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Original article

ANALYSIS OF THE DETERMINING FACTORS IN MAKING THE DECISION TO TRAIN PROFESSIONALLY AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN SOUTH-EASTERN ROMANIA

LARION Alin¹, ALEXE Dan Iulian²

Abstract*

Aim. An important component of a person's life, making the decision to train in a certain profession is conditioned by and linked to certain factors, with various degrees of importance for each individual, according to the person's possibilities, social conjuncture or aspirations.

Methods. This study aimed to analyze a series of aspects concerning the influences of various factors, influences that made 112 candidates choose to train professionally as physical therapists at the universities in South-Eastern Romania (Constanta, Galati), during the main admissions in the summer of 2016. The subjects were inquired using a 12-item questionnaire before the admission examination, their involvement being voluntary.

Results. The results, determined on the basis of certain criteria, present tendencies that do not allow any generalization, but they do allow the emphasis of the importance of certain factors taken into consideration by the subjects when choosing their profession.

Conclusions: One can conclude that in South-Eastern Romania, for the candidates for the main admissions of 2016, the determining factors in making the decision to train as physical therapists were, mainly: living near the university, the advice of their friends and family, as well as the desire to help people. For these three categories of factors, the statistical analysis has shown high values.

Keywords: profession, physical therapist, decision, factors

Introduction

An important component of a person's life, making the decision to train in a certain profession is conditioned by and linked to certain factors, with various degrees of importance for each individual, according to the person's possibilities, social conjuncture or aspirations.

The importance of the factors depends on the values and beliefs of the persons making the decision, on their information that they have on that subject (Miclea, 1999). From the point of view of the possibilities, making a decision for a career path would presuppose applying a cost-benefit analysis (Baban, 2009). The individuals' aspirations in making a decision depend on and are influenced by their age and life experience, but also by their ability to process the information on which the decision making process is based.

Professional literature takes into consideration the difficulties that might appear during the decision making process for a career path, difficulties that can be of at least two types (Gati, Garty, Fassa, 1996): difficulties encountered before making a decision regarding the career path (determined by lack of training), and difficulties that appear during this decision making process (determined by lack of information in general and by

a lack of quality information in particular).

The first type of difficulties Gati, Krausz, Osipow, (1996) delimits lack of motivation, indecision, dysfunctional myths and lack of knowledge about the process, while the second type includes lack of information about one's self, lack of information about the desired career path, lack of ways to get the information, uncertain information and internal conflicts (generated by personal desires and by the current real problems of the individual).

The problematic situation that can be generated by the difficulties in making a decision for a career path would involve finding a solution or opting between multiple possible solutions (Miclea, 1999). To put it another way, problem solving presupposes decision making. Any problem contains three basic elements: the data or the current state (an unfulfilled wish), the desired goal or state (wish fulfillment), and the imposed restrictions that guide the choice of the decision for solving the problem (Miclea, 1999, Baban, 2009).

Problem solving, together with self knowledge, career path information, decision making, and planning the decision steps are the five skills that allow a young person to exert a control over his or her own development (Savickas, 1999).

Career orientation is a complex process that

¹ Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, University Ovidius Constanta, ROMANIA

² Faculty of Movement, Sports, and Health Sciences, „Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău, ROMANIA

E-mail address: alinlarion@yahoo.com

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involves a global approach of the person who wants to take the steps toward choosing a certain career path (Jigău, 2007).

During adolescence, the decision making process regarding the career path is triggered by internal and external factors that impose the pressure to choose a certain educational and professional path.

Due to a lack of experience in processing information (internal decision making factor), but also to the familial and social influence (external factors), teenagers can be indecisive. The indecision that can appear in certain conditions during adolescence can take two forms (Baban, 2009):

- indecision as a normal moment of the decision making process (this type of indecision is accompanied by an exploring behavior, the teenager looking for information about himself and about the educational and occupational paths, evaluating alternatives, abandoning and looking for variants, etc.);
- indecision as manifestation of indecisiveness (low ability to make decisions, anxiety, lack of self trust, lack of strategies for evaluating the information or alternatives). This type of indecision manifests itself through an excessive dependence on other people, avoiding or postponing the decision.

Family, the parents' attitude and their socio-economic status, the education system and school environment, the group of friends and their system of values, the young people's dependence on the familiar setting (home) etc. are all factors that act, directly or indirectly on the decision making process regarding a career path. Indecision for the career path depends on other factors as well (diffusion of information, familial and social support, approaching one type of career and external barriers, according to Vondracek, Hostetler, Schulenberg & Shimizu, 1990), but their number and content do not sustain the multidimensionality (Savickas, Carden, Toman, Jarjoura, 1992).

Methods

This study aimed to analyze a series of aspects concerning the influences of various factors, influences that made 112 candidates choose to train professionally as physical therapists at the universities in South-Eastern Romania (Constanta, Galati), during the main admissions in the summer of 2016.

Starting from the premise that final choice belongs to the candidates, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

- could the place of residence be one of the main factors that would influence the decision to choose the location of the candidates enrolled to train as physical therapists in South-Eastern Romania?
- knowing the influence that certain categories of people can have in directing and guiding the young people towards a certain career path, could one presume that the influence of family and social circles is considerable in the candidates' decision to choose to train as physical therapists in South-Eastern Romania?

The subjects were 112 candidates (67 males, 45 females), selected out of the ones who agreed to take part in this research and who chose to train as physical therapists in the universities from South-Eastern Romania (Constanța, Galați). The age distribution (N=112) of the subjects was as follows: 18 y.o. - 18.75%, 19 y.o. - 39.28%, 20 y.o. - 15.17%, between 21-25 y.o. - 17.85%, between 26 - 30 y.o. - 1.78%, between 31 - 40 y.o. - 7.14%, between 41 - 50 y.o. - 0%.

Out of the 112 subjects aged 18-19, 58.03% (65) have graduated high-school in 2015 and 2016. In this category, 93.85% (61 subjects) have graduated high-school in the summer of 2016, right before the main admissions that were the basis for this study. The percentage of the 18-19 y.o. subjects who have graduated high-school in 2016, out of the total 112 subjects, is of 54.46%.

The main research method was the questionnaire-based inquiry. The research instrument was an adapted questionnaire composed of 12 items, applied either before the admission examination (Galați), or after it (Constanța). The questionnaire items comprised either choosing certain answers from a list, or writing other options than the ones presented, or freely expressing certain arguments that formed the basis for the subjects' decision.

In order to determine the complexity of the subjects' decision-making process or indecision, there was no specification at any of the items of how many answers can a person choose, leaving that to each individual's choice.

Results

The analysis of the first item asking the subjects directly to say why they have chosen to study physical therapy allowed the following observations:

- for 24.10% of the subjects, the decision to train as physical therapists was motivated by the desire to "help people", to "offer help to the people needing rehabilitation" and to "help the people with health problems"

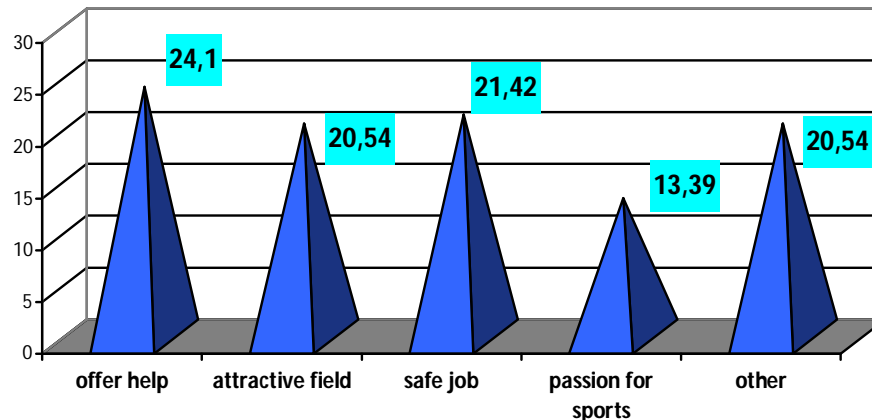


Figure 1. The percentage of the motives on which the decision to enroll in the university program "physical therapy and special motor skills" were as follows:

- for 30.36% of the subjects, the decision to train as physical therapists was based on their "attraction for this field", "the desire to have a career in this field".
- "a high income job" and "safe job" represented fundamental motives for which 21.42% of the subjects have chosen this program;
- 13.39% of the subjects motivated their choice by "passion for sport" and "passion for the human anatomy";
- the rest of approximately 10.73 % have stated other reasons, but since neither of these reasons were not over 2.00% individually, they were not taken into consideration.

The analysis of the human factor as possible determining factor in making the decision to become a physical therapist, for the subjects (item 4), envisaged the determination of the role played by the parent, brother or sister, colleague, teacher, neighbor, friend, or college professor. Thus:

- for 27.68% of the subjects (Fig. 2), the "parent" represented the person who advised or guided them to choose the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills". The "brother/sister" criterion was chosen by only 3.57% of the subjects. Cumulated, the family represented a stimulus in making a decision for 32.14% of the subjects (there was, however one subject - 0.89% - who chose both criteria);

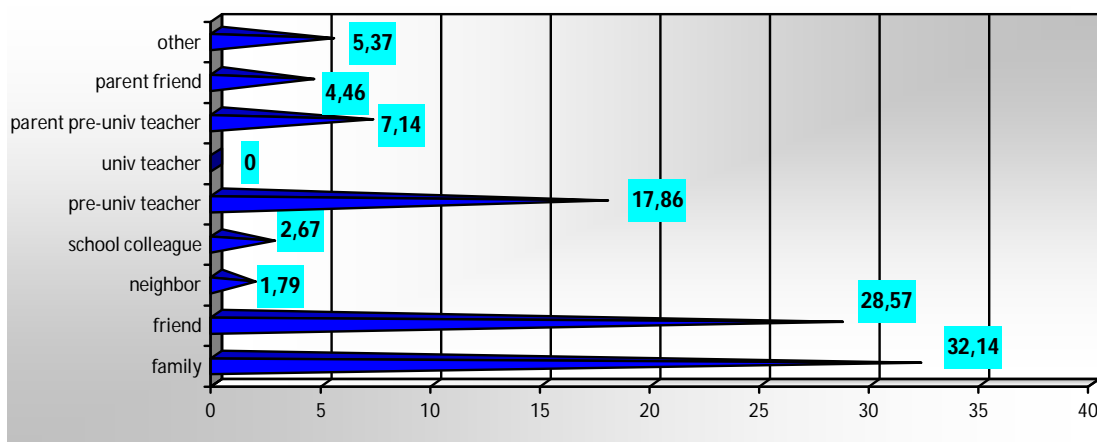


Figure 2. Percentage of the human factor in the subjects' decision to train as physical therapists

- for 28.57% of the subjects, the "friend" was the one who had a major influence in their decision to study "physical therapy and special motor skills";
- for 1.79% of the subjects (only 2 options expressed), the "neighbor" was the person who influenced their decision to follow this career path;

- for 2.67%, it was their "school colleague";
- "pre-university teacher" was chosen by 17.86% of the subjects, while "university teacher" was not chosen by anyone (Fig. 2);
- the combination "parent" and "pre-university teacher" represented the decisive factor for 7.14% of the subjects.
- the combination "parent" and "friend" represented the decisive factor for 4.46% of the subjects.
- the other combinations gave a percentage of 5.37.

The percentages above were analyzed strictly considering the mentioned criteria, however there were subjects who chose two, three, even four answers, which indicates possible higher values for the analyzed criteria (in the sense of a greater importance placed on the "parent" or "friend" criteria).

After the subjects were asked to present the human factors that influenced them in deciding to train as physical therapists (item 4), the following have been observed:

- 6.25% of the subjects said that the various persons who recommended this study program did not offer any arguments;
- for 13.39%, the arguments offered by the people with whom they have interacted were "interesting field" and "pleasant field";
- for 5.36% of the subjects, the main argument was that physical therapy is a "high income job";
- for 9.82%, the faculty renown was a solid argument for the people who advised the subjects;
- the fact that the physical therapist profession can offer "professional satisfactions"

represented an argument for 9.82% of the people who interacted with the subjects.

- 22.32% of the people who guided the subjects toward this profession had the following arguments: "safe job", "future employment opportunities", and "desired profession";
- the financial gain ensured by the practice of such a profession represented the argument that convinced 7.14% of the subjects to choose this program.
- other arguments represented 12.50% of the options;
- it must be said, however, that 13.40% of the subjects did not wish to state the arguments used by their families, friends, colleagues, or teachers to recommend them the profession of physical therapist;

Items 6 and 7 envisaged the determination of the closest university to the subjects' home (What is the closest university to your home), and the possible connection between home and choosing the university where they can study "physical therapy and special motor skills".

Thus, for 34.82% of the subjects (Fig. 3), the "Ovidius" University of Constanta was the closest university to their home. For 41.07%, the "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galați was the closest university to their home, while for 10.71%, it was the "Danubius" University of Galați. The other universities, public or private, of Constanta and Galați (the Naval Academy, the Dimitrie Cantemir University, the Constantin Brâncuși University, the Andrei Șaguna University) were closer to the homes of 6.25% of the subjects. There were subjects (7.15%) who did not express any point of view in regards to the closest university to their home.

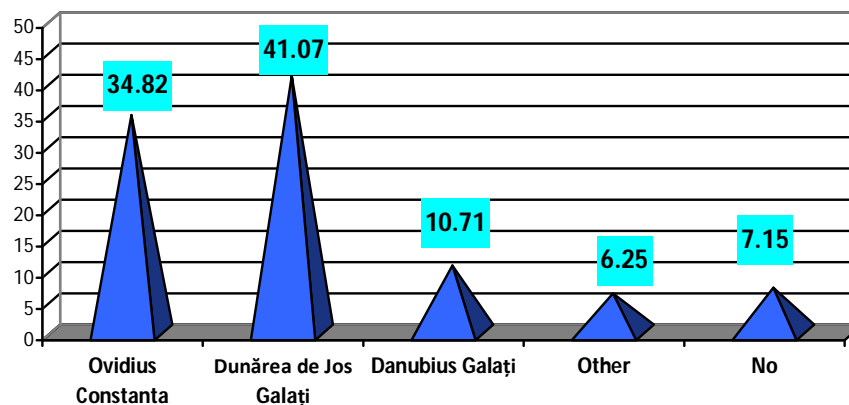


Figure 3. Universities closer to the subjects' homes

The analysis of the data has shown that for 12.50% of the subjects (Fig. 4), the distance between their home and university represented a factor in

choosing the university where they would enroll in the program "physical therapy and special motor

skills" (item 7), while for 87.50% *this distance was not an important criterion.*

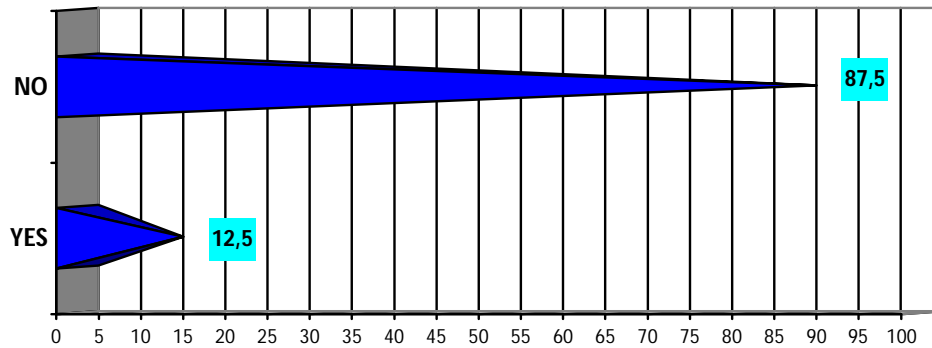


Figure 4. Percentage of the relationship between home and university in the subjects' decision to train as physical therapists

In trying to determine the alternative career paths and also the subjects' indecision to enroll in the program "physical therapy and special motor skills", their decision to enroll in multiple universities or multiple study programs was also analyzed. For that there was item no. 8.

Based on the data, only 16.07% of the subjects have enrolled also in other universities than the ones where they were inquired, or in other study programs than "physical therapy and special motor

skills". 83.93% of the subjects did not enroll in any other university (Fig. 5).

Out of the 18 subjects (16.07%), only one had enrolled in another university to be trained as physical therapist, the rest of 17 (15.18% - Fig. 5) have enrolled as an alternative to physical therapy, in other study programs (such as: medicine, political sciences, sports and motor performance, naval engineering, economy, police, architecture, letters, public administration, psychology).

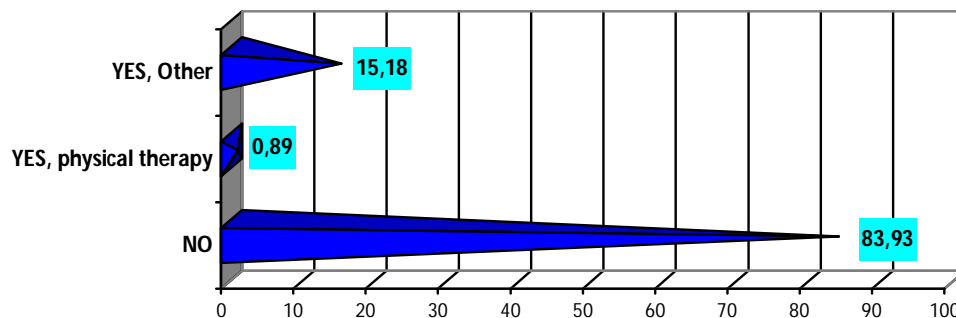


Figure 5. "Have you applied to other universities in this admission session of July 2016? Please specify the university and the study program."

In order to determine whether the renown of the university has represented a decision factor for the subjects, whether their decision to become a physical therapist was a firm one, and also to verify the validity of the answers given to items no. 6 and 7, the items no. 10 and 11 were created.

Thus, item 10 observed the subjects' opinion in regards to their motives for choosing one of the universities in South-Eastern Romania.

Out of the 112 subjects, 92 (82.14%) have chosen the university where they have enrolled because it was closer to their home. 11.61% of the subjects have chosen their university from other reasons (the sports club that they work at, personal reasons, changing the city, finances).

There is a small value in regards to "university renown", "faculty renown", or "teacher renown" as reasons for the subjects to decide to train as physical therapists - only 6.25% has given these reasons (Fig. 6).

If one considers the data from item 7 (Fig. 4), one can see that the data from item 10 contradicts what the subjects are saying at item 7. Thus, for 87.50% of the subjects, "home" was not a criterion for choosing the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills", but 82.14% have chosen their university for being "closer to home", because it is in their "home town", because they can "get to the university easier", etc. This comparative analysis shows that "home" is a criterion that was very

important for the candidates in choosing to be trained as physical therapists, in 2016.

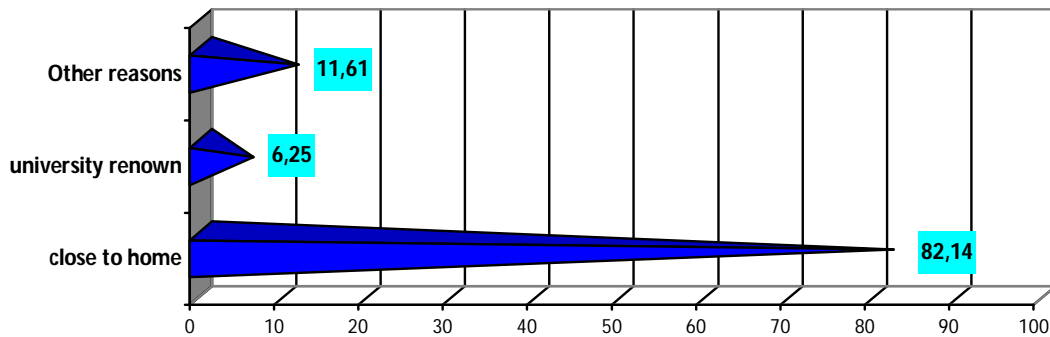


Figure 6. "Why did you choose this university?"

Item no. 11, "If the University of Constanța/Galați had not offered undergraduate studies in physical therapy, would you have went to another university, or would you have still chosen the University of Constanța/Galați?" allowed the observation of the subjects' decision for the city of that particular university (probably based on either the renown of the university or it being closer to

home, as previously mentioned). The analysis of the data shows the following:

- 38.39% of the subjects (N=43) would have enrolled in the same study program (KMS in Fig. 7) if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills". This percentage indicates a clear decision for this career path made by the 43 subjects;

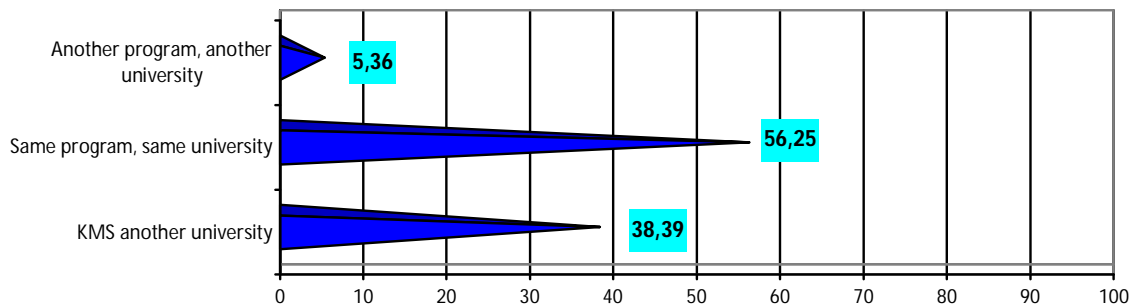


Figure 7. Percentage for item no. 11

- 56.25% of the subjects (N=63) would have enrolled in the same university but in another study program if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills". This percentage can indicate multiple aspects that can be considered causes in making a certain choice: their home close to the university represented a criterion in choosing the undergraduate studies; these subjects were indecisive in regards to their training as physical therapists, or other factors have influenced their opinion (finances, parental support, etc.);

- 5.36% of the subjects (N=6) would have enrolled in another university and another study program if the university where they had enrolled in July 2016 would not have had the study program "physical therapy and special motor skills".

In order to determine the possible orientation of the candidates toward another Romanian

university, thinking that the university where the subjects have enrolled and have taken an admission examination (Constanța/Galați) would not have in their curriculum the program "physical therapy and special motor skills", the last item of the questionnaire was created (item 12). After analyzing the options for each university included in the research (Iași, Bacău, Suceava, Constanța/Galați), the following aspects were determined:

- 43.55% of the subjects who have chosen the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați would have enrolled to study physical therapy at the "A.I.Cuza" University of Iași, 16.13% would have enrolled at the "Ovidius" University of Constanța, 19.35% at the "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, and 20.97% at other universities (Bucharest - 6.45%, Cluj, Timișoara, Brașov). The university of Suceava was not chosen by any of the subjects;



- 20.00% of the subjects who have chosen the "Ovidius" University of Constantza would have enrolled to study physical therapy at the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, 18.00% would have enrolled at the "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iași, 8% at the "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, and 54.00% at other universities (Bucharest - 36.00%, Cluj, Timișoara, Brașov).

Discussions

The results have shown the existence of certain percentage among the subjects who preferred to choose a certain university for personal reasons, which confirms the idea that personal interests can constitute important elements in choosing a career path, and the preferences for certain fields could favor the choice of occupations in which these interests could be pursued (Baban, 2009).

Family, as an important factor for the teenagers in choosing their career path, was also in this case very important for the subjects, and the arguments brought up by the subjects' families, when giving advice about a career path, emphasize that the status offered by a career depends largely on "a safe job", "future employment opportunities" and "desired profession".

School and social groups participate directly to the career choosing process (Salade, Drăgan, 1998), the school and social environment being in the case of these subjects, other factors that are important in making a decision, their percentage showing higher values (a little over 20%, meaning a fifth of the total).

Regarding the criterion "friend", as a deciding factor for a certain career path, almost 30% of the subjects have mentioned it, which highlights the importance of the social group, the fact that "friend" becomes a reference criterion for teenagers in choosing their career and their educational path.

Conclusions

The place of residence was one of the main factors that influenced the decision to choose the location of the candidates enrolled to train as physical therapists in South-Eastern Romania, in 2016. Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed.

Knowing the influence that certain categories of people can have in directing and

guiding the young people towards a certain career path, one can determine that the influence of family and social circles was considerable in the candidates' decision to choose to train as physical therapists in South-Eastern Romania, in 2016. Thus, the second hypothesis was confirmed.

It was noticed also an inability of the subjects to formulate their reasons, based on the percentages determined for the answer choices in two items that studied the relevance of the residence in choosing the location for training as a physical therapist.

Acknowledgments

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