

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The implementation of the research goal, which was to determine the main functional characteristics of a person's life and professional strategy, was carried out on the basis of the analysis of the results of his own research. The article substantiates the essence of the concept of "life strategies", "professional strategies" based on the analysis of scientific psychological literature. On the basis of the author's own research, a characterization of the professional strategies inherent in people of different age periods was carried out. In the structure of the characteristics, the following parameters were selected: the age of education seekers, the form of education, the strategy of choosing a profession and an educational institution, the presence of a profession and the presence of professional experience. Based on the analysis of the results of the author's research, the following characteristics were identified: the ability to adapt to the conditions of the profession and life, stress resistance, readiness for professional development, readiness to achieve professional success, professional activity, professional mobility, attitude to the profession as the implementation of a life plan. Combinations of these features made it possible to distinguish professional strategies: a strategy of cooperation, a strategy of professional creativity, a strategy of professional development and professional health.

Keywords: *life strategies, professional strategies, professional development, personal development, helping professions*

Introduction

The complex socio-economic conditions of existence of a modern Ukrainian present him with complex tasks that relate to the need for physical and psychological adaptation to the surrounding environment. At the same time, the question of individuality, personal and professional development, activity of the individual remains relevant for the individual himself. The latter depends directly on the life strategy followed by the individual in the process of forming and achieving goals and implementing life programs. At the same time, the choice of a professional strategy remains in question.

A modern person has a significant number of opportunities and freedom of choice to build his own personal and professional path - this is on the one hand. On the other hand, there are certain restrictions for the implementation of life and professional plans, since the current Ukrainian society is going through a certain crisis, which is caused by military actions that have been conducted on the territory of Ukraine by the Russian invaders for almost a year, long-term quarantine restrictions in connection with COVID-19, which limit these possibilities.

The problem of researching life and professional plans and ways of their implementation is one of the central ones in the study of personality, its social and professional mobility, motivation for self-realization and self-development, understanding of emotions, both one's own and other people's, development of personal traits and properties, such as self-control, perseverance, responsibility, activity, etc.

The understanding of life and professional strategies, which we use in this work, is based on the ideas of modern psychologists about the regularities of the processes of personal and professional development - spontaneity, uncontrollability-controllability, determinism by "innate potentials" and external and internal conditions, which in various theories is interpreted as "creative means of designing a life path" (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1991), as life realization and life creation (Donii & Nesen & Sokhan, 1996), strategic life choices (Pomytkina, 2014). And if the question of life strategy is investigated in the works of psychologists, then the problem of professional strategy remains open.

And if the questions of personal life strategy are raised quite actively in modern science, then the question of professional strategies is almost absent. In our opinion, in professional activity, the presence of a professional strategy as the main method and model of professional behavior should be revealed in depth.

Analysis of life strategies, their characteristics, features of manifestation were studied in the works of domestic and foreign scientists (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004; Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1991; Pylipenko, 2012; Pomytkina, 2014; Tytarenko, 2003). Research conducted by the representatives of the psychology scientific community Pomytkina (2014), Tytarenko (2003), Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (1991) indicate that in some works strategies were studied for professional career, but there is no analysis and selection of factors that influence the formation of a certain professional strategy. These scientific works served as the theoretical and methodological basis of our research.

For a clearer understanding of the concept of "life strategies", we will try to summarize several definitions. Some researchers, in particular, Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (1991), understand life strategy as the ability to design one's own life taking into account one's individual characteristics, personality type, and as a way to resolve contradictions between external and internal contradictions and living conditions, to transform conditions and situations of life in accordance with one's own life values. "The life strategy is a kind of unique law, a way of human existence in various spheres of life, which is the fundamental ability of a person to combine his or her own individuality with the conditions of life, to reproduce it and take risks" (Honcharenko, 2017, p. 80). However, what is missing here is an explanation that life strategy is not formed once and for all, as it is analyzed, evaluated, and comprehended by the individual on a continuous basis and is aimed at realizing certain functions. Life strategy, being formed in childhood, is a complex component of personal life, a certain way of organizing life, social and vital activity of a person, means, ways of achieving goals and realizing life plans. It ensures not only the development of life and professional plans and certain life decisions, but also determines a constructive way of solving life problems, including professional choices.

Life strategy is manifested in the behavior and actions of a person. Actual behavior is a way of personal existence. According to Titarenko (2003, p. 101), an act expresses the complexity of the relationship between the individual and society; an act concretizes, "grounds", embodies aspirations and desires, and promotes activity.

Analyzing the typological and action approaches, we came to conclusion that individual characteristics, the quality of psycho-emotional states, the dominance of any of the components of mental states - emotional, volitional, intellectual, etc. - indicate the presence of a personal lifestyle and the possibility of organizing one's life. This understanding allowed us to identify the strategy of action as a separate life strategy. This strategy is determined by daily actions and deeds that correspond to the basic principles of human life; comprehension, construction, and organization of one's life path and is reflected in the professional strategy. In our study, we have concluded that this life strategy can determine the formation of a certain professional strategy.

If we turn to the analysis of psychological literature and try to consider the understanding of the meaning of life through the prism of life strategies, we can point out that it is the meaning of life that determines the strategy and tactics of a person's life, reflecting satisfaction with one's own life and acting as a driving force for the person's life activity, his or her readiness to achieve life goals. Such a life strategy is a strategy of meaningful life choices. Our scientific research allows

us to identify its main characteristics: meaningfulness of life, emotional intensity, thoughtfulness, certainty of life's purpose, satisfaction with self-realization, ability to manage the events of one's own life, including the choice of profession and self-development in the profession. The formation of life's meanings, the choice of one's own life priorities, emotionality, and social and physical activity occur during the active period of adolescence and early adulthood. This period is favorable for learning the rules and norms of social and personal development and professional choice. This opinion is confirmed by various psychological studies. In particular, Titarenko (2003, p. 100) notes that "the meaning of life, which every person seeks, which he or she is constantly looking for, is the meaning of his or her life and creative path, which consists in self-knowledge and self-creation".

One of the components of the life strategy is the professional strategy, which we view as a complex, multicomponent phenomenon of professional life, which includes the ability to make independent professional decisions, the ability to plan a professional career, professional mobility, the ability to adapt to the professional environment and the requirements for a specialist, the ability of the individual to change his or her professional life, and, if necessary, the profession.

Thus, life and professional strategy are certain dynamic formations that can change under the influence of various factors, determined by a set of choices of actions and ways of social and professional behavior. Professional strategy, in our opinion, is realized in different professional situations in the same way and contributes to the reproduction and development of the individual in the process of life and the implementation of professional plans. That is why it is important to study the way to solve a number of professional problems, the way of professional behavior, both at the stage of choosing a profession and in the process of professional growth.

Research Aim

The purpose of the research was to determine the main functional characteristics of the life and professional strategy of the individual based on the presentation of the results of his own research.

Research Methodology

General Background

The theoretical analysis of the presentation of the results on the outlined problem is to be carried out in the context of the analysis of factors that influence the formation of professional strategies and personal development. The study was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, the answers to which allowed us to identify the psychological characteristics of professional strategy. The questions in the questionnaire were divided into blocks, where the first block included data on the place of residence, data on social status, health status and hobbies of the student. The second block combined questions, the answers to which allowed us to determine the factors that influenced the choice of profession; the third block of questions will allow us to analyze the factors that indicate the importance of the profession for the student; the fourth block of questions will allow us to analyze the factors that affect the place of employment. The answers to the fifth set of questions are intended to indicate the knowledge of students about the need for further professional development and their readiness for it. The last set of questions concerns the professional future and readiness to change professions. The survey participants had to identify a particular factor from a number of proposed ones, evaluating each one by its importance in a point system from 1 to 7, where 7 is the most influential factor.

Participants, Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted among students of two universities in the capital who studied «Psychology», «Social work», and «Special education» (total number of students surveyed 168) in full-time and part-time programs over the past four years, aged 18 to 55. The survey was conducted in compliance with the principles of anonymity and sincerity of answers. The empirical processing and interpretation of the data obtained was carried out using quantitative and qualitative analysis

of the data (descriptive statistics, comparison of samples), non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, calculation of the average value of individual indicators of questionnaire data. To build a professional strategy, the author correlated the answers with other answers of each respondent. Data processing was carried out using the STATISTICA program.

Research Results

To study the main characteristics of the professional strategy and the factors that influence its formation, we used the author's questionnaire, which was developed in such a way as to obtain information about the social data of the study participants, the degree of awareness of professional choice.

The first part of the questionnaire included questions of basic information: gender, age, social and marital status, education, employment, hobbies, health. These data are not analyzed in this article.

The questionnaire also included questions related to future professional realization: availability of specialization, professional development, etc. Table 1 presents the numerical indicators of participants by specialty, average age and availability of professions and place of work and work (professional) experience in the chosen specialty at the time of the survey).

The survey participants were divided into groups according to the indicator "Form of study" (see Table 1). This distribution allowed us to carry out a statistical analysis between the groups using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, where $n = 64$ - full-time and where $n = 104$ - part-time and to establish differences ($p < .05$) in the following professional strategies: strategy of cooperation, strategy of professional creativity, strategy of professional development and professional health.

Table 1

Ratio of Students by Profession and Professional Experience

Specialties	Average age indicator (in years)		Availability of profession and place of work (in %)		Availability of professional experience in the specialty (in %)	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Psychologists	23	-	4	-	-	-
Social workers	29	45,7	27	92	8	27
Special educators	21	34	69	8	15	92

The analysis of the percentage values presented in Table 1 and the qualitative analysis of the questionnaire data allows us to conclude that future social workers and special educators of full-time and part-time forms of education have the opportunity to work in their existing or previous profession, which can be noted as a positive phenomenon, since this situation allows the formation of certain professional strategies. It is worth noting that the majority of future special educators have the first education - pedagogical. These are primary school teachers, music teachers. It is also worth noting that part-time study allows applicants for higher education to work in the field of previous professional training or in the specialty in which education is obtained. Such a position allows not only to expand professional skills, but also to expand strategies for performing job duties.

The second factor that expands the strategic opportunities of the profession is the awareness and independence of the choice of profession. Our study found that the choice of profession was influenced by parents in 35% of higher education applicants who entered the institution immediately after school, 47% of higher education applicants over 25 years old indicated the prestige and demand for a particular specialty as a factor of choice, 18% - it was a random choice of both the educational institution and the specialty. Among higher education applicants aged 18-20 who changed their professional profile by studying in other specialties, all 100% indicated a conscious choice of the specialty to which they switched to study.

Analysis of the answers to the question “To decide on the future profession, I...” (a number of answers and degrees (numerical indicators) of their influence were offered for the choice) is presented in Table 2, which shows that psychology students were responsible for the choice of their future profession: they studied the market of professions, got acquainted with the offers on the labor market in the relevant profession, studied the financial support of specialists, some students managed to work before entering a higher education institution. This indicates a creative non-standard approach to the choice of future profession. Among future social workers, a significant number of students have undergone vocational diagnostics with a psychologist, got acquainted with the proposals on the labor market, but the highest average value was shown by the factor of meeting their own financial needs, this indicator is also high among representatives of the pedagogical direction, as well as the confidence that they will find a job in the chosen profession without problems. It is important that representatives of all specialties had time to work in the future profession. Quite alarming is the fact of choosing higher education rather than a profession and the randomness of the choice (previous profession of economic profile) and the “fashionability” of the profession as the first.

Table 2

Factors that Influenced the Choice of Future Profession (Average Values)

No	Factors	Psychologists		Social workers		Educators	
		Full- time	Part-time	Full- time	Part-time	Full- time	Part-time
1	Studied the market of professions	2.4	-	3	1.17	3.29	2
2	Consulted with friends	1.6	-	1	3	2	2.3
3	Passed professional diagnostics with a school psychologist	1.4	-	4.31	2	1.6	2.1
4	Chose the profession of his parents	1.7	-	1	2	1	1.9
5	Chose a “fashionable” profession	3.1	-	4.72	1.8	3.6	2.3
6	Relying on the opinion of others	1.63	-	2	1.8	1.1	2.5
7	Got acquainted with the offers on the labor market	3.8	-	4.3	2.7	3.3	4.2
8	Chose a profession that will meet my financial needs	3.5	-	5.3	2.7	5	3.91
9	Chose a profession in which you can find a job	1.8	-	5	4	5	3
10	Before entering the university, I worked	2.9	-	6.3	5.3	2.1	4.1
11	Chose not a profession, but an education	2.1	-	3	4	2.7	3.4
12	Chose my profession by accident	1.1	-	1	1.1	4.6	2.4

Analysis of average numerical indicators of answers to the question: “My employment depends on...”, allowed us to come to conclusion about the importance of such factors as professional knowledge and skills, the level of development of professional competence, creativity, the availability of additional knowledge and skills. But unfortunately, not for representatives of all specialties there is an understanding of the need to improve professional knowledge. More precise data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Factors that Influenced the Employment of a Specialist (Average Values)

No	Factors	Psychologists		Social workers		Educators	
		Full- time	Part-time	Full- time	Part-time	Full- time	Part-time
1	My physical health	2.9	-	1.3	1.5	5.3	5.5
2	Level of education	5	-	5.31	5.3	2	1.1
3	Presence of children	1.9	-	4,31	2,7	2,2	2,6
4	Child's health	2.3	-	2.7	2.6	6	6.1
5	Knowledge and skills	5.4	-	2.8	5.8	6.1	6.1
6	Level of development of professional competencies and skills	5.7	-	5.2	5.8	5	5.8
7	Level of creativity	4.8	-	5	5	5.3	6
8	Additional knowledge that does not directly affect my work (for example, knowledge of a foreign language)	5.3	-	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.9
9	Continuous improvement as a professional (I have additional education, attend advanced training courses, read a lot of new professional information)	5.1	-	4	4	1	1.3

The analysis of qualitative and quantitative indicators by the questions of the questionnaire allowed us to make an assumption that it is the analysis of strategies for choosing a profession and the possibility of adequate employment that is the main basis for the formation of professional strategies. The main structural elements that are more or less present in the strategies presented below and determine their characteristics are: the ability to adapt to the conditions of the profession and life, stress resistance, readiness for professional development, readiness to achieve professional success, professional activity, professional mobility, attitude to the profession as the implementation of a life plan. The presence of these structural elements determines the nature of a particular strategy.

Let us name and describe the professional strategies we offer.

Cooperation strategy - will allow to realize own plans for personal and professional self-development, to develop the ability to learn and assimilate new patterns of professional behavior, professional mobility, to develop the necessary professional qualities for representatives of helping professions such as stress resistance, intuition, empathy, openness to listening, etc.

The strategy of professional creativity involves the realization of the goals of professional and personal self-development, the ability to generate new professional and personal goals, autonomy, professional activity, professional creativity and ingenuity, freedom of choice and purposefulness, creative self-realization in the profession.

The strategy of professional development and occupational health involves understanding of occupational risks, development of the ability to take care of physical and occupational health, professional activity, positive attitude to the profession, readiness for professional improvement and development as an opportunity to reduce occupational risks, ability to adapt to the conditions of the profession and life, stress resistance.

Conclusions

Life strategy and professional strategy are quite complex social and psychological phenomena. The basis for the characterization of professional strategy should be the existing signs of the ability to adapt to the conditions of the profession and life, stress resistance, readiness for professional

development, readiness to achieve professional success, professional activity, professional mobility, attitude to the profession as the implementation of a life plan. Certain combinations of these features allowed us to identify several professional strategies: strategy of cooperation, strategy of professional creativity, strategy of professional development and occupational health.

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