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Using Social Media Resources to Build Young People's Professional Futures

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Abstract: *Young people are exploring alternatives, informing themselves and exchanging impressions among themselves in order to finalise their career choices. An active means of information is using social media resources, especially by joining social networking groups to discuss issues related to learning, choosing universities, helping by providing study materials or sharing learning practices for Baccalaureate or college admission etc.*
I will present, as a case study, an active Facebook group. The investigation will aim to explore a set of dimensions such as: young people's topics of interest, career visions, expectations after graduation from university (where they can work after graduation), forms of support among young people on learning and preparation for the transition from high school to university, etc. We are witnessing a pattern of informal education taking place within generations of young people at the stage of choosing a professional field.
The approach will be both qualitative and the applied research method will be case study. The novelty of the topic is to show that young people use social media to inform themselves and crystallise career options, thus using technological resources constructively. Time spent on the internet is valued for life planning and not just for entertainment.

Keywords: *young people, career, social media, informal learning, peer group.*

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Introduction

Recognizing the role of informal learning, alongside formal learning (directed by educational policies, implemented by educational units and focused on knowledge acquisition, is systematic and subject to assessment (Trif, 2016, p. 27) and non-formal learning, oriented towards the acquisition of social and emotional skills outside a formal curriculum (Blândul & Țurcanu, 2020, p. 19), I will pay attention here to the informal learning that takes place within the group of pupils and students who, on the basis of sharing their own information and experiences, go through a specific process of orientation towards a particular specialization or professional field (choice of profession). The informal environment facilitates the accumulation of information related to the resolution of issues related to university admission. Since the online environment on the Internet is expanding and taking into account the characteristics of some practices developed on social media, we have chosen to analyse aspects of informal education in the virtual context, oriented towards career choice by young people.

I will present some issues addressed by specialists in informal learning, the functioning and the role of the group in the achievement of the members' information but also the other attributes concerning the existence of young people in groups and highlighting some characteristics of the virtual group. The section on young people's career orientation, i.e. preparation for the baccalaureate and adopted processes such as information and analysis of alternatives for decision making on university education is also followed. In order to highlight the role played by online communication and informal learning via computer (virtual social networks) I will present the results of an empirical research based on the observation and analysis of the posts made by the members of a Facebook group.

The study aims to highlight aspects of informal communication and learning in virtual groups and contributes to the extension of the literature on the life of young people in the online environment oriented towards career decision-making, as there are few sociological studies on Romanian virtual groups.

The world of young people: informal learning, social group and career choice

Before qualifying in a professional field, the first stage a young person goes through is training; this involves classroom learning (accumulation of knowledge) and the formation of practical skills. At this stage individuals gather information and the non-formal environment helps to supplement the knowledge received through formal education and/or non-formal education. By being continuously carried out and responding to one's own knowledge needs, in addition to some responsibilities imposed by various institutions, informal education also fulfils a social function, namely facilitating social relationships (Carcea, 2001, p. 31).

Having different characteristics from formal learning, namely: „unplanned, incidental, implicit learning, and autodidactic learning situation" (Thaler, 2011, p. 1), informal learning provides individuals with information that meets their immediate interests.

Modern society provides various media products, including those with educational content. The origins of these range from television broadcasts (aimed at developing children's skills for school) to the abundant presence of educational media, even from an early age (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2018, p. 189). The availability of such content on the internet has increased the presence of children and young people online. Subsequently, the emergence of virtual social networks has enabled real-time communication via computers. On the background of the general model of prosocial media learning (which can model prosocial behaviours through video game characters) (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2018, p. 195) adolescents have developed new communication skills, which they transfer to new situations, including informing and learning from others through online communication.

The informal nature is due to the lack of teacher-directed learning planning. Social contexts provide multiple resources for information and education, i.e. learning how to proceed and what tools to use to solve a task. Increased access to social networks has created new opportunities for informal learning, increasing activities on social platforms involving the use of formal learning resources and tools in informal settings (Dron & Anderson, 2023, p. 1386).

Referencing the young people who are the subject of this study, I believe that they are preparing for a new stage (taking the baccalaureate exam or admission to university, including the other actions they have to take) by looking for the information they need - they are basically learning to solve specific problems. They are in a similar situation and this is enough to

build continuous links, to form a network based on role relationships: pupils/students. According to network theory, groups (considered as networks) are explained by the network flow model (nodes, i.e. group members, interconnect, exchange information or resources) and by the architecture model (creating structures of interdependence and coordination) (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011, p. 18) they establish links between them to obtain, respectively provide information or resources for formal learning, while establishing an interdependent relationship between the one who holds the information and the one who provides it.

In the process of career guidance young people also turn to social media, in particular the online social networking group. Are we talking about social learning? One could say yes. One of the lessons learned using the means of the internet is to develop social-emotional skills (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2018, p. 198). The developed behaviour has a prosocial character, consisting of helpfulness, altruism, affability/kindness (ibidem). The social impact is at least in one direction: facilitating inclusive education and reducing barriers found in formal education, increasing active citizenship (Thaler, 2011, p. 3).

Some authors consider that the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about an intensification of computer-mediated activities, leading to the development of the parameters of informal education by increasing the number of people concerned with assimilation in informal settings, the use of networked electronic resources, the permanent availability of the informal environment and thus of learning, the increase of aspects (indicators) subject to learning, accessible to the whole world (Zhelyazkova-Teya, 2020, pp. 41-42).

A few years ago, there was a call to give a central place to informal learning in educational research (Thaler, 2011, p. 1), and all the information circulating in the virtual environment shows this need for studies in this field. The development of social networks and the spread of communication practice within virtual groups or communities reinforce this need.

Informal learning involves social contacts where knowledge transfer takes place. From this perspective, the group plays an important role. We approach the group as an expression of the need to belong and its use as a social support system, with the following types of support: emotional, instrumental, informative, esteem and appreciation (Zani, 2003, p. 74). The type of support I am looking for in this study is to provide information related to learning, material content and choice of college, oriented towards access to an occupation but also that of learning to learn. As Raed Almateri points out, the actions in the support group are intentional, visible and are

followed by an improvement in the state of the group members, being a real help for those who do not have support from those close to them (2022, p. 32). This type of group allows the exchange of roles, with members being providers and recipients of support in the same context, facilitating involvement, breaking out of passivity and increasing self-confidence (Zani, 2003, p. 83). Guided by an interest in gaining information about baccalaureate and student status young people form "communities of interest", learning here results in the acquisition of knowledge for personal use (Henri & Pudelko, 2003).

In this new world of the Internet we witness a set of processes: the creation of personal accounts (profiles), computer-mediated communication, the distribution of texts and images that can be seen by several people at once, the building of one's own network (by adding to the personal page created the people/accounts with whom one wishes to stay connected in the new social space) and, last but not least, the creation of groups built around interests. In this "new social reality" it is populated mainly by teenagers and young people for whom "everything happens online, in public" (Twenge, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has fixed the practice of asking questions in virtual spaces, of giving and waiting for details, of reading other people's content to solve one's own problem.

Starting from the function of the Facebook application to gather together several people under the phrase "groups" we are somewhat obliged to approach this notion sociologically in the new environment. The group implies the existence of a number of people, linked by a "sense of unity" defined by "formal or informal criteria" (Marshall & Scott, 2014, p. 314). From this perspective, the phrase "group" used on the virtual network is justified. As a process of the birth of a virtual social group, we witness the decision of one or more individuals to create a virtual group. In order for this group to grow, it is essential that it has a defined and known purpose, often reflected in its very title. In this way it attracts the attention of those who have interests in common with the members of the group already created and asks for acceptance into the virtual group.

The type of social media group that is the subject of my study is the group of high school and university students who express the need for information and learning of those educational or social elements related to professional training for orientation towards a university training unit. Following the definition found in the Dictionary of Sociology (Marshall & Scott, 2014, p. 315) the group of young people in social media falls into the category of peer groups, having common characteristics: age, social status as pupils or students, concern for study with the aim of graduation, need to

find some information about school and profession, etc. Thus, the group of young people, as a group of peers in age, is a reference in personal development and also an environment that facilitates overcoming difficulties (Pombeni, 2003, p. 317).

I believe that there is an informal learning process taking place here, from those in the same situation or who have recently gone through a similar experience. They share what they have learned with others. Teenagers and young people need information, and some have no other sources of information or feel the need to gather more opinions before making a decision. Being able to interact in more social groups compared to the situation of young people in previous generations before the internet era (Aiken, 2019, p. 188), allows them to establish more contacts and communicate intensively to solve some problems.

Once assimilated the e-learning techniques (within the formal educational process) of using digital content through digital technology (Dumbrăveanu, 2018, p. 7) young people use and share electronically managed information sources with each other. In the virtual group, the transfer between members of information content (pdfs) is easily achieved.

Some research draws attention to the vulnerability of young people to the use of the internet, in terms of installed addiction, risks of attacks by bullies, installation of cyber hypochondria, etc. (Aiken, 2019), although the positive contribution is also recognized: the possibility of contacting people at a great distance and easy access to information (Wojdan et al., 2020). Portals that allow communication and exchange of views with friends are predominantly used, with photo sharing being prevalent (Wojdan et al., 2020, pp. 9-10). Facebook is used on a daily basis to keep in touch with friends, share aspects of life and a small proportion of users, for learning (Wojdan et al., 2020, p. 11).

A number of studies on the impact of participation in virtual groups on the lives of young people have been conducted with the declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, Levstek et al. (2021) show the positive impact of virtual involvement on the behaviour of young people in music education centres consisting of the development of emotional competences through the continuation of routines, the development of virtual interpersonal communication skills, concluding that virtual sessions for group music creation were especially important for young people deprived of parental support during isolation (Levstek et al., 2021). Bisno et al. (2022) study the effects of virtual group meetings on the care of young people with type I diabetes, showing that they led to a reduction in the burden experienced by young people diagnosed with diabetes experiencing distress.

Vocational training, as the first step in the career pathway (Stoliarchuk et al., 2022, p. 298), is of concern to most young people. The motivation for choosing a professional field is based on three aspects: the chosen profession fits with the skills possessed, the existence of interest in working with people and the desire to expand their knowledge in their specialty (Stoliarchuk et al., 2022, p. 289).

Factors reported by researchers as influencing career choice (extracted after analysis of 30 academic articles) are grouped into four major categories, namely: extrinsic factors (which include financial remuneration, job security, prestige gained by holding the profession, and accessibility of the job), intrinsic factors (personal interests, self-efficacy, expectations of professional performance and development, professional development opportunities), interpersonal factors (influence of family members, teachers, colleagues, and social responsibilities), and bicultural influence (of the values of the cultures they came from combined with the values of the cultures they lived in) (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018).

For young Romanians, choosing the field in which to work is a decision that raises difficulties if we refer to the economic context, fear of corruption, poverty (Bădescu et al., 2019), expectations about the future, confidence in the personal future and a low confidence in the society they belong to (IRES, 2020). Young people aspire to a high level of education, their goals being largely to pursue higher education (Bădescu et al., 2019).

The realities of our world - Empirical research on electronically mediated informal learning (for the purpose of preparation for working life). Methodology

The topics addressed by group members in social media, the suite of issues centred on learning for exams and the choice of university specialisation (as a step in shaping professional life), the way in which communication between members of the virtual group takes place, the links established between members, the content of communication were important factors in the study of the young people's virtual group. The research is of a fundamental nature, exploring the phenomenon of communication in the virtual group in order to accumulate new information. We used quantitative techniques of data analysis, but also qualitative analysis of communication contents and the object of informal learning.

The research has as its starting point the following hypothesis: an active way of informing young people (pupils and students) is to use social media resources, especially by joining social networking groups to discuss issues related to learning, choosing universities, help by providing study

materials or sharing learning practices for baccalaureate or university admission, oriented towards choosing the field in which to profess.

The objective of this investigation is to explore a set of dimensions such as: (1) learning contents: topics of interest of young people, career visions, expectations after graduation from university (where they can work after graduation) and (2) forms of support among young people regarding learning and preparation for the transition from high school to university etc. - which indirectly induce a way of relating, based on sharing educational resources, group participation (through expressed opinions) and involvement. All of these constitute models of learned and socially shared behaviour - the essence of education.

The analysed group is present on the social network Facebook and is located in Romania. The social media group was created on the12 January 2021, it is set as a private group but can be found by anyone and only members can see who is in the group and what they post. The group was created when there were still measures imposed to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus. The creator of the group gives the following description, stating the purpose of his action: "In such hard times for everyone, when all you want is for this ordeal to end and yet have a good future... I created this group with the purpose of gathering a community of future students, current 12th graders, to have a space online where they can find potential peers, where they can ask different questions about admissions, but also rents/student dorms. Good luck to all!"

We studied the posts (which thus become a social document) and implicitly counted the posts and not the people who posted, so the number of members who posted during the period analyzed is smaller than the number of postings analyzed. However, the difference is not large because few people posted more than twice. Repeated activity was by one group administrator, with 14 posts in the period under review.

In November 2022 the group had reached a number of 28,828 members, and on the 6th of January 2023 the number had dropped to 28,723 people. It can be characterised as a dynamic group, recording daily member posts and replies to them.

The data was collected between the 3rd of November 2022 and the 3rd of January 2023. The time period tracked (as date of posts) consists of two intervals: the 3rd of November – 21st of September 2022 and 15th of November – 25th of December 2022. Among the posts in the two intervals were posts dated earlier, i.e. between February and August 2022; their content was noted in this research. The data collection procedure consisted

of running the posts on the page in the order of their posting and recording their content in the mentioned intervals.

We tracked the contents of 357 posts. A numerical breakdown by month is as follows: February - 2 posts, June - 1 post, July - 3 posts, August - 19 posts, September - 2 posts, October - 83 posts, November - 133 posts, December - 114 posts.

What is a post? A text or image that a person who has an account on a social network creates and shares on the network. The post can be reacted to by clicking on emoticons inserted by the creator of the platform (such as like, love, care, tears, anger), commented on (other members writing a text, sharing a link or a picture) or shared on other pages of the network.

Research results

After structuring and analysing the content of the posts and the reactions to the posts, we found a number of elements regarding the group dynamics, the diversity of the topics and information transmitted, the concerns of young people regarding their immediate or long-term professional future. These findings are valid for the sample of posts under analysis.

A first finding is that the posts were made by members either displaying their identity (username and profile photo) or anonymously (identified with the phrase "member of the group"). Table 1 shows the numerical and percentage structure of the posts according to the participants in the discussions.

Table 1 - Statistical situation of the analysed postings

Crt. no.	Posting author's identity	Number of posts	Percentage of total posts
1	Female	146	40,90
2	Male	32	8,96
3	Anonymous person (group member)	178	49,86
4	Group page	1	0,28
5	Total	357	100

Source: Author's own conception

Analysing the statistics, we see that there are more females than males in the group posts and comments. Posting as anonymous prevents us from having a true picture of participation in the group according to the gender of the members; moreover, anonymity was sanctioned in only one case, by one of the group members in the comments to a post. Otherwise,

no link was found between posting as anonymous and the number of reactions to the post. Furthermore, we did not pursue this aspect, as the aim of the study was not to analyse the behaviour of members in the virtual group but to highlight aspects related to informal learning oriented towards building a professional life.

Of interest is a statistic obtained by the group administrator who, in a post on 27th of October 2022, initiates a "census" (via the voting function of the Facebook application) of members according to class/year of study. Table 2 shows the distribution of participants, valid on 6 th of January 2023.

Table 2 - Results of a micro-census conducted by the group administrator (generated by the Facebook application, except for the number of votes for boys, which was counted from the displayed list)

Crt. no.	Class / Year of study	Number of votes		Percentage
		Number of people	Of which males	
1	Grade 12 (high school)	195	34	15
2	1st Year of University	739	149	58
3	2nd Year of University	279	51	23
4	3rd Year of University	14	4	2
5	4th Year of University	3	1	1
6	Master's students	0	0	0
7	Other	12	4	0
8	Year of death (added by member)	0	1	0
9	Preparatory (added by a member)	1	0	1
10	Total votes	1243	244	100

Source: Author's own conception

I believe that the high number of 1st year students (at university) is explained by the presence of those young people who, at the time of the group registration, were in the 12th grade of high school and who, at the time of the vote, had become students (the posting took place after the start of the academic year). Boys who participated in the microcensus represent 19,63% of the total voters. Their numerical situation was possible by counting the accounts participating in the vote, identifiable by name and profile picture. I would like to point out that here there is no vote of a person who chose "group member" (anonymity).

The second finding concerns the topic of the 357 postings, which are predominantly focused on two areas of interest: baccalaureate (from preparation for taking the baccalaureate exams to the results obtained) and college (from preparation for college admission, exploration of study

opportunities to specific aspects of student life and career prospects). To these are added aspects of emotional reactions and motivation, which play a role in the decision-making process regarding the choice of career field. Table 3 summarises the themes addressed in the postings by the group members.

Table 3 - Thematic areas addressed by the members of the group

Crt. no.	Area of interest mentioned by the author of the post	Found in posts (number)	Percentage of total posts
1.	Baccalaureate - of which:	112	31,37
	distribution of learning materials (educational resources), including those from the reviews	57	15,96
	request educational resources	49	13,72
	evaluation of educational resources	20	5,60
	information to choose subjects for examination	7	1,96
	certificates (subjects, homework ideas, usefulness)	4	1,12
	tips, presentation of effective learning methods	5	1,40
2.	Faculty – of which:	217	60,78
	admissions (condition, averages etc.)	55	15,40
	fields/specialisations (request details) for choice of faculty + career prospects	55	15,40
	learning sources for admission	8	2,24
	student life (courses/books, accommodation, scholarships etc.)	85	23,80
	request for support in doing papers, reports, projects, catching up on basics, exam details	57	15,96
	announcements of the formation of groups by specialisation	2	0,56
	implications for work and learning (simultaneously)	3	0,84
	withdrawal from college (in first or second year of study)	7	1,96
	transfer to another university/faculty	6	1,68
	laptop/tablet purchase (consultancy)	4	1,12
	Others	6	1,68
3.	Emotional problems; dilemmas; inner conflict; discouragement, fear of decreasing motivation; panic, scared of high learning load; feeling of not fitting in (student abroad); encouragement, motivational messages	23	6,44

Source: Author's own conception

I would like to mention that in some posts, several aspects related to exam preparation and the conduct of the baccalaureate, college admissions, or student life were addressed. The main concerns related to the baccalaureate were to obtain learning resources, mainly essays in Romanian and textbooks or summaries in the subjects of Romanian, History, Geography, Sociology, Logic, Philosophy, etc. Summaries or resources are required to ensure either a good grade or a top grade. Another reported issue concerns the evaluation of learning resources, already owned, in terms of content and quality. Issues were also raised about learning to retain as much complete information as possible- as a result learning techniques were also shared. These issues were raised by high school students (either in 11th or 12th grade) or by graduates who had not taken all the written tests in the baccalaureate and were due to take the exams again.

The college admissions topics came from three categories of young people: those still in high school, those who have been admitted to college and those who have graduated from high school, including the baccalaureate, and who aimed to apply to college. A precise identification of this status is quite difficult, as it is not always specified by the group members. Apart from questions relating to admission conditions (admission averages, selection criteria, application procedure, etc.), we will pay attention to those aspects relating to the choice of a specialisation with a view to a profession in the field in question.

We find that young people in this group have, in some cases, concerns about their future professional life. Oriented towards getting details about fields/specialisations for their choice of college and career prospects young people chose the following approaches as strategies:
(1) seeking out students in a specific field or people working in the targeted field who can provide them with details about their college study and/or job specifics (e.g. kinesiology, marketing, construction, political and communication sciences, advertising, military career, film directing students, acting, art, geography, management, law etc.
(2) soliciting the opinions of those in the group on what specialisation is appropriate to their inclinations or skills - in doing so they make a description of their skills or interests. Some young people are interested in a particular specialisation and want information about the faculty that trains specialists. Among the situations presented I mention: oscillating between fields of interest such as psychology (to help people) and law; or, a member of the group knows what they want and what they would like ("I like to interact with people") and asks the group for opinions on what field they could work in and what job they could have after graduation.

(3) asks for information about university centres: some young people have decided on a field (specialisation) and are oscillating between university centres that provide good training (e.g. opinions are asked about the faculty in Bucharest compared to the one in Cluj, details/opinions are asked about the University of West Timişoara, the universities in Iaşi or Braşov; comparison of the theology faculty in Iasi with the one in Bucharest, etc.). One member of the group, after narrowing down the list of options, decided to study medicine ("because I am passionate about it") but does not know which university centre to choose, oscillating between Târgu Mureş and Cluj, so asks for "advice".
(4) Prospective job prospects: they ask for details about the salary that can be obtained after graduation, the sectors in which they can work (state or private sector).

Clarifications, opinions are requested for information but also to break the deadlock, to make a decision on the field of university training. Some young people oscillate between different fields (e.g. one young woman had chosen the fields of law, economics and political and administrative sciences) and ask for opinions on these fields, in order to resolve the "inner conflict" generated by the need to "choose between fields of creativity or critical thinking".

Deciding on the right college is a concern for high school graduates. Where there are several possibilities, the problem of making the right choice is intensely experienced, so some young people ask others for details of the process. The evaluation of faculties is a concern for young people - some want faculties where training is carried out systematically and in depth, while others look for "easy" faculties that do not involve a high effort in the training process. From another perspective, identifying faculties to which candidates might apply asks group members for details of particular faculties. I give as an example the mentions made by young people in their postings: opinions about the Faculty of Sociology (Bucharest), the Faculty of Architecture of the UPT Timişoara, the specialisations of the university in Braşov, Constanta etc. or asking for aspects related to the recognition of some (accreditation) by employers in the country.

The third finding refers to emotional and motivational issues affecting young people in the process of secondary school or university education. They find it difficult to make a good decision on the choice of career field, they vacillate between what they would like to do and what others consider useful. Young people are concerned to get information, details or opinions about what subjects will be taught at university, who the teachers are, so that they can prepare early. They fear that they will not take

their exams or that their motivation for learning might decrease. For example, one young person mentions that he is motivated to opt for medicine and wonders if it is enough that he wants to help people; he fears that his motivation for medicine will decrease and does not want to start on a path and then have to give up - 23 comments follow. Another young man, a high school student, hasn't found his vocation, wants to go to university but hasn't decided on a field - he addresses the students in Cluj, asks to share their experiences, what they are studying, how the admissions went with the stated aim: "to get into the subject".

Among other issues, panic was also reported, generated by the worry that they don't get to read everything required in seminars and lectures (and ask others for advice - 11 comments are recorded). Another student (studying abroad) is feeling unintegrated, feels lost, doesn't know what she wants at the moment, would like to return home but doesn't know how and where - supportive comments are received). There are also young people concerned about securing financial resources - they want to work and ask how they could and where (144 comments).

Another (fourth) finding is that young people distributed educational resources (for study, useful in preparing for the subjects of the baccalaureate exams). Once links to study materials are distributed, they become accessible to others who view the postings later. Thus the number of recipients may be higher than estimated at analysis). There is no record of the number of downloads of distributed materials. In other cases, for the distribution of educational resources, communication moves to private (messenger option). Distribution of study materials occurs either at the request of those who need them, or they are made available voluntarily (out of a desire to help others). There were instances where posts advertised the sale of books (test books or literature), although the administrator stressed in two posts that he encourages the free distribution of learning resources and does not support their sale. However, in the vast majority of cases, we note the willingness of group members to help others without expecting material or financial rewards (a process of group solidarity takes place). The group administrator is involved in collecting the distributed resources (PDFs) and storing them on a drive whose link is made available to group members, thus helping those who need learning materials.

A final (fifth) finding we mention here concerns the characteristics of informal learning in the virtual environment. First, we identify forms of learning, namely:
(1) informal learning through information (about study materials, about admission conditions, faculties or specializations, etc.), informing each other

about learning techniques in order to achieve good results. They obtain information about professions (what responsibilities they entail and the benefits they bring) or about the usefulness of certificates obtained at secondary school;
(2) social learning (how to cope, how to proceed to solve a particular situation at enrolment, what criteria to use to clarify options, how to search for information and what to do with it, how to deal with emotions, feelings of fogginess, indecision, etc.). Through social learning, emotional intelligence is developed, aimed at managing emotional problems, learning how to solve problems and manage emotions, to reduce indecision and resources to use in decision making;
(3) learning from the experience of others, experiences shared through posting is essential within the group. There is a category of young people who are looking for others who can provide the information they need.

Secondly, the advantage of the support offered by the virtual group is the possibility of returning to the text to refresh the information (so it is not distorted by the passage of time) or to have access to other situations described by other people without having contacted them directly. A person's experience thus becomes an asset of the group, available at any time.

Limits and discussions

The research examines the behaviour of Romanian students seeking the right school and career path for future satisfaction, thus limiting the study to Romania. A comparative research based on the analysis of social media groups of young people from other countries could lead to the definition of attitudinal or behavioural patterns regarding the paths chosen by young people in the process of choosing a profession (indirectly, universities) according to the cultural model of their countries.

Investigating cyberspace is a real challenge in many ways. Methodologically, I was confronted with the problem of sampling the subjects included in the research, the completeness of the data needed to investigate a phenomenon, the specifics of the behaviour of people active in cyberspace, etc., the way information circulates and the types of information accessible. Their effects are sometimes difficult to measure, given the limited possibility of contacting subjects in cyberspace. Nevertheless, cyberspace is taking over the lives of individuals and studies are needed to understand this universe. One person's post can also provoke hundreds of reactions or, conversely, no reaction at all. This is visible in the posts analysed in this study, without having an explanation for these situations.

Another aspect that relates to the subject of the research concerns the dynamics of the virtual group. The role of the group creator over time can also be studied, which shows the characteristics of the group leader (if we compare with groups in reality. He can animate the group, select certain posts or remove people from the group who do not respect the rules, which he also established. In the group analysed in this study, the group creator also played a role of emotional support, of accumulating educational resources and making them available to new members.

It is worth noting the behaviour of young people who seek out people (usually students) with the intention of asking for details, reflecting the need to gather information through direct communication, from someone who has gone through the experience or process (in our case of admission). The risk arising from this act is given by the presence of a relative degree of subjectivity in the transmission of information that can lead to misperception or incomplete perception of reality.

It would be interesting to follow all the posts over a longer period of time, possibly two years, in order to capture the dynamics of the group at all stages of the group's development, namely: from high school (possibly the last year of high school) - with the concern for sitting the baccalaureate exam, the process of choosing a university, respectively a specialization in correlation with the targeted profession. We find that there are young people who are more concerned with getting a college degree easily (doing a college that does not require a high effort for learning), without asking themselves the question of the field in which they will get their degree and the future working environment and whether these fit their psycho-emotional structure. There is a lack of a long-term perspective, a long-term plan, which aims to contribute and build a career. Again, we ask ourselves whether university is a means by which young people must reach a level of performance that leads to personal satisfaction (through professional fulfilment) or whether it is a goal, a model to follow (I go to university because others have done so) and then take up a job (whatever it happens to be) that provides a salary. From this point on, the focus of the research is on the type of individual formed in society: as a producer of value for oneself and society, or as a consumer of resources for one's own satisfaction.

Looking at the occupational perspective, we see that young people focus on the immediate future and implicitly on short-term objectives: to get a high grade in order to succeed in admissions, to choose a good university, to choose specialisations in fields with high labour demand, prestigious occupations. In this study we identified few young people who say they want to work in a particular field, aiming for long-term goals and therefore have a

vision for the distant future. Of course, there is a possibility that those who have made an early decision about their career path may not have joined the group or, if they did, may have limited themselves to obtaining learning resources to achieve their goals. Thus, the group may be made up of those who have not clarified their career path and are looking for information to help them make the decision. From this point of view, further studies are needed to analyse the profile of group members from the perspective of future career clarity/projection.

Another limitation is that some members of the group chose to post anonymously, which did not allow for gender analysis. However, we note a lower involvement of boys. The study could not include all members of the group, as the analysis was based on written reactions; there is no possibility to see the impact of some posts on other members, who did not react. We therefore wonder what the real number of recipients of a piece of information is, how many of the members did not see a post, etc., thus missing a significant part of the group, i.e. the inactive, from the possibility of inclusion in the study.

Conclusions

The need for information is achieved by joining a group in the Internet environment. The social media group thus becomes a source of information in the first stage of the career decision making process. We are witnessing a model of informal education taking place within the generation of young people at the stage of choosing a professional field. The transfer of information from those who know to those who do not know is done on a one-off, demand-driven basis.

Today's society, through the conquest of information technology, is creating a new framework for informal learning, namely the virtual environment, which has the capacity to interconnect people in different geographical areas and social categories. Young people can get together in virtual groups and share experiences. The means chosen is to write a text and post it, either under a real identity or under a false or hidden one (anonymous), to upload and share electronic documents (pdf's with learning resources or pictures of books/research sought). The social networking group becomes a source of information about the university and professional future - opinions, views, impressions, advice are sought from those of the same age (intra-generational solidarity) as well as from those who are already students. In this way, the undecided or uninitiated have more sources of information in addition to formal or family or school sources.

The areas of informal learning in social media are diverse. They are made up of learning content useful for the baccalaureate exams and details about them (essays, outlines, summaries, papers, etc.). They are particularly useful for those who are aiming for high exam results, for those who have few study materials and for young people who are unable to consult a teacher outside school hours (cannot afford a tutor). In the virtual group, those interested obtain a range of information about universities, specialisations, admissions, necessary documents, teachers or the difficulty of studying.

The virtual group, similar to the group based on direct interaction, facilitates the circulation of a set of opinions necessary to clarify the choice of a university and/or specialisation. In relation to the professional perspective, group members analyse the relationship between passion and financial reward through salary, express aspects of job satisfaction, detail the factors that are important when choosing a profession, and provide as many essential aspects as possible for professional orientation. It also shows ways or practices of analysing information and making decisions, the group indirectly being a system of support, motivation, encouragement to succeed or to crystallise options.

The psychosocial implications of joining a group are various, including: the group satisfies the need to belong; solutions to problems, experiences and specific difficulties/aspects are shared (for example, it is pointed out that each faculty has its own rules and students are invited to read the rules or ask the secretariat to solve specific situations); moral support, encouragement for young people who express various fears or show uncertainty about the right choice.

The virtual group is in some cases the first source of information. The question is asked in the group before information from official sources is provided. We see a tendency among some young people to seek out people who can provide details. Other young people do not understand the answers received from employees and ask in groups. Openness, high addressability towards those in the same situation is increased, noting young people's willingness to share their information and experience. Thus, the virtual group satisfies the need to help, it is a framework where altruism and mutual aid are present.

The advantages of communicating online in a group, which is private (only members can see the discussions) - there is an exchange of information (similar to the classic group), there is the possibility to post anonymously (you are not exposed to ridicule - you will not be identified and pointed out by others in case of criticism). A strength of the virtual group is that it allows

connection between people between whom there is a greater or lesser physical distance and who otherwise would not be able to communicate. The disadvantages of social media activation are related to the possibility of false or misleading information being passed on (lack of objectivity), but this can be corrected by the reactions of other members, etc. People with interests other than those declared by the group administrator can join these groups, and the risk increases when communication is transferred to private space (chat or messaging apps).

On the basis of what I have found so far, I can state that the online social networking group is a context for informal learning, offering ways of solving problems, a framework for information from several people in a short time, through communication. For a part of the group members this networking framework is a support for information to crystallize career options (of choice of professional field and academic training institutions).

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