
CAREER CHOICE MOTIVATIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN TUNISIA

Hanen Khanchel, IHEC, University of Carthage, Tunisia
LIGUE, University of Manouba

ABSTRACT

This article is based on a sociological framework and data collection from Tunisian students in the commercial and administrative affairs in order to analyze their priority motivations for career choice. We take a particular interest in the study of motivations in responsibility and professional representation in this field, these learners will be the guarantors of the faithful image, of objectivity of reporting and ethical behavior. The study was descriptive in nature and it employed a mixed methods design. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study had a sample of 50 respondents who were purposively selected. An empirical hierarchy of motivations shows that the interest of these participants to choose a speciality is certainly to advance the cause in which they are involved, but the primary source of motivation is first and foremost their career development. In the majority of cases, motivation is an integral part of their career, while in other cases, interest for commercial and administrative fields serves to build up social capital that can be used later in their job. However, our results are quite far from this reality: students show themselves to be more focused on the promise of rapid integration or that of attractive remuneration offered by the commercial and administrative affairs specialty of than on the regulated aspect represented by the profession. Theoretical and managerial implications are advanced highlighting the human, technological and relational sides of the study.

Keywords : Career choice, motivating factors, higher education, students, ICT

INTRODUCTION

In the face of growing challenges posed by global trends in technology, demographics and the environment, new career preferences and choices have emerged as more important than ever in the world and particularly in Tunisia. Commercial and administrative affairs was the main field of study chosen by students in Tunisia in 2019. That year, over 40,000 learners enrolled in higher education have studied this subject. The second most common field was engineering and related techniques, which attracted around 36,000 learners in the same year. The third field was computer sciences and telecommunications which attracted around 27,000 learners in the same year. On the other hand, information sciences were the least popular fields (INS, 2022). Commercial and administrative affairs constantly reflect on the evolution of their profession and the means of attracting and retaining young graduates. For this profession requiring a high degree of expertise, constant communication with potential young recruits is necessary, both to improve the image of the profession and to encourage them to invest in their career. In terms of the type of education, learners seem to have a preference for technical fields. In secondary education, more than half

of all A-level learners choose to study experimental science or technical studies. In higher education, technical fields such as engineering, ICT and natural sciences together account for more than 40 %. Based on ICT survey, Tunisian software developers rank highest among others in Maghreb countries.

In the Tunisian context, we deepen knowledge not only on student motivations, but also, more generally, on the university environment, studied in Musselin (2005), Adangnikou (2008) and Ientile-Yalenios (2013). This latest work focuses on various internal actors in universities. We question learners, thus complementing the work of Adangnikou (2008) who discusses the literature on student learning practices in academia. Another element strongly characterizes the Tunisian context. This is the rise in unemployment of graduates aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, there has been a rise in the unemployment rate of higher education graduates, which reached more than 30% (INS, 2022). This can be explained, among other things, by the structural and functional constraints on the Tunisian labor market due in particular to the weak capacity of the national economy to create jobs to reverse the upward trend in unemployment. Regarding the feminization of managers, it is differentiated in Tunisia. Therefore, inequalities persist in terms of access to decision-making functions. Women are often confronted with a "glass ceiling" and have less access to hierarchical positions (Ben Hassine, 2007). They are often limited to administrative or relational activities (Gadéa, 2003).

In this article we seek to understand the motivations of students to choose their career. Bourdieu (1979) emphasizes the idea that a profession is not a pre-existing object but a socio-historical construct related to the habitus. The habitus designates a system of preferences and motivations, a lifestyle specific to each person. It is not an automatism but a predisposition to act that influences the practices of individuals on a daily basis : their way of dressing, perceiving, speaking. Bourdieu (1977) has given a critique of the concept of "profession" that calls for a more reflexive analysis of the professions and in fact suggests not using the concept at all. In his theory of practice, he explicates the gist of that critique and argues it is possible to analyze it in detail. He regards professionalism as a form of symbolic capital, the substance of which is constantly at stake in power-driven contexts, both internally and externally. Professional fields are embedded in objective relations with other fields in what Bourdieu (1977) describes as a general field of power. Within each professional field, the legitimate substance of what it means to act in a "professional way" is constantly at stake. In turn, across various professional fields, within what Bourdieu (1977) describes as a larger field of power, the very idea or "formal content" of "professionalism" is subject to struggle and negotiation. This power-centered view emphasizes professionalism is a scarce symbolic resource, an object of a process of consecration and a source of legitimate forms of acting and interpreting. It thereby de-essentializes talk of professions and professionalization.

The foundations of our study are part of this literature. The choice of a career supposes that of a social group to which it belongs and is necessarily accompanied by reflections on a future professional identity. We could then legitimately assume that students who have chosen this very specific course have higher ethical predispositions than other students in more traditional management sections. If access to employment is a success, the rapid integration into the world of work is sometimes out of step with the educational achievements of young people. This discrepancy may be due both to a

gap between the level of diploma and skills associated with the job held and to a mismatch between the specialty of training and the profession exercised. While the term downgrading associated with the first type of shift is debating, both in terms of its definition and its scope, the fact remains that the qualifications for the jobs held by young people can sometimes seem problematic in relation to their level of diploma. The first years of working life, the scene of significant professional mobility, however, see the downgrading decrease, without this necessarily being accompanied by a better adjustment between job and training specialty (Sulzer, 2010). This question, which is little addressed in the literature, also leads us to reflect on the consequences that the results of this study may have on the renovation of programs and the incentive and remuneration systems in firms.

The first section presents the theoretical framework of the study. The second describes the context of the exploratory study and the data collection carried out with a sample of 50 young adults in the second year of a Master's degree. The third section is devoted to the literature review. Finally, we analyze the choice of students and examine the extent to which pecuniary interest for professional representation were articulated in the fourth section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career can be defined as a person's professional career within one or more organizations, in a profession, or more broadly, taking into account all of their experiences over time (Giraud and al, 2011). The motivation for career choice is the individual's desire to make efforts to improve their career development ambitions. It is a multidimensional construct that combines interrelated components of ambitions, interests and personality. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) makes it possible to distinguish two types of motivation:

Intrinsic motivation: "Doing something because it is inherently interesting and enjoyable". If an individual is intrinsically motivated for an activity, that is to say, he will do this activity for the pleasure that its execution gives him. Intrinsically motivated students are quick to put in more effort, be more persistent, and learn more deeply. **Extrinsic motivation:** "Doing something because it leads to a separate outcome". If an individual is extrinsically motivated for an activity, he will do this activity because he is pushed to do so by external elements or for a reward that the realization of this activity would give us (examples: competitions, punishment, reward, social pressure, constraints ...).

Herzberg et al., (1959) suggest "Hygiene factors" and "Motivator factors". It has been proposed that Motivator factors are intrinsic to the job, that is ; job content, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. The Hygiene factors or extrinsic factors include aspects of the job environment such as interpersonal relationships, salary, working conditions and security. McGregor (1960) suggested two theories in trying to study employee motivation. McGregor distinguished two alternative basic assumptions about individuals and their job. He called the two assumptions Theory X and Theory Y and according to him these two assumptions take opposite views of individuals's involvement to work in organizations. According to Maslow, a person's motivations result from the dissatisfaction of some of his needs. The work of Maslow (1954) makes it possible to classify human needs in order of importance in 5

levels. This ranking corresponds to the order in which they appear to the individual; satisfying the needs of one level generating the needs of the next level. Vroom's theory, unlike Maslow or Herzberg, does not focus on needs, but links an individual's motivation to their expectations and their chances of achieving them. Motivation depends on the individual's confidence in his ability to achieve the goal.

In a sociological approach, professional representations are elaborated in the action and professional interaction that contextualize them, by actors whose professional identities they found corresponding to groups of the professional field considered, in relation to objects salient for them in this field (Bataille, Blin, Jacquet-Mias & Piasser, 1997, p. 63). The representation of the commercial and administrative profession is, in other words, simultaneously influenced by the elements that structure and define the profession as well as by the actors who exercise their agency within this profession via the gestures they choose. We propose that the representation of the commercial and administrative profession, through its actors and its structuring elements, attracts a specific type of student, in particular students who are interested in the pecuniary advantages of the commercial and administrative profession more than in other facets of this profession (Champy 2009). Fields are relatively autonomous though interrelated spaces dividing society, and are structured according to the positions held by the agents who are part of a field (Bourdieu, 1976, 1995, 1996). The commercial and administrative profession operates, through its technical expertise (Champy 2009), in the cultural field as well as through its emphasis on income and pecuniary benefits, in the economic field. Over the years, the profession seems to have migrated from the cultural field to the economic field: the business logic underlying the emphasis on pecuniary income and benefits plays an increasingly important role in commercial and administrative career choice. This migration to the economic field is apparent, in particular, in the publications of associations: these publications highlight, through their images and their texts, the salary that can be earned by integrating the profession. Our theoretical framework is based on the presumption that students have affinities for the pecuniary advantages that their future profession can provide as an extrinsic motivation. Similarly, their future salary plays a sufficiently important role to constitute one of the elements which motivates their choice of career and speciality, in particular higher education. The analysis of the motivations of young adults to undertake and succeed in higher education has often been the subject of research (de Kerchove & Lambert, 2001; Boudrenghien & Frenay, 2011; Hamel, 2009). Interest is also traversed by a dialectical relationship: in addition to being a condition for the functioning of the field, because it motivates people to compete for the stake, it is also the product of the functioning of the field. By playing the game, agents invest their capital in the field with the aim of receiving a dividend and, therefore, increasing the value of the capital (Bourdieu, 1972). Our theoretical framework is based on the concept of professional identity to operate the attraction of a specific type of student towards the commercial and administrative studies sector. Professional identities are "socially recognized ways for individuals to identify with one another in the field of work and employment. (Dubar, 2000, p. 95). The professional identity of a young individual, in the process of choosing his field of study, is still in formation; it is built on the basis of his socialization within his family, his friends, his acquaintances, during his childhood, his adolescence and his youth, in particular through his schooling. Professional identity can thus be considered as part of the broader notion of habitus, which Bourdieu (2000) defines as

a "socialized, historical transcendental subjectivity whose patterns of perception and appreciation are the product of collective and individual history" (p. 259). Professional identity plays an important role in the way an individual identifies, chooses and integrates his professional reference group, that is to say a group in which he recognizes himself professionally (Mangen & Brivot 2014). For students with an affinity for pecuniary benefits, such reference groups focus on pecuniary values, such as the future salary the student may earn once he completes his studies and enters his profession. Insofar as these values resonate with the professional identity of a student, the latter feels an affinity with the reference group, with which he will identify and which he will try to integrate.

To sum up, the different agents who can constitute reference groups for students underline the pecuniary values that end up attracting students motivated by pecuniary considerations to the commercial and administrative field. Likewise, a selection takes place. It makes it possible to match students to their future profession, and it operates on financial criteria. Our empirical analysis illustrates this framework.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed methods design. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were addressed to a sample of 50 young adults in the second year of a Master's degree. Due to the complexity of surveying students' career choice motivations, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and processed. According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), mixed -methods research is the type of study in which a researcher combines both elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (p. 123). In this research, methodological and participant triangulation were conducted in order to provide supplementary and confirmatory data (Wacheux, 1996). Our approach is abductive in the sense of Peirce "Abduction is based on the connection between what has been observed with something different" (Dumez 2013 : p195). We have chosen to analyze the discourse produced and written by the students in a questionnaire comprising an open question. Each student's answer, each speech produced, was exploited according to the method of syntactic analysis which is based on the occurrence of words as units hierarchically superior to the sentence. It is therefore a study of the production of meaning based on the linguistic identification of markers in the discourse of students ; this method allows us to explain certain phenomena in a more relevant way than within the framework of the global statement.

RESULTS

We found it useful to analyze the results, in the order of the questions posed to the students before discussing them concerning :

- The discourse of students on their motivations to choose commercial and administrative affairs as a speciality,
- The correspondence analysis.

Analysis of student discourse (to the open question : why did you choose administrative affairs as a specialty)

The attraction for the specialty is varied but nevertheless the same arguments are often put forward by the students. Thus, we retain 8 reasons for commercial and administrative career choice (Table 1):

Table 1 : Codes and examples of verbatim quotations related to 8 reasons for commercial and administrative career choice categories.

Codes	Subcategories	Categories	Verbatim quotations
R1	The possibility of exercising a variety of professions.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“Commercial and administrative career offers the possibility of accessing a variety of professions, in particular allowing access to professions of excellence at a very good level. I think this profession gives various skills and it's an asset, I don't expect to be 'bored' during my career”.</i>
R2	A privileged position.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“ The excellent perception of the profession by third parties allows to have a privileged position vis-à-vis the managers ”.</i>
R3	The family tradition.	Extrinsic motivation	<i>“ By family vocation ”.</i>
R4	Thinking and learning mechanisms inherent to the profession.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“ I like the logic and straightforwardness that comes with the profession “.</i> <i>“When I was in final year, I hesitated between pursuing this profession. I started by doing a mathematics or technology degree, but I realized that it was really the application of reasoning and management that interested me and I reoriented myself towards commercial and administrative through a training. ”</i> <i>“Commercial and administrative field is regulated and standardized. That's what I love about this profession. Everything must be square”</i> <i>“Interest in numbers and logic”</i>
R5	Pecuniary work motivations	Extrinsic motivation	<i>“ The career and salary possibilities are interesting“</i>

R6	Proximity to companies.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“The commercial and administrative sector allows you to be close to companies, to advise them. Autonomy and the ability to analyze a situation are important factors in this sector. ”</i>
R7	The assurance of having a job and diversity of missions.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>"Booming sector, especially for young graduates : many offers on the market".</i>
R8	Career opportunities and job challenges.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“Lots of jobs and challenges”.</i>
R9	Vocation.	Intrinsic motivation	<i>“Passion and Logic” .</i>

The correspondence analysis

The research employed purposive sampling design and collected data using a questionnaire to a sample of 50 students of the Tunisian university. Analysis of the data was done using SPSS database in which the research ran cross tabulated frequency tables that contained data relevant to the findings. Moreover, the study had two hypotheses that were tested using cross tabulated Pearson chi-square test and based on the Cramer's V statistics. Correspondence analysis is a descriptive and exploratory technique for the analysis of cross- and multi-divisional tables, which allows finding connections between qualitative variables (Greenacre, 2007). The following variables were selected for analysis:

- Y1 – Pecuniary work motivations according to the distribution of bonus or dividend by interval ; variable categories : 0-15%, 15-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50% and over 50% ;

- Y2 – Interest for commercial and administrative field: increased, decreased, unchanged;

- X1 – Motivation to join a regulated profession: Yes; No; na.

Chi-squared test results between X1 and Y1 and between X1 and Y2 are presented table 2.

Table 2. Results of a chi-squared test

Statistics measure	χ^2	df	P
Statistics: X1 (3) x Y1 (6)			
Pearson's χ^2	35,922	10	0,00009
Cramér's V	0,37028		

Statistics: X1 (3) x Y2 (3)			
Pearson's χ^2	18,0735	4	0,00119
Cramér's V	0,26265		

The results of the chi-squared independence test indicate that between variable X1 and both other variables: there is a statistically significant dependence. The strength of these relationships, based on the Cramer's V statistics, can be considered as weak to moderate. Then, the correspondence analysis was carried out. Its results can be presented graphically on perception maps what makes the concluding much easier. Judging by the position of the points in the plot (Figure 1) it may be concluded that the greatest dependence is shown between the percentage of pecuniary work motivations(Y1), and motivation to join a regulated profession (X1). They have the closest coordinate values in 1 dimension, which is dominant, judging by the eigenvalue, and these points are the most distant from other categories. Furthermore, considering the 2nd dimension, The pecuniary work motivations is on the opposite sides of 0 and might be associated respectively with the categories "21-30%" and "0-15%" of the second variable. So these answers (circled in the plot) relatively more often appeared in the answer of the one respondent. It is difficult to combine the categories "15- 20%" and "31-40%" with a certain category of Y1. Therefore, it can be stated that the respondents belonging to the first category who receive best salaries (circled in the plot) are more motivated to join a regulated profession. However, The respondents belonging to the last category who receive low salaries (circled in the plot) are less motivated to join a regulated profession. What we can notice on the other hand, is the absence of purpose in the speeches : no one mentions the regulated aspect and only one student only cites the standards of the profession. However, of the few students who verbalize their motivation to choose an administrative and commercial career, students say they are motivated by the regulated aspect of the profession, they would not be bothered by the fact that the profession is not regulated and they did not think about the question.

Judging by the position of the points in the plot (Figure 2) it may be concluded that the greatest dependence is shown between the interest for commercial and administrative field (Y2), and motivation to join a regulated profession (X1). Therefore, it can be stated that the respondents who have an increased interest for commercial and administrative field (circled in the plot) are more motivated to join a regulated profession. However, the respondents who have not interest for commercial and administrative field (circled in the plot) are less motivated to join a regulated profession.

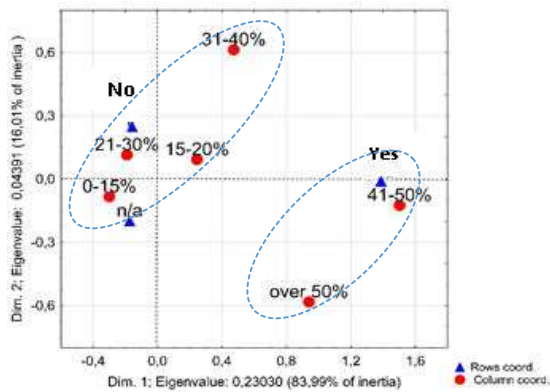


Fig. 1. Map of perception for variables X1 and Y1

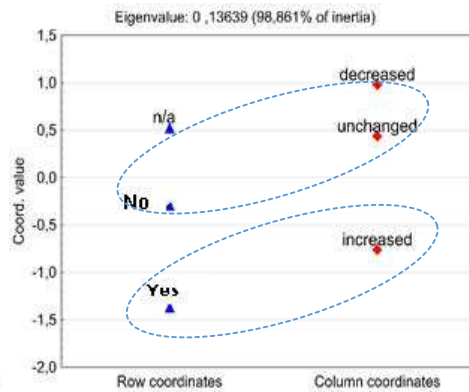


Fig. 2. Map of perception for variables X1 and Y2

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to examine the influence of interest on career choice motivations of Tunisian students to join a regulated profession. We take a particular interest in the study of motivations in responsibility and professional representation in the field of commercial and administrative affairs, these learners will be the guarantors of the faithful image, of objectivity of reporting and ethical behavior. The study concludes that student interest is significant in determining career choice motivations for an individual's career. Individual goals and interest produce motivation, that is, a person is directed towards a particular activity which is aimed at accomplishing goals or exploring interest in the field of commercial and administrative affairs. In this regard, motivation has two categories, one intrinsic and the other extrinsic. Motivator factors are intrinsic to the job, that is ; job content, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. The extrinsic factors include aspects of the job environment such as interpersonal relationships, salary, working conditions and security (Herzberg et al., 1959). An empirical hierarchy of motivations shows that the interest of students to choose a speciality is certainly to advance the cause in which they are involved, but the primary source of motivation is first and foremost their career. In the majority of cases, motivation is an integral part of their career, while in other cases, interest for commercial and administrative field serves to build up social capital that can be used later in their job. However, our results are quite far from this reality : students show themselves to be more focused on the promise of rapid integration or that of attractive remuneration offered by the commercial and administrative affairs specialty than on the regulated aspect represented by the profession.

We have seen above that Bourdieu (1976) takes into account the segmentation of social space into specialized “fields”, endowed with their own operating rules. A dialectical understanding of the relations between social space and physical space, drawn from the logic of Bourdieu's social theory, is argued for. Our study analyzes the representations mobilized by the students from their insertion in the professional field of commercial and administrative career. In the Tunisian model of the chartered commercial and administrative career, the characteristics are those of a legislative and regulatory framework of a profession backed by the responsibilities entrusted by the State, of the obligations incumbent on it, of a quest for respectability inherent in this model based on individualism. However, our results clearly show that students are

more focused on rapid integration and the promise of attractive remuneration. Furthermore, they are surprisingly tacit on the elements of the “Tunisian model”. The speeches of our surveyed students are analyzed in two major representational sections :

- A representation of the profession structured around knowledge, and which moreover expresses choices more centered on technical than disciplinary knowledge. Within this consensus-based representation, three classes can be distinguished :
 - The attraction of figures, rigor and logic,
 - The fact that commercial and administrative field is the basis of several career possibilities,
 - The living and evolving aspect of the specialty.
- A more economical representation of the profession, geared towards the perception of the advantages of the sector which seems little affected by the crisis and offers interesting pecuniary prospects.

CONCLUSION

In this article we seek to understand the motivations of students to choose their career. The study sought to examine the influence of interest on career choice motivations of Tunisian students to join a regulated profession. The study concludes that student interest is significant in determining career choice motivations for an individual’s career. Individual goals and interest produce motivation, that is, a person is directed towards a particular activity which is aimed at accomplishing goals or exploring interest in the field of commercial and administrative affairs. In this regard, motivation has two categories, one intrinsic and the other extrinsic. Our results show that more than 50% of students surveyed are not motivated to join a regulated profession. In addition, for 80% of the students surveyed, remuneration is an extrinsic factor noted as important. Moreover, we analyzed their discourse and noticed the absence of any reference linked to ethics and the regulated aspect of the profession: young adults translate the idea that, ultimately, the training course gives access to professions that are generally well paid without any reference being made at any time to the function imbued with responsibilities, obligations and therefore to some consistent principles of competence, impartiality and integrity. Similarly, students show themselves to be little concerned, when choosing a career, by the image and values now conveyed by the profession : the latter has nevertheless set up effective communication on the image of the profession, made of professionalism and competence but also and above all of ethics. To these three pillars is added a fourth : responsibility. Furthermore, we note that students have no real “representation” of their future profession. This absence of vision is rather alarming, especially in the national context of restructuring, ultimately unflattering, described by Bourdieu (1986): the acculturation of large national firms to the foreign model which nevertheless continues to co-exist with the international firm. This absence of vision is also very surprising in the recent context which has once again profoundly upset the regulated profession. These findings allow us, at the end of our analyses, to ask ourselves the question of the very relevance of the “professional model” in the regulated professions of the figure in Tunisia, so much it appeared to us that this professional field was always, at young newcomers, in search of identity. Furthermore, the orientation towards higher education in commercial and administrative affairs is influenced by the university environment, the professional

environment, and personal characteristics and, ultimately, the social environment as an intrinsic motivation.

The research has some limitations that mainly relate to the sample size within the survey. Therefore, we extend the insights advanced by this study to a larger student population by examining whether the pecuniary interests of students from other countries play a role in their orientation to other fields. This question is all the more relevant since, by virtue of their future status, these students will be the guarantors of the key values of the profession. We thus investigate a whole international literature which indicates, in cultural contexts other than that of Tunisia, on the potential of a high salary as one of the most important motivations for students in the choice of career.

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