32** | 0,38** | 0,30** | 0,15 | - | |
| | Conscientiousness | -0,45** | 0,50** | 0,43** | 0,45** | 0,36** | 0,28** | 0,29** | 0,16 | 0,36** | - |

* p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01

5. Conclusions

Scores from *indecision in career choice* positively correlated, statistically significant and with a moderate intensity ($r = 0,58$; $p < 0,01$; $r^2 = 0,33$ – moderate size effect), with the scores teenagers obtained at the questionnaire we used to evaluate *locus of control in career choice*. When pupils with external locus of control have to take a decision, they show a high level of confusion and become undecided in choosing a vocational path. Externalist people have the tendency to see life as being determinate by chance and often they do not find a reason to get involved in taking the decision. On the other way, teenagers with a high level of internal locus of control are spending more time to analyze the situation and this is why they are more decided in future decisions.

Scores from *indecision in career choice* that teenagers obtained positively correlated, statistically significant and with a moderate intensity ($r = 0,46$; $p < 0,01$; $r^2 = 0,21$ – low to moderate size effect), with scores from *neuroticism* factor, measured with BFI. The result shows that indecision in career choice has the tendency to be the characteristic of adolescents that show a high level of *neuroticism* (emotional instability).

On the other way, *extraversion* can be a resource for achieving vocational goals – this aspect is highlighted also by the negative correlation, of lower intensity ($r = -0,23$; $p < 0,05$; $r^2 = 0,05$) and

statistically significant, between scores investigated adolescent's obtained at proper scale from BFI and the ones from evaluating *indecision in career choice* scale. This result show that not so enthusiastic adolescent's that face difficulties in communicating with other people and have problems in imposing their point of view or options in front of others (parents and teachers, for example) have the tendency to face higher difficulties in adequate career choice to follow in the future.

From Table 5 we can ascertain a negative correlation, statistically significant, but of moderate to low intensity ($r = -0,30$; $p < 0,01$; $r^2 = 0,09$ – negligible effect size), between *intellectual openness* level among teenagers that participated in our study and *indecision* level in *career choice* field.

Even though scores from *indecision in career choice* negatively correlated (with a relatively low intensity – $r = -0,18$; $r^2 = 0,03$ – negligible effect size) with scores adolescent's obtained at *agreeableness* factor, the relation was statistically non-significant. The negative correlation, statistically significant and of moderate size ($r = -0,45$; $p < 0,01$; $r^2 = 0,20$ – low to moderate size effect) between scores adolescent's from the investigated lot obtained at evaluating *indecision in career choice* scale and between scores from evaluating *conscientiousness* personality factor scale highlight the role which perseverance in the initiation and meticulously, namely the degree of organization in the realization of specific actions, have in the process of delimitating and choosing a career. Taking a realistic and successful decision regarding future-to-be professional career implies early initiation (even from gymnasium stage) of all specific actions (informing-forming), the continuity of conducted approaches, the ability for exceeding obstacles that can appear in searching process and of continuous motivation, the capacity of assigning clear objectives and perseverance in actions that can fulfil all these – in fact, all these characteristics are part of the dispositional fund described by *conscientiousness* factor.

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