

INVESTIGATING THE RELATION BETWEEN PERSONALITY FACTORS AND SELF-PERCEIVED REFLECTIVITY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract: *The present study aims to investigate whether certain personality traits of the participants (extraversion and conscientiousness) are associated with the degree of self-perceived reflexivity of teachers. After applying the Big Five@plus_short personality test and examining the relationship between teachers' self-perceived professional reflexivity and teachers' personality factors, the statistical analysis of the data shows that there is no significant correlation between extraversion and self-perceived professional reflexivity. However, on the other hand, we found that there is a significant correlation between conscientiousness and self-perceived personal reflexivity.*

Key words: *teacher's personality, extraversion, conscientiousness, reflexivity, reflexive practitioner.*

1. Introduction

In the context of the contemporary world, building autonomous human personalities, ready to exhaustively overcome the challenges of life, seems to be a utopian topic when looking at personality from the perspective of the multiple influences it has on human behavior. Aniţei and colleagues (2016, p. 47) define personality as “a plastic and original construction of stable and defining endowments that allow the characterization of man both as a unique and unrepeatable individuality and his framing in a typology, which allows for the development of valid predictions about his behaviour”.

Starting from the four important pillars in education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, and learning to be, we can argue that personality can influence the way individuals think, feel, or act in different situations and influence their perception of themselves. Roberts and DelVecchio (2000) and Roberts and Jackson (2008) reported that certain psychological qualities, as parts of individuals' personalities, influence their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings.

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Most notably, over the last two decades personality has been studied as a predictor of job performance (Schneider, 2007; Marcus et al., 2007; Tănase et al., 2012; Chraif & Aniței, 2013). According to meta-analyses in the literature (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Borman et al., 2001), conscientiousness is the only factor that is positively correlated with job performance, regardless of the field of work in which an individual is employed.

On the other hand, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2005) report that extraversion positively correlates with salary level and managerial potential, whereas Costa (1996) suggests that extraversion is positively associated with oral expression and flexibility as job performance criteria.

Conscientiousness is the personality factor that denotes the ability of individuals to engage in tasks that they solve in an organized, cautious, and perfectionistic manner (Ashton, 2013). The personality factor extraversion highlights the disposition of individuals towards active participation in social events. Individuals defined by extraversion are energetic, passionate, happy, have relatively high social self-esteem, and are seen and understood by others as popular people (Ashton & Lee, 2001; Costa & McCrae, 2001; Lucas & Diener, 2003).

In the field of education, according to Bocoş and collaborators (2021, p. 1544), the personality of the teacher is “the set of individual characteristics that a teacher presents, highlighted in the activities in which he/she fulfills the professional roles specific to the teaching profession”. In contemporaneity, the personality of the teacher fulfills an essential position in the academic success of the students. Gopinath (2015) talks about a mass awareness of the vital role that teachers occupy in the lives of students. The professional, psycho-pedagogical, and cross-curricular skills possessed by teachers, their character, and their creativity can crucially influence quality in education. Some of the roles that teachers fulfill concerning their profession have been outlined in several studies. Thus, the teacher can be an educator, partner in education, executor, resource person, facilitator of students' cognitive and moral development (Gallagher, 1994), organizer, counselor, guide, and perfectionist (Potolea et al., 2008), as well as expert, trigger, and sustainer of students' interest in learning, leader, manager, professional who reflects, analyses, studies, interprets the phenomena in the classroom (Woolfolk, 2016).

We believe that a reflective teacher is an effective teacher who investigates his/her pedagogical actions, self-assesses his/her weaknesses on which he/she knows exactly how to act, and self-evaluates own strengths. Manea (2015) mentions some of the skills of an effective teacher: rigorous formulation and monitoring of educational objectives, designing and carrying out relevant learning situations for students, mastering innovative, motivating strategies in the learning process, and monitoring professional progress. Such a teacher constantly positions him/herself in the proximity of action research. Brookfield (2017) argues that teachers who approach reflexivity as a position of permanent inquiry in their pedagogical life realize that this process is an irreversible one. Properly speaking, in the instructional-educational act, reflexivity can take forms such as retrospective and prospective questioning, personal and collective reflections, and self-reflections (Bocoş et al., 2009).

And then, is a reflective practitioner sociable, talkative, affectionate, lively, attributes of extraversion, or rather, organized, hard-working, attentive, careful, secure, serious, attributes of conscientiousness, according to Schultz and Schultz (2004)?

Next, we were interested in investigating whether teachers' self-perceived reflexivity can be influenced by the personality factors: extraversion and conscientiousness.

2. Method

2.1. Study objectives

In the present study, we investigated the association between personality factors and self-perceived career reflectivity of primary school teachers. This study was carried out during the school year 2022-2023 in an online environment, completing another previously unpublished empirical study conducted by the same authors as the present paper. Through that study, we investigated the perceptions/self-perceptions and opinions of primary school teachers in Romania regarding the process of self-analysis of the teaching activity in their careers. The questionnaire applied in the study included 7 items and was completed by 463 respondents. The last item measured self-perceived professional reflexivity ("I consider myself an authentic and reflexive teacher, where authentic means master of scientific content, facilitator of socio-emotional approaches, who views learning as a lived experience") on a 5-point Likert scale. The majority of participants (54.80%/ 253 teachers) claimed that they consider themselves to be authentic and reflexive teachers.

Based on the findings obtained in that study, we were interested in identifying (in the current study) whether certain personality traits held by teachers might have an impact on self-perceptions of reflectivity in their professional careers. Thus, based on the authors' agreement to use the Big Five@plus_short personality test, we made this inventory available to all respondents in the previous study to complete it and test the following hypothesis: There is a significant association between primary school teachers' levels of extraversion and conscientiousness and the degree of self-perceived professional reflexivity in their teaching career.

2.2. Participants

For this study a sample of 67 primary school teachers in Romania, aged between 21 and 54, was used, teachers who had previously completed the questionnaire in the first study. In terms of the biological gender of the participants, most of them are women over 40 years of age and therefore with more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Within the sample of participants, there are representatives from both rural and urban areas, and the coverage of the geographical regions from which the participants come is sufficiently relevant (18 counties).

2.3. Instrument and procedure

In this study, for the assessment of personality traits, we applied the survey method

based on a personality test developed by Constantin and collaborators (2010). This instrument assesses five factors, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness, and comprises 90 items. For the purpose of this study, results obtained on the Extraversion and Conscientiousness subscales were examined.

The Big Five plus Personality Inventory was validated on the Romanian population, using a sample of 1340 persons (Constantin et al., 2010), obtaining good psychometric properties (Cronbach alpha for the Extraversion subscale was .917, Cronbach alpha for the Conscientiousness subscale was .840).

Internal consistency analyses in the present study revealed good Cronbach alpha coefficients: .807 for the Extraversion subscale with 18 items and .930 for the Conscientiousness subscale with 18 items on a 5-point Likert scale).

3. Results

To test the degree of association between the levels of extraversion and conscientiousness of primary school teachers' personality and the degree of self-perceived professional reflexivity in their teaching career, a correlation analysis was conducted between the total score obtained on the Conscientiousness subscale, respectively Extraversion, and the item assessing self-perceived professional reflexivity: *"I consider myself an authentic and reflexive teacher, where authentic means master of scientific content, facilitator of social-emotional approaches, who regards learning as a lived experience."*

Table 1

Correlation coefficients between the investigated variables

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3
1. Reflexivity	4.54 (0.559)	-		
2. Extraversion	18.79 (1.388)	.69	-	
3. Conscientiousness	21.04 (3.164)	.89**	.31	-

N = 67, ** p ≤ .001

The result of Pearson correlation analysis shows that there is no significant correlation between extraversion and self-perceived professional reflexivity ($r = 0.069$, $p > .05$). The results of Pearson correlation analysis show that there is a significant correlation between conscientiousness and self-perceived professional reflexivity ($r = 0.890$, $p \leq .001$), thus partially sustaining the research hypothesis.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The results of the study showed that there was a significant correlation between the level of conscientiousness of primary school teachers and the degree of self-perceived reflexivity in their teaching careers, while extraversion does not seem to be associated with reflectivity. Thus, teachers who are ambitious, organized, attentive to detail, persevering, fair, and analytical confer positive influences on how they perceive reflexivity in their teaching careers.

On the other hand, there was no significant correlation between the level of extraversion in the personality of primary school teachers and the degree of self-perceived reflexivity in their teaching careers. In other words, outgoing attitude, dynamism, constant involvement, enthusiasm, and qualitative interactions with other educational agents do not fully enhance teachers' self-perceived reflectivity.

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