VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL GOALS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Milanko Čabarkapa[1i]**,**
Zorica Marković[2]**,**
Nebojša Petrović[1]
[1]Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology,
University of Belgrade; Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia
[2]Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology,
University of Nis; Cirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia

Abstract:

Plenty of space in psychological literature was dedicated to professional orientation of students, where the role of school, peers, parents, material and social factors was more studied while the role of personality traits, goals, expectations, personal and social values was studied less. This paper is focused on preference of personal and social values that we have defined as certain goals which are important within the context of choice of faculty, and thus, the future profession. We used two lists of goals - 18 personal and 18 social, which were applied to the sample of 497 high school graduates, where the sample consisted of 37,4% boys and 62,6% girls. The study was conducted in the field, at the end of 2014/2015 school year, within standard school conditions. Preference and level of goal importance the respondents expressed by giving only one answer for each personal and social value at the 5-point Likert- type scale, which enabled application of descriptive statistics methods, correlation and discriminant analysis in statistical data processing. The study results show that there are significant differences in preference of certain goals, as well as relation between importance of goals with expectations for achieving them through choice of faculty and future profession. Also, there is relation between the level of desire for doing the preferred profession and level of expectations that one may achieve his/her goals through the profession. In addition, it is shown that there are significant differences in the level of

[i] Corresponding author: Milanko Čabarkapa, PhD
Address: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia. E mail: milanko.cabarkapa@gmail.com

accepting certain goals as values, where more importance is given to personal than to social values, which is verified by validity of the author's initial attitude that personal and social values should be separately studied, as they have different importance for professional orientation of young people.

Keywords: values, personal and social goals, high school graduates, professional choice

1. Introduction

Professional orientation of young people is mostly associated with the end of high school period. High school students – graduates mainly choose to study at one of the existing faculties or colleges. In series of previous studies on professional orientation, the attention was focused on examining the role of school, peers, parents, material and social factors, while the role of personality traits, goals, expectations, attitudes and values was less studied. Therefore, in this study we focus our attention on, to certain extent, neglected aspect of professional orientation of young people, where the main objective relates to research of role and importance which certain value-based goals have with regard to choice of studies and future profession. More precisely, the focus is on value-based expectations that the high school graduates in Serbia have from their future profession which is acquired by completing the planned faculty or college. Actually, the question is whether one of the factors of choice of the faculty constitutes expectation that in that way there will be provided occupation that allows realization of some important personal and social goals, which can be also viewed as personal and social values.

One of the sources for this topic lies in some theories of career choice which have wider approach to choice of profession because they talk about systems of abilities, personality traits, needs and interests, but it may be reasonably assumed that those broader systems also include attitudes and values, that is value-based goals. In that regard, Holland's Theory of Career Choice is interesting, in which choice of profession is viewed primarily as an expression of personality (Brančić, 1986). Holland (Holland, 1973) theoretically differentiates six personality types, to which also correspond six appropriate types of environment. Persons who belong to the particular personality type, in their professional orientation seek environment, including also working environment, within which they can express their personality. Although Holland does not use the concept of *expectation* as an explanatory term, it is implicitly contained in the thesis that persons with certain personality type tend to look for the right profession for which they expect to be in compliance with their personality traits.

Another important source for this study is the Super's Career Development Theory (Super 1973), where one of the key concepts is the *self-concept*, while choice of occupation is viewed as process of the self-image realization, i.e. as harmonizing occupation with the image. Undoubtedly, an important part of that picture is comprised of attitudes and values that an individual has, which was also emphasized by Super who otherwise dealt with studying of working values. Within context of the topic that we are interested in, choice of profession can be understood as an assessment that through the preferred choice of faculty and future profession, important life goals (i.e. values) for the individual may be achieved, which the individual sees (or would like to see) as essential elements of the ideal self-image.

Also, Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation (Vroom, 1964) may be also related to value-based expectations and professional choice because in addition to *valence* or value and *instrumentality* of goal, also importance of *expectations* is pointed out as subjective belief or assessment that certain behavior will bring to the desired goal. Although Vroom's theory is mainly related to explanation of work motivation and job satisfaction, it is logical to assume that by analogy it can also be applied to the field of professional orientation, because attractiveness of the goal and expectation that it will come true are congruent with certain attitudes and values, so that according to this model one can also view the choice of faculty by the high school graduates as an instrumental goal which has positive valence and from which is expected to facilitate achievement of other important goals or life values.

Finally, as one of the important bases for this study are also some relevant socio-psychological studies related to value-based expectations of young people that were carried out in Serbia. In this regard, significant are studies about relationship between values and students' expectations from future profession, which were performed in our country by Havelka (1994). The author first conducted study on students in the final grade of primary schools in Serbia (1989), and later he repeated the study on students in the final grade of high school (1994). Exactly in the context of those studies, as a key concept, the *value-based expectations* are used. In all the studies he selected 12 values and in connection to them he asked the direct question: "*How much, for you personally, are significant the following expectations in relation to your future profession?*" offering at the same responses in the form of short formulations in which he operationally expressed certain value. With each statement he offered a five-point scale for evaluating importance of expectations from their future profession. Actual profession which the respondent would choose was not recorded so that the goal was not to look for eventual differences in expectations from different professions. The main goal was of general descriptive nature and it was achieved: it indeed showed that students of both age have

certain value-based expectations from their future professions. Some of those expectations are dominant, which means that most of the students relate them to their professions – for example, possibility of cooperation and good prospects for personal development.

In addition to the above mentioned study in our country several more studies were carried out by Kuzmanović and Petrović (2007, 2010, 2013), that is, Petrović and Kuzmanović (2010, 2012), which studied relation between preference of certain goals and attitudes towards political parties. For the topic that we deal with here, those studies are relevant as theoretical and methodological analogies and not as comparable results.

Choice of prospective profession viewed through choice of faculty that one will study, may be understood as manifestation of values and positive attitudes towards certain occupations and professions. In one study Petrović and Kuzmanović found that students of different faculties, study groups and orientations differ in the level of acceptance of certain personal and social goals (2013), but the question of whether the differences originated before enrolling the faculties or were influenced by the faculty studies, remained open. In any case, this study is also encouragement for seriously raising the question of importance of values as a factor in choosing faculty and future career.

1.1 Study problems and objectives

The main problem in this study refers to the role of values and value-based expectations among the high school graduates which they have when choosing the type of studies, and thus their future profession. More particularly, the goal is to determine whether profession acquired by studying at the planned faculty or college, is related to expectation that in such way one can achieve certain significant personal and social values. With regard to the above, five main study questions related to the main research goals were raised:

1. Which personal and social values do the high school graduates prefer to choose?
2. Is there a significant relationship between level of acceptance of certain goals and level of expectations that through the chosen faculty and future profession the goals may be achieved?
3. Is there a relationship between desire to study at the chosen faculty and level of expectations that through profession acquired by studying at the particular faculty, the goals may be realized?
4. Are the chosen faculty and profession acquired through it attributed greater possibility of achieving personal goals as compared to social goals?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Variables and instruments:

The central term in our study is: *personal and social goals,* so that it is necessary to say something in more detail on its meaning within this context. When it comes to goals as values, they may relate to very concrete objects, conditions and situations, as well as relatively general classes of objects and situations, including highly abstract categories. General and abstract goals are treated as value with a reason, regardless the fact that there remains disputable question whether all values can be understood as goals. Some distinguished researchers of values (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990, 1987; Inglehart, 1977), through general and shortly named goals studied values of individuals and groups, although they did not use the term goal as the key term.

When studying values as goals, researches mostly do not attach importance to differentiation and separation of individual life goals (personal goals in the narrow sense) from social goals that concern society as a whole (such as - for example, social justice, democracy, patriotism). However, our researchers Kuzmanović and Petrović (2007) consider that those two categories of goals should be separated and level of acceptance of each of them should be individually studied.

Starting from an idea that personal goals are based upon personal needs and interests, or on their combinations and systems, Kuzmanović and Petrović, on the basis of their research experience, established the list of 18 personal goals (LLC-18) which shortest names are: reputation, friends, power, self-actualization, altruism, achievement, exciting life, subordination, security, conscientiousness, love, material standard, knowledge, pleasure (hedonism), social engagement, independence, popularity and healthy life. Contrary to that, social goals can also be based on needs and interests but relevant to wider circle of people, social groups and the entire community. Logically, articulation of the goals is influenced by various social factors, including those that are important in the current historical time for the particular society. The authors took into consideration various surveys of public opinion as well as their previous studies (Kuzmanović, 1990, 1995; Petrović, 1996) and compiled a list of 18 social goals (LDC-18): strong economy, good international relations, fight against crime and corruption, strengthening of the country defense forces, more humane relations in society, environmental goals, employment, social equality, state of law, preservation of tradition, joining the European Union, privatization, state and territorial integrity, democracy, living standard, development of science and culture, social rights and political system.

In this study, all the above specified personal and social goals are operationalized through short and concise statements, for example - *social rights*, through the statement: "*That the state provides free education, health and social care*", or personal goal - *reputation*, through the sentence: "*That other people respect me, that I enjoy good reputation among them.*" Since the value-based goals are mainly accepted, only on different levels (due to which we talk about preferences), with each statement the following five answer modalities are offered: "*it is little important*", "*it is moderately important*", "*it is rather important*", "*it is very important*" and "*it is extremely important*". Answers were transposed into numbers during data processing, so that the evaluation scale was obtained ranging from 1 to 5, which enabled that in statistical analysis some comparisons could be performed through average values and relation through correlation coefficients.

Expectations of the high school graduates in relation to their future profession were also studied through the five answer modalities scale with following meanings: "none", "low", "medium", "quite" and "very much". Those answers were also transformed into five-level numerical scale.

The questionnaire, of course, included the question about which faculty or college a respondent intended to enroll as well as level of desire (five-level scale) to do the profession which the chosen faculty or college enabled him/her. The questionnaire also included common questions about demographic and social characteristics of respondents: gender, the high school major course, average grades, assessment of the family material situation, father's and mother's education, as well as information if any of the family members lost his/her job in the past five years. Those features were included assuming that they could have the function of intervening variables to relationship between importance of goals and expectations that they could be achieved through the chosen faculty.

2.2 Respondent sample and study procedure

The study included 497 students in their final year of high school (high school graduates) in Belgrade and several other cities in Serbia (Niš, Čačak, Loznica), so that it could be considered that the sample is representative for the high school students in Serbia since high schools, as school institutions, do not differ significantly regarding the students structure and schooling conditions. The sample structure per high schools, orientation and gender is shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Sample structure per cities

High school	F	%
Belgrade high schools	310	62.3
Čačak high school	42	8.5
Niš high school	80	16.1
Loznica high school	65	13.1
Total	497	100.0

Table 2: Sample structure per majors

Chosen major course	F	%
Sciences	203	40.8
Humanities	241	48.5
General	53	10.7
Total	497	100.0

Table 3: Sample structure per gender

Gender	F	%
Female	311	62.6
Male	186	37.4
Total	497	100.0

The study was conducted at the end of the school year with graduates of the above high schools in school conditions (in the classrooms), which we can take as an advantage for this type of study related to professional orientation of young people, because the high school graduates at the end of final year already had clearly established attitudes and preference towards which faculty they will enroll. The group testing technique per grades was applied by researchers and school psychologist, with adequate explanation and positive motivation of students for participation in the study. During the study, there was no resistance and irregularities that could influence the study results.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Level of acceptance (preference) of personal and social goals
The first question raised in our study was related to preference of personal and social goals, which were examined through two separate lists. Table 4 shows preference of personal goals which are listed according to average level of acceptance so that their order also represents a ranking list of importance given to them by respondents.

Table 4: Level of acceptance of personal goals

Personal goals	AS	SD	Personal goals	AS	SD
Friends	4.49	0.82	Altruism	3.77	1.02
Love	4.36	0.89	Respect	3.57	1.02
Independence	4.43	0.82	Achievement	3.47	1.07
Self-Actualization Actualization	4.34	0.81	Healthy Life	3.45	1.25
Material Standard	4.17	0.93	Conscientiousness	3.38	1.25
Knowledge	4.09	0.86	Social Engagement	3.26	1.04
Exciting Life	4.00	0.98	Social Power	2.62	1.23
Security	3.95	1.00	Subordination	2.05	1.05
Pleasure (Hedonism)	3.78	1.03	Popularity	2.04	1.19

According to mean value of acceptance, it can be said that the high school graduates accept majority of personal goals to a large extent, where they specially point out: friendship, romantic relationships (love), independence and autonomy, self-actualization, material standard, knowledge and exciting life. Opposite to that, from the same table one can see that the least preferred personal goals are those related to popularity, obedience, subordination and social power and engagement. It seems that personal goals of the high school graduates do not coincide with certain concepts present in recent times according to which young people are expected to be oriented to interest, prestige, competitiveness, success, social promotion and reputation (Kuzmanović, Petrović, 2013; Joksimović, 1999), but according to choice of personal goals they more correspond to a typical profile of adolescents known from earlier studies (Erikson, 1976; Vranješević, 2001). It is obvious that goals that are based more on emotional and intellectual needs are more dominant, which fits into the broader picture of a typical adolescent, but also with emphasizing material needs related to personal and family standard, which can be attributed to impact of the current socio-economic crisis in our society.

Table 5: Level of acceptance of social goals

Social goals	AS	SD	Social goals	AS	SD
Social Rights	4.43	0.87	Social Equality	3.66	1.16
Employment	4.24	0.99	Good International	3.59	1.16
Development of Science And Culture	4.24	0.93	State and Territorial	3.57	1.17
Living Standard	4.20	0.88	Democracy	3.42	1.18
More Humane Relations	4.06	1.02	Strong Economy	3.27	1.31
Environmental Goals	3.97	1.04	Strengthening of Defense	3.14	1.22
The State of Law	3.86	1.06	One-Party System	2.54	1.29

Fight Against Crime and Corruption	3.83	1.21	Privatization	2.46	1.11
Preservation of Tradition	3.81	1.14	Joining the EU	2.17	1.14

When it comes to social goals, the high school graduates prefer those that might be associated with social values, such as: social rights, education, science, job, providing better standards and more humane relations among people, which can be interpreted as a sign of their humanity, democracity and maturity. At the same time, it corresponds to the general picture of young people who aspire to equality, justice, economically and socially stable social environment. Such choice of social goals does not entirely fit into currently prevailing social and especially political expectations and values that are related to market and liberal economy, since in the first plan one puts social and democratic values such as social justice, access to education, job security and satisfactory material standard. Opposite to general expectations and beliefs that young people are more committed to international integration, EU and market economy, according to this study those are the least acceptable goals among our high school graduates. Reason for that should be probably traced in the fact that consequences of transition and privatization in our country, as well as conditions that EU puts before Serbia in the association process, left negative image in the minds of young people so that such goals are experienced as less acceptable compared to other social goals. In addition to this we should add their low valuation of one-party political system as a social goal or value could demonstrate that young people do not accept one ideological doctrine, dogmatism and authoritarianism. In general, according to preferences of social values, it could be said that young people are oriented towards democratic and social values but with a certain national connotation (due to low valuation of accession to EU as the social goal). That suggests that young people are open to humane and democratic values but that they relate political and social goals more to national frameworks in which they probably see more space for expressing personal needs and goals but also general social values such as humanism, justice, freedom and independence.

B. Relation between importance of goals and expectations that the goals may be achieved through the chosen faculty and future profession
Since on the sample as a whole it was found that respondents accepted in greater extent personal compared to social goals, it is justified to ask question: can importance of personal goals be related to the level of expectations that those goals may be achieved through the chosen faculty. In other words, the question is whether there is correlation between level of importance of the goal and level of expectations that through the preferred faculty and future profession that goal may be achieved.

Table 6: Correlations of importance of personal goals and expectations
that they may be achieved

Goals	r	Goals	r	Goals	r
Reputation	.477**	Exciting life	.371**	Knowledge	.471**
Friends	.459**	Subordination	.545**	Hedonism	.515**
Social power	.567**	Security	.416**	Social Engagement	.513**
Self-actualization	.407**	Conscientiousness	.581**	Independence	.457**
Altruism	.514**	Love	.443**	Popularity	.634**
Achievement	.503**	Material Standard	.486**	Healthy life	.616**

At Table 6 it can be seen that expected correlations regularly appear and that they are rather high. Most individual correlations move above 0.40 and some even above 0.60, which shows that there is significant correlation between level of acceptance of majority of personal goals and expectations that through the chosen profession those goals may be achieved. It may seem unusual, but the highest level of correlation is between evaluation of importance of *popularity* and level of expectation that through the chosen faculty and desired profession that goal may be realized (0, 63). We have seen that popularity is among the lowest-evaluated goals and that, as a whole, the high school graduates believe that their preferred profession contributes less to achievement of popularity. The question then arises - How do we explain this new result? There is no doubt that majority of respondents do not especially appreciate popularity as personal value, but believes that the chosen faculty and desired profession can contribute to achieving that goal, so that certain co-variation in evaluations of those two variables exists. That means that the respondents believe that faculty contributes to personal popularity, but that it is not particularly significant goal to which they aspire, because they have other more important goals to which they aspire. However, in general, the rule is: the more certain goal is important for the high school graduates, the more they expect that it may be achieved through the preferred profession and vice versa.

To some extent, only two personal goals– popularity and exciting life - are exceptions to that rule. *Popularity* is not particularly valid goal, but faculty contributes significantly to achieving it, while *exciting life* is valid personal goal, but faculty does not contribute much to it. That is why there was obtained the smallest correlation between importance of the goal *exciting life* and expectations that through the chosen faculty and future profession that goal may be achieved (R = 0, 37), which indicates that this is an important goal for the high school graduates, but that it is not followed by the same high expectation that the chosen faculty and future profession will contribute to it.

Significant correlation between level of desirability of the goal and expectation that future profession will enable achievement of those goals mainly applies to

personal, life goals, while in social goals correlations are generally low, so that we do not show them separately.

C. Relation between level of desire to do the preferred profession and expectation that through that profession personal goals may be achieved

First are shown individual correlations between level of desire to do the preferred profession which is provided by the chosen faculty, and expectations that through that profession certain goals may be achieved, and then using the regression analysis there was established relation between all goals and desire to do the preferred profession.

Table 7: Correlations between desired profession and expectations of achieving the goals

Individual correlations					
Reputation	.181**	Exciting life	.097*	Knowledge	.232**
Friends	.100*	Subordination	-.068	Hedonism	.129**
Social power	.059	Security	.094*	Social engagement	.128**
Self-actualization	.350**	Conscientiousness	.162**	Independence	.160**
Altruism	.102*	Love	.071	Popularity	.113*
Achievement	.178**	Material Standard	.113*	Healthy Life	.074

Table 8: Regression – personal goals as predictors of desired profession

R	R²	Corrected R²	Std. error of the estimate
.414a	.171	.137	.87560

In total, correlation regression analysis (Table 9) shows that there is correlation (R= 0.41), between level of desire of the high school graduates to do certain profession and expectations that through that profession certain goals may be achieved, but explanation level of variance of criterion variable is relatively low. When one observes beta coefficients, one can notice that the largest contribution to that relation is given by correlations which are related to the goals - self-actualization (to demonstrate one's abilities and realize opportunities), and conscientiousness (to live life conscientiously and peacefully). Probably the main reason for relatively low overall correlation is that level of desire to do the preferred profession is insufficiently variable, because all respondents stated that they choose certain occupation (faculty) which they wish to deal with more than with others. However, when one looks at ordinary linear correlations per individual items (Table 7) one can notice that all individual correlations are significant except for the goals which are related to social power, obedience, love and healthy life. It is obvious that the respondents believe that those goals, compared to others, can be achieved less through the preferred profession, while desire to do the

chosen profession is significantly associated with expectation that it will contribute to achieving most of the other personal goals. That once again confirms our initial assumption that value-based goals and expectations are related to choice of faculty and future profession.

D. Differences in evaluation of possibilities to achieve personal and social goals

Based on comparison of total average scores for two lists of goals (Table 9), we can conclude that respondents believe more that the chosen profession will enable realization of their personal goals compared to social goals (t = -24.422, sig 0.000). This is supported by correlations between desired personal goals and possibilities to achieve those goals, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Possibilities to achieve goals

Goals - values	AS	SD
Personal goals	3.64	.54
Social goals	2.73	.89

According to importance of personal goals for everyday life and need of young people to more quickly and more directly meet their needs, it is not difficult to comprehend and explain why the preferred profession is more related to achievement of personal, life goals, than to achieving social goals. Probably that the high school graduates when choosing the faculty and professional orientation are more governed by personal, life goals (values) than by social goals, expecting that those goals more depend on themselves and their future employment position than it is the case with broader social goals that depend on general social circumstances on which the respondents have less influence.

4. Conclusions

The results of this study in total show that value-based expectations of the high school graduates are important factor of choosing the faculty or college, that is, that they are important factor of choosing the desired future profession which they want to acquire through the chosen faculty. It was found that at the list of 18 personal goals, for 15 of those goals the high school graduates believed significantly more that they could be achieved through the chosen faculty and the desired future profession.

Importance of the value-based expectations from the desired profession is also confirmed by finding that there are rather high positive correlations (around 0, 50, and even 0, 60) between level of importance of personal goals and expectations that the

goals can be achieved through the chosen faculty and profession. Generally viewed, the following regularity is valid – the more certain life goal is valid for the high school graduates, the more they believe that it can be achieved through the desired profession.

The results also show that there are significant, although low correlations between value-based expectations in relation to certain goals (14 in total) and level of the desire to do the preferred profession. Regression analysis shows that multiple correlation is statistically significant but is not very high (R = 0, 41). Reason for low correlation may be in a fact that level of desirability has limited range of variation, due to the fact that certain professional orientation involves critical level of desirability.

It was found that there was significant difference in regard to expectations that through desired profession one can achieve personal and social goals, in favor of personal goals. By nature of things, in choice of profession, young people are more governed by personal, life goals (values) than by social goals. Personal goals are more founded on certain basic needs or combinations of needs that an individual wants to meet through selection of the faculty and future profession while paying less attention to importance of general social needs and goals.

Viewed on the whole, the obtained findings show the importance of values and value-based expectations for choice of the faculty and profession that is acquired by it, where we believe that it is justified in future studies to examine separately personal and social values, as they have different significance for choices and decisions that individuals make in terms of career or in terms of other life choices.

Acknowledgnement

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