

# THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AND THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE LEVEL IN CAREER CHOICE

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**Abstract:** The period of adolescence includes an ensemble of transformations that tend to a bio-psycho-social and extremely nuanced evolution. This period represents a complex stage of development on the road to maturity and includes a series of conflicting states: revolt, annoyance, stress, anxiety, restlessness, pressure build-up, etc., all of which take place as a result of cognitive, social, emotional and physical transformations. The high school profile followed by adolescents can determine their involvement in achieving good results, and certain personality traits can influence their school outcomes.

*Research hypotheses:* 1. It is assumed that there is a significant correlation in student performance and their personality traits. 2. It is assumed that there is a significant difference in student performance and the profile of graduate high school.

*Research instruments:* To conduct this research we used the FFPI Questionnaire, and for evaluating students' performances we analyzed the overall average of each year of high school and the average in the first semester of the 12th grade. Participants were trained to give the first answer that comes to mind that matches their usual behavior. To keep the data confidentiality were used only the questionnaire identification codes without mentioning personal data.

*Lot of participants:* Considering that normality and homogeneity conditions were met, we applied the T Test for independent samples to verify Pearson's first hypothesis and the correlation for verifying the second hypothesis. Sampling was stratified by choosing from each class the first five students and the last five students as school performance. The sample comprised 100 students in terminal classes from real and socio-human profiles.

*Conclusions:* School performance is influenced by personality traits, and school performance differs depending on the lyceum profile. Vocational students are oriented towards social issues, working with children, while those in theoretic are concerned about the concrete aspects of life. Most students already have a system of interests that they set up during high school.

**Key words:** school performance, vocational interests, career, teenagers.

## **Introduction**

School performance represents the total of students' achievements, respectively, the level of training in acquiring knowledge and skills for their application, but also the development of intellectual capacity, the formation of personality traits and the interest, ability and motivation towards learning. As a consequence, performance quality with a certain level of efficiency will have distinct psycho-pedagogical meanings in terms of school success. Success and school failure differ depending on the situation and from one student to another, with concrete forms of manifestation.

Evaluating the learning process is possible by measuring performance and their quantitative expression. School success or failure, in psychological terms, consists in solving and overcoming internal contradictions between external demands and the psychological development level of the student. School success expresses a degree of adequacy in the educational process between objective demands and the psychophysical development level. The dissonance between the two poles indicates the failure. The efficiency of the learning process is done by reporting school performance or efficiency as a result of objective demands, and school success requires reporting on both the internal student's possibilities and external requirements. The analysis of school success and the efficiency evaluation of the educational process are done with the help of docimological tools for measuring and evaluating the performance quality.

Regarding school failure, in the specialized literature, there is a difference between the particular and the generalized one. In the first category are students who have difficulty in certain educational subjects, and in the second case there are students who have difficulty adapting to school life and cannot cope with the minimum scales in most of the objects. School failure, on the other hand, is a dynamic phenomenon and goes through several phases in its evolution with specific manifestations and variable intensity. Two situations can be distinguished: initially the student lags behind the teachings, and another, a

perpetual phase in which it lags behind is an obvious failure, with manifestations that predict failure through correlation and repetition.

In terms of performance in crafts and industrial schools, Togănel (fd) sustains that performance can be established in relation with professional and general knowledge because there are students with low results at the professional ones and students with a very good results at general knowledge and vice versa. Although the factors that aren't intellectual may represent students' performance, the pedagogical way and the content must correspond to the intellectual level.

There are various researches that have set the countless causes that intertwine into school performance. For starters, it can be taken into account the time allocated for the study, situation where, following a constant study during the semester, the student may have better results than another student which gives much less time. Another importance is the family environment, the time for rest, the adequate space for study, the balanced nutrition, the physical health, an active life, movement, the existence of motivation, a good emotional status, all of these have proven to be the most important aspects that support the increase in school performance.

School performance is revealed through pedagogical assessment that includes all the changes in student personality following learning. It appears changes of a cultural nature but also changes in personality development. As a result of pedagogical activity, it is required a continuous monitoring of results to observe changes in learning. The performance level achieved by the student refers to the ability to adapt to pedagogical requirements and the differences in performance are manifested both by their level and by adapting to different activities (Togănel, f.d.).

Researchers address two directions:

- (1) An over-average result that all pupils have to achieve, and that would be performance;
- (2) An exceptional result that is gained by 15-20% of the students, and here they refer to performances above average.

The following principles have been established for formative actions:

- conscious acquirement;
- becoming;
- complexity;
- contiguity;

In pedagogy, school performance can be found in two ways: the results of pupils or students obtained in learning activities and the students outcomes that have exceeded the average level (Togănel, f.d.).

School performance cannot be measured precisely because it is a continuous variable and it moves to an ordinal variable, such as school grades.

Thus, the performance level is achieved with the help of scoring system set by ranks and which reflects sufficient results to promote, or maximum results that reflects the performance. In other words, performance is a term that reflects the results that can be observed in learning. For the student, as a concrete result in learning activity, the performance is a source of information that influences perception of one's own skills. These effects on the student's self-perception can be both constructive and destructive. The school performance includes several variables: motivation, intelligence, conscientiousness, learning style, anxiety level, personality traits.

### **The motivation role in school performance**

School performance has an important role in motivational dynamics, representing a motivation consequence, because the more motivated the person will be, the better the performance. A person who is motivated will persevere more by using appropriate learning strategies, and these will influence his / her performance. The relationship between performance and motivation should not be viewed unilaterally, because the performance may influence the motivation. As a result of learning activities, the performance as a concrete result becomes for the person the source of information that can represent the level of competence that can influence his or her perception of himself and of his / her own competence. Thus, the effect can be either positive or negative in terms of self-perception of the person. The person will think that performance deserves, and then he will achieve the success of a task for which he persevered and cognitively committed to solving it. After a repeated failure, however, it will be directed to the phenomenon of helplessness learned.

The relationship between performance and motivation is governed by the aspiration level thru which the person determines the value of the goals either in relation to different load categories or for the purposes in general. In the specialized literature, the psychologists talk about a difference between the aspiration level which represents a faraway achievement, to the success of complex purposes, and the level of expectation, which refers to the concrete result expected by the individual.

During the adolescence, new forms of motivation develop, such as its own system of values, the ideal of life, the concept of life and aspirations to be as close as possible to adulthood. The adolescents understand that society requires more competence, and the school provides it to a great extent. According to Sălceanu (2015), they are convinced that a very good training, guarantees a good professional future, an important place in the society, that the big school grades will support the reputation, the medals, the awards, the Olympics and the competitions success, earns the esteem of others. All this represents the extrinsic motivation. About the extrinsic motivation of learning

we can say that it is represented by the profound and long-lasting cognitive interests, the creative interests and the satisfaction obtained by solving the problems. During this period, there is also a negative motivation, with different intensity, and we can take as examples: the fear of failure, punishment, not to correspond, not to disappoint their parents. To achieve performance, there is an association that includes intricate motivation, persistence, effort, high academic efficiency, strategies used to improve conceptual understanding. Conversely, performance avoidance is associated with a negative motivational pattern, avoiding the need for help in the absence of persistence and self-denigration (Salceanu, 2015).

The relationship between the performance level and the motivation intensity depends on the activity complexity that the person will perform. Motivation is put to the job of achieving high performances, but not interpreted and considered as an end in itself. From the perspective of different forms of human activity (learning, work, play, creation), it counts the propulsive motivation efficiency and its value.

The performance refers to the higher goal level to be achieved. Zlate (2009) says that psychological research has shown that in routine tasks the performance level increases as the motivation intensity increases, because the differentiation is easily made with only one or two correct answers and the increase of the motivational impulse is not negatively influenced. In complex tasks, the performance increases are associated with an increase in motivation to one point, and then performance decreases because the action of motivational impulse is hampered by the existence of more alternative actions and critical evaluation. The effective tasks outcome depends both on the relationship between the activity complexity and the motivation intensity, as well as on the relationship between the activity difficulty faced by the person and the intensity of the motivation. Thus, the greater the correspondence between the degree of the activity difficulty and the motivation intensity, the activity efficiency will be ensured. In this context, we refer to the optimal motivation that represents the optimum of motivation intensity that allows achieving high or desired performance (Zlate, 2009, p.197). So we can speak of optimal motivation in two situations:

- *When the task difficulty is perceived rightly by the individual ;*
- *When the task difficulty isn't perceived correctly by the individual.*

The first situation refers to an equivalence relation, the correlation between the measures of the two variables. Thus, if the task is difficult to achieve, a high intensity of motivation will be needed to achieve it. If the task is achievable with an average difficulty, solving it will be sufficient with an average intensity of motivation.

In the second situation, there are two possibilities: either the subject understands the task difficulty or overreaches. In both cases, the subject fails to mobilize the efforts and energies that correspond to the task, because when it is *under-motivated*, it acts with an energy shortage that can lead to the task failure; and when *over-motivated*, it acts with an energy surplus that can disorganize it by consuming its energy before confronting the task. When the student overestimates or easily treats the test importance, he can get the same result: failure. Thus, in these conditions, a slight imbalance between the task difficulty and the motivation intensity is necessary to obtain a motivational optimum (Zlate, 2009, p.198). For example, if the task is perceived incorrectly as high and the actual deficiency is average, then an average motivation to achieve it (respectively, a slight demotivation) is sufficient. If the task has a medium difficulty level and is perceived incorrectly as being too small, it is sufficient to have a medium difficulty motivation to achieve the task (respectively, a slight over-motivation).

### **Lot of participants:**

Bearing in mind that the normality and homogeneity conditions were met, we applied the T Test for independent samples to verify Pearson's first hypothesis and the correlation for verifying the second hypothesis. Sampling was stratified by choosing from each class the first five students and the last five students as school performance. The sample comprised 100 students in terminal classes from real and socio-human profiles.

### **Research instruments:**

To accomplish this research we used the FFPI Questionnaire (Albu, Corn, 2009) that has 100 items grouped in 5 scales. Each scale has 20 items and wears the name of one of the Big Five Factors Model: Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), Emotional Stability (S), and Autonomy (D) and for the evaluation of students performance we analyzed the average of each year of high school and the average of the first semester of the 12th grade. Participants were instructed to give the first answer that comes to mind that matches their usual behavioral. To keep the data confidentiality, it has been used only the questionnaire identification codes without mentioning personal data.

### **Results**

1. It is assumed that there is a significant correlation in student performance and personality traits.

To verify this hypothesis we used the FFPI personality questionnaire and the student average.

**Table 1 Pearson correlation for school performance with student conscientiousness and autonomy**

		Conscientiousness	Autonomy	Mean
Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation	1	.157	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.232	.001
	N	100	100	100
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.157	1	.425*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232		.011
	N	100	100	100
Mean	Pearson Correlation	.507**	.425*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.011	
	N	100	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

We obtained a positive correlation between students' average and the personality traits conscientiousness, the threshold of significance is .001,  $p < .01$ , so the value of the correlation coefficient  $r = .507$  is statistically significant.

Between mean and autonomy we also obtained a positive correlation with a significance threshold .011,  $p < .05$ , so the correlation coefficient value is  $r = .425$ , meaning it is statistically significant.

The hypothesis is confirmed. As a result of these correlations, we can say that a conscientious person with increased autonomy will prepare very well, will be sure of it, which will help to achieve a school performance.

Based on previous research, a study (Zhou, 2015) was conducted on a sample of 249 students in China, examining how personality traits influence academic performance.

Concerning the link between conscientiousness personality trait and academic performance, a positive correlation was reached at a significance threshold  $p < .01$ . Thus, a conscientious person prepares considerably to achieve results and obtains better school performance than a less conscientious person.

Therefore, students with a high-grade conscientiousness scale are task-oriented, working orderly, and making an effort to complete the task on time, being well trained, they will achieve very good school results over the less conscientious, which will postpone the tasks, will not fit the deadlines, will

prepare less and in a short time, aspects that will reflect poor school results.

The confirmation of this hypothesis comes with the explanation that students who have been disciplined, organized, persistent, diligent, and curious are most likely to be able to do very well at school and achieve academic performance as a result of following the perseverance and the effort made towards a study in a conscientiously way.

Autonomy plays an important role in learning situations as it can help improve skills and preferences for learning situations. Individuals with a high score on the scale of autonomy are creative, imaginative, open to new experiences, trusting their skills, and engage in learning tasks that they can accomplish and which they can do very well.

Students who have achieved high scores on the scale of autonomy strongly correlate with their performance as they are creative, independent, act differently from others, have confidence in them and are fulfilling their tasks; while those with low scores have no initiative, lack their own opinions, accept what is said and are easily influenced, which correlates negatively with school performance.

2. It is assumed that there is a significant difference in terms of student autonomy and graduate high school profile.

The data were statistically processed using the t test for independent samples.

Students from the vocational profile (N = 30) are more autonomous than those from the theoretical profile (N = 30), with a significance threshold  $p = .045$ , where the students from the theoretical profile have an average of 70.43 and the standard deviation 9.565 and those at Vocational 75.37 and a deviation of 10,701.

Table 2 Calculation of t test for independent samples

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Autonomy	Equal var. ass.	1.10	.298	-2.18	58	.045	-4.933	2.62	-10.17	.312
	Equal var. not ass.			-2.18	57.2	.045	-4.933	2.62	-10.18	.314



Students who have achieved a high score on the autonomy scale are described as people who do not give up their own beliefs and principles simply because they are different from others or because others do not agree with them. In the execution of the tasks, they strive to solve by themselves and lead them to the end even if they find difficulty without being discouraged. They analyze the information's received in a critical way, they have the ability to make decisions by themselves, and they do not need others to do it. They have no reservations about expressing what they feel, even if others have other feelings.

Students who have achieved low scores on the autonomy scale are described as people who are influenced by others when they make up their own ideas, they give up their own beliefs when others are not agreed with them or have other ideas, they need others to make important decisions, they do not trust their own forces, and they are easily influenced and do not firmly maintain their own opinions. They need encouragement to carry out the tasks, because if they have difficulties, they will abandon them. Most of the time, they avoid showing what they feel, if their feelings are different from others.

Students from the pedagogical profile, the vocational pathway, are more autonomous than the theoretical, because they are oriented towards the profession, they are more creative, they know what they will do after graduation. Autonomy stems from the safety of the chosen field, the inclination they have and the fact that they are sure what they want and have a well-defined route. They chose this profile because it represent the domain to which they want to go, they are sure what they want to do and where they want to go after graduating high school. Those at the theoretical high school are less likely to be autonomous because they chose that profile at the urge of their parents, they were influenced, it was at hand, or because they did not know what to choose. Many of them do not know what they want to do after graduating high school; they do not know where to go, or what they would like to study. They wait for the others to decide for them, to be presented with variants, they ask the teachers, parents or they follow others, friends, acquaintances or close people that seem to be worthy to follow without going through their own filter if whether they fit or not, or whether they want to work in that area for a long time.

Another important aspect that makes the difference in the student's autonomy from the vocational branch, compared to the theoretical ones, is the professional safety that they have after the high school graduation. They know from the beginning how things in their career will evolve, what they have to do, how they have to prepare for it.

## **Conclusions**

The continuous process of modeling the human personality is the result of the sustained interaction of genetic and environmental factors. To the personality construction, participates the biological, behavioral, cognitive and emotional structures, situated in a perpetual interaction.

The concept of personality circumscribes a dynamic and absolutely individual reality of each individual with interrelated cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physiological references. If we refer to the educational context, we can say that the student's personality has a significant impact on the entire teaching and instructional approach at the school level.

Vocational education system differs from the theoretical by generating general culture skills simultaneously with acquiring professional skills necessary to a job or a position that the graduate will occupy. The job prospects also provide students with an importance awareness of engagement and motivate them to engage in learning.

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