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## Relationships between personality characteristics and attitude towards work in school teachers

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### Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the relationships between attitudinal variables in teachers. These variables are teachers' attitudes towards work and typological tendencies of personality which are dominant attitudes. Results indicated that typological dimensions significant correlate with attitudes towards work. Also, differences in attitudes towards work depending on the intensity of typological characteristics. The implications of the findings and the limitations of the study have been discussed.

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*Keywords:* attitude towards work, personality, typological trait, teacher

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### 1. Introduction

Attitude towards work is a personality variable important in assessment of the job capacities and work accommodation, as in job performances prediction in different professions. Efficient behaviour of an employee depends on the professional skills and competencies, specific to a particular job, personality traits that are significant for that job, needs, values and attitudes towards different aspects of organization and professional activity. All these components interact in a psychological pattern that is influenced by the organizational context. Generally, the concept of *attitude* is defined as a consistent tendency to react in a particular way, positively or negatively, favorable or unfavorable, towards a person, group, situation, object or event. Attitude has three components (cognitive,

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affective and behavior) and represents a combination of beliefs, emotions and behavior tendencies towards something or someone. Attitudes have different degrees of stability. Thus, some attitudes are stable, characteristic for individual's personality and situated nearby the personality traits level, that makes them very hard to change of lifelong, just as are deeply anchored attitudes in the structure of personality and developed as result of the social and cultural factors (attitude towards work), or marginal and secondary attitudes, changeable under the influences of social and professional situations and personal experience (Constantin, 2004, p. 50).

Although the direct influence of attitudes on job performances has not been demonstrated by systematic studies, the general attitude towards work of the members has particular importance for the manner in which the work is effectively carried out, as well as for individual and organizational outcomes. Findings have indicated that employees seek different meanings in their work and employees with positive attitudes tend to be more productive. In specialized literature, *attitude towards work* has been differently defined as its own way through individual assigns meanings to work and various aspects associated with work (Secord & Backam, 1969, *apud* Constantin, 2012, p. 80), as voluntary reporting to the organizational goals and professional achievements (Lehman & Simpson, 1992), as availability to develop, direct, regulation and maintain the effort in order to overcome obstacles and difficulties and achieve an objective, while individual has a positive attitude towards work, tasks and operational requirements (Popa, 2008, p. 86). Other similar or close concepts are mentality towards work, work-related attitudes or job attitude/attitude towards job. Whether attitude towards work exists on individual level, mentality towards work defines social level. Also, work-related attitudes are evaluative tendencies toward aspects of work that are based on clusters of feelings, beliefs, and behavior intentions. Job-related/work-related attitudes refer to the manner in which individuals think and feel about everything related to their jobs (work itself, individual/collective performance, superiors, subordinates, co-workers, organizational procedures and activities) and tend to react on these. Work-related attitudes include of attitudes toward others, attitudes toward the job (job satisfaction), and attitudes toward the organization (organizational commitment) (Greenberg, 2005, p. 156).

In psychological research and practice, attitude towards work is considered a dominant personality attitude, which has been differently conceptualized: as a bipolar concept (positive-negative attitude), or by ways of the employee's reporting to the various organizational aspects, as objects of attitude (job tasks, pay and promotion, supervision) or through some psychological variables with that attitude is in relationship, such as dimensions of employees' behavior in organizational context (organizational commitment and identification, job satisfaction). Constantin (2012, p. 86) proposed an indirect way for attitude towards work assessment through the evaluation of work of style. The assessment of how people behave, feel, think and act in various job situations and work tasks allows identification of psychological dimensions that define their attitude towards work.

## 2. Conceptual framework

### *Teacher attitude towards work*

Attitude towards work has been studied on various categories of employees from different professions, organizations and cultures. Research on employees from education system, teachers especially, have evidenced some characteristic aspects of attitude towards work derived from the specific peculiarities of teaching profession and school organization. In various research teachers' attitude towards work has been examined as attitude toward teaching profession (Ispir, 2010), or as teaching attitude means teachers' attitude about their ability to teach and about students' ability to learn, sometimes referred to as teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). On the other hand, teaching is a stressful profession and, therefore, teachers' work attitudes include burnout, tendency to quit and organizational commitment which are in relation with teacher roles and skill flexibility (Rosenblatt, 2001) and with burnout level (Ispir, 2010). According to Ahmad and Sahak (2009), teachers' attitude towards work is in relationship with teacher-student attachment and has been assessed through four components: job satisfaction (Mitchell & Lasan, 1987), commitment, communication, and alienation (Northcraft & Neale, 1996). Studies that have examined direct measures of teacher attitudes have found substantial effects on student learning and academic performance. Positive attitudes are fundamental to effective teaching (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001) and teachers' attitude towards work has been found as a predictor of teaching behavior (Ekstrom, 1975). Have been established the relationship between a number of teacher work-related attitudes (autonomy, job stress, teacher-student relationships, supervisor support) and job satisfaction (Fairchild & colab., 2012).

### *Teacher personality*

Compared to teacher attitudes which have received less attention in the research literature, because are more difficult to measure teacher's personality characteristics and traits are well documented. In the research literature have been examined various personality traits and characteristics which are indicative of teaching style or are associated with teacher effectiveness. Research has identified complex relationships between personality variables and problems reported by teachers (Myers, Kennedy, & Cruickshank, 1979). Characteristics of teachers' personality have been investigated using variables such as flexibility/rigidity, extraversion/introversion, locus of control, self-efficacy (Brophy, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1999). New variables of personality will be employed in the present investigation.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

This study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between attitude towards work and personality characteristics in teachers. The main objectives of the study are the followings:

1. To identify differences between male and female teachers in attitudes towards work and personality variables.
2. To examine the relationships between typological dimensions and attitudes towards work in teachers.
3. To investigate differences in attitudes towards work depending on personality dimensions.

Arising from these objectives, the study was conducted to test the following hypotheses:

H1. We suppose that male and female teachers differ in their attitudes towards work and typological tendencies of personality.

H2. We presume relationships between the typological personality characteristics and attitudes towards work in teachers.

H3: We anticipate that are differences in teachers' attitudes towards work depending on the intensity of typological personality characteristics.

### **4. Method**

#### *4.1. Participants*

A total of 201 Romanian teachers participated in the study. The sample consisted of public schools teachers, 161 female (80.1%) and 40 male (19.9%), with ages from 22 to 65 years (mean=40.65, st.dev.=10.43) and length of service in school from 1 to 46 years (mean=16.35, st.dev.=10.64). The distribution of the sample by teaching degrees is: 18 beginners, 42 tenured teachers, 54 second degree graduated teachers, and 87 first degree graduated teachers. 164 are full teachers and 37 are substitute teachers, 149 are working in urban and 52 in rural environment. 109 (54.2%) are teachers in high schools, 63 (31.3%) in secondary schools and 29 (14.4%) in primary schools.

#### *4.2. Instruments*

Were applied two self-reported instruments. MM Questionnaire (T. Constantin, 2004) aims to identify the mentality/attitude towards work in the form of one overall score (negative – positive attitude) and two secondary factors. The first secondary factor is "achievement and self-determination", as positive attitude towards work, that express tendency to consider work a self-fulfillment factor, an important condition for personal life development). The another secondary factor is "obligation and avoidance", as negative attitude towards work, expressing the tendency to perceive work as a necessary evil, like a tiresome obligation which should be avoided. As a consequence, involvement in work activity is low and work is perceived only in its negative aspects. The scales have a good reliability. The Alpha Crombach's coefficients are: 0.871 (general attitude), 0.742 (positive attitude factor) and 0.893 (negative attitude factor).

In order to measure teachers' personality characteristics has been used TT Questionnaire (T. Constantin, 2004) which contains 40 items and measures four typological dimensions of personality and two secondary factors. Typological dimensions evaluated by this instrument are:

-“Generous” type: persons who are willing to involve, to act on behalf of others and to solve common problems, provided that their effort and sacrifice to be recognized and appreciated. These individuals are aware that their effort depends on the success enjoyed by others. They have an internal locus of control and place on the selfishness pole;

-“Involved” type: persons who involve in causes that are not own, resolve common problems and help others without waiting for anything in return and without feeling a special effort or sacrifice. They have the feeling that their success is due to chance, situation or others’ aid, have an external locus of control and place on the unselfishness pole;

-“Claim” type: these persons are good analytics and observers, perceive any disfunction of the social system to which they belong (organization, group, family) or any violation of their rights, reacting immediately and having the courage to express their position in front of colleagues or principals. These individuals have the feeling that others are responsible for the malfunction of the system and must do something to remedy and improve the situation. They have an external locus of control and place on the selfishness pole;

-“Helpless” type: persons who are sensitive to the others’ and system’s problems, and easily detect what are the problems and what should be done. Although they are aware that are also part of the problem, they have not the “claim” type’s courage to strive for solving the situation. Compared to the “generous” type they have not the energy, confidence and determination to act. Moreover, these persons are aware that on their effort depends many problems’ solving, but have the feeling that they are not able to do it. So, they are nervously and guilty waiting for someone to act, in order to join the collective effort. They have an internal locus of control and place on the selfishness pole.

The two secondary latent factors are:

-“Altruism - Selfishness”’: scale measures disposition to offer, to help, to intervene in order to resolve common problems (low scores), by opposition to the disposition to be sensitive to situations involving violation of personal rights and benefits and to request rectification of such situations in personal advantage;

-“Internal-External Locus of control”’: scale measures the tendency to think that everything that happens, problems or opportunities that appear depend on rather by chance, situation, other actions or external forces (low scores-external locus of control), by contrast with the situation in which the person feels responsible for everything that is happening, thinks it can predict and control what is going on around (high scores-internal locus of control).

The scales have a very good reliability with the following Alpha Crombach’s coefficients: 0.816 (generous), 0.848 (involved), 0.896 (claim), 0.834 (helpless), 0.841 (selfishness), 0.839 (locus of control). In both questionnaires, the participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which they are agreed with the statements on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never true for me) to 7 (always true for me). The prior instructions were applied regarding their work in teaching profession.

## 5. Results

Hypothesis 1: The descriptive statistics of the variables are presented in table 1. On the whole sample, factors have the following intensities: very low for overall attitude towards work and negative attitude towards work, low for positive attitude towards work.

Table 1.Descriptive statistics of the variables

Typological tendency	male		female		Total	
	m	SD	m	SD	m	SD
Generous	5.46	.99	5.76	.73	5.70	.80
Claim	5.63	1.27	5.92	.71	5.86	.85
Helpless	3.45	1.06	3.30	1.03	3.33	1.03
Involved	5.59	1.01	5.92	.67	5.86	.76
Selfishness	5.79	.97	6.08	.64	6.02	.72
Locus_control	5.32	1.12	5.66	.73	5.60	.83
Work_attitude (general)	4.68	.88	4.65	.85	4.65	.85

Achievement_determination	5.68	.93	5.86	.72	5.82	.77
Obligation_avoidance	3.82	1.33	3.65	1.48	3.69	1.45

To identify the differences between male and female teachers has been applied *t*-test. Statistical analysis has shown that are not differences in attitudes towards work. Moreover, the only difference between male and female teachers are in the “generous type” dimension ( $t=-2.145$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r^2= 0.022$ ), which is more developed in female teachers. The hypothesis has not been confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: To test the relationships between teachers’ typological personality dimensions and their attitudes towards work were calculated Pearson correlations. Effect size has been calculated using the *r*-squared coefficient of determination. As can be seen in Table 2, overall attitude towards work correlates with all typological tendencies. All correlations are positive and low. Positive attitude towards work has high and positive correlations with all typological dimensions of personality, except helpless type which lowly correlates only with negative attitude towards work. Teachers who positively perceive work as an important condition of achievement and self-development tend to be more generous, claimed, involved, selfishness and have an internal locus of control. The effect sizes are high in the cases of the correlations between positive attitude towards work and typological personality dimensions. Concerning typological dimensions of personality, teachers with an internal locus of control are more generous and inclined to involve and to act on behalf of others, more ready to immediately react, to endorse their position in front of colleagues or principals and solve common problems.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations

	Gen	Claim	Help	Inv	Self	Loc_ct
Work_attitude (general)	.266**	.251**	.128*	.286**	.270**	.284**
Achivement_self-determination	.496**	.549**		.570**	.589**	.514**
Obligation_avoidance			.134*			

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

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

Hypothesis 3: Based on general standard has been established two subgroups corresponding to the levels of intensity for each typological tendency: 1- low dominant attitude, 2- high dominant attitude (Table 3).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the subgroups

Dominant attitude	Work_attitude				Achievement_determ				Obligation_avoidance			
	1		2		1		2		1		2	
	m	s.d.	m	s.d.	m	s.d.	m	s.d.	m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Generous	4.45	0.83	4.81	0.83	5.52	0.79	6.07	0.65	3.56	1.41	3.79	1.48
Claim	4.44	0.85	4.78	0.83	5.37	0.86	6.09	0.56	3.66	1.34	3.70	1.52
Involved	4.36	0.67	4.76	0.89	5.29	0.79	6.02	0.66	3.73	1.13	3.66	1.56
Helpless	4.60	0.87	4.74	0.82	5.79	0.72	5.89	0.85	3.61	1.54	3.82	1.27
Selfishness	4.36	0.74	4.82	0.87	5.38	0.79	6.07	0.64	3.51	1.24	3.78	1.55
Locus of control	4.42	0.80	4.86	0.84	5.49	0.81	6.11	0.60	3.55	1.38	3.81	1.50

In order to identify the differences between groups has been applied *t*-test. Effect size has been calculated using *d* Cohen coefficient. Statistical analysis has shown significant differences in teachers’ attitudes towards work for five typological dimensions of personality. Teachers with low ( $N_1=91$ ) and high scores ( $N_2=110$ ) in generosity

dimension differ in their both general attitude towards work ( $t=-3.04$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $d=0.43$ , low to medium effect) and positive attitude towards work ( $t=-5.38$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ,  $d=0.76$ , high effect), but they are not different in negative attitude towards work. More generous teachers have a more positive attitude towards work than less generous teachers. Also, teachers with low ( $N_1=75$ ) and high scores ( $N_2=126$ ) in claim dimension differ in their both general attitude towards work ( $t=-2.69$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $d=0.38$ , low effect) and positive attitude towards work ( $t=-7.16$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=1.01$ , very high effect), but they are not different in negative attitude towards work. Claimer teachers have a more positive attitude towards work than the others. Similarly, teachers with low ( $N_1=54$ ) and high tendency to involve ( $N_2=147$ ) differ in their both general attitude towards work ( $t=-3.04$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $d=0.43$ , low to medium effect) and positive attitude towards work ( $t=-6.57$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ,  $d=0.93$ , very high effect), but they are not different in negative attitude towards work. Teachers with higher tendency to involve have a more positive attitude towards work than the others with lower tendency. Overall attitude towards work and its component are not different in teachers with low and high levels of helpless ( $N_1=128$ ,  $N_2=73$ ). Altruist teachers ( $N_1=72$ ) differ of selfishness teachers ( $N_2=129$ ) both in overall ( $t=-3.98$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=0.61$ , medium effect) and positive attitude towards work ( $t=-6.77$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=0.96$ , very high effect). Altruist teachers have more positive attitudes towards work than selfishness teachers. Finally, external teachers ( $N_1=94$ ) differ of internal teachers ( $N_2=107$ ) both in overall attitude ( $t=-3.80$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=0.53$ , medium effect) and positive work attitude ( $t=-6.19$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $d=0.91$ , high effect). Higher levels of attitude towards work are characteristic for internal than external teachers.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper is a part of an extensive investigation relating to teaching profession and teacher personality. The main purpose of this paper was to investigate the relationships between attitudinal variables in teachers. These variables are attitudes towards their work and typological tendencies of personality which are dominant attitudes. Teachers with low and high tendencies of manifestation of generosity, involvement and claiming differ in their attitudes towards work, both general and positive, but not in negative attitude. For helpless type, results have not shown differences in work attitudes. Also, internals have different levels of attitude towards work than externals, and altruist than selfish teachers.

The study has certain some limitations. First, the sample is not representative the Romanian teachers from pre-university education system population. Second, are measured only some dominant attitudes of teachers' personality. Other personality variables which are significant in explanation and prediction of the performances in teaching profession, such as motivation, job satisfaction, personality traits, work style, are not covered by this study.

The findings could be important in psychological testing and assessment of teachers' personality after employment, in personal and professional continuous formation and development activities, in teaching career management, in situations of professional promotion or restructuring, and in predictive investigation of the performances in teaching profession.

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