Study Preferences in Higher Education

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Abstract: It is a well-known fact that in modern societies educational systems are inseparably tied to the labour market. Individuals invest in their own economic potential through education and training; therefore, they increase their labour market value and their future earnings, according to human capital theory. The primary objective of this paper was to examine the decisions made by young people studying in Hungary on continuing their education and selecting the appropriate institution and degree programme, as well as their expectations for their degree. The examination was conducted by means of a questionnaire in seven Hungarian higher education institutions. The findings revealed that students' decisions on going on to higher education are largely influenced by the prospect of a better job in the future, as well as the likelihood of career and financial success.

Keywords: youth; higher education; labour market; employability; decisions; expectations

1 Introduction

Personal decisions on education are influenced by a variety of factors that can be, on the one hand, objective and not necessarily based on rational considerations, on the other hand. Future labour market opportunities, position in the social hierarchy, direct monetary expenditure and anticipated gains are considered when making objective decisions; for the latter, the importance of social environment and culture is taken into account [1].

It is important for young people to make the right job decisions in today's globalized world. They will have a better chance of coping with the changing labour market demands if they continue their education and obtain professional qualification. Choosing a profession is a lengthy and complex phase that is affected by a variety of factors [2]. The first stage involves secondary school selection in which age-related considerations such as the immediate environment, family and friends play a crucial role. However, it is the school that plays the crucial role in preparation. Ritoókné emphasizes [3] the value of experiential content, pointing out the basic distinction between being able to do something well and doing it for enjoyment, even though it is not necessary. This desire for experience differs from person to person and from profession to career, but it can be traced back especially well in the case of those who have entered their career through family or other compulsions rather than their own determination. In the literature it is Lange, who emphasises the importance of a rational judgment situation, which means that a person's professional experience is extensive, i.e., they have gained considerable theoretical and experiential knowledge [4]. It is also stressed that the autonomous personality is capable of self-reliance and accountability. They are characterized by strong self-confidence, process the information obtained and take into account the opinions of others, but make decision based on their own preferences.

Galasi measured labour market success solely in terms of earnings [5]. Hetesi and Kürtösi identified many other criteria as requirements for success, including finding a job, having a position that is ideal for the qualification, a short job search period, and a satisfactory wage [6].

The paper aims to address the question of what factors affect enrolment in higher education based on all of this. To answer this question, the authors apply an empirical approach based on the international literature.

2 Theoretical Overview

Motivational theories explain what influences a person's behaviour in different situations. Hofmesiter-Tóth considered the desire to learn to be a secondary need [7]. During their studies, people learn a career and earn a degree, which is a basic prerequisite for jobs and hence one of the requirements for establishing security [8].

Becker and Hecken, stated while examining secondary school students that stakeholders consider the scale of investment in education before deciding on further education, i.e., they aim to estimate how the cost/benefit ratio evolves in this situation [9]. A 2016 study confirmed the correlation between the labour market and an individual's interest in learning, finding that students' higher

education is driven by the acquisition of a wider range of new skills, knowledge and abilities [10]. Furthermore, they also discover that it helps them advance in their careers. The decision making skill model can also be used to define continuing education as a buying decision. According to Törőcsik [11], each sub-decision shows a change toward the child or parent's supremacy, as well as the presence of shared decisions on certain issues. The choice of the study programme and the admission strategy are dominated by the prospective student's opinion while the parent is competent in financial matters. Thus, parents leave room for individual ambitions and professional interests, but since they finance the studies, they have the final say on financial issues. Young people's choices are also largely determined by the opinions and values of their peers, and financial matters depend on the financial situation of the family. Joint decisions are most common in deciding on the settlement and housing. The family's financial status determines how far the student can go for higher education, but individual preferences are also allowed, and the family considers the best options together. The importance of a degree and potential job prospects are heavily influenced by parents' views [11].

Several studies have examined the factors that most influence students' decisions to study at one institution or another. These studies list various factors influencing the decision, such as the quality of the institutions and their social acceptance [12] [13] [14], the cost of education and tuition [15] [16], labour market opportunities [17], and the impacts of the family, friends and academic life [18]. The process of selecting an institution is a complex decision on the part of the student [19]. This choice can also affect a student’s future career, place of residence, and personal satisfaction [20]. Smith and Cavusgil, also confirm this statement, suggesting that this type of decision is in many cases unique in an individual’s life, which incurs different financial and psychological costs [21]. According to Chen [22], students select their prospective university based on a three-step process: (1) the student's personality (socio-economic background, personality traits, personal preferences, learning abilities, relational capital, and creative capital); (2) other decision makers (family members, friends, relatives, teachers, and employers); (3) external push-pull factors (personal driving forces, institutional characteristics). In their research, Galotti and Mark [23] found that students with better abilities considered significantly more aspects and applied to more institutions than their peers with more modest abilities.

Institutional selection criteria can be various. On the one hand, they can be interpreted in terms of student considerations, and on the other hand, in terms of institutional factors. Social and economic status, the educational attainment of the parents, budget, financial assistance, career, the opinion of parents, peers, and teachers are all variables that affect students. On the institutional level, the geographical situation, size, type of training, infrastructure, reputation, ranking and the quality of education are all factors to consider [24]. Niu and Tienda [25], confirm in their study that students consider different college/university

characteristics when choosing an institution. Drewes and Michael [26], draw attention to the importance of the geographical distance between the institution of higher education and the place of residence. Their survey of Canadian high school students showed that respondents preferred institutions close to home when choosing a university. Heine [27], in a study of student preferences, found that the reputation of the university, its facilities, but also the range of leisure activities and the atmosphere on campus can influence students' choices.

According to Kuráth and Sipos, in selecting a university, financial return factors, such as comparing education and living expenses to potential "returns," are becoming increasingly relevant. The attractiveness of the city of the educational institution is a competitive advantage: the site of the educational institution, the distance of the place of training from the student's place of residence and the labour market opportunities of the region. Student choice is influenced by which centre offers greater opportunities for placement and long-term employment. In other words, the economic effect appears strongly, which also influences the push or pull potential of a settlement or institution [28].

According to Frankowska et al. [29], the potential career prospects associated with the selected field of study play an important role in the student's decision. This is due to the fact that finishing a study programme helps them earn money after graduation, improve their social status, and achieve their goals. In their study, Heine and Willich [30] call attention to the risks of selecting a university and a study programme. Prospective higher education students are often underinformed about study programmes and prospects, as well as uncertain about their personal abilities, ambitions, and desires, according to their findings. As a result, these considerations can distort decisions on continuing education. In order to prevent this risk, it is becoming increasingly important to educate and prepare students, i.e., carry out career counselling activities.

In the mid-1990s, Powell [31], explains the four pillars of career planning. The first pillar is a person's self-esteem. The point is that the person is looking for the answer to the question, "Who am I?" (E.g., what am I capable of, what are my skills, abilities, what am I interested in, etc.)? The second pillar is to look for career opportunities. At this point the person reviews the opportunities offered by the environment (e.g., labour market, occupations, prospects, salaries, etc.). The third pillar of career planning is defining goals, that is, clarifying how you will select (e.g., clarifying goals, objectives in life, analysing career advantages, disadvantages, etc.). Finally, the fourth pillar is the action itself (learning, placement), which interacts closely with the individual's life goals, willingness to compromise, existing career goals, and their analysis. The driving force behind all this is nothing but decision. In Powell's theorem, awareness can be traced down in all four pillars.

According to KSH [32], 287.5 thousand students continued their studies in 62 higher education institutions in Hungary in the academic year 2020/21. Of these,

one in five were enrolled in economics and 13% in engineering. The number of foreign students has doubled in the last ten years.

Success on the job market and employability are inextricably linked to career planning. Watts [33], divided employability into three groups based on the role of time: immediate employment, immediate employability, and sustainable employability. He uses the term "immediate employment" to describe the percentage of people who are hired six months after graduation. Immediate employability examines whether a graduate student has the qualifications and expertise necessary for a graduate job without any further learning right after graduation. Sustainable employability explains that it is critical not only to get a first graduate job, but also to remain continuously employed, which necessitates continuous renewal. Professional opinions are divided on the attitude to work of the new generation entering the labour market: skillful, practical, have divided attention, highly materialistic, impatient. At the same time, they are overconfident and self-assured. They also have high expectations of their employer, striving for immediate success and results with the least possible investment of energy [34]. They clearly want to assert the "I am basically entitled to it" feeling in the labour market. A study by Juhász and Terjék [35] of Generation Y found that women in their sample appear to be more career-oriented than their male colleagues. Their impatience manifests itself in the fact that if their unrealistic ideas are not realised in a short period of time, they will leave the workplace without thinking and try to succeed elsewhere. Spending 3-4 years in a job is surprising. One in four young people are preparing to leave their jobs within a year [36]. Kiss [37], conducted an analysis of the data of the Graduate Career Tracking System, in which, examining the factors that influence the time of employment of recent graduates, it was concluded that good academic results and good language skills significantly improve the job search process.

3 Method of Research

Between 2019 and 2020, the authors surveyed students in Hungarian higher education on what aspects affected their decision to continue their studies, select their university and also how they see time spent in higher education contributes to their future labour market jobs, and whether or not their choice of profession was a well-established and appropriate decision. The following institutions participated in the research: University of Debrecen, University of Miskolc, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Szent István University, University of Szeged, University of Pécs, University of Győr.

The main objective of the examinations was to involve students in the research in as wide a geographical and professional distribution as possible. The first stage of the survey focused on students and then involved employers to assess the extent to which they believe graduates meet labour market needs.

This paper presents some results of the questionnaire survey with students only.

Participants were asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire, which was available online or on paper. Inquiries were made in person, on the internet, by email, and via social media.

When respondents completed the pilot questionnaire, all of the questions were correctly understood. Just one open question was included in the questionnaire, which was mostly made up of closed questions. The questions were typically based on nominal and metric variables, the latter on a 5-point Likert scale. The number of questionnaires that could be evaluated was 328. The questions of the questionnaire were divided into 4 areas as presented in Table 1.

Table 1
The structure of the questionnaire

1st group of questions	**2nd group of questions**	**3rd group of questions**	**4th group of questions**
General data	Career choice attitude to learning	Training	Employment and labour market knowledgeability
Name of the higher education institution, its geographical location where they study Gender, age and place of residence of the respondents Parents' educational attainment	Factors determining further education Factors determining the choice of a study programme Factors determining the choice of institution Expectations regarding the degree	Satisfaction with the quality of training Sources of additional information needed for further education	Employment objectives, expectations and realities Factors for a successful employment Knowledge of domestic labour market trends

The correlations that result from the responses to Question Group One, Two, and Four will be the subject of this article. The aim of the research is to look at students' motivations in relation to their desire to pursue their studies and the factors that influence their decision-making.

The research question is whether the students' decision to continue their studies at tertiary level is influenced by their desire to succeed in the labour market. This is tested along two hypotheses: (1) In further education, rational decision-making is crucial, and is mostly justified by the labour market situation and professional interests, but the family and friends also play a role. (2) As graduates, students expect primarily labour market and professional success.

The following statistical methods were used to test the hypotheses: single- and multivariate analyses, such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, factor analysis, ANOVA and SEM modelling. The programmes used for the evaluation

were SPSS Statistics 27 and SPSS AMOS 27. Since the questionnaire basically contained scale and categorical variables, the authors applied the methodological analyses mentioned above.

4 Results and Discussion

The examination includes an analysis of the responses of 328 individuals. The sample specification is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Specification of the sample

	Total
Gender	34.1%Male 65.9% Female
Age	Average age: 23.16 years The youngest is 18, the oldest is 50.
Residence	41.4% Budapest 20.1% County seat 25% City, town 13.4% Village
Study programme	37.8% Arts 36.2% Business 18.4% Technical 4.6% Healthcare 3.1% Other

During the sample specification, the researchers inquired about the parents' educational attachment. Just 30.8 percent of the fathers had a secondary school certificate, while 45.8% had a college or university diploma. The proportions were higher among mothers: 49.7% had completed tertiary education and 38.8% a secondary school.

The above data was required to see to what extent parents' educational achievement affected their children's decision to continue their education. In addition, participants in the research were asked to identify additional motivating factors that influenced their decision to go on to higher education. Respondents had to decide on statements, on a five-point Likert scale, whether the given factor played a decisive role in this question completely (Value 5) or not at all (Value 1). Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the answers to this question.

Table 3
Factors motivating participation in higher education (mean, standard deviation)

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid		
My friends encouraged me.	328	2.53	1.347
My parents encouraged me.	328	3.92	2.115
My teachers encouraged me.	328	2.88	1.376
I was attracted by student life.	328	3.02	1.428
I could not find a job after school.	326	1.62	1.107
I did not feel like working.	328	1.93	1.346
I like studying.	328	3.17	1.244
I would like a degree.	327	4.33	1.046
I believe that I can find a job more easily with a degree.	328	4.14	1.083
I believe that I will have a higher salary with a degree.	328	4.16	0.996

The table shows that earning a degree is the primary aim for the respondents. However, there are financial and labour market / career building factors for a student to go on to higher education. Parents are a significant factor of the impacts of the immediate environment. The standard deviation value was very high, i.e., in this respect it cannot be said that the participants in the sample had a unanimous opinion. Higher salary, degree, and career reasons had the smallest standard deviation values indicating that respondents' opinions on these topics are nearly identical. It is interesting to note that the desire to learn (I like studying) and to learn new things was hardly motivating for the respondents. The question arises as to how much they can strive for good learning outcomes in the absence of this.

The ANOVA method allowed us to explore how parental education influences the above reasons. While analysing the educational attainment of fathers, it was found that a significant difference was found for the statement "I can find a job more easily with a degree" (F: 3.027 sig.: .030 $p<0.05$) and for the statement "I will have a higher salary with a degree" (F:5.48 sig.: .001 $p<0.05$). These findings were more strongly supported by students whose father had a degree than those whose father did not have tertiary education. The same result was found for mothers. When examining the statements regarding easier employment (F: 3.792 sig.: .011 $p<0.05$) and higher salary (F: 5.655 sig.: .001 $p<0.05$), a significant difference was confirmed according to the mother's educational attainment. In this case, too, the support for the statement was strongest for students whose mothers had a higher education degree. It is more likely that these students have already had an example to prove that those who have a degree can find employment more easily, for a higher salary, and in a better position than those who do not. The first hypothesis of the research was only partially confirmed.

For further investigation, the authors grouped the variables influencing participation in tertiary education into factors. Two variables: 'My parents encouraged me' and 'I was attracted by student life' were not suitable for factor construction. KMO and Barlett's test results were as follows. Chi-squared: 558.176 Sig: .001. Varimax rotation was used to construct the factors and the explained proportion was 64.65%. The factors, their names, components and Cronbach Alpha values are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Motivating factors for choosing higher education (p=0.05)

	Component		
	Career and financial considerations	No option	Emotional reasons
(KM1) I believe that I can find a job more easily with a degree.	0.901		
(KM2) I believe that I will have a higher salary with a degree.	0.839		
(KM3) I would like a degree.	0.768		
Cronbach Alpha	0.800		
(NO1) I did not feel like working.		0.802	
(NO2) I could not find a job after school.		0.782	
Cronbach Alpha		0.562	
(EM1) My parents encouraged me.			0.773
(EM2) My friends encouraged me.			0.673
(EM3) I like studying.			0.583
Cronbach Alpha			0.463

Three variables were identified by the authors. The first explains the career and financial factors (its components are labelled CF), the second explains the lack of option (labelled NO), and the third explains the emotional reasons for the choice (labelled E) (marked component: EM). The labels are used in the SEM model formation.

Based on the data, it seemed to prove that basically graduation, future financial appreciation, and labour market and career opportunities motivated students to continue their studies. The question arises as to what aspirations a person may have by obtaining a degree; and if these aspirations are in line with the reasons for going on to higher education. Respondents were also asked to rate their aspirations for a degree on a Likert scale of five, depending on the specificity of the statement. A score of five indicated completely characteristic, while a score of one indicated not characteristic at all. The results (mean and standard deviation) of the expectation of a degree are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Expectations of a degree (mean, standard deviation)

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid		
Higher salary	327	4.09	1.068
Good job	327	4.28	0.884
Professional recognition	327	4.16	0.931
Managerial position	327	3.37	1.211
Interesting and responsible job, position	327	3.98	0.984
Good expertise in several areas	327	3.91	0.997
Protection against unemployment	327	3.80	1.224
Social recognition	327	3.55	1.150
Self-fulfilment	326	3.97	1.099
Family recognition	327	3.62	1.254
Job opportunity abroad	326	3.05	1.465

Students expect a good job opportunity, professional and financial appreciation from the degree. The beneficial effects of the degree on the labour market are also felt by the respondents, as expertise in several areas and protection against unemployment have also been highly appreciated. However, they do not think that obtaining a degree today would lead to greater social or family recognition. Nor did they think to be prevented from working abroad if they did not have a higher education degree. This is also supported by the data that when the respondents had to determine labour shortage, the occupations that required a secondary qualification were basically indicated: seamstress, carpenter, car mechanic, bricklayer, and only then were the occupations requiring a degree listed such as doctor, teacher, engineer, etc.

Collecting the variables into factors, it turned out that one variable was unsuitable for factor formation: self-fulfilment. The KMO and Barlett test results are as follows: KMO: .818 seems to be very good. Approx. Chi-square: 956.181, sig: .001. The factors were formed by varimax rotation, while the explained proportion was 61.485%. The factors, their names, components, and Cronbach Alpha values are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Factors of expectations of a degree (p=0.05)

Expectations	Component		
	Career	Financial security	Recognition by environment
Interesting and responsible job, position	0.800		
Professional recognition	0.746		
Good expertise in several areas	0.666		
Managerial position	0.517		
Cronbach Alpha	0.728		
Higher salary		0.837	
Good job		0.767	
Protection against unemployment		0.642	
Cronbach Alpha		0.710	
Family recognition			0.790
Job opportunity abroad			0.698
Social recognition			0.596
Cronbach Alpha			0.651

Based on the components the factors were named as Career, Financial security, Recognition by environment. Further research was directed at whether there were any ethnicity, age, or parental educational attachment differences in the given sample.

The ANOVA examination revealed that significant difference could only be explained when the career aspect was examined by gender (F: 6.868 sig.:.009 p0.05), and that professional career was more important for men as an expectation in this case than for women.

Analysing the parents' education by ANOVA method, significant difference could only be verified in the case of the fathers: examining the environmental assessment (F: 4.018 sig.: .008 $p<0.05$). If a student had a father with a lower level of education, the environmental respect that a degree can provide was more important to them than to students whose father had higher education.

The examinations by age confirmed that only in the case of career was there no significant correlation between age and the factor (Pearson Correlation:.110 sig.:.070 $p>.0.05$). Furthermore, the significant correlation was also proved by the fact that the younger a respondent, the more appreciated financial security by degree (Pearson Correlation: -.164 sig.:.006 $p<0.05$) and recognition by environment (Pearson Correlation: -.243 sig.:.001 $p<0.05$). The second hypothesis is to be accepted.

The questionnaire also asked respondents what factors they thought were necessary for a successful job. Listing a number of components, these were rated

by the students on a Likert scale of five, similar to the previous question. A score of five indicated completely and one indicated not at all, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Factors that support a successful job (mean, standard deviation)

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid		
A degree with good results	304	3.55	2.069
Good internship	304	4.05	0.934
Good connections	304	4.88	2.370
Good communication skills	304	4.48	0.744
Self-assurance	304	4.46	0.721
Adequate references	304	4.09	0.884
Language knowledge	304	4.30	0.941
Problem solving ability	304	4.20	0.855
Professional language knowledge	304	3.90	1.047

The students' opinion is thought-provoking: the qualification of the degree is now moved to the bottom of the priority list when it comes to job seeking. In employment respondents believe it is most important to know who has what relationship with whom and how they can assert themselves at an interview. These considerations take precedence over professional expertise. However, it is also evident from the viewpoints of the students that there was no consensus on the importance of a good degree, as the average was highest here.

The variables that induced a successful job were also grouped into factors by the researchers. The KMO and Barlett test: KMO: .745 is good. Approx. Chi-square: 444,357 sig: .001. The factors were formed by Varimax rotation and the proportion explained was 67.804%. The component values and the names of the factors are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Factors inducing a good job

Reasons	Component			
	Soft skills	Professional knowledge	Reasons of the student	Good connections
(SK1) Good communication skills	0.837			
(SK2) Self assurance	0.802			
(SK3) Problem solving ability	0.619			
Cronbach alpha	0.692			
(P1) Professional language knowledge		0.821		
(P2) Language knowledge		0.816		
(P3) Adequate references		0.541		

Cronbach alpha		0.665		
(ED1) A degree with good results			0.808	
(ED2) Good internship			0.753	
Cronbach alpha			0.313	
CON Good connections				0.988

The authors formed four factors: the first symbolizes soft skills (its components are marked SS), the second, professional knowledge (marked: P), the third the reason related to the student (marked: SR), and finally the importance of good connections (Label: CON). The labels are used in the SEM model formation.

SPSS AMOS 27 offered the opportunity to perform additional analyses. It was investigated whether any correlation could be justified between the reasons for good jobs and opting for further education.

Among the factors that induce the choice of tertiary education, the following were included in the analysis: career and financial reasons (components labelled CF), no other option (labelled NO), and emotional reasons (component labelled E). In the case of successful labour market placement, two factors were included in the model analysis, which are basically linked to higher education as they can be acquired and developed there: soft skills (components labelled SS) and professional knowledge (components labelled P). The other two factors were not considered in this relation because they depended less on the educational opportunity and more on the student and the environment.

The authors used the SEM model they developed to evaluate thought associations. The association between one or more exogenous (independent) variables and one or more endogenous (dependent) variables may be examined using SEM (Structural Equation Modelling). Endogenous variables influence exogenous variables both directly and indirectly. The objective of the CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) examination is to figure out how the examined and latent variables are related. The CFA should be used if the researcher already has knowledge of the latent variable structure.

The model of the factors and variables under study was created using SPSS AMOS 27 version. Five external models were constructed (measurement model) based on latent variables and indicators. The external models are composed of Career and financial reasons, No other option, Emotional reasons, Soft skills, Professional knowledge.

The Measurement model allows the exploration of the relationships between the indicators and the latent variables. The internal model (Structure model) allows the exploration of the relationships between the variables Career and financial reasons, No other options, Emotional reasons, i.e., the interrelationships between these variables. The back-and-forth arrows in Figure 1 represent the covariance or correlation between the variables, while the system of arrows depicts the influence of one variable on the other. The indicators were given letters that corresponded to

the letters in Tables 4 and 8. In the diagram, the error variables are represented by circles. These factors were not in the focus of the study but have an effect on the variables. The model is shown in Figure 1.

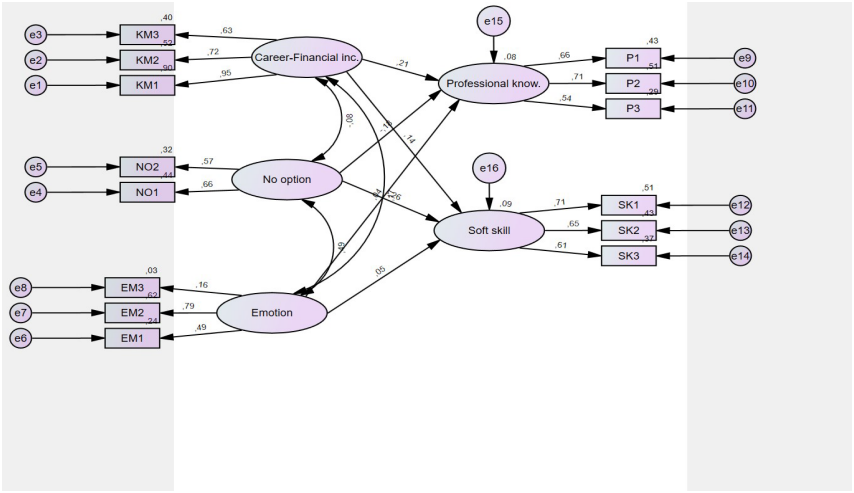

Figure 1

Relationships between the reasons for higher education and a successful job

KM= CF SK= SS

The following metrics should be used to assess the suitability of the model. The Chi-square was significant ((238) 220,782 df: 68 p: .00) in the first research metrics, confirming "absolute model fitness." However, this is insufficient to rule out the model's fit since the Chi-square significance on a sample size of 200 indicates a value of 0 more strongly. Other indicators need to be examined such as RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error Approximation) value: .085, which should typically be below 0.08, but this value is close to the limit. The third such indicator is the GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), which is acceptable for values above 0.9. For the present model, this value is .912, so it is adequate. In the context of Incremental Model Fit, four indices have been examined, AGFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, whose values above 0.9 are considered good. In the model, AGFI: .864, CFI: .836, NFI: .786, TLI: 780, these indices also have values close to the limit. In the case of Parsimonious Fit the value of Chi-squared/df is 3.376, which is good as it does not exceed the value limit of 5, so based on this, the model can be considered fit, as well.

The following findings are interesting when looking at the relationship between each element. Career and financial incentives have a favourable impact on professional knowledge, according to regression principles (.211). Students who entered higher education without any expectations continued to believe that developing soft skills was less beneficial to later success (-.262). Interestingly,

those who chose higher education on an emotional basis have not demonstrated in this regard that both soft skills and professional knowledge determine the way to success.

According to the model, a medium positive relationship value (.489) could be justified between "no other option" and emotional triggers, whereas there could be a relatively weak relationship between financial and career motives and emotional motivations proved by the model.

The fundamental hypothesis of the research, i.e., students' intention to go on to higher education is highly influenced by their ability to be successful in the labour market - has been justified in the light of the results.

According to the findings of this study, the responding students conclude that a degree has a value in the labour market because it opens up career prospects for young people and therefore, they expect outstanding professional and financial recognition from their studies. In recent decades, more and more research has emerged showing a strong link between education and average earnings [38] [39]. According to Pascarella and Terenzini [40], those who continue their education after secondary school are more likely to earn excellent salaries and a better career status than those who only have a secondary school certificate. In a scientific paper published in 1989, Murphy and Welch [41] examined the differences in incomes and discovered that one of the causes for the disparities was separate levels of education. This is also supported by the study published by Naguib et al. [42], according to which those with higher education earn on average better than those without tertiary education.

A number of research in international literature have emphasized the importance of family and friends in shaping learning decisions. Sellami [43] in his study highlighted the powerful influencing role of parents, stating that parents have a significant effect on their children's educational and career decisions. These findings are also echoed by Georgiou and Tourva [44], as well as Kobal Grum and Seničar [45]. However, it is important to note that the results obtained in the present study do not support the findings of these previous studies, as the students interviewed did not confirm a strong relationship between the desire to learn and the influence of parents and friends.

One of the most significant advantages of education is that it allows people to develop competences that can be valuable later in their careers [46] [47] [48]. Looking at different skills, the results showed that so-called soft skills are important for future professions [49]. But many studies show that relational capital is even more so. According to the respondents, having a network of connections can be extremely beneficial when looking for jobs after graduation. This result has been confirmed by several literature sources. According to a 2005 paper by Forret and Dougherty [50] there is a close relationship between relational capital and successful career building. In a 2000 study, Langford [51], concluded that an individual’s ability to make relationships is closely related to a successful

career. Furthermore, confident, determined action is also a key factor nowadays, so it can also play an important role in later career building, especially in areas where good aptitude is crucial [52]. Students interviewed in their study also considered self-confidence in career building as an important factor.

Conclusion

The objective of the present paper was to explore the motivations of university students in terms of their intention to continue their studies, as well as the factors that influence their decision-making. The findings support the attainment of favourable career opportunities, as well as personal and financial success.

The results of the study show that it is primarily obtaining a degree why graduates are motivated to participate in higher education, and that the possibility of a higher salary and finding employment ore easily with a higher education degree basically influence their decisions on whether to continue their studies in higher education after secondary school. The desire to learn (I like studying), to learn something new, hardly motivated the respondents. Parental influence is typically “only” indirect, and friends have little effect on further education, as well.

Students expect good job opportunities, as well as professional and financial recognition as a result of their degree. The latter two are more important the lower the father's education and the younger the individual interviewed. The beneficial effects of the degree on the labour market are highlighted by respondents; they expect applicable expertise and protection against unemployment.

As a result, it can be concluded that students assume that relationships and self-assurance are the key factors to finding a good job. Relatively stronger decision-relationships could be found among those whose main reason for continuing their education was a future career and livelihood, who were most likely to see professional knowledge as a guarantee of later success in finding a job.

Based on the above, the following solutions emerge:

- The transformation of pedagogical processes in institutions, with the aim of fostering the development of the child who selects the institution for employability.
- A stable, well-functioning economy, well-established ways connecting education and employment, a great variety of work experience opportunities, information resources, and a consultancy system are all important.

At the same time, given the dynamism of the labour market, students and all workers need to be prepared for a possible change of profession and be able to adapt to changes in the labour market.

A well-educated, trained, and confident society in the labour market could be created by improving and extending labour market knowledge, transforming people's mindsets and increasing their mobility, retraining, and the concept of "Lifelong Learning." In the future, the direction of the research could be to ask the

employers' side of the researchers which knowledge content should be included in the educational content and where the gaps are between the educational and labour market expectations.

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