

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESULTS OF HIGH-SCHOOL PUPILS COMING FROM THE RURAL AREA

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**Abstract:** *The study draws attention on the issues concerning the relationship between the motivation of the 12th grade pupils to continue their studies in higher education and their school results. In order to accomplish this desideratum, three high-schools belonging to the rural area of Timiș County were included in the study. The method of investigation employed a survey containing closed and semi-open questions. The survey was applied to a number of 159 graduating high-school pupils. The conclusions have shown that the intrinsic motivational aspects correlate in a positive way with school results. The research offers openness to specialists in school and career counselling, who work in the field of pre-university education within the rural area.*

**Key words:** *intrinsic motivation, school results, higher education.*

## 1. Introduction

Having in view the school results obtained at the end of their high-school studies and the desideratum to achieve school and professional success, the 12th grade high-school pupils coming from the rural area are projecting, in terms of their motivational impulse, the requested steps to be followed in order to successfully integrate in higher education, according to each and every student's aspirations, values, wishes and interests. From this perspective, the current research aims at analysing the main factors that intervene along this process, as well as the analysis of those aspects which, by having as a basis the learning motivation as well as their personal and professional achievement, determine the integration of these pupils from the rural area in higher education. By treating these issues

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in a comprehensive manner and by reclaiming the implications of this sum of factors contributing to the successful integration of the youth in higher education, the key role of motivation consists in the impulse offered to pupils towards initiating and supporting the attitude regarding the learning activities, also representing a guaranty of the efficiency of the learning activity and implicitly school and professional achievement. On the other hand, the integrating manner in which the access to higher education should be placed, by referring to the entire educational system, offers great importance to the factors belonging to the high-school graduated (Frempong, Ma, & Mensah, as cited in Savescu & Tulbure, 2017).

Numerous studies in this specialty field (Busato, Prins, Elshout, & Hamaker, 2000, McCoach & Siegle, 2001; Hobson, 2002; Svinicki, 2004; Nilson, 2010; Tulbure, 2010) reveal the existence of some significant correlations between the intrinsic motivation and the pupils' academic success. Thus, the pupils' positive expectations in relation to their efficiency regarding school accomplishment stimulate them to approach difficult tasks as mere challenges, thus adding intrinsic value to the accomplished activities (Paulino, Lopes da Silva, as cited in Tulbure, 2017). Statistics at the national level, by numerous specialty studies, reveal the fact that over 80% of the high-schools graduates wish to attend a faculty (Pricopie, Frunzaru, Corbu, Ivan, & Bârgăoanu, 2011; David-Kacso, Haragus, & Roth, 2014, Rarița, 2014; Prodan, Maxim, Manolescu, Arustei, & Guta, 2015). There have been noticed some differences regarding the pupils' living place, rural or urban, so that only 54.9 % of the pupils from the rural area express interest in attending a faculty. As for the lines of studies of the high-schools graduates, the highest percentage of pupils who wish to attend a faculty is of 86.6%, registered for those coming from high-schools having a theoretical line of studies (Pricopie et al., 2011). As for the reasons associated with the decision to attend a faculty, Rarița (2014) concludes, as the result of a research, that the pupils' decision is based on the wish to work in a certain domain of activity, correlated with the chosen future profession and also with the financial expectations and the wish to find a job as easily as possible. The results of a study made in 2012 by Misran, N. et al. in Malaysia showed that the most important factors that influence the pupils in the process of selection are: the adequacy of the pupils' personal, internal values with the main characteristics of the field, pupils' interests, university reputation and future career opportunities. Nevertheless, sometimes future graduates of certain high schools do not encounter a so-called stability within their professional route, "which they abandon, seeking out other domains in which they do not possess the necessary knowledge" and the domains they were preparing for remain in a difficult situation (Palicica, Savescu & Boacă, 2008).

## **2. The Hypothesis and Objectives of Research**

By this empirical study we aimed at reaching two main objectives:

- ❖ to identify the level of development of the intrinsic motivation concerning the attending of a faculty after the high-school graduation;
- ❖ to analyse the relationship between the level of intrinsic motivation and the pupils' school results.

By following these objectives we intended to test the hypothesis according to which there is a positive correlation between the level of intrinsic motivation and the pupils' school results.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Procedure**

The cross-sectional study took place during the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017. Three high-schools belonging to the rural area of Timiș County were involved in the study. The pupils were informed about the aim of research and each pupil took part in the project voluntarily, by following the personal agreement which was expressed individually. All pupils were presented the survey and they were instructed regarding its completion.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The sample of subjects included 159 high-school pupils from the rural area of the country, registered in the 12th grade at 3 high-schools in Timiș County. The pupils' ages ranged between 17 and 19 ( $M = 17.46$ ;  $SD = .58$ ). From the perspective of the high schools' lines of studies, 40% of the pupils were enrolled in Sciences ( $N = 64$ ); 39 % in Humanistic Studies ( $N = 62$ ), 21% in Services and Economics ( $N = 33$ ). As for the genre, 47% were girls ( $N = 75$ ) and 53% were boys ( $N = 84$ ).

#### **3.3. Measures**

The research used the method of the survey based on a questionnaire, the tool was a questionnaire of opinion which was applied to each pupil included in the target-group. The questionnaire included the pupil's identification data (age, genre, form, line of study, locality), as well as questions regarding their academic and professional options and interests, comprised in closed and semi-open questions. More precisely, three closed questions referred to the options for higher education and 4 semi-open questions were oriented towards more precise details of motivation as well as their academic and professional orientation.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1. Results Concerning Motivation to Attend a Faculty**

First, the data analysis underlined the pupils' interest in attending a faculty. From this perspective, the results are optimistic, meaning that on a declarative level, 92% ( $N = 146$ ) of the inquired pupils reported that they intended to attend a faculty after their graduation, while only 8% ( $N = 13$ ) of the pupils declared that under no circumstances they wished to attend the courses of a faculty.

By deepening the issue, we also analysed the degree in which those 146 pupils, who declared that they wished to attend a faculty, were motivated to accede to the level of higher education. Thus, we observed that in the group subjected to the study, a percentage of 43 of the pupils wished to become students in a very large measure; 30% wished that very much; a percentage of 21 affirmed that they wished only to some degree to become students, while only 6% of the pupils claimed that their wish to become students was little or very little.

*Pupils' motivation for choosing a faculty* Table 1

<b>Reasons to choose a faculty</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Desire to be successful in life	4.17	0.94
An attractive job	3.86	1.2
Parents' influence	3.82	1.23
The chance to find a job	3.78	1.06
Pleasure to learn	3.78	1.16
Desire to become a good specialist	3.75	1.14
Benefit of guidance	3.72	1.25
Appreciation of the role of education	3.70	1.31
Entourage	3.40	1.21

In order to find out what exactly inspires the pupils' desire to attend a faculty, we investigated the reasons lying at the basis of this option. When analysing the data in Table 1, we found that the highest score regarded an aspect of intrinsic motivation, namely the pupils' desire to succeed in life.

There also appeared extrinsic reasons to attend a faculty. We noticed that pupils were strongly motivated by the desire to find an attractive job, but they were also aware that university studies provided higher chances to obtain a better professional position. The pupils claimed that their parents' opinions were very important to them, so they had that in view in a pretty great measure. Other intrinsic reasons to attend a faculty were the desire to be a good specialist in a certain field of activity, the pleasure to learn, along with the appreciation of the role of education in one's personal and professional development.

#### **4.2. The Relationship between Motivation and School Results**

In order to analyse the relationship between the motivational indicators and school results, but also to test the hypothesis of research, we performed a correlation analysis by determining the value of the Bravais-Pearson correlation coefficient and identifying the significance of its value. The data was processed using the statistical program SPSS 17. The analysis of the data reveals a direct correlation, strongly significant, between school results and one of the most powerful indicators of intrinsic motivation, namely the desire to attend a faculty in order to become a good specialist in a field of activity ( $r = .21$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In other words, the pupils who reported that they wished to attend a faculty because they wanted to add value to a domain of activity had very good results during the high-school senior years, which points to the fact that they had prepared themselves for a future career even since high-school. Also, we supposed that pupils with good and very good academic results were already aware of the role of education in one's personal and professional development. By the perspective of this strong significant correlation, we think that the two variables were intensifying each other in a way that both the desire to become a good specialist stimulated the student's desire for higher quality learning and superior school performance, and also the obtaining of higher results gave pupils trust and a confirmation of the fact that by in-depth learning they could become good specialists in their professional life.

The analysis of other indicators revealed the absence of significant correlations between school results, the other intrinsic motivational indicators (the desire to succeed in life, the pleasure to learn, the reevaluation of the role of education) and extrinsic ones (parents' influence, the environment, the desire to find an attractive job). Although all correlations were positive, they didn't reach the threshold of significance, which shows that these values, considered separately, do not correlate in a significant way with school results.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

Following the research and the accomplishment of its objectives, we may state that the research hypothesis has been only partially confirmed, as school results correlate with a single indicator of intrinsic motivation, namely the desire to become a good specialist. Based on the obtained results, we are in the position to accept mostly the null hypothesis and to claim that there is no significant correlation between the level of intrinsic motivation and school results. Despite all this, we may definitely affirm that the desire to become a good specialist is associated as early as high-school with good and very good school results, and the proper training in pre-university education stands as decisive premises for success in higher education and in one's professional life.

The results are concordant with similar studies that claim that the role of the graduated high-school is decisive for access and success in higher education (Frempong et al., 2012). The results are similar to the conclusions of the study performed by Prodan and collaborators (2015), according to which the 12th grade pupils coming from rural high-schools think that poor high-school results lead to the poor insertion in higher education and academic under-achievement. In order to prevent that, we must offer the young people coming from the rural areas equal access to superior educational levels (Palicica, Savescu & Gavrilă, 2008).

If we refer to the limits of research, we consider that for better relevance of the results, we can initiate in the future the following steps: to enlarge the sample of subjects from the rural area and to combine the quantitative methods with the qualitative ones. A very important aspect is related to the improvement of the psychometric qualities of the questionnaire. In this context, we intend to pre-test the questionnaire in order to assure a good reliability and validity.

In the educational practice, we believe that professional orientation should start in pre-adolescence in order to teach pupils some practical useful skills like: to establish concrete professional objectives, to build a strategy to follow and to accomplish these objectives and to sustain them by the constant effort towards the fulfilment of the established objectives. From this point of view, our study offers some openings to the researchers who study the pedagogy and psychology of the pre-university and university education, and also to school counsellors, high-school teachers, university professors, parents who wish to be able to guide their children properly from the academic and professional points of view and to all those interested in rising the quality of education at all levels of education.

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