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*Psychological and Pedagogical Framework of Ukrainian
University Students' Career Self-Determination*

Psychologiczno-pedagogiczne podstawy samookreślenia zawodowego studentów na Ukrainie

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ABSTRACT

A theoretical substantiation of the psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of higher education students in Ukraine is presented based on an analysis of contemporary international, Polish, and Ukrainian scholarly discourse. The methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, systematization, generalization, and interpretation of scientific sources

were employed. It is clarified that career self-determination of higher education students should be understood as a dynamic process involving the awareness, design, implementation, and adjustment of an individual educational and professional trajectory. The psychological foundations of this process are identified, including personal agency, motivational and value-based orientation, self-knowledge and reflection, professional identity, career self-efficacy, adaptability, and emotional self-regulation. The pedagogical foundations of career self-determination are outlined, including the understanding of the university as an environment for personal and professional development, the integration of career-related issues into the educational process, practice-oriented learning, reflective organization of educational experience, mentoring and counselling support, continuous career guidance, and the development of flexible competencies. It is demonstrated that the Ukrainian context significantly modifies the content and conditions of career self-determination due to the influence of martial law, labor market transformations, unequal access to career support resources, and the increased importance of psychological resilience and adaptability. The key psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of higher education students in Ukraine are summarized.

Keywords: career self-determination; university students; psychological and pedagogical foundations; professional identity; career adaptability

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is radically changing the requirements for higher education seekers, which are not limited to the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills, but also form expectations that they will be able to consciously plan their individual educational and professional trajectories. Under such conditions, career self-determination is not a one-time act of choosing a profession, but a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional process of understanding one's own values, interests, abilities, opportunities for professional realization, and prospects for entering the labor market. This problem is particularly relevant in the BANI world – in conditions of social instability, labor market transformation, digitalization, and increased demands for flexibility and adaptability of specialists. In the Ukrainian context, these conditions are exacerbated by the state of war and, subsequently, the need for post-war reconstruction of the country (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine, 2024; National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance [NAQA], 2025a, 2025b; Okhrimenko et al., 2024).

The role of higher education institutions in this process is also changing. Modern universities are seen not only as institutions of professional training, but also as environments for personal and professional development, the formation of professional identity, career self-efficacy, the ability to reflect, make responsible choices, and plan long-term careers. In this context, higher education is an important factor in the personal and professional development of future specialists, and career self-determination is one of the mechanisms of this development (Bratko et al., 2025; Bratko, Semenyk, 2025). Therefore, not only the organizational forms of career support at the university need to be scientifically understood, but above

all the psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of higher education seekers.

In international English-language scientific discourse, the problem of career self-determination of university students is considered through the prism of several interrelated approaches. First of all, there is the concept of career construction, within which a career is interpreted as a process of actively constructing a life and professional path, and adaptability, subjectivity, and meaning-making become key (Wang, Li, 2024). A significant body of contemporary research focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of career interventions for university students, the development of career adaptability, career decision-making self-efficacy, professional identity, employability, and readiness to transition from education to work (Soares et al., 2022; Soares, Taveira, 2024; Wetstone, Rice, 2023; Zhou et al., 2023; Scandurra et al., 2024). A separate area of research is professional identity formation, which demonstrates that the professional development of university students is linked not only to the acquisition of competencies, but also to internal work on the image of the professional "I," rethinking values, experiences, and professional roles (Pach et al., 2025; Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024).

At the same time, international studies convincingly show that the effectiveness of students' career self-determination largely depends on a combination of internal psychological resources of the individual and pedagogically organized conditions of the university environment. This refers to the interaction of motivational and value orientations, professional identity, career self-efficacy, reflectivity, emotional regulation, professional trial experience, academic engagement, mentoring, career-oriented training courses, internships, and other forms of support provision in higher education (De Schepper et al., 2023; Hooley et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2024; Wei, 2025). This determines the expediency of a psychological and pedagogical approach to the analysis of career self-determination, since such an approach allows for the integration of personal and educational-environmental factors into a single analytical framework.

The European and, in particular, Polish scientific context also actualizes this issue. Contemporary research shows an interest in barriers to career planning among students, individual styles of career planning, and the relationship between the educational environment and the formation of competencies necessary for the professional future of the applicant (Czarnecka et al., 2025; Jagielska, 2025; Mroczkowska et al., 2024). In this sense, the issue of career self-determination goes beyond narrowly applied career guidance and emerges as an important area of psychological and pedagogical research in the European higher education space.

In the Ukrainian scientific field, certain aspects of the problem under study are also being actively developed. In particular, researchers are focusing on modern career guidance technologies and tools for the career development of students

(Okhrimenko, Tkachuk, 2023), the socio-psychological factors of professional self-determination among students in higher education institutions (Bugerko, Hirnyak, 2024), the role of career centers and career development centers in the personal and professional development of young people (Slippchyshyn, Melko, 2024; Vasylieva et al., 2024), educational strategies for the professional self-realization of higher education seekers (Martynenko et al., 2025), as well as trends in the development of professional self-determination in the activities of higher education institutions in European countries (Dubinka, 2025). In wartime conditions, works devoted to the professional and career development of students in a situation of social crisis and national recovery are of particular importance (Dobrovolska, 2024; Okhrimenko et al., 2024). At the same time, an analysis of existing publications shows that most studies focus either on individual career guidance and career support tools or on narrow sectoral and applied aspects of professional self-determination.

Therefore, despite the growing scientific interest in the problem, the psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of higher education seekers in Ukraine remain insufficiently substantiated. The essence of this phenomenon, its psychological mechanisms, pedagogical conditions for support in the university environment, as well as the specifics of its implementation in the modern Ukrainian context, taking into account international scientific discourse, require further consideration. It is this scientific gap that determines the relevance of the article's topic.

RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the set purpose, a set of general scientific research methods was used: analysis, synthesis, comparison, systematization, generalization, and interpretation of scientific sources, which made it possible to identify key approaches to understanding the career self-determination of higher education seekers, outline its psychological and pedagogical foundations, and determine the peculiarities of their implementation in Ukraine.

RESULTS

In contemporary scholarly discourse, career self-determination is increasingly interpreted not as a local stage of occupational choice but as a long-term process of awareness, design, and construction of an individual trajectory of professional development. This approach has emerged under the influence of transformations in the socio-economic environment, changes in employment models, the growing importance of flexible competencies, and the transition from the concept of a linear career to the understanding of a career as a dynamic, open, and multidimensional

life-professional construct (Wang, Li, 2024). Under these conditions, a higher education student is no longer viewed as an object of external professional guidance but rather as a subject of active choice, reflection, and construction of their own professional future.

The concept of career self-determination should be considered broader than the traditional notion of vocational self-determination. While vocational self-determination is primarily associated with choosing a profession, specialty, or field of activity, career self-determination also encompasses awareness of desired models of professional realization, ways of achieving professional goals, evaluation of personal resources and barriers, and decision-making regarding educational, professional, and life strategies. In this sense, career self-determination integrates not only choice but also design, adaptation, self-regulation, and readiness to revise one's individual trajectory depending on environmental conditions (Soares et al., 2022; Soares, Taveira, 2024).

For university students, career self-determination has specific characteristics. The period of study at a higher education institution represents a stage of intensive personal and professional development, during which professional intentions are clarified, self-perceptions are correlated with the requirements of the chosen field, professional identity is formed, and the capacity for conscious career choice develops. The university context creates both opportunities and risks for this process. On the one hand, students gain access to new knowledge, social practices, environments for professional experimentation, mentorship, and reflection. On the other hand, they face labor market uncertainty, competition, and the challenge of reconciling personal expectations with external demands. In the Ukrainian context, these challenges are further intensified by the impact of martial law, forced mobility, and general social instability (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine, 2024; NAQA, 2025a; Okhrimenko et al., 2024).

In international research, the career self-determination of university students is most often analyzed through a number of interrelated psychological constructs. One of them is *career adaptability*, interpreted as an individual's readiness to cope with current and anticipated tasks of professional development, transitions, and uncertainty (Soares, Taveira, 2024; Wetstone, Rice, 2023). Another important construct is *career decision-making self-efficacy*, defined as confidence in one's ability to make informed career decisions, analyze alternatives, and act in accordance with established goals (Zhou et al., 2023). Equally significant are *vocational identity clarity* and *professional identity formation*, which reflect the degree to which individuals develop clear perceptions of themselves as future professionals, the stability of professional meanings, and a sense of belonging to a particular professional community (Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024; Shen et al., 2024).

In this perspective, career self-determination appears as an integrative phenomenon that combines motivational-value, cognitive, emotional-regulatory,

reflective, and behavioral-projective components. The motivational-value dimension is associated with professional interests, life meanings, perceptions of success, and the social significance of future work. The cognitive dimension includes knowledge about oneself, professions, employment opportunities, and educational pathways. The emotional-regulatory dimension involves the ability to cope with uncertainty, anxiety, and doubt while maintaining internal readiness for decision-making. The reflective dimension manifests itself in the ability to analyze one's own experience, adjust intentions, and evaluate future prospects. The behavioral-projective dimension is related to practical actions such as searching for information, participating in internships, selecting educational opportunities, and developing an individual career strategy (Scandurra et al., 2024; Wei, 2025).

From this perspective, career self-determination cannot be adequately explained solely through psychological approaches or exclusively within the framework of pedagogical analysis. Its nature is fundamentally interdisciplinary. The psychological dimension allows researchers to examine internal mechanisms of the formation of career intentions, professional identity, self-efficacy, agency, and adaptability. The pedagogical dimension, in turn, makes it possible to analyze how the educational environment, the content and organization of the learning process, mentorship, practical training, career counselling, institutional support, and the culture of the university facilitate or, conversely, complicate the process of career self-determination (Hooley et al., 2023; Slipchyshyn, Melko, 2024; Vasylieva et al., 2024). Therefore, a psychological and pedagogical analysis provides the most comprehensive perspective for understanding this phenomenon.

The psychological and pedagogical approach assumes that the career self-determination of university students develops at the intersection of two groups of factors: internal factors related to the personality of the student and external factors determined by the educational and social environment. Internal factors include interests, needs, value orientations, life plans, professional expectations, the level of reflection, self-esteem, readiness to assume responsibility for one's choices, career self-efficacy, and psychological resilience. External factors include the content of the educational program, the quality of pedagogical interaction, the availability of internships and practical training, access to career support, student services, and professional networks, as well as broader societal conditions, including the state of the labour market and social risks associated with the transition from education to employment (De Schepper et al., 2023; Scandurra et al., 2024). The interaction of these factors determines not only the success of the initial career choice but also a student's capacity to adjust it in response to changing environmental conditions.

Within the framework of contemporary scholarly understanding, it is also essential to distinguish career self-determination from related but not

identical concepts. For example, *professional identity formation* describes the development of one's self-image as a future professional but does not encompass the entire logic of career design. *Employability* focuses on the ability to remain competitive in the labor market but does not fully capture the personal and meaning-oriented dimension of choice. *Career adaptability* reflects readiness for professional change and transitions but functions rather as a resource for career self-determination than as the phenomenon itself. *Career decision-making self-efficacy* reflects confidence in one's ability to make career decisions but does not include the full spectrum of value-based, identity-related, and environmental aspects. Therefore, career self-determination should be interpreted as a broader integrative concept within which these constructs function either as components or as psychological resources (Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024; Shen et al., 2024; Wang, Li, 2024).

For the Ukrainian context, such an approach is particularly important. Domestic research demonstrates significant interest in career guidance technologies, socio-psychological factors of vocational self-determination, the role of career support centers, and educational strategies of professional self-realization among university students (Buherko, Hirniak, 2024; Martynenko et al., 2025; Okhrimenko, Tkachuk, 2023). However, many of these studies focus either on applied career guidance tools or on individual aspects of professional development. Comprehensive conceptualization of career self-determination as a psychological and pedagogical phenomenon that integrates internal mechanisms of personal development with external conditions of the educational environment still requires further theoretical elaboration.

Therefore, the career self-determination of university students should be understood as a multidimensional process of awareness, choice, design, and adjustment of an individual professional trajectory, realized through the interaction of personal resources and pedagogically organized conditions of the university environment. Such an understanding provides a basis for further analysis of the psychological and pedagogical foundations of this process and for identifying the specific features of its implementation in contemporary Ukraine.

The psychological foundations of career self-determination of university students reflect the internal mechanisms through which external educational, professional, and social influences acquire individual meaning for the person and are transformed into conscious choices, intentions, and strategies for professional development. In this sense, career self-determination cannot be reduced solely to the rational analysis of employment opportunities or the selection of a future workplace. Rather, it is the result of complex internal work of the individual, which combines self-knowledge, value-based reflection on the professional future, the experience of uncertainty, the formation of a professional self-image, and the development of confidence in one's ability to make career decisions and adapt to

change. For this reason, the psychological dimension constitutes the fundamental basis for understanding the essence of career self-determination among university students (Shen et al., 2024; Wang, Li, 2024).

One of the key psychological foundations of career self-determination is personal agency. This refers to the ability of a higher education student to perceive themselves as an active creator of their own educational and professional trajectory, to assume responsibility for decisions made, and to independently set and adjust goals depending on changing circumstances. In this context, a career is not perceived as a predetermined route but rather as an individually constructed project that requires internal activity, self-regulation, and readiness for choice (Bratko, Simenyk, 2025; Wang, Li, 2024).

Equally important is the motivational and value-based foundation of career self-determination, which develops under the influence of professional interests, life priorities, perceptions of a desired lifestyle, significant social reference points, and expectations regarding the future. This component determines the stability of career intentions, the willingness to invest effort in professional development, and the ability to maintain internal motivation under conditions of uncertainty. Studies devoted to *future orientation* and *vocational identity clarity* demonstrate that clearer perceptions of the future and a more defined image of oneself in a profession strengthen students' confidence in their professional prospects and increase their engagement in the process of career planning (Shen et al., 2024). In this regard, career self-determination should be understood not only as an instrumental but also as a meaning-oriented life process.

Career self-determination also requires systematic self-knowledge and reflection, which involve the ability of students to analyze their own interests, abilities, strengths and weaknesses, personal resources, and limitations, as well as to correlate them with the demands of the professional environment. In contemporary conditions, where professional trajectories increasingly depart from linear patterns, reflection ensures internal flexibility and the capacity to reconsider previous ideas about one's professional future without losing personal integrity (Pach et al., 2025; Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024).

Another important psychological basis of career self-determination is *professional identity*, understood as the formation of a perception of oneself as a future specialist, awareness of belonging to a particular professional field, and acceptance of its values, norms, and roles. Consequently, *professional identity formation* is considered in contemporary research as one of the key processes occurring in higher education (Pach et al., 2025; Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024). Professional identity does not develop automatically but gradually evolves through reflection on professional meanings, interaction with teachers and professional communities, and the accumulation of practical experience. In Ukrainian academic discourse, a similar logic can be observed in studies devoted to professional

identity and the personal and professional development of university students (Bratko et al., 2025; Rahrina, Repetun, 2023).

Career self-efficacy should also be emphasized as an important psychological resource. It refers to confidence in one's ability to perform actions related to career choice, such as gathering information, analyzing alternatives, making decisions, and planning steps toward career goals. A higher level of *career decision-making self-efficacy* contributes to students' readiness for career planning and increases their assessment of their own *employability* (Wei, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023). For university students, this represents a significant psychological resource that supports both the process of career choice and subsequent career-related actions.

Alongside self-efficacy, *career adaptability* constitutes another psychological foundation reflecting the ability to manage transitions, uncertainty, and change within the professional environment. In contemporary conditions, career self-determination increasingly implies readiness to continuously review and transform one's professional trajectory. Career adaptability includes concern for the future, control over one's career path, curiosity about opportunities, and confidence in taking action. Research indicates that higher levels of adaptability improve adaptation, well-being, engagement, and readiness for career transitions among students (Oliveira, Marques, 2024; Soares, Taveira, 2024; Wetstone, Rice, 2023). This is particularly relevant in Ukraine, where young people must plan their careers under conditions of significant social and economic instability.

The psychological foundations of career self-determination also include an emotional-regulatory component. Choosing a professional path is often accompanied by anxiety, doubts, and the influence of external expectations. Therefore, emotional resilience, self-regulation, and tolerance for uncertainty become crucial personal qualities. Research indicates that career self-efficacy and emotional intelligence significantly influence the success of professional self-determination, particularly under crisis conditions (Zhou et al., 2023).

Special attention should also be paid to the role of socio-psychological factors which, although external in nature, are psychologically internalized and influence individual career decisions. These include the influence of reference groups, family, the academic environment, social capital, models of success, and support networks. Such factors not only create opportunities or constraints but also shape perceptions of future prospects and assessments of the realism of career intentions. Psychological maturity is manifested not in the absence of external influences but in the ability to critically reflect upon them and integrate them into one's own professional project. For this reason, the socio-psychological dimension of professional self-determination among university students has attracted considerable attention from Ukrainian researchers (Buherko, Hirniak, 2024).

Thus, the psychological foundations of career self-determination among university students encompass an interconnected complex of internal resources

and mechanisms: personal agency, motivational and value-based clarity, self-knowledge and reflection, professional identity, career self-efficacy, adaptability, emotional self-regulation, and socio-psychological maturity. Their interaction ensures the transition from externally influenced professional choice to conscious career self-determination. At the same time, these resources can be fully realized only within an appropriately organized educational environment, which highlights the importance of the pedagogical dimension of this issue.

The pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of university students reflect a set of conditions, influences, organizational decisions, and educational practices through which the internal psychological resources of the individual gain opportunities for development, actualization, and realization. While the psychological dimension focuses on the subjective mechanisms of choice, self-awareness, and career design, the pedagogical dimension explains how the university environment organizes – or, conversely, fails to organize – the space for students' career development. In this context, career self-determination appears not merely as an individual matter of the student but as a process shaped through the interaction between the individual and the educational environment of the higher education institution, its culture, curriculum, pedagogical support, and practices of professional socialization (Hooley et al., 2023; Scandurra et al., 2024).

One of the fundamental pedagogical foundations of career self-determination is the understanding of the university as an environment for personal and professional development rather than merely an institution for the transmission of knowledge. Such an approach assumes that the educational process should be oriented not only toward the formation of specialized competencies but also toward developing students' ability to navigate the professional world, understand their own resources, analyze future professional prospects, and make responsible decisions regarding their educational and career trajectories. In this sense, higher education functions as a factor of personal and professional development because it creates conditions for expanding experiences of self-knowledge, professional experimentation, reflection, and self-realization (Bratko et al., 2025). Consequently, the pedagogical content of career self-determination lies in the purposeful creation of an educational environment in which students' professional future becomes an object of awareness, analysis, and pedagogical support.

Another important pedagogical foundation is the integration of career-related issues into the content of education. Career self-determination should become an organic component of educational programs, particularly through academic courses, professionally oriented tasks, reflective exercises, and case analysis. Research confirms that such elements contribute to the development of *career self-efficacy* and students' readiness for conscious professional choice (Wei, 2025). Therefore, pedagogical support for career self-determination should be implemented throughout the entire educational process rather than only at the stage of employment.

A further important pedagogical principle is the practice-oriented nature of the educational process. Career self-determination becomes more realistic when students participate in practical activities such as internships, volunteering, work-integrated learning, or professional projects. Such experiences help align expectations with the realities of the professional environment and foster responsibility, reflection, confidence, and professional identity. Studies demonstrate that participation in internships and practical experiences enhances employability confidence and clarifies professional identity (Dollinger et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2024). From a pedagogical perspective, this means that career self-determination requires not only information but also real experience in professional roles.

Equally important is the reflective organization of learning. Career self-determination requires not only participation in professional activities but also meaningful interpretation of these experiences in relation to the future. Educational practices that encourage self-analysis, discussion of experience, and formulation of personal career goals are therefore essential. Universities that promote reflective learning increase academic engagement and support the integration of personal and professional development. Consequently, pedagogical principles should include mechanisms of purposeful reflection rather than merely the organization of activities.

Mentorship, tutoring, and career counselling also play a special role within the pedagogical foundations of career self-determination. Many students encounter difficulties due to limited experience, insufficient information, or uncertainty about how their education relates to real career opportunities. In such situations, interaction with teachers, mentors, tutors, or career service professionals provides not only information but also meaningful support. It helps students set goals, interpret experiences, clarify intentions, understand labor market demands, and develop realistic career plans. Within international discourse, university career interventions are considered an important instrument for enhancing students' career adaptability, confidence, and quality of career decisions (Soares et al., 2022; Wetstone, Rice, 2023). In the Ukrainian context, similar conclusions are supported by studies on the role of career centers and career development centers in supporting young people (Slipchyshyn, Melko, 2024; Vasylieva et al., 2024).

Another essential pedagogical foundation is continuous career support. Students' career self-determination begins to develop from the early years of study and evolves under the influence of learning experiences, internships, and external circumstances. Pedagogical support should therefore be staged: initially focused on self-knowledge and orientation, later on the development of career self-efficacy and planning, and finally on facilitating the transition to employment. Research indicates that comprehensive support models are significantly more effective than isolated initiatives (Scandurra et al., 2024).

An additional important pedagogical foundation is the connection between education and the professional environment and social communities. Career

self-determination depends on students' opportunities to interact with professionals, employers, and alumni, which helps clarify perceptions of professions, assess personal expectations, and observe real models of career development. Studies show that social networks significantly influence professional entry into the labor market (De Schepper et al., 2023). Pedagogically, this implies that universities should actively integrate students into professional contexts.

Within the structure of pedagogical foundations, it is also important to emphasize the development of soft skills. Career self-determination requires communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility, self-organization, problem-solving abilities, decision-making skills, and lifelong learning competencies. These competencies ensure adaptation to the professional environment and enable students to perceive themselves as active agents of future professional activity. Ukrainian studies highlight the significance of soft skills for the preparation and professional realization of university students (Shvedova et al., 2022). Consequently, career self-determination should be supported not only through specialised initiatives but also through the overall logic of contemporary university education oriented toward the development of autonomous and adaptable individuals.

For the Ukrainian context, the adaptability of pedagogical support to conditions of instability is particularly important. Martial law, forced mobility, labor market transformations, disruptions to traditional educational trajectories, digitalization, and the need for post-war reconstruction of the country change not only the external conditions of career choice but also the pedagogy of supporting career self-determination. Under such circumstances, universities should not merely inform students about possible career paths but also help them develop resilience, flexibility, scenario-based thinking, and the ability to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty while combining short-term adaptive actions with long-term professional vision. Therefore, in Ukraine, the psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination acquire an additional crisis-management and recovery-oriented dimension (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine, 2024; NAQA, 2025b; Okhrimenko et al., 2024).

In summary, the pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of university students include the understanding of the university as an environment for personal and professional development; the integration of career-related issues into educational content; the practice-oriented character of the educational process; the reflective organization of learning; mentoring and counselling support; the continuity of career guidance; connections with professional environments; the development of flexible competencies; and the adaptability of educational practices to conditions of social instability. Taken together, these foundations ensure the transition from spontaneous or externally determined professional choice to conscious career self-determination as a pedagogically supported and personally meaningful process.

Career self-determination of university students in Ukraine develops under the influence of a complex combination of social, educational, economic, and psychological factors that have become particularly dynamic in the current period. Consequently, this process possesses specific features. While in the international context the issue is primarily associated with the individualisation of educational and professional trajectories and the development of *adaptability* and *employability*, in Ukraine these processes occur simultaneously with the modernisation of higher education, high social instability, and martial law (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine, 2024; NAQA, 2025a, 2025b). As a result, career self-determination acquires not only educational and psychological significance but also a pronounced social and recovery-oriented dimension.

One of the leading characteristics of the Ukrainian context is the heightened uncertainty of professional futures. This uncertainty is associated with labor market transformations, migration processes, the growing role of digital employment formats, the emergence of new professional niches, and the simultaneous reduction of some traditional employment opportunities. Under such conditions, university students must orient themselves not toward a strictly predetermined trajectory but toward a variable field of opportunities where flexibility, the ability to reorient, and readiness for lifelong learning become particularly important.

Another significant feature is the impact of martial law on the life and professional strategies of young people. Wartime realities influence not only conditions of study and employment but also the psychological structure of career choice itself. For many students, questions about their professional future are intertwined with experiences of insecurity, disruptions of established life scenarios, forced relocation, distance or interrupted education, and the reassessment of personal priorities. In such circumstances, career self-determination acquires an additional moral and value-based dimension, becoming associated with social responsibility, civic engagement, and readiness to contribute to the post-war reconstruction of the country (Dobrovolska, 2024; Okhrimenko et al., 2024).

Another feature of the Ukrainian situation is the coexistence of European trends in higher education modernization with the incomplete development of institutional mechanisms for career support. Universities are gradually implementing student-centered learning, competency-based approaches, practice-oriented elements of training, and internal quality assurance systems. However, career self-determination is not yet universally considered a cross-cutting component of the educational process. Often, career support remains concentrated in individual activities, consultations, job fairs, or the work of specialized centers which, although important, do not always form a comprehensive support system for students (Slipchyshyn, Melko, 2024; Vasylieva et al., 2024).

At the same time, the Ukrainian context also demonstrates a transition from a narrow vocational guidance approach toward a broader understanding of career

development. Contemporary research increasingly addresses not only occupational choice but also career formation, professional self-realization, the development of soft skills, professional identity formation, and readiness to construct individual career trajectories (Martynenko et al., 2025; Okhrimenko, Tkachuk, 2023; Shvedova et al., 2022). Nevertheless, this transition is not yet complete, resulting in certain terminological and conceptual inconsistencies within national research.

The specificity of the Ukrainian context is also determined by the importance of socio-psychological factors. Under conditions of instability, the influence of family, close social environments, teachers' positions, and socially approved or "secure" career paths becomes stronger. As a result, students often have to balance between their own professional interests, expectations of their social environment, objective labor market demands, and circumstances determined by war or economic risks. Therefore, socio-psychological factors of professional self-determination occupy an important place in Ukrainian research (Buherko, Hirniak, 2024).

At the same time, the Ukrainian context possesses considerable resource potential. The high adaptive capacity of students, experience of studying in difficult conditions, growing digital competence, participation in volunteer and civic initiatives, and increased attention to the quality and social role of higher education create the foundation for a renewed understanding of career self-determination. In this sense, it appears not only as an instrument of individual professional advancement but also as a manifestation of personal responsibility and readiness for socially meaningful activity.

Therefore, the specific features of career self-determination of university students in Ukraine are determined by the interaction of several groups of factors: high professional uncertainty, the influence of martial law, labor market transformations, unequal access to career support resources, the growing role of socio-psychological environments, and the increasing importance of flexible competencies. These circumstances necessitate a particularly sensitive psychological and pedagogical approach to supporting career self-determination in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

The conducted analysis allows career self-determination of university students to be interpreted as a holistic psychological and pedagogical phenomenon that combines internal mechanisms of personal development, educational-environmental conditions, and the broader social context. It cannot be reduced either to the mere fact of occupational choice or to a set of isolated career practices. Rather, it represents a dynamic process of awareness, design, experimentation, and adjustment of an individual educational and professional trajectory. In this sense, career self-determination functions both as a result of personal and professional development and as a mechanism for its further unfolding (Bratko, Simenyk, 2025; Soares et al., 2022; Wang, Li, 2024;).

The generalization of scholarly approaches makes it possible to distinguish three interrelated groups of foundations of career self-determination. The first group includes psychological foundations: personal agency, motivational and value-based clarity, self-knowledge and reflection, professional identity, career self-efficacy, adaptability, and emotional self-regulation (Reissner, Armitage-Chan, 2024; Shen et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2023). The second group consists of *pedagogical foundations*: integration of career-related issues into the educational process, practice-oriented learning, reflective organization of educational experience, mentoring and counselling support, continuity of guidance, development of flexible competencies, and openness of universities to interaction with professional environments (Hooley et al., 2023; Vasylieva et al., 2024; Wei, 2025; Scandurra et al., 2024). The third group comprises *contextual and social foundations*, particularly evident in Ukraine, associated with martial law, labor market transformations, unequal access to career support resources, and the challenges of post-war recovery (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine, 2024; NAQA, 2025a, 2025b).

Based on the conducted analysis, the psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of university students can be defined as a set of internal personal prerequisites, educational-environmental conditions, and socio-contextual factors that ensure the conscious design, choice, implementation, and adjustment of an individual career trajectory. Within this framework, career self-determination unfolds at the intersection of three dimensions: the intrapersonal, the pedagogical-organizational, and the socio-contextual.

Accordingly, the key psychological and pedagogical foundations of career self-determination of university students include agency, value-meaning orientation, reflexivity, practice orientation, continuity, adaptability, and institutional support. Together, they form a conceptual basis for understanding career self-determination as a multi-level process in which personal resources, pedagogical opportunities of the educational environment, and contemporary social challenges interact.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical analysis of contemporary scholarly discourse allows career self-determination of university students to be interpreted as a holistic psychological and pedagogical phenomenon and as a dynamic process of designing and adjusting an individual educational and professional trajectory. It has been established that the effectiveness of this process depends on the interaction between students' internal personal resources and the pedagogically organized conditions of the educational environment. The key psychological and pedagogical foundations of this process include personal agency, value-meaning orientation, reflexivity, practice orientation, continuity, adaptability, and institutional support.

It has also been established that in the Ukrainian context career self-determination of university students acquires specific features under the influence of martial law, socio-economic instability, labor market transformations, and unequal access to career support resources. These conditions increase the importance of psychological resilience, flexible competencies, and purposeful pedagogical support. Prospects for further research lie in the empirical verification of the outlined foundations and the development of models of psychological and pedagogical support for students' career self-determination in the practice of Ukrainian higher education institutions.

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ABSTRAKT

W artykule przedstawiono teoretyczne uzasadnienie psychologiczno-pedagogicznych podstaw samookreślenia zawodowego studentów szkolnictwa wyższego na Ukrainie na podstawie analizy współczesnego międzynarodowego, polskiego i ukraińskiego dyskursu naukowego. Zastosowano metody analizy, syntezy, porównania, systematyzacji, uogólnienia oraz interpretacji źródeł naukowych. Doprecyzowano, że samookreślenie zawodowe studentów szkolnictwa wyższego stanowi dynamiczny proces uświadamiania, projektowania, realizacji oraz korekty indywidualnej ścieżki edukacyjno-zawodowej. Określono psychologiczne podstawy tego procesu, w szczególności podmiotowość jednostki, orientację motywacyjno-wartościową, samopoznanie i refleksję, tożsamość zawodową, poczucie własnej skuteczności w podejmowaniu decyzji zawodowych, adaptacyjność oraz samoregulację emocjonalną. Nakreślono także pedagogiczne podstawy samookreślenia zawodowego, do których zaliczono rozumienie uniwersytetu jako środowiska rozwoju osobowo-zawodowego, integrację problematyki kariery w procesie kształcenia, praktyczny charakter nauczania, refleksyjną organizację doświadczeń edukacyjnych, wsparcie mentorskie i doradcze, ciągłość wsparcia kariery oraz rozwój kompetencji elastycznych. Wykazano, że kontekst ukraiński istotnie modyfikuje treść i warunki samookreślenia zawodowego ze względu na wpływ stanu wojennego, transformację rynku pracy, nierównomierny dostęp do zasobów wsparcia kariery oraz zwiększone znaczenie odporności psychicznej i adaptacyjności. Uogólniono kluczowe psychologiczno-pedagogiczne podstawy samookreślenia zawodowego studentów szkolnictwa wyższego na Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe: samookreślenie zawodowe; studenci szkolnictwa wyższego; podstawy psychologiczno-pedagogiczne; tożsamość zawodowa; adaptacyjność kariery