

“Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca  
Faculty de Sociology and Social Work,  
Doctorate in *Sociology*

## **Students’ Career Orientation**

- PhD Thesis Summary -

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**Key words:**

Career orientation, career planning, career decision, social stratification, inequalities, social mobility, structure of opportunities

**Introductory Arguments**

If nowadays career was given a professional meaning, today the term is associated with a series of personal, social or economical connotations. Due to the growing importance of career today, the concept itself has become an object of study for numerous scientific disciplines (vocational psychology, sociology of education, management etc.).

Choosing a professional career is (cf. Păuș, 2006) usually influenced, for each individual, by a series of factors, such as: competencies, practical and intellectual abilities, by the capacity to transpose the acquisitions obtained in school into practice in different areas of activity, by special aptitudes the individual becomes aware of during education, interests, motivations and personal values, family model (the reproduction of family's professional experience), community's attitude toward the individual (like societal preconceptions that negatively influence the individual's self-concept), by the society's professional offer or by the structure of opportunities.

The present study aims at analysing the way students majoring in Public Relations make career choices, trying at the same time to identify the factors that influence students in career orientation and to underline the way these factors operate. Herr and Cramer (1996) define career guidance as a systematic program which is intended to facilitate personal career development and management, through the combination of theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Career orientation is approached by both psychology and sociology studies. While psychologists study the role of personal characteristics, that determine an individual to choose a specific profession or occupation, characteristics such as: interests, values, aptitudes and competencies, personality traits, self concept or work satisfaction, sociologists concentrate on the vertical dimension of occupational choice (the prestige) and on the relationship between it and socioeconomic hierarchy (occupational values,

social mobility etc.) Unlike psychologists, sociologists place a higher importance to the individual's status, to his position in the social structure related to their parents' occupation, education, income, gender, race, ethnical group, to social institutions' influence on occupational choice, career orientation and status achievement during life. We have tried to cronologically present the two perspectives on career orientation in parallel in order to have a clear view of the scientific development of knowledge in these two fields of study.

Starting from the main psychological and sociological theories of career orientation presented above, our paper approaches career orientation of PR students from both theoretical and practical perspective.

Thus, our paper is structured in two parts. The first one presents a theoretical insight into the theoretical background litterature, summarising the main psychological career orientation concepts and theories (Frank Parson's Trait-Factor Theory, Super's Self-Concept Theory of Career Development, Holland's Theory of Personalities in Work Environments, Social-Cognitive Career Theory of Lent, Brown and Hackett, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription, Compromise and Self-Creation, Hall and Levinson's Career Stages Theories, Schein's Career Anchors Theory and career information Processing Theory of Peterson, Sampson și Reardon) and the sociological ones (starting with the social stratification and social mobility and continuing with the classical studies of Lipset and Bendix, Blau and Duncan, Jenks, Sewell, Hauser and Featherman, Goldthorpe or Roberts).

The second part of the study consist of the methodological framework set in order to allow us to draw a series of conclusions concerning PR students career orientation. Our paper's starting point was the question: Which are the main factors that contribute to the career orientation process of students and how do they influence the students?

Based on this question we have set four specific research questions:

1. How does the educational profile influence students' career orientation?
2. How does the gender influence students' career orientation?
3. How does the socioeconomic status influence students' career decisions?
4. Which is the specialists' opinion on students' career orientation?

### **The research design**

Concerning the methodology of the study we have decided to combine the quantitative and the qualitative methods, as „or the purpose of enhancing a research the logical option is to combine several methods, techniques and procedures, thus minimizing the methodological risks and maximizing the strength and the suppleness of data” (Rotariu, Iluț, 2006). The research design combines the indirect survey with a series of semi-structured interviews applied to PR employers, university professors, Cluj County Labor Force Agency employees and University career counselors. The survey focuses on PR students’ of the Faculty of Administrative, Political and Communication Science, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The methodological triangulation was added by the theoretical and data triangulation, as well as the investigator's.

Chapter III is dedicated to interviews and aims at setting an analysis of specialists’ opinions on students’ career orientation. At the same time, the analysis aims at identifying the differences of opinions between four groups: the employers, the university professors, the representatives of the Cluj County labor Force Agency and the University’s Career Center and at setting the specifics of PR students’ career orientation.. Therefore, we have formulated four different guidelines, which share common questions, addressing students’ education (the necessary education, experience, abilities and competencies etc.), the graduates’ advantages and disadvantages on the labor market, the relationship between the academic environment, employers and students (their expectations, collaborations, common projects if so etc.). The differences between the four guidelines concern the more specific issues of each group. While university staff were interviewed about the faculty’s policy, the specific objectives it has set in order to articulate the educational offer with the requirements of the labor force and to increase the employability rates, the policy regarding students’ internship programs or the differences between students’ career orientation based on their year of study, major, finance or attendance program, the employers were asked about the recruitment policy or about the investments put into employers’ professional development.

In addition to the interviews drawn with the first two categories of respondents, two more interviews were conducted with a career counselor from Babes-Bolyai University’s Career Center and with an employee of the county labor force Agency. The

main purpose of this interviews was to analyze by which means do this two institutions support students' efforts to integrate into the professional environment.

The surveys objective is to identify the specifics of PR students' career orientation during college. Thus, the research hypotheses are the following:

**H1. Students' educational profile influence their career decisions.**

H1.1. Third year students are more preoccupied with career decisions than second year students.

H1.2. The line of study influence students' career decision.

H1.3. Students' decisional style differs based on their finance program.

H1.4. Students' type of education influence their career decisions.

**H2. Students' career interest and values are influenced by gender.**

**H3. Students' socio-economic status influence their career orientation.**

H 3.1. Students with above average family income have higher professional abilities and competencies required by employers.

H 3.2. Students' career decisions are major influenced by their occupational status.

H 3.3. Parents' education influence students career decisions.

H 3.4. Students' educational and professional choices are slightly influenced by their parents' occupations.

In order to test these hypotheses, we have used the indirect survey, using the self-administered questionnaire for PR students at the Faculty of Administrative, Political and Communication Science, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. We have investigated both second and third year students, from both attendance and finance programs, from all the lines of study: Romanian, Hungarian and German. The questionnaires were administered during the summer exams in June 2009.

We haven't sampled the group of students, thus including in survey 724 PR students. The questionnaires were validated and processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 13.

The questionnaire consists of 48 questions. The main investigation themes include: academic choice motivation, students' abilities and competencies, interests and values, the career choice factors, decisional style, academic and professional experience, career decision information sources and students' future intentions and objectives. The



questionnaire allowed us to investigate eight main directions: students' educational profile, socio-demographic profile, socio-economic status, future intentions and attitudes towards the future, involvement during study, students' abilities and competencies, interests and values and, last but not the least, career decision..

## **Results**

After analyzing the interviews, we can state that employers perceptions and expectations towards students career orientation conduct differ greatly from the professors'. While the first ones are not interested in students' academic training, but value their experience, professionalism and transversal competencies, the professors underline the importance of professional competencies and of student's responsible engagement in their own's career management. Although the professors identify the main issues as concerning: the adverse relationship between the educational offer and the demand on the market, the communication specialist's statute in our country, the structural shortcomings of the PR market: the market's immaturity, the distortions caused by black and grey labor, the absence of empirical studies, and individual's low education investment), so far the four actors mentioned above have no real action plan to remediate these problems. For the moment, the faculty's management have worked at the strategic plan for the institution, which states among other objectives that the faculty aims at increasing the employability rates of students, enlarging the portofolio of partners and improving the relationship with them.

Although it has been founded with the intention to increase the employability rate of students and to facilitate the relationship between the university and the market, the University's Career Center does not have the necessary human, material and financial resouces. The absence of a functional career services network at faculty level and the Center's projects and activities low notoriety (among both students and professors) adds up to this important shortcoming.

The County Work Force Agency is not seen as a real partner by none of the three actors above mentioned. As the institution does not have any clear data or statistics concerning PR labor market evolution, the labor market insertion for university graduates (not to mention for PR students alone), the CWFA employee considers that the main

disadvantages of PR graduates (lack of experience, ineptness, lack of vision, pessimistic attitude) are „generated by a system of education that focusses very little if not at all on experience, imagination, personal development, team-work and communication”.

To sum up, we can observe a real parallelism between the these four actors' perceptions and actions. The University establishes the educational policy based on ministry's orders and on its own needs, autistic, as one of the professors said. The employers act on an imature market, are not very well aware of students' formal training, therefore require transversal competencies when hiring and prefer to train their employees according to their organizational culture. University's Career Center aims at increasing the employability rates of graduates, but does not have the necessary funds or any real projects for this. And the County's Labor Force Agency, which should mediate the relationship between the above mentioned groups, does not have any clear statistics nor has a detailed action plan for university students according to their major.

We can draw some conclusions based on the statistic analysis as well. Concerning the first hypothesis (Third year students are more preoccupied with career decisions than second year students) we can state that students do become more aware of the importance of internship programs and labor market prospect for a good start in the career. Senior students attend more job fairs in order to gather information, hiring interviews or firm presentations. At the same time, their intentions for the future start to take shape, even though they still don't have a real career plan.

The students seem to be aware of the importance abilities and competencies have for job hunting. Their professional portofolio takes shape. In order to make career decisions, they acces different sources of information, such as: the internet, newspapers and magazines, direct contact with the employers, friends or family, job fairs or labor force agencies.

Students career decision seems to be influenced, even if to a small extent, by their own interests by their information resources and last, but not least, by their parents. Third year students are better oriented when talking about career stages. A larger proportion of third year students are looking for a job, are hired or develop a career that has already begun.

Thus, even though the descriptive analysis showed us that there are a series of significant associations between students' year of study and the career decision variables, in the structural model number 6, the independent variables (students' year of study) was eliminated as it did not correlate with the dependent variable (career decision factors). We did not find any significant relationships between the line of study and the other variables from the career decision set (career plan, career indecision factors or decisional style).

Therefore, H 1.1 is partially disconfirmed.

For hypothesis H1.2 (students' line of study influences their career decisions), the descriptive analysis supports a significant set of relationships between the line of study and students labor market statute, their intention to emigrate, their abilities and competencies or interests and values. Thus, a higher percentage of Romanian students are hired compared to German or Hungarian students (33% to 17).

There are some differences between students when talking about the relationship between their line of study and the intention to move to another country. German students seem to be more inclined to move to either Germany (10,5%), or UK, France or Denmark (all three with 5,3%).

Students options for PR or advertising jobs differ greatly. Even if at the highest scale in students preferences is event planning, German students seem to choose this line of career more than Romanians or Hungarians. At the same time, the hungarians are more inclined than the others to choose BTL management, while the Romanians prefer to become spokespersons.

The line of study can also be associated with students' abilities and competencies. Therefore, Hungarian students rate lower on written abilities or digital competencies, but higher on conflict management or professional community engagement. Extremely powerful relationships are established between the students' line of study and their language skills (for French,  $\Gamma=-0,808$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0,000$ , Spanish,  $\Gamma=-0,516$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0,000$ , German,  $\Gamma=0,847$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0,000$  or Hungarian,  $\Gamma=0,872$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0,000$ ).

Regarding their career interests, German and Hungarian students are more liable to choose artistic (Creators) type, while Romanians prefer the social (Helpers) one.

Concerning students' values, the association quotient indicates a little relationship between the line of study and the life values, especially with three of these values: prestige, security and comfort. PR students follow mainly professional prestige and promotion opportunities when interviewed about work values. Career anchors can not be associated with the line of study, with one exception: stability. 24,9% of Romanian students choose this anchor, while only 18,9% Hungarians and 10,7% German.

One out of three Romanian students get a job during studies, and only one out of five German or hungarians students.

Regarding the information sources students choose, the Hungarians access more the faculty, professors or family, while Romanians and Germans prefer the direct contact with the employer.

We did not find any significant relationships between the line of study and the other variables from the career decision set (career plan, career decision and indecision factors or decisional style).

Therefore, we can state that H 1.2 was infirmed.

For the third hypothesis (students decisional style vary according to their finance program), the data shows some differences between budget and tax students on formal experience, involvement during studies, with fair procentages for those who do not pay University fees). At the same time, they are more involved in students' professional body.

There are differences between students based on their values. If budget students seek variety, tax students look for security and confort. When asked about work values, the second category of students ask for steady jobs, offering them promotion opportunities and professional prestige. Otherwise, the most wanted career anchor for tax students seems to be stability or security.

The analysis does not show any significant relationship between the finance program and career decision variables, such as the career plan ( $r^2=-0,01$ ), career stage ( $r^2=0,004$ ), career indecision ( $r^2=-0,05$ ) or students' decisional style. Higher Pearson correlation coefficients were found for the relationship between the finance program and two of the decision factors: succesful PR practitioners ( $r^2=-0,1$ ), and students informational resources ( $r^2=-0,13$ ).

Thus, H 1.3 was not validated.

For H1.4 (students attendance program influences their career decisions), we have seen that student who decide to choose distance learning enter the labor market earlier. As a matter of fact, their option for study is straightly influnced by their intention to held a job during college. Students' work status influences their participation to curricular and extracurricular activities too. For all six categories of activities (PR and adverstising internships, scholarships in and out of the country, conferences, contests and festivals, firm presentations and workshops), distance students have lower procentages.

Still, distance students tend to be more determined about their career path. At the same time, although most students tend to report a rational decisional style, regular students are more influenced by miths and stereotypes, by the lack of information or by conflicting interests.

On the other hand, excepting the career plan variable, no significant relationships were found between students attendance program and the other variables from the career decision set (career stage, factors of career decision and indecision, decisional style) or the career path.

Thus, we can conclude that H 1.4. is disconfirmed, as is the whole H 1. We can state that students' educational profile does not influence their career decisions. Both descriptive, and analytical data (factor analysis and structural equations modelling) support this allegation. No matter the year of study, the atndance program, the finance or the line of study, students make decisions based on their own particular case. We can not say that there is a specific pattern for career orientation of any of the categories of students above mentioned.

Concerning the second hypothesis (students' career interests and values are influenced by gender), the descriptive part of the research has identified a series of differences between male and female students regarding their intentions for hiring: if male students prefer jobs such as creative director, DTP or media broker, female students orientate towards PR counsellor, media relations officer or event manager.

There are some differences between students based on their gender when mentioning the intension to continue studies with a masters program. If girls choose at a higher rate PR, management, journalism, letters, public administration, tourism, design or

psychology, boys options go to advertising, marketing, engineering, studies of security, law or sports.

Concerning Holland's RIASEC types, boys are more interested in realistic activities (19,2 male to 7,1% female), the girls choose the social type (55% female to 38 male).

The association between students' gender and their life values show that entertainment is more important to males, while females choose self respect. As work values, the first prefer a job with a flexible schedule. Also, males are anchored in technical competence, while female students have anchors such as: lifestyle or service and dedication to a cause.

Structural equation modelling number 4 and 5 have shown that students' values and career interests are not influenced by gender.

In conclusion, statistical analysis data do not confirm the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis (Students' SES influences their career orientation) was split into four secondary hypothesis. For the first one (students with higher family income have more professional abilities and competences required by the labor market), research data does not show any significant relationship between income and abilities and competencies (Pearson coefficients rate from  $-0.001$  for ethical decisions to  $0.110$  for digital competencies). A slight relationship was found between income and students' language skills (Gamma= $0.134$ , sig.= $0.005$ ), but contrary to our expectations, the number of students with lower family income that hold a language certificate is higher than the one of students with higher family income ( $66.7\%$  to  $43.1\%$ ) Therefore, it seem that the financial effort required by language courses is not an obstacle for students.

Thus, H 3.1 is also disconfirmed.

For H 3.2, data show little relationship between occupational status and career stages ( $r^2=-0.194$ ), career decision ( $r^2=-0.269$ ) and career plan ( $r^2=-0.247$ ). Thus, the number of employees and private entrepreneurs who have already made a career choice is far greater the one of students ( $47.3\%$ ,  $70.6\%$ , and  $21.8\%$ ). The most important factors in career decision seem to be family members and employers. As related to career plans, the employees have a clearer image on their future intentions and establishing medium and long-term career objectives.

Still, it is alarming that 80% of the students that do not have a steady job have no career plan at all

There were no significant relationship found between income and the other variables concerning career decision, such as: indecision factors ( $r^2=0.019$ ) or decisional style ( $r^2=-0.065$ ).

Thus, we can state that H 3.2 is partially confirmed.

For H 3.3 (students' parents' education influences students' career decisions), analysis shows that students make highschool choices based on their parents' education. Also, when students choose a line of study (Romanian, German or Hungarian) they tend to be influenced by their parents education. Excepting stability, students' career interests and values are not influenced by their parents level of study.

At the same time, little relationship was found between students' mother's and father's education and the family income, students' marital status, ethnical group or mother tongue.

Concerning the decision variables, mother's education has a slight influence on students' career decision and career plan, while father's education correlates with students' decisional style. Still, neither parents' education influences students' career stage or career options, nor does it influence the information sources they access, participation in curricular and extracurricular activities, college engagement or occupational status. The factor analysis and structural equation models support this statement. Thus, H 3.3 is also partially confirmed.

The occupations of students' parents influence students highschool and college options. Mother's occupation seems to influence at a higher rate the university major of students' who make the choice based on the institutional reputation, on interest in the field of study or on friends' options, while father's occupation is important for students who choose a college based on the fact that they are sure they will be admitted.

Students' intention to immigrate does not correlate with parents' occupations. Professional choice, too, with the exception of jobs like researcher and spokesperson.

At the same time, parents' occupations seem to slightly influence students' abilities and competencies, their occupational status, business ownership and family income. Regarding business ownership, 31% of students have a family or own business.

Most of these students' parents are employers or entrepreneurs (10.7%), intellectuals (5.6%) or working in commerce and services (4%). The categories with fewest students owning a business are the ones of those whose parents are in the army, working as unskilled workers, working abroad or unemployed (under 2%).

There are no significant relationships between parents' occupations and students' career decisions, career stages or career plan, sources of information used for choosing a job, the preference for a specific organizational environment or the intention of continuing studies. Nor were any relationships between parents' occupations and students' ethnic groups, religion or mother tongue.

Thus, H 3.4 is partially confirmed, as parents' occupations only influence a small part of students' educational and professional choices.

## **Conclusions**

Our study also started from the Communication Department's desire to test the feasibility of a Career Center for the students of the Political, Administrative and Communication Science Faculty. This action seems even more necessary as we have seen that career orientation is an individual process, which requires for a private approach for each student, according to the specifics of the age and of the career stages, but at the same time keeping in mind the generalities of the counseling process. The results of our study have pictured a general image of career decisions and career choice for students, but still they did not allow us to sketch out a unitary profile of PR students concerning their career orientation.

The results can not be generalized. They can only show us how PR students from the class of 2008-2009 orientate in career. It is very likely that today's students choose different career paths being influenced by a different set of factors. The descriptive part of the research thus only has an informative contribution. The analytical part (the crosstabs between variables, the factor analysis and the structural equation modelling) though has tried to analyze the relationships between research variables and to underline the significant statistical ones in order to allow us to test the hypotheses.

Most of the hypotheses were disconfirmed, proving that educational profile and gender do not influence students' career decisions. Nor does the SES. Maybe the best



conclusion we can draw from this study is that career orientation has to be approached as an individual phenomenon, based on the individual differences and on the particularities of each student.

More so, we can assert that students are more disoriented (than oriented) in the career, that they strongly need career guidance specialized services, in order to clarify their interests, values, attitudes and behavior, to understand society's functioning mechanisms and the multitude of factors that play an active role in career planning process to develop their flexibility and adaptability to change.

The interviews have allowed us to unlarge our research in the offing and to enhance it with quatitative data. Thus we can state that, unfortunately, there is a strong degree of parallelism between emoloyers', university staff's, career counselors' and labor force employees' perceptions and actions. We can draw the conclusion that the University establishes its policies starting from the Ministry's orders and its own necessities, autistically, as one of the proffesors stated. The employees act on an immature market, are not very well aware of students' formal training, therefore asking for soft skills when hiring new employees and pefer to train them according to their own organizational environment. The Career Center aims at increasing graduates employability rates, but does not have real programs, nor the necessaru funds to accomplish this objective. And the County's Labor Force Agency, which should somehow mediate the relationship between the three actors above mentioned, does not have any clear statistics, nor has it a detailed action plan for college graduated, not to mention for PR students.

Therefore, in order to increase the employability rates of graduates, these four agents have to gather their efforts and to sketch up common action plans, base on real projects.

At the same time, we agree with Borgen's opinion (1991), according to which individuals plan an active role in their own career shaping process, both at the intelectual and behavioral level. More so, given the specifics of the academic age (18-25), the decisions students have to make are extremely important for their future. Therefore they have to be aware of the fact that their career is their own responsibility. Thus, given the consequences, they have to approach the career management decisional process with

maximum care and devotion. They have to be fully aware of the need to establish personal and professional objectives that can allow them to develop a life-long career, integrating all the social roles (student, family member, worker, citizen), contexts (family, school, community, work place) and events (first day of school, first workplace, parenthood, changing jobs, retirement etc.).

Recent psychological research (Arnett, 2000; 2004) have shown that this stage of the individual's development, called emerging adulthood, placed between adolescence and young adulthood, is an age of exploring identity, of instability, concentration on self, of the *feeling in-between* and of multiple possibilities. In this stage, the individual explores (cf. Super, 1980) various possibilities concerning his own education, social activities and relationships, profession etc. At the same time this period is all about trying new experiences, gathering information and improving abilities, cristalyzing identity and implementing occupational options.

Our data shows that a third of questioned students (n=240; 33,8%) plae themselves in the first (self-knowledge) or in the second (evaluation of own abilities and competencies, values and interests) stage of the career, while 10% of them are undecided or can not identify the stage they are in at this moment. Only 13% of them declared that are developing a career that has already started. Still, we could not identify any certain relationship between students' age and career stages. More so, given the fact that the students are at the beginning of careers, we can not talk about career maturity, although if we approach Super's definition of the concept, that of the readiness to make career decisions, there is a fair number of students that prove insight and vision in dealling with career decision. Concerning students, theory emphasizes the importance of career planning, as an important factor of career management.

In the case of PR students, two thirds of the questionned students (67,3%) state that they have not taken a strong decision on career and a similar procentage (69,8%) state that have no career plan at all. Shocking, if we are to think about cteh fact that we have only questioned second and third year students, who will soon acces the labor market. Students short and medium term objectives aim at graduating college, continuing studies, getting a job and getting relevant PR experience. Still, tehy do not have a clear idea about their own professional options or aspirations.

Regarding the importance of social, economical and personal factor on career decision, the factor analysis has identified three corresponding categories of factors: the perceived job accessibility (material, financial and informational barriers and opportunities), self concept and the significant others (parents, friends and succesful PR people).

The Social-Cognitive Career Theory also brings into discussion the importance of personal and environmental factors. The individual identifies the succesful experiences and ends in choosing those vocational alternatives that are associated with these experiences. Internship seems to be a good opportunity for them to establish a contact with labor market, with the organizational environment and with team work.

Fortunately, most students prefer to make career choices based on logic, arguments and alternatives, thus adopting a rational decisional style. When asked about career indecision factors, 45,8 % of the students have mentioned conflicting interests for several fields, while 36,4% are influenced by the lack of information on possible alternatives.

We have approached the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise because of its fourth stage (orientation to internal, unique self). Adolescents through adults, become more introspective and self-aware, establishing a self-identity or self-concept and related personal goals. They focus on personal objectives, rather than on the ones set by the others, but still take any clue coming from them on the choice they are to make. This clues might be: higher rates of colleagues, teachers' or parents' comments, experiences or test results. With each barrier, many students may be faced with a choice between sacrificing compatibility according to vocational interests, job level, or femininity/masculinity of the job.

The interviews confirmed that students make both kinds of compromises: anticipatory and experiential. Anticipatory compromises are made when an individual perceives that a most desired occupation is not an accessible or realistic choice. In comparison, experiential compromises occur when an individual modifies aspiration in response to experiences obtained when attempting to gain employment.

In conclusion, we can state that the dealing with a heterogenous group, we can not frame students as a unitary category. Students' different age, and social-economical and

professional status force us to deal with each case individually. Each student has his own particular personality traits, aptitudes, abilities and competencies, interests and values. Given that the variables involved in this process are so numerous and so different, we found it difficult to shape up a unitary set of factors influencing the decisional process of PR students.

More so, given the particular characteristics of the age, students have to put an effort in analyzing their whole self concept, their relationships and developmental alternatives, in order to make true career decisions, which would allow them to establish fair relationships between their lifestyle, values, leisure time, education and profession. A career counsellor's guidance is therefore even more important in this context.

### **Limits and research perspectives**

Apart from the results and the contributions of a reserach, no matter how complex and documented, there are a series of limits , which allow the researcher to continue and to get thoroughly into the subject. In our case, we can identify three sets of limits: concerning the studied population, concerning the reserach methods and concerning the perspectives.

The first set of limits are given from the fact that we have selected a single case of study, the PR students of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Science, from the Babes-Bolyai University, in Cluj-Napoca. Even though we have applied questionnaires to all second and third year students, the results only depict a descriptive image of career orientation phenomenon for the 724 students included in the study. The results can not be generalized and can not be reported as valid for other Romanian universities.

When choosing the methods, we have tried to keep in mind the fact that „using combined methods and techniques for the study of the same phenomenon is a principle of the sociological research methodology, assessed by the immanent limits of each method or technique in setting the truthand that one's virtues of knowledge compensate for the limits of the others (cf. Chelcea, 2001:281). Cu toate acestea, cel de-al doilea set de limite, și poate cel mai consistent, se referă la metodele de cercetare alese și la modul în care acestea au fost aplicate.

For the qualitative method, we can mention the following limits:

- although we have selected representative PR people, the number of interviews applied is a little bit too small for the importance of the approached subject;
- given the overloaded schedule of two of the interviewed specialists, we had to conduct the interviews through e-mail, thus not having the opportunity to clarify or develop some of the answers;
- at the same time, we could not eliminate completely the desirability of some answers.

For the survey,

- although self-administered questionnaires are recommended for large educational populations, given the fact that we have applied them during the exams period, the students had only a small amount of time to complete them;
- when self-administering questionnaires a fairly large quantity of information is lost, thus not giving the researcher the possibility to eliminate ambiguity, imprecision, inconsistency or incomplete answers;
- when some aspects of the questions are not fully understood (for instance for value coding), the researcher has no chance in identifying the answers that are not true;
- last, but not least, having a degree of validity adequate only to the interviewed subjects, the results can not be generalized to a large scale population.

Regarding the instruments, the great majority of studies approaching career orientation use psychological inventories or tests, while our research used sociological instruments, such as interview-guide and self-administered questionnaire. We have striven to overcome this limit by using the factor analysis (where it was possible) and structural equation modelling.

The third set of limits concern the research perspectives. Our study does not aim at analysing PR specialists' career orientation, nor does it extend to other communication science students (coming from journalism, advertising, documenting and archiving, librarian studies etc.). At the same time, we have to keep in mind at all times the national context of PR development as a field, as we have tried to emphasize in our paper the problems the PR specialists have to face in establishing PR as a profession in Romania.

Concerning the present state of research in career orientation, we have only consulted the English scientific literature. But given the fact that the great majority of main research has been driven and published by English speakers, we have tried to summarize the most important career orientation theories, starting with Franks Parsons' Trait-Factor Theory and ending with Career Information Processing Theory of Peterson, Sampson and Reardon. Nevertheless, we assume that recent research approached in our paper reflect the present state of knowledge in career orientation literature.

Also, given the transdisciplinary of the theme, our study has tried to combine the psychological and the sociological perspective on career orientation.

An important limit of our research concerns the scientific articles on PR specialists' career orientation. Although we have identified a series of articles dedicated to this subject (especially international journals, such as PR Review or PR Journal), our access to them was strongly restricted. Had we consulted these articles, the results of our paper would have been enriched with valuable data, offering a consistent point of view coming from PR specialists all over the globe.

Based on these limits, several research perspectives can be drawn in order to sketch a more detailed image of students' career orientation, of the decisional process involved in choosing vocational paths and managing careers.

No matter the field of interests, research is never ending. There are countless courses of research and possibilities to improve knowledge. Most of the limits mentioned above can be transformed into future research perspectives, thus providing us the opportunity to fathom the approached themes.

The instruments and the results can be used to analyze career orientation for other educational or professional groups.

Finally, we believe that our research has achieved its goal, meeting the information needs for both theoreticians and practitioners. We hope that the paper's results and the contribution to the state of knowledge in career orientation will be useful to researchers and professionals in the field, that the inherent limits of the study will be overcome and future research directions will be the subject of other scientific approaches.

## **Personal contribution**

Since the main goal of any research is to create added value for the studied field, we further present a synthesis of the main contributions that we have made in this paper. Given that this paper is a combination of theoretical and empirical research, we structure the contributions into two categories: conceptual and empirical level contributions.

At the conceptual level, the conducted research is characterized by:

- - the detailed presentation and development of several conceptual approaches on career guidance,
- - the synthesis the psychological and sociological theories that have been developed in an attempt to explain career guidance topics
- Chronological presentation of the main theoretical contributions to the development of career guidance issues that allowed tracking how scientific knowledge has evolved in time

At an empirical level, to highlight the main contributions of the research, we must refer to the obtained results in our study, as follows:

- we have presented the perspective of employers, teachers, CAE's and University Career Center's on PR students' career guidance and we have shown that in order to increase employability of graduates, the four players beforementioned need to join forces and develop action plans based on real projects
- we have demonstrated that gender and educational profile do not influence students' career decisions and that the economic status is not a strong determinant of their career orientation
- we have demonstrated that career guidance is a subject that should be addressed individually, as we could not identify a unitary model that combines the advanced theoretical research perspectives. Career orientation is a phenomenon that must be approached differently from individual to individual, taking into account the particularities of each student. We could not detach a profile of career guidance for students in communication sciences as a whole. Moreover, we can say that students are more confused than career oriented. They need the strong guidance of a career counselor, in their effort to clarify their interests, values, attitudes and behaviors. Thus they will get a better understanding of society's mechanisms and

of the multiplicity of factors that play an active role in career planning. In the end, they will develop flexibility and adaptability to change

- we have shown that students have to be empowered in the career guidance process; they should be helped to understand the importance of career management decision-making approach with maximum seriousness, given the consequences of this process.

Finally, we believe that our research has achieved its goal, meeting the information needs of both theoreticians and practitioners. We hope that the results and contributions to the state of knowledge will be useful to researchers and professionals in the field, which the inherent limitations of our study will be overcome and that future research directions will be the subject of other scientific approaches.



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