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DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

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**THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY FACTORS FROM SOCIAL-COGNITIVE
THEORY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS**

**SPECIALISATION: 511.02 DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

Summary of the doctoral thesis in psychology

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The presentation will take place on March 29, 2024, at 11:00 am, during the meeting of the Doctoral Committee of the Doctoral School of Psychology of „Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University in Chişinău, Str. I. Creangă, 1, MD-2069, bl.2, Senate Hall.

The doctoral thesis in psychology and the summary can be consulted at the Scientific Library of „Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University in Chişinău and on the website of ANACEC (www.anacec.md, www.cnaa.md).

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THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

Relevance and importance of the theme. In the last decades of the century, various analyses and reports have emerged regarding the state of higher education. Among the highlighted aspects was the academic performance of students, given the challenges that have arisen in society. In the context of reforming higher education, it is extremely important to focus on increasing the level of academic performance among students. This is the ultimate indicator that characterizes the activity of a higher education institution in training specialists, meeting educational requirements and standards, and ensuring the quality of educational services. In the learning process, students acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for future professionals, develop general cultural and professional competencies, as well as essential personal qualities for professional activity.

From the findings of teachers and from personal observations as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Psychology of Hyperion University in Bucharest, there has been a decline in students' interest in good academic preparation, especially in the early years of the undergraduate cycle. Analyses and reports, such as the ANOSR Report (2015), the „*Education, Good Governance, National Security*” Report (2016), or the European Commission Report (2015), the report of the Ministry of Education in Romania (2022), draw attention to the decrease in academic performance among students and the alarming increase in those students choosing to drop out of studies. Aspects related to the decrease in academic performance also appear in analyses such as: the Report of the Career Counseling and Guidance Center Suceava, entitled „*Determinants of Career Orientation of First-Year Students*” (2016, pp. 4-7); the Evaluation Report of Transilvania University in Braşov (2013, pp. 12-13); the Annual Public Report - 2014 „*The State of Financing Higher Education and the Necessary Optimization Measures*” (CICOCA, 2015, p. 11); the Activity Report for the academic year 2012-2013 of the University of Craiova - Faculty of Electrical Engineering (2014, pp. 17-18); the presentation of the Center for Information, Counseling, and Career Guidance Alumni - Cluj Napoca, CICOCA (2015).

Description of the research field and identification of the research problem. Programs have been developed to improve management in universities such as: Mihalca L. and Mengelkamp C. (2020), Boncu Ş. and Ceobanu C. (2016), training programs, Covaci M. (2018), correlational studies on attendance and exam results, Sandu M. and Regep G. (2013). The social-cognitive theory, Rotter J.B. (1982), and Bandura A. (1977), primarily emphasize cognitions about oneself, the world, and the future. These thoughts intervene and mediate the relationship between knowledge and action. Techniques used in coaching or psychotherapy are built based on personality factors. The present study, focused on concretizing and structuring a definition of

academic performance, from the perspective of personality factors in the Social-Cognitive Theory, constitutes a premise for further exploration and the construction of a psychological intervention program to improve it.

In an attempt to reduce the effects of the phenomenon of declining academic performance, the RESL project (Reducing Early School Leaving) was created, as presented in the European Commission's report (2015). Several programs have been developed, such as FOTEL, Accrochange Scolaire, or FYEBV. Counseling methods at the university level have been improved (European Union, 2015). It has been observed that the mechanisms and factors supporting academic performance are not sufficiently identified and addressed at an adequate level. Therefore, we are justified in formulating the **research problem**, which consists of answering the following question: *What are the relationships between personality factors and academic performance, and how would the improvement of these factors contribute to its enhancement, for students in the young adult developmental period?*

The purpose of the research is to study the relationships between personality factors from the social-cognitive theory, the psychological characteristics of students in the young adult developmental period, gender differences, specialization, or year of study. Additionally, the goal is to develop and test a psychological intervention program through which students' academic performance can be improved by enhancing these factors.

The research objectives were as follows: 1. Reviewing the specialized literature regarding academic performance, personality factors from the social-cognitive theory, and psychological traits of students in the young adult developmental stage. 2. Highlighting the associative relationships between academic performance and personality factors, identifying gender, age, and year of study differences, as well as evolution models for the studied constructs. 3. Identifying how personality factors influence academic performance, including causation-effect or moderating relationships. 4. Developing and implementing a formative program aimed at improving personality factors and analyzing its impact on academic performance. 5. Formulating conclusions and recommendations for optimizing the process of enhancing academic performance through the improvement of personality factors.

Research hypotheses.

We assume that there are differences in the level of academic performance and personality factors according to age, gender, specialization and study year among students;

We assume that there are relations of association between academic performance and personality factors and their evolution patterns, according to age;

We assume that students' academic performance can be improved, under experimental conditions, by improving personality factors.

The theoretical framework of the research included: Theoretical approaches to academic performance (Landsheere G. (1975), Cristea S. (1996)). Social-cognitive theory (Antonovsky A. (1987), Bandura A. (1977), Kobasa S.C. (1979), Papalia D.E. et al. (2010), Rotter J.B. (1966, 1982), Rosenberg M. (1989), Scheier M.F. and Carver C.S. (1992), Erikson E. (1963), Racu I. (2013)). Attribution theories (Weiner B. (1985, 2000)). Theories and concepts regarding the psychological traits of young adult students (Côté (2006), Kreitler S. and Kreitler H. (1993), Paulhan I. and Bourgeois M. (1995)).

Methodology of scientific research derives from the purpose, objectives, and hypotheses of the research. The study employed *theoretical* methods (analysis, synthesis, interpretation of scientific literature, and research results); *empirical* methods (questionnaire, test, observational experiment, control experiment, analysis of semester-end grade averages operationalized in standard classes). For assessment we used empirical methods, such as the SES Scale by Schwarzer R. and Jerusalem M. (1995), Golu I. et al. (2015); RSES Scale by Rosenberg M. (1989), Baban A. (1998), Vasiliu D. (2019); *Rotter's Questionnaire* by Rotter J.B. (1966), Baban A. (1998); DRS15 Scale by Bartone (2007), Sîrbu M. et al. (2015b); SOC13 Scale by Antonovsky A. (1987), Rizeanu S. et al. (2015a); LOT-R Scale by Scheier M.F. and Carver C.S. (1992), Baban A. (1998). Mathematical and statistical methods included descriptive analysis (frequency analysis, Box-Plot, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test) and inferential analyses (Kendall tau_b association test, Kruskal Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test, partial correlations test, Wilcoxon test).

The obtained results that contribute to solving the important scientific problem consist of a holistic approach to the constitutive elements of academic performance and personality factors, the relationships between them, and the specifics of gender, age, and year of study for young adult students. This formed the basis for the development and implementation of a psychological intervention program that contributed to the improvement of academic outcomes.

The scientific novelty and originality resides in conducting a theoretical-experimental approach regarding the relationships between personality factors and academic performance, as well as the evolution models of these factors in students throughout the young adult developmental period. We identified how personality factors influence academic performance, either causally or as intermediate variables, and determined the optimal intervention period. Additionally, an experimental model of psychological interventions aimed at improving the

academic performance of students, young adults, through the enhancement of personality factors from the social-cognitive theory, was developed and experimentally verified.

Theoretical significance of the work. The results of the theoretical-experimental research contribute to the fields of developmental psychology and educational psychology by providing current and comprehensive knowledge regarding the improvement of academic performance in students, as well as the relationships between this psychological construct and personality factors. The research results, subsequent explanations, established patterns, and formulated conclusions are essential for reconceptualizing and updating knowledge concerning academic performance in the context of Educational Psychology. The relationships and evolution patterns of personality factors contribute to updating information in the field of Developmental Psychology for young adult students. We developed models that explain the analyzed constructs. The thesis represents a thorough contribution to enriching the literature in the field of psychology and educational sciences.

Applicative value of the thesis. The ideas and principles described in this research regarding the relationships between the analyzed constructs and the influence of personality factors on academic performance can be used as guidelines in the process of training and development for students in the young adult developmental period. The models resulting from the experimental study can serve as benchmarks for achieving high academic performance, taking into account personality factors in the context of the psychological characteristics of young adult students. The program of psychological interventions aimed at improving personality factors for the enhancement of academic performance can be used by university educators, psychologists, psychotherapists, and students themselves to control and enhance academic performance, as well as for solving certain personality difficulties or issues.

Main scientific results submitted for presentation:

1. In university education, there is a growing trend towards low academic performance, and significant dropout rates among students are observed.
2. Academic performance correlates with personality factors, and to a large extent, it is determined by their characteristics, except of locus of control.
3. The evolution models of academic performance and personality factors are similar for students in the first and second years of study, differing based on age, as a result of psycho-social development during young adulthood and the psychological characteristics of students.
4. Specially organized psychological interventions can improve personality factors with a positive effect on students' academic performance. Self-efficacy, self-esteem, and sense of coherence positively influence academic performance through a cause-and-effect relationship.

Optimism and hardiness play the role of moderating variables, with a positive influence, between personality factors and students' academic performance.

Implementation of scientific results. The results of the theoretical-experimental research have been implemented in the teaching and training process for students at Hyperion University in Bucharest, including the Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economic Sciences, and Faculty of Psychology. Optional extracurricular sessions were organized with the approval of the university's management.

Approval of research results. The results were discussed and approved during the meetings of the Doctoral School of Psychology, the Department of Psychology at the State Pedagogical University „Ion Creangă” in Chişinău, the Department of Psychology at Hyperion University in Bucharest, and at scientific conferences and journals, including: Annual Scientific Conference of Ph.D. Students – State Pedagogical University „Ion Creangă,” Chişinău, 2017. „Rethinking Social Action. Core Values in Practice” conference, Suceava, Romania, 2017. National Scientific-Practical Conference with International Participation „Modern Trends in Practical Psychology,” Chişinău, 2017. Annual Scientific Conference of Ph.D. and Postdoctoral Researchers, May 16, 2019, State Pedagogical University „Ion Creangă,” Chişinău. „International Scientific Conference Rethinking Social Action. Core Values in Practice,” May 15-17, 2019, Iaşi – Romania.

Publications on the thesis topic: The fundamental ideas and content of the thesis have been reflected in 17 scientific papers: four published in scientific journals in the Republic of Moldova and 13 articles in international journals and conferences, as well as conferences with international participation.

Volume and structure of the thesis: The thesis includes abstracts (in Romanian and English), a list of abbreviations, introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, a bibliography consisting of 232 titles, 18 annexes, and has been completed in 162 pages, containing 54 figures and 71 tables.

Keywords: academic performance, personality factors, students, young adults.

THESIS CONTENT

The introduction includes the presentation of the current situation and the importance of the investigated theme, the description latest developments in the research field. It presents the conceptual framework, the purpose, objectives, and hypotheses of the research, as well as the obtained results, contributing to the resolution of an important scientific problem. Additionally, the scientific novelty of the obtained results, the theoretical significance, and the practical value of the work are highlighted.

Chapter 1, entitled „**THEORETICAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY FACTORS FROM SOCIAL-COGNITIVE THEORY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS,**” presents conceptual delimitations and theories regarding academic performance, personality factors from social-cognitive theory, and the psychological characteristics of young adult students. The paragraphs within the theoretical chapter describe the most established approaches and conceptual delimitations of academic performance, characterize the personality factors from social-cognitive theory, and highlight and determine the relationship between academic performance and personality factors. The chapter also includes a presentation of the psychological characteristics specific to young adult students.

Academic performance, the measure to which a student achieves the curriculum objectives with the real outcomes of their academic activities established through the application of measurement and evaluation tools (tests, assessments, simulations, etc.), is in constant dynamics and is influenced by cognitive representations, motivational processes, learned social behaviors, physiological and biochemical mechanisms. Situational factors, which complement this picture, amplify physiological responses, emotions, as well as cognitive processes of evaluation and decision-making.

Following the analysis of the specialized literature, relationships between personality factors and academic performance have been identified. Negative correlations were established between the diagnostic criteria of personality disorders and the level of coherence, as observed by Vasiliu D. and Rizeanu S. (2017). Correlations were found between self-efficacy and the sense of coherence, according to Vasiliu D. (2016), as well as correlations between locus of control and hardiness, based on Vasiliu D. (2017c). The impact of self-esteem and optimism on self-efficacy was also explored by Vasiliu D. (2017). Additionally, correlations between hardiness and the sense of coherence were identified in the work of Rizeanu S. and Vasiliu D. (2016). Furthermore, models of interaction between optimism, locus of control, and hardiness were determined by Vasiliu D. (2017b), and the age-dependent model of self-efficacy was established by Stomff M. and Vasiliu D. (2017). Associations between personality factors and academic performance in young adult students were also noted by Vasiliu D. (2017a).

Academic performance has been conceptualized as follows: the grade is the expression of a synthetic appreciation, and the score on a test is the representation of the result, as stated by Landsheere G. (1975, pp. 12-13). Additionally, it is described as "[...] a complex action integrated into didactic activity (teaching - learning - assessment) by correlating didactic measurement and appreciation operations - which ensure diagnosis - with decision-making -

which involves forecasting - with self-regulating purposes at the level of the process and the education system," according to Cristea S. (1996, pp. 190-191).

Personality factors, as a result of the interaction between psychological mechanisms and environmental factors, are dynamic constructs that structure themselves based on cognitions about the self, the world, and the future. Representations of the self significantly influence the learning process and motivational processes. Perceived through the lens of future actions, these representations can either aid or inhibit a person's behaviors. Personality factors are both a product of learning and processes that characterize the flexibility of human response. The influence of these factors is determined by social representations or sociocognition, defined as mental images through which people make attributions and provide causal explanations.

Research has identified relationships between academic performance and personality factors. *Academic performance* indicates the extent to which a student achieves approved curriculum objectives with the real outcomes of their academic activities, determined through the application of appropriate measurement and evaluation tools (tests, assessments, simulations, etc.). It is influenced by situational factors, cognitive representations, motivational processes, social behaviors, physiological and biochemical mechanisms, and is expressed in grades.

Academic performance is influenced by cognitions about the self, the world, and the future. The period of young adult development, where the majority of students are situated, is characterized by profound cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes that can activate defense mechanisms and maladaptive coping strategies. We consider the issue of improving academic performance and maintaining it at an appropriate level to be an ongoing challenge. Unresolved issues lie in identifying more effective ways to enhance academic performance among students.

The period of university education is fundamental for both professional and personality development. How individuals cope with the challenges of this period, that of *young adulthood*, can lead to either favorable or unfavorable outcomes. Postformal thinking generally begins in young adulthood, particularly through engagement with higher education. During this time, verbal abilities, critical thinking, and moral judgment develop. Adult role characteristics and associated responsibilities crystallize. Towards the end of this period, the self consolidates. The main task during this period is recentering. The outcome is significantly influenced by the consequences, positive or otherwise, of the adolescent crisis. The choices made by young adults in this context are more or less influenced by the management of perceived losses.

Causal attributions, such as perceived ability or perceived effort, are predictors for the level of performance. These attributions are complemented by those based on expectancy-value, such as persistence or perceived value of tasks. The motivational force towards performance of

attributions is rooted in two types of antecedent conditions: personal factors and environmental factors. Attributions are based on certain causes, where the properties of the causes are more important than the cause itself. Efficient identification and management of emotions, in relation to personal goals, lead to achieving goals with a low level of interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts.

Chapter 2, „EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY FACTORS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE," presents the observational experimental framework, including research methodology, experimental design, sample, experimental procedures, and ethical norms adhered to in the research. It encompasses the data analysis regarding the relationships between personality factors and academic performance, the dynamic evolution of these constructs throughout the period of young adult development, as well as differences based on specialization, year of study, and gender.

The sample included a total of 299 first and second-year students, young adults from the faculties of Psychology, Economic Sciences, and Law at Hyperion University in Bucharest.

The purpose of the exploratory research was to identify relationships between personality factors from social-cognitive theory, psychological characteristics of students during the period of young adult development, and gender, specialization, or year of study peculiarities.

The objectives of the exploratory research were as follows: 1. Identifying the model of academic performance evolution in students based on age; 2. Determining differences in academic performance among students based on specialization, study year (I or II), evaluation year, and gender; 3. Analyzing the associative relationships between personality factors and academic performance in students; 4. Identifying the evolution patterns of personality factors for students based on age; 5. Determining differences in personality factors among students based on specialization, study year (I or II), evaluation year, and gender.

The hypothesis of the exploratory experiment is as follows: We assume that there are differences in terms of the level of academic performance and personality factors based on age, gender, type of specialization, and year of study among students. Additionally, there are associative relationships between academic performance and personality factors, as well as evolution patterns of these factors based on age.

The general hypothesis led to the formulation of several **operational hypotheses**:

1. We assume that there is a model of academic performance based on age, gender, type of specialization, and year of study among young adult students.

2. We assume that there are associative relationships between scores obtained in the evaluation of personality factors and academic performance for young adult students.

3. Among young adult students, we consider that there are group differences (based on specialization, study year, evaluation year) in the scores obtained in the evaluation of personality factors and the level of academic performance, depending on the chosen specialization.

4. For young adult students, we consider that there are group differences in the scores obtained in the evaluation of personality factors and the level of academic performance between male and female students.

5. We assume that there is a model of self-efficacy based on age among students.

6. We assume that there are models of personality factors such as self-esteem, hardiness, sense of coherence, and optimism based on age among students.

Scores obtained in the evaluation of personality factors were considered, as appropriate, independent variables in relation to *Academic Performance* and dependent variables in relation to *Gender*, *Specialization*, and *Age*. The dependent variable, *Academic Performance*, was operationalized based on the results obtained in exams at the end of the semester, transformed into T scores (M=50, SD=10), and grouped into five standard classes (Vasiliu D., 2018). Following the operationalization process, the following intragroup distribution of participants in the exploratory experiment resulted (fig. 1.).

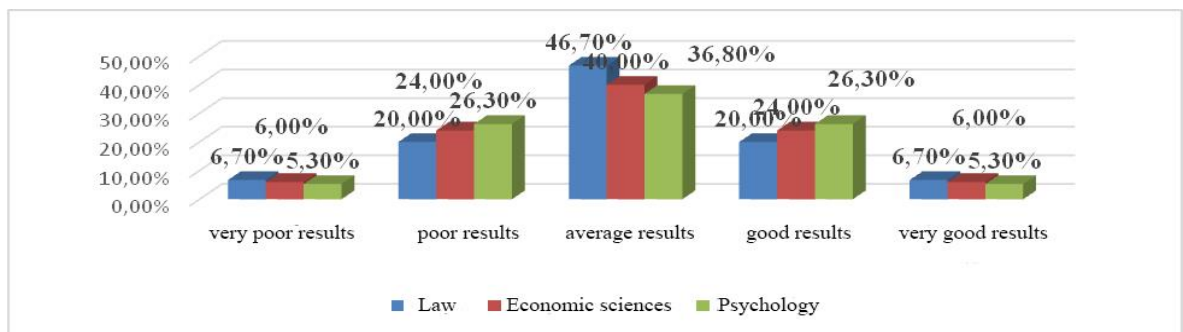


Fig. 1. Distribution regarding academic performance for first-year students (2017)
Academic performance in relation to second-year students is reflected in Figure 2.

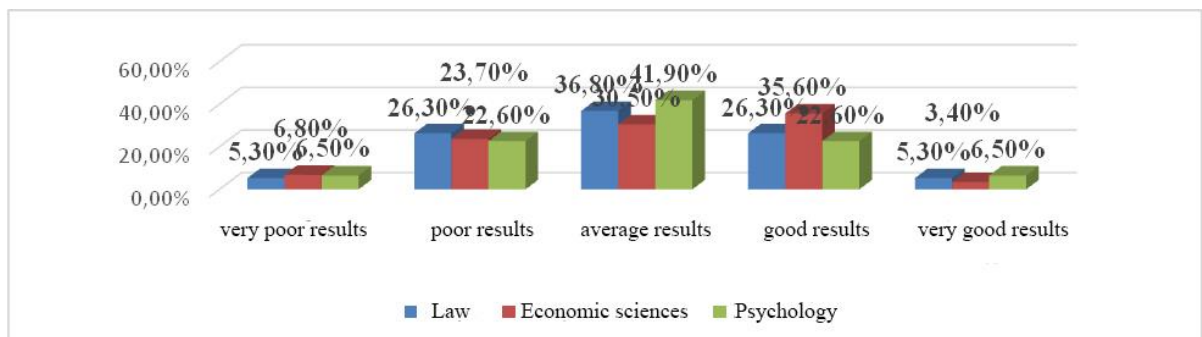


Fig. 2. Distribution regarding academic performance for second-year students (2017)

Next is the presentation and analysis of academic performance results for students from the three specializations in the year 2018. The obtained results are reflected in Figure 3.

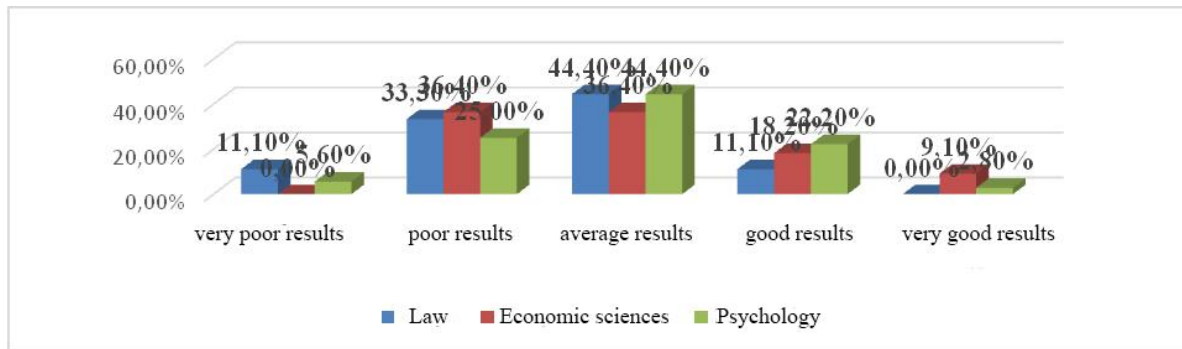


Fig. 3. Distribution regarding academic performance for first-year students (2018)

Regarding *Academic Performance*, for the first hypothesis, we considered the assumption that self-efficacy is the best predictor of academic performance. Participants were grouped into three categories based on the self-efficacy model by Stomff M. and Vasiliu D. (2017). We identified a model of *Academic Performance* based on *Age* (Fig. 4), with a low level in the age range of 19-26 years and an increase around the age of 27. By the end of the period (28-30 years), the performance stabilized.

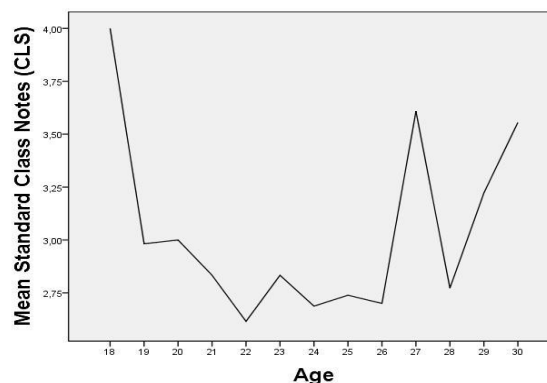


Fig. 4. Model of Academic Performance Evolution Based on Age

Following the application of the Mann-Whitney test, we did not observe statistically significant differences ($p=.062$) between the mean ranks of standard grades between Category 1 (18 years old) and Category 2 (19-26 years old), and between Category 1 (18 years old) and Category 3 (27-30 years old). The result is due to the small sample size of participants in the first age category, four (1.34%) individuals. We found statistically significant differences ($U=6575.000$, $z=-3.363$, $p=0.001$) between Category 2 (19-26 years old) and Category 3 (27-30 years old). The effect size was medium ($r=0.20$). We rejected the null hypothesis. The result is attributed to the emergence and development of reflective thinking, the onset of postformal thinking, the crystallization of the *Self* around beliefs and values, the discovery of freedom, and the experimentation with new lifestyles and different roles.

For the third hypothesis (Kruskal-Wallis test), we did not find statistically significant differences ($p=0.979$) regarding *Academic Performance* based on specialization, study year, or

evaluation year. We retained the null hypothesis. This fact can be explained with the help of *Attribution Theory* (Weiner B., 1985). Even though the goals were different, academic motivation, the performance generator, was supported by the same intrinsic or extrinsic factors.

For the fourth hypothesis (Mann-Whitney test), we did not find statistically significant differences ($p=0.923$) regarding *Academic Performance* based on gender. We retained the null hypothesis. Regardless of gender, motivation for self-fulfillment, the desire to have a career, to show others "that they can," or to please significant individuals intervened. Academic motivation was supported by desire, need, compulsion, and the student's inclination, regardless of gender.

The average obtained by students for personality factors is represented in Figure 5.

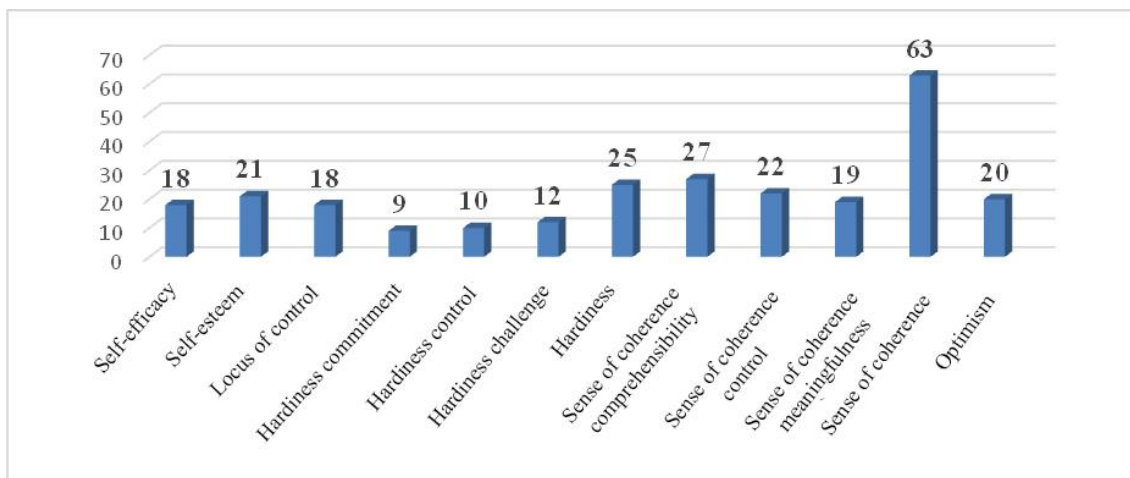


Fig. 5. Averages for students' personality factors

Regarding *Personality Factors* and *academic performance*, for the second hypothesis, we applied the Kendall tau_b association test. We found statistically significant and positive associations between academic performance and *Self-Efficacy* ($K\tau=0.409$, $p=0.001$, 95%CI=0.3099-0.4993), *Self-Esteem* ($K\tau=0.353$, $p=0.001$, 95%CI=0.2496-0.4485), *Hardiness* ($K\tau=0.342$, $p=0.001$, 95%CI=0.2378-0.4384), *Sense of Coherence* ($K\tau=0.353$, $p=0.001$, 95%CI=0.2506-0.4494), and *Optimism* ($K\tau=0.354$, $p=0.001$, 95%CI=0.2506-0.4494). The effect size was medium ($r=0.341$, $r=0.325$, $r=0.296$, respectively $r=0.353$). We rejected the null hypothesis.

Self-efficacy is built on the basis of: the evaluation of previous performances, vicarious learning experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. A positive resolution of these factors constitutes the framework for the development of the student's desire, need, compulsion, and inclination – the elements that form the basis of academic motivation and, implicitly, the achievement of high performance. For young adult students, the lack of perseverance, the belief in a lack of competence, the fear of failure, or self-directedness – elements that build self-efficacy – can lead to the occurrence of the "priming effect" or "associative activation." Self-

esteem is constructed through self-thinking, perceived affect, tendencies for self-evaluation, or tendencies to reject attributes.

As in the case of self-efficacy, previous experiences regarding the success or failure of achieving goals and tasks play an important role. The motivational force towards performance of attributions is determined by personal factors: task-related beliefs and self-related beliefs, both developed before tackling the task. Additionally, confidence in one's own abilities, the difficulty of adopting a certain behavior, personal expectations related to one's assigned value – elements that contribute to the formation of self-esteem – define the three dimensions: magnitude, strength, and generalization. These three describe the concept of self-efficacy as a performance factor. Hardiness, or stress resistance, is defined as a personality matrix that includes three factors: engagement, control, and challenge. Associations with effects in the performance domain are based on certain causes. The characteristics of these causes are more important than the cause itself. Perceiving changes as normal events in life, interpreting them as stimulating situations, having a future orientation – characteristics of the challenge factor contribute to the perception of stability. These explain the positive associations between constructs, academic performance, and the control and challenge factors of hardiness. Beliefs that events can be influenced and controlled, as well as the perception of one's ability to take responsibility, are constituent elements of the resilience-control factor and play a role in the perception of controllability. Depending on these meanings, objective stimuli transform into personal constructs based on which certain coping styles, active or passive, will be adopted. Experiencing a certain level of sense of coherence can shape the attributional style, which will influence performance. At the same time, improving the sense of coherence influences assessments of expectations and beliefs related to the value of the task. These directly relate to choices, persistence, and performance. Understanding refers to how external and internal stimuli are considered, as explainable and predictable, and the accuracy with which information is processed and interpreted. Control involves the perception of resources to cope with stimuli. The sense and purpose factor involves a certain way of relating to demands, considering them as meaningful and deserving attention, or that involvement and effort investment are justified. Optimism and pessimism can activate defense mechanisms that substantially intervene in the choice of coping style. Optimistic individuals generally develop an active coping style, while pessimistic ones tend to adopt a passive one. Depending on the coping style adopted, performance orientation will result. Exaggerated optimism can deteriorate the level of performance by attributing success to random factors such as luck or the intervention of a divine element. Optimism and self-esteem

can compete in directing goals toward either approach or avoidance goals. There are significant correlations between academic performance and performance-approach goals.

Consulting the calculation tables from *Statistics Solutions* (2019), no association was found between *Academic Performance* (CLS) and *Locus of Control* ($K\tau = 0.133$). The null hypothesis was retained. Motivation can determine a level of performance regardless of its nature, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. Academic motivation can be oriented toward performance, either as an internal desire to satisfy principles or values developed during psychosocial development, or based on obtaining rewards from significant others and seeking their approval. The difference lies in the experience of optimal satisfaction regarding goal achievement.

For the third hypothesis (Kruskall-Wallis test), no statistically significant differences were found between personality factor scores based on specialization ($p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was retained. The path to freedom of choice is liberating but overwhelming. The responsibility of being independent and solving problems using reflective thinking depends on the individual and not on the chosen specialization. The development of verbal skills, critical thinking, and morality is favored by the academic environment.

For the fourth hypothesis (Mann-Whitney U test), no statistically significant differences were found between personality factor scores based on gender ($p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was retained. The sources that shape students' personalities are the same regardless of gender. The social environment, family, and peer group contribute to the acquisitions made by an individual during childhood and adolescence. The role of social learning in shaping personality factors becomes increasingly important. Personal variables are seen as both the product of learning and a flexible process of adapting responses to the context.

For the fifth hypothesis, we established a model of self-efficacy (Fig. 6) similar to that of academic performance.

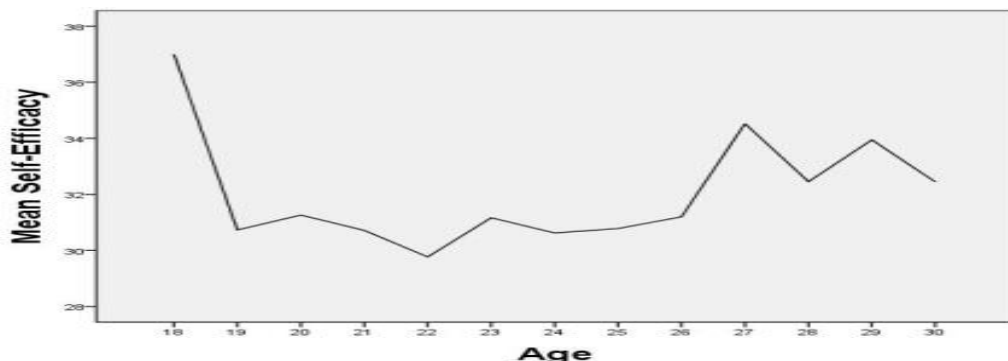


Fig. 6. Evolution of self-efficacy scores by age

Through the application of the Mann-Whitney U test, statistically significant differences were found ($U=164.500$, $z=-2.116$, $p=0.034$) between the mean ranks of scores of participants in Category 1 (18 years old) and those in Category 2 (19-26 years old). The effect size was small ($r=0.14$). Statistically significant differences were observed ($U=5279.500$, $z=-5.199$, $p=0.001$) between the mean ranks of scores of participants in Category 2 (19-26 years old) and Category 3 (27-30 years old). The effect size was medium ($r=0.30$). No statistically significant differences were found ($p=.79$) between the mean ranks of scores obtained in the self-efficacy assessment by participants in Category 1 (18 years old) compared to those in Category 3 (27-30 years old). The result is due to the small number of participants in Category 1. With the necessary reservations, we rejected the null hypothesis. For young adults, navigating through the adolescent crisis is still felt in the management of losses, especially in the first half of the developmental period, and the responsibility to be independent can be overwhelming. Self-efficacy increases due to the development of options, diversification of motivation types, acquisition of new skills, and the experience of new behaviors. The increase in self-efficacy is influenced by the development of reflective thinking, up to around the age of 26-27. After 27 years, the Self "*consolidates around a set of rules and beliefs that define a relatively stable adult personality.*"

For the sixth hypothesis, we found the existence of similar patterns to those of academic performance and self-efficacy for personality factors: self-esteem, hardiness, sense of coherence, and optimism. The assumption was based on the results of previous research, Vasiliu D. (2016), Rizeanu S. and Vasiliu D. (2016), Vasiliu D. (2017, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c), and the results obtained in testing the second null hypothesis.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate that there were no statistically significant differences for the factors Sense of coherence and Optimism ($p=.134$ and $p=.379$, respectively) between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 1 (18 years) compared to those in Category 2 (19-26 years). However, for the Self-esteem factor, statistically significant differences were observed between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 1 and those in Category 2 ($U=183.000$, $z=-1.964$, $p=0.050$). The effect size is small ($r=0.13$). Similarly, for the Hardiness factor, statistically significant differences were found between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 1 and those in Category 2 ($U=118.500$, $z=-2.482$, $p=0.013$). The effect size is small ($r=0.17$). The null hypothesis has been rejected.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine the differences between the mean ranks of scores obtained in the evaluation of personality factors by participants in Category 2 (19-26 years) compared to those in Category 3 (27-30 years). For the factor Self-esteem, statistically

significant differences were observed between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 2 and those in Category 3 ($U=5595.500$, $z=-4.708$, $p=0.001$). The effect size is moderate ($r=0.27$). For the Hardiness factor, statistically significant differences were found between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 2 (19-26 years) compared to those in Category 3 (27-30 years) ($U=6354.000$, $z=-3.544$, $p=0.001$). The effect size is moderate ($r=0.20$). For the Sense of Coherence factor, statistically significant differences were found between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 2 compared to those in Category 3 ($U=5884.000$, $z=-4.257$, $p=0.001$). The effect size is moderate ($r=0.26$). For the Optimism factor, statistically significant differences were found between the mean ranks of scores obtained by participants in Category 2 compared to those in Category 3 ($U=5651.000$, $z=-4.626$, $p=0.001$). The effect size is moderate ($r=0.27$). The null hypothesis has been rejected.

We applied the Mann-Whitney_U test to check the differences between the mean ranks of the scores obtained on the assessment of personality factors by participants in Age Category 1 (18 years) versus those in Age Category 3 (27-30 years). We found no statistically significant differences between the averages of the score ranks when evaluating the personality factors by the participants in Age Category 1 versus those in Age Category 3.

The low scores observed for the first category, ages 19-26, result from living the adolescent crisis period, characterized by managing losses and disillusionments. The responsibility of being independent becomes overwhelming due to the loss of structure from the high school period and the support it provided. Consequently, both hardiness and the sense of coherence decrease, particularly the factors of control and flexibility. Adolescence and early adulthood are risk periods for the onset of depression or anxiety, leading to a reduction in stress resistance and, consequently, hardiness. The search for identity, typical of the adolescent period, extends into the early adult stage, which can result in confusion. The effects are felt through a decrease in the sense of coherence, self-esteem, and optimism. The state of distrust or disappointment can negatively influence optimism or self-esteem. Towards the end of the developmental period, around 27-30 years old, the process of recentering is completed, and the young adult identifies resources to support themselves and moves towards serious commitments. Adult identity is formed, and a set of rules, beliefs, and values is structured. This results in the consolidation of self-esteem, optimism, and the sense of coherence. The young adult begins to prioritize, whether towards a career or the establishment of a family. The perception of controllability increases, and hardiness strengthens. Orientation towards new goals and the obstacles in their path can generate fluctuations in personality factors, but not as dramatic as in

the first part of the developmental period. These fluctuations can have an impact on motivation or the emotions experienced.

Results have allowed us to describe a general model of academic performance and personality factors for young adult students (Fig. 7).

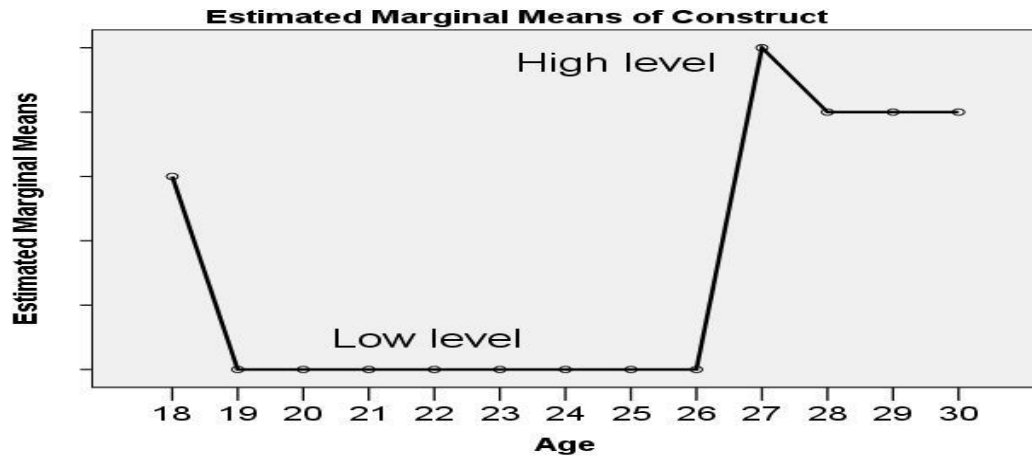


Fig. 7. General Model of Academic Performance and Personality Factors for Young Adult Students Based on Age (Vasiliu, D.)

The model highlights the age range suitable for psychological interventions aimed at improving academic performance, specifically the interval between 19 and 26 years old.

Chapter 3, titled „**IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE THROUGH PERSONALITY FACTOR ENHANCEMENT**,“ describes the methodology of the formative experimental study, as well as the strategies, techniques, and principles of intervention applied in the psychological intervention program. The chapter includes the presentation of results for improving students' academic performance by enhancing personality factors through comparisons of results between the experimental group test and retest, comparisons between the control group test and retest, and comparisons between the experimental group retest and the control group retest.

The purpose of the formative experiment was to develop and implement a psychological program aimed at improving academic performance through the enhancement of personality factors and to assess its effectiveness.

Specific objectives included: 1. Developing and implementing the psychological intervention program; 2. Analyzing the results and evaluating the effectiveness of the psychological intervention program; 3. Formulating conclusions and recommendations based on the obtained results.

The formative research hypothesis: We assume that the academic performance of students can be improved under experimental conditions by enhancing personality factors.

Operational hypotheses of formative research:

1. Following students' participation in the formative program, academic performance will increase.
2. Following students' participation in the formative program, results obtained in the assessment of personality factors will improve.
3. The influence of personality factors on students' academic performance is of a cause-and-effect nature.

Extrapsychological factors included: *Age*, ordinal, categorical; *Gender*, nominal, categorical; *Specialization*, nominal, with three categories. *The independent variable* was personality factor scores, of interval scale type. *The dependent variable* was *Academic Performance*, ordinal, categorical, operationalized into five standard classes.

The research sample was made of 24 individuals, with 12 in the experimental group and 12 in the control group. To verify the consistency of the sampling, the Mann-Whitney statistical test was applied.

Following the application of the Mann-Whitney statistical test, no statistically significant differences in ranks were observed between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) regarding academic performance in the first semester (Table 4). The null hypothesis was retained.

The formative psychological program. In developing the formative program, we aimed to: a) Personal development through movies to facilitate the discovery of models, resources, skills, strategies, as well as the identification of new meanings, Dumitrache D. (2015), Niemiec R.M., and Wedding D. (2014). The movies were chosen according to recommendations, Wolz B. (2004), Zur Institute (1995). b) Retrieval of lost information (distortions, omissions, and generalizations), discussing and transforming them, and modifying the internal structure of language through *Neuro-linguistic Programming* techniques, O'Connor J., and Lages A. (2009), Dilts R. (2007), Bandler R. (2010). The program was designed with five modules. The first module, focusing on improving optimism, enhanced changes at the level of other constructs, Vasiliu D. (2017, 2017b). The structure of the modules included preparation, intervention, and training (Table 5). Preparation consisted of a brief presentation of the characteristics of the personality factor undergoing change. This was followed by inducing the „*academic state*“. The anchor was done at the level of the three submodalities (visual, auditory, and sensory) with an „*as if*“ induction procedure. The anchor was reinforced by completing a questionnaire with two

or three items having the highest saturation in the evaluation questionnaires: LOT-R, Patton W. et al. (2004), Rosenberg's Questionnaire, Robu V. (2013), DRS15, Sîrbu M. et al. (2015b), SOC13, Rizeanu S. et al. (2015a), SES, Golu I. et al. (2015).

The intervention had two stages. In the first stage, the metaphor aimed to improve the perspective on the world, the perception, and interpretation of stimuli from the environment, finding resources, and identifying options. Participants completed sheets during the viewing to identify: models, resources, strategies, and new goals. The second stage involved identifying omissions, distortions, and generalizations and recovering lost information. The deep structure of language was modified to improve personality factors. Training - at the end of each module, the experiences were discussed, and specific exercises for the transformed personality factor took place. It was recommended that the exercises be repeated in the following period. The formative program was applied during the second semester. We observed a decrease in task-solving time from one module to another, and the recovery of lost information was more elaborate, positively conditioning. Changing the deep structure of language led to a decrease in confusion, Côté J.E. (2006), and the inactivation of regression and avoidance mechanisms, Ionescu S. et al. (2007).

Evaluation instruments for personality factors. We used the same instruments as in the constative experiment. The same operationalization procedure as in the constative experiment was used for evaluating academic performance. Performances for the first and second semesters were analyzed. The five questionnaires were administered twice: first during the testing phase O^I_{1-5} and then during the retesting phase O^{II}_{1-5} , with an interval of 30-40 days. Academic performance for the first semester (O^I_6) and for the second semester (O^{II}_6) was assessed. The intervention was noted with an X.

$$\begin{array}{l} R: \quad O^I_{1-5}; O^I_6 \quad X \quad O^{II}_{1-5}; O^{II}_6 \\ R: \quad O^I_{1-5}; O^I_6 \quad \quad \quad O^{II}_{1-5}; O^{II}_6 \end{array}$$

We've chosen a basic experimental design with one experimental group and one control group, employing a pretest-posttest evaluation, as described by Vasiliu D. (2018, p. 22).

Presentation and interpretation of the results: We found that participants identified a total of 236 omissions, 202 distortions, and 75 generalizations. The result may be attributed to a dependence on technology. For the first hypothesis, following the application of the Kendall tau_b test, we observed a lack of association for academic performance ($K\tau=0.550$, $p=0.049$, $95\%CI= -0.0349 - 0.8543$) between semesters for the experimental group (EG). The 95% confidence interval includes the value „ 0." We found significant associations ($K\tau=0.653$, $p=0.001$, $95\%CI=0.2115 - 0.8732$) for the control group (CG) (Fig. 8).

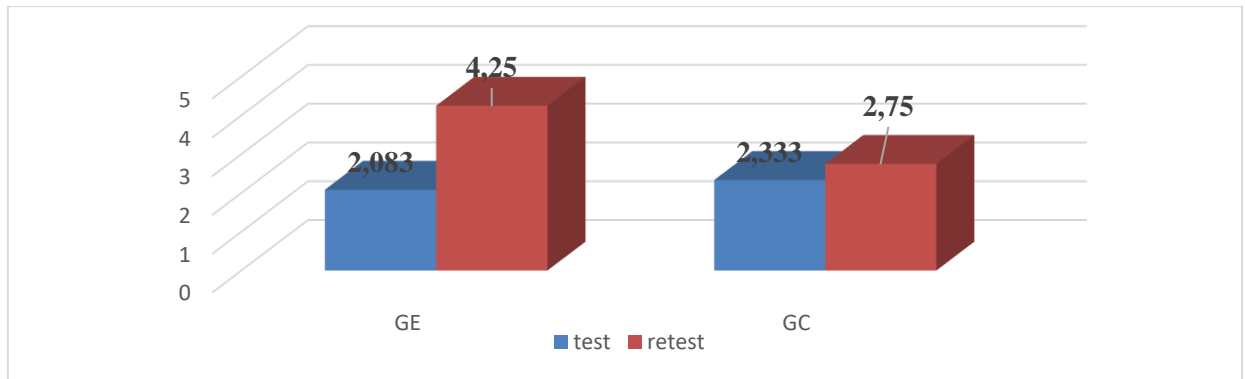


Fig. 8. Evolution of academic performance between the two semesters for students in EG and CG (test and retest).

It was observed that only for the control group can we affirm that young adult students maintain their hierarchy within the categories they belong to (specialization, year of study, evaluation year) regarding academic performance. This may be explained by the fact that the change, following participation in the psychological program, did not have proportional effects on academic performance. After the intervention, the hierarchy was not maintained. The cause could be the existence of individual differences such as different abilities or abilities at various stages of development, the nature and intensity of motivations, diverse coping methods, differences in attributing meanings, or variations in the consistency of experiences of success or failure.

Following the application of the Wilcoxon test, significant statistical differences were observed for participants in the formative program between first semester and second semester ($N=12$, $z=-3.169$, $p=0.002$). The effect size is large ($r=0.91$), meaning that the effect is significant both statistically and practically. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The negative value ($Z=-3.169$) of the test was calculated based on the negative values of the rank difference. There were fewer negative differences than positive ones, indicating that, following the intervention, *Academic performance* increased, as noted by Vasiliu D. (2018, p. 81). For the control group (GC), no statistically significant differences were found ($p=0.059$).

For the second hypothesis, following the application of the Kendall tau_b test, significant statistical associations ($p<0.05$) were observed for both the experimental group (GE) and the control group (GC) between test and retest for the factors: *Self-efficacy*, *Self-esteem*, *Hardiness*, *Sense of Coherence*, and *Optimism*. The effect size is large ($K\tau >0.5$).

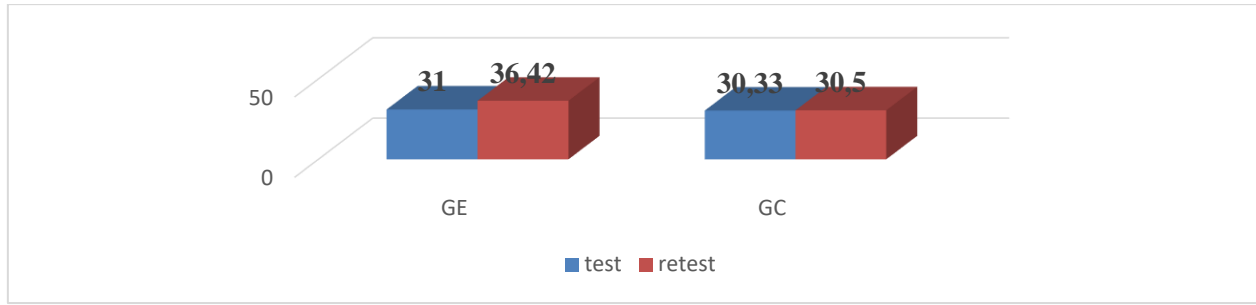


Fig.9. The averages for *Self-Efficacy* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

The effect is significant, both statistically and practically. We rejected the null hypothesis. Following the application of the Wilcoxon test, we observed that, for the Experimental Group (GE), the ranks increased for *Self-Efficacy* between the test and retest (N=12, $z=-3.071$, $p=.002$), for *Self-Esteem* between the test and retest (N=12, $z=-3.077$, $p=.002$), for *Optimism* between the test and retest (N=12, $z=-2.195$, $p=.028$), for *Hardiness* between the test and retest (N=12, $z=-2.339$, $p=.019$), for *Sense of Coherence* between the test and retest (N=12, $z=-2.186$, $p=.029$), (Fig. 9). The effect size was large in all cases ($r>0.5$), indicating that the effect is significant, both statistically and practically. We rejected the null hypothesis. For the Control Group (GC), we did not observe significant differences ($p>0.05$). We retained the null hypothesis. Following the application of the metaphor, the film, the participants' reality in the Experimental Group (GE) was modified through a process of rediscovery. This enriched their perception of the experience and their approach to past successes and failures. The positive attitude inspired by the movies improved the way meanings were attributed.

For *Self-Esteem*, in the experimental group, the values increased for all participants. In the control group, the rankings of self-esteem decreased for five participants, increased for another five, and remained constant for two (Fig. 10).

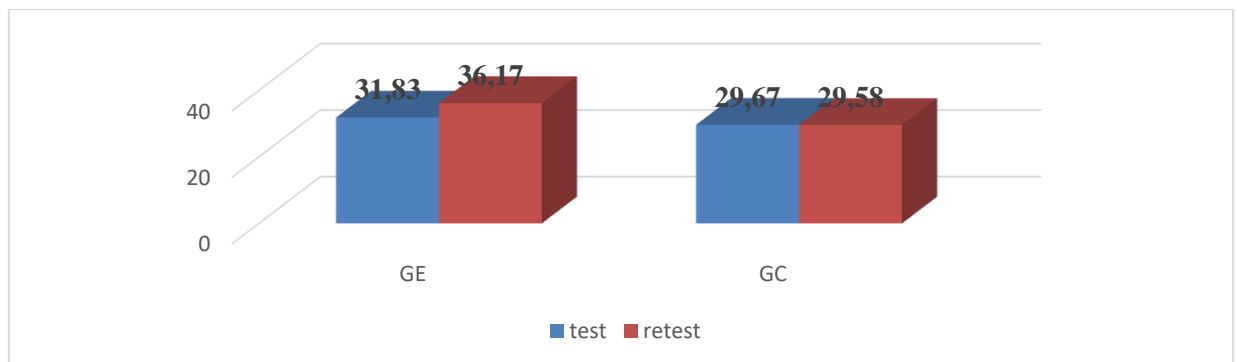


Fig. 10. Means for *Self-Esteem* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

For the factor of *Optimism*, in the experimental group, rankings decreased for two participants, increased for nine, and remained stable for one.

In the case of the control group, rankings decreased for five participants and increased for seven (Fig. 11).

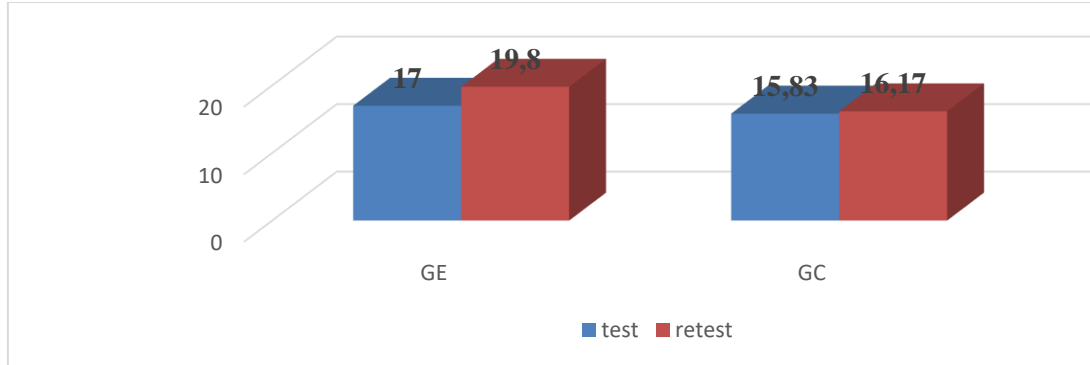


Fig. 11. Means for *Optimism* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

For the factor of *Hardiness-Engagement*, in the experimental group, we observed the depreciation of ranks for two participants, appreciation for nine, and maintenance of stability for one participant. In the control group, we found the depreciation of ranks for five participants, appreciation for six, and maintaining the rank for one participant (Fig. 12).

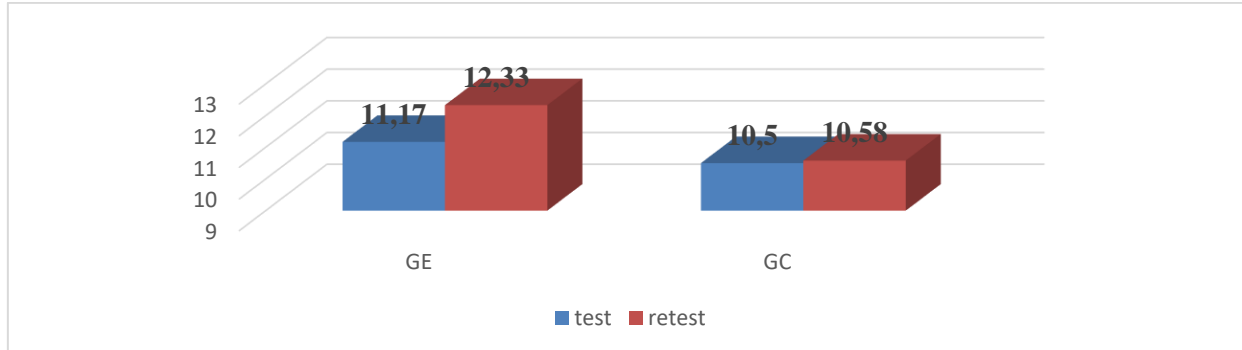


Fig.12. Means for *Hardiness-Engagement* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

For the factor of *Hardiness-Control*, in the experimental group, we observed the appreciation of ranks for five participants, depreciation for four, and maintaining ranks for three. In the control group, we found the appreciation of ranks for four participants, depreciation for four, and maintaining ranks for two (Fig. 13).

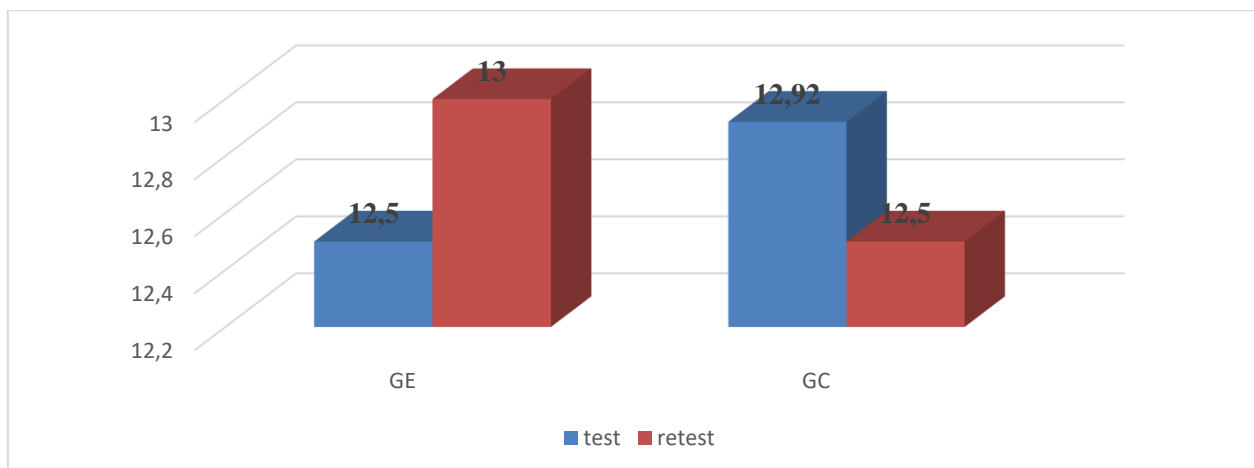


Fig. 13. Means for *Hardiness-Control* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

The participants discovered coping models and procedures. Emotional intelligence was improved, leading to increased intrinsic motivation and social skills. Persuasive attitude and the desire to achieve goals were enhanced. The metaphor, the movie, contributed to initiating the process of forming a strong character through its effect on commitment and the desire for achievement. Following the discussion and transformation of omissions, distortions, and generalizations, participants in the experimental group reconfigured and enriched their worldview. A consequence was the identification of resources and orientation towards a proactive attitude in the process of making plans. Negative differences were fewer than positive ones, indicating that, following the intervention, personality factors were appreciated, Vasiliu D. (2018, p. 81).

For the *Hardiness-Challenge* factor, we found that, for the experimental group, rankings were appreciated for eight participants, depreciated for two, and maintained for two participants. For the control group, we found rankings were appreciated for six, depreciated for three, and maintained for three participants (Fig.14).

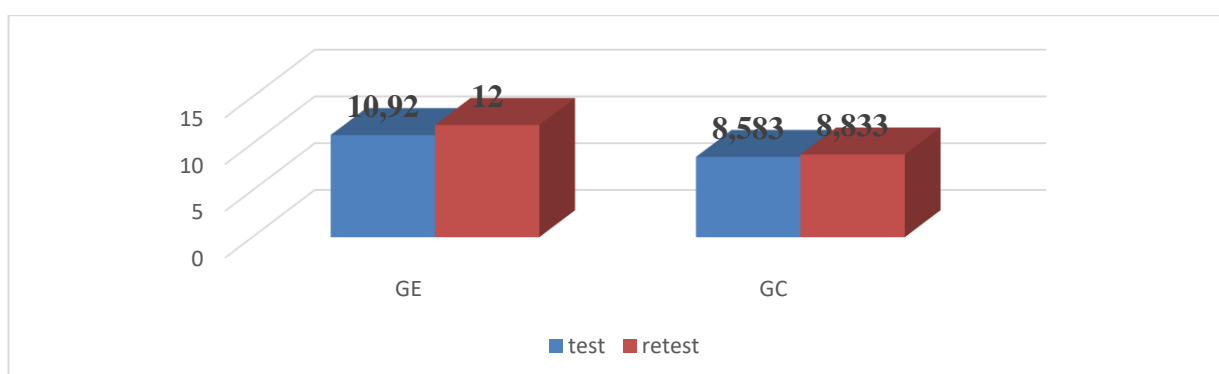


Fig. 14. Means for *Hardiness-Challenge* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

For the overall *Hardiness* factor, we found that, for the experimental group, rankings were appreciated for nine participants, depreciated for two, and maintained for one participant. For the control group, we found rankings were appreciated for six and depreciated for six participants (Fig.15).

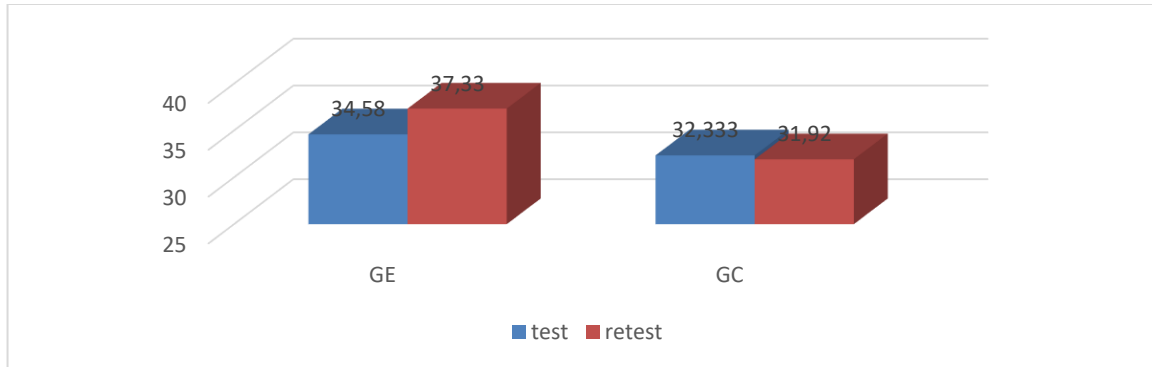


Fig.15. Means for *Hardiness* for subjects in the Experimental Group (GE) and Control Group (GC) at the test and retest stages.

For the third hypothesis, we operationalized the following variables: 1) independent variables - the difference scores between retest and test for personality factors, and 2) dependent variable - the difference between the standard grade class on the second semester and that on the first semester. Statistical tests were applied to the entire sample (experimental and control groups).

After applying the Kendall tau_b test, we found statistically significant associations between the test-retest evolution for *Self-Efficacy* ($K\tau=0.678$, $p=0.001$, $95\%CI=0.378-0.8492$), *Self-Esteem* ($K\tau=0.525$, $p=0.001$, $95\%CI=0.1543-0.7661$), *Sense of Coherence* ($K\tau=0.614$, $p=0.001$, $95\%CI=0.2799-0.8154$), and the evolution of *Academic Performance* between semesters. In all cases, the effect size ($K\tau>0.5$) is large, indicating that the effect is both statistically and practically significant. We rejected the null hypothesis. Considering the results of the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis, and the third hypothesis, the existence of a cause-and-effect relationship between these personality factors and *Academic Performance* is confirmed. Between the test-retest evolution of the *Optimism* and *Hardiness* factors and the evolution of *Academic Performance*, we did not find statistically significant associations ($p>0.05$). Optimism is positively associated with other personality factors, as noted by Vasiliu D. (2017, 2017a, 2017b). There is an effect of optimism on self-efficacy, as indicated by Vasiliu D. (2017). The partial correlation test, moderated by optimism, showed an appreciable effect size.

Optimism influences decision-making and determines the orientation towards performance-approximation goals. Optimism guides individuals towards a specific coping style, either active or passive. Individuals with high self-esteem will have more self-confidence and

tend to engage actively. The desire for active involvement facilitates the process of attributing meaning and purpose to tasks. An active coping style positively correlates with academic performance.

We have found that hardiness positively correlates with the other personality factors, Rizeanu S. and Vasiliu D. (2016), Vasiliu D. (2017a, 2017b). We have examined relationships, moderated by hardiness, between the evolution of academic performance and the evolution of personality factors. The effect size has been assessed, and the relationship between optimism and academic performance has become statistically significant ($p=0.014$).

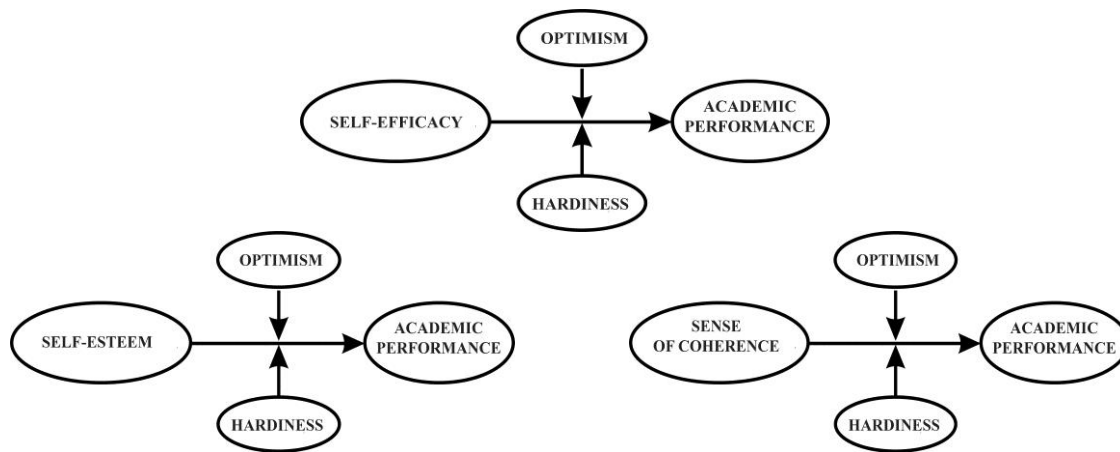


Fig. 16. The model of the influence of personality factors on academic performance (Vasiliu, D.)

Identifying and managing emotions in relation to personal goals promotes stress control and, implicitly, performance orientation. Hardiness also influences the way value and meanings are attributed to tasks, which is directly related to choices, persistence, and performance. In the case of low hardiness, breaking free from the vicious circle of helplessness is hindered, making it difficult to discover the necessary steps towards achieving the goal and generating a tendency to superficially resolve tasks just to check them off, in a way, without genuine completion. The perception of changes as a normal aspect of life and an opportunity for personal development, as well as the meanings attributed to failure and success, are elements that contribute to the construction of hardiness. These aspects direct attention towards goals, foster self-confidence, and mediate the effect of self-esteem and self-efficacy in relation to performance.

The cause-effect relationships between self-efficacy, self-esteem, and sense of coherence in relation to academic performance, as well as the role of moderating variables for self-esteem and hardiness, are explained in Figure 16. The implementation of the psychological program in universities is easy for teaching staff. The methods used, such as movies and self-discovery of

obstacles regarding the interpretation of the surrounding world, are relaxing and invite students to dynamic and active participation.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Academic performance is the expression of the grade obtained in exams, the evaluation of activity products, or the result of aptitude tests. Attributions associated with performance, motivational strength, psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the exploitation of the zone of proximal development, and the use of thinking System 2 point towards performance. Our proposed definition: *academic performance means the measure or degree to which the student achieves the approved curricular objectives, with real outcomes of their academic activities, established through the application of appropriate measurement and evaluation tools (tests, assessments, simulations, etc.), influenced by situational factors, cognitive representations, motivational processes, social behaviors, physiological and biochemical mechanisms, and expressed in grades.*

2. We highlighted patterns of evolution in academic performance and personality factors for young adult students, depending on age. The models showed a decrease after 18 years, followed by a stable low period between 19 and 26 years, a significant increase around the age of 27, after which they stabilized, Stomff M. and Vasiliu D. (2017), Vasiliu D. (2018a, 2020). These patterns are not dependent on gender, specialization, or year of study. Students in the young adult development period are influenced by how they concluded the adolescent crisis. The freedom of decision and choice is often liberating, but the responsibility to become independent and autonomous can be overwhelming. The main task of the young adult period is recentering. The social-cognitive theory provides explanations for the psychological mechanisms that can influence human choices and behavior. We have identified the opportune period (19-26 years) for intervention to enhance and support academic performance.

3. We found statistically significant associations between academic performance and personality factors: self-efficacy, self-esteem, hardiness, sense of coherence, and optimism, as indicated by Vasiliu D. (2017a). The theoretical sources regarding academic performance have shown a reciprocal relationship between the constitutive elements of the constructs. No associations were found between locus of control and performance. Motivation directs towards academic performance regardless of its nature, intrinsic or extrinsic. The difference appears at the level of optimal experience, satisfaction, regarding goal achievement. Motivation tends to be maximized when psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied.

4. Following the testing of the psychological intervention program, we observed an improvement in academic performance among students due to the enhancement of personality factors, as indicated by Vasiliu D. and Adăscălița V. (2019). The metaphor, the movie, contributed to initiating the process of building a strong character by appreciating the commitment factor and the desire for achievement. Emotional intelligence was improved. Through discussions and transformations of omissions, distortions, and generalizations, participants in the experimental group reconfigured and enriched their worldview, discovered new abilities, strengthened their belief in the importance of actions, and improved their perception of changes as a normal aspect of life. Students were thus oriented towards a proactive attitude towards their goals.

5. We have identified the ways in which personality factors influence academic performance. We found cause-and-effect relationships between factors such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and sense of coherence on one hand, and academic performance on the other. Hardiness and optimism were found to be moderating variables between other personality factors and academic performance, as indicated by Vasiliu D. and Adăscălița V. (2019a).

The results contributing to solving the important scientific problem include the identification of how personality factors influence academic performance and the identification of the age period during which support is opportune. The results of the formative program application addressed the first part of the question, while the models of the evolution of constructs addressed the second part.

Based on the conducted theoretical-experimental research, we can formulate the *following recommendations*: 1. Implementation of the formative psychological program in the university and school environment, identifying and experimenting with the use of impactful movies for different age groups. 2. We recommend the development and testing of new methods to enhance personality factors for the improvement of academic performance. 3. Establishing methodological norms for the application of the formative program. 4. Developing more accessible methods for understanding, identifying, and transforming distortions, omissions, and generalizations in the metamodel.

Perspectives on future research to complement and add theoretical-experimental value to the present study: 1. Expansion of the research approach to different age groups, including adolescents or adults. 2. Extension of the research to samples of students from other universities with specializations different from those analyzed in the current study. 3. Conducting a longitudinal study on the evolution of the performance of students who have participated in such a formative program. Observing how they integrate into the workforce and the outcomes

obtained can refine the formative program, ensuring that the effects are maintained in the long term. 4. Conducting separate studies on the influence of each personality factor on academic performance. This approach could identify specific modules of the formative psychological program that may require increased attention or expansion into multiple submodules.

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ANNOTATION

Dan Vasiliu. The influence of personality factors from social-cognitive theory on academic performance of students. PhD thesis in psychology. Chişinău 2024.

Thesis structure: The thesis consists of annotations, a list of abbreviations, introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography comprising 232 titles, 18 annexes, and is finalized at 162 pages, including 54 figures and 71 tables. The obtained results are published in 17 scientific papers.

Keywords: academic performance, personality factors, students, young adults.

Field of study: Educational Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Optimization of the professional training process for university students.

The research aimed to explore the relationships among personality factors from the social-cognitive theory, psychological characteristics of students during the young adult developmental period, gender-specific traits, specialization or academic year, and to develop and test a psychological intervention program. The goal was to improve students' academic performance by enhancing these factors.

The research objectives were as follows: analyze specialized literature regarding academic performance, personality factors, and psychological traits of students in the stage of young adult development; highlight associative relationships between academic performance and personality factors, identifying gender, age, and academic year differences, as well as patterns of evolution based on age for various constructs; identify how personality factors influence academic performance, including causal-effect relationships or moderating factors; develop and implement a psychological program aimed at improving personality factors and analyze its impact on academic performance.

The obtained results contributing to addressing the important scientific problem consist of a holistic approach to the constituent elements of academic performance and personality factors. This includes exploring the relationships between these elements and the specifics of gender, age, and academic year for young adult students. This foundation led to the development and implementation of a psychological intervention program, ultimately contributing to the improvement of academic results.

The scientific novelty and originality lie in conducting a theoretical-experimental approach to the relationships between personality factors and academic performance, as well as in modeling their evolution in students, young adults. The study identified how personality factors influence academic performance, whether causally or as intermediate variables, and determined the optimal period for intervention. An experimentally verified model of psychological interventions was developed, aimed at enhancing the academic performance of students, young adults, by improving personality factors derived from the social-cognitive theory.

The theoretical significance of the work lies in the fact that the results of the theoretical-experimental research contribute to enriching the fields of developmental psychology and educational psychology with current and comprehensive knowledge concerning the enhancement of academic performance in students and sheds light on the relationships between this psychological construct and personality factors. The research results, subsequent explanations and laws, as well as the formulated conclusions, are crucial for reconceptualizing and updating knowledge regarding academic performance in the context of Educational Psychology. The relationships and patterns of evolution of personality factors contribute to updating information in the field of Developmental Psychology for young adult students. The developed models provide explanations for the analyzed constructs. The thesis constitutes a substantial contribution to enriching the literature in the field of psychological sciences and psychopedagogy.

The practical value of the thesis. The ideas and laws described in this research regarding the relationships between the analyzed constructs and the influence of personality factors on academic performance can serve as guidelines in the training and development process of students in the young adult developmental period. The models resulting from the experimental study can serve as reference points for a more thorough understanding of personality factors and academic performance in the context of the psychological characteristics of young adult students. The psychological intervention program aimed at improving personality factors for the enhancement of academic performance provides an accessible application for university educators in a relaxed environment for participants.

Implementation of scientific results. The results of the theoretical-experimental research were implemented in the didactic process of preparation and training of students at the Hyperion University in Bucharest from the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economic Sciences and the Faculty of Psychology. Optional extracurricular sessions were organized with the approval of the university management.

VASILIU DAN

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THEORY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS**

Summary of the doctoral thesis in psychology

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