

Personnel Marketing at the University of Defence as an Important Part of Human Resource Management in the Defence Sector

Monika DAVIDOVÁ^{1*}, Miroslav KRČ¹, Blanka FRANKOVÁ², Marcela TRÁVNÍČKOVÁ²

¹Department of Resources Management, Faculty of Military Leadership, University Defence, Kounicova 65, 662 10, Brno, Czech Republic

² Consulting Services Group, University of Defence, Kounicova 65, 662 10, Brno, Czech Republic

Correspondence: *monika.davidova@unob.cz

Abstract

The present study examined the communication sources used in the personnel marketing of the University of Defence, the content of the university's website, and the perceived reactions of family members to the intention to study at the university. The study draws on data obtained from a questionnaire survey conducted among prospective students during the university's Open Days, that is, prior to the submission of their applications. The findings indicate that electronic sources, in particular the university website, are the most frequently used sources of information. The majority of prospective students who visited the website were able to obtain the information they required. The reactions of family members to prospective applicants' intention to study at the University of Defence are predominantly positive. However, they also express concerns about the applicants. The originality of the article lies in the fact that this issue has not yet been examined, thereby enabling more targeted use of specific communication tools within the personnel marketing of the University of Defence.

KEY WORDS: *human resources management, personnel marketing, prospective students and applicants to study, University of Defence, Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic*

Citation: Davidová M.; Krč M.; Franková B., Trávníčková M. Personnel marketing at the University of Defence as an important part of human resource management in the defence sector. In Proceedings of the Challenges to National Defence in Contemporary Geopolitical Situation, Brno, Czech Republic, 07-10 September 2026. ISSN 2538-8959, <https://doi.org/10.47459/cndcgs.2026.78>

1. Introduction

Personnel marketing is an important part of human resource management for any employer, as it forms the starting point of many personnel activities. It is preceded by the creation of work tasks and positions, as well as by job analysis, through which the employer defines the conditions and requirements connected with both the work itself and the employee expected to perform it [1]. Personnel marketing is then followed by other personnel activities, including recruitment, selection, and hiring, and later by adaptation and orientation.

The concept of personnel marketing can be understood in two main ways. In a narrower sense, it refers to the long-term acquisition of human resources from the external labour market and to the building of a positive employer image. In a broader sense, it also includes measures aimed at keeping current employees and supporting their long-term link with the organisation [2]. This approach is based on the use of marketing principles in human resource management, mainly in relation to workforce management [1]. According to Myslivcová [3], personnel marketing applies marketing approaches to human resource management and views both employees and potential candidates as customers.

The marketing mix can be used to attract, develop, and retain employees, to increase the interest of potential applicants, to present the strengths of the employer, and to support the stability of the existing workforce. As Kotler states, "The marketing mix is the set of tactical marketing tools – product, price, place, and promotion – that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market" [4].

In the context of higher education and military education, personnel marketing is closely linked to communication with prospective students. Universities need to provide clear, timely, and trustworthy information about study programmes, admission conditions, career options, and the specific demands connected with study. This is

especially important for institutions such as the University of Defence, where the decision to apply may be affected not only by the applicant's own interests but also by the views and concerns of family members.

Therefore, the present study focuses on selected communication sources used in the personnel marketing of the University of Defence. Particular attention is paid to the role of electronic sources, especially the university website, as a key channel through which prospective students search for information before submitting their applications. The study also examines whether the website provides the information needed by prospective applicants and how family members react to their intention to study at the university. The research is based on questionnaire data collected among prospective students during the university's Open Days. This focus makes it possible to better understand the information behaviour of applicants before the application process and to support more effective use of communication tools in the personnel marketing of the University of Defence.

2. Current status of the issue under study

The University of Defence is part of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, which considers human resource management to be a key area and monitors it closely. Strategic documents identify competent and motivated individuals as a priority [5], with particular emphasis on the recruitment of new military professionals, their career development, and the areas of education, professional development, and retention [6]. In practice, this function is carried out by the Personnel Agency, specifically its Personnel Recruitment Department.

In recent years, several studies have focused on the recruitment of prospective candidates and applicants to the Czech Armed Forces. These studies have addressed, for example, the macroeconomic context of recruitment in the Czech Armed Forces [7], the motivational reasons why prospective candidates and applicants seek to join the Czech Armed Forces [8], the motivations of men and women for joining, in order to determine whether gender differences exist [9], military expenditure and unemployment [10], and the education of soldiers in the context of career development and management [11]. The present study focused on the recruitment of new students to the University of Defence, who simultaneously enter the Czech Armed Forces upon enrolment.

One of the tools of personnel marketing is the Internet, which is regarded not only as a passive space in which basic information about the military and recruitment can be provided, but also as an active platform for online marketing, where specific marketing activities can be carried out systematically. Websites enable interactive communication with potential candidates. As demonstrated by Grbac and Vrkic [12], the majority of developed countries have military websites that meet the high standards associated with internet marketing. In contrast, the presence of military websites in less developed countries remains underrepresented in this new medium.

New communication strategies are used by armed forces across Europe, with a view to both legitimising new tasks and recruiting new personnel. Research also points to the use of social media, such as blogs. This expanding phenomenon aims to bridge the gap between the military and society [13]. Semenenko et al. [14] analysed human resource management models, including contract-based recruitment, long-term workforce planning, short-term training programmes, and rotation, as well as their impact on the economic performance of the armed forces in different countries. Contract-based recruitment provides flexibility in staffing levels, but it may lead to lower employee loyalty, whereas long-term workforce planning promotes stability but requires substantial investment. Their findings showed that effective career planning, strict recruitment standards, regular training, and social support are key factors contributing to cost optimisation and personnel stability. In addition, the integration of technological training improves the efficiency of resource use and reduces maintenance costs.

The objective of this study was to identify the communication sources most frequently used by prospective students of the University of Defence prior to submitting their applications, and to determine whether the university's website provides potential applicants with the information they require. At the same time, the study sought to examine how prospective students perceived their family members' reactions.

3. Methods and Data

The target population consisted of prospective students of the University of Defence for the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample population comprised potential applicants who attended the Open Days of the University of Defence between December 2024 and February 2025. During this period, three Open Days were held, with an estimated attendance of several hundred prospective students and their family members at each event.

The data were collected using a questionnaire, which was available in both electronic and paper formats, in order to accommodate respondents who preferred a physical version. However, priority was given to the online version, for which a QR code was generated. Visitors were approached in two ways: the QR code was included in the information brochure for the University of Defence Open Day, and it was also distributed in bulk to arriving visitors at the gatehouse of the Šumavská barracks, through which all visitors entered.

The questionnaire focused on the personnel marketing tools through which prospective students had learned about the University of Defence. It also examined the reactions of immediate family members to the applicant's interest in studying at the university. The majority of questions were closed-ended and used Likert-type and dichotomous scales. The questionnaire was piloted in November 2024 among students of the University of Defence.

The respondent data were collected using the PS QUAESTIO PRO software tool, for which the University of Defence holds the licence and which is administered by the staff of the University of Defence Advisory Services Group. The data are stored in the software database on the university server. A total of 297 prospective students of the University of Defence completed the questionnaire over the course of the given period.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using a range of descriptive statistical methods, including frequency distribution tables, appropriate graphs, and descriptive characteristics, as well as selected statistical tests. These included the test of equal proportions, the two-sample Wilcoxon test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and multiple comparison methods. Unless stated otherwise, all statistical tests were conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

Main research question 1: Which sources of information about the University of Defence are used most frequently by prospective students?

Main research question 2: How do prospective students perceive their family members' reactions to their intention to study at the University of Defence?

Hypothesis 1: Prospective students of the University of Defence obtain information about the university more frequently from online sources than from classmates and friends.

Hypothesis 2: Prospective students of the University of Defence generally consider the information provided on the University of Defence website to be sufficient.

Hypothesis 3: Prospective students of the University of Defence generally perceive their family members' reactions to their intention to study at the University of Defence as positive.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that the Internet is a major personnel marketing tool, with as many as 77% of respondents obtaining information about the university from some type of online source (see Figure 1). The most significant of these was the University of Defence website (58.6%), followed by Instagram (31.6%), YouTube (21.2%), and Spotify (10.1%). In contrast, respondents mentioned the Virtual Recruitment Centre (3.4%) and Facebook (3.0%) less frequently. Friends or classmates were identified as a source of information by 39.1% of respondents. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Another source that was identified by respondents was education fairs such as Gaudeamus (36.7%). The least frequently used sources were high school guidance counsellors (3.7%), general information about the University of Defence in the media (4.7%), and university catalogues (9.4%).

These findings confirm the results of earlier studies [12, 13], which highlighted the growing importance of the Internet in personnel marketing. It can be assumed that this trend is even more pronounced in the present study because prospective students of the University of Defence belong to Generation Z. A salient characteristic of this generation is the strong influence of technology on everyday life, as they have grown up in a world in which the Internet has always been present. In order to ensure the success of recruitment efforts directed at this generation, it is essential that external personnel marketing strategies align with the distinctive characteristics that define this demographic [15, 16].

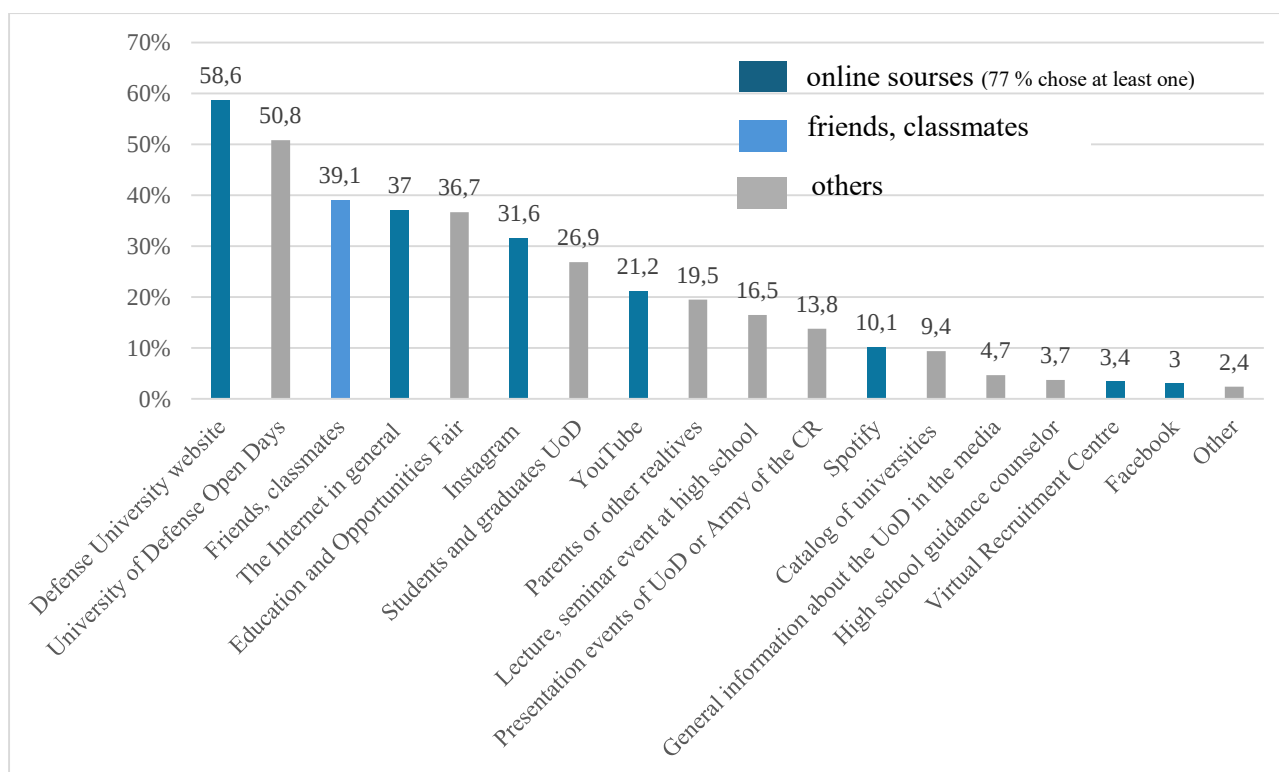


Fig. 1. Sources of information about the University of Defence

The University of Defence website had been visited at least once by 96% of respondents prior to attending the Open Day. Of these respondents, 27.4% considered the information obtained on the website to be comprehensive, while 59.6% stated that they had learned most of what they needed to know. The survey results indicated that 87% of the surveyed prospective applicants obtained a substantial proportion of the information that was important to them at that time from the University of Defence website. Only 13% of respondents reported that they had not found a more substantial part of the information they needed, with their responses falling into the categories "I learned a lot of information, but only part of what I needed" or "I learned some information, but only a little of what I needed." This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, respondents were given the opportunity to specify the missing information in an additional open-ended question. In their responses, they indicated that they lacked more detailed information about the admission procedure and subsequent study, about the student life at the university, or more specific information about the basic training course.

While it is true that the majority of prospective students who visited the university website found a substantial part of the information they needed there, it would be appropriate to pay further attention to those who did not. For secondary school students, websites play an important role in career decision-making and may represent "one of the tools for increasing competitiveness in attracting applicants for study" [17]. Consequently, it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on this aspect.

In view of the current security situation in Europe, the study also examined perceptions of families of prospective students of the University of Defence, as viewed through the eyes of the potential applicants themselves. It is parents who, among those in the social environment of secondary school students, have the greatest influence on their decisions regarding university choice [17, 18, 19]. The results demonstrated that family members of prospective students of the University of Defence expressed support in 75.1% of cases, enthusiasm in 71.7%, agreement in 68.0%, respect in 63.0%, and admiration in 51.8% (see Figure 2).

In 74.0% of cases, respondents reported that they had not encountered family reactions in the form of resistance or rejection, including threats of being thrown out of the house. In 48.9% of cases, the families of applicants had not attempted to talk them out of their decision, and in the majority of cases, they had not expressed disagreement by ceasing communication with the applicant (85.2%; see also Figure 2). At the same time, however, families were not indifferent to where the respondent was applying in 58.9% of cases, and 67.9% of respondents reported that their families had expressed concerns about them.

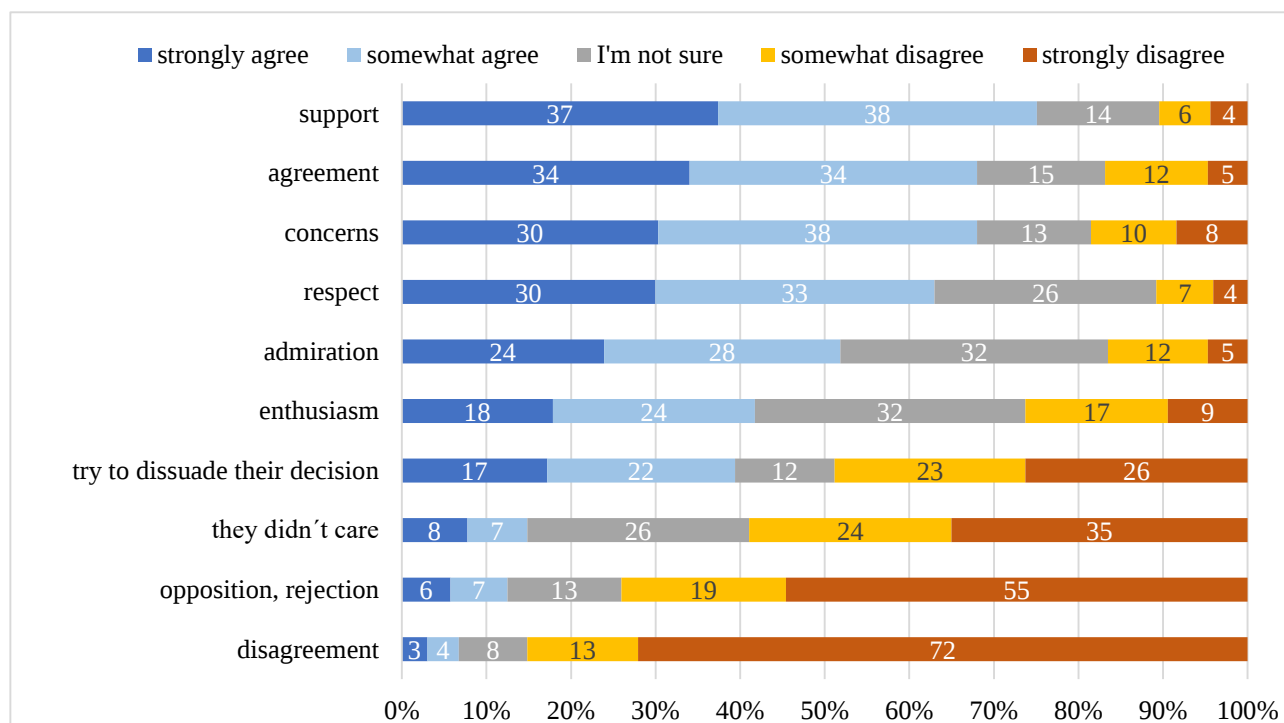


Fig. 2: Family Members' Reactions to the Applicant's Intention to Study at the University of Defence

It follows from the above that, overall, family members tend to take a largely positive view of prospective military academy students' decisions, and only a smaller proportion of prospective applicants did not receive the support they needed among their loved ones. According to the respondents themselves, an explicitly disapproving attitude was shown by 6.7% of families, 12.4% experienced direct resistance to or rejection of their decision, and 14.8% of respondents stated that their families did not care.

It is also noteworthy that, according to the respondents, even a negative family reaction would not affect their intention to study at the University of Defence: only 17% of respondents considered their family's opinion to be very important, while 36% considered it somewhat important. Concurrently, an overwhelming majority of respondents (97%) stated that the decision to study at the University of Defence was predominantly their own. Nevertheless, as Hlad'o [18] observes, this reflects the respondents' subjective perspective, and the assessment of one's own influence on decisions concerning further education and career paths should be approached with considerable caution.

5. Conclusions

Prospective applicants identified online sources (77%), particularly the university website, as the most frequently used source of information about studying at the University of Defence. This finding aligns with the preferences of Generation Z and is also consistent with survey results among secondary school students in the Czech Republic. As indicated by the findings of this study, friends represent a frequent source of information regarding studying at the University of Defence (39%), and it is suggested that they may also play an important role in career choice. As posited by certain studies [20, 21], "the fear of losing friends can represent an obstacle in achieving a dream career", which may result in a compromise to the original career trajectory [22].

A positive finding is that the majority of prospective students who visited the university website (87%) found a substantial proportion of the information they needed there. Nonetheless, it is recommended to continue improving the content of the university website, as it represents an important point of reference when students are deciding on their future educational and professional path.

Parents and other close family members constitute an important factor in applicants' decision-making process regarding further study after secondary school. Their reaction to the intention to study at a military university may therefore be significant. The findings of the present study demonstrate that family reactions to the intention to study at

the University of Defence are predominantly positive, as applicants simultaneously perceived concerns on the part of their family members.

All hypotheses were confirmed. The study's findings suggest that greater attention should be allocated to the university website, with a view to ensuring that it reflects the specific characteristics of Generation Z, to which the current prospective University of Defence students belong. The findings indicate that, within the framework of personnel marketing tools, it is also appropriate to target the family members of applicants. Parents have a substantial influence on decisions concerning school choice and, at the same time, they are typically concerned about where their child is applying and express concerns about them. One opportunity to engage with prospective students' families is provided by Open Days, which are attended not only by potential applicants themselves but also by their family members, thereby offering a unique opportunity for direct personal contact.

Acknowledgements. The data in this article was processed by the PERSONÁL OYUOB20240008 (PERSONNEL) defence research project – "Increasing the effectiveness of recruitment activities at the University of Defence and retention of first- and second-year students." Consent granted by the research sponsor to publish the data. The research has been supported by the team and budget of the long-term institutional research project Conduct of Land Operations (DZRO-FVL22-LANDOPS).

References

1. **Koubek J.** Řízení lidských zdrojů: základy moderní personalistiky. Management Press, Praha, 2015, 399 p. ISBN 978-80-7261-288-8.
2. **Dvořáková Z.** Management lidských zdrojů. Beck, Praha, 2007, 485 p. ISBN 978-80-7179-893-4.
3. **Myslivcová S.** Personální marketing v řízení lidských zdrojů. Masarykova univerzita, Brno, 2019, 215 p. ISBN 978-80-210-9356-0.
4. **Kotler P.** Marketing od A do Z: osmdesát pojmů, které by měl znát každý manažer. Management Press, Praha, 2003, 203 p. ISBN 80-7261-082-1.
5. **Bílá kniha o obraně.** Ministerstvo obrany České republiky – OKP MO, Praha, 2011, p. 74-87 [online] [cit. 2026-01-01]. Available: https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/images/Bilakniha/bila_kniha_o_obrane.pdf
6. **Koncepce výstavby armády České republiky 2035 (KVAČR 2035).** Ministerstvo obrany České republiky - VHU Praha, Praha, 2024, [online] [cit. 2026-01-15]. Available: https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/KVA_R_2035_Final.pdf
7. **Holcner V., Davidová M., Neubauer J., Kubínyi L., Flachbart A.** Military recruitment and Czech labour market. Prague Economic Papers, 2021, 30(4), p. 489–505. ISSN 1210-0455. DOI: 10.18267/j.pep.778.
8. **Davidová M., Holcner V., Kubínyi L., Neubauer J., Binková K., Laštovková J.** Motivation for Military Service as an Important Component of Human Resources Management in the Ministry of Defence in the Czech Republic. Ad Alta-Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2023, 13(2), p. 55–62. ISSN 1804-7890. DOI:10.33543/1302.
9. **Binková K., Štěpánková E.** Motivation of Men and Women to Join the Armed Forces. In: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gender Research: Proc. Int. Conf. Gend. Res.. B.m.: Academic Conferences and Publishing International Limited, 2023, p. 37–46. ISBN 978-1-914587-63-4. DOI:10.34190/icgr.6.1.1011.
10. **Odehnal J., Neubauer J., Davidová M., Kubínyi L., Brizgalová L.** Military Expenditure and Unemployment in Selected Nato Member States. Ad Alta-Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2023, 13(2), p. 190–196. ISSN 1804-7890. DOI:10.33543/1302.
11. **Kubínyi L., Veteška J.** Importance of Further Education of Soldiers in the Context of Development and Career Management. In: K. S. SOLIMAN, ed. 29th International-Business-Information-Management-Association Conference: Sustainable Economic Growth, Education Excellence, and Innovation Management Through Vision 2020, Vols I-Vii. Norristown: Int Business Information Management Assoc-Ibima, 2017, p. 1114–1123. ISBN 978-0-9860419-7-6. WOS:000410252700112.
12. **Grbac B., Vrkic M.** The role of e-marketing in military recruiting. In: A. ZAHARIM, N. MASTORAKIS a I. GONOS, ed. 7th WSEAS International Conference on E-Activities: Proceedings of the 7th Wseas International Conference on E-Activities: Recent Advances in E-Activities. Athens: World Scientific and Engineering Acad and Soc, 2008, s. 42-+. Electrical and Computer Engineering Series. ISBN 978-960-474-047-5. WOS:000263828400006.
13. **Deverell E., Olsson E.-K., Wagnsson Ch., Hellman M., Johnsson M.** Understanding public agency communication: the case of the Swedish armed forces. Journal of Public Affairs, 2015, 15(4), p. 387–396. ISSN 1472-3891, 1479-1854. DOI:10.1002/pa.1552.
14. **Semenko O., Kliat Y., Tsarynnyk V., Yarmolchik M., Ovanesian R.** Personnel policy and defence economics: The relationship between efficiency and costs in the armed forces. Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State

University-Series Economics, 2024, 11(4), p. 52–67. ISSN 2313-8114, 2518-1254. DOI:10.52566/msu-econ4.2024.52.

15. **Halová D.** Recruiting Generation Z: Potential of social media in personnel marketing. Knowledge on Economics and Management, Conference Proceedings, Olomouc, 2021.
16. **Gajanová L.** Challenges of external personnel marketing. Globalization and its Socio-Economic Consequences 2020. SHS Web of Conferences 92, 02018, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20219202018>
17. **Hlad'o P., Drahoňovská P.** Rozhodování žáků základních a středních škol o dalším studiu a práci v pohledu žáků i jejich rodičů. Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků, Praha, 2012.
18. **Hlad'o P.** Sociální vlivy – psychologický fenomén při volbě další vzdělávací a profesní dráhy. Lifelong Learning – celoživotní vzdělávání, 2015, 5(2), p. 32–53, ISSN 1804-526X. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11118/lifele2015050232>.
19. **Frombergerová A., Karasová A.** Vliv učitelů na výběr vysoké školy. Gramotnost, pregramotnost a vzdělávání, 2023, 7(1), p. 31-49, ISSN 2533-7882.
20. **Gottfredson L.** Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. Journal of Counselling Psychology, 1981, 28(6), p. 545-579, DOI: 10.1037/0022-0167.28.6.545.
21. **Lent R. W., Brown S. D., Hackett G.** Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. Journal of Counselling Psychology, 2000, 47(1), p. 36-49. DOI: 10.1037/0022-0167.47.1.36.
22. **Sinclair S., Carlsson R., Björklund F.** The role of friends in career compromise: Same-gender friendship intensifies gender differences in educational choice. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 2014, 84, p. 109-118, DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2013.12.007.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of CNDCGS 2026 and/or the editor(s). CNDCGS 2026 and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.