

The Factors Determining Professional Career of Females From Different Social Groups: Reflexive Attitude

Palmira Peciuliauskiene, Marija Barkauskaite
Vilnius Pedagogical University, Vilnius, Lithuania

This article analyzes the factors determining professional careers of females from different social groups (convict, unemployed and those who achieved successful career). It is decided to classify those factors into two groups: subjective (education and personal qualities); and objective (age and parents' professional career). This article deals with a scientific problem formulated in the following questions: (1) How do females from different social groups (convict, long-term unemployed and successfully working females) assess the role of personal qualities and parents' professional careers for their personal careers? (2) What factors, in females' opinion, mostly determine the professional career? The aim of the survey is to reveal the convict, long-term unemployed and successfully working females' attitudes to the professional career formation factors. It has been found that females' education usually correlates with their attitudes to personal qualities, which may condition professional career, rather than their age. It means that education is an important factor determining different social group females' attitudes to personal qualities which are important for professional career. Personal education may be improved. Therefore, the role of educational processes becomes more important for professional career conception, professional career development and the formation of different social groups. Analyzing the attitudes of successfully working, long-term unemployed and convicting females to parents' professional careers, statistically important differences were not found. Only one statistically important but weak correlation was found when analyzing the relation between females' education, age and the attitudes to parents' professional careers. It means that females' education and age more often correlates with their attitudes to personal qualities, being important for professional careers, rather than with the attitudes to parents' professional careers.

Keywords: factors determining professional careers, professional career, social disjuncture, social group

Introduction

There are two important components in every person's biography—personal life and professional career. The most general career conception arises from the Latin word "carraria", which means the way of a person's life, running. The career way begins as soon as a person is born and it plays an important role in life (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998; Guichard, 2001; Savickas, 2001; Valackiene, 2001). A professional career is a constant personal self-expression way, which has changed perspectives and directions. It reflects the completeness of a person's life. It is said that the career is the change of qualitatively performed, socially significant professional and other roles in a person's life (Kucinskiene, 2003; Watson & McMahon, 2006; McIlveen, 2009).

The professional career conception changes in a volatile society. According to a traditional attitude, professional career is understood as rapid and successful rise at work or scientific activity (Dictionary of International Words, 2004). It means that hierarchic structure is typical of traditional professional career model—tight, intended succession of activities (“career ladder”) in an organization. The contemporary career model is not related to an activity in one organization and does not have purposeful hierarchic structure. In modern society, person’s professional career is becoming more and more flexible due to work instability. It means that social context determines a person’s professional career.

Analyzing the factors of professional career, the country’s educologists divide them into internal (subjective) and external (objective). Vabalas-Gudaitis (1938) was one of the first country’s educologists who analyzed the factors of profession selection. In their opinion, if profession selection is influenced by external factors (e.g., honor or salary), a person has to force himself/herself work only by effort of will. Sakalas and Salcius (1997) distinguished the following internal (subjective) career factors: persons’ education and qualification, expectations, aims and attitudes. Other educologists supplemented this classification. Kucinskiene (2003), Petkeviciute (2003), Valackiene (2003), Stanisauskiene (2004), Burwell and Kalbfleisch (2007) claimed that the main subjective factors are not only higher general and professional education but also personal self-education and self-consciousness, personal needs, values and interests that are related to self-education.

Generalizing the country’s sociologists’ and educologists’ attitudes about external factors of professional career, it is possible to distinguish two groups of external factors. They are the external factors of macro-environment: global economy (economic conditions, status and tendencies in the labour market), influence of the society (work assessment and system of values) and technological advance. Family influence (family values and social-economic level) and company’s influence (working conditions and attitude towards co-workers) can be attributed to the external factors of microenvironment (Sakalas & Salcius, 1997).

External professional career factors are conditioned by the society’s economic, social and cultural changes. Scrupiness and uncertainty of future activity situations are typical of the contemporary informational-creative society. The development of technologies and global market caused not only positive, but also negative phenomena. One of the biggest social problems in these days is unemployment and phenomena related to it—social disjuncture and dependence on social support system. It is thought that if social changes become stronger and the reaction to the situation challenges delays, the social tension and social conflicts increase (Grigas, 1998; Bovey & Hede, 2001; McIlveen & Patton, 2006). One of the tensions of the contemporary society is unemployment. The statistic data of labor exchange showed that in 2003, the ratio of unemployed males and unemployed females was almost the same. Since 2004, the number of unemployed females, compared to males, has started to increase. For example, in 2007 there were 62% of females of all registered in the labor exchange, and 67.6% of females among long-term unemployed people. It means that social tensions that rise in the country’s labor market affect females more than males.

Professional career possibilities of various persons are different. They are unique, because it is impossible to find two people who would be the same. The differences of professional career possibilities are noticed not only between females and males, but also among people who belong to different social groups. The survey shows that labor market conditions and career possibilities are less favorable of people who are in social disjuncture. Therefore, the question “What factors influence the professional career of social disjuncture people” remains topical, especially during the critical economic development periods (Aperaviciene, 2003;

Poviliūnas, 2001; Mikulioniene, 2005; Orenienė, 2006). Professional career and its development factors of long-term unemployed or convicting people is an important sociological as well as educological problem. However, it is also important to analyze the factors determining successful career. Regarding them, it is possible to analyze the professional career development factors of people belonging to social disjuncture. Therefore, the survey approaches may be various. In order to reduce their variety, it was decided to analyze the attitudes to professional career factors of females from different social groups.

Regarding the reality mentioned above, the scientific problem analyzed in this article is formulated as follows questions: (1) How do females from different social groups (convict, long-term unemployed and successfully working females) assess the roles of personal qualities and parents' professional career for their personal career? (2) What factors, in females' opinion, mostly determine the professional career?

The object of the survey is the attitudes to professional careers of females from different social groups (convict, long-term unemployed and successfully working).

The aim of the survey is to reveal the convict, long-term unemployed and successfully working females' attitude to the professional career formation factors.

Methodology of Research

Pedagogical-Psychological Assumptions

Analyzing the attitudes of females from various social groups to the factors determining professional careers and the methodological approach—constructivist paradigm, was chosen. The essence of the professional career is not ultimate, unchangeable and cannot be conveyed. The professional career formation is a permanent process determined by the earlier gained knowledge and experience. According to constructivism, the professional career is understood as appeasement of personal self-realization and individual attitude to success. It is hardly predictable, related to persons' competence in relation to goals, relative, and depending on a number of internal and external factors.

Survey Instrumentation

In order to analyze the attitudes of females from different social groups to the factors determining professional careers, the following methods were used: the analysis of scientific literature, questionnaires and quantitative data analysis.

During the first stage of the survey, questionnaire was created. Three objective groups were made for quantitative survey of the questionnaires. The first group included 70 convict females, and the second one included 110 long-term unemployed females. Females who were registered in the labor exchange and who were looking for a job for more than a year belonged to these two groups. The third group included 120 successfully working females. Females who had managing positions in state or private educational institutions belonged to this group. The reliability of each group was approved statistically, comparing to the general set¹ of long-term unemployed, convict and successfully working females. It was statistically determined that the chosen groups are reliable with a small general set (automated statistical information system).

A part of the questions in the survey questionnaire was related to subjective and objective professional

¹ The following formula was used for calculation $n = \frac{1}{\Delta^2 + \frac{1}{N}}$, where n = selection size, Δ = error size (0.05), N = general unit size.

career formation factors. Respondents' education and personal qualities (indulgence, aggressiveness, fear of responsibility, flexibility, activeness, determination and sensibility to criticism) were attributed to the group of subjective factors. The chosen subjective factors were divided into two sub-groups: positive (flexibility, activeness, determination and sensibility to criticism) and negative (indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility). Nominal-dichotomy (important and unimportant) scale was applied for the measurement of subjective factors.

Age and parents' professional careers were attributed to the group of objective factors. Interval and grade scale was used for the measurement of the objective factors: interval, for the age of respondents and nominal scale, for the parents' professional careers.

To process research data, descriptive statistics was applied and correlation coefficients and the percentage of answers were calculated. In order to evaluate statistical significance of different positions, the chi-square (χ^2) criterion was used to examine homogeneity of population. Probability of statistical margin $p \leq 0.05$ was accepted. Critical limits of probability of statistical margin p shows permissible margin value of statistical decisions. The statistical decisions disagreeing with specification $p \leq 0.05$ are treated as invalid, i.e., the permissible margin of statistical decisions which is more than 5% was established. To statistically process the data of research, the statistical packet SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 14.0 was applied.

Survey Results

Subjective Factors

Personal education is a subjective factor, which depends on persons' abilities, motivation and other personal qualities. During the survey, it was found that the education of females from different social groups (successfully working, long-term unemployed and convict) varies (see Table 1). Almost all successfully working respondents (90.1%) had higher university education. More than a third of them (33.4%) had master's degree. Convict females had lowest education. None of the respondents from this group had second stage university education. Only 5.6% of convict females had higher education. In the group of long-term unemployed females, 23% had university education (bachelor's or master's degree). It means that education is an important subjective factor, which determines females' belonging to the different status social group. The respondents' education in different groups varies, which is proved by statistically gained significant difference ($p = 0.002$, $\alpha < 0.05$).

Table 1

Percentage Rate of Education Level of Females From Different Social Groups

Social group	Education level			
	General	Secondary	University (bachelor's degree)	University (master's degree)
Long-term unemployed	20.1	56.9	14.2	8.8
Convict	41.3	53.1	5.6	0
Successfully working managers	0	9.9	56.7	33.4

Personal qualities may also have influence on persons' professional careers and may condition the belonging to one or another social group. How do successfully working, convict and long term-unemployed females assess the personal qualities that determine professional career? In order to answer the question, a list of personal qualities related to professional career was created. In exploratory survey, applying factorial analysis, a group of positive personal qualities was distinguished from that list, which included the following

qualities: flexibility, activeness, determination and sensibility to criticism. According to the same statistical method, the following three qualities belong to the group of negative personal qualities: indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility.

When carrying out the survey, a nominal assessment scale to evaluate the positive and negative personal qualities was chosen. When the respondents assessed each quality indicated in the questionnaire, they could select one of the two provided ranks: important and unimportant. The survey data show that the attitudes of successfully working, long-term unemployed and convict females are different (see Table 2).

Table 2

Attitudes' Percentage Rates of Personal Qualities According to the Rank "Important" of Females From Different Social Groups

Personal qualities	Social group		
	Convict	Unemployed	Successfully working
Positive personal qualities			
Flexibility	13.1	44.9	60.9
Activeness	43.7	44.4	66.1
Determination	35.1	56.7	53.7
Sensibility to criticism	55.1	53.9	53.3
Negative personal qualities			
Indulgence	89.2	11.3	13.8
Aggressiveness	75.6	13.1	13.3
Fear of responsibility	87.1	44.5	49.2

Successfully working female leaders favourably assess the personal qualities, which may have positive influence on professional career: flexibility, activeness, determination and sensibility to criticism. From 53.3% to 66.1% of this social group females ranked these qualities as "important". The attitudes of successfully working females and convict females differed when ranking those personal qualities, which may have negative influence on personal careers. These were indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility. More than two thirds of convict females ranked these qualities as important for professional career. Persons' sensibility to criticism was ranked almost the same by all respondent groups.

In order to statistically evaluate the established regularity (see Table 3), a chi-square (χ^2) criterion was calculated for all possible comparison cases. It shows that the most frequent statistically important differences are established when comparing the attitudes to personal qualities that determine careers of successfully working and convict females. When comparing the attitudes to personal qualities determining careers of successfully working and long-term unemployed females, statistically important attitudes was established in one case only.

The attitude difference of unemployed and convict females when assessing personal qualities, which may have negative influence on professional career, was in all cases statistically important. The attitude difference of females who belong to the same social groups to positive personal qualities is only in one case statistically important—when assessing persons' social flexibility. This statistically important difference emerged, because long-term unemployed females more favourably assess persons' social flexibility than the convict ones.

Table 3
Statistical Importance of Different Social Group Females' Attitude Difference to Personal Qualities Determining Career

Personal qualities	Long-term unemployed-convict			Long-term unemployed-successfully working			Successfully working-convict		
	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p	χ^2	df	p
Positive personal qualities									
Flexibility	14.11	4	0.011**	15.91	4	0.050*	17.12	4	0.000**
Activeness	14.53	4	0.097	14.37	4	0.078	16.91	4	0.012**
Determination	12.22	4	0.061	8.77	4	0.102	13.52	4	0.063
Sensibility to criticism	8.25	4	0.133	8.94	4	0.103	7.24	4	0.151
Negative personal qualities									
Indulgence	19.22	4	0.000**	7.11	4	0.155	18.11	4	0.000**
Aggressiveness	16.4	4	0.001**	6.87	4	0.199	15.48	4	0.008**
Fear of responsibility	16.6	4	0.014**	13.99	4	0.099	13.34	4	0.028**

Note. ** p ≤ 0.01.

Generalizing the attitudes of females from different social groups, it is possible to claim that the conception of convict females about personal qualities that determine career is peculiar and differs from the attitudes of unemployed and successfully working females. In the convict females' opinion, the professional career is determined by indulgence and aggressiveness. We may think that this attitude is conditioned by the peculiarities of their environment. These qualities often help to adapt and survive in the imprisonment institutions. The survey carried out by the authors (Bandzeviciene, 2002; Suslavicius & Valickas, 1999; Zukauskiene, 2006) confirmed the attitude that imprisonment raises disobedience, aggressiveness, defence and conformism.

Objective Factors

There are many objective factors, which condition personal professional careers: technology change, work assessment and its conditions, cultural work force differences and family. In order to pursue the aim of the survey, the different social group females' attitudes to the objective microenvironment factors, which determine professional careers, were analyzed. Two objective factors were chosen: the age of females and parents' professional careers.

Dichotomy nominal scale was used for the different social group females' attitudes to parents' professional careers influencing on the professional careers of children. The result analysis according to the positive assessment rank "important" shows that parents' professional careers do not influence children's professional careers (see Table 4). Comparing the respondents' attitudes to fathers' and mothers' professional careers, it was found that a bigger percentage of females assess fathers' professional career more favourably. The priority to fathers' professional careers was given by 51.2% of unemployed females.

Table 4
Percentage Rate of Females From Different Social Groups Attitudes to Parents' Professional Careers

Parents' professional careers	Social group		
	Convict	Long-term unemployed	Successfully working
Good professional career of a mother	39.3	35.2	37.5
Good professional career of a father	44.1	51.2	40.8

Personal age may condition the attitudes to professional career factors. Respondents' age was not taken into consideration when forming the survey sample. Regarding the age feature, the survey sample is random. However, analyzing the respondents' age in different social groups, certain regularities were found (see Table 5). The age of long-term unemployed and successfully working females is similar: more than a third of them are older than 45. Meanwhile, among the convict females, there are mostly young ones. Almost a half (48.5%) of convict females are between 20 and 30 years old. This regularity of survey sample is typical of all convicts' general set. According to the prison department data (automated statistical information system), every second convict in imprisonment institution is younger than 31.

Table 5

Percentage Rate of Females' Age From Different Social Groups

Social group	Age group (years)					
	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	Virš 46
Long-term unemployed	4.1	11.8	16.2	11.3	18.4	38.2
Successfully working	2.3	6.2	9.4	17.0	26.5	38.6
Convict	17.7	30.8	12.1	10.1	10.2	19.1

It was analyzed whether persons' age and education correlate with their attitudes to objective and subjective factors, determining professional career. Spearman correlation rate was calculated between the females' attitude to subjective and objective factors and females' education and age.

Table 6

Spearman Correlation Rate Between Different Social Group Females' Age, Education and Attitude to Personal Qualities, Parents' Professional Careers

Characteristic of social group	Personal qualities ²							Parents' professional career ³		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3
Education of long-term unemployed	0.20*	0.13	0.02	0.11	-0.05	0.09	-0.12	0.04	0.16	-0.14
Education of successfully working	0.26**	-0.01	0.12	0.17	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.05	0.02
Education of convict	0.11	0.01	0.02	0.09	0.28**	0.26**	0.31***	0.09	0.14	0.11
Age of long-term unemployed	0.17	-0.13	0.10	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.03	-0.11	0.22*	0.04
Age of successfully working	-0.11	0.10	0.17	0.16	0.11	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.02	0.14
Age of convict	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.05	0.21*	0.25**	0.21*	-0.04	0.03	0.15

Notes. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

In most survey cases, statistically unimportant correlation rates were found. The most (six) statistically important correlation rates were found when analyzing statistic relation between females' education and their attitudes to subjective factors which condition professional careers. Correlation between unemployed females' education and their attitudes to persons' social flexibility and activeness is weak, but statistically important. Correlation between convict females' education and their attitudes to personal qualities: indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility is statistically important.

² 1. Flexibility; 2. Activeness; 3. Determination; 4. Sensibility to criticism; 5. Indulgence; 6. Aggressiveness; 7. Fear of responsibility.

³ 1. Good professional career of a mother; 2. Good professional career of a father; 3. Parents' professional career unimportant.

Analyzing the statistic relation between females' age and their attitudes to subjective factors, only three statistically important rates were found. Correlation between convict females' ages and their attitudes to indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility is statistically important. Analyzing statistic relation between females' ages and their attitudes to objective factors, which determine professional career, only one statistically important factor was found.

Conclusions

The analysis of scientific literature shows that professional career is understood as a process, which is led by the person himself/herself. The personal career is conditioned by various factors. They may be classified variously. On the basis of subjective-objective classification criteria, factors which determine professional career may be divided into two groups: subjective (education, personal qualities, social status, values and life roles); and objective (sex, age, socio-educational conditions in a family, living place and requirements of the labour world changes and others).

Professional career possibilities of each person are individual. Significant professional career possibility differences are noticed when analyzing people who belong to different social groups, especially those who belong to social disjuncture groups. One of the most important conditions, which determine personal career possibilities, is the tune of personal qualities and requirements of certain activity field.

Flexibility, activeness, determination, sensibility to criticism, indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility are important personal qualities which are differently evaluated by females who belong to different social groups (successfully working, long-term unemployed and convict). Comparing the attitudes of different social group females to the significance of these qualities for the professional career, it was found that the attitudes of long-term unemployed and successfully working females usually coincide. The attitudes of these females are especially close when assessing positive personal qualities for career: personal determination and sensibility to criticism, and negative qualities: indulgence, aggressiveness and fear of responsibility. The attitude of convict females differs from the former ones in a way, that convict females give prominence to the role of aggressiveness and indulgence, and insufficiently assess the role of flexibility in professional career.

The females' attitudes to the qualities mentioned above depend on the subjective factor: education, and the objective one: age. It was found that females' education usually correlates with their attitudes to personal qualities, which may condition professional career, rather than their age. It means, education is an important factor, determining different social group females' attitudes to personal qualities that are important for professional career. Personal education may be improved. Therefore, the role of educational processes becomes more important for professional career conception, professional career development and the formation of different social groups.

Analyzing the attitudes of successfully working, long-term unemployed and convict females to parents' professional careers, statistically important differences were not found. Only one statistically important but weak correlation was found when analyzing the relation between females' education, age and parents' professional careers. It means that females' education and age more often correlates with their attitudes to personal qualities, important for professional career, rather than with the attitudes to parents' professional careers.

References

- Aperaviciene, G. (2003). The support provided by Panevezys city institutions to convicted females. *Education and social exclusion, adult education experience week* (pp. 52-56).
- Automated statistical information system. (2008). Retrieved August 1, 2008, from <http://www.nplc.lt:8000/asis/>
- Bandzeviciene, R. (2002). Attitudes of convicted persons towards phenomena important for social integration. *Social Work, 2*, 125-133.
- Bovey, W. H., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organizational change: The role of defence mechanisms. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 16*(7), 543-548.
- Burwell, R., & Kalbfleisch, S. (2007). Deliberations on the future of career development education in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Career Development, 6*(1), 40-49.
- Dictionary of international words. (2004). Retrieved September 1, 2008, from <http://kazkas.kobra.ktu.lt/>
- Grigas, R. (1998). The social interpretation of fields of social tension and its' application. *The particularities of social groups* (the selection of articles). Vilnius: Social echo.
- Guichard, J. (2001). A century of career education: review and perspectives. *International Journal for Education and Vocational Guidance, 1*(3), 155-176.
- Kucinskienė, R. (2003). *The methodology for education about building up a professional career*. Klaipeda: Klaipeda University Publishing.
- McIlveen, P. (2009). Career development learning and work-integrated learning in Australian higher education. Paper presented at the *International Careers Conference*, Wellington, New Zealand, November 19-21, 2009.
- McIlveen, P., & Patton, W. (2006). A critical reflection on career development. *International Journal for Education and Vocational Guidance, 6*(1), 15-27.
- Mikulioniene, S. (2005). Social exclusion: interpretation of the term and application of the term in Lithuania. *Social Works, Science Works, 4*(2), 20-30.
- Oreniene, R. (2006). The paradigm of career projection to prevent social exclusion. (Doctoral Theses, Vytautas Magnus University)
- Petkeviciute, N. (2003). The projection and development of professional career under the aspect of globalization. *Professional Education: Researches and Realities, 7*, 82-97.
- Poviliunas, A. (2001). *Civil society: The social development of a person*. Vilnius: Homo Liber.
- Sakalas, A., & Salcius, A. (1997). *The management of career*. Kaunas: Publishing Office Technologija.
- Savickas, M. L. (2001). A developmental perspective on vocational behavior: Career patterns, salience, and themes. *International Journal for Education and Vocational Guidance, 1*(1-2), 49-57.
- Stanisauskiene, V. (2004). *The social-educational backgrounds to the process of preparation for professional career*. Kaunas: Publishing Office Technologija.
- Suslavicius, A., & Valickas, G. (1999). *Social psychology for employees of law institutions*. Vilnius: The Academy of Lithuanian Law Publishing.
- Vabalas-Gudaitis, J. (1938). The term of professional calling. *School and Life, 6*/7, 1-2.
- Valackiene, A. (2001). Professional career of females of different generations: Valuing the situation and the attitude towards their professional career in Lithuania. (Doctoral Theses, Kaunas University of technologies)
- Valackiene, A. (2003). Factors determining professional career: Subjective valuation. *Professional education, 7*, 110-127.
- Watson, M., & McMahan, M. (2006). My system of career influences: Responding to challenges facing career education. *International Journal for Education and Vocational Guidance, 6*(3), 159-166.
- Watts, A. G., & Van Esbroeck, R. (1998). *New skills for new futures*. Brussels: VUB Press.
- Žukauskienė, R. (2006). *Psychology of criminal behaviors*. Vilnius: Mykolas Romeris University.