

CHOOSING SOCIAL WORK AS A FIELD OF STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

In the present is growing interest about university studies. The number of people with higher education has been increasing over the long term, with a significant proportion of students being adults. The main goal of our research was to find out what motivates people at this stage of life, in addition to work and family responsibilities, to decide on further education and improving their qualifications. We focused on the area of helping professions, which are financially less attractive and interesting than other professions. We were interested in whether their decision is based on legislative changes in the work sphere, or is it more an effort to obtain a higher education degree, or are they led to this decision by factors related to the sense of helping others. The results of long-term research in this area indicate that the motivation to study at university is complex and includes several factors. Therefore, the choice of study is usually not influenced by a single motive, but by a combination of several stimuli, factors that influence their decision.

Choosing a future profession is an important process and we define it as a process that includes a decision about a future profession, preparation for a future profession, but also a person's entire career path. The most important task is the decision itself for a given profession, which affects a person throughout their entire life, and therefore the choice of a future profession itself can be considered one of the most important decisions in a person's life. A profession that is not correctly and appropriately chosen can negatively affect an individual and have a stressful effect on them, which negatively affects the quality of their life. [4] Motivational stimuli that influence us in the work environment are

numerous. These may include an increased degree of democratization, the level of participation in decision-making, and the need for security and safety. In the context of career choice, these factors lead to the decision to pursue a profession that ensures stable employment and provides the individual with fundamental life securities: economic, material, and social. [8] According to the authors Hadašová and Kollárová [3], motivation is the basis of human resources and directly affects the results achieved at work. Kollárik et al. [5] states that motivation is the core of biological, psychological and social regulation. The term motivation is derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means to move, it sets a person in motion and is related to why and for what reason a person does something. It is an area that is intrinsically linked to the dynamic nature of psychological activity and the issue of social activity of the individual. [7]

PURPOSE OF THE WORK

The aim of the topics is to determine the motivational structure of students to choose the field of study Social Work from the perspective of gender and form of study of university students.

RESEARCH SET

Our research sample consisted of 285 students of the University of Health and Social Work of St. Elizabeth, Institute of the Blessed M. D. Trčka in Michalovce. They were students of the study field of Social Work, in full-time and part-time form. Their more detailed characteristics are presented in Table 1, from which we see that out of 285 respondents, 206 were female (73%) and 79 were male (27%). We see a higher representation of women in the research set, which is a natural phenomenon considering the study field under study. The students were aged from 19 to 55 years, with an average age of 35,1 years (SD = 8,9).

Scheme 1: Socio-demographic indicators of the research set

		Number	%
Total – number of respondents		285	100
Form of study	Full time	87	31
	External	198	69
	Bc.	178	62

Level of study	Mgr.	107	38
Gender	Men	79	27
	Women	206	73
Age	Average (SD)		Range
	35,1 (8,9)		19 – 55

METHODOLOGY

In our research, we chose to use a quantitative research strategy, where a questionnaire was used as a tool, consisting of questions aimed at identifying socio-demographic indicators and seventeen questions (items) aimed at identifying the motivational structure of students in the field of Social Work. A questionnaire was used from the authors Leczová et al. [6] Individual questions represent motivational factors that led, influenced or motivated students to choose a given field of study at university. Each item (question) or each motivational factor was evaluated by students on a five-point scale, expressing the degree of significance of individual items – individual motivational factors in choosing to study a given field. They answered the question: "To what extent did the reasons listed influence (motivate) you in choosing your field of study?" The five-point scale was with multiple-choice options, where: (1) meant not at all, (2) rather not, (3) I am not sure, (4) rather yes and (5) meant very much. A higher score indicates a greater significance of the given motive. Based on the analysis of the tightness of linear relationships between the individual items (motivational factors) of the assessment scale, three groups of factors were created, which contain related items. The individual groups of factors are named according to their predominant motivational tendency, namely: prosocial motivational factors, professional motivational factors and conformal motivational factors.

RESULTS

The data we obtained through the collected questionnaires were evaluated and processed in the statistical software SPSS. In the statistical description of the obtained data, we used a non-parametric test for two independent samples - Mann-Whitney U-test.

Scheme 2 below shows the motivational factors that influenced or motivated students in choosing a given field of study to the greatest and least extent. In scheme 2, the first three places show the three motivational factors that are most

important from the students' point of view and the last three motivational factors that were least important for students in choosing a field of study.

Scheme 2, we see that students were most influenced in choosing the field of study Social Work by prosocial motivational factors, specifically the factors: how much I like working with other people, I want to help others and I am interested in their fates.

The least significant role among students was played by factors from the group of conformist motivational factors, specifically in the sense that there are lower demands on the given field of study, it was my parents' wish and I could not get into another university.

Scheme 2: Significance of motivational factors in the entire research set (N=285)

Items	Categories of Motivational Factors	M	SD
I like working with people	Prosocial	4,39	0,71
I want to help other people	Prosocial	4,38	0,75
I am interested in the fates of other people	Prosocial	4,21	0,77
Lower demands for studying in the field I am studying	Conformity	2,21	1,06
My parents wish it	Conformity	1,85	1,24
I did not get into another university	Conformity	1,41	0,96

Scheme 3 shows the differences in the categories of motivational factors in students by gender, where we see that we recorded statistically significant differences in each group of motivational factors. Women achieved higher average values in one of the monitored categories, namely in the area of prosocial motivational factors, while men achieved higher average values in the area of professional and conformal motivational factors. Several studies indicate that women are characterized by a greater degree of prosociality.

Scheme 3: Differences in categories of motivational factors between students from the perspective of gender

	Women		Men		U
	M	SD	M	SD	
prosocial motivational factors	25,7	5,1	22,1	3,6	2589,0*
professional motivational factors	15,9	4,5	17,5	4,9	3245,5**
conformist motivational factors	12,5	3,1	13,5	3,3	2449,0**

In Scheme 4 we see that statistically significant differences were also recorded among students in terms of the form of study. As we can see in Table 4, we found higher average values in the group of prosocial motivational factors and professional motivational factors in students of the external form of study, and in the group of full-time students we found that they achieved higher average values in the category of conformal motivational factors, which is a natural phenomenon due to their younger age compared to external students.

Scheme 4: Differences in categories of motivational factors of students by form of study

	Full time form		External form		χ^2
	M	SD	M	SD	
prosocial motivational factors	24,5	4,2	25,2	3,4	41,5***
professional motivational factors	19,1	4,0	22,5	4,1	8,7*
conformal motivational factors	15,4	3,2	14,3	3,5	19,3***

*sig. $p < 0,05$; ***sig. $p < 0,001$

DISCUSSION

In the entire research set, we found that students were mostly motivated to choose a given field of study mainly because of prosocial motivational factors, which achieved the highest average values. Specifically, students were led to

choose the study because this profession is characterized by working with people, helping others, and that they are interested in the fates of other people.

Our results agree with the statement of the authors Žiaková and Balogová, [11] who state in their publication that a helping worker is characterized by prosocial behavior, which is characterized by certain actions and deeds performed for the benefit of another person without the right to remuneration. The results of our research also coincide with the research of Schavel, [9] who conducted research in this area and found that most often students chose this field because of expanding their knowledge in this area, and also because they want to help other people, which coincides with our motivation factor, which reached the second highest average value of all monitored factors. Schavel [9] further states that respondents are interested in solving their problems.

In terms of the form of study, we found that younger students (full-time students) were statistically significantly more often influenced by conformist motivational factors when choosing the field of study Social Work compared to older students (part-time students) and part-time students were statistically significantly more often motivated by factors from the category of prosocial and professional motivational factors when choosing this field, which was also confirmed by several studies conducted in this area. Our findings do not match those of Gregorová and Krystoň, [2] who conducted research where they assumed that external students would be motivated to study mainly due to increasing their qualifications as a condition from the employer, which was not confirmed by the authors. Our results are in line with the results of our previous research Barkasi, [1] where it was found that external students were more influenced by career motivational factors when choosing the field of study Social Work than full-time students.

SUMMARY

Based on the findings, we can state that the choice of a field of study is influenced by several factors, and only one factor or motive never plays a role. In our research, we found that students chose this field of study mainly because of prosocial motivational factors and were least influenced by conformist motivational factors. At the same time, we found that specific motivational factors are typical for specific groups. Our findings are in line with several research studies that have already been carried out in the subject area. Age is a significant factor that determines the primary basic motivational tendencies when choosing the field of study Social Work.

For the work of a social worker, professional theoretical knowledge and practical skills are necessary and essential, as well as certain key personal

prerequisites and abilities that are important for the quality performance of this profession. Our research showed that students choose this field of study mainly for prosocial motivational reasons. This finding is extremely positive because it indicates that students enjoy working with people, desire to help them, and find deep meaning in social work. At the same time, it also points to their positive relationship with people and suitable personality prerequisites for this profession. On the contrary, the least significant motivational factors in choosing this field were the conformity category. We are pleased with the favorable result in that it is proof that students have the potential to be good helping professionals after completing their studies.

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Abstract

In this topics we will discuss about students' motivation to choose the field of study Social Work. Choosing a profession is a key moment in the life of every individual, and the decision to study at a university is influenced by a number of factors. Our research focused on analyzing motivation from the perspective of gender and form of study. As a tool, we used a questionnaire from the team of authors Leczová et al. (2014), which includes statements divided into three areas of motivational factors: prosocial, career and conformal motivational factors. We investigated the motivation to choose the field of study Social Work, which is a profession that requires not only professional knowledge and practical skills, but also specific personality prerequisites. The research results show that students chose this field mainly for prosocial reasons, which indicates their interest in helping others, a positive attitude towards working with people and natural prosocial qualities.

Keywords

Social work, prosocial motivational factors, career motivational factors, conform motivational factors, choice of field of study