

THE IMPACT OF THE PERSONAL RESOURCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL INTENTIONS

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Abstract: The article reflects some theoretical aspects regarding the professional orientation of people with visual impairments. At the same time, some experimental data are reflected regarding the role of personal resources in the formation of professional intentions of people with visual impairments. The study includes a sample of 76 subjects with visual impairments. The research has shown that people with visual impairments have difficulties in identifying personal resources. They consider the social environment or relationships as an external resource and acquired resources as internal resources to be more important, but they have difficulties in identifying personal resources that can help them cope with social and situational factors in the process of professional orientation.

Keywords: personal resources, professional orientation, professional intentions, visual disability.

1. Introduction

"In a developed society, the concept of vocational guidance constitutes a coherent and dynamic system of principles, actions, and measures through which an individual or a group is guided (helped) to choose, at a given moment, a specific profession corresponding to their inclinations, aptitudes, and aspirations. Vocational guidance aims to prepare the person for the exercise of a profession, focusing on the actional aspect of the educational ideal, because the exercise of the profession represents the fundamental way in which the junction between the individual and society is achieved. Its necessity is determined by the objective requirement regarding the human participation in the production process of material and spiritual goods, which represents the basis of society's existence, through the exercise of a profession.

The growing trend regarding the vocational guidance of people with disabilities is well known not only abroad but also in the Republic of Moldova. It is based on the evolution of human rights and, in particular, individual rights, on the need for democratization of society and inclusive schools. This idea perfectly finds its place in several international legislative acts, ratified by the Republic of Moldova (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; World Declaration on Education for All; UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, etc.); in a series of national legislative acts such as: the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova; the Family Code; the Law on the Rights of the Child; the National Strategy and Action Plan on the Reform of the Residential Child Care System for the years 2007-2012; Law 60 of 30.03.2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, published on 27.07.2012 in the Official Gazette No. 155-159; the National Strategy on Community Actions to Support Children in Difficulty for the years 2007-2014; the Social Inclusion Strategy for People with Disabilities (2010-2013); the National Plan of Community Actions to Support Children in Difficulty for the years 2007-2014; the Education Code, 2014; the National Program for Ensuring Gender Equality for the years 2010-2015; the

National Program for the Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2024-2027; the National Development Plan for the years 2025-2027; the "Education-2030" Development Strategy; etc. [4]. The purpose of these normative acts is:

- to accelerate the transformations in the labor sphere, pursuing the strategic solution of economic, social and psychological problems regarding employment in the market economy, and aims to increase labor efficiency and develop a flexible market, achieving structural reforms in the national economy [11];
- to create and improve open, transparent, flexible subsystems of general, professional secondary and higher education, of vocational guidance for pupils and young people, of reorientation and continuous professional training of the population throughout their active life, in all branches of the national economy and at all levels of qualification and responsibility, both within state education and outside it [4];
- to ensure equal opportunities and chances for education for excluded/marginalized people, in order to provide quality education for all in integrated contexts and continuous learning environments [9]."

2. Theoretical Aspects Regarding Vocational Guidance for People with Disabilities

Currently, various educational factors are involved in the school and vocational guidance of students: school, family, governmental and non-governmental organizations, labor agencies and offices, economic agents, etc.

The analysis of several sources has allowed us to conclude that the main factors involved in vocational guidance at the school level are:

- teaching staff, who, during lessons, guide students into the world of professions and develop their professional skills and abilities;
- class teachers, who develop students' self-management skills during "Personal Development" classes;
- the psychologist, whose purpose is to "facilitate young people's possibilities in choosing a profession, capitalizing on their aptitudes and abilities" [6, p. 8] through psychological evaluation, prevention, counseling, and personal development activities.

Vocational guidance is a complex issue – economic, technical, sociological, psychological, and moral. J. Drevillon (1973) argues that in vocational guidance, we can rely on ordinary curiosity and young people's interests (which we must know), but it is equally important to offer young people the chance to expand their range of interests. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the person's personal resources, such as interests, aptitudes, values, abilities, motivations, etc.

According to Bolboceanu A. (2015), vocational guidance represents the set of optional and consultative actions carried out through psychological and pedagogical, general and special methods, designed to support the student psychologically, morally, and informationally in order to develop an appropriate professional option. Cucer A. (2018) defines the concept of vocational guidance as a coherent and dynamic system of principles, actions, and measures through which a person or a group are guided to choose a profession, according to their inclinations, aptitudes, and aspirations, for the purpose of personal development and preparation for a specific profession. According to Stolarencu L. (2000), vocational guidance represents a system of activities aimed at identifying the person's personality traits, interests, and abilities, to help them make a rational choice of profession.

Based on these definitions, vocational guidance can be approached from several aspects. In vocational guidance activities, the person is helped to know themselves, to recognize themselves

in various situations, and to mobilize their "reserves" at the opportune time. Through vocational guidance, we offer the person means to fill their gaps in the professional field and to compensate for missing or insufficiently developed competencies. In vocational guidance, the person receives information about the world of professions, the set of documents necessary for employment, and about the reality of social life and the labor market. Vocational guidance helps the person create their professional path starting from the study profile at the high school level, the profession in a vocational school, college, center of excellence, or university, up to professional advancement through specializations and improvements or changing the profession that ceases to satisfy the person either professionally or materially, etc.

People with disabilities have much less chance to choose their profession themselves, because until recently, most of them studied in special schools. Thus, their professional interests were limited by the specialties studied in these schools. The issue of vocational guidance for people with disabilities requires an attitude:

- socio-economic, for the rational allocation of labor resources, increasing production efficiency, identifying the personality's potential, and its multilateral development;
- medico-psychological, because each profession sets certain requirements for the person's physical and psychophysical qualities and health;
- pedagogical, because vocational guidance must be based on a set of competencies that provide information about the person's preparation for a profession [5, p. 7-8].

According to Barnes [3], "disability is a loss or limitation of opportunities to participate in normal life in the community at an equal level with others and is due to physical or social barriers." Both the concept of disability and the attitude towards people with disabilities have evolved throughout history from deviation, normality to "deficiencies that, in interaction with various barriers/obstacles, can hinder their full and effective participation in the life of society." [8]. Law no. 60 of 30.03.2012 [8] stipulates that people with disabilities are considered people with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, where:

- *Physical disability* refers to any type of problem related to the decrease or elimination of the functionality of a limb.
- *Sensory disability* refers to the presence of a limitation related to the deficiency of senses with which the internal or external environment is perceived. Several types of sensory disability are distinguished: visual, auditory, deafblindness, etc.
- *Intellectual disability* refers to any limitation in the development of the individual's autonomy, cognitive abilities, and social participation as a result of intellectual insufficiency. Several degrees of intellectual disability are distinguished.
- *Mental disability* refers to any type of behavioral problem, arising from the suffering of a certain type of mental disorder.
- *Visceral disability* refers to the worsening of the quality of life and the decrease in the individual's participation in community life related to the deficiency in one of the internal organs.
- *Multiple disability* involves the combination of two or more deficiencies listed above.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics [10], on January 1, 2022, people with disabilities represented 6.7% of the country's population. In the Republic of Moldova, 168.0 thousand people recognized with disabilities live, including 10.6 thousand children aged 0-17 years, which represents 1.9% of the total number of children (Figure 1)."

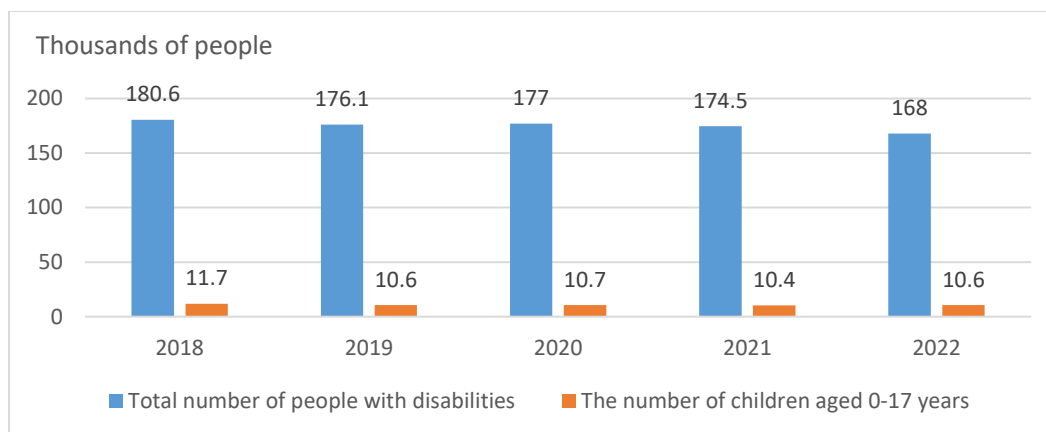


Figure 1. Number of people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova, as of January 1, 2018-2022.

Research methodology

Disability limits both social and professional inclusion and leaves traces on personality development. Research on the vocational guidance of people with disabilities has served as a favorable premise for initiating direct research into the professional intentions and personal resources of people with visual impairments. The study conducted in 2023 involved 76 respondents with visual disabilities (52 girls and 24 boys) from various educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova.

To determine professional intentions, the "Professional Intentions" questionnaire, developed by L. M. Fridman, T. A. Pushkina, and I. I. Kaplunovich [13] and translated and adapted by Golovei L., was applied. The questionnaire contains 35 items, grouped into 5 categories: general plans, passions and professional intentions, knowledge about the chosen profession, self-assessment of one's own abilities for the profession, and assessment of professional self-determination. To determine the personal resources used by respondents, the "My Resources" questionnaire, developed by Golovei L., was applied. The questionnaire contains 10 items based on which respondents' knowledge of personal resources, the type of resources used for recovery in difficult situations, the factors that influence rapid exhaustion, and the ability to formulate goals and identify the resources needed to achieve professional goals were identified.

Research results

To begin, we aimed to investigate the general professional plans of people with visual impairments who participated in the research (Figure 2). When asked, 'What do you wish to do next?' 45% of respondents indicated that they intend to pursue university studies, 21% of respondents opt for studies at a college, center of excellence, or vocational school, 16% of respondents are oriented towards high school studies, 11% of respondents wish to enter the workforce, of which 10% plan to continue their studies in parallel. 7% of respondents could not answer this question.

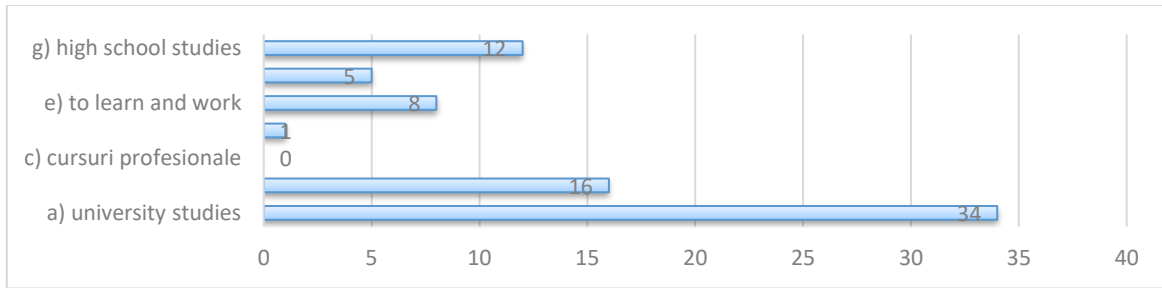


Figure 2. What do you wish to do next?

When asked, 'Do you know the professional field of the profession you like or what professional field are you passionate about?' 33% of respondents mentioned the 'human' field, 21% of respondents each mentioned the 'science and technology' fields, 15% of respondents the 'arts' field, and 10% the 'nature' field (Figure 3). Another item asked respondents to indicate whether 'There are professions close/related to the profession they like and that they could practice?' 53% of respondents confirmed the existence of a profession(s) close/related to their preferred profession, 14% of respondents believe that there are no professions close/related to the profession they are interested in, and 33% of respondents do not know if there are professions close/related to their preferred profession (Figure 4).

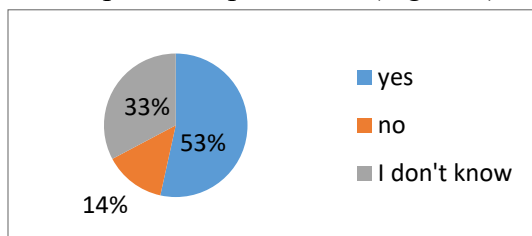


Figure 3. What professional field does the profession you like belong to or what is the professional field you are passionate about?

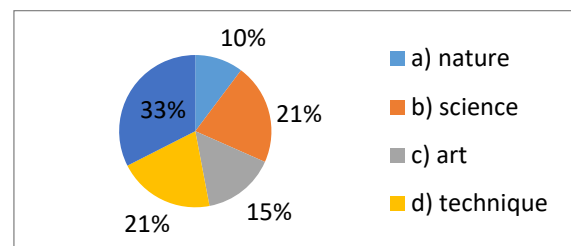


Figure 4. Are there professions close/related to the profession you like that you could pursue?

Every professional wants to be a good specialist at their workplace, but the strategies used by each are different. 95% of respondents believe that studies can help them become good specialists. For 62% of respondents, university studies are important, 26% of respondents indicated studies at a college or center of excellence, and for 7% of respondents, studies at a vocational school (Figure 5). At the same time, 77% of respondents believe that through work you can become a good specialist, of which 34% of respondents consider a work internship in the profession to be important, and 43% of respondents believe that the activities performed at the workplace can help you become a good specialist (Figure 5).

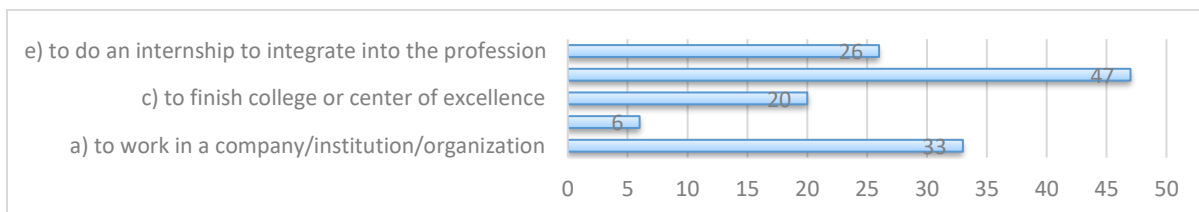


Figure 5. What do you need to do to become a good specialist?

Although most respondents currently prioritize studies, 30% of respondents want their work to be interesting, 26% of respondents want a motivating salary, 18% of respondents want their profession to match their personal abilities, 14% of respondents want to be of use to society, and for 12% of respondents, the prestige of the profession is important (Figure 6).

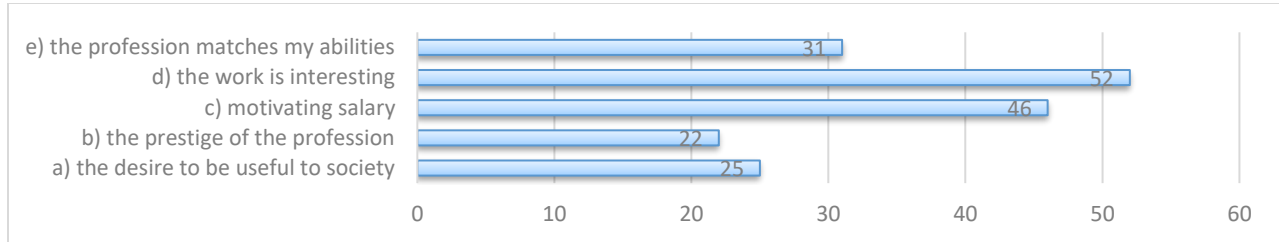


Figure 6. What is important in choosing a profession?

One of the goals of vocational guidance is to provide information about schools and professions, which can be achieved through various forms, such as excursions to a company/organization/institution or meetings with successful professionals/veterans of work. Of the respondents, 26% indicated that they had been on an excursion at least once, 46% of respondents were interested in the specifics of the profession, 37% of respondents in the working conditions, 30% of respondents in the demonstration of the technological process, 34% of respondents in the salary, and 28% of respondents in the organization of work.

Of the 12% of respondents who participated at least once in meetings with successful professionals or work veterans, 67% were interested in the personality of the professionals, and 11% each were interested in the perseverance, organization of work and life, and professional experience of the professionals they talked with (Figure 7).

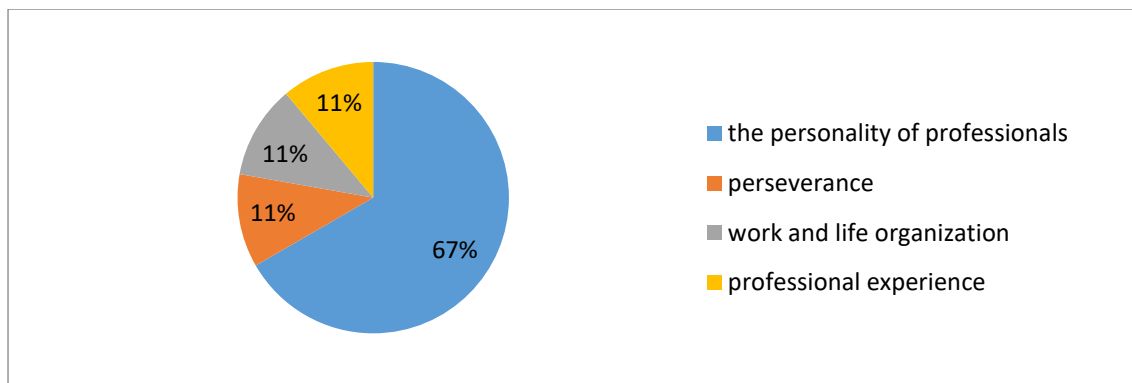


Figure 7. Meetings with successful professionals or work veterans

During the research, the passions and professional intentions of the respondents were examined. Thus, 72% of respondents indicated that they have identified a profession for the future, for 20% the interest currently oscillates between 2 or more professions, and only 8% do not know what they will do in the future (Figure 8). However, 75% of respondents mentioned that they have been interested in other professions as well.

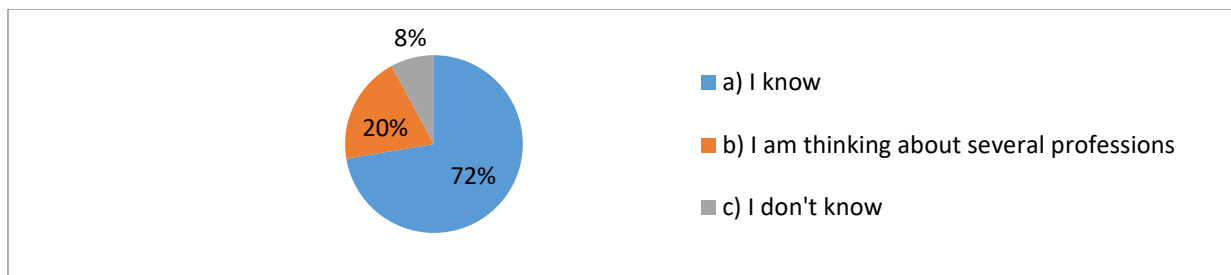


Figure 8. Passions and professional intentions of the respondents.

To the question *What are the sources that can help you in choosing a profession?* 45% of respondents indicated the internet and television, 38% specified - other people are the main source. Scientific literature was indicated as a source in choosing a profession by 4% of respondents, special literature - by 2%, artistic literature – by 2%, and 9% indicated that the sources in choosing a profession are others than those indicated in the proposed answer variants (Figure 9).

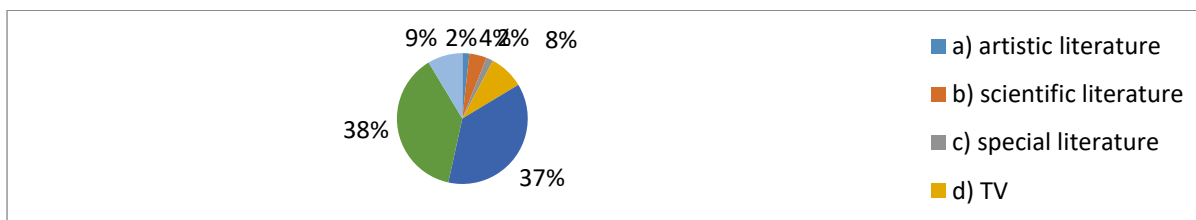


Figure 9. What are the sources that can help you in choosing a profession?

Curricular and extracurricular activities within the school and outside the school offer a varied range of activities, giving students the chance to know and explore different professional fields. Only 30% of respondents indicated that they attended optional/elective classes. 1% each indicated attending optional/elective classes in environmental protection, biology, religion, geography, informatics, history, and Romanian language, 2% - economic education, 4% - foreign languages, 6% - know your country, 8% - mathematics, 38% of respondents mentioned that the school curriculum does not contain optional classes, but they would like to study optional/elective classes in hairdressing, hand-made crafts, Romanian language, cars, medicine, music, painting/linear drawing, psychology, sports (1% each), arts (3%), history (4%), informatics (5%), foreign languages (6%), while 8% indicated they do not know what optional/elective classes would interest them.

The number of respondents attending interest clubs within or outside the school is twice as high as the number of people attending optional or elective classes. Out of 66% of respondents, 1% attend clubs for religion, chemistry, acting, reading club, multimedia lab, law, interior design, debate, eco, physics, photography, and informatics; 2% - clubs for Romanian language, music, and theater; 3% - clubs for art, painting, and volunteering; 4% - dance club; 8% - mathematics club; 12% - foreign language and sports clubs. 50% would like to attend a club where they would have the opportunity to expand their knowledge about the world of professions and develop their professional skills. Thus, 1% of respondents wish to attend clubs for architecture, personal development, physics, professional training, journalism, graphics, science, volunteering; 2% - acting, business and administration, painting clubs; 4% - dance clubs; 5% - foreign language clubs; 8% - informatics clubs; 10% - a sports section; while 4% indicated they do not know what club they would like to attend. The results show that despite the fact that most respondents have made

a professional choice, they are not tempted to develop their competencies within optional/elective classes and/or clubs inside or outside the school.

We were also interested in identifying what respondents with visual impairment know about the chosen profession. A series of items aimed to identify respondents' representations about the characteristics of the profession or their role in the workplace. Thus, all respondents are convinced about their role within the team that would help them feel comfortable. In this sense, 57% of respondents indicated they would like the role of organizer, while 43% - the role of implementer. 44% of respondents indicated they prefer to work individually, 48% prefer to work in a team, and only 8% would prefer to work with friends, which demonstrates that they differentiate between friendship relationships and professional relationships (Figure 10).

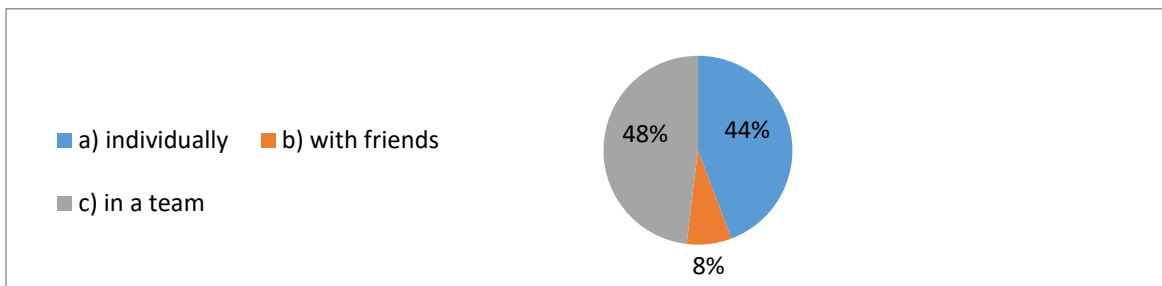


Figure 10.How do you prefer to work?

Comparing the answers to the items *What requirements does the profession you might embrace impose?* and *How are you preparing for your future profession?* (Figure 11), we established that out of 63% of respondents who consider that knowledge, skills, and acquired abilities are important for a profession, only 58% engage in activities to develop them. Of the 30% of respondents who consider special qualities important for a profession, 28% prepare for professional activity by developing these qualities. Although only 7% of respondents consider possessing a set of general qualities important for a profession, twice as many respondents develop these qualities.

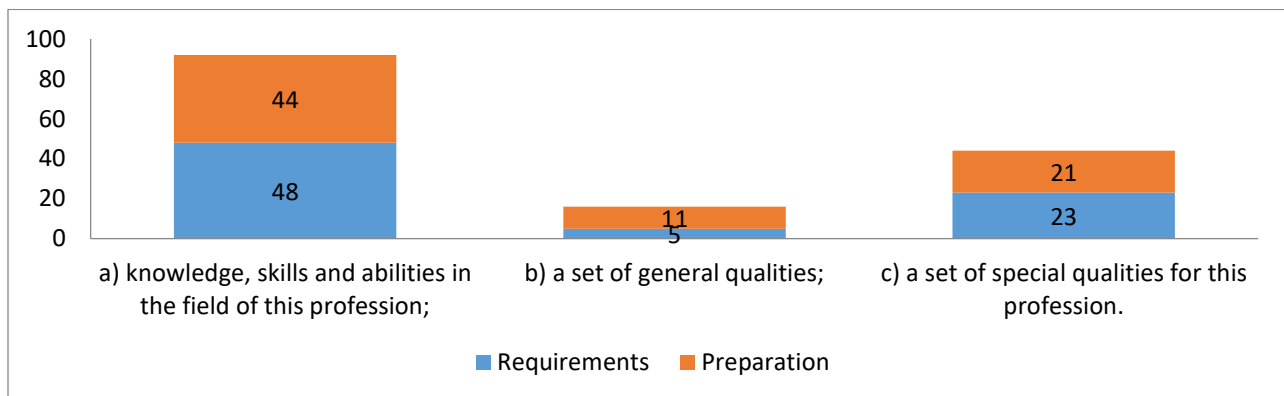


Figure 11. What requirements does the profession you might embrace impose? and How are you preparing for your future profession?

Since the respondents belong to the category of people with visual impairments, one item requested their opinion regarding the health requirements imposed by the profession they might embrace (Figure 12). Thus, 32% of respondents consider visual acuity very important in the

profession they like. Having vision problems, this requirement could make them abandon the idea of embracing the profession they are interested in. Respondents listed other requirements for the profession: 46% believe they must be mentally healthy, 34% - that they must handle various tools and equipment without problems, 33% - that they must not have locomotor problems, 29% - that they must distinguish colors and their tones, 25% - that they must have auditory acuity, 17% - that they must not have cardiac problems, 12% - not be allergic, and 5% - not have gastric problems. And 34% of respondents believe that any person can practice the profession they like.

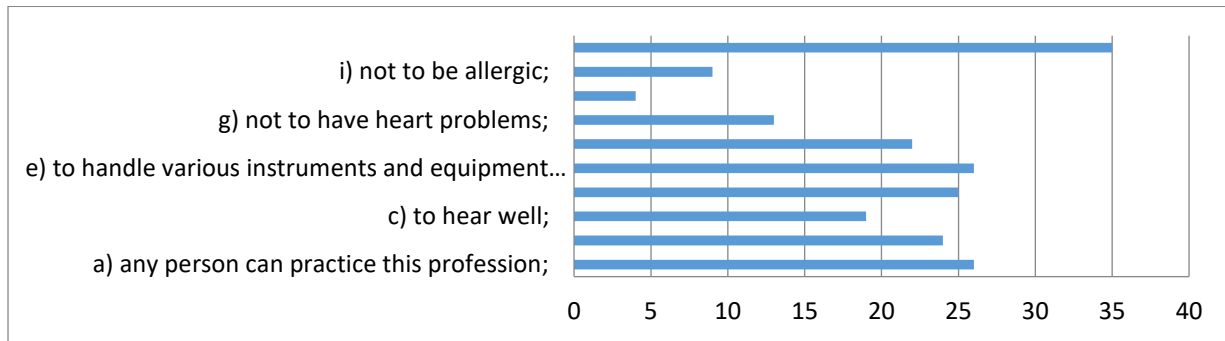


Figure 12. What health requirements does the profession you might embrace impose?

Working conditions in which the employee carries out their professional activity are also important. Thus, the item *What working conditions are specific to the profession you like?* allowed the identification of respondents' knowledge about working conditions. It was found that 59% of respondents consider office work specific to the profession they like, 46% - work in large rooms with people, 38% - home office, 21% - outdoor work, 20% - laboratory work, 11% - workshop work, 5% each - work in extreme conditions or work in a means of transport, 4% - work in a production section.

Own capabilities for the profession were also evaluated. Starting from the idea that respondents have visual impairments, one item asked them to *assess their own capabilities for the preferred profession from the perspective of their own health status?* 51% of respondents are aware that visual impairments could create certain obstacles for them in entering the workforce. The question arises: are the other 49% of respondents aware that vision problems could create certain employment difficulties for them.

It is not enough to know one's own professional qualities; it is necessary to practice them constantly. It was determined that 82% of respondents indicated that they test their professional qualities, among which, during school lessons (25%), within clubs and sports sections (7%), within extracurricular institutions (17%), and at home (33%) without indicating what these professional qualities are.

To identify the evaluation of professional self-determination, respondents were asked if *The decision regarding the choice of profession is final.* Only 29% of respondents indicated that the decision is final 71% of respondents specified that their decisions can be influenced: by parents (38% of cases), specialists in this professional field (22% of cases), friends (13% of cases), teachers (5% of cases), and 22% of cases respondents indicated that someone else could influence their decision

The fact that 71% of respondents are not sure that the decision regarding the choice of profession is final is also confirmed by the duration of maintaining interest in a certain profession (Figure 14): 5% of respondents indicated they have liked the profession for less than a month, for

9% the passion lasts between 1 and 3 months, 23% have been interested in a profession for 3-6 months, 13% - between 6 and 12 months. For 50% of respondents, interest in a profession lasts more than 1 year.

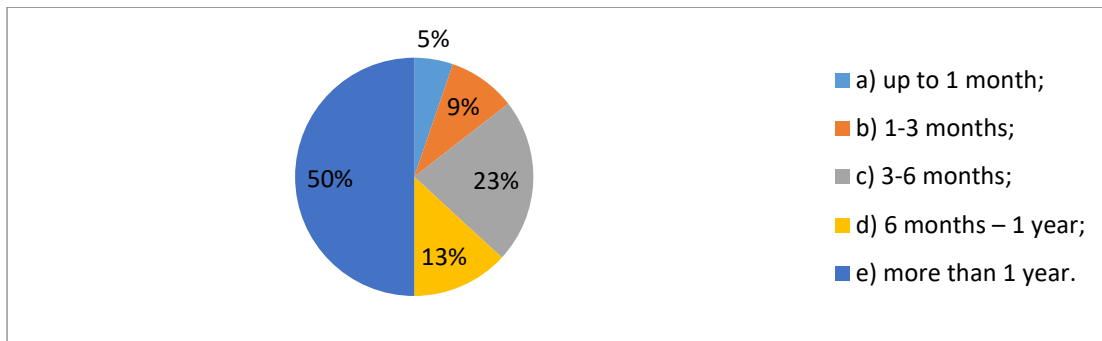


Figure 13. How long have you liked a profession?

At the same time, only 30% of respondents who participated in the research indicated the reasons for not choosing a profession: 57% indicated they are undecided, 22% specified they do not like any profession, the others specified the following reasons: emotional state, lack of self-confidence, not knowing oneself, misinformation, it's complicated (Figure 14). The answers provided show that respondents have not analyzed the causes either alone or together with others, even though professions are discussed in many lessons.

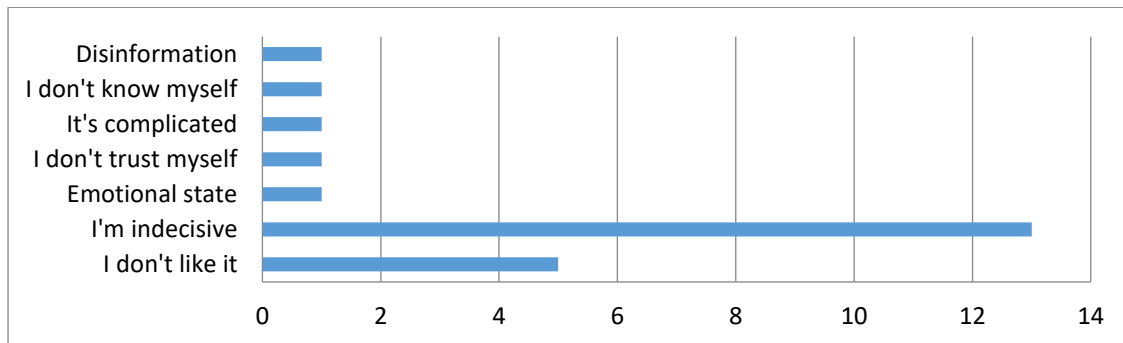


Figure 14. If you haven't chosen a profession yet, what is the reason?

Professional activity uses a range of resources – natural, material, financial, human, informational, personal. We are interested in the role of personal resources in the career guidance of people with visual impairments. According to Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis & Jackson, personal resources are positive self-evaluations associated with resilience, referring to the person's perception of their own abilities to control and effectively influence their personal environment [1]. In the opinion of Kalashnikova S. A., personal resources represent the systemic and integral characteristic of the personality, which facilitates overcoming difficult life situations, actualizing and manifesting in the processes of personality self-determination [9]. Synthesizing the existing concepts in the specialized literature, we consider that personal resources are a complex mechanism that ensures the efficient functioning of the person in any activity.

We distinguish 2 types of resources that influence each other:

- **Internal resources** form the totality of stable qualities:
 - innate with which the individual is endowed from birth (aptitudes, temperament, etc.);

- acquired which the individual acquires and develops throughout life (character traits, interests, motivations, values, abilities, etc.)
- **External resources** form the totality of elements made available to the individual by:
 - the surrounding environment: objects, phenomena, and elements of nature;
 - the social environment/relationships: people, communication, activities, and events.

Analysis of the results obtained regarding the personal resources used by respondents allowed us to identify their knowledge regarding personal resources, establish the type of resources used for recovery in difficult situations, determine the factors influencing rapid exhaustion, skills in formulating goals, and identifying the necessary resources for achieving professional goals.

To identify knowledge regarding external resources, respondents were asked to choose among 5 elements from the 2 environments they live in, having the possibility to select one or more answer options. Most respondents opted for elements of the social environment/relationships. Thus, 49% indicated that people are important, 30% - communication, and 25% - different activities or events. Less important are elements of the surrounding environment: for 21%, nature is important, and for 13% - objects. A totally different picture emerges in the case of internal resources, where 34% of respondents either did not indicate the internal resources they possess, did not know what to answer, or specified that they do not possess any potential. The other respondents indicated at least one personal resource, identifying acquired internal resources more easily (abilities – 30%, qualities – 20%) and innate internal resources with more difficulty (talent – 9%, cognitive capacities – 5%, physical capacities – 1%). The question arises: what were the factors that influenced the respondents' choice of profession, if they do not know their own potential?

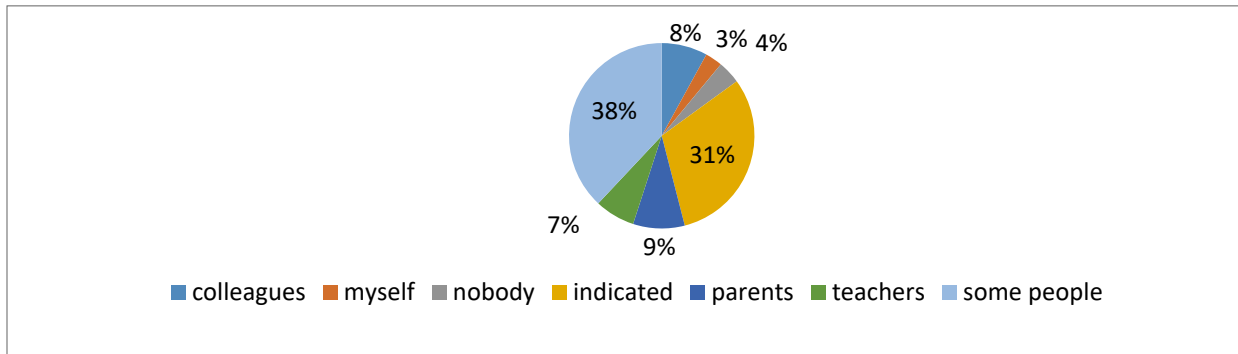


Figure 15. Social Factors

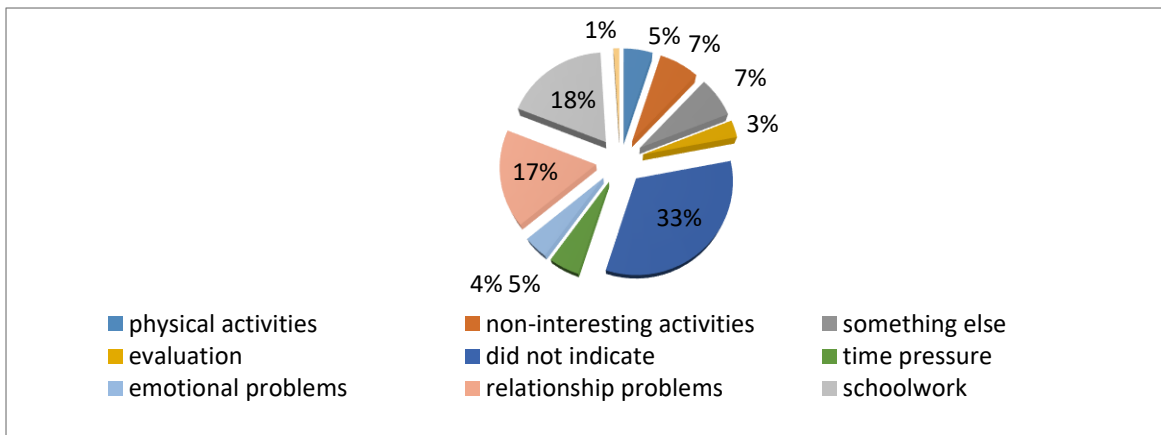


Figure 16. Situational Factors

To determine the factors influencing rapid exhaustion, respondents were asked to name 2 categories of factors: social (Figure 15) and situational (Figure 16). As social factors, respondents named teachers - 7%, parents - 9%, colleagues - 3%, themselves - 3%. The other answers were more general. 38% indicated "some people" without specifying concretely, while 36% either did not indicate or believe there are no people who exhaust them. The list of situational factors indicated by respondents is much larger, although 33% could not enumerate the situations or problems that exhaust them. The following situations or categories of problems that exhaust them were indicated: school tasks or assessment - 21%, relational problems - 17%, uninteresting activities - 7%, time pressure - 5%, physical activities - 5%, emotional problems - 4%, stress of choice - 1%.

To cope with exhausting social and situational factors, each person turns to different personal resources (Figure 17). Thus, 32% of respondents named no resource, 3% turn to resource persons, 6% regain their strength in nature, walking alone, with friends, or with a pet, 3% - meditate, 3% - do sports, 5% - either turn to a hobby, draw, listen to music, or use various aquatic procedures, 4% recharge their batteries with the help of television or the internet, and 8% read. Not all respondents use active methods to regain strength. Thus, 4% cry and eat compulsively, 5% isolate themselves, and 33% indicated sleep as the only method of regaining inner strength.

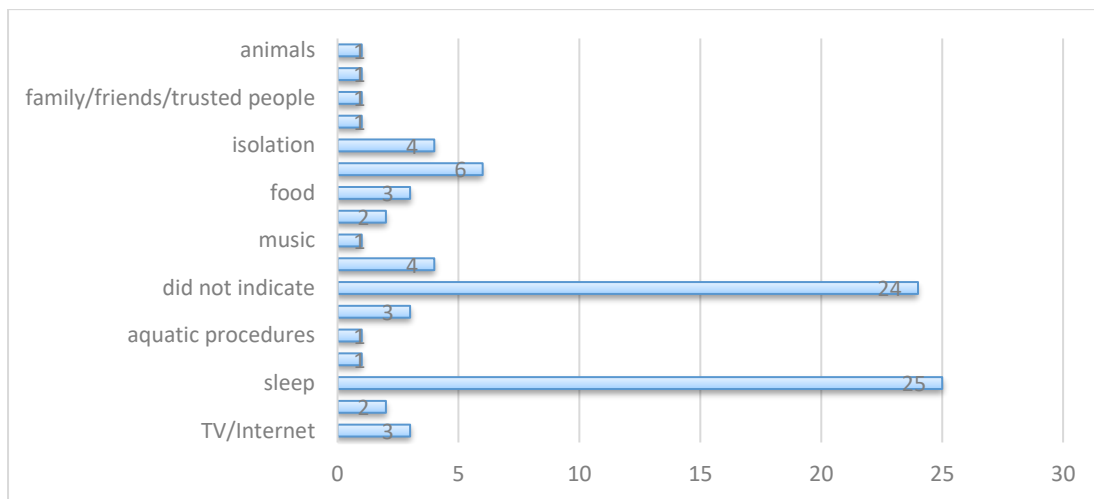


Figure 17. What do you do when you are exhausted (have no more strength)?

Starting from the idea that intention is the desire to achieve something to reach a goal, during the research we were also interested in the skills of formulating goals and identifying the necessary resources for achieving professional goals. In this sense, respondents were asked to list their desires, formulate a goal for the next year, and identify the personal resources that can help them achieve the goals.

A significant difference can be observed in the *studies* category. The fact that for 11% of respondents desires are related to studies and exactly 39% formulated goals related to studies for the next year demonstrates that people with visual impairments are aware of the role of studies in ensuring a successful professional future. 3% of respondents desire financial well-being and 1% more respondents formulated goals related to the financial/material aspect. However, the answers were not concrete enough to establish whether they belong to the category of professional desires or goals. Although 54% of respondents formulated extra-professional desires for the next year,

only 16% formulated extra-professional goals. In addition, 40% formulated goals in the category of sports performance and 13% in the category of personal development. It is worrying that 18% of respondents did not formulate any goal, and 57% could not identify the personal resources that can help them achieve the goals formulated for the next year.

Discussions and conclusions

The research results demonstrate that people with visual impairments know what profession they will embrace and consider that they must continue their studies both to obtain a profession and to become a good specialist. However, the professional plans of people with visual impairments do not often include attending optional/elective classes, school and extracurricular clubs, participating in trips to enterprises, and/or meetings with professionals in the field, etc. People with visual impairments consider that knowledge, skills, and acquired abilities are important for a profession, and school lessons, the internet, and television are the main sources for developing them. For the most part, they answered that they know the requirements imposed by the profession they have chosen or are interested in. However, the lack of interest in attending activities where they can gather the necessary information to learn more about the world of professions could lead us to the idea that their knowledge is superficial. Half of the people who participated in the research are aware that visual impairments could create certain obstacles for them in entering the workforce.

The research showed that people with visual impairments encounter difficulties in identifying personal resources. They consider the social environment or relationships more important as an external resource and acquired resources as internal resources, but they encountered difficulties in identifying the personal resources that can help them cope with the social and situational factors that exhaust them. Although few participants have desires related to studies and the professional future, the goals formulated for the next year demonstrate that people with visual impairments are aware of the role of studies in ensuring a successful professional future. But it was found that more than half of the participants could not identify the personal resources that can help achieve the goals formulated for the next year.

Researching professional intentions and personal resources is a first stage of investigating the results regarding the role of personal resources in the career guidance of people with visual impairment, which will finalize with the development of a psychological model for leveraging the personal resources of people with visual impairment, a model which, in our opinion, will contribute to the successful inclusion of these people in the labor market.

(Note: Titles are kept in their original language as per academic convention. Bracketed translations or transliterations are added for non-English/non-Romanian titles where helpful. Translations of annotations like [online], [citat] are provided.)

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