

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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**THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF
VOCATIONAL PATH CHOICE**

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

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INTRODUCTION

Analyzing vocational choice(s): relevance of the topic. In a modern, rapidly changing society career development becomes a focus of numerous research studies. Analyzed not only by psychologists, it addresses a wide variety of interdisciplinary issues, such as career decision making, development of vocational interests, retention or drop-out rates, career competency development, just a few to mention.

Although choosing a vocation is a one-time event, it should be noted that it indicates only a beginning of one's vocational path, a path that normally starts with a study major choice and lasts throughout the professional life. Therefore, it is important not only to analyze how initial vocational choices are made, it is equally important to identify the determinants of further career development. A time-frame that draws many researchers' attention as having an essential importance in career development is that of acquiring a profession. It encompasses undergraduate studies, at least, and can be considered to be one of the main pathways of transition from school to the world of work. Consequently, the analysis of vocational path at this stage raises a lot of issues, such as understanding the continuity of vocational path, retention promotion, and prevention of the drop-out.

The main research question that has to be asked here: what factors determine the linkage between the initial vocational choice and its outcome – becoming a professional in a certain field? It also addresses a very specific psychological issue: what are the (psychological) determinants of a successful vocational choice?

In the practice of career counselling there's a great demand of new forms of counselling, as well as up to date career assessment and development tools. Therefore, the results of psychological vocational choice factors' analysis can be widely applied in a variety of settings. Firstly, they can provide an explanation for career decision making during the transition from school to work. And, moreover, help to define what a successful vocational choice is.

Goal of the study: to analyze the internal and external factors affecting vocational path choice(s) during the transition period¹ and to identify the determinants of a successful vocational choice.

¹ During the time of undergraduate studies

The initial objective, therefore, was to elaborate on the conceptual framework of psychological indicators indicating a successful vocational choice.

Psychological indicators of a successful vocational choice: a conceptual framework. Every choice, wherever it was made, has its outcomes. Accordingly, a successful choice can be defined as the one having positive outcomes for an individual. What are those outcomes when talking about vocational choices?

Vocational path during the transition from school to work links two major events: choosing a study major (at the beginning), and entering the world of work (at the end). Therefore, in attempt to evaluate the (un)successful vocational choice from a psychological perspective, it is essential to have the indicators of career goal setting and/or accomplishment that would *cover both the beginning and the end of the transition period* (Lent et al., 1999; Kiener, 2006). Looking from a time perspective, the first indicator would conceptually ‘link’ the actual moment to the very beginning of the vocational path (a *retrospective* indicator). Whereas the second indicator would ‘link’ the actual moment to the foreseen end of the studies when one will enter the world of work (a *prospective* indicator). Having two types of indicators – *prospective* and *retrospective* helps to ‘frame’ the analyzed period of time and allows analyze vocational choices in a more specific manner.

Based on the previous arguments, a successful vocational choice during the transition period can therefore be defined by a high level of a retrospective indicator (showing a positive outcome related to the beginning of a vocational path), followed by a high level of the prospective indicator (showing a positive outcome related to the end of transition period).

There is a wide consensus that one of the positive outcomes is a continuity of the chosen vocational path. It can be illustrated by numerous research aimed at exploring its antecedents (Hull-Blanks et al., 2005; Immekus et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2008; Kenny et al., 2006; Kara, De Shields, 2003; Sun et al., 2004; Kahn, Nauta, 2001; Leppel, 2001; Sandler, 2000). Although measured and defined in somehow different ways, it reflects one’s commitment to the chosen vocation or career field. As an objective indicator, it can be measured by college retention, student drop-out rates, employability etc. The above-mentioned objective measures are very informative from a global perspective (group-centred approach), while a subjective, psychological measure of vocational path

continuity conveys an invaluable information about vocational choices from an individual perspective (individual-centred approach). In addition, most of the objective measures can be taken only post-factum, i.e. at the end of transition period, and expose a researcher to a fact or tendencies that have already taken place. On the contrary, subjective measures of vocational path continuity do not necessarily record a past event, they can measure a foreseen action – an intention that has not yet taken place. From a psychological point of view, the latter approach is beneficial as it can help to understand vocational choice(s) in a *prospective* way.

In psychology, the continuity of one's vocational path is defined as career choice commitment (Koslowsky, 1987; Wang, 2006). Accordingly as job commitment in later stages of career development (when one has already started professional career) reflects one's attachment to his job, career choice commitment defines one's attachment to the chosen vocation, i.e. acquiring vocational identification, setting vocation-related future goals that manifest as **vocational continuity intention** – an intention to pursue a career in a chosen vocational field. The latter behavioural aspect of career choice commitment is theoretically related to the prospective end of the transition period and entrance to the world of work. In this way, it is a *prospective* indicator of a successful vocational choice.

Again, the assessment of the beginning of one's vocational path can be twofold. The choice priority of the actual college major can be taken as an objective indicator. It shows whether the individual managed to enter a major that he or she had desired (according to the Lithuanian college and university entrance regulations, one can indicate up to 20 college major choices ranked from 1 – top priority to 20 – least priority). And again, as in the case of vocational continuity, a subjective measure exists. **Vocational choice satisfaction** reflects how much one is satisfied with a chosen vocational path. Although in theory, both of them define how successful the accomplishment of the initial career goal (choosing a major) was, it can be assumed that the satisfaction measure is a better reflection of a 'successful' vocational choice because it is not strictly tied to the beginning of the vocational path – it is just *retrospective*, but it stays active during the whole period of acquiring a vocation. Therefore, when trying to encompass the (un)successful vocational choice as a whole, and link the retrospective and prospective indicators, *vocational choice satisfaction would possibly serve as a mediator* in major choice priority and vocational continuity relationship.

The main question – what is the relationship between the two. Does increasing satisfaction lead to stronger continuity intentions? Normally, it should. On the other hand, in real life situation one is rarely fully satisfied, and it is often a case when we stick to our initial choices even when we are not satisfied with them. If vocational choice success can be best defined by high vocational choice satisfaction and strong vocational continuity intention, the following objective of the study is to analyze the mechanism of why and when the (in)congruence of the satisfaction-continuity intention appears. It is much more than solely analyzing predictors of high levels in satisfaction and continuity intention. The retrospective-prospective indicator incongruence reflects some inadequacy in career planning, therefore it is nonetheless important to look for its determining factors.

Theoretical background: Social Cognitive Career Theory. Despite that career psychology offers a wide choice of explanations for career goals, interests, and choices, most of the theoretical models tend to overemphasize either stable factors or dynamic aspects of career choice. When analyzing career development during the transition period, it is extremely important not to lose either of them, therefore an integrated theoretical model encompassing both stable and dynamic factors would be most appropriate.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT – Lent et al., 1994) provides one of the recent approaches to vocational choice and career development in general. The theory integrates both trait and developmental theories, and offers an extensive background for the analysis of vocational planning issues during the transition period from school to work. SCCT seeks to explain how career/vocational interests and goals are formed referring to various individual and contextual factors. The key elements in career development (and, therefore, in vocational choices) are considered to be:

Self-efficacy beliefs: confidence in one's ability to perform well a certain task (Bandura, 1977).

Outcome expectations: expectation how valuable an outcome of the performed action/activity would be (Lent et al., 1994; Lent, 2005).

Besides, SCCT proposes a wide array of *contextual factors* (social environment, individual predispositions, past performance in goal accomplishment etc.) that might have an impact on how an individual vocational interests and goals are formed.

SCCT points out several models explaining how career goals are set and maintained regarding previous experience and other surrounding factors. If the *retrospective* indicator (vocational choice success) was treated as previous experience in accomplishing career goals, and the *prospective* indicator (vocational continuity intention) was treated as one of the future career goals, their analysis based on SCCT would include a variety of determinants. The key feature of the theory is that it integrates contextual (relatively stable) factors and cognitive (changing and changeable) variables, focusing on their interplay when explaining career development.

The internal and external factors of vocational choice(s). Accordingly to the goal of this study and based on the main elements of SCCT, the possible predictors of vocational choice satisfaction (*retrospective*) and/or continuity intention (*prospective*) were classified into several categories.

Internal-cognitive factors: self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs are pointed out as key cognitive factors of vocational choice. It is important to note that self-efficacy refers to a belief, not a stable characteristic of a person (Betz, Luzzo, 1996; Betz, Hackett, 2006). Therefore, it should always be measured referring to a certain domain of activity (Betz, 2007). Self-efficacy has a long history of research in many areas of psychology. Specifically in career psychology, it is assumed that certain types of self-efficacy beliefs might be related to the way how one chooses his vocational path. There is substantial evidence showing that higher career decision making self-efficacy leads to positive outcomes of career choice and development (Betz, Luzzo, 1996; Creed et al., 2004; 2006), while academic self-efficacy is considered to be strongly related to school or college success (Gore, 2006; Rodgers, Summers, 2008; Elias, MacDonald, 2007; Zajacova et al., 2005). Academic self-efficacy is often included in various academic achievement measures or measured on its own right and research findings show its importance in understanding one's behaviour and performance in academic settings.

In a conceptual way, career decision making self-efficacy refers to a 'process domain' of career/vocational choices, while academic self-efficacy refers to a 'contents domain'. So to speak they cover two important issues of the transition period: decisions associated with the further vocational path, which means career planning in general (process domain), and decisions associated with a particular vocational path, that is, a career in the vocational field of one's major (contents domain).

Although numerous research studies prove the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in career decision making, there is still a gap in understanding their role in vocational choices in a more integrated manner. The question of this study is not only how they relate to either one of the vocational choice ‘success’ indicators, but what their role is taking into account a more complex model. There is a solid conceptual and empirical basis to assume that self-efficacy beliefs might be direct predictors of vocational choice satisfaction and/or vocational continuity intention. Then, taking into account their dynamic nature (i.e. self-efficacy beliefs are changing and changeable factors), it is important to explore, how the impact of self-efficacy beliefs on vocational continuity intentions (*prospective* indicator) differs depending on the level of vocational choice satisfaction (*retrospective* indicator). Pointing out, which of them have the greatest impact for vocational path continuity intentions when satisfaction is high or, on the contrary, low might provide novel theoretical and practical insights on the topic.

Internal-cognitive factors: vocation-related expectations. As it is suggested in SCCT and other more specific theoretical goal setting models (Ajzen, 1991; Locke Latham, 1990), outcome expectations play a key role in decisions to engage or persist further into a certain activity. Continuity of a vocational path is not an exception. It can be assumed that when one envisages a positive or *valuable* outcome of vocational/career choice (e.g. graduating in a chosen major), one is more prone to get committed to the chosen vocational path and be more satisfied with the choice. As in the case of self-efficacy, outcome expectations are treated as cognitive factors. Though differently from self-efficacy beliefs, their ‘object’ is the activity itself (e.g. outcome of the activity) rather than an individual (e.g. confidence in one’s abilities). In the context of this research, outcome expectations are related to the vocational path that one has chosen, therefore they are to be labelled as **vocation-related expectations** further on in the study. Although opinions vary how the value of the envisaged activity outcome should be defined, a certain consensus about several broad outcome categories exists. Many theoretical models envisage that the outcome of the activity can be valuable in terms of intrinsic factors (personal) and extrinsic factors (social, material) (see, Bandura et al., 2001; Locke et al., 1988). In this study three types of vocation-related expectations were distinguished: expected job idealness (reflecting the intrinsic value of the future professional job if graduated in a chosen major), expected job prestige (reflecting the

extrinsic value), and expected negative job features (reflecting how undesired, i.e., neither intrinsically nor extrinsically the outcome of a chosen vocational path would be).

In SCCT, outcome expectations fall under the same category of cognitive factors as self-efficacy beliefs and form a basis for explaining the cognitive aspect of one's career decisions.

Internal-personality factors: Big Five trait dimensions. Although SCCT does not include personality as a separate element, in this theoretical model personal predispositions are understood as one of contextual, static factors (in contrast to the cognitive factors which are dynamic) that might influence career development. Moreover, many research studies support an idea that Big Five personality traits to a certain extent may help to explain smooth or problematic career decision making (Wang et al., 2006; Klein, Lee, 2006; Feldt, Woelfel, 2009; Hartman, Betz, 2007). Big Five traits are defined as basic behavioural tendencies to react in a certain way (McCrae, Costa, 1995). Career development, or to be more precise, vocational path choice(s) can be understood as a set decisions made regarding to previous experiences, situational influences, and anticipation of future consequences. Therefore, in the context of this study, it is especially relevant to ask a question what the role of Big Five traits in vocational path choice is. If congruence between vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention indeed defines a successful choice, it is important to identify how Big Five traits relate to continuity intention (it reflects behavioural planning) when vocational choice satisfaction varies from low to high (it reflects an emotional reaction towards one's vocational situation). Based on the theoretical concept of Big Five trait dimensions and previous research findings, there is enough basis for an assumption that Big Five traits play a role in continuity intentions and, moreover, this role depends on the level of vocational choice satisfaction.

External factors: situational and demographic characteristics. These are the factors indicating either respondent's demographic characteristics or situational features of the transition period from school to work. Situational or demographic features reflect the immediate context in which career development takes place and are essential in interpreting vocational choices. In fact, the external factors can be understood as either objective or subjective 'guidelines' that affect one's beliefs, decisions, and actions. Beforehand, it is essential to identify those external factors that correspond (or reflect

best) the time-period of interest. In the context of this study, the following external factors, i.e. situational-demographic characteristics were distinguished:

- *Year of the undergraduate studies* (1 to 4);
- *Gender* (male, female);
- *Scientific area of the chosen major* (arts and humanities, social sciences, technical and natural sciences). Based on the classification of the Lithuanian Ministry of Science and Education (ŠMM, 2007);
- *Last semester GPA* (high, low);
- *Professional work experience* (yes, no);
- *Perceived labour market demand* for the professionals in one's chosen area of study (from a respondent's point of view) (high, low).

According to SCCT and previous research evidence on contextual factors of career development (Brown, Lavish, 2006; Turner, Lapan, 2003; Schmitt-Rodermund, Silbereisen, 1998; Jackson et al., 2000; Constantine et al., 2005; Vondracek, Reitzle, 1998), it is hypothesized that the above mentioned situational-demographic characteristics may form a basis for the formation of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, and therefore, explain their differences when compared between groups. Furthermore, the situational-demographic characteristics may serve as immediate predictors of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention (or their relationship). By doing this, they might provide a useful contextual framework for the interpretation of a vocational choice and its success.

To summarize, this study envisages two psychological indicators of (un)successful vocational choice (*retrospective* – vocational choice satisfaction, *prospective* – vocational continuity intention) and three different groups of internal/external factors: internal-cognitive factors (self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations), internal-personality factors (Big Five traits), external factors (situational-demographic characteristics) that possibly play a role in making vocational choices. In order to analyze their interrelationships, the following *objectives of this study* were identified, and the following *defended statements* were formulated:

Objectives

- To explore the interrelationship between the *retrospective* and *prospective* indicators of vocational choice success.
- To identify cognitive predictors of a successful vocational path choice: to analyze which of academic self-efficacy, career decision making self-efficacy beliefs, and vocation-related expectations directly predict vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention.
- To analyze which cognitive factors and Big Five traits can best predict vocational continuity intention under different levels of vocational choice satisfaction.
- To identify the existing interrelationships between situational-demographic characteristics (study year, gender, study field, professional work experience, last semester GPA, perceived labour market demand) and cognitive factors (academic self-efficacy, career decision making self-efficacy, vocation-related expectations).
- To analyze the importance of situational-demographic characteristics to vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention as the psychological indicators of vocational choice success.
- To point out the most significant internal and external determinants of the above mentioned indicators of a successful vocational path choice(s), and discuss both theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Defended statements

DS1: *vocational choice satisfaction mediates the relationship between major priority number and vocational continuity intention.*

DS2: *vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention can be directly predicted by the internal-cognitive factors of vocational choice (career decision making self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, vocation-related expectations).*

DS3: *the importance of the cognitive and personality factors (career decision making self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, vocation-related expectations, Big Five traits) for vocational continuity intention differs depending on the level of vocational choice satisfaction.*

DS4: *the external factors of vocational choice (study year, gender, area of study, GPA, professional work experience, perceived labour market demand) differentiate*

between the internal-cognitive factors (career decision making self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, vocation-related expectations).

DS5: *the external factors of vocational choice (study year, gender, area of study, GPA, professional work experience, perceived labour market demand) directly relate to vocational choice success indicators (vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention).*

METHOD

Research participants. In total, 803 undergraduates participated in the study. 178 of them were pilot study participants. Pilot sample consisted of 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students, 34% male (N = 61) and 66% female (N = 117), mean age 19.2 years (SD = .95). The data gathered in the pilot study was used exclusively to test preliminary hypotheses and psychometric characteristics of measures used in the study, and was not included in the further analysis.

Original study sample consisted of 625 undergraduates, 23% male (N = 193), 77% female (N = 432), mean age 19.98 (SD = 2.40). The participants came from major Lithuanian universities: Vilnius University, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius Pedagogical University, Kaunas Technological University, Vytautas Didysis University, Klaipėda University, Kaunas University of Medicine. The original sample was composed of 1st to 4th year undergraduates, majoring in different fields that were classified into 3 scientific areas (based on official scientific area classification, Lithuanian Ministry for Science and Education, 2007). Respondent distribution rates according to the study year: 1st year (N = 282), 2nd year (N = 148), 3rd year (N = 116), 4th year (N = 76), non-identified (N = 3). Respondent distribution rates according to the scientific area: arts and humanities (N = 154), social sciences (N = 302), technical and natural sciences (N = 154).

Procedure. The pilot study was conducted during the autumn semester of the 2007/2008 academic year. The original study was conducted during the autumn and spring semesters of the 2008/2009 academic years.

A survey method was used to collect the data. Both in-person and online data collection procedures were used. The in-person procedure consisted of conducting a survey as part of a course. During the online procedure participants were asked either to

send the filled out questionnaire by e-mail or to fill the questionnaire form directly online.

Measures. *Demographic questionnaire.* Questions in the demographic questionnaire were used to measure demographic-situational variables that were labelled as external factors of vocational choice. It consisted of 4 general demographic questions and 6 questions aimed to measure the external factors: 1) study year, 2) gender, 3) study major, 4) professional work experience; 5) last semester GPA; 6) perceived labour market demand (for professionals in one's chosen area of study). All variables were measured by a single item questions. As most of the demographic-situational variables were categorical in nature, in order to simplify data analysis, GPA and perceived labour market demand (continuous) were also categorized. 3 categories of GPA (controlling for the scientific area first) and 3 categories of perceived labour market demand were created: low (1SD below mean), high (1SD above mean), average (the mid-range data).

Vocational continuity intention. A questionnaire consisting of 6 Likert-type items was designed for this study. The respondents were asked to rate each of the items measuring their vocational path continuity intentions from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The questionnaire Cronbach alpha coefficient is .92. Sample item: *most of my future career goals are related to my current vocational field.*

Vocational choice satisfaction. A questionnaire consisting of 5 Likert-type items was designed for this study. The respondents were asked to rate each of the items from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The Cronbach alpha coefficient is .89. Sample item: *choosing this vocation was a mistake (reverse).*

Vocation-related expectations. 3 tasks were designed for this study in order to measure vocation-related expectations, i.e. as foreseen by a respondent, how valuable the outcome of a chosen vocational path is in terms of: 1) future job idealness, 2) future job prestige, 3) negative features of the future job. Each task consisted of two steps. At the first step respondents were asked to define what 'ideal job', 'prestigious job' and 'negative job features' means to them by defining each of them by three characteristic features. At the second step, the respondents were asked to review the characteristics of the 'ideal', 'prestigious' job, and 'negative job features' they have written, and then rate how likely it is that their future professional job will have these characteristics. The ratings had to be done in a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (absolutely unlikely) to 7

(absolutely likely). The higher the rating, the higher are the expectations that one's future professional job will correspond to the job perceived as ideal, prestigious or the one having negative features.

The reliability of the measures was checked using test-retest method (N = 31). The following correlations were obtained between two measurements: expected job idealness ratings ($r = .86$), expected job prestige ratings ($r = .82$), expected negative job features ratings ($r = .83$).

Academic self-efficacy. A translated version of the Academic Efficacy Scale (Midgley et al., 2000) was used in the study. Respondents were asked to rate 4 items from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Cronbach alpha coefficient in a Lithuanian sample is .87.

Career decision making self-efficacy. A Lithuanian version of a Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (CDSE-SF, Betz, Taylor, 2006) was used in the study. CDSE-SF measures one's confidence in performing career decision making tasks. The questionnaire consists of 5 subscales designed to measure the following aspects of career decision making: Goal Selection, Planning, Problem Solving, Occupational Information Gathering, Self-Appraisal. The original CDSE-SF version consists of 25 items (5 items for each subscale). Nevertheless, as noted by the authors, many translated versions don't confirm the original structure and/or number of items (Betz, Taylor, 2006). After conducting psychometric analysis, only 23 items were retained in the Lithuanian version. EFA analysis, using varimax rotation suggested a 5-factor scale structure, accounting for 54% of variance. A CFA conducted at the following step of the study has shown satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2/df < 2$, TLI = .95, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .039), therefore a 5-factor solution was retained.

The internal consistency test has shown satisfactory scores: Goal Selection (4 items, Cronbach alpha = .79), Planning (3 items, Cronbach alpha = .68), Problem Solving (5 items, Cronbach alpha = .72), Occupational Information Gathering (6 items, Cronbach alpha = .72), Self-Appraisal (5 items, Cronbach alpha = .70), overall scale Cronbach alpha = .87.

Big Five personality traits. A Lithuanian version of the NEO-FFI questionnaire (S form) was used in the study. Permission for questionnaire use was received from Vilnius University Special Laboratory of Psychology in charge of the adaptation of the

Lithuanian version of the questionnaire. NEO-FFI consists of 60 items measuring personality traits in five dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness. Each subscale consists of 12 items. The subscale internal consistency coefficients in the study sample range from Cronbach alpha .67 to .83.

Due to restrictions in distribution, NEO-FFI questionnaire was NOT included in a survey conducted online. Only those respondents who participated in the in-person survey (N = 375) filled out this questionnaire.

Data analysis. The data was analysed using SPSS version 13.0. Multiple regression analysis was used to check the simple prediction models, while ANOVA test of variance was conducted to check the differences between groups (i.e. gender, study year etc.). In addition, the following macros designed for SPSS were used: MODPROBE version 1.1 (Hayes, 2009) in order to conduct moderation analysis, and INDIRECT version Beta 2.0 (Hayes, 2009) in order to conduct mediation analysis. MPlus version 3.0 was used to conduct CFA in order to test scale structure.

RESULTS

A mediation model of the relationship between the major choice priority, vocational choice satisfaction, and vocational continuity intention. The mediation analysis was conducted using INDIRECT version Beta 2.0 macro for SPSS. The rationale of designing the model (see Figure 1) was based both on the nature of the variables and theoretical assumptions (i.e., major choice priority precedes vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention, therefore it is set as the initial independent variable, whereas vocational continuity intention is defined as *prospective* variable, therefore, it is a dependent variable in the model).

As can be seen in Figure 1, the effect of major choice priority to vocational continuity intention (c path) decreases considerably when vocational choice satisfaction is included in the model (c' path). Moreover, in the latter case, the relationship becomes statistically insignificant ($p < .05$).

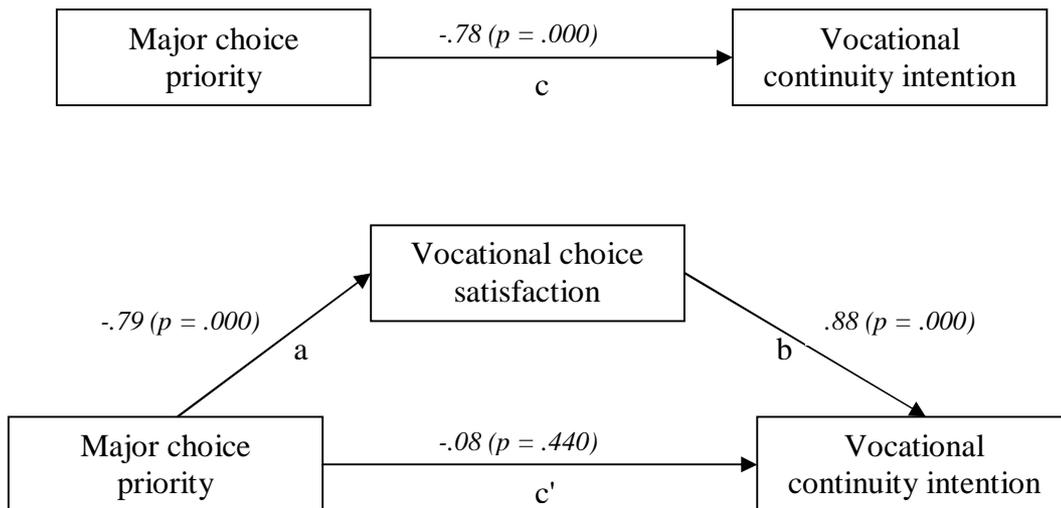


Figure 1. The relationship of major choice priority with vocational continuity intention mediated by vocational choice satisfaction

The overall model $R^2 = .52$, $F(2; 606) = 331.76$, $p < .05$

All path coefficients provided in the figure are unstandardized

The mediation analysis was run using a bootstrapping ($N = 1000$) resampling procedure

The results imply that vocational choice satisfaction might indeed mediate the relationship between the objective vocational choice indicator, i.e., major choice priority and vocational continuity intention. Decreased effect of the major choice priority and strong and statistically significant relationship between vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention confirms the theoretical assumption (see *DS1*) that vocational continuity intention can be predicted by major choice priority mostly *through* vocational choice satisfaction. Therefore, when analyzing the link between retrospective and prospective vocational choice indicators (see introduction part), vocational choice satisfaction is a good option for a retrospective indicator.

The internal-cognitive factors as predictors of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. A multiple regression analysis was run in order to determine which self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations might serve as predictors of either vocational choice satisfaction, or vocational continuity intention, or both of them. The main results of regression analysis are provided in Table 1.

The results confirm the initial hypothesis (*DS2*) that vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention can be directly predicted by internal-cognitive factors. At the same time, quite different patterns of predicting factors can be identified as a number of

factors are significant predictors of vocational continuity intention in Model 2 compared to only three significant predictors of vocational choice satisfaction in Model 1.

Table 1. Self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations as predictors of vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention

Predictor variable:	Dependent variable	
	Model 1: vocational choice satisfaction	Model 2: vocational continuity intention
	β coefficients	
Goal selection self-efficacy	.31*	.12*
Problem solving self-efficacy	.06	-.06
Planning self-efficacy	.04	-.08*
Self-appraisal self-efficacy	-.05	-.07
Occupational information gathering self-efficacy	.04	.10*
Academic self-efficacy	.06	.08*
Expected job idealness	.41*	.15*
Expected job prestige	.02	.11*
Expected negative job features	-.12*	-.02

* statistically significant ($p < .05$)

R^2 coefficient for Model 1 is .39, $F(9; 496) = 36.05$, $p < .05$

R^2 coefficient for Model 2 is .57, $F(10; 491) = 63.99$, $p < .05$

Predictor β coefficients in Model 2 were obtained after controlling for vocational choice satisfaction ($\beta = .55$, $p < .05$)

As can be seen in Table 1, expected job idealness and goal selection self-efficacy are the strongest predictors in both models, i.e., when the dependent variable is vocational choice satisfaction, and when the dependent variable is vocational continuity intention. It is important to note, that they are significant predictors of vocational continuity intention even after controlling for vocational choice satisfaction (Model 2) which explains the biggest part of its variance. It implies that despite a strong relationship between vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention, other factors (self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations in this study) still affect vocational continuity intention significantly.

Further analysis is therefore aimed at the more in-depth exploration of the interrelation of the above mentioned variables.

An interaction between internal-cognitive factors and vocational choice satisfaction in predicting vocational continuity intention. A moderation analysis was run to test the existing interactions between the internal-cognitive vocational choice variables (career decision making self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and vocation-related expectations) and vocational choice satisfaction in predicting vocational continuity intention. The analysis was conducted using MODPROBE version 1.1 macro for SPSS. Self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations were the independent variables in the model. Vocational choice satisfaction was set as a moderator, and vocational continuity intention was set as a dependent variable.

The analysis was run checking for the independent variable and moderator interaction at 3 levels of the moderator: low, average, high. The results are provided in Table 2. In addition to the interaction analysis coefficients, region of significance of the independent variable (i.e., level of the moderator under which the independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependent variable) is displayed.

Table 2. The coefficients of interaction between the internal-cognitive factors and vocational choice satisfaction in predicting vocational continuity intention

Predictor variable:	Interaction β coefficient	Region of significance (referring to the level of vocational choice satisfaction)
Goal selection self-efficacy	.09*	AVERAGE-HIGH
Problem solving self-efficacy	.08*	LOW
Planning self-efficacy	.03	-
Self-appraisal self-efficacy	.06	-
Occupational information gathering self-efficacy	.09*	AVERAGE-HIGH
Academic self-efficacy	.11*	AVERAGE-HIGH
Expected job idealness	.14*	LOW-AVERAGE-HIGH
Expected job prestige	-.02	-
Expected negative job features	-.07*	HIGH

**Interactions are statistically significant ($p < .05$)*

Separate moderation analyses were run with each of the independent variables. In every case the remaining independent variables were included as covariates in the model

The results of the interaction analysis partially confirm the hypothesis (DS3) stating that the way how internal-cognitive factors relate to vocational continuity

intention might depend on the level of vocational choice satisfaction, and show the complexity of these relationships.

The following section is dedicated to the analysis of the remaining internal factors – personality traits and their role in vocational choice(s).

The role of Big Five personality traits in predicting vocational continuity intention. Analogically as in the previous section, the analysis of Big Five personality traits as predictors of vocational continuity intention was performed (see Table 3 and Table 4). Initially, a multiple regression analysis was run, in order to check whether vocational continuity intention can be directly predicted by Big Five traits. The results reveal that after controlling for vocational choice satisfaction only Conscientiousness is a significant predictor variable, whereas other Big Five traits stay insignificant (see Table 3).

Table 3. Big Five traits as predictors of vocational continuity intention after controlling for vocational choice satisfaction

Predictors:	β coefficient**
Neuroticism	.02
Extraversion	-.03
Conscientiousness	.12*
Openness to Experience	-.02
Agreeableness	.03

* statistically significant ($p < .05$)
 ** Big Five trait β coefficients obtained after controlling for vocational choice satisfaction ($\beta = .69, p < .05$)
 The overall model R^2 is .50, $F(6; 359) = 62.79, p < .05$

Further on an interaction analysis was conducted. As in the previous section, vocational continuity intention was set as a dependent variable, vocational choice satisfaction level (low, average, high) was set as a moderator and Big Five personality traits were the independent variables (predictors) in the model.

The interaction analysis (see Table 4) reveals the importance of Neuroticism and Extraversion in predicting vocational continuity intention in interaction with vocational choice satisfaction. It partially confirms the hypothesis (DS3) that under different levels

of vocational choice satisfaction personality traits might in turn differently affect vocational continuity intention.

Table 4. The coefficients of interaction between Big Five traits and vocational choice satisfaction in predicting vocational continuity intention

Predictor variable	Interaction β coefficient	Region of significance (referring to the level of vocational choice satisfaction)
Neuroticism	-.11*	LOW
Extraversion	.08*	LOW
Conscientiousness	.06	-
Openness to Experience	.02	-
Agreeableness	.02	-

* Interactions are statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Separate moderation analyses were run with each of the independent variables. In every case the remaining independent variables were included as covariates in the model

The role of cognitive and personality factors in the (in)congruence of vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention. Generalizing the results provided in the previous sections, factors related to the (in)congruence of vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention were identified. According to their region of significance (see Table 2 and Table 4), four categories of factors were distinguished (see Table 5).

Table 5. Factors related to the (in)congruence of vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention

	Increased level of the factors displayed in the table is related to:	
	INCREASE in vocational continuity intention	DECREASE in vocational continuity intention
when vocational choice satisfaction is LOW	Neuroticism Expected job idealness	Extraversion Problem solving self-efficacy
when vocational choice satisfaction is HIGH	Goal selection self-efficacy Occupational information gathering self-efficacy Academic self-efficacy Expected job idealness	Expected negative job features

The grey shaded areas of the table highlight factors related to the incongruence of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. E.g., high level of neuroticism relates to the increase of continuity intention despite that vocational choice satisfaction is low. On the contrary, white areas highlight factors related to the congruence of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention (i.e., increased continuity intention when satisfaction is high, and decreased continuity intention when satisfaction is low).

The role of external factors in vocational choice(s). The results indicate that certain situational-demographic characteristics are especially relevant in differentiating between vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention, as well as self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations (see, Table 5, and Figure 2 – Figure 5).

A comparison between groups regarding respondent's gender and scientific area of a chosen major allows to explain a vast majority of differences in self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations (for a more detailed analysis, see Table 5, Figure 3 and Figure 4). Moreover, differences in vocation-related expectations appear when compared between groups regarding respondent's study year and perceived labour market demand (see Table 5, Figure 2, Figure 5). The latter variables appear to be important to vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention as well. As can be seen from Figure 2, satisfaction and continuity intention tend to decrease in later years of study, and as it is indicated in Figure 5, respondents anticipating high demand for professionals in their field of study tend to be more satisfied with their vocational choice and demonstrate stronger vocational continuity intention.

Whereas a comparison between respondents by most of situational-demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, study year, perceived labour market demand, and scientific area) explain differences in numerous variables (either internal-cognitive factors or vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention), the remaining external factors (i.e. last semester GPA and professional work experience) appear to be more specific. They reveal differences in certain domains only (see Table 5).

Table 5. The between-group differences in internal-cognitive factors, vocational choice satisfaction, and vocational continuity intention when compared by the situational-demographic characteristics

Study year	Gender	Scientific area	Professional work experience	Last semester GPA	Perceived labour market demand
Goal selection self-efficacy					
Problem solving self-efficacy					
Planning self-efficacy					
Self-appraisal self-efficacy					
Occupational information gathering self-efficacy					
Academic self-efficacy					
Expected job idealness					
Expected job prestige					
Expected negative job features					
<i>Vocational choice satisfaction</i>					
<i>Vocational continuity intention</i>					

The grey-shaded parts in the table indicate statistically significant overall between-group differences ($p < .05$)

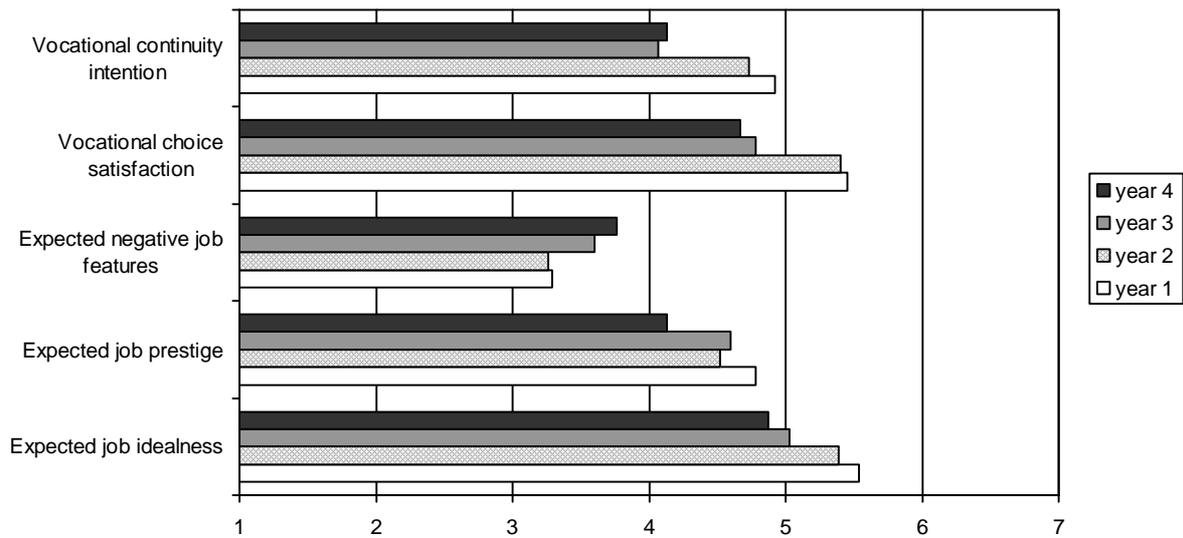


Figure 2. Variable comparison by study year

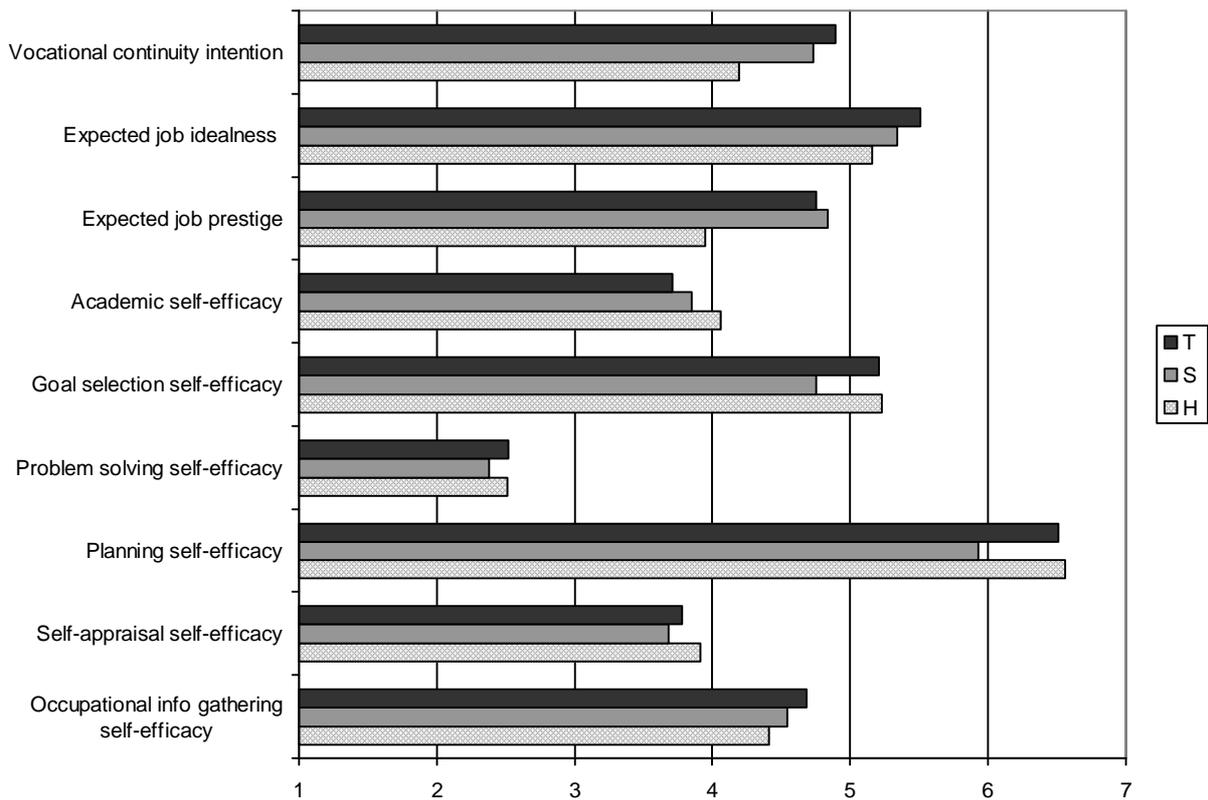


Figure 3. Variable comparison by scientific area of a chosen major

T - technical and natural sciences, S - social sciences, H - arts and humanities

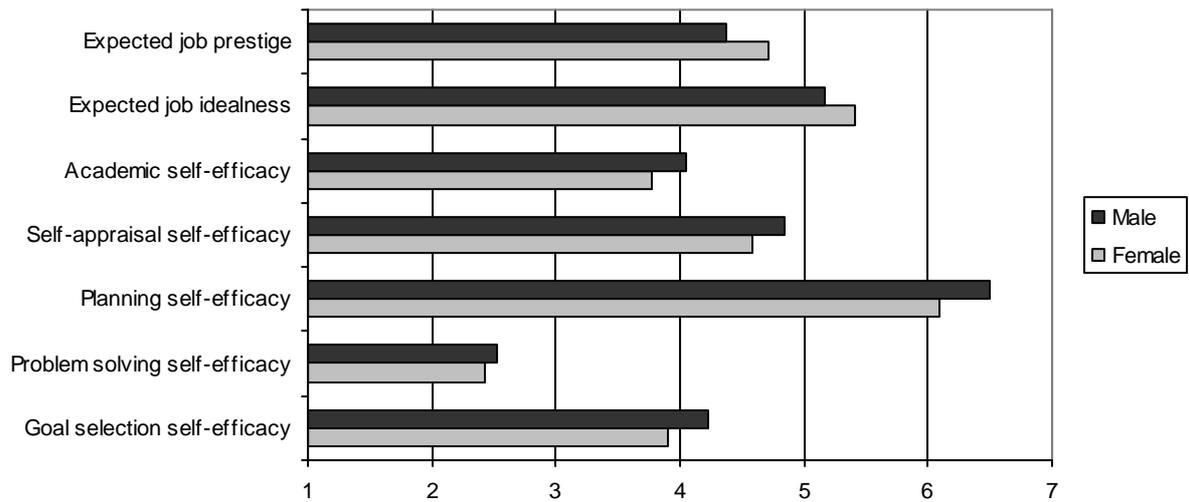


Figure 4. Variable comparison by gender

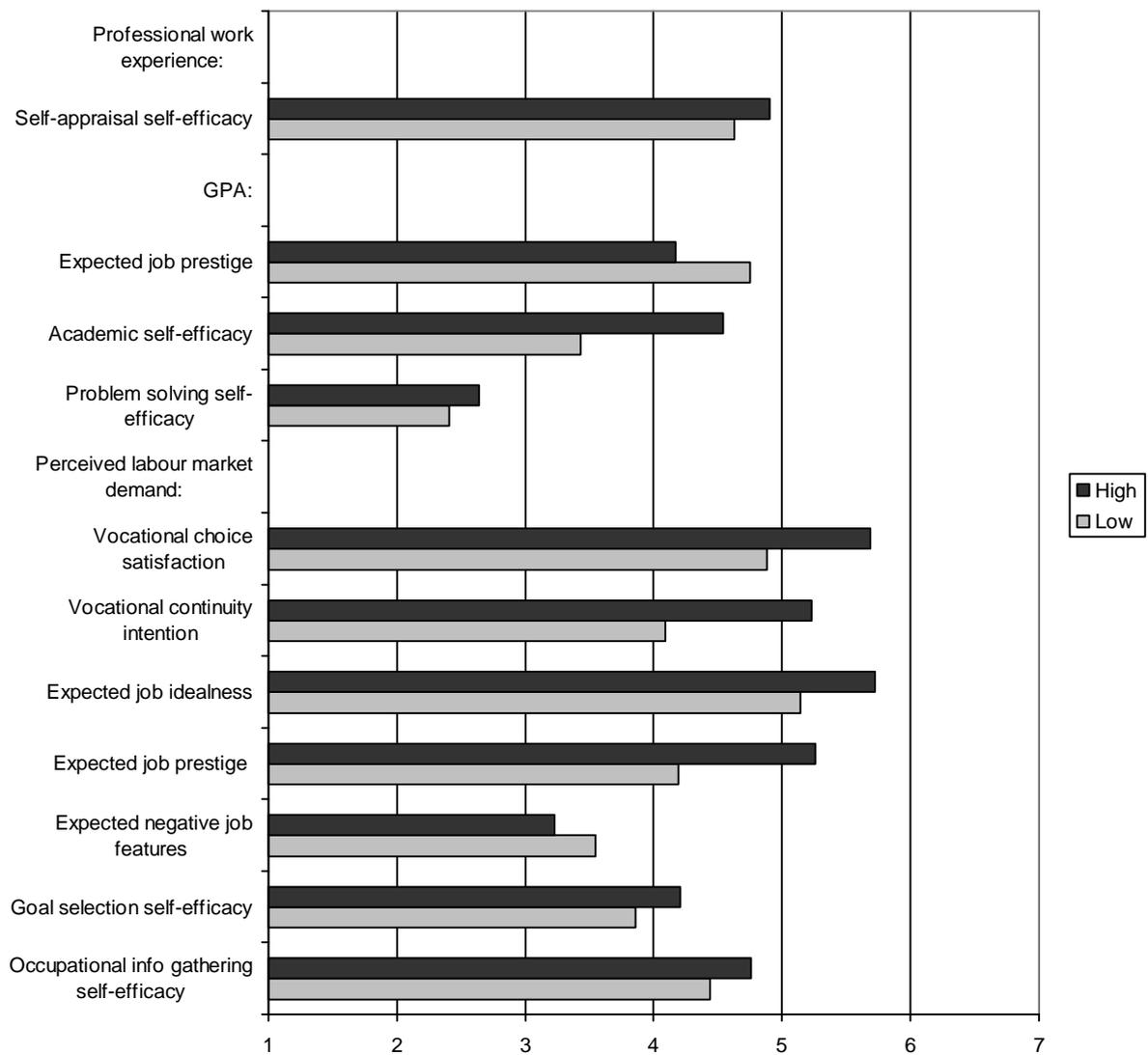


Figure 5. Variable comparison by GPA, professional work experience, and perceived labour market demand

At the following stage of the analysis, the results have shown that none of the external factors can serve as an interacting variable in the relationship between vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. All the interactions appeared to be insignificant: study year ($p = .102$), scientific area ($p = .947$), gender ($p = .930$), professional work experience ($p = .991$), last semester GPA ($p = .170$), perceived labour market demand ($p = .139$). That is, the vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention relationship maintains a similar pattern at different values of the external factors.

Nonetheless, the analysis of the external factors has provided empirical support to the initial hypothesis (*DS4 and DS5*) stating that the situational-demographic characteristics might explain the immediate basis of differences in either internal-cognitive variables or the psychological indicators of vocational choice success.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study allow for an interpretation of what makes a successful vocational path choice during the period of transition in several ways. Firstly, the results have supported the idea about vocational choice satisfaction as a mediator in predicting vocational continuity intention by major choice priority. Vocational choice satisfaction (as a retrospective indicator of vocational choice success) has proven to 'lead' to vocational continuity intention (a prospective indicator of vocational choice success). In this way, these results build a basis for a further interpretation of the factors predicting either retrospective, or prospective indicators, or their congruence.

The significance of cognitive factors (academic self-efficacy, career decision making self-efficacy, vocation-related expectations) adds more evidence to the existing research data stating that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are important in career development. Vocational choice satisfaction can be predicted only by goal selection self-efficacy, expected job idealness, and expected negative job features whereas vocational continuity intention can be predicted by academic self-efficacy, goal selection self-efficacy, self-appraisal self-efficacy, occupational information gathering self-efficacy, and all of the vocation-related expectations. Although both vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention reflect successful vocational choice, they have different predictors and should be separated at least conceptually.

The interaction between the level of vocational choice satisfaction and a number of internal-cognitive factors, such as goal selection self-efficacy, problem solving self-efficacy, occupational information gathering self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, expected job idealness, and expected negative job features adds another aspect to the interpretation of a (successful) vocational choice. As the above mentioned factors have different regions of significance (e.g. problem solving self-efficacy significantly predicts vocational continuity intention under low level of vocational choice satisfaction, whereas the rest of the cognitive factors are significant under high level of vocational choice satisfaction), it is worth to note a different role that self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations might play in vocational choice.

A second group of the internal factors – personality traits were measured as a reference point of for reaction to an (un)satisfactory vocational choice. Three Big Five traits have proved to have an impact on vocational choice in the framework of this study. Neuroticism seems to promote strong intention to stick to a chosen vocational path in case of low vocational choice satisfaction therefore it can be interpreted as one of the factors related to inadequate vocational planning and choice. On the contrary, Extraversion can be labelled as an adequacy promoting factor as it is related to the congruence of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. These interpretations are supported by a number of previous research outcomes where namely Neuroticism and Extraversion were found to be significantly related to various aspects of career decision making (see, Wang et al., 2006; Hartman, Betz, 2007; Klein, Lee, 2006). Furthermore, Conscientiousness seems to be directly related to vocational continuity intention. These findings correspond well to the research literature where Conscientiousness is interpreted as a Big Five trait that accounts most for planned behaviour (Sansone, Thoman, 2006; Hoyle, 2006). In the context of this research it can be interpreted as a Big Five trait dimension that is most related to vocational path planning and choice.

The analysis of the third group of factors – the external factors of vocational choice helps to explain differences in cognitive factors (the way one thinks), vocational choice satisfaction (the way one feels), and vocational continuity intention (the way how one intends to behave). Therefore, the findings of this study support a SCCT assumption that situational-demographic characteristics indeed describe an immediate contextual

background referring to which, a number of career development variables can be explained. The external factors measured in this study (respondent's study year, gender, scientific area of a chosen major, professional work experience, last semester GPA, perceived labour market demand) help to characterize the situational-demographic preconditions that either promote or inhibit career development during the transition from school to work. Moreover, two of the external factors (respondent's study year and perceived labour market demand) help to explain differences in vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention. These results indicate that the situational-demographic context might be linked to fluctuations in any of the vocational choice success indicators separately (although their relationship stays relatively stable), and can add some explanation to why and when high/low vocational choice satisfaction or continuity intention appears.

Finally, the practical implications of this study are based upon the classification of the internal and external factors regarding their importance to vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. The results have revealed that goal selection self-efficacy, expected job idealness, expected negative job features, respondent's study year, and perceived labour market demand are the universal predictors of both satisfaction and continuity intention. In practice, they can serve as an axis in designing counselling and career skills development programmes, and in understanding general preconditions of one's vocational choices.

In attempt to define a successful vocational path choice during the transition period, we defined it by a combination of vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention. The analysis of factors promoting the (in)congruence of the above mentioned indicators are particularly applicable in practical settings. Whereas incongruence related factors might explain inadequate vocational planning, factors promoting congruence might be essential in understanding the story of a successful vocational choice.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Vocational choice satisfaction serves as a mediator between major choice priority and vocational continuity intention. The results justify having vocational choice satisfaction as a retrospective success indicator in the analysis of vocational path choice.

2. Both vocational choice satisfaction and continuity intention can be directly predicted by self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations, but the results have shown that prediction patterns differ.

3. An interaction between the level of vocational choice satisfaction and a number of internal-cognitive factors exists. Moreover, the analyzed internal-cognitive factors have different regions of significance when predicting vocational continuity intention. These results underline a different role that self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations might play in choosing vocational path.

4. Neuroticism and Extraversion interact significantly with vocational choice satisfaction in predicting vocational continuity intention. Based on the interaction patterns, high level of Neuroticism can be related to the inadequacy of career planning, whereas high level of Extraversion can be related to the adequacy of career planning.

5. Conscientiousness is directly related to vocational continuity intention even when controlling for vocational choice satisfaction. In the context of this research, it can be interpreted as a Big Five dimension most related to vocational path planning.

6. The external factors of vocational choice described in this study (respondent's study year, gender, scientific area, last semester GPA, professional work experience, and perceived labour market demand) differentiate substantially between the internal-cognitive factors. By doing so, they allow characterize a situational-demographic basis upon which self-efficacy beliefs and vocation-related expectations are formed.

7. The results indicate that the situational-demographic context might be linked to fluctuations in the level of *retrospective* and *prospective* vocational choice success indicators, although they don't have a major impact on the relationship pattern between vocational choice satisfaction and vocational continuity intention.

8. The main findings of this study have several practical implications. The analysis has revealed direct predictors of retrospective or/and prospective success indicators, which leads to identifying conditions optimal for vocational choice satisfaction and continuity. Furthermore, factors related to the (in)congruence between these indicators were identified, distinguishing variables that might play the most important role in the continuity of the vocational path under certain conditions of vocational choice satisfaction.

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REZIUMĖ

Darbo aktualumas ir naujumas. Profesinio kelio pradžia – profesijos pasirinkimas – svarbus įvykis individo gyvenime. Todėl tiek profesijos pasirinkimo, tiek tolesnio profesinio kelio *rinkimosi* ypatumai – plati ir daugelio tyrėjų dėmesio sulaukianti tyrimų sritis. Nagrinėjami įvairūs karjeros planavimo, sprendimų priėmimo, profesinių tikslų kėlimo aspektai. Nors šioje srityje atlikta daug tyrimų, kyla nemažai neaiškumų bei prieštaravimų, kokie veiksniai yra svarbiausi sklandžiai individo profesinei raidai.

Profesinio kelio rinkimasis šiuolaikiniame pasaulyje yra nelengvas uždavinys. Šiuolaikinė profesijų pasiūla ir paklausa nuolat kinta, nors atrodytų paradoksalu, šiame informacijos amžiuje neretai sunku konkrečiai apibrėžti reikalavimus būsimai profesijai, kadangi darbo rinka yra labai dinamiška, reikalaujanti daug, įvairių ir naujų gebėjimų bei įgūdžių. Todėl klausimas, kokie veiksniai svarbiausi (sėkmingam) profesinio kelio pasirinkimui – ypač aktualus.

Karjeros psichologijos ir darbo rinkos tyrimuose ypač pabrėžiama pereinamojo laikotarpio tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį svarba. Manoma, kad jo metu padedami pagrindai individo integracijai į darbo rinką. Tad profesinio kelio rinkimosi ypatumai tiek šio laikotarpio pradžioje, tiek jam jau baigiantis domina įvairių disciplinų atstovus. Siekiant įvertinti profesinio kelio pasirinkimo „sėkmingumą“, galima skirti nemažai rodiklių. Vienas svarbiausių – profesinio kelio taša. Nemažai tyrimų siekia įvardinti pereinamajam laikotarpiui būdingus veiksnius, kurie padėtų nustatyti profesinio kelio tašos prielaidas. Šis klausimas aktualus tiek ekonominiu, tiek socialiniu atžvilgiu, kadangi siejasi su tuo, kiek ruošiamas specialistas vėliau „atsiperka“ darbo rinkoje, kiek sklandžiai integruojasi į darbo rinką ir visuomenę, kiek turi rizikos nutraukti studijas ir pan.

Psichologinis šio klausimo aspektas nemažiau svarbus. Ypač aktuali psichologinė profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksnių analizė, kadangi vien objektyvių rodiklių įvertinti profesinio kelio pasirinkimo ypatumams nebeužtenka. Psichologinių (kintančių ir keičiamų) profesinio kelio pasirinkimo veiksnių tyrimai turi ir geras praktinio pritaikymo galimybes, kadangi jų pagrindu gali būti kuriamos karjeros planavimo įgūdžių įvertinimo ir ugdymo programos.

Atsižvelgiant į išvardintus argumentus, šiame darbe pirmiausia buvo siekiama įvardinti *psichologinius sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodiklius*, būdingus pereinamajam laikotarpiui tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį. Remiantis *Socialine kognityvine karjeros teorija* (Lent et al., 1994), išskirti vidiniai ir išoriniai veiksniai, galintys turėti reikšmės profesinio kelio pasirinkimui ir planavimui. Tyrimo rezultatai leidžia įvardinti vidinius ir išorinius veiksnius, labiausiai besisiejantčius su išskirtais sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodikliais. Skirtingos vidinių ir išorinių veiksnių sąsajos su minėtais rodikliais leidžia detaliau atskleisti sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo prielaidas, būdingas pereinamajam laikotarpiui. O vidinių (kognityvinių ir asmenybės) veiksnių analizės apibendrinimas pateikia keletą įžvalgų ne tik apie psichologinį sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo, bet ir adekvataus jo planavimo mechanizmą.

Pasaulinėje tyrimų praktikoje pastaruoju metu ypač išpopuliarėjo *Socialinė kognityvinė karjeros teorija*, kurios pagrindu kuriami ne tik teoriniai, bet ir praktiniai profesinės raidos įvertinimo modeliai. Vienas iš šio darbo naujumo aspektų – Socialinės kognityvinės karjeros teorijos prielaidomis paremtų vidinių ir išorinių veiksnių analizė.

Ši teorija integruoja nemažai aspektų ir teikia daug galimybių profesinio kelio analizei įvairiais individo amžiaus tarpsniais. Nors teorija plačiai nagrinėjama, atliekamuose tyrimuose dažniausiai susikoncentruojama tik ties tam tikra jos dalimi, dažniausiai – ties kognityviniais veiksniais, ypač – ties saviveiksmingumo įvertinimu. Tuo tarpu kiti svarbūs kintamieji (lūkesčiai, ankstesnis patyrimas, individą ir situaciją charakterizuojantys veiksniai) lieka pamiršti ir duomenys apie juos gana fragmentiški. Be to, dauguma tyrėjų nagrinėja profesijos pasirinkimo baigus vidurinę mokyklą, o ne tolesnio profesinio kelio rinkimosi ypatumus. Šiame darbe buvo siekiama įvertinti vidinių ir išorinių profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksnių visumą ir galimas jų tarpusavio sąsajas pereinamuoju laikotarpiu tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį. Be standartinių, tokio pobūdžio tyrimuose dažnai matuojamų kintamųjų, darbe pabandėme įvardinti pereinamajam laikotarpiui būdingus išorinius veiksnius bei kiek kitu – vertybiniu – aspektu įvertinti profesinius lūkesčius.

Bene didžiausią praktinio pritaikymo reikšmę turi remiantis šio tyrimo rezultatais sukurta svarbiausių profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksnių klasifikacija. Ja siekiama integruoti svarbiausius vidinius ir išorinius veiksnius ir jais remiantis pabandyti atsakyti į

klausimą, kas, kada ir kaip siejasi su profesinio kelio planavimu pereinamuoju laikotarpiu tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį. Nors profesinio kelio rinkimosi klausimas – ypač aktualus ir dažnai nagrinėjamas, vieningos sampratos, kaip apibrėžti sėkmingą profesinio kelio pasirinkimą, nėra. Tad tikimės, kad šio darbo indėlis, siekiant šį klausimą panagrinėti teoriniu ir empiriniu lygmeniu, bus vertingas tiek tyrėjams, tiek praktikams, o tyrimo rezultatais paremtos išvalgos bus atsvara dažnai pernelyg akcentuojamų objektyvių profesinio kelio rodiklių įvertinimui ir padės geriau suprasti psichologines profesinio kelio pasirinkimo prielaidas.

Tyrimo tikslas: išnagrinėti vidinius ir išorinius profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksnius bakalauro pakopos studijų metu (pereinamuoju laikotarpiu tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį) ir įvardinti, kurie jų labiausiai siejasi su sėkmingu profesinio kelio pasirinkimu.

Tyrimo uždaviniai:

1. Remiantis profesinio kelio rinkimosi pereinamuoju laikotarpiu samprata, teoriškai apibrėžti galimus psichologinius (ne)sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodiklius ir empiriškai pagrįsti jų tarpusavio sąsajas.
2. Įvertinti tiesiogines vidinių kognityvinių veiksnių ir sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodiklių sąsajas – įvardinti, kurie karjeros sprendimų priėmimo, akademinio saviveiksmingumo ir profesinių lūkesčių aspektai geriausiai prognozuoja pasitenkinimą pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimą eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu.
3. Įvertinti netiesiogines vidinių veiksnių (karjeros sprendimų priėmimo saviveiksmingumo, akademinio saviveiksmingumo, profesinių lūkesčių, *Didžiojo penketo* asmenybės bruožų) ir ketinimo eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu sąsajas, atsižvelgiant į pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija lygį.
4. Aptarti pereinamajam laikotarpiui būdingus išorinius veiksnius ir įvertinti, ar pagal juos galima diferencijuoti saviveiksmingumo ir profesinių lūkesčių skirtumus.
5. Įvertinti išorinių veiksnių (respondento kurso, lyties, mokslo srities, akademinų pasiekimų vidurkio, darbo patirties, specialybės paklausos darbo rinkoje) ir pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija bei ketinimo eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu sąsajas.

6. Suklasifikuoti gautus rezultatus ir įvardinti veiksnius, turinčius daugiausiai svarbos pasitenkinimui pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimui eiti profesiniu keliu. Aptarti jų reikšmę sėkmingam profesinio kelio pasirinkimui.

Ginami teiginiai:

1. Pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija yra ryšio tarp studijuojamos specialybės pasirinkimo prioriteto ir ketinimo eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu *mediatorius*, todėl laikytinas geresniu profesinio kelio pasirinkimo sėkmės rodikliu negu specialybės pasirinkimo prioritetas.
2. Pasitenkinimą pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimą eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu galima prognozuoti pagal karjeros sprendimų priėmimo ir akademinį saviveiksmingumą bei profesinius lūkesčius.
3. Vidinių veiksnių (karjeros sprendimų priėmimo saviveiksmingumo, akademinio saviveiksmingumo, profesinių lūkesčių bei *Didžiojo penketo* asmenybės bruožų) sąsajos su ketinimu eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu skiriasi priklausomai nuo pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija lygio.
4. Pagal išorinius veiksnius (respondento kursą, lytį, mokslo sritį, darbo patirtį, akademinį pasiekimų vidurkį, specialybės paklausą darbo rinkoje) galima diferencijuoti karjeros sprendimų priėmimo ir akademinio saviveiksmingumo bei profesinių lūkesčių skirtumus.
5. Išorinių veiksnių (respondentų kurso, lyties, mokslo srities, darbo patirties, akademinį pasiekimų vidurkio, specialybės paklausos darbo rinkoje) reikšmė profesinio kelio pasirinkimui gali būti paaiškinta tiesioginėmis jų sąsajomis su pasitenkinimu pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimu eiti profesiniu keliu.

Metodika. Iš viso tyrime dalyvavo 803 1–4 kurso bakalauro pakopos studentai. Pilotiniame tyrime, atliktame 2007–2008 m. m. dalyvavo 178 respondentai (vidutinis amžius 19,2 m., SD = 0,95). Originaliame tyrime, atliktame 2008–2009 m. m. dalyvavo 625 (vidutinis amžius 19,98 m., SD = 2,40) respondentai.

Tyrimo kintamieji:

A) (Ne)sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodikliai:

Studijuojamos specialybės pasirinkimo prioritetas stojant į aukštąją mokyklą. Siekiant įvertinti šį kintamąjį, tyrimo dalyvių buvo prašoma nurodyti studijuojamos specialybės prioritetą, kurį buvo pažymėję stodami į aukštąją mokyklą.

Pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija. Šis kintamasis buvo matuojamas specialiai šiam tyrimui sukurtu 5 teiginių klausimynu.

Ketinimas eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu. Šis kintamasis buvo specialiai šiam tyrimui sukurtu 6 teiginių klausimynu.

B) Vidiniai profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksniai:

Karjeros sprendimų priėmimo saviveiksmingumas. Šio kintamojo įvertinimui buvo naudojamas CDSE-SF klausimynas (Betz, Klein, 1996). Klausimynas vertina karjeros sprendimų priėmimo saviveiksmingumą 5 srityse: tikslų kėlimo, planavimo, kilusių problemų sprendimo, savo gebėjimų įvertinimo, informacijos rinkimo.

Akademinis saviveiksmingumas. Šio kintamojo įvertinimui buvo naudojamas Academic-Efficacy klausimynas iš PALS sąvado (Midgley et al., 2000).

Profesiniai lūkesčiai. Šio kintamojo įvertinimui buvo sukurtos 3 užduotys, kurių pagalba įvertinta, kiek tiriamojo įsivaizdavimu, būsimas darbas atitiks idealų darbą (1 užduotis), prestižinį darbą (2 užduotis) bei pasižymės neigiamomis savybėmis (3 užduotis).

Asmenybės bruožai. Šiam kintamajam įvertinti buvo naudojama Specialiosios Psichologijos laboratorijoje adaptuojama NEO-FFI metodika, leidžianti įvertinti *Didžiojo Penketo* bruožų išreikštumą 5 dimensijose: neurotizmo, ekstraversijos, atvirumo patyrimui, sutariamumo ir sąmoningumo.

C) Išoriniai profesinio kelio rinkimosi veiksniai. Jų matavimui buvo sukurtas demografinių–išorinių veiksnių klausimynas. Juo buvo įvertinti šie veiksniai:

Respondento kursas (nuo 1 iki 4).

Respondento lytis.

Mokslo sritis, kuriai priklauso studijuojama specialybė.

Respondento darbo pagal specialybę patirtis.

Respondento akademinų pasiekimų vidurkis.

Studijuojamos specialybės paklausa darbo rinkoje (respondento vertinimu).

Tyrimo eiga. Pilotinio tyrimo duomenys (N = 178) surinkti apklausus studentus užsiėmimų metu. Originalaus tyrimo (N = 625) duomenys buvo renkami keliais būdais: 1) tyrimas buvo atliekamas auditorijose, kaip dalis užsiėmimo; 2) trumpas tyrimo aprašymas, instrukcija ir anketa buvo išsiuntinėta kursų seniūnams bei studentų atstovybėms. Užpildytas anketas tiriamųjų buvo prašoma gražinti elektroniniu paštu; 3) tyrimo anketa buvo patalpinta interneto svetainėje. Tyrimo aprašymas, instrukcija ir anketos nuoroda paplatinta studentų atstovybėms bei katedroms.

Pagrindiniai rezultatai ir išvados:

1. Specialybės pasirinkimo prioritetą ketinimą eiti profesiniu keliu prognozuoja tik netiesiogiai – per pasitenkinimą pasirinkta profesija. Tai parodo, kad nagrinėjant profesinio kelio rinkimosi ypatumus pereinamuoju laikotarpiu tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį, su ketinimu eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu tikslingiau sieti ne objektyvų profesinio pasirinkimo sėkmingumo rodiklį (ar pavyko įstoti į aukštą prioritetu pasirinktą specialybę), o subjektyvų – pasitenkinimą pasirinkta profesija.

2. Psichologiniai sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodikliai – pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimas eiti profesiniu keliu tiesiogiai siejasi su saviveiksmingumu ir profesiniais lūkesčiais, tačiau turi skirtingus prognostinius veiksnius. Pasitenkinimą pasirinkta profesija prognozuoja tik tikslų kėlimo saviveiksmingumas, darbo idealumo ir neigiamų aspektų vertinimas, tuo tarpu ketinimą eiti profesiniu keliu – akademinis, tikslų kėlimo, savo gebėjimų įvertinimo, informacijos rinkimo saviveiksmingumas bei visi profesiniai lūkesčiai. Nors tiek pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija, tiek ketinimas eiti profesiniu keliu atspindi sėkmingą profesinį pasirinkimą, gauti rezultatai skatina juos atskirti konceptualiai.

3. Nustatyta statistiškai reikšminga tikslų kėlimo, problemų sprendimo, informacijos rinkimo, akademinio saviveiksmingumo, darbo idealumo bei neigiamų darbo aspektų vertinimo ir pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija sąveika prognozuojant ketinimą eiti profesiniu keliu. Tai, jog problemų sprendimo saviveiksmingumas prognozuoja ketinimą eiti profesiniu keliu, kai pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija žemas, o likusieji veiksniai – kai pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija aukštas, atkreipia dėmesį į skirtingas sąlygas, kuriomis saviveiksmingumas ir profesiniai lūkesčiai veikia profesinio kelio rinkimąsi.

4. Nustatyta dviejų asmenybės bruožų – neurotizmo ir ekstraversijos – sąveika su pasitenkinimu pasirinkta profesija prognozuojant ketinimą eiti profesiniu keliu. Kadangi neurotizmas siejasi su didesniu ketinimu eiti profesiniu keliu, kai pasitenkinimas žemas, ir mažesniu, kai pasitenkinimas aukštas, šį asmenybės bruožą galima priskirti prie neadekvataus profesinio kelio planavimo veiksnių. Atvirkščiai, ekstraversijos sąsajos su ketinimu eiti profesiniu keliu silpnėja, kai pasitenkinimas pasirinkta profesija yra žemas, todėl ekstraversija priskirtina prie adekvataus profesinio kelio planavimo veiksnių.

5. Sąmoningumas tiesiogiai siejasi su ketinimu eiti profesiniu keliu, nepaisant pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija lygio. Tai papildo ankstesnių tyrimų duomenis apie tai, kad sąmoningumas iš visų *Didžiojo penketo* bruožų labiausiai sietinas su planinga elgsena, o pritaikant rezultatus šio tyrimo kontekstui – su profesinio kelio tąsa.

6. Pagal darbe išskirtus pereinamajam laikotarpiui būdingus išorinius veiksnius (respondento kursą, mokslo sritį, lytį, akademinį pasiekimų vidurkį, darbo pagal specialybę patirtį, specialybės paklausą darbo rinkoje) galima diferencijuoti tiek akademinio ir karjeros sprendimų priėmimo saviveiksmingumo, tiek profesinių lūkesčių skirtumus. Tai leidžia įvertinti saviveiksmingumo ir profesinių lūkesčių formavimosi pagrindą, būdingą pereinamajam laikotarpiui tarp mokyklos baigimo ir įėjimo į darbo pasaulį.

7. Išorinių veiksnių reikšmė profesinio kelio pasirinkimui geriausiai atsiskleidžia per tiesiogines jų sąsajas tiek su pasitenkinimu pasirinkta profesija, tiek su ketinimu eiti profesiniu keliu: jie diferencijuoja sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodiklių skirtumus, tačiau šių rodiklių ryšiui didesnės reikšmės neturi.

8. Pagrindinis tyrimo rezultatų aspektas yra tas, jog pagal gautus rezultatus galima suklasifikuoti vidinius ir išorinius veiksnius, įvardinant: a) specifinius ir universalius sėkmingo profesinio kelio pasirinkimo rodiklių prognostinius veiksnius, b) pasitenkinimo pasirinkta profesija ir ketinimo eiti profesiniu keliu (ne)suderinamumą skatinančius veiksnius. Šių veiksnių įvertinimas ypač svarbus profesinio orientavimo ir konsultavimo praktikoje, siekiant suprasti sėkmingo profesinio pasirinkimo prielaidas ir ugdyti karjeros planavimo įgūdžius.

DOCTORAL STUDENT RESUMÉ

Ieva Urbanavičiūtė has studied Psychology at Vilnius University since 1999. She was awarded a Bachelor's degree in Psychology in 2003 and a Master's degree in Organizational Psychology in 2005. From 2005 to 2009 she was a doctoral student at Vilnius University, Department of General Psychology. During her doctoral studies Ieva Urbanavičiūtė has contributed to a number of projects and academic activities carried out at both Vilnius University and at other institutions of higher education.

From 2005 to 2006 she was a psychologist at Vilnius University Career Centre and was responsible for the preparation of the project 'Vilnius University Career Centre Activities: Organizing the Practical Development of Vilnius University Graduate Students' Generic Competencies Corresponding to the Labour Market Needs' (project prepared under EU Structural Funds scheme).

In 2006 she contributed to the establishment of Vilnius College Career Centre, and from *2006 to 2007* was responsible for the project 'The Development and Implementation of a Joint Career Centre Model at Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Marijampolė, Utena, Žemaitija, and Šiauliai Colleges for Higher Education' (project supported by EU Structural Funds).

From 2007 to 2008 Ieva Urbanavičiūtė was one of the scientific editors when preparing the current Lithuanian edition of D. G. Myers 'Psychology' (Kaunas: Poligrafija ir Informatika, 2008).

From February 2008 to July 2008 she spent part of her doctoral studies as an exchange student at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.

During her doctoral studies Ieva Urbanavičiūtė has prepared scientific publications on career development and has presented the main findings of her research at both national and international conferences. Moreover, she has been involved in various pedagogical activities: has supervised a number of undergraduate students, and has given lectures and seminars to the undergraduates.

Research interests: educational psychology, career counselling and development, competency development, models of goal-setting and vocational choice.

Main publications:

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). University Undergraduates' Career Choice Commitment: An Analysis of Two Samples. *Psichologija. Mokslo darbai*, 39, 45–58. (Lithuanian, English abstract available).

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2008). The Psychological Antecedents of Career Goal Setting among University Students. *Socialinis darbas*, 7(3), 110–118 (Lithuanian, English abstract available).

Other publications:

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). The Peculiarities of the University Students' Occupational Expectations (pp. 106–112). In: *VI Conference of Young Researchers in Psychology Proceedings*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla (Lithuanian, English abstract available).

Urbanavičiūtė I. et al. (2007). Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education: National Report for Lithuania (pp. 198–210). In: *Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education in EU Member States*. Ed. by Katzensteiner M. et al. University of Aarhus.

Recent Conference Presentations:

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). To Be or Not To Be: The Underlying Factors of The Undergraduates' Career Choice Commitment. 4th Annual Nordic-Baltic Doctoral Network in Psychology meeting. Helsinki, Finland, August 24–26.

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). Do High Hopes Matter? The Link between Profession Related Expectations, Career Choice Satisfaction, and Commitment. XIV European Conference on Developmental Psychology. Vilnius, Lithuania, August 18–22.

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). The Peculiarities of the University Students' Occupational Expectations. VI Conference of Young Researchers in Psychology. Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania, 8th of May.

Urbanavičiūtė I. (2009). The Role of Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Career Choice Satisfaction and Commitment. 1st International Conference of Psychology and Education. Covilha, Portugal, March 26–28.

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TRUMPA INFORMACIJA APIE DOKTORANTĘ

Ieva Urbanavičiūtė studijavo psichologiją nuo 1999 metų. 2003 metais jai buvo suteiktas psichologijos bakalauro laipsnis, 2005 metais – organizacinės psichologijos magistro laipsnis. Nuo 2005 m. – VU Bendrosios psichologijos katedros doktorantė.

Doktorantūros studijų metu Ieva Urbanavičiūtė dalyvavo įvairioje akademinėje bei projektinėje veikloje, vykdomoje tiek Vilniaus universitete, tiek kitose institucijose.

2005–2006 m. ji ėjo psichologės pareigas VU Karjeros centre ir buvo atsakinga už ESF finansuojamo projekto „Vilniaus universiteto Karjeros centro veikla organizuojant magistrantų bendrųjų kompetencijų, atitinkančių darbo rinkos poreikius, praktinį ugdymą“ parengimą.

2006–2007 m. prisidėjo prie Karjeros centro Vilniaus kolegijoje įkūrimo darbų bei vadovavo ESF finansuojamam projektui „Vieningo karjeros centro veiklos modelio sukūrimas ir įgyvendinimas Vilniaus, Kauno, Klaipėdos, Marijampolės, Utenos, Žemaitijos ir Šiaulių kolegijose“.

2007–2008 m. buvo viena iš D. G. Myers „Psichologija“ (Kaunas: Poligrafija ir informatika, 2008) mokslinių redaktorių.

Nuo 2008 m. vasario iki 2008 m. liepos pagal mainų programą studijavo Belgijoje, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

Doktorantūros studijų metu Ieva Urbanavičiūtė parengė keletą mokslinių publikacijų, pristatė disertacijos tyrimo rezultatus mokslinėse konferencijose bei seminaruose. Taip pat vykdė pedagoginę veiklą: vadovavo studentų kursiniams ir bakalauro darbams, vedė paskaitas ir seminarus.

Mokslinių interesų sritys: edukacinė psichologija, profesinis konsultavimas ir orientavimas, kompetencijų ugdymas, tikslų kėlimo ir profesinio pasirinkimo teoriniai modeliai.

Pagrindinės publikacijos (LMT patvirtintose duomenų bazėse referuojamuose leidiniuose):

Urbanavičiūtė I. Bakalauro pakopos studentų ketinimo eiti pasirinktu profesiniu keliu ypatumai: dviejų imčių analizė // *Psichologija. Mokslo darbai*. 2009, t. 39, p. 45–58.

Urbanavičiūtė I. Psichologinės studentų profesinių tikslų kėlimo prielaidos // *Socialinis darbas*. 2008, t. 7(3), p. 110–118.

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Urbanavičiūtė I. Studentų lūkesčių, susijusių su darbu pagal specialybę, ypatumai // VI Jaunųjų mokslininkų psichologų konferencijos medžiaga. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2009, p. 106–112.

Urbanavičiūtė I. et al. Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education: National Report for Lithuania. In: *Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education in EU Member States*. Ed. by Katzensteiner M. et al. University of Aarhus, 2007, p. 198–210.

Pranešimai konferencijose:

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