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## HOPE FOR SUCCESS AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE CAREER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

This article aims to analyze the relations between the difficulty of making career decisions and hope for success. Hope for success may be a factor that modifies the quality of decisions, especially in difficult situations. As a source of motivation to act and overcome the obstacles encountered, hope for success influences human perception and behavior when making decisions and taking actions. The study was carried out on a group of 149 students in the final grade of high schools located in the Mazowieckie voivodeship, Poland. The participants were 17 to 21 years old ( $M = 18.64$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). To measure the variables, we used the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire and the Hope for Success Questionnaire. The results indicate statistically significant differences in the severity of the difficulties in making career decisions in people with different levels of hope of success.

**Keywords:** difficulties in the career decision-making process, lack of readiness, lack of information, inconsistent information, hope for success.

### THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

At the threshold of adulthood, a young person faces difficult choices regarding their future (Rożnowski, 2013). Career decision is one of the most important life decisions and is subject to the same decision-making processes as other choices (Kida, 2011). Under conditions of quick changes in the economy and on the labor market, the future of each individual is less defined than it was in tradi-

tional societies, which leads to a situation where any type of decision involves some risk and making a career decision may be difficult (Rożnowski, 2009). At present, a young person needs to decide on their own whether his or her planned choice of career path will be appropriate in the lifetime career perspective (Bańka, 2011). It needs to be stressed that the career decision-making process is multifaceted (Gati, Amir, & Landman, 2010).

Accustomed to short-term planning, young people find themselves in a situation where they need to make a decision that will have consequences in the future (Kida, 2011). This may give rise to career indecision. The lack of planning of one's professional career delays the process, and eventually an individual makes a random choice or relies on what the circumstances suggest (Germeijs & De Boeck, 2002). This may lead to wrong choices of further professional career (Bańka, 2011). To help those on the verge of making a decision regarding their further education or professional career, it is necessary to locate and identify their specific areas of difficulty (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005).

The career decision-making model proposed by Gati – *Prescreening, In-depth exploration, Choice* (PIC) – is addressed to those facing a situation of choosing a career, and its aim is to facilitate the decision-making process (Gati, Saka, & Krausz, 2001). It is possible to indicate areas of difficulty and reasons for making wrong decisions by juxtaposing the decision-making model with the indicators of young people's dissatisfaction with their career decisions (Rożnowski, 2013). Holland, Gottfredson, and Nafziger (1975) point to four indecision factors: competence doubts, lack of information, anxiety about the choice, and lack of clarity regarding one's place in the labor market.

To help those facing a career choice, Gati (Gati & Saka, 2001) developed a taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties. The sources of difficulties were grouped into three major clusters: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. Ten specific sources of difficulties in the decision-making process were also distinguished: lack of motivation – a lack of willingness to make a decision; general indecisiveness – a person has a general difficulty in making decisions; dysfunctional beliefs – irrational beliefs and expectations regarding career decisions; lack of information about the decision-making process – reflects the lack of knowledge about how to make a decision wisely; lack of information about the self – the decision-maker does not have enough information about themselves; lack of information about occupations – lack of information regarding the existing array of career options; lack of information about ways of obtaining information – lack of information about the ways of obtaining additional information or help that may facilitate decision making;

unreliable information – the information that the decision-maker has about themselves is unreliable or unproven; external conflicts – indicate a gap between an individual's preferences and the preferences voiced by others; internal conflicts – indicate mutual exclusion of an individual's preferences (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996).

The belief in having competences that enable success is referred to by Snyder (2005) as hope. Hope expresses a belief that one is able to find the pathway to the goal by themselves and mobilize the energy to take up the task. Hope is defined as a positive motivational state that is based on two types of beliefs (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). One is a belief in the ability to complete a planned task. It is connected with having strong will power. It is a belief in the ability to achieve a set goal even despite numerous obstacles and despite doubt. The other factor is a belief in the ability to find solutions. It is a belief in one's knowledge and mental abilities (Łaguna, 2010). Hope for success can be described as expecting positive outcomes of one's own actions (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). High hope for success has a positive impact on a person's existence; it is accompanied by lower depression and by flexibility when dealing with stress (Snyder, 2005). When facing difficulties, high-hope individuals are able to skillfully adapt to the existing conditions. They quickly find an alternative goal (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). Moreover, high hope for success is associated with better adaptation, which is reflected, for instance, in social competencies. This is accompanied by good relationships with family and friends (Snyder, 2005).

Contemporary career theories put greater emphasis on subjective career determinants (Hauziński, 2012). An essential element in psychological career theories is an individual's personality, his or her emotional sphere, desires, and ambitions that determine the pace and nature of transition (Roznowski, 2013). The level of hope is responsible for the effectiveness of an individual's behaviors, the way of overcoming obstacles, and perseverance in accomplishing goals; it also affects the level of adaptation to life (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). Hope for success influences an individual's perception and actions when making decisions and initiating activities (Snyder, 2005).

### **Research question and hypothesis**

The purpose of the survey was to examine the relationships between hope for success and difficulties before embarking on the career decision-making process in young people preparing for transition, because the number of Polish studies on the phenomenon of indecision in young people is insufficient (Roznowski,

2013). The following research question was formulated in the course of literature analysis: Do people with different levels of hope for success differ in the level of difficulties they experience while making a career decision? The following hypothesis was put forward: individuals with higher hope for success experience less difficulty in making a career choice.

## METHOD

### Participants

The survey was conducted on a group of 149 respondents (64 women and 85 men, 43% and 57% respectively), high school students from the Mazowieckie voivodeship, Poland. The age range of the respondents was between 17 and 21 ( $M = 18.64$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

### Measures

We used Snyder's Hope for Success Questionnaire (HSQ) as adapted into Polish by Łaguna, Trzebiński, and Zięba (2005). The questionnaire consists of 12 statements (including 8 diagnostic ones), the applicability of which is rated on a scale from 1 to 8. Apart from yielding the general score, *HSQ* measures two dimensions of hope: belief in having strong will power, which enables the achievement of goals, and belief in one's ability to find solutions in difficult situations. The reliability of the *HSQ* general score scale, measured using Cronbach's alpha, is .82, the reliability of the scale measuring strong will power beliefs is .74, and the reliability of the scale measuring beliefs in one's ability to find solutions is .72.

Difficulties in the decision-making process were measured with the use of the Career Decision-Making Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati & Saka, 2001). The questionnaire consists of 34 statements and makes it possible to calculate the general score reflecting the general level of difficulties in choosing a career as well as results for three main scales and 10 subscales being parts thereof, concerning specific difficulties. The scales and its constituent subscales are as follows: lack of readiness: lack of motivation, general indecisiveness, dysfunctional beliefs; lack of information: lack of information about the decision-making process, lack of information about the self, lack of information about occupa-

tions, lack of information about ways of obtaining information; inconsistent information: unreliable information, external conflicts, internal conflicts (Gati & Saka, 2001). The psychometric properties of both the whole scale and individual subscales are on a good level – reliability measured using Cronbach's *alpha* is .88 for the whole scale, and for individual main scales it is the following: .61 for lack of readiness, .87 for lack of information, and .77 for inconsistent information. The Polish version was developed as a translation of the English version, and then back translation was performed. The retranslated version was approved by the author of the original version (Koper, 2005).

## RESULTS

To answer the research question, we distinguished three groups of students based on HSQ questionnaire norms: with low (below 4 sten), moderate (5 and 6 sten), and high (over 7) hope for success. The significance of differences between the distinguished groups was compared using variance analysis for inter-object factors. Bonferroni post hoc comparisons with multiple comparison correction were conducted for the obtained data.

Based on a one-way ANOVA for independent samples, we found statistically significant differences between individuals with different hope for success in the general level of perceived difficulties in making a career choice,  $F(2, 146) = 14.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$ . The post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in perceiving difficulties related to career decision between individuals with high hope for success and those with a low ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate ( $p < .01$ ) level of that variable. In high-hope participants, the general level of difficulties was lower ( $M = 10.92, SD = 4.17$ ) compared to the group of low-hope ( $M = 14.84, SD = 3.51$ ) and moderate-hope individuals ( $M = 14.53, SD = 3.70$ ).

Based on a one-way MANOVA, statistically significant differences were identified between individuals with different hope for success in the level of difficulties in making a career choice in three main areas,  $F(6, 288) = 5.04, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$ . A comparison of detailed intergroup results revealed differences in the area of difficulties related to lack of information,  $F(2, 146) = 14.63, p < .01, \eta^2 = .16$ , and inconsistent information,  $F(2, 164) = 11.32, p < .01, \eta^2 = .13$ . In both cases, post hoc analyses revealed statistically significant differences between high-hope and low- ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate-hope individuals ( $p < .01$ ). Students demonstrating high hope for success have less difficulties in

the area of lack of information ( $M = 9.53$ ,  $SD = 5.16$ ) compared to low- ( $M = 14.51$ ,  $SD = 4.38$ ) and moderate-hope students ( $M = 14.29$ ,  $SD = 4.91$ ). Students demonstrating higher hope for success have less difficulties in the area of inconsistent information ( $M = 10.17$ ,  $SD = 5.16$ ) compared to low- ( $M = 15.00$ ,  $SD = 4.76$ ) and moderate-hope student groups ( $M = 14.31$ ,  $SD = 5.16$ ).

Based on a one-way MANOVA, statistically significant differences were found between individuals with different hope for success in the level of perceived specific difficulties in making a career choice,  $F(20, 274) = 2.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ . A comparison of the level of difficulties in specific areas revealed statistically significant differences between students with different levels of hope, which is illustrated in Table 1; the table shows means, standard deviations, and tests of inter-object effects for specific difficulties.

The results of post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences between individuals with high and low ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate ( $p < .01$ ) hope for success for the following factors: general indecisiveness, lack of information about the decision-making process, lack of information about the self, lack of information about occupations, lack of information about ways of obtaining information, unreliable information, external conflicts, and internal conflicts.

Based on two-way ANOVA for independent samples, statistically significant differences were found between individuals with different levels of belief in having strong will power enabling the achievement of goals in the general level of perceived difficulties in making a career choice,  $F(2, 140) = 14.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ . The other main outcome for the belief in solution-finding skills in difficult situations and interaction between factors turned out not to be statistically significant. Post hoc analyses revealed statistically significant differences between individuals with a high and low ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate ( $p < .02$ ) level of belief in having strong will power in the level of general decision-making difficulties. In students with a high level of belief in having strong will power, the level of perceived difficulties was lower ( $M = 11.08$ ,  $SD = 3.79$ ) compared to the groups with a low ( $M = 15.04$ ;  $SD = 3.37$ ) and moderate level of that belief ( $M = 14.67$ ,  $SD = 3.79$ ).

A comparison of intergroup results revealed significant differences in the area of difficulties related to lack of information between individuals with different levels of belief in having strong will power,  $F(2, 140) = 3.76$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . The post hoc comparison revealed statistically significant differences between individuals with high and low ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate belief in having strong will power ( $p < .01$ ) in the area of insufficient information. In the case of individuals with a high level of belief in having strong will power, the lack of

information is lower ( $M = 9.70$ ,  $SD = 4.89$ ) compared to the groups with a low ( $M = 14.98$ ,  $SD = 4.49$ ) and moderate level of that belief ( $M = 14.39$ ,  $SD = 4.87$ ).

Table 1  
*The Level of Difficulties in Choosing a Career by Level of Hope for Success (N = 149)*

Career decision-making difficulties		Level of hope for success			MANOVA		
		Group	M	SD	F	p	$\eta^2$
Lack of readiness	Lack of motivation	A	12.20	4.18	1.29	.29	.02
		B	11.45	5.76			
		C	10.25	6.13			
	Indecisiveness	A	16.68	6.26	6.76	<.01	.09
		B	15.83	5.59			
		C	12.10	6.58			
	Dysfunctional beliefs	A	16.50	6.62	0.76	.47	.01
		B	17.86	5.90			
		C	18.23	8.05			
Lack of information	about the decision-making process	A	15.55	4.49	12.89	<.01	.15
		B	14.20	5.44			
		C	9.68	6.48			
	about the self	A	19.00	6.96	13.04	<.01	.14
		B	18.59	7.49			
		C	11.80	7.55			
	about occupations	A	14.75	5.59	8.31	<.01	.10
		B	15.61	5.92			
		C	10.77	6.82			
	about ways of obtaining information	A	8.75	4.12	7.93	<.01	.10
		B	8.78	3.99			
		C	5.88	3.62			
Inconsistent information	Unreliable information	A	13.85	4.91	8.50	<.01	.10
		B	13.54	5.93			
		C	9.43	5.50			
	External conflicts	A	22.90	7.75	9.36	<.01	.11
		B	21.83	8.01			
		C	15.70	9.09			
	Internal conflicts	A	8.25	4.40	5.43	<.01	.10
		B	7.58	4.23			
		C	5.38	3.74			

Note. A – low hope for success ( $N = 40$ ); B – moderate hope for success ( $N = 69$ ); C – high hope for success ( $N = 40$ ). The results are significant at  $p > .05$ .

A comparison of detailed intergroup results for specific difficulties revealed significant differences in the area of difficulties related to lack of information about the decision-making process,  $F(2, 140) = 3.58$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ , and lack

of information about the self,  $F(2, 140) = 5.11, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$ , between individuals with different levels of belief in having strong will power. Post hoc analyses revealed statistically significant differences between individuals with a high and low ( $p < .01$ ) or moderate level of strong will power ( $p < .01$ ) in the area of lack of information both about the self and about the decision-making process. In individuals demonstrating strong will power, insufficient information about the self was lower ( $M = 12.31, SD = 7.17$ ) compared to the groups of individuals with low ( $M = 19.96, SD = 7.05$ ) and moderate sense of will power ( $M = 18.49, SD = 7.66$ ). Similarly, in students with a high sense of strong will power, insufficient information about the decision-making process was lower ( $M = 9.96, SD = 6.08$ ) compared to the groups of students exhibiting low ( $M = 15.92, SD = 4.40$ ) and moderate belief in having strong will power ( $M = 14.19, SD = 5.61$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Within the general paradigm of cognitive psychology, hope for success is a subjective judgment: the way one perceives one's surroundings (Ng et al., 2005). Beliefs play crucial regulatory functions in human life: they may influence human behavior or constitute a regulator that influences judgment making (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). As a belief, hope for success further defines an individual who is the subject of their own actions and their life, shaping the surroundings based on their judgments and beliefs (Snyder, 2005). Based on the statistical analyses employed, it was confirmed that the level of hope diversifies students in terms of the level of perceived difficulties in making a career decision.

Differences between groups with low, moderate, and high hope for success are reflected both in the general level of perceived difficulties in career decision-making and in specific types of difficulties. The highest level of perceived difficulties is found in people with low and moderate hope. Both groups exhibit significantly higher levels of difficulties compared to high-hope individuals, especially in areas related to lack of information and inconsistent information. Difficulties of this specific kind, stemming from the lack of sufficient information, may be remedied by contacting a career counselor. Research conducted by Rożnowski (2009) shows that only a negligible proportion of young people use employment counseling. A majority of young people get the knowledge about



career options from their peers or from the media, which are not sources of information as reliable as educated and experienced job counselors.

Individuals with low hope for success anticipate failure in what they do, which leads to withdrawal and avoidance behaviors such as: delaying the career decision or taking potluck instead of making conscious informed choices (Snyder & Pulvers; 2001). Such people are more focused on passive dealing with stressful situations (Ng et al., 2005), and choosing a career should be treated as one of such situations (Kida, 2011).

High hope for success releases positive emotions that motivate an individual to actively look for solutions to a given problem. High-hope individuals exhibit lower perception of difficulties compared to low and moderate-hope individuals. Qiu and Li (2008) suggest that a high level of hope is a factor that facilitates active and constructive dealing with difficulties, which is confirmed by research results – high hope for success and strong will power are factors that decrease the level of perceived difficulties in making a career choice. Research done by Ng and colleagues (2005) also points to hope as a good predictor of pursuing a career.

In the case of components comprising hope for success, statistically significant differences have been identified between individuals with different levels of belief in having strong will power. Individuals with a high level of strong will power demonstrate a lower general level of perceived difficulties in choosing a career compared to those with low or moderate will power. As regards specific difficulties, individuals with a higher level of strong will power display a lower information deficit in the areas of lack of information about the self and about the decision-making process. This might translate into braver initiation of actions aimed at achieving the goal (Snyder, 2005) – namely, at choosing a career and perseverance despite the difficulties that occur. In addition, the research conducted shows that a low level of difficulties is promoted by a high level of hope for success, and that is why it seems important to develop competencies that would strengthen students' hope for success. Developed and enhanced competencies will provide young people with adequate theoretical knowledge and practical skills of operating in the labor market.

A limitation of the survey performed was the too narrow selection of the sample, limited only to high school students from the Mazowieckie voivodeship. Despite obtaining statistically significant differences between individuals with different levels of hope, the survey should be repeated with inhabitants of other voivodeships due to the unstable situation in the labor market in various regions of Poland (Bańka, 2011).

The obtained results point to a significant interrelation between hope for success and the level of perceived difficulties in making a career decision in the group of students in the final grade of high school. These results may be useful to career counselors in the process of employment counseling for people choosing a career and may induce them to be particularly sensitive to the level of hope for success.

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