

# CONCEPTUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF MAKING STRATEGIC LIFE DECISIONS BY STUDENTS *Öğrencilere Yönelik Stratejik Hayati Kararlar Verirken Kavramsal Psikolojik Model*

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## Öz

*Bu makale öğrencilere yönelik stratejik hayati kararlar verirken kavramsal psikolojik modelin yapısı ile ilgili uygulanan teorik ve metodolojik yaklaşımlarını, 'mesleki olarak bireyin kendini idare edebilmesi, evleneceği eşi seçebilmesi ve hayattaki konumunu kararlaştırması' olmak üzere üç farklı alanda inceler ve ayrıca tüm bu aşamaların ana hatlarını, bulgularını, kriterlerini ve psikolojik mekanizmalarını ortaya çıkarır.*

*Ortaya çıkan sonuçlar bu modelin gerçek hayatta kullanımı öğrencilerin uygun psikolojik ve pedagojik eğitimlerini geliştirmek ve bu aşamaların tanısını koymak için öğrencilere yönelik stratejik hayati kararlar vermede gönüllük ana belirtilerinin ve kriterlerinin belirlenmesine izin verdiğini kısaca özetlemektedir. Öğrencilerin bilgileri, yetenekleri, becerileri ve anlayışları, mezkûr kararları verebilmek için gerekli olan hazırbulunmuşluk onların kendi geleceklerini inşa ederken hüsrana uğramaktan alıkoyacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kararlar, Karar Verme, Stratejik Hayati Kararlar, Psikolojik Model, Öğrenciler.

## Abstract

*The article presents theoretical and methodological approaches to the construction of the conceptual psychological model of making strategic life decisions by students in three areas: professional self-determination, choice of a marriage partner and determination of life position of the individual; determines the basic stages, indications, criteria and psychological mechanisms of this process.*

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*The conclusions summarized that the use of the model in practice allows to specify the basic indications and criteria of the personality readiness to making strategic life decisions by students, to make the diagnosis of this process and to develop the appropriate programs of psychological and pedagogical training of students to making strategic life decisions. The knowledge, abilities, skills and understanding of students the necessity of preparing for making the mentioned decisions will allow them to avoid frustrations in building their own life path.*

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

### **Formulation of the problem**

The problem of the development of a person, which is able to build a constructive life path, in the modern social world is particularly urgent. Modern education as a system of socialization and personal development is constantly looking for new ways to ensure personal growth of students. To the problems of personal development are devoted the works of famous foreign and domestic scientists and practitioners in philosophy, pedagogy, psychology and other variety of sciences that examine different sides of the phenomenon of “person”. One of the urgent problems of the students’ development is preparing them for making responsible fateful decisions, the result of which affects their life path. This is about the strategic life decisions in three key areas of life: professional self-determination, choice of a marriage partner and determination of life position of the individual, that need to be made, generally at the students age.

To the problem of choice and decision-making process are dedicated the works of both foreign and domestic scientists, such as K.A.Abulhanova-Slavskaya, 1991, K.Arnold, 2014, A.Adler, 1968, G.A.Ball, 2007, N.Ya.Grot, 1882, L.V.Sohan’, 2010, A.K.Tihomirov, 1977, E.Sari, 2008). However, the problem of making strategic life decisions by students is not enough developed and needs to be clarified and scientifically substantiated.

### **The goal of the article**

is to highlight the theoretical and methodological approaches to building a conceptual psychological model of the process of making strategic life decisions by students in three areas: professional self-determination, choice of a marriage partner and determination of the life position of the individual. The defined model can become the leading theoretical and methodological basis for empirical research of features, patterns and psychological mechanisms of strategic life decision-making process in older adolescence.

### **Presenting main material**

### **Psychological meaning of strategic life decisions**

During the analysis of scientific and psychological literature, it was found that in general, the decision means the formation of human's thinking operations that reduce the original uncertainty of a problem situation, and also the most significant stages of a volitional act, that pass the stages of search, making and implementation of decisions. Making a decision means to determine the purpose and manner of action. The worked out theoretical material gives the reasons to develop a conceptual psychological model of making strategic life decisions by students.

During the comprehensive multi-years research, we have formulated a working definition, that is: making strategic life decisions by students is a complex personality deterministic process that actualizes the value-motivational, emotional and sensual, intellectual and volitional psychological mechanisms and leads to the life determination (concerning the position in life, choice of profession, marriage partner), reduction of uncertainty of original situation of choice (Pomytkina L.V, 2012, 2013) [6, RV 167; 11]. Herewith, the semantic concept of psychological mechanism should be understood as a theoretical construct that describes the interaction of the system components and ensures its functioning.

In the basis of the model should be a personality of a student with its age, socio-psychological, individual and activity characteristics. Herewith, the psychological content of strategic life decisions in this case should be their focus to determination of the life position of personality, professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner.

### **Mechanisms of decision-making**

Since the mental activity unit (Grot N.Ya., 1882) [5] is a mental turn, making strategic life decisions by students should be considered as an integral process of revitalization of perception, emotions, intellectual and volitional activity of the personality. Consequently, on the level of personal activity as internal activity of the personality, the mental turn is the basis for actualizing the general mechanism of reflection and specific value-motivational, emotional, sensual, intellectual and volitional psychological mechanisms, which gain distinctness in relation to students.

Activation of reflection at all levels of determination (as an organism, as an individual, as a personality) creates understanding by student of his or her own needs in something (in this case – in own life position, professional self-determination, marriage partner) that acquires distinctness depending on the age characteristics and social situation of development, which were analyzed earlier.

Reflection as a mental (rational) process aimed at analyzing, understanding and awareness of self (own actions, behavior, language, experience, feelings, states, abilities, character, relations with others and to others, own tasks, targets) conceptually, processually and functionally linked to introspection, retrospection and self-consciousness. In the process of making strategic life decisions should be considered the personality and intellectual reflection.

Personality reflection is considered by scientists in one synonymous row with the concept of “self-reflection”, which provides self-organization and self-mobilization of the personality in different conditions of existence. Scientists (Abulhanova-Slavskaya K.A, 1991, Ball G.A, 2007 and others) also investigated personality reflection in the process of self-regulation of personality when the individual in relation to oneself at the same time serves as an object of reflection, and as its subject, that regulates own actions and deeds. Personality reflection (Beh I.D., 1995) provides the ability of individual to comprehend own motives, to predict the consequences of own actions and deeds to oneself and other people, the ability to coordinate goals and behavior with the means of their achievement [4, R. 23]. It is a personal reflection that leads to determination of oneself in the world (self-determination), and therefore in the three key areas of life: determination of own life position, professional self-determination, choice of a marriage partner.

In the process of making strategic life decisions by students the personality reflection occurs during individual’s rethinking of inner self as directing the cognition of a young person to oneself, own inner world, as the assessment of own qualities and conditions. Forecasting future activity in each moment of time, adjusting own behavior, own actions, choosing the goal, a student always in some way correlates own capabilities (to that extent in which he is aware of them, in which he reflects) to how important, significant for him are requirements and conditions of making strategic life decisions.

Intellectual reflection is defined as the ability to select, analyze and correlate own actions with the subject activity. In the process of decision-making the intellectual reflection is necessary for students for understanding the bases of their own mental activities. Intellectual reflection manifests through complementary mechanisms of generation and control. It provides a general regulation of subject-operating transformations of content of the decision-making process: the mechanism of generation provides the use and transformation of holistic guidance of mental activity - its semantic gestalts (models, tools, charts), and the mechanism of control - specification and implementation in the thinking process of already present holistic functional elements of its content. Thus, the combination of intellectual and personality reflection in the process of making strategic life decisions contributes to their adequacy and is an essential condition for improving the efficiency of preparing students for the aforementioned actions.

Among the value-motivational psychological mechanisms (outlook, motives, needs, ideals, meanings, values, beliefs, principles, interest), the presence of persistent motives causes the activity of personality of the student in making strategic life decisions, which give his wishes and desires a more long-term effective character (Sohan` L.V, 2010) [8]. The student's motivation in the process of making strategic life decisions should be considered as a set of pushing factors that determine the activity of the personality towards defining own position in life, professional self-determination and choice of a marriage partner. Among the leading factors, the motives of making strategic life decisions can have both biological (psychophysiological) and social determination, which together will determine the desire of purposeful activities of students.

Thus, in the process of determining own position in life, the motives are caused by the development of self-consciousness, needs in formation of own system of values, attitudes and beliefs, creation of personal life principles etc. (Pomytkin E.A., 2012) [7]. During the professional self-determination the motives may be mostly as social needs of achieving success, material welfare or respect of others, spiritual motives of being useful for fellow beings, country or mankind and so on. Due to this, the situational factors that may appear are such as difficulty in achieving desired professional levels or development of professional necessary skills, features of social and cultural conditions, which involve the vital trajectory of the student, features of the influence of parents, teachers and classmates in educational institutions or other referent figures.

In the process of choosing a marriage partner the motives of making strategic life decisions by student have an expressed naturally-biological as well as social determinism. Thus, the naturally-biological determinism is manifested in the attraction to the opposite sex, sexual desires and behavior. Social determinism is associated with the social needs of a family creation, ensuring own children with a decent wealth. Important in this case are the motives to meet the spiritual needs of the individual: love, support, feeling of unity (Maslow A., 1987) [12].

The effect of emotional and sensual psychological mechanisms during the student life is particularly distinctive because boys and girls are quite developed and manifested in behavior and communication are emotions, feelings, affections, desires, aspirations, i.e. all affective states. Therefore, the based on these mental processes generalized psychological mechanism of making strategic life decisions can be defined as affectation. In the research we will consider affectation as a psychological mechanism which ensures gaining emotional attractiveness or disgust for students in any decisions. Besides, the modality of the basic emotions and feelings in the process of decision-making in different directions may not significantly vary.

Thus, in the process of determining own position in life a student can feel joy, inspiration, can be in a state of confusion, sadness, despair, just as in the process of

professional self-determination or in the process of choosing a marriage partner (for example, joys and sorrows of self-knowledge, self-determination and love).

Among the intellectual psychological mechanisms (problematization, goal-setting, hypotheses producing, argumentation, choice, anticipation, intuition) for students the most characteristic are goal-setting and argumentation. Goal-setting helps students to define a strategic life goal and occupies a central position in the structure of activity, performing a regulatory function in relation to the concentration of attention and thinking of the personality (Tihomirov A.K., 1977) [9]. The image of a goal in the process of making strategic life decision performs as a basis of internal mental and further practical actions of a young person, combining his or her desires, needs and aspirations.

In general, the psychological mechanism of goal-setting connects motives, expectations of students at previous failure to reach the expected result, the choice of a set of possible solutions, ensures the changing of motive to a motive-goal, the transition from the first to the final goals and the formation of hierarchy and time sequence of goals.

The argumentation as the psychological mechanism in the process of making strategic life decisions helps students to formulate logical reasons in the own system of statements that are made to support the evaluation of correctness of the decision made, increasing the evidence of its necessity. According to the direction of strategic life decisions, the process of argumentation can be facilitated (when it is not difficult to explain the choices made for student) or complicated. In particular, in the process of determining own position in life, the decisions made have mostly conscious nature, relating to overwhelming influence of intellectual psychological mechanisms, and thus can be quite easily presented and laid out in a logical manner.

Instead, making strategic life decisions on the choice of a marriage partner is largely connected with the emotively colored desires of the individual, the feelings for potential chosen person, contradictory emotions and feelings that are not subject to reasonable logical explanation. Such decisions are difficult to explain even for an adult. As for students who, mostly, have no experience in long-term relationships, skills of creation a family and interactions in marriage, the argumentation of such strategic life decisions is made with excessive difficulties.

The psychological mechanism of argumentation distinguishes the process of decision-making by student from the process of its implementation in practice, which depends primarily on actualization of volitional psychological mechanisms (perseverance, organization, responsibility etc.). According to the specificity, the strategic life decision is expedient to consider accepted, if the student can argument it at a sufficient level, i.e. he knows what he wants, how he will reach this, which means he will use doing this, with what criteria will evaluate its accuracy and effectiveness.

Volitional psychological mechanisms cause the willpower of the personality (Arnold K., 2014, Ball G.A., 2007, Beh I.D., 1995, and others), which in the student age, usually, is not completely formed. However, focusing on the need of a decision-making, the persistence in finding the necessary information, the stability and integrity in the rejection of alternatives, the focus in finding the desired option and responsibility for the decision made is a necessary condition for making strategic life decisions on the determination of the position in life, the choice of professional specialization, as well as on the choice of a marriage partner.

So the volitional psychological mechanisms cause a conscious focusing of a student on the achievement of defined strategic goals in life, control of own behavior, aimed at overcoming the difficulties that arise in the process of implementation of conscious intentions that reflect the strategic life decisions (Ball G.A., 2007) [3].

Each of these psychological mechanisms is actualized more or less depending on the orientation of the strategic life decisions. In determining own position in life the most active become value-motivational psychological mechanisms, because the life position mostly related to the value-semantic formations of students.

In the process of making decisions on professional self-determination, the largest activity reach the intellectual psychological mechanisms, because such decisions require an active search for information on possible areas of professionalization and professiogenesis, analysis, synthesis, anticipation and other intellectual actions.

When making strategic life decisions on the choice of a marriage partner, firstly come out the feelings, emotions (love, passion, preferences), that is why the biggest activity gains affectation that provides the process of making strategic life decisions with emotional colorfulness, as opposed to managing, educational or emotionally strained decisions.

The process of actualization of the psychological mechanisms of motivation, affectation, goal-setting and argumentation during making strategic life decisions by students is consistently carried through certain stages which were defined by us in the previous sections of the research. Thus, the construction of psychological model takes into account all the components of a working definition of the process of making strategic life decisions by students (fig. 1).

### **Levels of determination of decision-making**

Further, let us consider the structural composition of the model and the key links in detail. As the decision-making process should be considered as an internal mental activity of a person, should be mentioned, that any activity is predetermined by the actualization of needs as at the level of an organism, and at the levels of the individual and personality.

In particular, at the level of an organism the subject is subordinated by hereditary and gained biopsychical determinants that contribute to the reactive character of behavior organization, unity, coordination of its psychophysiological functions. At the individual level a student serves as the subject of public relations in the process of assimilation of social experience, which is defined at socio-psychical level of determination. At the personality level is a higher level of manifestation of student's activity that characterizes socially unique, original properties of psychics, the ability to create new social experiences and self-creation. In our case, these needs are caused by both growing age of students and their personality development in the process of socialization.

In accordance with the developed psychological model of making strategic life decisions by students, their need to define own position in life is caused by the age characteristics of a young person, the development of self-consciousness, desire for self-actualization, and makes motives for further internal activity.

In particular, the need to define own position in life by personality is motivated by a desire of young boys and girls to find themselves, formation and strengthening own system of values, opinions and beliefs, determination of life guidelines that will be useful in adult life.

Moreover, in social terms, young boys strive to prove their peers and classmates their own independence, ability to solve problems in life without parents' participation, to make their own life decisions and implement them in life. The need for professional self-determination with special intensity actualizes in young age, supports by developed physical and psychic qualities of the young person and takes an individual identity through professional interests, propensity, abilities, causing further appropriate psychological activity to professional self-determination of a student.

In particular, at the level of an organism, the need for professional self-determination is associated with the need to survive, to ensure own existence and support own vital activity and vital activity of future generations. At the individual level this need is associated with the assimilation and reproduction of social experience of labor activity, acquisition of professional skills and abilities. At the personality level the need for professional self-determination is motivated by a desire of self-improvement, realization of creative potential to enrich the social experience.

The need for search for a marriage partner occurs at the biological, psychophysiological level as an instinctively conditioned necessity of procreation, the continuation of life on the planet, but later, subjecting in the individually-psychological dimension actualizes a desire for creation a family as a part of society. At the personality level, this need gains individual originality, personal colorfulness and leads a young person striving for bringing happiness to a marriage partner, enabling the ability of self-realization not only for oneself, but for all members of the family.



Thus, the needs for making strategic life decisions are internally and externally caused and mediated by means of the mental turn (Grot N. Ya., 1882) with actualization of the relevant mental processes - from the perception of information and relevant motivational-value attitude to it, the emergence of certain affective states, thinking operations of goal-setting and argumentation of the made strategic life decision.

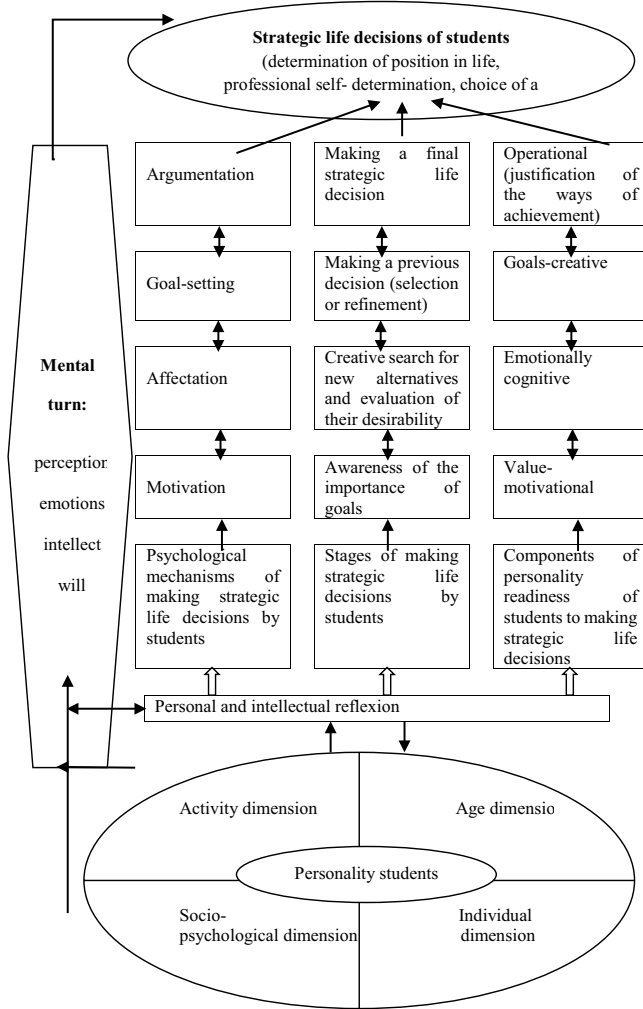


Fig. 1. The conceptual psychological model of making strategic life decisions by students.

The mental turn - an important psychological condition in which at the end of the selection of alternatives a person makes a preliminary decision, then while receiving the additional information, the new alternatives are considered and compared again, and the previous decision is adjusted. This cycle can be repeated, rotated in a circle until the student does not take the final decision.

### **Specifics of decision-making**

As the specifics of strategic life decisions is the prolongation in time, the process of decision-making is carried out not immediately, but gradually, in several stages - from awareness of the importance of the goal, sketching targets, evaluating the desirability of possible alternative solutions, making the previous, not the final decision, which leaves the possibility of adjustments - to the final stage –making the final strategic life decision (at this stage of the mental turn). Each of the next following in the model stages depends on the content and success of overcoming the previous.

Actualization of the following psychological mechanisms and realization of stages of making strategic life decisions is considered as a sign of personality readiness of students, which is a complex hierarch structural entity consisting of value-motivational, emotionally-cognitive, goal-creative and operational components, and provides the ability of personality to successful determination of the position in life of individual, professional self-determination, a choice of a marriage partner.

The need to determine the position in life of the personality is caused by the development of self-consciousness and is mediated by self-esteem, attitude to the world, others, and is realized inside the inner world in the formed system of values, principles and beliefs that the person is guided in life. The personality readiness to making strategic life decisions by students depends on their content.

### **Readiness to decision-making**

The personality readiness of students to making strategic life decisions on determination of their own position in life is characterized by the awareness of the value of their own opinions, ideological settings and beliefs, and ideological beliefs of others, the motivation to build and improve own position in life, attitude towards themselves and the world; knowledge of types of personality's positions in life and the ability of creation own position in life; certainty of goal and ways of creation their own life strategy; reasonableness of made by student decision on the selected position in life and the ways to achieve it.

In the direction of professional self-determination, the personality readiness provides the formed value-positive attitude to a particular specialization in the professional activity, the availability of motivation, formation of necessary professional knowledge, understanding the purpose of professional growth, the reasonableness of the decision made, and the ways to achieve it.

The personality readiness of students to making strategic life decisions on the choice of a marriage partner involves understanding the values of marriage, the formed motivation to find the right person, the availability of knowledge required to create a family, the certainty of a purpose, the reasonableness of the decision made and the ways to achieve it.

Thus, the state of readiness provides a transition to the implementation of a new task, or the implementation of a task in the circumstances that have changed. The pleasure and development of needs, the change of the internal and external conditions (introspection, self-analysis) through the reflection rise to a new mental turn, which corresponds to a higher quality level of psychic self-regulation and may lead to a more considerate making strategic life decisions by student.

So, the developed psychological model of making strategic life decisions by students includes the driving forces (mental turn as a unit of mental activity, personality and intellectual reflection as a common psychological mechanism and specific mechanisms of motivation, affectation, goal-setting and argumentation), the content characteristics (direction of decisions to the determination of life position, professional self-determination and the choice of a marriage partner), time characteristics (stages of awareness of the importance of the goals, creative search for new alternatives and evaluation of their desirability, making the previous decision and the final strategic life decision) and the productive characteristics (value-motivational, emotionally-cognitive, goals-creating and the operational components of personality readiness).

### **Conclusions**

The extensive theoretical and methodological study of the basic scientific approaches to the features of the decision-making process of making strategic life decisions by students allowed to build a conceptual psychological model with the general and specific mechanisms of this process, specific age characteristics of students and their personality readiness to planning their own life path. The construction of the conceptual psychological model takes into account all components of working definition of the process of making strategic life decisions by students in three areas: defining own position in life, professional self-determination and a choice of marriage partner.

Using the psychological model in practice allows to specify the basic indications and criteria of the personality readiness to making strategic life decisions by students, to make the diagnosis of this process and to develop the appropriate programs of psychological and pedagogical training of students to making strategic life decisions. The knowledge, abilities, skills and understanding of students the necessity of preparing for making the mentioned decisions will allow them to avoid frustrations in building their own life way.

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