

THE FUTURE OF THE PSYCHOLOGIST PROFESSION – A STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The importance of the psychologist profession in our society is a frequent subject of the discussions especially of the psychology students. What are the problems and the difficulties to which are confronted the young graduates? Why they choose the psychologist profession? What are the advantages of the psychologist profession?

Key words: psychologist, society, opportunities, barriers

In the present the need for psychologist begin to be covered by the young graduates generations of psychologists, starting with the years '90. The evolution of this profession is given by the socio-economic situation and the population education, regarding the psychologist roles and its utility, in differnt field of the economy, education and health. What are the professional perspectives of the psychologists, from the psychology students point of view?

According to Mattu (2012), psychologists need to find what is working and replicate it. He says psychologists must create a path from

the negatives to the positives, and they can do that by investing in the future and finding opportunities for engagement .

Shullman (2012) points out that psychologists have been trained to be critical – to find what is wrong; they need to adjust their mindset and focus on what psychologists *can* do. Psychologists need to recognize opportunities and think globally about the roles they can play in evolving health-care systems.

Methodology and participants

The present study has as main objective the investigation of the issues related to the future of the psychologist profession, from the psychology students point of view. In this manner, the participants were represented by a group of 14 persons, aleatory selected from the first year of study, in psychology, and the research method was the *focus-group*.

We used in the study a semi-structured guide of interview, of which discussion themes are arranged on three categories: „The motivation for the choice of psychologist profession”, „The psychologist job itself” and „Advantages/Disadvantages”.

The proposed theme - The future of the psychologist job – approach the participants with two introductive questions, followed by a series of grouped questions. The questions and their succession were established after a previous consultation with other five students, also from the first year in psychology, but who did not participate to the focus-group. The introductive questiones were formulated as follows:

1. What is your opinion about the higher education in Romania?
2. What are the main problems with which the higher education institutions confront themselves, especially in the psychology field?

The questions series related to „The motivation for choosing the psychology specialization?” is:

1. What is your opinion about the psychologist job?
2. Why did you choose this specialization?
3. What is your family, friends and relatives opinion about your decision to choose the psychology field?
4. With what can this field help you in the personal plane?
5. With what can this field help you on the professional plane?

The category questions – „The psychologist job itself” is made up by the following questions:

1. From the psychology branches – that is clinical psychology and psychotherapy, work and organizational psychology and the transports psychology, on which do you want to work? Why?
2. Why , in Romania, this field does not present any interest?
3. Why the Romanian have a bad opinion about the psychologic consultation ?
4. Why in other countries this field is more accessed?

The last category is named „Advantages/Disadvantages” and includes the following questions:

1. What are the advantages of the psychologist job in Romania?
2. What are the disadvantages of the psychologist job in Romania?
3. What are the advantages of the psychologist job abroad?
4. What are the disadvantages of the psychologist job abroad?
5. You want to work in Romania or abroad?

Each participant was asked to present himself and to offer some informations about the origin environment, age, previous studies, and the residence locality.

To the participants was allocated a code (S), and the numbers were allocated function to their position/physical location in the hall. So we have:

S1 – rural environment, secondary education, 19 years old, female;

S2 – urban environment, higher education, 39 years old, female;

S3 – urban environment, secondary education, 19 years old, female;

S4 – urban environment, higher education, 44 years old, female;

S5 – urban environment, higher education, 23 years old, female;

S6 – urban environment, secondary education, 19 years old, male;

S7 – urban environment, secondary education, 19 years old, female;

S8 – urban environment, higher education, 26 years old, female;

S9 – urban environment, secondary education, 51 years old, female;

S10 – urban environment, higher education, 26 years old, female;

S11 – urban environment, higher education, 34 years old, female;

S12 – urban environment, higher education, 34 years old, female;

S13 – rural environment, higher education, 46 years old, female;

S14 – rural environment, higher education, 32 years old, female;

The participants characteristics can be seen in the table 1. Thus we can say that three persons come from the rural environment, 11 persons from the urban environment. From the studies point of view, five persons have secondary education, and nine persons have higher education. From the age perspective, half of our participants have the age between 19 and 29 years old, than the category of the age between 30 and 40 years old (29%) and the participants with the age between 41 and 51

are only three. The majority of the participants are females, being a single male participant.

Table 1.

The participants percentage distribution fonction of gender, studies and origin environment

	Gender		Age (years)			Studies		Environ ment	
	M	F	19- 29	30 -40	41 -51	Secon dary	Higher	R	U
Nr. Pers.	1	13	7	4	3	5	9	3	11
%	7	93	50	29	21	36	64	21	79

The results presentation

During the unfolding of the focus-group were given different answers, which detailed more of the attitudes and reactions of the participants. S1 take over the initiative, the other participants having a small reticence, manifested only at the begining. S2 preferred to reserve his answers to each questions on the last place. S3 offered short and concise answers. S4 had an active implication in the debate, sometimes even detoured from the subject. S5 conformed himself to the group opinion, did not have his own opinion, and agreed with his predecessors. S6 was very preoccupied by the subject having different attitudes related to the problems rised by the choosed theme. S7 had a conciliant attitude, reserved in front of the problem. S8 involved himself in the discussion offering moreover other problems for the debated theme. S9 and S10 greatly detoured from the subject and initiated conversations related to their own experiences. S11 gave answers fontion to the other participants opinions. S12 was passively involved and gave simple and short answers. S13 had an intensive participation, supporting the discussion

with enthusiasm. S14 manifested an attitude which reflected problems knowledge from different points of view.

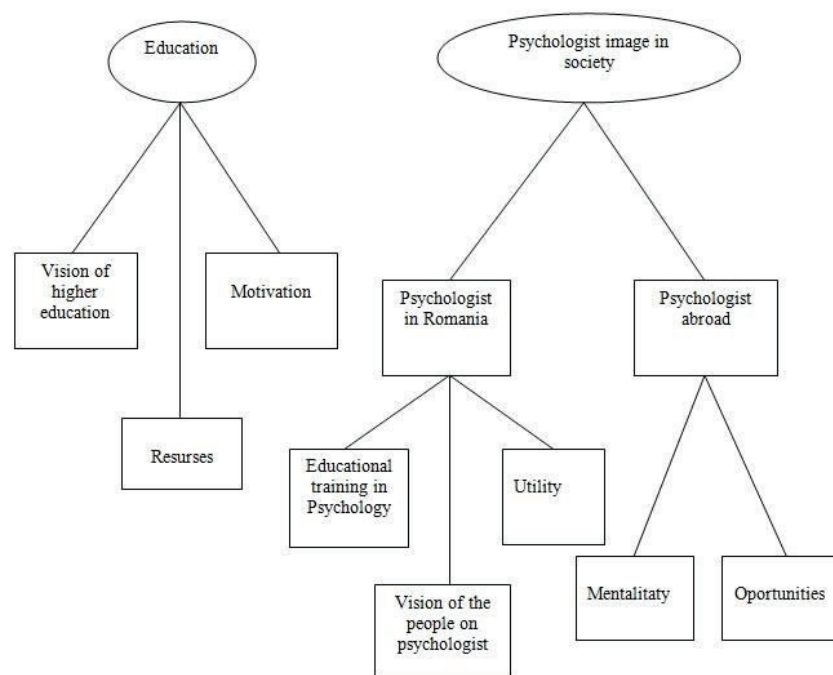
In the phase „The motivation for choosing the psychologist job” were identified the following answers: „it is not enough only a diploma”, „there are too many study places”, „there are only few work places”, „evolution”, „a job without physical effort”, „help for the people”, „helps”, „personal development”, „knowledge”, „learning”, „the help confirming in the family”, „mentality”, „ignorance”, „reticence”.

In the phase „The psychologist job itself” were underlined the following aspects: „education”, „confidentiality”, „the mob effect”, „advertisement”, „transparency”, „useful job”, „opens the thinking”, „helps in communication”, „insertion in work”, „the state does not involve itself”.

In the phase „Advantages/Disadvantages” stood out the following answers: „standard of living”, „neutrality”, „to profess”, „appreciated”, „valued”, „fashion”, „resources”, „incompetence”, „security”, „uprooting”, „breakage”, „stereotypy”, „absence of a timetable”.

The answers received in the three phases were collected thus that we arrived at three conceptual maps. From the received answers were extracted the main words to make up the titles and the themes of the conceptual maps. The main titles are: „the initial studies”, „The psychologist image in society” formed by the following categories: „The psychologist in Romania” and „The psychologist abroad”. After the collection of the data was made an initial theme schema formed by two categories and 57 themes. The second conceptual map is made from 26 themes and the third conceptual map is composed by two categories and ten themes (Braun, Clark, 2006).

In the following rows the analysis is made for the first variant, the final conceptual map, which results after many categorial an thematic analysis and limitations. Thus were obtained two categories – the initial preparation (studies) and - the psychologist image in society, and 10 themes which reflect the real preoccupations of the future psychologists related to their professional future both in the eventuality to remain in our contry to profess or in the case in which they would go abroad to profess. The categories and the themes can be seen in the figure1.



Graphic 1. The theme map - The psychologist image in society

The category „Initial preparation/studies” is made by the themes „vision on the higher education”, „resources” and „Motivation”. The

category „The psychologist image in the society” is composed by the themes „The psychologist in Romania” and „The psychologist abroad”. The category „The psychologist in Romania” is composed by „The educational formation in psychology”, „The society vision on the psychologist” and „Utility”. The category „The psychologist abroad” is made up by the themes: „Mentality” and „Opportunities”.

In the theme „The vision about the higher education” was discussed the high number of study places and the small number of work places in the domain and about the absence of the admission exam, which could sort the interested students from those uninterested. Also, was raised the problem of the fact that the faculties do not create application conditions. Some participants were revolted and mentioned by a „leader” participant in discussions „the quality of the higher education is given by the people and not by the system”. A participant spoke about his opinion that the higher education is very expensive, and the quality-price balance is not justified in this case.

In the „Resources” theme the participants spoke about the state study financing and about the small number of budgetary places occupied by those with high marks at the bachelor exam. The absence of the work instruments, of the courses classes and of the access to the material and the apparatus, as well as their defect technique state were reasons of revolt for those who graduate a specialization.

In the „Motivation” theme was raised the problem of the professor teaching methods, the problem of the students absence from courses and about the development of this field in professional level. The participants identified also the lack of the space for practice, that demotivates the students. The participants identified as reason for choosing the

psychologist job the desire to help the others, by a professional basis not only as friends.

In the theme „The educational formation in psychology” were discussed the problems of self-knowledge and personal development which are realised in the faculty frame. They are necessary both the theoretical part and also the practical one in which they can observe the „humans grotesque and beauty” (S2). The participants show themselves willing to learn new things and to use them to help themselves or to help the others.

In the theme „The society vision about the psychologist” were discussed the Romanians preconceptions about the psychologist, and the lack of understanding the difference between the psychologist and the psychiatrist. The fear to be catalogued „being different” after a visit to the psychologist determines many Romanian people to refuse a professional help which could be salutary for them. Also, few participants took into account their family, friends and relatives opinions when they choose this job.

In the theme „Utility” we observed the concentration of the discussions on the absence of the projects which could help its development and its image, as well as the state does not create conditions for the application of the job itself. The great majority of the participants are disappointed about the fact that there are too many psychologists on the work market and the fact that in our country this job has not success. The subject S3 is very sad because of the fact that he must leave the country if he wants to impose himself as a good professional and in this way an uprooting would be produced. In the other hand S11 wants to remain in the country especially for the reason to help people to change their obsolete mentality

In the theme "Mentality" the discussion took a pessimistic turn about the problem, the general opinion being that the Romanians are strait-laced in fix ideas, limited regarding the psychologist and the visit to the psychologist, comparing with the psychologist image abroad. The majority of the participants manifested their desire to emigrate for having professional realisation in the psychology domain. A part of them are content and confident in their future in Romania. At this theme the comparisons didn't stopped. They talked even about the fact that abroad the psychologist job is taken to ridiculous and that the visits to the psychologist are a fashion that all want to try.

In the theme „Opportunities” the discussion was based much on a positive orientation because they talked about the professional practice outside the country, and the general opinion clear underlined was that the future is more favourable outside the borders due to the fact that the strangers accomodate more easy to this trend.

Conclusions

After the discussions, the general opinion of the participants is that in Romania there are difficulties regarding the society opening towards the necessity and the real value of the services offered by the psychologists. From this reason, the professional development and the rise in career face many difficulties. In the other hand if we refer to the opportunities offered by other states to the psychologists and to their professional development, those are more numerous and are quantified in more substantial financial gains, due to a superior valued recognition in the frame of society.

The specialization in different branches of the psychology and the obtaining of the practice right for the new graduates is hampered by a bushy legislation and by the expensive costs that the young graduates

must support. These do not benefit from any financial support from the state, in the moment of the beginning of their profession.

A last aspect underlined refers to an insufficient practical training of the students, regarding the latter work as professionals, and the access to the special informations is limited by additional financial costs (the access to data bases is generally payed).

Our society has a pressing need for opening and removing stereotypes and prejudices which prevents a large part of the population to seek the services of psychologists, in different stances of their existence. With the change of these erroneous perceptions, provided training and psychological status in our society will change and people will benefit from the services offered by psychologists.

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