

## **The personality profile of the physiotherapist - Dominant features and counselling needs**

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### **Abstract**

**In recent years, in Romania, the name and competencies of the physiotherapist profession have sparked differences and controversy between the providers of training for the field of "medical physical rehabilitation". What is the paradigm that governs this area of activity? Science of Sports versus Medical Sciences, sports and motor-rehabilitation faculties or medical faculties? The Order of Physiotherapists in Romania refers to "professional and educational disagreements" affecting the level of public perception and not only the status of the profession, the quality of specialists and their interventions in what is called the "superior interest" or the benefit of the patients. In this study we will focus on the cross-competencies necessary for specialists in motricity specialization (physical rehabilitation exercises) which, when working with the patient, must exhibit an adequate attitude system and an optimal value set, which will serve to establish a successful therapeutic relationship. To reach the objectives and verify the research hypotheses, we applied on a number of 120 students, the Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator (MBTI) and the Professional Counselling Sheet, both instruments being designed to develop the personality profile of the subjects and assess the compatibility level with the physiotherapist profession. The results obtained from the evaluations were statistically processed and comparisons were made between the subgroups included in the research, according to age and sex criteria.**

Key words: physiotherapist, personality, profile, therapeutic relationship

## 1. Theoretical delimitations

At international level, educational and medical systems in different countries define the physical therapist in a similar way, as the "motion specialists who deals with the treatment of somatic and painful functional disorders of the patient." Movement therapies, specific exercise techniques, and complexes therapeutic massage manoeuvres with the goal of acquiring the highest possible degree of autonomy by the patient are as many tools as possible for the specialist, addressing not only children, but also adults and the elderly. (Swiss Physiotherapy Association<sup>1</sup>).

The British medical system identifies as the primary purpose of this profession, "treating patients who face physical or locomotive difficulties caused by either acute or chronic illnesses or disabilities inherited or acquired as a result of injuries. Patients can be people of all ages and injured athletes, etc., and specific interventions consist of both massage and recovery exercises, as well as the promotion of education for a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a well-being, avoiding injuries and risky behaviours"<sup>2</sup>.

In Canada, the National Consultative Group on Physiotherapy has the role of coordinating "the activity of practitioners working in medical centres or in private clinics, whose activity is client-centred and aimed at maintaining the health and productivity of people who have suffered injuries, as a result of specific accidents or conditions affecting their functionality"<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the professional competencies of the medical physical rehabilitation specialist, by consulting the vocational training providers from different countries, we synthesize the following: expert (in assessing the health status); professional (acting in the best interest of the client, in compliance with the ethical norms of the profession); manual skills, planning and monitoring of client therapy and evaluation of results through analysis and reflection; the conscious organization of social relations in a professional context; diagnostician of the physical condition of patients, able to develop, apply and monitor treatment plans; abilities to elaborate the patient's activity reports and its evolution; the ability to collect statistical data and collaborate with professionals in related areas for the benefit of the patient, etc.

In terms of the cross-skills of the successful physical therapist, the UK's Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)<sup>4</sup> provides: excellent communication skills; ability to establish effective therapeutic relationships with patients and their families; problem solving skills; tolerance, patience, sensitivity and tact in working with the patient; firm but empathetic and patient-friendly attitude; the ability to work under pressure, time management efficiency, etc.

The Canadian National Consultative Group in this field, in 2009-2010, developed the Physical Therapist's Key Competences Profile<sup>5</sup>, which included: adopting a flawless behaviour in customer relations, an effective communicator; good collaborator (team spirit, promoter of inter-professional practice); availability for personal development and continuous training, but also sensitivity to the personality of the client; active listening that facilitates dialogue; adaptive and appropriate responses to customer behaviours; respect for privacy (privacy); honest, objective, empathic approach of customer relationship etc.

For our study, aspects of interest are those aspects of the therapist's activity, which derive from his/her personality structure and on which depends the quality of the therapeutic relationship and, implicitly, the success of his/her interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.physioswiss.ch/](http://www.physioswiss.ch/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles> (p. 1-3).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.physiotherapyeducation.ca/Resources/ProfilCompetenceEssentiellesPhysiotherapie.pdf> (p. 6-10).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/physiotherapist>

<sup>5</sup> Profil des compétences essentielles des physiothérapeutes au Canada, 2009

## 2. Tools used in the research

**The Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator**<sup>6</sup> was applied to the subjects included in the study to determine the dominant profile of group personality (in terms of skill, attitudes and values sets), with the analysis of aspects significantly relevant to the profession of physical therapist. We also analysed the degree of compatibility of this profile with the requirements of the profession, and on the basis of the identification of the weaknesses and the strengths, an individual and group professional counselling approach was designed in the course of a quarter of 2015, when the project was running.

The Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator abbreviated MBTI, is based on the theory of C G Jung, who in the Theory of Psychological Types defines the type as "a model, or example" characteristic of a general attitude manifested in many individual forms. Among the many possible attitudes, Jung has highlighted a number of four, namely those that focus primarily on fundamental psychological functions, that is, on thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation. To the extent that such an attitude becomes habitual, putting a specific seal on the character of the individual, we can speak of a certain psychological type.<sup>7</sup>

From this perspective, "both the type of introversion and that of extraversion must be treated as overriding categories of the functional types" of the human personality. Jung believes that introversion is characteristic of those who think, feel and act in a way that makes it clear that the "subject" (self, ego) is primarily motivating, while the "object" much more a secondary value. Introversion can be more intellectual or more sentimental, so it can be characterized by intuition or sensation<sup>8</sup>.

**Extraversion**, also according to Jung means the "outward" orientation of the interest of the individual, so "someone who is in an extraverted state thinks, feels and acts in relation to the object, that is, in a direct and clearly perceivable way, so that there can be no doubt about his/her positive attitude towards the object. Extraversion is therefore to some extent a transfer of interest from subject to object. If extraversion is intellectual, then the subject thinks of him/herself in the object; if it is emotional, the subject feels him/herself inside the object. In the state of extraversion the subject is strongly determined, even if not exclusively, by the object"<sup>9</sup>.

**The individual counselling sheet**, the second tool applied to subjects, provided data on the socio-cultural, economic and family background of the subjects in order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the group included in the research.

**The sample** consisted of 120 students at the Bachelor and Masters level, in the field of Physical Therapy and Motric Recovery at FEFS and Balneo-Kinetotherapy, at the Faculty of Medicine, at Ovidius University in Constanta.

For the statistical processing of the data, two subcategories were divided by gender, 73 women and 47 males respectively, among which were made comparative analyses, at the level of personality traits identified.

## 3. The objectives of our study are as follows:

1. Identifying the main personality profiles of the group included in the study
2. Highlighting the weak points of the subjects and, implicitly, the needs of their counselling and personal development
3. Establishing the compatibility level of the main profile of the subjects, with the requirements of the profession

## 4. Research hypothesis:

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<sup>6</sup> Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Manual, WC Personality, Inc., 2005

<sup>7</sup> Jung, C., G., (1997) – *Psychological Types*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 520

<sup>8</sup> Jung, C., G., (1997) – *Psychological Types*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 490

<sup>9</sup> Idem, p.461

1. We presume that the most frequently encountered profile and of the research sample is ISTJ
2. We consider men compared to women to have a higher level of introversion
3. It is assumed that men, unlike women, have a lower sensory degree
4. We assume that men, compared to women, have a higher level of affectivity

#### **4. Results and discussions. Reaching objectives and verifying hypotheses**

Analysing the data from the evaluation, we find that the main personality profiles of the target group, according to MBTI is ISTJ type (Introverted-Sensing-Thinking-Judging), for 26% of the sample (1st hypothesis is confirmed).

The MBTI Manual, describe this profile as „loyal, logical, and responsible. The primary function of the ISTJ is Introverted Sensing, which means they like things to be quantifiable. They work with facts and take a methodical approach towards solving problems. They will also put themselves at risk to carry out any task assigned to them. They generally know right from wrong in their areas of interest and responsibility which makes them devoted and dutiful individuals”.<sup>10</sup> Also, the ISTJ subjects seem to be „The Most Responsible" among the 16 archetypes, the motto of life being "I do what I must do and I do it as good as I can".

Despite their realism, attention to detail, a calm and self-control attitude even when confronted with difficult situations, responsible and "measured" behaviour when different tasks must be accomplished, they rarely externalizing emotions, and they also have the tendency towards conservatism, the subjective orientation only to those data or aspects that support his/her decisions, excessive caution, sometimes rigid thinking; the lack of emotional manifestations, the difficulty of being understood by others.

The MBTI authors suggest that the Key Elements for good interactions with ISTJ type, are the following: do not expect them to be tactful; always expect the truth; Offer constructive criticism, they are always willing to improve upon something.; Show the same devotion as ISTJs do; they value their commitments etc. We also mention that subjects belonging to the ISTJ profile (in our case, the future physiotherapy specialists), are largely compatible with the chosen profession and possess the features, attitudes and value systems that are required to successfully practicing it.

Counselling recommendations for individual and group ISTJ persons, are: manifestation of enthusiasm and trust in their own forces, highlighting their qualities, avoiding excessive prudence, taking in to consideration the collateral aspects of professional activity, such as socialization, communication etc.

The ISTJ profile is followed by the ESTJ (Extraverted-Sensing-Thinking-Judging), for 22% of our sample. ESTJ, which according MBTI Manual<sup>11</sup> are: „responsible, realistic, and conventional. Their primary function is Extraverted Thinking while their auxiliary function is Introverted Sensing. This allows them to recognize concrete needs and remember data in detail. They use logic and traditional principles to guide them through life. They are quick to come up with a plan and finish it off. Because of this, they may take on leadership roles. They are self-confident and assertive. They may be perceived as critical and harsh, but this is only to ensure their plan works out”. ESTJ weaknesses include their general inability to adapt to new environments. They can be too demanding and fail to recognize other people’s opinions and feelings. This is because they have a set value system. They may also come across as too bossy.

Working with ESTJ type, or „Life Administrators”, has four Key Elements like: be open and honest with the ESTJ; Be organized, ESTJs are impatient with inefficiency; Do not criticize the ESTJ’s values; Offer constructive criticism.

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/8334924/MYERS-BRIGGS\\_TYPE\\_INDICATOR\\_MANUAL](https://www.academia.edu/8334924/MYERS-BRIGGS_TYPE_INDICATOR_MANUAL), WC Personality, Inc. p. 37

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/8334924/MYERS-BRIGGS\\_TYPE\\_INDICATOR\\_MANUAL](https://www.academia.edu/8334924/MYERS-BRIGGS_TYPE_INDICATOR_MANUAL), WC Personality, Inc. p. 15

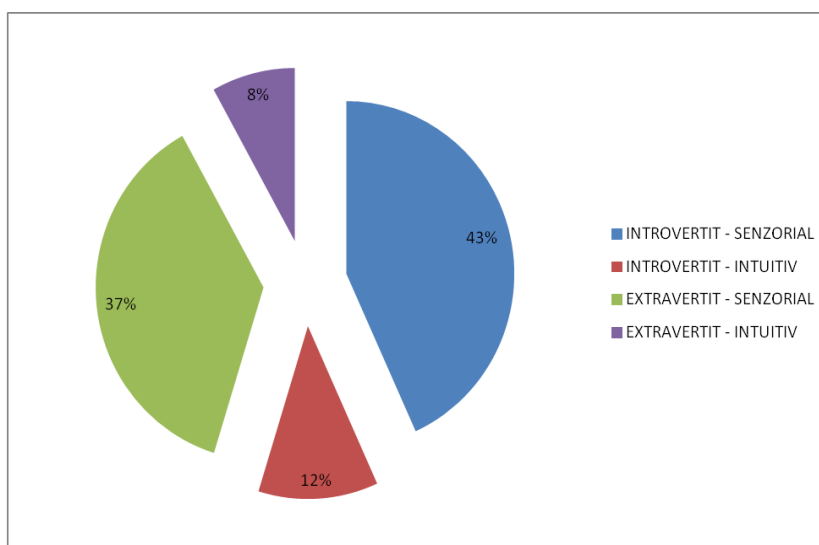
In our opinion, the counselling needs for the ESTJ profile are, as follows: avoiding decision-making without prior analysis, replacing rigidity and inflexibility with openness, improving conversational skills etc.

Like a conclusion, the combined sums of ISTJ&ESTJ profiles, accounting for almost 50% of the total target group. This percentage distribution shows a remarkable homogeneity of the personality traits of the students included in the study, which significantly differs only in terms of introversion size (26%) - extraversion (22%), all three other features within the profile remaining constant for the whole group, referring here to sensing, thinking and judging tendencies (Table nr. 1, Chart Nr. 1).

Table 1: TARGET GROUP'S DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAITS (N = 90)

Nr. crt.	INTROVERTED versus EXTRAVERTED	100%
1	INTROVERTED - SENSING	43%
2	INTROVERTION - INTUITIVE	12%
3	EXTRAVERTED - SENSING	37%
4	EXTRAVERTED - INTUITIVE	8%

Chart. nr. 1: Graphic representation of the main personality traits of the sample (N=90)



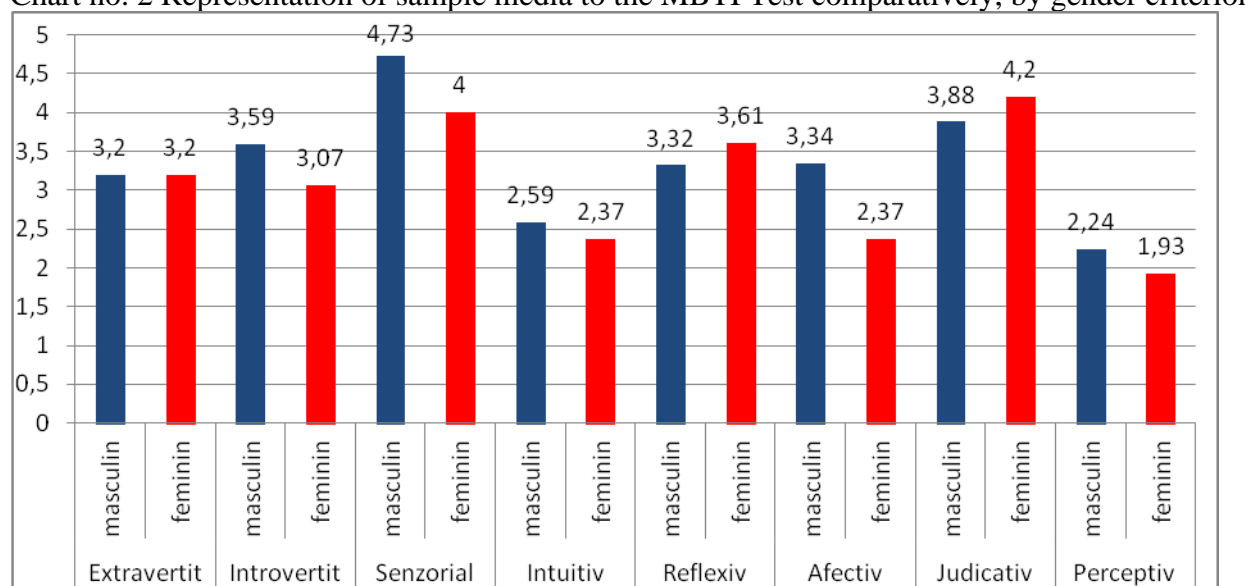
Analysing Figure no. 2, we note the following:

- Extraversion dimension does not differ on average from men to women,
- Men physical therapists are more introverted than women (hypothesis 2 is confirmed)
- The "sensing" dimension is on average more pronounced in men in the sample structure than in women (hypothesis 3 is denied)
- The "feeling" dimension shows on average a higher level in men than women, the difference between the subgroups being significant (hypothesis 4 is confirmed)

From the graphical representation, it is also noted that while women are more "judging", being endowed with a pronounced critical spirit, demanding with oneself and others, or with tendencies towards perfectionism, the men included in the sample of research are more

"perceiving" than the women, which can be translated into their inclination towards lucidity, the substantiation of decisions on facts and logic, their practical and innovative spirit.

Chart no. 2 Representation of sample media to the MBTI Test comparatively, by gender criterion



### Conclusion

Analysing our research data, we observe that most subjects (55%) are Introverted (Sensory and Intuitive), while 45% of them are Extraverted (also in combination with Sensitivity and Intuitiveness).

We can conclude that the psychological evaluation based on the two samples, the Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator and the individual counselling sheet, applied to the group of 120 students at the Kinetotherapy and Balneo-Physiotherapy Studies Programs, revealed the adequacy of a significant proportion of the personality of the subjects to the chosen profession, as well as compatibility with the activities carried out with the patients, in the framework of an optimal professional partnership, to achieve their physical and mental well-being.

The inevitable incompatibilities, some "weaknesses" of the personality of the subjects, as well as the (still) deficient skills and abilities, as we studied the young prospective professionals, were milestones for designing the specific activities of the PROKINETO project. These included, among other things, the identification of counselling and professional guidance needs in order to allow access to an informed decision about the option for the aimed specialty or access to a permanent job in the field of physical therapy and motor rehabilitation.

The following are included in the Job Counsellor's list: elaboration of the communication strategy and information and motivation materials for the students' participation in the project activities; dissemination of materials; making multi-media materials, organizing workshops.

An important part of the project activities consisted of individual and group counseling, during which various communication techniques and role games were used to develop assertiveness, sociability and optimal relationship skills, to raise awareness of future professionals in regards to the needs of patients, empathy nurturing, acceptance and tolerance towards diversity, promoting equal opportunities, etc.

We believe that the information provided to the subjects about their personality profile as a result of our study (identifying sets of skills, attitudes and values), as well as the prevailing professional interests, beliefs and skills, are relevant to a significant, appropriate and generating

better self-knowledge in order to optimize the academic and professional performance of target group members.

### References

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