

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE PUPILS FROM THE RURAL AREA, BASED ON GENDER DIFFERENCES

C. TULBURE¹ C. GAVRILĂ²

Abstract: *The study investigates the gender differences regarding the motivation of high-school pupils from the rural area to integrate in higher education. We have included in this study a sample of 159 high-school pupils from the rural area. The research method of investigation was the survey containing closed and semi-open questions. The results have revealed significant differences between girls and boys concerning some of the intrinsic motivational values. The conclusions of the study offer some openness to the theoreticians and practitioners working in higher education, who are concerned with the professional and educational counselling of high-school pupils coming from the rural area and their successful integration at the university level.*

Key words: *motivation, higher education, gender.*

1. Introduction

From the perspective of the successful integration in the Romanian higher education of the high-school graduates coming from the rural area, school motivation, by the two directions in which it manifests, intrinsic or extrinsic, is the one thing that influences their chances of success and channels their efforts towards attaining this desideratum. A number of studies performed in the United States and reported by the National High School Centre, have placed the boys as having 8% less chances to graduate high-school compared to girls; the disparity reaches even 14 % among boys and girls with African-American origins. Similar data show that girls have better chances to integrate in higher education, at the level of 2011, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, 74% of them were already integrated in higher education in comparison with 62.8% of the boys. These figures follow the ones that indicated, with the occasion of the 2007 census in the United States, that at the level of the year 2005, 56% of the B.A. students and 59 % of the higher studies graduates were women (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2015). The students' academic motivation and implicitly their success may be based on three conditions, which aim to

¹ Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Timișoara, tulburecristina@gmail.com

² Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Timișoara.

high expectations and an adequate process of instruction for all pupils, the creation of equal conditions for access to thorough studies and, last but not least, the provision of proper support for all pupils (Jerald, 2006). Although according to the data registered during the first centuries of university education, the percentage of highly educated boys was superior to that of girls, the majority being European white students, currently there can be noticed a feminine majority of 57%. Also, the data of a cross-sectional study elaborated by Cochran, Wang, Johnson and Crews outlined the fact that the professional success of adolescent boys was greater than that of girls (cf. Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2015). Rarița (2014), based on a questionnaire applied to high-school pupils, concludes that the majority of those who wish to continue their studies at university level is represented by girls.

Another study accomplished by Pricopie et al. (2011) has emphasized the fact that girls are more interested in attending a faculty than boys. As a consequence, 83,1% of them have declared that they are willing to attend a faculty, both in our country and abroad; meanwhile, pupils from the rural area have reported that they are less interested in attending the courses of a faculty, only 54.9 % of them wishing to continue their studies. The results of a research performed by David-Kacso et al. (2014) claim that the respondent's gender represents an important predictor regarding the educational aspirations of high-school pupils, girls differentiating themselves from this perspective more than boys. Within the same register, Johnson & Bouchard (as cited in Cliniciu, 2014), following their study, concluded that the girls' performances overpassed the boys', due to the fact that school and education in general are still very much based on verbalism. A lot of research concerning gender differences underlines the fact that adolescent girls tend to be more preoccupied with exploring professions and manifest stronger professional engagements than boys (Hirschi, 2012); as for the adaptability to career, girls manifested significantly higher initial levels as concerning their own career and in the same time regarding the curiosity referring to that (Negru-Subțirică et al., 2015).

2. The Objectives of Research

The study focuses on two main objectives:

- ❖ to identify the level of motivation in boys and girls attending the last years of high-school, regarding the integration in higher education;
- ❖ to observe the differences between girls and boys concerning the motivational aspects that can be found at the basis of their decision to attend a faculty.

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedure

During the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017, three high-schools from the rural area were involved in a cross-sectional study. At that moment, all pupils were registered in the 12th grade. The high-schools had three categories of studies: Sciences, Human Studies and Services-Economics. The aim of the research was explained to the pupils and the participation in the investigation was voluntary. The tool of research, a questionnaire of opinion, was presented to the pupils, together with the instructions for completion.

3.2. Participants

The target-group included 159 high-school pupils from the rural area, enlisted in the 12th grade at three high-schools from Timiș County. The pupils' ages ranged between 17 and 19 ($M = 17.46$; $SD = 0.58$). From the gender perspective, a relative balance was noticed. Thus, 47% of the pupils were girls ($N = 75$), and 53% were boys ($N = 84$). If we relate to the high-schools' fields of studies, 21% of the pupils attended Services-Economics courses ($N = 33$), 40% of them were enlisted in Sciences ($N = 64$) and 39 % of the pupils were attending Human Studies.

3.3. Measures

The method of research was the investigation based on a questionnaire. The tool of assessment was represented by a questionnaire of opinion, which included three categories of items: factual data (gender, age, grade, profile); closed questions regarding the options for higher education; semi-open questions concerning motivation, interests, sources of information and selection criteria for the universities and faculties the pupils wished to attend. Confidentiality was assured by the fact that all questionnaires were anonymous.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Results regarding the Degree of Motivation for Girls and Boys Concerning the Attendance of a Faculty

Table 1 shows the reasons for which girls choose to attend a faculty, as well as the hierarchy of those reasons in a descending order based on the means obtained.

Girls' motivation for choosing a faculty

Table 1

Reasons to choose a faculty	Mean	SD
Desire to be successful in life	4.12	1.0
Appreciation of the role of education	4.08	0.98
Pleasure to learn	3.92	1.09
An attractive job	3.78	1.26
Parents' influence	3.77	1.33
The chance to find a job	3.75	1.06
Desire to become a good specialist	3.74	1.17
Benefit of guidance	3.67	1.25
Entourage	3.44	1.18

By analysing Table 1, we find that the motivation to continue the studies is mainly intrinsic, and in top of the reasons there stand two important variables of intrinsic motivation: the desire to succeed in life ($M=4.12$) and the girls' strong appreciation of the role of education in one's personal and professional development ($M=4.08$). Also, on the third place in the 12th grade girls' hierarchy there is an intrinsic motivational variable, namely the pleasure to learn ($M=3.92$). There follow extrinsic motivational variables such as: the desire to find an attractive job ($M=3.78$) and the parents' influence ($M=3.77$), variables that have close scores, which means that in choosing their profession, girls put

great value on parents' advice and others' examples. Girls also give high scores to the desire to become a good specialist ($M=3.74$), aspect that completes the spectre of intrinsic motivational variables which stand at the basis of choosing a faculty. The lowest scores are assigned to entourage and guidance from friends and acquaintances, which draws attention to the fact that the girls belonging to the target group are not easily influenced as concerning their career decisions.

Table 2 presents, also in a descending order, the means obtained for the reasons invoked by boys when they consider continuing their studies.

Boys' motivation for choosing a faculty

Table 2

Reasons to choose a faculty	Mean	SD
Desire to be successful in life	4.21	0.89
An attractive job	3.93	1.14
Parents' influence	3.88	1.15
The chance to find a job	3.81	1.12
Benefit of guidance	3.77	1.25
Desire to become a good specialist	3.76	1.11
Pleasure to learn	3.65	1.29
Appreciation of the role of education	3.43	1.52
Entourage	3.36	1.25

The data in Table 2 indicates that the first reason is the same as in girls' case: the desire to succeed in life ($M = 4.21$). This aspect indicates the fact that no matter the reason, all adolescents in final high-school years wish to succeed in life and consider that the professional achievement depends decisively on graduating a faculty. In the boys' hierarchy, there follow four reasons from the sphere of extrinsic motivation: the desire to find an attractive job ($M = 3.93$); parents' influence ($M = 3.88$); the improvement of chances to find a better job ($M = 3.81$), but also the guidance received from people they know (acquaintances and friends etc.) ($M = 3.77$). It seems that boys claim that they choose a faculty rather to get a better paid job, a job which is attractive and has good perspectives, and also for the desire to become good specialists in a field of activity ($M = 3.76$). On the last places in the hierarchy of reasons we find the pleasure to learn ($M = 3.65$) and the appreciation of the role of education in the individual's development ($M = 3.43$). In other words, boys learn for their professional achievement and they choose a faculty for the same reason, rather than because they prefer to learn very much or appreciate the role of education.

4.2. The Results relating to Gender Differences, Concerning the Motivation to Integrate in Higher Education

In order to achieve the second objective, we performed an independent sample t-test, to check up the differences between girls' and boys' reasons lying at the basis of attending a faculty. The results of the test that identifies the significance of differences in means (t), as well as the values of the threshold of significance (p) are presented in Table 3.

Independent samples t-test (between group comparison; girls and boys) Table 3

Variable	Girls		Boys		t test	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Appreciation of the role of education	4.08	0.98	3.43	1.52	.65	P < .01

The most pregnant difference between girls and boys as concerning the motivation to continue their studies in higher education is observed next to an intrinsic variable: the appreciation of the role of education in the development of one's personality ($t = 0.65$; $p < .01$). This aspect draws attention upon the girls' degree of maturity, in that they appreciate more than boys the major role of education in personality development, even since adolescence. Girls choose to continue their studies on a superior level because they are aware of the differences in education between people, both at an intellectual level, and also at a professional and moral one. A second aspect by which girls differentiate from boys is the pleasure to learn, where they prove once again their consciousness and interest in learning. Unfortunately, although the difference is easy to notice, the value of t tests did not reach the threshold of significance, thus the result is statistically insignificant.

For all the other motivational variables investigated, the differences are not statistically significant, and this implies that at the end of high-school, the girls' and boys' motivational spectres are alike in terms of the option to continue their studies.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The theoretical and methodological step taken by this study has aimed at identifying the gender differences between the 12th grade pupils from the rural area, in relation to their motivation to continue to study in higher education. The results have shown that girls wish to go to the faculty for mainly intrinsic reasons: the desire to succeed in life, the appreciation of the special role of education in the individual's development, but also for the pleasure to learn. Boys wish to have a successful life too, but they are also animated by extrinsic reasons: the desire to find a good and attractive job, the parents' influence and opinions coming from other people they know (friends, teachers, acquaintances, etc.).

By statistically comparing the differences in means between girls' and boys' scores, there has been registered a single significant difference in terms of their appreciation of the role of education in any individual's evolution. More specific, girls value education more and consider that entering higher education is an important step in raising their educational level. Boys have assigned rather significantly lower scores to this factor, as they consider that it is more important to be a good specialist in a field of activity than to be an educated person on the whole.

The results obtained are aligned with other conclusions to be found in the specialty literature, according to which the relationship between gender and academic or professional success is moderated by motivational factors (Borde, 1998; McNabb et al., 2002). In other words, the level of motivation, especially the intrinsic one, largely contributes to both the academic achievement and the option to continue the studies and further, to professional achievement (Busato et al., 2000; McCoach & Siegle, 2001).

As for the limitations of the research, the use of a single investigation tools and its application on a relatively limited number of subjects may lower the relevance of the results and does not allow us their generalization. Despite all these, we intend to continue and complete the analysis by using more methods and investigation tools and by involving more schools from the rural area in the empirical study. The study is drawing

attention to the adolescents' need for psycho-pedagogical and professional counselling for their better career orientation and adequate development of their potential.

Starting from the results of the research, we can apply in the educational practice more complex counselling strategies in order to increase and to stimulate the level of pupils' intrinsic motivation. Really effective teachers are, in our opinion, those who succeed in motivating to learn and to develop professionally not only the pupils with clear goals, but also those who are undecided, disoriented or even discouraged. Consequently, the main role of motivation in professional and academic orientation should be exploited in the pupils' benefit. In this context, our research offers openings and themes of reflection to researchers and practitioners in the pre-university and university education, as well as to parents, teachers, school counsellors and all those interested in the factors found at the basis of professional and academic orientation.

Other information may be obtained from the address: tulburecristina@gmail.com

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