

Thesis of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**Career development of students in secondary school
specialized in music based on a Social-Cognitive
Career Theory**

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Debrecen, 2022

Aims and study characteristics

A multitude of social stereotypes and research findings bring our attention to the health-damaging behaviors of musicians and students of music (Dobson, 2010; Kapsetaki & Easmon, 2017), while other studies suggest the opposite (Hipple, Chesky & Young, 2018; Noble, 2018). Teachers play a key role in the everyday life of music students, in addition to their professional development and career guidance, they also take part in solving their everyday problems (Duffek, 2009; Fehérvári, 2009; Gyarmathy, 2012; Nogaj, 2014).

Vocational music training has an intermediate stage to which much less attention is paid. There are currently 25 secondary schools specialized in music in Hungary. The type of school – coined secondary schools specialized in music – is quite young in the field of Hungarian public education, as we can speak from 80 years. Although the type of school is not unknown in other countries - for example, music education operates in a similar system in Poland and Serbia (Kołodziejski, 2015; Maffli & Eicker, 2011; Perkovic, 2016) - this kind of carefully constructed, interdependent music education system is not widespread globally. In America and England, group education is common, so young people acquire musical knowledge in a band or choir, and individual lessons are available as part of private education (Chardos, n.d.; Körtesi, 2015; Nerys & O'Donnell, 2019). We can consider the secondary schools specialized in music operating in Hungary as a special type of school where the students are placed in an environment that is different from other vocational grammar schools (Héjja, 2017). In addition, young people are exposed to significant mental and physical strain due to their school responsibilities and the competitive spirit of the profession. The focus of our research is the complex examination of the career development of students participating in music training in secondary schools specialized in music. The focus of our research is on the career development of students participating in music training in secondary schools specialized in music.

For our empirical work, we used the Social-Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994, 2000) as a theoretical framework, allowing us to obtain a complex and orderly picture of the career development components of the young people participating in our study. We place great emphasis on the effects of the family's socioeconomic status on young people, assessing it in multiple dimensions. We compared certain indicators of family background, school type, and demographic indicators with the characteristics, aspirations, health behavior indicators, general and specific self-efficacy, and self-esteem of young people related to further education and career choice. As parts of the Social-Cognitive Career Theory, these have a significant impact

on the career development of musicians (Bergee et al., 2001; Rickels et al., 2010; Thorton & Bergee, 2008; Zelenak, 2011).

The research aims to fill a gap in the field of educational science and psychology, because no such study has been conducted in Hungary in such a complex way for students attending secondary school specialized in music. This is a type of school in which young people attend vocational classes in addition to their general knowledge classes and have to spend the rest of their time practicing to be successful in the music field. In addition, due to their performance in competitions and concerts, their daily lives are characterized by an unusual workload. Although some topics of our study often appear in domestic and international research, these are not focused on the type of school we are studying, moreover, not in such a cohesive order as with the utilization of the social cognitive career model. In the course of our dissertation, we present the factors influencing career development and compare students attending secondary schools specialized in music, fine and applied arts high school students, and general curriculum high school students. Our goal was to examine how students attending secondary school specialized in music differ from young people in vocational and applied art high school and general grammar school in terms of their continuing education plans and some of their career development factors, as well as their aspirations, self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Applied methods

The target group of our research was students studying in secondary schools specialized in music. Institutions established in the 1940s and 1950s and 1980s were included in the survey as we did not undertake a full-scale research. Furthermore, we excluded students studying popular music in our study because we thought that the gap between the genres would have been too great. When selecting the two types of control groups, it was decisive to compare the results of music students with a traditional public education institution, i.e. a school that does not have a special function or department, for which students in general grammar school education were the most suitable. We also aimed to compare the indicators with young people studying in a similar type of school but in a different branch of art, so we chose students in the fine and applied arts departments.

As no known survey was carried out in secondary schools specialized in music in Hungary precedently, we tried to conduct research with students studying secondary schools specialized in music on the most diverse aspects possible. Since 2015, we have conducted questionnaire surveys to gain insight into young people's family self-image, their relationship

with their parents, family milieu and school choice motivations, comparing these with aspects of demographic and socioeconomic status. In the course of our online questionnaire survey conducted in the autumn of 2017, we compared the life management competencies of such students along with their family background variables, plans for further education and their results on the 2014 Felvi scale (Hungarian admission score for further education)

At the beginning of 2019, we conducted a total of four focus group interviews. Two with the participation of students attending secondary schools specialized in music and the other two with the participation of high school students specialized in illustration. There were eight individuals in each group, distributed proportionally by gender and grade: two girls and two boys from grades 9 and 11. Using the data obtained from the focus group interviews, we conducted a questionnaire survey after finalizing the questions. Our summary research was conducted between 2019 and 2020. The total number of responders is 860, of which 345 are students attending secondary schools specialized in music, 205 are high school and applied arts high school students, and 310 are general high school students. We did not aim for a comprehensive survey of the total population of music students, we managed to reach out to 15% of all students. The sample is representative, all seven regions of Hungary appear in the research.

9th and 11th grade students were included in the research. We chose these two grades because our goal was to map how young people feel about their careers at the beginning of high school and how this approach evolves over time (these are not the same students, so the study cannot be considered longitudinal). We did not consider it prudent to involve 12th graders, because in the last year of their studies, students' thoughts revolve almost exclusively around graduation and further education, so the survey would have been too direct, not to mention the workload of graduating grades.

The participants filled in a complex voluntary, self-reported paper-based questionnaire, which took place mainly as part of homeroom class, and in the case of musicians, group music lessons. The completion of the questionnaires was supervised by the class teacher, the specialist teacher, or the researcher. Prior to completing the questionnaires, we provided students with an active consent statement, and their parents with a passive consent statement with the moderation of the class teachers. We conducted our research with the approval of the Joint Psychological Research Ethics Committee (ethical license reference number: 2019/81), and we did not offer a reward for participating in the survey. The questionnaires were taken to the institutions by the researcher, and if this was not possible, they were sent to the schools by post. We first contacted the school management of each participating institution in the form of an e-mail detailing the

direction, specifics, and ethical implications of the study. This was followed by a personal or telephone conversation. The research included a partially adapted background questionnaire (Pusztai, 2009), Abbreviated Aspiration Index (Martos, Szabó & Rózsa, 2006), Rosenberg self-assessment scale (Sallay et al., 2014), Health-conscious behavior questionnaire (Nagy & Kovács, 2017), General self-efficacy scale (Kopp, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993), an abbreviated, modified version of the HDSEQ-HE Life Competence Questionnaire (Kiss, 2009), and in part we used self-developed measurement tools (career choice, sponsorship questionnaire). The data we obtained was analyzed by a quantitative method using the SPSS 27 program, and the database was dubbed the Social-Cognitive Career Theory (Szociál-Kognitív Pályamodell - SZKP) 2019-2020.

Results

The first group of hypotheses focused on factors related to the career development of young people. *We hypothesize that students in arts education would make their career choice decisions already during their elementary school years, as opposed to high school students.* A significant proportion of those who take part in art training are already committed to their chosen career in upper primary school, and even in their preschool age. Most of the high school students did not make a decision about what they wanted to do in the future until the age of 11. According to research (eg. Kenderfi, 2016, 2019), at the time of enrolling in high school, young people are not ready to decide on their future due to their age characteristics, but according to our results, young people make career decisions earlier in the case of art education. So the hypothesis was confirmed.

In the second proposition of the first hypothesis, we examined the significance of individuals influencing career choices. *We hypothesized that the role of teachers in art schools during career development is more prominent than teachers in high school.* The role of parents in career choice is outstanding among all schoolchildren, turned out to be most significant among high school students, in the case of music school students the teachers take on a more prominent role (Páskuné, 2008), consequently our hypothesis was confirmed. Among students in art education, the opinions of friends are also decisive in career decisions.

According to the third proposition of the first hypothesis, *we hypothesized that intrinsic reasons predominate among those participating in art education regarding career choice decisions and that proportion is higher than among high school students.* Regarding the career choice decision, we distinguished three groups based on the answers: interest, desire to transfer

cultural value, and self-expression. Interest plays an important role in career choice in all three school types. In addition, the desire to transfer cultural value and the importance of self-expression stood out. Self-expression was more important among young people in fine and applied arts education, and the desire to transfer cultural value is a significant drive for career choice among musicians. Thus, this part of the hypothesis has been confirmed, but there is also a difference between the participants in art training. The attraction of material goods appeared in the highest proportion among high school students when compared to students in secondary school specialized in music, in their case, interest was the most typical motive for choosing a career.

The second topic examined relates to the long-term life goals of young people and the human traits they consider desirable. *We hypothesized that among the aspirations, intrinsic goals would stand out among students in art education.* Even in art education, musicians are prominent in terms of intrinsic goals, therefore our assumption was confirmed. Extrinsic aspirations appeared significantly more frequent among high school students, except for the desire for fame, which was significant among musicians. This is unsurprising, since perfectionism and exhibitionism are not unknown features among performers (Mirnics, 2013). Glenn Gould (2009) pointed out that the essence of music is found by the performer if he is able to ignore these appearances (Monsaingeon, 2009).

Our observation also extended to which inner human qualities young people consider to be really important. *We hypothesized that differences in human traits considered desirable by school type could be observed. Thus, we expected the desirability of adaptability among musicians and creativity among fine and applied artists, in line with the training profile and social stereotypes. However, certain qualities, such as perseverance, diligence, or self-confidence, are equally important in all types of students.* In all three school types, perseverance was the most important trait, especially among high school students. Diligence is also important regardless of the type of school, however it is also the most significant among high school students, while among fine and applied artists, specialized creativity and talent were the preferred human traits. Contrary to expectations, the importance of self-confidence was not outstanding in any of the school types. Humility can be mentioned as a desirable human trait that seems special among musicians. Our hypothesis was partially confirmed, as creativity appeared as a special trait between visual and applied artists, but adaptability did not stand out among musicians, instead the trait of humility was prevalent.

Health behaviors of young people were also surveyed. *We hypothesized that the health behavior indices of students in secondary schools specialized in music did not differ from those*

of students in the other two school types. The high school students were the most conscious, followed by musicians, and subsequently by the students in fine and applied arts. In certain health behavioral factors (physical activity, preventive health), high school students stood out, and we found similar results with musicians in terms of nutrition, smoking, substance use, subjective health, and attitudes related to emotional balance. Young musicians expressed similar behavior with the youth in fine arts and crafts in the areas of alcohol consumption and telephone and internet use. Although age was a predominant factor for the indicators of health behavior, there are also differences according to the type of school. According to prior research no significant difference can be detected between grammar schools and vocational grammar schools in relation to the health behavior of young people (Németh et al., 2011). Our hypothesis has not been confirmed, as students in secondary schools specialized in music are situated between the two types of schools in terms of health behavior.

Socioeconomic status and a supportive social environment were also studied in relation to health behavior. *We hypothesized that regardless of school type, higher socioeconomic status and a supportive social environment (support of family, teachers, friends) appear as protective factors in relation to youth health behaviors.* Parents' higher education was indeed a protective factor in most cases, with the exception of substance use and alcohol consumption, where we found higher levels of aversion among children of parents with lower education. During this period, the role of the peer group, which emerged as a risk factor for alcohol consumption in our survey, is prevalent. This influence has been observed in other surveys (Elekes, 2005; Kovács & Pikó, 2009; Laurie et al., 2016; Pikó, 2010; Settertobulte & Gaspar, 2004).

Higher financial status emerged as a protective factor in terms of physical activity, subjective health and emotional balance, while young people living in more modest financial conditions demonstrate a more aversive attitude towards alcohol consumption, substance use and telephone and internet use. In addition, Ranschburg (2013) highlighted that poverty can appear as a risk factor for deviant behavior as well as the nouveau riche status. The data in the literature do not provide a clear explanation for the relationship between financial situation of the family and the substance use habits of young people: similar to Ranschburg's statement, addictive behavior may appear among those living in better (Elekes, 2019) and worse (Elekes, 2005) financial conditions. Our proposition has not been substantiated because not all subfactors of higher socioeconomic status function in a protective manner. As for supporters in health behavior, we found a prominent role for family, teachers, and friends. While family and educator support reinforce positive improvement in health behaviors, friends have the opposite effect on alcohol use, substance use, and telephone and internet use. Therefore, those with a

stronger network of friends are more prone to addictive behavior. Thus, our hypothesis about the social support network was only partially confirmed. Our results support what is already portrayed in literature, namely that the strength of parental support is prominent in terms of health behaviors; young people who do not receive adequate support at home are more prone to deviant behavior under peer pressure (Elekes, 2005; Kovács & Pikó, 2009; Laurie et al., 2016; Pikó, 2010; Settertobulte & Gaspar, 2004).

Health behavior was also examined by age and gender. *We hypothesized that differences in the health behaviors of young people, regardless of school type, could be observed based on demographic characteristics such as age and gender.* Thus, those in higher grades as well as girls can be characterized by more conscious health behaviors. 11th graders have an accepting attitude towards alcohol, smoking, and substance use, and perceive their subjective health to be worse than their 9th graders. Regarding nutrition, we found more positive results among senior graders, but only among musicians. By healthy eating we mean eating five times a day, eating vegetables and fruits regularly, and eating in a relaxed environment. An important component is the consumption of adequate amounts of fluids, and the reduction of coffee consumption and the avoidance of alcoholic and sugary soft drinks (Szabó, 2012).

We found differences between the sexes for certain health behavioral factors. In terms of nutrition and alcohol consumption, girls show an attitude towards a healthy lifestyle. On the other hand, boys have a more positive attitude towards physical activity. Boys rate their subjective health and emotional balance significantly more positively than girls.

According to prior studies, girls tend to pay more attention to their eating habits, the reason for which is the effect of health awareness and the ideal of beauty portrayed by the media (Böröndi & Szakály, 2010; Inchley et al., 2020; OLEF, 2014; Pikó, 2012; Pico & Cross, 2008). Poorer emotional balance in girls may be correlated to the incidence of anxiety symptoms being higher among women when compared to men (Örkényi, 2005). We need to take into account that the weakness of the male gender does not fit into society's general worldview, thus men tend to feel a duty to appear strong (Csizmadia & Balku, 2016). Hence, our proposition was only partially confirmed.

The fourth main unit of the study concerns the *general self-efficacy* of young people as well as their *specific self-efficacies*. An individual's self-image influences behavior and cognition, defining goals (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002; Turkish, 2017). *We hypothesized that overall self-efficacy and life management competencies are mostly influenced by socioeconomic status indicators, demographic characteristics, and the supportive social network.* In terms of overall self-efficacy, we found no differences between school types.

Differences were observed in self-efficacy, namely within socioeconomic status in relation to parents' level of education and financial status. Young people of mothers with higher education are characterized by a higher level of self-efficacy. Several factors may contribute to the development of self-efficacy, but children first receive feedback on their performance in family settings (Bandura, 1994b; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Lőrincz, 2020; Mohanraj & Latha, 2005; Schunk & Meece, 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Upon observing life management competencies, the children of more qualified parents also showed higher values, typically the education of the fathers proved to be decisive.

Financial situation also affects general and specific self-efficacy: the better the financial situation, the higher the self-efficacy (Shek & Liang, 2016). In life management competencies, there was a positive effect of subjective material well-being in relation to interpersonal communication, self-management, and relationships, while objective material characteristics only differed in the area of communication skills.

Depending on the demographic indicators, we also found a difference in overall self-efficacy. Boys reported higher self-efficacy, which is consistent with prior findings (Meece & Jones, 1996; Nótin & Páskuné, 2013). In the observation of life management competencies, we found differences in gender within school types in two cases; in the case of high school students, the skill of integration into society, and in the case of fine and applied artists, body skills stood out among the girls. Students in higher grades have higher levels of overall self-efficacy, although there was no difference in life management competencies by grade. A similar result in general self-efficacy has been found among young people in China, however, an overall decline in the level of self-efficacy have been observed among Western youth over the years (Diseth, Meland & Breidablik, 2014; Jain & Dowson, 2009; Shek & Liang, 2016).). What we have experienced is more contradictory than confirming previous results. Our hypothesis was partially confirmed, as in only a few cases did demographic and socioeconomic status characteristics were decisive in the field of life management competencies.

As a second proposition for the fourth hypothesis, *we suggested that there are differences between school types in some life management competencies that can be deduced from the characteristics of the school type. In this way, the skill of managing communication (self-expression, verbal and nonverbal communication, and emotional intelligence) as well as managing close relationships stands out among musicians.* With the exception of physical prowess, we found the highest level of life management competencies among students in music high schools. We suggest that the answer may be found in the school atmosphere, social music practice, and the extroverted nature of young musicians. The hypothesis was partially

confirmed, as skills were indeed predominant, but in addition, a number of skills were also shown to be significant.

The last hypothesis of the research was formulated in relation to self-esteem. *We hypothesized that self-esteem is determined by socioeconomic status indicators, demographic characteristics, and social factors (support from family, teachers, and friends) rather than school type.* The degree of self-esteem increases with age (V. Komlósi et al., 2017), this was confirmed by our results, we experienced higher self-esteem among 11th graders. In terms of parents' educational attainment, the self-esteem of children of parents with higher educational attainment is higher. Parents' educational attainment is also reflected in their child's self-esteem, additionally, different parenting styles also contribute to children's positive or negative self-image of themselves (Kis, 2013). In terms of family structure, those raised in single-parent families have lower self-esteem. In these families, mostly due to the workload of the parent, not enough quality time is spent with their child, and due to divorce the child often does not have the opportunity to maintain an intimate relationship with the other parent. In many cases their financial resources are more modest (Bodonyi & Hegedűs, 2006; Harcsa & Monostori, 2020; Heckman, 2020; Pusztai, 2009). Students living in better financial conditions have higher levels of self-esteem in the study sample, and this result is also consistent with literature data (cf. Sallay et al., 2014).

The importance of the family's supportive attitude towards young people was also reflected in the results of the self-esteem assessment: support from the family is accompanied by a higher self-esteem of their child. According to the literature, a supportive parental attitude strengthens a positive child's self-image, during which the family creates an environment that provides mental and physical security (Banai, 2015; Bodonyi, Busi & Vizelyi, 2006; Marosi, 2014).

We found significant differences in self-esteem between school types. High school students showed the highest level of self-esteem, followed by the musicians and finally the fine and applied arts classes. The hypothesis was fulfilled in the sense that demographic and socioeconomic status and the social support network have a great influence on self-esteem, but there were differences between school types.

The early commitment of young musicians to their careers and their close and confidential relationship with their teachers in addition to their parents can confirm to many music teachers that their work is of paramount importance in the career development of young musicians. However, our research can be beneficial to any parent, seeing that although

education or material well-being are determinants of adolescents' health behaviors, self-esteem, or self-efficacy, a supportive parental attitude is in all cases a significant protective force.

In summary, the novel result of our research is that students attending secondary school specialized in music differ from those who participate in other art education when considering certain aspects of their career development. Compared to students in the school types taken under scrutiny, music learners are more likely to commit to their chosen career, their teachers play a more prominent role in the career choice process. These students stand out in terms of life skills, and have higher self-esteem and fewer drop-outs than students in the fine and applied arts. They are more aware of health behaviors. In addition, their socio-economic status, a factor which also influences career development, puts them in the upper middle class, while students in fine and applied arts generally come from a more humble background.



Registry number: DEENK/158/2022.PL
Subject: PhD Publication List

Candidate: Emerencia Bella Héjja
Doctoral School: Doctoral School of Human Sciences
MTMT ID: 10058168

List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (2)

- Héjja, B. E.:** Zeneművészeti szagimnazisták családi háttérének bemutatása a családszerkezet, testvérek száma, a szülők iskolai végzettsége és a szülők gyermekükkel való kommunikációja mentén.
In: A zenepedagógia múltja, jelene és jövője : tanulmánykötet a felsőfokú zenetanárképzés 50 éves évfordulója alkalmából rendezett konferencia előadásából. Szerk.: Váradi Judit, Szűcs Tímea, Debreceni Egyetemi K., Debrecen, 191-204, 2018, (Oktatáskutatás a 21. században, ISSN 2559-8864 ; 7.) ISBN: 9789633187647
- Héjja, B. E.:** A zenei képzésben eltérő formában részt vevő tanulók családi háttere és énképe.
In: Sokszínű zenepedagógia : tanulmányok a zeneoktatás szerepéről, módszereiről és társadalmi hatásairól. Szerk.: Váradi Judit, Szűcs Tímea, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 56-72, 2017, (Oktatáskutatás a 21. században, ISSN 2559-8864 ; 4.) ISBN: 9789633186756

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

- Héjja, B. E.:** A zeneművészeti szagimnazista tanulók iskolaválasztási motivációi.
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Hungarian scientific articles in international journals (1)

- Héjja, B. E.:** Alkoholfogyasztás, dohányzási szokások, valamint tudatállapot-módosító szerek használata zeneművészeti szagimnazisták között.
PedActa. 8 (2), 51-60, 2018. ISSN: 2248-3527.





List of other publications

Hungarian book chapters (1)

5. **Héjja, B. E.**, Lehotka, I., Dragony, G.: Klasszikus kulturális szokások és attitűdök.
In: Művészeti körkép : kutatás a művészeti nevelés helyzetéről és a lehetőségeiről, a tanórai és tanórán kívüli művészeti tevékenységről és rendezvényekről. Szerk.: Várad Judit, Magyar Művészeti Akadémia Művészetelméleti és Módszertani Kutatóintézet, Budapest, 71-90, 2020.
ISBN: 9786156192158

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)

6. **Héjja, B. E.**: Losonczi Ágnes "A zene életének szociológiája" c. könyvéről (Zeneműkiadó, 1969).
Parlando. 2, 1-5, 2022. ISSN: 0133-2767.
7. **Héjja, B. E.**: Bencze Lászlóné Dr. Mező Judit (1933-2017) életművére emlékezve.
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8. **Héjja, B. E.**: Az alapfokú és középfokú zeneoktatás helyzete Magyarországon.
Parlando. 2, 1-30, 2016. ISSN: 0133-2767.
9. **Héjja, B. E.**: A zenész lelke.
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Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)

10. **Héjja, B. E.**, Szalai, T.: Investigating attitudes and musical taste related to music lessons of primary school students in Debrecen.
Hung. Educ. Res. J. 9 (2), 318-331, 2019. ISSN: 2062-9605.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1556/063.9.2019.1.27>
11. **Héjja, B. E.**, Joó, O.: Agnes Engler (2014): Student dimensions- the mature students of higher education. Debrecen:CHERD.
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Hung. Educ. Res. J. 7 (3), 99-102, 2017. ISSN: 2062-9605.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14413/HERJ/7/3/10>





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13. Szűcs, T., **Héjja, B. E.**: The Institutional Network and State of Music Education in Hungary.
Hung. Educ. Res. J. 7 (3), 39-54, 2017. ISSN: 2062-9605.

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

06 April, 2022

