CHOOSING TEACHING AS A PROFESSION: INFLUENCE OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS ON FALLBACK CAREER

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Abstract

Personality plays a significant role in influencing motivation for choosing a perspective profession. As empirical evidence confirmed, personality traits conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion are in positive correlation with intrinsic motives for choosing teaching as a profession (in negative with personality trait neuroticism), and in negative correlation with extrinsic motivation and fallback career (in positive with personality trait neuroticism). The primary aim of research is to point out the importance of personality traits in career choices via detecting which personality traits are predictors of fallback career. In the research first grade university students (teacher trainees; N = 402) completed the Five Factor Inventory and SMVUP-4-S scale. As results show, Big Five personality traits are in correlation with fallback career and are a significant predictor of fallback career. The Big Five model together explained 17.4% of the variance in fallback career, where personality traits agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience and neuroticism has been shown as a statistically significant predictor of fallback career of teacher trainees.
Keywords: *Big Five, career choice, fallback career, personality traits.*

Introduction

The influence of the personality on the career choice is a frequent topic in scientific researches. These influencing variables have been dealt with by many authors such as Holland (1985), Barrick & Mount (2005), Kapová (2007), Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović (2012), Datu (2012), Chen, Wu & Chen (2010) and others. According to Holland (1985), types of personality allow to predict individual professional behavior, career choice, and even satisfaction with the chosen profession. The issue of professional personality and career choice in the teacher's profession is particularly sensitive because teachers work with children and shape their personality, what justifies a large number of researches dealing with this problem. Nevertheless, there are only a handful of studies that deal with the correlation between the personality of the teacher and the motivation for choosing teaching as a career (particularly fallback career choice) in our region. In this study, on the basis of certain theoretical and empirical assumptions, we try to identify the existence of a linear relationship between the personality traits and the specific motives for choosing teaching as a profession, and point to an important role of personality predispositions in the career choices.

*Personality Traits and Fallback Career: Defining the Concepts
and Background of Research*

Holland (1985) has developed a typology of personalities or professional orientations according to which can be predicted the professional behavior of individuals. Some personality traits are important for a successful performance in certain professions, which ensure certain

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consistency in the behavior of individuals in different situations (Kapová, 2007). An instructive classification of the personality characteristics of the teacher is given by Kasáčová (2004). However, the author states that personality characteristics do not have a permanent and unchangeable condition. Many of them can continue to develop during the study process. Kasáčová (2004) differentiates the personal (intrapersonal and interpersonal), social and ethical characteristics of teacher personality. The author determines the following factors as the most important personality characteristics of the teacher:

- Personal:
  a) Intrapersonal: self-confidence, creativity, purposefulness, responsibility, emotional stability.
  b) Interpersonal: patience, flexibility, sophistication, persuasiveness, consciousness, optimism, foresight.
- Social: communicativeness, sociability, tolerance, accepting others, empathy, respect for others, agreeableness, affiliation, sense of humor, consideration, justice, love for children, prosociality.
- Ethical: altruism, congruence, honesty, straightness.

Based on these personnel requirements for the teaching profession can be deduced that individuals with these characteristics have stronger intrinsic and altruistic career choices, while individuals who do not have these characteristics are, as stated by Watt & Richardson (2006), oriented against the profession because their personality characteristics do not correspond to the nature of the profession (Tomšik, 2016a).

Currently there are many studies dealing with the problematic of motivation for choosing teaching profession (e.g. Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović, 2012; Şahin, 2014; Watt & Richardson, 2006), but there are only a handful of studies that deal with the motivation for choosing teaching profession in relation to personality characteristics (Emmerich, Rock & Trapani, 2006; Tomšik, 2016c). The fact that only a few studies focused on the correlation or influence of personality traits on the motivation for choosing teaching profession results from the difficulty of realizing the research and the absence of a research tool that would find a global motivation for the choice of profession (e.g. internal, external). A large majority of existing studies have identified the relationship between personality traits and specific interests related to a particular profession or to the general interests (e.g. Chen, Wu & Chen, 2010; Barrick & Mount, 2005; Holland, 1985; Larson, Rottinghaus & Borgenl, 2002; Tokar, Fischer & Subich, 1998; etc.).

Nevertheless, even on the basis of these results, it is possible to predict the direction of the hypotheses on relation between personality traits and motivation for choosing teaching profession. By summarizing the theoretical basis and empirical evidences mentioned above, the following generalizations and assumptions can be deduced: it can be expected that internal and socially beneficial values (intrinsic and altruistic motivation) are associated with higher scores of extraversion, openness, consciousness and agreeableness. Some research evidence suggests that neuroticism could be related to the external aspects of motivation and fallback career, but so far, research does not allow clear predictions. Consciousness is not conceptually related to the specific professional requirements of the teacher's profession but is consistently the most promising dimension of overall performance and job satisfaction (Barrick & Mount, 2005; Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002). To this day, there is only one research that deals with the relationship between the personality traits (NEO-FFI) and the motivation for choosing a teaching profession on the sample of teacher trainees' students, namely Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović (2012). The study was released in Croatia and presents the results that are based on standardized research tools. In the research the FIT-Choice scale was used to determine the motivation for choosing teaching as a profession and NEO-FFI for determining personality traits. There were 374 respondents involved into the research, teacher trainee students of three Croatian universities. Confirming the factors using factor analysis in the Croatian version of the FIT-Choice tool, the results of the research reached a higher, more sophisticated level. The research results show that extraversion and agreeableness were important predictors of intrinsic

motivation for choosing teaching as a profession, but also satisfaction with the choice of this profession. Personality trait extraversion also predicted capabilities and experience, while agreeableness was positively correlated with the altruistic types of motives. Neuroticism has been in a negative relationship with the mentioned types of motives for choosing teaching as a profession.

The specific motive for choosing teaching profession is a fallback career. This motive is characterized as an alternative choice of profession, or it can be defined as a second occupational choice, if one of the first choices of the profession is for some reasons unavailable. Because of today's volatile labor market and large job offer, many university students often choose teaching as an alternative profession for various reasons (university availability, failure to access to other study programs, easier access to teaching study programs etc.). However, the alternative career choice has a hidden motive that could be included in other categories of motives (extrinsic, altruistic or even intrinsic). In most studies this motive is categorized as an extrinsic motive (Şahin, 2014), nevertheless Tomšik & Verešová (2016) consider it as a separate category of motive, precisely because the hidden motives behind fallback career not always must be conditioned to external influences.

In the aforementioned research (Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović, 2012) fallback career was in negative correlation with the personality traits extraversion (r = -.110), agreeableness (r = -.220) and conscientiousness (r = -.210). In the research a prediction model was also analyzed, where the lack of the personality traits agreeableness and conscientiousness predicts fallback career (R^2 = .074, a linear regression relation was negative).

Based on the results of this research and the theoretical assumptions given above, it was assumed that there is a negative correlation between the fallback career and the personality traits of conscientiousness (H_1), openness to experience (H_2), extraversion (H_3) and agreeableness (H_4), and the positive relationship between the fallback career and the personality trait neuroticism (H_5). The last hypothesis (H_6) assumes that personality affects the choice of profession, which means that Big Five personality traits will be the predictors of fallback career.

Methodology of Research

General Characteristics

The aim of research is to point out the importance of personality traits in career choices by measuring influence of personality on fallback career. This aim involves measuring the correlation between variables (personality traits and fallback career) and measuring which personality traits are predictors of fallback career. In order to confirm the defined hypotheses, it was decided to carry out quantitative oriented research, which allows the support of previous theoretical and empirical assumptions using statistical analyzes.

To obtain information about students' personality structures and motives for choosing teaching as a profession, standardized and validated research tools were chosen (questionnaires, paper form). The whole research tool consists of two full questionnaires for the measurement of research variables and one questionnaire for the detection of demographic information of participants. Participants submitted questionnaires with consent to the processing of data. All questionnaires were anonymous. Data was collected by psychologists at Slovak universities. Participants had 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

The final version of the research tool was elaborated and piloted in March – April 2016. Data were collected in September – November 2016. In December 2016 data were processed and analyzed.

Sample of Research

The research sample consists of students of the Slovak universities (Catholic University Ružomberok, Comenius University, Constantine the Philosopher University, DTI University, Matej Bel University, University of Prešov, University of Trnava, University of Žilina) from all regions of Slovak republic (Nitra, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Trenčín, Trnava and Žilina). In total 402 students of the first year of bachelor studies were involved in the research (teacher trainees). A research sample consists of 119 male and 266 female respondents (17 uncategorized), with an average age of 20.50 years.

In the academic year 2015/2016, around 3300 adolescents were admitted to the first year. According to the approximation of Morgan and Krejcie (as cited in Tomšik, 2017), at least 346 respondents must be included in the set, with a percentage distribution corresponding to the size of the basic set in each region. During research 500 questionnaires were distributed, which means that the return of the questionnaires was 80.40%. This means that criterion of Morgan and Krejcie approximation is fulfilled. The choice of first year students was based on the assumption that there was primary motivation for choosing teaching as a career. Primary motivation of students of higher grades might be modified due to other factors.

Instrument and Procedures

NEO Five Factor (NEO-FFI) is a standardized personality inventory that examines a person's Big Five personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). The authors of the NEO-FFI questionnaire are McCrae and Costa (Slovak version by Ruisel & Halama, 2007). Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire is $\alpha = 0.87$ (Ruisel & Halama, 2007). Questionnaire consists of 60 items (Likert type), twelve for each personality dimension:

- Openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious). Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity,
- Conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless). A tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior.
- Extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, surgency, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness.
- Agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.
- Neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident). The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability.

For detecting the fallback career of teacher trainees was used the Scale of motivation for choosing teaching profession (SMVUP-4-S) – version for students constructed by Tomšik & Verešová (2016). Individual motives of career choices in the SMVUP model were induced in a scale based on empirical and theoretical findings. Existing studies (e.g. Hřebíček, 1995; Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović, 2012; Şahin, 2014; Watt & Richardson, 2006; Young, 1995) indicate three types of motivation for choosing teaching as a career: intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic. Each category consists of specific motives related to the teaching profession, specifically:

- Intrinsic motivation: interest, self-perception of teaching skills, work potential, previous experience;
- Extrinsic motivation: benefits, income, social status, significant others;
- Altruistic motivation: prosocial behavior, work with children, work with youth.
- Fallback career (alternative choice).

Each of the subscale consists of four items. The score of the respondents can range

from 4 points as a minimum score 20 points as a maximum attainable score. The higher score represents a higher level of motivation factor. Items of the range are in the form of assertions that the respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha of scale is $\alpha = .86$, while at the subscale alternative career choice is $\alpha = .75$ (Tomšik & Čerešník 2017).

Data Analysis

For the descriptive and inference data analysis statistical programs SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science ver. 20) and STAT 13 were used, specifically:

- MCAR test (Little's Missing Completely at Random) was used to verify the missing data.
- To verify the normality of the research data the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were used.
- To determine the correlation between personality traits and fallback career Pearson coefficient of correlation was used, while Linear regression analysis was used, based on Breusch-Pagan test of homoscedasticity, to determine the statistical prediction.

Results of Research

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of research variables. Observing only the average score, students have reached the highest score in the personality trait conscientiousness (M = 31.82). Approximately one-and-a-half points below were scaled personality traits of extraversion (M = 30.14) and agreeableness (M = 30.07). The lowest average scores were achieved in personality traits openness (M = 27.99) and neuroticism (M = 22.28). Compared to the standards presented by Ruisel & Halama (2007) in the handbook, we do not notice significant differences compared to the scores that were measured on our sample. For the age group of individuals aged 15–24, the authors report the following average scores for individual personality traits: neuroticism M = 21.87; extraversion M = 30.05; openness to experience M = 29.45; agreeableness M = 29.69 and conscientiousness M = 29.45. The biggest differences are in personality traits openness to experience and conscientiousness, where students of our research sample have reached about one point higher scores compared to norms. Average score of variable fallback career is M = 8.796, which is compared to the median (Md = 12) satisfying result.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables.

Variables	N	MIN	MAX	M	SD	S	C
Neuroticism	402	.00	43.00	22.28	8.077	.000	-.120
Extraversion	402	5.00	45.00	30.14	6.538	-.297	.103
Openness to Experience	402	4.00	46.00	27.99	6.070	.246	.137
Agreeableness	402	16.00	46.00	30.07	6.421	.235	-.742
Conscientiousness	402	13.00	48.00	31.82	6.736	.109	-.217
Fallback Career	402	4.00	20.00	8.796	4.143	.401	-.958

*Note: N- number; M- mean; MIN- minimum score; MAX- maximum score; SEM- standard error of the mean; SD- standard deviation; S– skewness; C– kurtosis.

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Table 2 summarizes correlations between fallback career and Big Five personality traits. The results show that significant correlations were obtained between fallback career and all Big Five personality traits, specifically: negative linear correlation with personality traits conscientiousness ($r = -.322$, $p < .001$), agreeableness ($r = -.316$, $p < .001$), openness to experience ($r = -.206$, $p < .001$) and extraversion ($r = -.270$, $p < .001$). Between fallback and personality trait neuroticism were obtained positive linear correlation ($r = -.238$, $p < .001$).

Table 2. Correlation between fallback career and Big Five personality traits.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fallback Career	1	.238**	-.270**	-.206**	-.316**	-.322**
Neuroticism		1	-.442**	-.143**	-.198**	-.234**
Extraversion			1	.207**	.385**	.341**
Openness to Experience				1	.133**	.194**
Agreeableness					1	.390**
Conscientiousness						1

*Note: r– Pearson correlation coefficient; p– level of statistics significance; **.– correlation is significant at .010 level.

Homoscedasticity of data was confirmed by Breusch-Pagan test ($\chi^2 = 8.220$; $p = .145$). Results of linear regression analysis show that independent variables when pulled together significantly predicted fallback career of the participants ($F (5, 396) = 17.863$, $p < .0001$). The value of R^2 (adjusted) $= .174$ indicated that the personality traits accounted for 17.40% of the total variance in fallback career (Table 3).

Table 3. Linear regression analysis.

Predictor	Dependent Variable	R	R²	Adjusted R²	β	Standard-ized β	F	p
Neuroticism					.059	.115		
Extraversion					-.040	-.064		
Openness to Experience	Fallback Career	.429	.184	.174	-.080	-.117	17.864	< .001
Agreeableness					-.118	-.183		
Conscientiousness					-.110	-.179		

*Note: R– multiple correlation coefficient; R²– coefficient of determination; β– Beta coefficient; F– F ratio; p– level of statistics significance.

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Discussion

The aim of the research was to point out the importance of personality traits in the career choices among teacher training students. This aim was realized by detecting the correlation and prediction between the key research variables on a sample of teacher training students. Research has identified significant correlations between Big Five personality traits and the motivation of choosing teaching as a career, namely fallback career. Despite the fact that all of the required personality traits for the successful performance of the teacher's profession are not implemented in the Big Five model, in relation to SMVUP-4-S model successfully explains reality. Students with the lack of personality trait openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion, which are also important factors for the successful performance (not only) in the teaching profession, more often choose the teaching profession as a substitute solution. Due to the fact that between these personality traits and the fallback career variable were found the significant correlations, hypothesis H_1–H_5 were supported. Another research goal was to find out whether personality traits are predictors of fallback career. Based on the results of regression analysis hypothesis H_6 was supported. Personality traits are a good predictor of fallback career, specifically personality traits as openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness have a negative impact on fallback career (they are declining fallback career) while personality trait neuroticism has a positive impact on a fallback career (neuroticism increases the fallback career). Although we found only one research with similar research problem, results were also supported by research findings from other authors such as Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović (2012) who also found out that personality traits are predictors of career choices among teacher training students. However, Jugovic, Ivanec & Vidović (2012) research was carried out on a sample of Croatian students, where the percentage of variability was significantly lower (7.4%) compared to the variability of this research sample (17.4%).

The results of the analysis confirmed the theoretical assumptions and confirmed the empirical facts of the previous authors (e.g. Holland, 1985; Şahin, 2014; Watt & Richardson, 2006; etc.). According to the theoretical backgrounds, each personality structure is predestined and directed to a certain profession, and the intrinsic motivation attuned individually to the specific professions. In particular, in the teaching profession, intrinsic and altruistic motivation leads to better learning outcomes, higher satisfaction with the choice of profession and a more active approach to work activities as well as engagement at work (Barrick & Mount, 2005). These facts were also confirmed by research, specifically extraverts are more likely to report job satisfaction than individuals low in extraversion (Cropanzano, Janes, & Konovsky, 1993; Tokar & Subich, 1997), but have additionally shown that agreeableness is an important predictor of satisfaction with the specific career choice of becoming a teacher, while extrinsic motivation repudiates individuals from choosing a profession that is not in compliance with their personal predispositions and inner convictions (Watt & Richardson, 2006). Here comes the tendency to choose profession under the influence of fallback career. These individuals have lower scores of personality dimensions conscientiousness and openness to experience (Jugović, Ivanec & Vidović, 2012). These individuals also show higher score of neuroticism, where we consider this feature to be unpleasant in the teacher's profession, given that the teacher should be an emotionally stable personality to effectively manage work-related stress and problems.

The results of this research can be implemented in the theory of pedagogy and teacher development and deepen the knowledge of the teaching personality. It has been pointed out that personal characteristics are important in career choice, and it is important to pay attention to these qualities even before the beginning of the study through an admission procedure, which should encompass not only an analysis of previous school success but also an analysis of personality predispositions and motivation of choosing a teaching profession. Such a selection of students can allow further work during a research with students whose personality characteristics and motivating factors corresponded to the content of a profession.

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Conclusions

Research has found that personality traits (Big Five) are predictors of motivation for the choice of the teaching profession, particularly students with high scores of neuroticism and low score of openness to experience agreeableness and conscientiousness choose the professions under the influence of fallback career.

From the results of the descriptive statistics, it was found that approximately 15% of the participants had chosen the profession under the influence of fallback career. To reduce the number of these candidates, it is necessary to implement the diagnosis of personality traits, and in particular the motivation for choosing teaching as a profession would allow the selection of students with intrinsic and altruistic motivation to teach, which are considered to be the pillars of successful exercise of a profession. Despite the fact that students are admitted to teacher training study programs regardless of their personal characteristics, the subjects that develop these characteristics should be implemented in the education system (e.g. self-confidence, patience, flexibility, persuasiveness, conscientiousness, sociability, tolerance, altruism and others), because the personality traits are variable in a certain way and can be developed to a certain extent.

Based on this, it is possible to determine the implications for further investigation of this issue. It is necessary to observe (on the basis of the longitudinal type of research) whether during the study and practice of the students (primarily those who have chosen profession under the influences of external motives and fallback career) is changing their personality structure (whether some personality dimensions are increasing and to what extent), consequently, whether this change is sufficient for the successful performance of the teaching profession. This longitudinal research should be more comprehensive and should include all motivating factors for choosing teaching as a profession (intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic) as well as the professional characteristics of the teachers that are not included in the Big Five model.

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