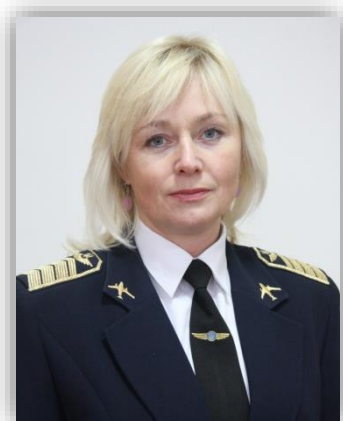


## Subjective analysis of regularities of making strategic life decisions in late adolescence



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The article highlights the theoretical and practical synthesis of the data revealed from the series of empirical studies on the problem of making strategic life decisions in late adolescence. Strategic life decisions are considered as those that have an outstanding, fateful character, associated with a special responsibility, have the leading role in human living space and influence the formation of personality life path. The direction of strategic life decisions includes the decisions on determination of own life position of the personality, professional self-determination and decisions on choice of a marriage partner.

Defined the psychological regularities of making strategic life decisions that are divided into general and specific for each direction. The general regularities that appear in all three directions of decisions include: 1) the process of making strategic life decisions by students is surpassed by the process of making the preliminary decision, due to the prolongation of such decisions in time and personality responsibility of students about the meaningfulness and fulfillment them in the present and future life space; 2) the gradual reorientation of students from close to tactical purposes, and from them to the terminal ones, which is associated with self-realization of their life prospects in the future; 3) the relative statics of making strategic life decisions as they may be refined, improved and made to the particular stage of youth ontogeny.

Specific regularities of making strategic life decisions on determination of own life position by students include: 1) their alternately actualization after the professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner; 2) their decision-making based on the basis of conscious justification of a life position value, which is inherent in late adolescence. Among the regularities of making strategic life decision on professional self-determination by students, there have been defined: 1) the presence of reorientation of the professional perceptions of student's personality from the ideal-abstract to the actually-real, socially relevant; 2) internal struggle and reconciliation between personality and professional motives. In the process of making strategic life decision on the choice of a marriage partner by students, there have been revealed the following regularities: 1) the mutuality of interpersonal interaction that takes place on the basis of reciprocity and coordination of the views and wishes of the future spouses; 2) the particular subjectivity on the decision-making on the choice of a marriage partner, due to the predominant activity of the senses, emotions, experiences and inferiority of logical reasons and considerations.



Identified and summarized psychological regularities of the process of making strategic life decisions by students can be used by practical psychologists, teachers and curators on the universities and colleges on the organization of help to students with self-determination in their own life-creation.

**Keywords:** decision, decision-making, psychological regularities, strategic life decisions, students, youth.

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**Суб'єктивний  
аналіз  
закономірностей  
прийняття  
стратегічних  
життєвих рішень  
у пізній юності**

У статті висвітлені теоретико-практичні узагальнення отриманих даних ряду емпіричних досліджень з проблеми прийняття стратегічних життєвих рішень у пізній юності; обгрунтовані закономірності прийняття студентами стратегічних життєвих рішень у трьох напрямках: професійному самовизначенні, виборі шлюбного партнера та визначенні власної життєвої позиції; визначені загальні та специфічні психологічні закономірності окремо для кожного напрямку означених рішень. Стратегічні життєві рішення розглядаються як такі, що носять визначний, доленосний характер, пов'язані з особливою відповідальністю, мають провідне значення у життєвому просторі людини та впливають на формування життєвого шляху особистості. Стратегічне життєве рішення може бути актом особистісного вибору, а може детермінуватися зовнішніми обставинами (громадською думкою, соціальною ситуацією тощо). Прийняття стратегічних життєвих рішень, по-перше, є процесом особливої відповідальності; по-друге здійснює проєкцію на великі часові відрізки людського життя; по-третє, в їх прийнятті особливої ваги набувають цінності, почуття та емоції. Спрямованість стратегічних життєвих рішень охоплює рішення щодо визначення життєвої позиції особистості, професійного самовизначення та рішення щодо вибору шлюбного партнера.

**Ключові слова:** рішення, прийняття рішень, психологічні закономірності, стратегічні життєві рішення, студенти, юнацтво.

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## Introduction

The global integrative processes that happen in the modern global socio-cultural space, cause the reviewing of the life principles and values of every person, the need in education of a new, active, purposeful young generation that is able to independently make important decisions in their lives. A person assesses the success of own life path, usually, at the end, when it is possible to summarize and determine the correctness or incorrectness of the decisions made. That is when this person reminds how acted and how could act, weighing alternatives and trying to understand the causes and mechanisms of the life choices made. The correctness or incorrectness of the decisions made often is judged by their consequences, which are not easy to change. Is it possible to not make mistakes in the most important decisions? Is it possible to predict in advance the consequences of actions and behavior, caused by the decisions?

To do this, it is necessary to at least understand yourself, to know the characteristics and psychological mechanisms of decision-making, have a developed reflection, consider the factors that affect the choice, and understand the regularities of making fateful decisions at certain age stages.

**Purpose of the article** is a synthesis of the data received from the series of empirical studies on the problem of making strategic life decisions in late adolescence, and highlighting and reasoning the regularities of this process.

**Main part.** The analysis of scientific literature showed that decision-making have been studied by the leading scientists from a long ago (A.Adler, Voltaire, R.Dekart, V.James, D.Kelly, K.Levin, R.May et al.) in various areas of scientific progress and to this day (K.O.Abulhanova-



Slavska, P.K.Anohin, H.O.Ball, I.D.Beh, M.Ya.Hrot, T.V.Kornilova, V.O.Molyako et al.) in both foreign and domestic sciences [7].

For several years in various colleges and universities of Ukraine have been conducted experimental researches, which examined the theoretical and practical assumptions about the nature of making strategic life decisions in older adolescence. The generalization of the data received allowed to draw certain conclusions and make a statement of facts about the nature of this phenomenon.

Strategic life decisions are considered as those that have outstanding, fateful character, associated with special responsibility, and have the leading role in human living space and influence the formation of life path of the personality. Strategic life decision can be an act of a personal choice, and can be determined by external circumstances (public opinion, social situation, etc.) [7].

Making strategic life decisions, firstly, is a process of special responsibility; secondly, makes the projection on large time intervals of human life; Thirdly, in the process of making decisions the values, feelings and emotions gain a special weight. The focus of strategic life decisions includes the decisions on the life position of the personality, professional self-determination and the decision on a choice of a marriage partner.

The analysis of scientific works (P.K. Anokhin, H.O.Ball, V.O.Molyako et al.) have revealed that making strategic life decisions by the personality is implemented by the following stages: 1) awareness of the importance of goals, 2) creative search of new alternatives and evaluation of their desirability, 3) making the preliminary decision, and 4) making the final strategic life decision. The *first stage* is awareness of own life position and a need of its improvement as a promising target; awareness of the importance of own professional self-determination and its specification; awareness of the importance of readiness for choosing a marriage partner and the importance of making the right decision.

The *second stage* is comparison of the features of different life positions, its evaluation in view of the most optimality and attractiveness; comparison of known alternatives of professionalization and delineation of desirable prospects for professional development; comparing existing approaches to the choice of a marriage partner and forming ideas about creation of happy family relations. In case if none of the existing alternatives is satisfying, there is a creative search for new ways to solve the problem.

The *third stage* is making the preliminary decision on the choice of own life position and identifying the ways to achieve it; making the preliminary decision concerning the direction of own professional self-determination and finding the ways to implement it; making the preliminary decision on the choice of a marriage partner and searching capabilities of their verification.

The *fourth stage* is making the final strategic life decision, which involves an analysis of results of the preliminary decision on determination of own life position and its specification; processing new alternative information about possibilities and perspectives of professional self-determination; understanding the possibilities of choice of a marriage partner and making the appropriate final (for now) life decision.

Passing to each stage of making strategic life decisions is in general predetermined by actualization of value-motivational mechanisms, which include the outlook, needs, motivations, ideals, meanings, values, beliefs, principles and interests; emotional mechanisms, which include emotions, feelings, affections, desires and beliefs; intellectual, in particular, problematization, goal-setting, producing hypotheses, argumentation, selection, anticipation and intuition; and volitional mechanisms, in particular, will power, as a conscious determination of a person to



perform certain actions that ensure the implementation of making strategic life decisions on determination of a life position, choice of profession and choice of a marriage partner by the personality[10].

Theoretical and empirical research of features of making strategic life decisions made it possible to determine the age specialties of students (increased responsibility, determination in creation of a life path, prolongation in time) [9], to examine the operational characteristics (personality determinants, goal-setting features and strategies of students to achieve the goals) of this process.

Thus, the analysis of the problem of the personality's decision-making in the philosophical and psychological studies allowed to define the psychological content and direction of strategic life decisions, define the stages and psychological mechanisms that are actualized by the personality during the process of decision-making, and further requires defining the psychological regularities of making strategic life decisions in late adolescence.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish the regularities that are common to all three areas of strategic life decisions, that are typical for the decision-making on determination of own life position, professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner.

**General regularities.** The results of theoretical analysis and stated diagnostic survey defined the three general regularities. *The process of making strategic life decisions by students is surpassed by the process of making preliminary decision*, due to the prolongation of such decisions in time and personality responsibility of students about the meaningfulness and self-realization of them in the present and future living space. The process of making the preliminary decision differs from the final by consideration of many various and conflicting alternatives. Instead, the final strategic life decision is made after making the preliminary by reviewing the already limited number of alternatives (2-3 alternatives), which allows students to use additional reserve of time for thinking on their choice.

Thus, after graduation from high school, most students make decisions about employment, but the chosen place of work may be temporary, because the student had to make at least some decision - preliminary. Often some external circumstances force to make such decision, but sometimes the personality realizes that has already exhausted all the alternatives that exist at the moment (e.g. forced to get married in order to get rid of parents' pressure, to achieve more freedom, etc.). At the same time the preliminary decision may coincide with the final, and may differ from it (as in the case of choosing a profession different from the specialty).

The meaning of the second regularity is that *making strategic life decisions by personalities of students is achieved through the gradual reorientation from the close objectives to the tactical, and from them to the terminal ones*, which is associated with self-realization of life prospects in the future. Strategic life decision can not be made without formation and achievement of the tactical objectives.

In the process of making strategic life decisions there are practically actualized all personality substructures (self-consciousness, character, intellect, emotions, focus, etc.), which leads to the significant personality changes, transformation of the personality of students, that have to take more and more responsibility for their adult lives on themselves. The feeling of adulthood herewith leads the students to the desire of distance from their parents, to prove them own capacity for independent living.

Self-realization of the student's personality is acting through the subjective involvement in the decision-making process, as the decision made in its content and direction is a reflection of the personality, its inner world. Herewith the instrumental, tactical goals that don't have



crucial role, act as stairs, by overcoming which, the personality is getting closer to the strategically important vital point.

Thus, in the process of making strategic life decisions on professional self-determination the students set a goal to learn more about different directions of professional specialization, wanted to have the practice on those enterprises, activity of which is most of all common to the profile selected, etc.

In their responses to questions about choosing a potential marriage partner, adolescent boys often pointed out that every important meeting with the girl for them was the opportunity to learn and express themselves, understand what is desirable for them in their future wife, and what is irritating and seems unacceptable. The girls pointed out that they relate to the process of learning their chosen partner more responsible than boys, as for them making the appropriate decision is related to child dreams of true love, candid conversations with mother, etc. Tactical goals for them were such as: to learn more about possible chosen one, to watch him, finally, meet a potential marriage partner.

The third defined regularity: *any strategic life decision made by students is characterized by a relative static character, because it is in a particular significant for them period of adolescence, can be tested, refined, improved and be acceptable to the particular stage of youth ontogeny.*

The static character in this case refers to a final determination which is not a subject to change. Due to youthful maximalism inherent to students, young people often think that most of their decisions are final. But the personality is not constant and unchanged. Internal changes may be associated with a better understanding of themselves, others, and external – due to a change in the circumstances, obtaining additional, sometimes conflicting information. The presence of internal and external changes causes students to reviewing their previous decisions even when these decisions seemed final and unchanged.

Thus, a passive life position may at first seem nice to the personality and its close people, but in the situation of an activity expression need (to defend own interests, to be interviewed for employment, etc.) this position can be realized by the student and close people as harmful and unacceptable. Its finality is questioned and eventually may be rejected.

**Specific regularities.** Besides the general regularities of making strategic life decisions by students there are also specific regularities defined to each direction. In particular, *personality readiness of students to making a strategic life decision with the determination of own position is actualized after the professional self-determination and choosing a marriage partner.* In theoretical terms, this readiness should be formed primarily, while in practice more formed is a readiness to the professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner [7].

In theoretical studies the scholars indicate that in the process of personality development, initially, there are formed opinions, ideals, beliefs, and later there is a professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner. Some of the scientists pointed out that the life position begins to emerge from prenatal period, childhood, others - from adolescence. However, as the empirical study indicates, the process of its formation does not end even in the student years.

Moreover, a conscious valuable relation to the development of own life position needs an experience in life, is the result of trials and mistakes, which no one else can make instead of a person. Acquiring such an experience only possible in the development process, growing up. Determining own life position requires a special maturity, perhaps more than in the professional self-determination process and while choosing a marriage partner. However, even when the profession is defined, and a marriage partner chosen, the life position is improving, supplementing with new views and beliefs. As empirical studies have shown, 57.0% of young



people during the student age do not have a stable life position. The survey of more mature people (30-45 years old) indicates that the stability of own life position appears later, when firstly, an individual acquired professional skills and can promote individual approach or personal opinion, secondly, when a person has already built the family and is ready to defend the formed family values.

The second regularity is that *making strategic life decisions by students on determination of own position in life is based on a conscious justification of its values, which is inherent in late adolescence*. Formation of a life position begins in childhood, but the readiness to the conscious justification of values of own life position requires advanced personality qualities of late adolescence. Readiness to the conscious justification of own views, beliefs by the personality indicates that the person is not a passive object of external influences (pedagogical and psychological), and manifests subjectivity, its own activity. Awareness and justification of a value of own life position means self-acceptance, in some way formed «ME» concept of the personality, which focuses not on the views of others, but on the personal, independently formed values and life meanings. For sure, the justification of the value of own life position requires a developed self-consciousness, characterized for the late adolescence, however, as shown by the data of psychological diagnosis, for the majority of students, this task is not easy.

The empirical data have showed that awareness level of the students of their own strategic goals in life in the spheres of human relations (life position of the personality) is not high enough (36.1%). A division of life goals by the spheres showed that in the first place on the importance for students is a professional self-determination and work; in the second – family (choice of a marriage partner); in the third – a social status and relationships with others; in the fourth – a physical condition, i.e. health; in the fifth – a psychological condition; in the last, sixth – a daily life. The reasons for this, first of all may be associated with age-related characteristics, because in adolescence young people just begin to integrate into the social processes and show their social activity.

Second of all, the reason for lack of conscious goal-setting may be due to the fact that choosing a career and marriage are caused by social processes that are encouraged in society. As for own life position, the importance of its formation by a young person declaratively proclaimed in the Soviet period, but in fact a collective opinion was recognized as more important. Now the society is largely focused on the formation of consumer goods and services, which focus on advertising and stereotypes. In such circumstances, the value of own life position (and thus the life positions of others) demonstrates the maturity of such personal qualities of a student as independence ( $r = 0,82$ , at  $p \leq 0,01$ ), determination ( $r = 0,57$ , at  $p \leq 0,01$ ), purposefulness ( $r = 0,46$ , at  $p \leq 0,05$ ) and the desire to predict the future ( $r = 0,47$ , at  $p \leq 0,05$ ). The highest correlation of students' readiness to making strategic life decisions with such personal quality as "independence" is consistent with the detected specifics of such decisions which are vitally important, and therefore the responsibility for their consequences lays not on the parents, referent environment, but on the personality.

Regarding making strategic life decisions on professional self-determination, the following regularities have been defined: *in the process of making strategic life decisions on professional self-determination, there is a reorientation of professional perceptions of student's personality from ideally-abstract to actually-real, socially significant*.

As the narrative researches with students have shown, the chosen profession mostly is significantly different from that which was a dream in childhood. For the students in childhood the most attractive seemed romantic professions: astronaut, doctor, sailor, polar pilot and others. However, in the process of growing up the attractiveness of romantic professions were



covered by the realism and pragmatism. Eventually, the determinants that define the professional choice for many students have become: prestige, financial incentives, approval of parents. According to one student «*if the profession does not help to feed a family, it is rather a hobby*». Let's note, that pragmatism can also have negative sides, when a person in the pursuit of wealth neglects own life vocation, abilities, forgets about family, friends, and basic life meaning.

In accordance with the second regularity, the *conscious making strategic life decision on professional self-determination by students implies an internal struggle and reconciliation between personal and professional motives* (an opportunity to realize own vocations and the prestige of the profession, a need of creative activity and material incentives, taking into account the wishes of parents and their own opinion, etc.).

The analysis of the empirical data revealed that: 1) motivation for learning and professional activity in the vast majority of students is 46.0%; 2) motivation to achieve financial security and comfort - 31.2%; 3) achievement of power and success - 68.7%; 4) a subjective activity - 76.0%. These data indicate that student youth aged 19-20 years has a very high motivation to achieve power and success (68.7%), but has no ideas (or not interested) in how to achieve it, as an indicator of motivation to learning and professional activity was below average (46.0%). This fact confirms our assumptions, that students of 1-3 courses of universities don't have a final certainty about the professional choice, don't have the skills for the proper professional and personality growth. This means that the major strategic life decision on professional self-determination is not completely made yet, and therefore the strategy of achievement has not been lined up yet.

The fight of the motives is an evidence of internal cognitive dissonance, by which the process of making strategic life decisions on professional self-determination may be accompanied with. Herewith, of great importance are the character, content and scope of that information about the possibilities of professional choice, which a student has at this period of time. Thus, after the practical training, one student had described his inner state: «*Before, I thought I could work anywhere just for the high enough material compensation. But I realized that was wrong. There is a work that brings me pleasure, and which I can easily do well, but there is another, which I can not do well for a long time even for big money*».

To the similar conclusions the person can come at the beginning of a professional way, or maybe at its end, which is often accompanied by thoughts of vain intervening years when there are dominant emotional states such as emptiness, feelings of hopelessness, despair.

As for making strategic life decisions on the choice of a marriage partner, the following regularities have been defined: *making strategic life decision on the choice of a marriage partner by students is a process of mutual interpersonal interaction that takes place on the basis of reciprocity and coordination of the views and wishes of the future spouses*. If making strategic life decisions on determination of own life position and professional self-determination are made by a student individually, the decision on choice of a future marriage partner is significantly different by the need of mutual agreement. In the process of interpersonal interaction that can last many years, the partners get to know each other, find out the orientation of values, character, and in case of a success of this process (improving relationships, physical, psychological and spiritual compatibility) they produce common meanings of life, sketch the common plans for the future.

If the coordination of life positions, beliefs, interests didn't happen, the interpersonal interaction can pause or close relationship will be broken forever, which is often accompanied by conflicts, abuses by a partner who feels abandoned. The obtained empirical data have



shown a lack of students' awareness of values of marriage and unformed motivation to the search of a future spouse (as boys (41.5%) and girls (44.6%)), lack of a knowledge system needed for a family creation (especially boys), the uncertainty of a goal and means of choice of a marriage partner, the inability to prove the strategic life decision made (both boys and girls).

The diagnostic results confirmed the assumption that most students make decisions on the choice of a marriage partner without having some knowledge on the specifics of the selection process, its criteria, not being aware of the responsibility for the consequences. Decision-making in this area is carried out mainly under the emotional impact of youthful charm, love, social stereotypes, fear of loneliness, which often leads to haste and unjustified expectations. Unlike boys, girls have slightly higher levels of readiness to making strategic life decision on the choice of a marriage partner in all components, due to greater responsibility of women to nature for the birth and upbringing of the child, creation of a family comfort. Students consider potentially important the presence of the family, close relations, but more than half of them don't choose a partner according to common interests and don't try to improve the mutual understanding on this basis.

This way mutuality and readiness to building of family relationships with the partner are essential conditions to the success of making strategic life decisions on the choice of a marriage partner.

The second regularity *applies to the students' special subjectivity of making strategic life decisions on the choice of a life partner, due to the predominant activity of the feelings, emotions, experiences and inferiority of logical reasons and considerations.* In the time of falling in love the personality is transformed so that it is visible not only to close people, but also to others. A person in love "radiates" positive emotions, thinking about the object of love, trying to see and talk with him or her as often as possible.

The high emotional potential caused by the natural need of procreation, on the one hand, leads to increased personality activity, «inspires to the exploits», but on the other - hinders intellectual processes. Thus, a person in love focuses on own feelings and on partner, not noticing anything around (the features of attention), not accepting the advices of friends, parents (the features of perception), the majority of thoughts are directed on the potential chosen (the features of thinking), the person often reminds the words said by the partner, image, actions, deeds (the features of memory), dreams about the future family life (the features of imagination). Considering all these personality transformations, a choice of a future marriage partner gains a particular subjectivity: everyone selects a mate, often contrary to the many logical reasons, listening to the «voice of the heart», own feelings, that should be maintained for life.

Thus, in the process of experimental study, there have been defined the psychological regularities of making strategic life decisions by students, which have divided into the general and specific for each direction (the decision on determination of own life position, professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner).

In general, the conducted study of the features and psychological regularities confirms that making strategic life decisions by students is a complex personality deterministic process that updates the value-motivational, emotionally-sensitive, intellectual and volitional psychological mechanisms and leads to a life self-determination (meaningful definition of own position in life, professional self-determination, choice of a marriage partner), reducing uncertainty of initial situation of choice. Identified and summarized psychological regularities of the process of making strategic life decisions by students can be used by practical





psychologists, teachers and curators of universities and colleges, even students on planning and organization of life path.

**Conclusions.** Psychological regularities of making strategic life decisions by students is divided into general and specific for each direction. The general regularities that appear in all three directions of decisions include: 1) the process of making strategic life decisions by students is surpassed by the process of making the preliminary decision, due to the prolongation of such decisions in time and personality responsibility of students about the meaningfulness and fulfillment them in the present and future life space; 2) the gradual reorientation of students from close to tactical purposes, and from them to the terminal ones, which is associated with self-realization of their life prospects in the future; 3) the relative statics of making strategic life decisions as they may be refined, improved and made to the particular stage of youth ontogeny.

Specific regularities of making strategic life decisions on determination of own life position by students include: 1) their alternately actualization after the professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner; 2) their decision-making based on the basis of conscious justification of a life position value, which is inherent in late adolescence. Among the regularities of making strategic life decision on professional self-determination by students, there have been defined: 1) the presence of reorientation of the professional perceptions of student's personality from the ideal-abstract to the actually-real, socially relevant; 2) internal struggle and reconciliation between personality and professional motives. In the process of making strategic life decision on the choice of a marriage partner by students, there have been revealed the following regularities: 1) the mutuality of interpersonal interaction that takes place on the basis of reciprocity and coordination of the views and wishes of the future spouses; 2) the particular subjectivity on the decision-making on the choice of a marriage partner, due to the predominant activity of the senses, emotions, experiences and inferiority of logical reasons and considerations.

In general, the results of psychological studies have shown a mainly low level of readiness of students to making strategic life decisions on the determination of own life position, professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner, which necessitates the development and implementation in the practice of universities the psycho-pedagogical support aimed at developing skills of students on setting strategic goals in life, and preparing young people for the aforementioned decisions. Identified and summarized psychological regularities of the process of making strategic life decisions by students can be used by practical psychologists, teachers and curators on the universities and colleges on the organization of help to students with self-determination in their own life-creation.

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