PERSONALITY TRAITS OF TEACHERS IN LITHUANIA: DO PRESCHOOL AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EDUCATORS DIFFER?

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Abstract. *Background.* HR professionals are challenged to improve teachers' performance. Knowledge about personality traits might help in developing recruitment systems as well as training programs for school staff. Educators' traits are rarely researched in developing countries. *Research Questions.* What are the differences of Lithuanian teachers' personality traits according to age and education? Do personality traits differ between preschool and comprehensive school educators? *Purpose*. The goal of this study was to explore some personality traits (Social Boldness; Tension; Liveliness; Emotional Stability) of Lithuanian teachers working in preschools and comprehensive schools. *Materials and Methods*. 184 Lithuanian teachers working in preschools and comprehensive schools participated in the cross-sectional survey. The traits of Social Boldness, Tension, Liveliness, and Emotional Stability were assessed with the help of self-report questionnaire based on the Cattell 16PF theory (Cattell & Mead, 2008; Cattell & Schuerger, 2003). *Results.* Social Boldness was significantly associated with teachers' educational level – higher scores of Social Boldness were identified in the group that holds a university degree. Younger teachers reported higher levels of Liveliness and Emotional Stability. In addition to this, preschool and comprehensive school teachers differed in Emotional Stability, no other personality differences were found. *Conclusions*. Teachers' personality traits can affect teacher's communication with students, their abilities to consider students' needs and overcome challenges in the classroom. Gained information could be helpful in human resource management and education: enhance teacher selection processes, teachers' training and professional development, and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: education, personality, age, teacher.

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INTRODUCTION

Lithuania is a young European Union country going through many educational reforms and posing many challenges for the teachers and their work quality. Because of demographic changes, emigration, and changes in educational system, the number of schoolchildren is decreasing. Thus, schools became competitive in Lithuania. Graduates have an opportunity to study abroad – it sets high expectations for the education process and learning outcomes. Therefore, there is a continuing demand on qualified and effective educators. Educators need certain personality traits to adjust to the reform successfully and work effectively as well, but there is no information about such correlations. Similar studies were implemented in other countries (Basak & Ghosh, 2014; Bentea, 2015). However, due to cultural differences, it is difficult to take advantage of the research findings. There is a notable lack of research expanding the links between Lithuanian teachers' personality traits and significant variables of their work quality.

One of the objectives of this study was to explore individual characteristics (personality traits) of Lithuanian teachers according to demographic differences (age, education) and contextual variable (working at a preschool or comprehensive school). Information obtained could be helpful in human resource management and education: improve teachers' selection processes, teachers' training, professional development, and educational outcomes (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Cattell & Mead, 2008; Cattell & Schuerger, 2003). It could help making education more responsive to societal and labour market needs. In the broad sense, findings could contribute to the sustainable economic growth as well.

The evidence trying to relate the personality profiles (e.g. using Big Five factor model of personality) or separate personality traits (e.g. self-efficacy, extraversion, stress tolerance) with effective teaching are still not well developed (Jamil, Downer, Pianta, 2012; Guseva, Dombrovskis, Capulis, 2014; Cabanova, 2015; Basak & Ghosh, 2014; Bentea, 2015; Colomeischi, 2015; Colomeischi, Colomeischi, Clipa, 2014). However, a wide range of studies is based on the assumption that teachers' psychological characteristics are significant for their work effectiveness (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Güngör, Kurtb, Ekicic, 2014; Aliakbari & Darabi,

2013). There are significant findings that personality profiles or single personality traits of teachers can affect behaviour in the workplace as well (Zhang, Zhou, Zhang, 2016).

According to the literature, some personality traits (for example, Social boldness, Liveliness, Emotional stability, or Low tension) can be particularly important in teaching context (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013; Basak & Ghosh, 2014; Cabanova, 2015; Colomeischi, 2015, Colomeischi et al., 2014; Güngör et al., 2014).

Teachers' personality traits affect their communication with students. Educators must be able to recognise and accept the needs of their students in the classroom and adjust their communication (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013). They should be able to handle differences in discipline and classroom management (Guseva et al., 2014; Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013; Zhang et al., 2016). Researchers found out that teachers' verbal ability together with extraversion (and personality traits such as social boldness) could become an important predictor of teaching effectiveness (Aloe & Becker, 2009; Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013). Extravert teacher is believed to be more likely successful in his/her job (Norkienė, 2010). Social boldness and Liveliness may be useful in inadequately communicating with students. Teachers possessing those traits are good social organisers capable of establishing contacts and interaction, and seem enthusiastic, spontaneous, and lively in interacting with others. They may control students' disruptive behaviour or establish and restore contacts with others in conflict resolution (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013). Good communication skills (positive communication, empathy) facilitate students' adaptation to the school environment, whereas lack of teacher's emotional stability deters or delays the adaptation (Šilėnienė & Malinauskienė, 2004).

Teacher is one of the most stressful professions because of intense social interactions (Travers, Cooper, 1996). Each teacher is forced to rely on his personal characteristics when making a decision on how to controll disruptive students or motivate them (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013; Fidler, 1997). Personality can influence the way teacher reacts to the environment; certain personality traits can affect stress level (Mojsa-Kaja, Golonka, Marek, 2015; Zhang et al., 2016). Subjectively felt tension and level of stress become meaningful in teachers' self-efficacy, and their job satisfaction (Klassen & Tze, 2014). The match between the person

and the job predicts engagement at work, and mismatch is related with the burnout (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015). According to literature, Emotional stability and Low tension refer to teachers' calmness and inner balance in their work challenges, these traits allow adjusting their leadership style according to different situations in the classroom (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013; Cabanova, 2015).

The quality of educational services is mainly influenced by the quality of teachers' activity (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Teachers have the most powerful influence on students' achievements – it cumulates in every grade , and later is difficult to change (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Wright, Horn, Sanders, 1997). Thus, teachers can affect their students' performance, goal attainment, and behaviours to gain effective learning and achieve positive educational outcomes (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013), and certain personality traits might become especially important when predicting teachers' work effectiveness.

Research identifying profiles of highly effective teachers (Klassen & Tze, 2014) suggests that such "ideal" teachers selected for the high-level recognition may share particular personality profiles. However, there is no developed evidence proving the relationship between the personality profiles and effective teaching using the latest models of personality (Basak & Ghosh, 2014; Bentea, 2015; Cabanova, 2015; Colomeischi, 2015; Colomeischi et al., 2014; Guseva et al., 2014; Jamil et al., 2012). Although personality traits are important, research is quite scarce, especially in developing countries like Lithuania. Several studies analysing researches on Lithuanian educational sector have focused on the importance of personality traits (Kairys, 2008; Norkienė, 2010). Nevertheless, few studies are investigating the link between various factors, like personality features, age and level of education, in different educational institutions (Juodkūnė, 2015; Laurinaitytė, 2008).

Personal features, such as Social boldness, Tension, Liveliness, and Emotional stability, may be linked with teachers' appropriate communication, teaching effectiveness and ability to cope with stressful situations properly (Basak & Ghosh, 2014; Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015) and subjective well-being (Eryilmaz, 2014). These traits are significant in job performance and may protect educators from the burnout syndrome (Colomeischi, 2015; Colomeischi et al., 2014; Kokkinos, 2007; Mojsa-Kaja

et al., 2015). Emotional exhaustion refers to the decrease in emotional resources, it may be associated with the detached attitude towards colleagues, school society, and reduces job performance as well (Kokkinos, 2007). Therefore, the present study focuses on teachers' personality traits – Social boldness, Liveliness, Emotional stability and Tension.

In the person-job fit theory, positive responses occur when individuals fit the occupational environment (Carless, 2005). In this case, selected personality features may be assessed differently according to the education institution. According to the environment and job conditions, preschool teachers are expected to be more emotionally stable, and feel less tension due to relatively lower requirements for academic achievement, or other teaching characteristics (e.g. they may freely choose educational themes, purposes and implementation). According to the transactional model, the interaction between environmental variables and intrapersonal traits (personality traits) may lead to the burnout or might be coped with challenges (Grakauskas, 2004; Kokkinos, 2007). Liveliness is expected to be more expressed in the group of preschool educators – small children pay attention to lively, enthusiastic communicators more easily. However, high social boldness is predicted to be higher in comprehensive school teachers' group because of relatively higher communicative challenges. Comprehensive school teachers are expected to respond appropriately to students' challenges in adolescence associated with conflict resolution, negotiation, and manipulative behaviour (Kokkinos, 2007). Comprehensive school and preschool teachers face different environmental challenges – they have different peculiarities of work that may lead to specific demands for personality features and personality development (Kokkinos, 2007; McCrae et al., 2000). Also, some differences might be expected according to socio-demographic issues, such as teachers' age and their educational level. Through a lifespan, according to the age, personality traits differ (Martin, Long, Poon, 2000). Personality traits are sensitive to the educational background (Rammstedt, Goldberg, Borg, 2010). Contradictory studies are attempting to link increasing education of teachers with their work effectiveness (Early et al., 2007). The profession of teacher is predominated by females in Lithuania: 97.1% primary school teachers and 81.6% secondary school teachers are women (Eurostat, 2014; Novelskaitė, 2010).

Although some effects of individual and contextual variables have been reported in previous research, the combined effects of personality and situational factors have rarely been considered. Teachers' personality traits may vary according to their individual (age and education) or contextual variables (at preschool and comprehensive school). Generalising the above stated, the purpose of this study was to explore some personality traits (Social boldness, Tension, Liveliness, Emotional stability) of Lithuanian teachers working in preschools and comprehensive schools. The study is intended to seek answers to the following research questions:

What are the differences of Lithuanian teachers' personality traits according to age and education?

Do personality traits (Social boldness, Liveliness, Tension, and Emotional stability) differ between preschool and comprehensive school educators?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

184 Lithuanian teachers working in preschools and comprehensive schools participated in the cross-sectional survey. All of them were females; male teachers were excluded from further analysis due to the small number of subjects. Sample composition corresponds to the situation in Lithuania, where women are largely predominant (Eurostat, 2014; Novelskaitė, 2010). The age ranged from 21 to 64 years (M=39.68, SD=10.88). 83.7% of teachers hold a university degree, 16.3% of teachers hold lower than university degree. 136 participants were preschool teachers, 48 worked in comprehensive schools. All respondents participated in the study on a voluntary basis; oral informed consent was obtained.

Instruments

The traits of Social boldness, Tension, Liveliness, and Emotional stability were assessed with the help of self-report questionnaire based on the Cattell 16PF theory (Cattell & Mead, 2008; Cattell & Schuerger, 2003).

High scores in Social boldness are characterised as socially bold, venturesome, thick-skinned, uninhibited. Tension scale is associated with tense, high-energy, impatient, and driven attributes. Expressed liveliness scale means someone is lively, animated, spontaneous, enthusiastic, and impulsive. High scores in Emotional stability are associated with emotionally stable, adaptive, and mature features (Cattell & Mead, 2008; Cattell & Schuerger, 2003). The Lithuanian version of the questionnaire consisted of 52 items. The participants were asked to mark their answer to the question choosing the alternative "agree", "uncertain", or "disagree". The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha coefficient) of Social boldness scale (13 items) was .816, of Tension scale – .703 (13 items), of Liveliness scale was .641 (13 items), and of Emotional stability – .657 (13 items). The scores were analysed regarding stens; higher sten indicated higher expression of each personality trait. The questions about teachers' age, education, and workplace were also included in the questionnaire.

Procedure and data analysis

All procedures and steps of spreading and gathering data were conducted by the researchers. The web-based survey method was used. Data were analysed using SPSS 16.0 statistical software. Data was spread according to a normal distribution. In addition to the descriptive statistics, the quantitative data was analysed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and one-way ANOVA.

RESULTS

ANOVA was conducted to identify differences between teachers' personality factors according to education (Table 1). Statistical analysis has shown significant differences in Social boldness according to educational level (F = 6.521, p = .011). Teachers with high education are more socially bold – they have little fear of social situations, they fit quickly into new groups, have no trouble speaking in front of groups and being in the centre of attention. Other personality traits (Liveliness, Emotional stability, Tension) were not related to teachers' education level.

Table 1. *Differences between teachers' personality factors according to the educational level*

Variables	Female (N=184)				ANOVA	
	Lower than university degree (N=30)		University degree (N=154)		F	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social boldness	6.23	1.28	7.14	1.85	**6.521**	**.011**
Liveliness	4.57	1.33	5.19	1.84	3.177	.076
Emotional stability	5.2	1.67	5.56	2.04	.852	.357
Low tension	5.60	1.98	5.58	2.23	.003	.96

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the correlations between teachers' age and four personality traits. Data showed statistically negative correlations between age and Emotional stability (Pearson's $r = -.334$, $p < .01$), as well as Liveliness (Pearson's $r = -.172$, $p < .05$). According to these results, younger teachers tend to be more emotionally stable and lively than their elder colleagues. Tension (Pearson's $r = -.117$) and Social boldness (Pearson's $r = -.126$) were not statistically significicantly related to the age.

These results indicate that the differences occur in teachers' personality traits according to other individual differences (age, education). Social boldness was positively correlated with educational level – teachers with high education were more socially bold. Liveliness was negatively correlated with age – younger teachers scored higher in Liveliness. Emotional stability was negatively correlated with age – younger teachers scored higher in Emotional stability compareto elder colleagues.

To answer the second research question, whether personality traits (Social boldness, Liveliness, Tension and Emotional stability) differ between preschool and comprehensive school educators, mean differences among groups were analysed. The Means and standard deviations (SD) of personality traits in different school sector were calculated separately, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive and statistical analysis of personality traits in preschool and comprehensive school teachers' groups.*

| Variables | Female (N=184) | | | | ANOVA | |
| | Preschool (N=136) | | Comprehensive school (N=48) | | F | Sig. |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social boldness	6.87	1.72	7.33	1.98	2.4	.123
Liveliness	4.95	1.6	5.5	2.16	3.47	.064
Emotional stability	5.21	1.82	6.33	2.2	**12.03**	**.001**
Low tension	5.54	1.87	5.69	2.93	.15	.697

Both, preschool and comprehensive school, female teachers showed more or less similar scores on all the personality variables. ANOVA analyses revealed a statistically significant difference between preschool and comprehensive school female teachers in one personality factor – Emotional stability (F = 12.03, p = .001). Comprehensive school teachers reported lower Emotional stability than preschool educators. The differences in other traits were not significant.

Concerning the relationship between teachers' personality traits and contextual variables (working at a preschool or comprehensive school), differences occur in Emotional stability – preschool teachers have more expressed Emotional stability compared to comprehensive school educators.

DISCUSSION

Teachers' performance plays a key role in determining the quality of educational services (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand whether teachers' personality traits meet the teaching challenges. The purpose of this study was to explore some personality traits (Social boldness, Tension, Liveliness, and Emotional stability) of

Lithuanian teachers working in preschools and comprehensive schools. The results showed an image of Lithuanian female teachers in terms of different socio-demographic variables (school sector, age, and educational level).

Statistically significant differences were found comparing the individual peculiarities of the preschool and comprehensive school female teachers within their different educational institutions, age, and educational level.

Social boldness was significantly linked with teachers' educational level. Personality traits differ with regard to the educational background (Rammstedt et al., 2010). In this study, educators with high education are more socially bold. Teachers who scored high in Social boldness are good social organisers capable of establishing contacts and interaction. They can manage the stress and have abilities to organise classrooms and students' behaviour. According to Aliakbari (2013), teachers who enjoy the company of others, exhibit an open-mindedness toward new ideas, report a willingness to re-examine social values, are trusting and well organized, and strive to achieve their goals may be ranked higher in performance compared to teachers who do not exhibit these traits. These links are important in achieving positive educational outcomes (Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013; Fidler, 1997). According to the literature, teachers' Social boldness is an important predictor of teaching effectiveness (Aloe & Becker, 2009; Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013) and their educational level can not be ignored.

According to the results, younger teachers scored higher in Liveliness and Emotional stability scales compared to elder colleagues. Lively, active, spontaneous, enthusiastic personality traits are more common in the group of younger teachers. It was determined that higher scores in Emotional stability, teachers' ability to withstand failures, difficulties and other stresses without becoming emotionally upset was linked with the younger age. These results contradict other studies where lability of emotional experience reduced with age – elders were less responding to daily stressors (Carstensen et al., 2011; McCrae et al., 2000). Results of the present study may be linked with teachers' workplace characteristics, which creates cumulative stress ant becomes meaningful for elders.

Exhaustion, contradictory claims from parents, colleagues and administration, anxiety, and disappointment may lead elder teachers to poor load resistance (Cabanova, 2015) and lower Emotional stability scores. Therefore, additional studies are required.

Preschool and comprehensive school teachers differed in Emotional stability as well. Preschool teachers have a more expressed Emotional stability than comprehensive school educators – it might be because of differences in their educational challenges and demands in their performance. These results must be carefully assessed and challenged in future studies. However, performance complexity and professional challenges might be linked with increased demand for teachers with certain personality traits. The interaction between environmental challenges and personality traits may lead to specific personality features (Grakauskas, 2004; Kokkinos, 2007; McCrae, Costa, Ostendorf, et al., 2000). According to literature, psychologic characteristics of educators are significant for their work effectiveness, and work satisfaction (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Güngör, Kurtb, Ekicic, 2014; Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013). Subjectively felt teachers' level of stress becomes meaningful for their self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Educators' traits are rarely researched in developing countries. Aspects explored in the study could attract the attention of the administrative staff as educators' personality traits are associated with the work effectiveness. Information gained could be helpful in accepting personality strengths and limitations, identifying relevant adjustment issues and planning effective career paths. Knowledge about personality traits might help in developing recruitment systems as well as training programs, in professional development, and improvement of educational outcomes (Klassen & Tze, 2014).

 Professional training should be arranged as to help teachers learn to enact educational challenges skilfully. According to results, such training could involve teachers' stress management skills together with up-to-date schooling skills – innovative methods for teaching together with pupils' motivation, management of class behaviour, teaching the collaborative work. These competencies, together with an attitude to the teaching profession, their motivation and engagement could contribute

to overcoming school challenges and may be meaningful in teachers' personal development, and work satisfaction (Cabanova, 2015). These aspects could be useful in developing personal growth programs, prevention programs for teacher burnout, and other steps.

Teachers' development has become a constant concern nurturing for the educational agencies and management responsibility in schools. It is important to identify the psychological resources to prevent teachers from burnout and to prepare young specialists for their occupational challenges (Colomeischi, 2015). The task could become easier if we could realise how personality traits and other factors are linked to work efficiency, satisfaction, and occupational development. These results must be carefully assessed and challenged in future studies.

The study has certain limitations. First of all, voluntary participation in the study did not allow to get the representative sample of the general population of Lithuanian teachers. Second, self-reported data raise the question of social desirability bias. Therefore, obtained results might be the starting point for further studies in this field.

Notwithstanding the limitation, literature and results of our study confirm that personality traits have to be taken into account considering educators' developmental goals, teaching effectiveness, and their experience.

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LIETUVOS MOKYTOJŲ ASMENYBĖS BRUOŽAI: AR IKIMOKYKLINIŲ IR BENDROJO LAVINIMO MOKYKLŲ PEDAGOGAI SKIRIASI?

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Santrauka. *Problema.* Mokyklų administracija kartu su žmogiškųjų išteklių specialistais siekia gerinti mokytojų darbo kokybę. Žinios apie pedagogų asmenybės bruožus padėtų kuriant tinkamiausių kandidatų įdarbinimo ugdymo įstaigoje tvarką, planuojant personalo kvalifikacijos tobulinimo programas. Pedagogų asmenybės bruožai retai analizuojami besivystančiose šalyse. Tyrimo klausimai: Ar yra asmenybės bruožų skirtumų tarp skirtingo amžiaus ir išsilavinimo mokytojų? Ar ikimokyklinių ir bendrojo lavinimo mokyklų pedagogų asmenybės bruožai skiriasi? ***Tikslas*** – išanalizuoti Lietuvos mokytojų, dirbančių ikimokyklinėse ir bendrojo lavinimo mokyklose, asmenybės bruožus (drąsa bendraujant (angl. *social boldness*), įtampa (angl. *tension*), nerūpestingumas (angl. *liveliness*), emocinis pastovumas (angl. *emotional stability*)). ***Metodai.*** Tyrime dalyvavo 184 Lietuvos mokytojų, dirbančių ikimokyklinėse ir bendrojo lavinimo mokyklose. Mokytojai savo asmenybės bruožus tokius kaip drąsa bendraujant, įtampa, nerūpestingumas ir emocinis pastovumas įsivertino atsakydami į klausimyno klausimus, paruoštus pagal Ketelo 16 faktorių teoriją (Cattell & Mead, 2008; Cattell & Schuerger, 2003). ***Rezultatai.*** Tyrimo rezultatai patvirtino prielaidą, kad yra skirtumų tarp skirtingų amžiaus ir išsilavinimo mokytojų asmenybės bruožų. Drąsai bendraujant buvo reikšmingas mokytojo išsilavinimas – aukštesni drąsos bendraujant rezultatai nustatyti universitetinį išsilavinimą turinčioje tiriamųjų grupėje. Jaunesniems mokytojams būdingi aukštesni nerūpestingumo ir emocinio pastovumo įvertinimai. Emocinis pastovumas skyrėsi tarp ikimokyklinių ir bendrojo lavinimo mokyklų pedagogų, kitų asmenybės bruožų skirtumų nustatyti nepavyko. ***Išvados.*** Mokytojų asmenybės bruožai gali būti reikšmingi bendraujant su mokiniais, siekiant suprasti jų poreikius, gebėjimus bei įveikiant ugdymo iššūkius. Gauti rezultatai ir tolesni tyrimai galėtų būti pritaikyti kaip mokymo įstaigos personalo valdymo ir žmonių išteklių vystymo priemonė, atidžiau vertinant mokytojų atrankos procedūrą, planuojant mokytojų ruošimą ir kvalifikacijos tobulinimą, gerinant pedagogų darbo efektyvumą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: švietimas, asmenybė, amžius, mokytojas.