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Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits in Higher Education

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Abstract. Emotional intelligence is a field that has been studied repeatedly lately due to the success achieved by Goleman's works, which introduced several personality traits to the definition of emotional intelligence. According to researchers the investigation of emotional intelligence in combination with personality traits represents the possibility of improving social relations and educational environments. A sample of 100 students from universities in Constanta and Bucharest was assessed with the Five Factor Personality Inventory (from Cognitrom Assessment System) and with Mihaela Roco's Emotional Intelligence Survey. We presumed the existence of correlations between emotional intelligence and extraversion, autonomy, kindness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. We obtained significant correlations only for the first two variables, although studies in the scientific literature have discovered positive relationships between all of them. Results are discussed in the context of the importance of emotional intelligence for human life.

Keywords. Emotional intelligence, extraversion, kindness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, autonomy.

1. Emotions, Personality, and Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence was first formulated in a doctoral paper by Payne (1985, apud Roco, 2004), which defined the term as a skill that involves a creative relationship with states of fear, pain, and desire. Salovey and Mayer (1990) describe emotions as a complex reaction system involving multiple areas of psychological systems, such as cognitive, physiological, and motivation. Previously, emotions and intelligence had been seen as opposites because it was believed that emotions did not occur in reasoning.

Emotional intelligence is closely related to the cognitive skills that are needed in the processing and use of emotional information. Thus, the term emotion indicates the affective component while "intelligence" indicates the cognitive component. The field of emotional intelligence includes verbal and nonverbal evaluation and expression of emotion, Regulation of emotion itself and others, and use of emotional content in problem solving (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

People with a high level of emotional intelligence can identify both their own emotions and those of others, are able to express their emotions in a socially acceptable way, understand the causes and consequences of emotions, use them to strengthen their thoughts, social actions and relationships and regulate them when they are not appropriate to their objectives or

situational context (Petides, Mikolajczak, Mavroveli, Sanchez-Ruiz, Furnham & Pérez-González, 2016). Some studies have shown that emotional intelligence influences life satisfaction, can predict workplace performance, and academic performance (Gong & Jiao, 2019).

Being a complex construct, emotional intelligence can change and shape over time as it develops with age and experience, from childhood to adulthood. Several studies have shown that emotional intelligence records higher levels in older adults than in younger adults, which can be explained by lifelong learning and knowledge accumulation (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000).

Adaptive perception of emotion, the use of emotion to enhance cognition, the understanding of emotion, and the Regulation of emotion can contribute to mental and physical health in various ways. The level of emotional intelligence can have implications for both mental disorders in which emotion plays a central role and disorders that relate to the non-emotional traits of emotional intelligence.

Segal (1999, apud Roco, 2004) highlighted four components of emotional intelligence: Emotional awareness; acceptance; active emotional awareness, and empathy. Thus, the first component, represented by emotional consciousness, aims to experience all emotions authentically by excluding the intellectual habits through which the tendency to think emotions arises. The second component, acceptance, involves the admission of conscious emotions, which involves taking responsibility for your own feelings. Active emotional awareness is the third component, which involves awareness of emotions and their causes, reality, and situation in which you are to be balanced, to think clearly and not be influenced by past emotions. Empathy refers to the ability to relate to the feelings and needs of others without giving up on one's own experience. Empathy involves understanding the other person, participating in his or her emotional problems, but without involvement in solving them.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) describe emotions as a complex reaction system in which multiple areas of psychological systems such as cognitive, physiological, and motivation are involved. Previously, emotions and intelligence had been seen as opposites because it was believed that emotions did not occur in reasoning. They later demonstrated that the two aspects are highly connected and could lead to an understanding of human behavior and social relationships. Salovey and Mayer described the concept of emotional intelligence as a form of innate intelligence, a largely innate set of skills that impact how people manage their own emotions and understand and influence emotions in others. Salovey and Mayer (1990) argue that the ability to learn balance skills arises from an innate form of intelligence, and just as IQ predicts the ability to learn cognitive material, EQ predicts the ability to learn emotional skills. Their model is known as the ability model.

Within the general concept defined by Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence consists of four branches that describe both how people recognize and manage their own emotions and how people can try to influence the emotions of others (Ackley, 2016). According to him the four branches consist of:

- perception, evaluation, and expression of emotion.
- emotional assimilation.
- understanding and analyzing emotions.
- reflexive regulation of emotions.

The first branch describes the perception, evaluation, and expression of the dimension of emotion as the ability to identify and differentiate the emotion and in others. This level corresponds to several steps such as (Roco, 2004):

- ability to identify emotion in your own thoughts, feelings, and physical states.
- the ability to identify emotions in others, in projects, works of art, language, sound, behavior.

- the ability to express emotions as accurately as possible and to express feelings needs.
- ability to distinguish between precise and imprecise feelings or sincere and insincere

Subsequently, as an individual mastered in generalizing emotions based on self-experience, one develops the ability to identify the emotion of others by observing the surrounding cues. After that, an individual could express feelings coherently with the surrounding clues. Finally, a person can differentiate between accurate and inaccurate expressions of feelings, as well as recognize or establish between sincere and dishonest expressions of feelings.

Another dimension of emotional intelligence is emotional assimilation, described by Kanesan & Fauzan (2019) as the ability to use emotion in facilitating thought processes such as reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication. Within this level, emotions give priority to thinking by focusing attention on important information, and the oscillation of emotional States alters the subject's perspective from optimism to pessimism, leading to the consideration of several points of view. Thus, emotional assimilation is related to the ability to understand emotional information, the way in which it changes over time and the ability to appreciate emotional meanings (Fernández-Berrotal & Extremera, 2006).

The third dimension, understanding and analyzing emotions, orients an individual's ability to classify emotions and understand the meanings involved in those emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). At the same time, it is important to understand emotions to label words and recognize similarities and differences between emotional States and to know their meaning, both depending on the complex situations and relationships in which they occur, and to recognize complex, contradictory emotions depending on the situations in which they occur.

In the process of understanding emotions, there is also a knowledge of how emotions evolve and transform according to situations, for example, anger can intensify and turn into anger, later turning into satisfaction or guilt. Other intervening abilities are: Interpreting the meaning of emotions in relationships, such as sadness, that sets in because of loss. Understanding complex or simultaneous feelings such as love and hate, or awe as a combination of fear and surprise, as well as recognizing the possible transit from one emotion to another, for example the transition from anger to satisfaction, or from anger to shame (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

The last dimension, the reflective Regulation of the size of emotion refers to the ability to remain open to feelings and monitor and regulate the emotions of one's own and others to promote personal understanding and growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) which encourages an individual's cognitive and emotional development. At the same time, a good regulation of emotion facilitates the planning of thought processes.

For the regulation of emotions and, implicitly, the emotional and intellectual growth to unfold, the individual must first acquire the ability to be open, to accept both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Second, it must demonstrate the ability to use or release an emotion at will, depending on its usefulness or importance. Third, the regulation of emotions also consists in the ability to monitor emotions in relation to oneself or others so that the subject can recognize how precise, typical, influential, or reasonable they are.

Finally, this level includes the ability to manipulate both one's own and others' emotions by moderating negative emotions and highlighting pleasant ones, without repressing or exaggerating the information they contain. Thus, the individual with a good reflective regulation

of emotions tends to accept both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, and eventually learns to detach from an emotion based on its usefulness. Subsequently, the individual could monitor and reflect the emotions of his own and others, eventually becoming competent in managing his emotions, increasing pleasant emotions, and moderating unpleasant emotions.

These four branches are hierarchically organized, so the perception of emotions is at the most basic level, and the management of emotions is at the highest and most complex level in the hierarchy, therefore the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions is built on the competencies of the other three branches (Fernández-Berrotal & Extremera, 2006).

In 2000, Bar-On & Parker perfected the original model by reclassifying components into constituent components (self-esteem, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, problem-solving, etc. flexibility, reality testing, stress tolerance; impulse control) and facilitators (self-actualization, independence, social responsibility, optimism; happiness).

2. The Big-Five Personality Model

Although the names attributed to factors differ from one author to another, these differences stem from the fact that the elements introduced in the factorial analyzes carried out were not pure indicators of factors (Albu, 1998). Thus, the names under which the big five factors are known are (Minulescu, 1996):

1. extraversion, sociability and ambition, interpersonal attraction, affirmation, power, outburst, which highlights an individual's ability to orient outwards, how they engage in action, and sociability.

2. agreeableness, social adaptability, pleasure, the level of socialization, kindness, love, refers to a person's emotional qualities and prosocial behaviors.

3. conscientiousness, compliance, dependence, responsibility, prudence, self-control, interest in work, power of achievement, concerns a person's concrete, characteristic way of dealing with tasks, activities, problems he or she has.

4. emotional stability, emotional control, emotionality, neuroticism, adaptation, anxiety, affection show the emotional characteristics of a person (calm, satisfied, emotional, etc.) and various emotional difficulties (anxiety, depression, irritability).

5. culture, intellect, intellectual curiosity, intelligence, subtlety, openness, independence, attention refers to intellectual functions (creativity, inventiveness, openness to new experiences).

Studies about the emotional health of adolescents and youth show that distress, anxiety, and depression with a mood disturbance. Thus, what people experience as sadness, contempt, worry, anger, fear, or regret is the result of the ways people think, feel, and behave in a certain life-situation.

McCrae and Costa (1992) described personality by 5 dimensions, or 5 main factors, as fundamental psychic dispositions that have biological bases and are not directly observable representing a category of psychic facts called psychic adaptations. The latter are acquired and include habits, attitudes, habits, values, and motives. At the same time, the characteristic adaptations aim to provide explanations for observable behaviors such as the thoughts, feelings and actions noted in the people around them (Minulescu, 1996).

Extraversion shows the ability to orient the personality outwardly, the way of involvement in action, the sociability of the person (Zlate, 2009). Traits commonly associated with it include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active in need of activity, enthusiasm, and stimulation (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Giluk, 2009). This dimension also

predicts the development of social relationships during college, so those who achieved high scores more easily develop friendships.

The six facets of Costa and McCrae's extraversion (1992) are the warmth (affectionate and friendly behavior, managing to easily connect close relationships with the people around), gregarious spirit (preference for the company of others), assertiveness (the tendency to be dominant, strong and aggressive), activism (the tendency to vigorous movement, a sense of energy), the search for stimulation (the need for excitement and stimulation, preferring vivid colors and noisy environments), and positive emotions (the tendency to experience positive emotions and be cheerful).

Openness to experience involves receptivity to the experience, including your own feelings and inner emotions. Open individuals are attentive and curious to both their inner and outer worlds. People who score high on openness to experience tend to be curious, imaginative (Giluk, 2009). Features commonly associated with this dimension include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, intelligent, and artistically sensitive (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

The six facets of Costa and McCrae's openness to experience (1992) are represented by fantasy (the tendency of a vivid and creative imagination), esthetics (a deep appreciation for art and beauty), sentimentalism (receptivity to one's own feelings and inner emotions and evaluation of emotion as an important part of life), action (willingness to try different activities and go to new places), idealism (intellectual curiosity and openness to change), and values (availability of re-examine social, political and religious values).

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and reliable. Conscientiousness is the only personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person's performance will be in a variety of occupations and jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Thus, it targets the specific, characteristic way of dealing with the tasks, activities, problems that arise in his life (Zlate, 2009).

The six facets of Costa and McCrae's conscientiousness (1992) are competence (it emphasizes that an individual is capable, sensitive, prudent, and effective), order (the tendency to be cared for, orderly and well-organized), sense of duty (the tendency to adhere to their ethical principles and to fulfill their moral obligations very carefully), desire for achievement (it highlights high aspirations and perseverance in achieving goals), self-discipline (the ability to start tasks and carry them out, in spite of boredom or other distractions), and deliberation (the tendency to think carefully before acting).

Neuroticism refers to a person's emotional stability is perceived as retaining individual differences in a person's emotional characteristics (calm, satisfied, emotional, non-emotional), but this factor is also related to a person's general tendency to experience negative emotions such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, and the emotional state of the mind. guilt, Disgust (Zlate, 2009). Neurotic individuals tend to be anxious, depressed, angry, emotional, worried, and insecure, and are more susceptible to psychological distress (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Giluk, 2009). Thus, neuroticism is regarded as a tendency to experience anxiety, tension, hostility, impulsivity, shyness, illogical thinking, depression, and low self-esteem.

Costa and McCrae's six facets of neuroticism (1992) are anxiety (tendency to anxiety or fear), anger-hostility (the tendency to experience anger, frustration, and anxiety), depression (the tendency to experience feelings of guilt, sadness, lack of hope and loneliness), shyness (the tendency to experience shame and embarrassment), impulsivity (inability to control needs and desires), and vulnerability (the tendency to feel overwhelmed and panicked by stress).

Agreeableness describes people who are pleasant, pleasant, animated by pleasant feelings toward children, toward animals and, in general, toward others, with resistance to

frustration and who do not express their frustration through acts of physical or verbal aggression. Agreeable people are generally good, cooperative, supportive, concerned about others, and the traits associated with this dimension include being polite, flexible, confident, benevolent, cooperative, Forgiving, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1999; Giluk, 2009).

The six facets of Costa and McCrae's agreeableness (1992) are represented by trust (the tendency to believe that others are sincere and have good intentions), honesty (the tendency to be honest and ingenious), altruism (an active concern for the well-being of others), compliance (the tendency to give in to others, to inhibit aggression and to forgive and forget), modesty (the tendency to be humble and withdrawn), and gentleness (the tendency to show sympathy and care for others).

3. Objectives and hypotheses

The main objective of our study is the identification of relationships between emotional intelligence and Big Five personality factors.

The hypotheses are:

1. It is assumed that there is a relationship between extraversion and emotional intelligence.
2. It is assumed that there is a relationship between kindness and emotional intelligence.
3. It is assumed that there is a relationship between conscientiousness and emotional intelligence.
4. It is assumed that there is a relationship between emotional stability and emotional intelligence.
5. It is assumed that there is a relationship between autonomy and emotional intelligence.

4. Sample, instruments and procedure

The sample consisted of 100 students aged between 18 and 30, from universities in Bucharest and Constanta, of which 83 are female and 13 are male. The participants were students from the Faculties of Architecture, Construction, Law and Administrative Sciences, Physical Education and Sports; Electrotechnics, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Pharmacy, Letters, Mathematics and Computer Science, Medicine, Dental Medicine, Psychology and Educational Sciences, Economic Sciences, Applied Sciences and Engineering, Natural Sciences and Agricultural Sciences.

Two tools were used to collect data: The Five Factor Personality Inventory (from Cognitrom Assessment System) and the Emotional Intelligence Survey (by Mihaela Roco).

The data collection was done through a questionnaire conducted online through the Google Forms platform. After obtaining the results from the two questionnaires, the answers were entered into a database for statistical analysis. For this purpose, the SPSS program was used, where scores were introduced, and for the interpretation of hypotheses, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used.

Students who participated in the research were assured of data confidentiality by explaining the purpose of the questionnaires and how the results will be subsequently used. The subjects were then informed that there was no time limit, no right or wrong answers. After the subjects agreed to participate in the research, they were explained the procedure for filling in each questionnaire, ensuring data confidentiality and the possibility of withdrawal without follow-up.

5. Findings and results

Our hypotheses assumed the existence of relationships between emotional intelligence and the Big-Five personality traits. To verify these hypotheses, we calculated the normality of the data using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality coefficient.

The results are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	.149	.100	.000
Extraversion	.069	.100	.200*
Kindness	.072	.100	.200*
Conscientiousness	.093	.100	.034
Emotional Stability	.097	.100	.020
Autonomy	.065	.100	.200*

The analysis of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality coefficient shows an abnormal distribution of the participants' answers to the research in the variables Emotional Intelligence, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability, and normal distribution of scores for the variables Extraversion, Kindness, and Autonomy. We used the Spearman rho correlation coefficient, and the results are shown in the table below:

Table 2. Correlations between Emotional Intelligence and Big-Five personality traits

Big-Five Traits	Correlations with Emotional Intelligence	
	rho	Sig.(2-tailed)
Extraversion	.256*	.010
Kindness	.051	.614
Conscientiousness	.015	.886
Emotional Stability	.187	.063
Autonomy	.211*	.035

From the analysis of the results presented in Table 2, only the correlations between Emotional Intelligence, Extraversion and Autonomy were confirmed.

6. Discussion

A personality trait that often receives special attention is the tendency toward extraversion, which reflects an individual's social needs. Typically, a student with a tendency toward extraversion may be interested in his or her social environment and may be characterized as talkative and assertive. At the same time, as for a student with a tendency toward introversion, it can be considered as somewhat calm, reserved, and showing a more reflective tendency. Studies suggest that these trends are stable over time, and some evidence indicates that they may influence the level of motivation (their expectations and values) that students may exhibit in different situations or contexts (Smith, Guimond, Bergeron, St-Amand, Fitzpatrick & Gagnon, 2021).

According to a study by Myleen, Michael, and William (2009), on the relationship between the five personality dimensions represented in the big five model and emotional

intelligence, there was a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and the extraversion factor. Thus, the results of the study indicated that there is a strong correlation between the Extraversion/Introversion dimension and the components of emotional intelligence such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability and general mood.

Avsec, Masnec and Komidar (2009) they conducted research to examine whether there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and the five major personality factors. The results of the study showed a significant correlation between extraversion and emotional intelligence due to its related qualities, such as sociability and developed social skills.

Extraversion increases the willingness to experience pleasant events and predisposes individuals to experience positive emotions. At the same time, emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, to assimilate feelings related to emotion, to understand information about those emotions and to manage them. Emotional intelligence skills are essential for the development of positive personality and well-being of individuals.

Students with high levels of extraversion faced a disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which banned social interactions for periods of several months. Thus, from a social point of view, they have been more difficult to adapt to this situation because social isolation has been an obstacle to strengthening social interactions and for them, returning to college in physical form could be perceived as a relief from a challenging situation. Students with high levels of extraversion may show more enthusiasm than others for opportunities to be in situations that allow social interaction because they have greater needs for interaction with other people than individuals with a tendency to introversion.

In turn, extraversion is associated with the involvement and enjoyment of social interactions, participation in social activities and larger social networks. Further, extroverts receive greater social support from others suggesting that they may rely on more social support in times of emotional crisis (Gubler, Makowski, Troche & Schlegel, 2020).

Kindness refers to the motivation to maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and people with a high degree of kindness tend to be friendly and warm, have respect for others, and tend to be sensitive to other people's desires. At the same time, emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions as accurately as possible and express them, the ability to access and determine feelings when they facilitate thinking, the ability to know and understand emotions and systematize them. To promote intellectual and emotional development (Mara & Mara, 2010).

Although understanding the emotions of others is a first step for the cognitive component of empathy, it does not necessarily end with a relationship of sympathy and, consequently, better interpersonal relationships, which are frequently related to agreeableness. Thus, agreeableness also had very low correlations with the ability to express and rank emotions and correlations, with the scale of managing and regulating emotions. For better interpersonal relationships, which are an indicator of agreeable people, it is more important to achieve an appropriate environment for expressing one's own emotions (Avsec et al., 2009). In the same way, people with high courtesy scores have high emotional intelligence, are optimistic, can engage in an effective interpersonal relationship, and are able to perceive, express and regulate emotions effectively (McCrae, 2000).

Although the literature highlights the existence of a correlation between emotional intelligence and kindness, one factor that contributed to the rejection of the hypothesis is the measures of social isolation, which caused the appearance of negative emotional States among students. Reducing social interactions, lack of social support, and the stressors that arise associated with the COVID-19 crisis could negatively affect students' mental health.

Reducing interactions in physical format to a minimum due to measures of social distancing is likely to cause individuals greater attention to those relationships that are significant or most established (Elmer, Mephram & Stadtfeld, 2020). Thus, people with a low level of agreeableness are less concerned about the well-being of others and thus may be better prepared to psychologically adapt to measures of social distancing (Zager Kocjan, Kavcic & Avsec, 2021).

Conscientiousness refers to accepting responsibility and strict adherence to principles. Conscientious individuals have an intrinsic motivation for achievement and a capacity for self-discipline through persistent goal-oriented action.

Although there is a strong correlation between conscientiousness and emotional intelligence in the literature, this hypothesis is refuted in the present study. At the same time, in the research conducted by Van der Zee, Thijs and Schakel (2002), there was no strong correlation between emotional intelligence and conscientiousness, but most studies report a positive correlation between these two traits. Studies conducted by Mara & Mara (2010) revealed a positive and direct correlation between the emotional intelligence coefficient and the level of development of the conscientiousness dimension. At the same time, the conscientiousness factor refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and reliable.

On the other hand, McCrae (2000) suggests that the attention, reliability, persistence, and goal orientation of people with high levels of conscientiousness have no conceptual resemblance to monitoring, interpreting, and managing emotions.

Another factor that led to the disproved hypothesis is the establishment of the pandemic context, which limited social interactions in the relationship between students and teachers. This was achieved by introducing an online course format, which tracked the level at which both teachers and students were prepared to adopt and use these technologies in their learning activities.

The main obstacles highlighted were the low levels of knowledge of technology platforms for the use of information; insufficient experience in managing online learning platforms in terms of student participation, interactivity, and involvement; lack of a process for evaluating online learning outcomes; and lack of experience in developing online course content or turning courses from offline to online ways. Other relevant challenges are low levels of engagement during online courses by students. A significant difference in the conduct of online courses was noted, when students participated in audio and video discussions, participation in online courses determining the feeling of a classroom environment (Al-Kumaim, Alhazmi, Mohammed, Gazem, Shabbir & Fazea, 2021).

Further, time management represented another difficulty among students being attributed to an increase in workload, difficulties in structuring the day's schedule and multiple responsibilities as a result of returning home. The lack of structure was also highlighted by the tendency of distraction and difficulty concentrating (Laher, Bain, Bemath, de Andrade & Hassem, 2021). Thus, the transition from physical to online education has led to an increase in the workload through the high number of topics received by students from teachers. At the same time, the difficulties of structuring the program were also represented by the hours spent in front of the monitor for attending the courses, their involvement in their development, the choice to have the camera switched off and the division between attending classes and work.

O'Connor & Paunonen (2007) argue that emotional stability ensures the academic success of students, while Barrick & Mount (1991) demonstrates, in the study conducted on different professional categories, that there is a positive correlation between a high level of

emotional stability and performance in all areas analyzed. The low values of this dimension are characterized by nervousness, worry, feeling of self-pity, lack of emotional control, tension, etc. and are found in correlation with professional failure, a hindrance to the successful completion of tasks.

Studies highlight the negative correlation between neuroticism and emotional intelligence, and the association of extraversion and neuroticism with emotional intelligence can be justified based on the characteristics of positive mood adjustment and negative mood adjustment. Extraversion and neuroticism are indicative of the tendency to experience negative and positive emotions. This tendency acts toward mood adjustment in two ways: positive (under extraversion) and negative (under neuroticism) (Bar-On, 1997).

Neuroticism highlights people who are more vulnerable to experiencing emotional instability and self-awareness (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Next, the researchers found that neuroticism is positively correlated with perceived stress, and people with high levels are prone to experience negative emotions, such as depression, anxiety, or anger, and tend to be impulsive. Therefore, these individuals are generally more likely to experience suffering, as their own emotions influence the adaptation process. Such subversive emotions are the result of irrational thoughts, reduced ability to control self-motivation and cope with stress (Agbaria & Abu Mokh, 2021).

Neuroticism reflects the tendency to experience irritability, anger, sadness, anxiety, worry and hostility (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Individuals with high content in this trait reported more concerns and were pessimistic about the duration of estimates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous research has shown that people with higher neuroticism experience a chronic negative effect, have particularly intense reactions to negative events, and rely more on coping strategies focused on emotions than problems. Moreover, a recent COVID19 study also reported that people with high levels of neuroticism had a more negative effect in their daily lives during the pandemic (Aschwanden, Strickhouser, Sesker, Lee, Luchetti, Stephan, Sutin & Terracciano, 2021).

Studies have shown that higher neuroticism has been linked to fewer precautions. Thus, further analysis showed that this effect was mainly determined by the facet of depression. In other COVID-19 studies, higher neuroticism was more related to physical distancing and hygiene behaviors (Aschwanden et al., 2021).

Openness to experience or autonomy reflects intellectual curiosity, imagination, and esthetic sensitivity, while emotional intelligence describes the ability or self-perceived ability to identify, evaluate, and manage the emotions of one's own, others, and groups. People with high emotional intelligence know each other very well and can show empathy by being friendly and optimistic (Goleman, 2018).

Finally, one can expect a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and openness to experience or autonomy. McCrae (2000) suggested that emotional intelligence should have the strongest relationships with the dimension of openness to experience because it exhibits similarities with intelligence, referring to the words that people usually use to describe intelligent people (e.g., imaginative, sensitive, flexible, curious, and independent). But the evidence of a relationship between emotional intelligence and openness is not uniform. Thus, Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, and Dornheim (1998) reported that the emotional intelligence scale had a significant correlation with openness and insignificant relationships with other personality traits of the big five model.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and student life satisfaction, positive attitudes toward life and achievement of various educational goals was highlighted by the study

conducted by Wong, Wong, and Chau (2001). The results indicated that emotional intelligence positively correlates with life satisfaction and performance in moral, social, and intellectual development. It also negatively correlates with powerlessness in life.

7. Conclusions

The main objective of our research was accomplished. We discovered the existence of relationships between emotional intelligence, extraversion, and autonomy, but found no significant correlations between emotional intelligence, kindness, conscientiousness and emotional stability.

A first dimension that correlates with emotional intelligence is the extraversion factor due to the qualities related to sociability and the development of social skills. This hypothesis is also supported by specialized studies that highlight a positive correlation between these factors.

The hypothesis that there is a correlation between kindness factor and emotional intelligence has been refuted. According to the results obtained, they were not statistically significant enough to support the hypothesis formulated, therefore it was revealed that the two variables do not correlate. At the same time, specialized studies illustrate that these two variables correlate, and the present research was influenced by the limitations caused by the sample of subjects.

Another dimension of personality that does not significantly correlate with emotional intelligence is conscientiousness. According to the data obtained, there is no correlation between these two variables, and the hypothesis considering the existence of a possible correlation between them is thus refuted. At the same time, specialized studies illustrate that these two variables correlate, and the present research was influenced by the limitations caused by the sample of subjects.

Emotional stability is a personality trait that does not correlate with emotional intelligence. The results obtained from the data processing show that there is no correlation between the level of intelligence and emotional stability, thus dismissing the penultimate hypothesis. Studies show that there is no correlation between emotional stability and emotional intelligence.

The last hypothesis reveals a positive correlation between the autonomy factor and emotional intelligence, the hypothesis being confirmed. Thus, the results obtained from the statistical processing highlight the relationship between the two factors, supported by examples from the literature.

At the same time, the limitations that existed in the research were the lack of an equal sample of both women and men, as well as an approximately equal number of human and real-profile faculties. Thus, the sample consisted of 100 students from four universities in Bucharest and Constanta. Further, the limitations of the research were also the scores that, according to the interpretation of the emotional intelligence test, were below average, which subsequently influenced the SPSS program. Another limit was the emergence of the pandemic context that caused changes in the interaction of students highlighted in the research.

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