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### **Abstract**

The habilitation thesis entitled ‘Psychological factors of academic adjustment’ encompasses scientific contributions published in the last years. During the nine years of activity at Transylvania University of Braşov, I focused on the field of educational and learning psychology and on the field of research methods and psychological testing, aspects which were included also in my doctoral studies. My research activity concerned the following research topics: self-regulated learning and psychological factors involved in the learning process, academic adjustment, positive psychology applied in the field of education, and adaptation and validation of research instruments on Romania population. All these research topics have a common aspect, school or university with their educational settings and factors leading to a successful adjustment to the academic life.

The first part of the thesis part is a synthesis of my professional development, from the didactic, academic and scientific perspective. Starting from my decision for the psychological field, the milestones of my career were the following: becoming an assistant teacher in 2008, earning the title of Doctor in Psychology in 2012, at the University of Bucharest, becoming a lecturer in 2012 and then an associate professor in 2015, and recently a more administrative position, as a vice-dean for didactic activities, scientific research and IT at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Transylvania University of Brasov. The results of my scientific activity materialise in the publication of several articles in ISI journals, indexed in the databases, or books, written either as a single author or as a co-author.

The second part of the thesis, and the most complex one, presents my most relevant scientific contributions after earning the PhD title and some of my previous researches conducted during the doctoral studies, as a proof of my sustained concerns and continuity in the research activity. My scientific contributions are grouped on four research directions, as follows: learning and the psychological factors influencing learning; academic adjustment; elaboration and validation of psychological instruments; career counselling, initial training of teachers and psychologists, entrepreneurial personality.

#### *1. Contributions to the investigation of learning and the psychological factors influencing learning*

Academic learning is a broad concept investigated in the international literature but also in Romania, as a result of the increasing number of students which can access higher education. The results of my research showed that implementing a training program focused on the

development of self-regulation could lead to a higher engagement in learning, to the use of metacognitive and deep learning strategies. Interventions that emphasized students' knowledge and use of metacognitive strategies were the most effective because they gave students the opportunity to develop the learning strategies that worked best for them in a given context. Other important factors influencing learning are academic self-efficacy and test anxiety, these results being the starting point for developing research studies which investigated the online learning context.

### *2. Contributions to the study of academic adjustment*

Most of my recently published articles are linked to a greater or lesser extent to the concept of academic adjustment, the core of my research concerns. Academic adjustment was analysed in its relationship with the academic performances, but also as the absence of maladaptive behaviours such as aggressiveness, disruptive behaviour and the prevalence of efficient behaviours based on cooperation, engagement and self-regulation. Academic adjustment is a multidimensional concept, as a variety of indicators including coping strategies and predictors could explain adjustment. Therefore, my research also focused on the analysis of the stressors and coping mechanisms which facilitate a successful academic adjustment. Another research direction involves academic dishonesty, as indicator of academic maladjustment, the most important contribution on this topic being the construction of a scale measuring the tendency to engage in academic cheating activities. My research also focused on the associations between resilience, stress and academic adjustment, highlighting that resilience could be an efficient mediator in the process of overcoming stressful academic events. We also aim to implement intervention programmes for the development of self-regulation and adjustment, focusing on concepts and models specific to the positive psychology field, such as academic resilience, coping strategies, academic stress, student satisfaction with university life, etc. Our approach will be directed towards the definition of a relatively new concept in educational psychology – academic well-being.

### *3. Contributions to the construction and validation of several psychological instruments*

One of my expertise fields is the psychological assessment. My interests and my passion for statistics and psychometrics gave me the opportunity to explore the qualities of a high number of psychological instruments extensively used abroad but underresearched in Romania in various fields: educational psychology, positive psychology, organizational and environmental psychology. Through my research, I contributed significantly to the construction of some instruments (The Academic Adjustment Questionnaire, the Inventory of Academic Dishonesty, The School Climate Questionnaire, The Scale for Goal-Oriented Learning Motivation, The Entrepreneurial Personality Inventory) or to the adaptation and validation on Romanian samples of other instruments (Almost Perfect Scale, The Discipline Focused Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire, The Need for Cognition Scale, The Inventory of Learning Styles, The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, The Defence Style Questionnaire or The Tilburg Work Identity Scale for Commitment and Reconsideration of Commitment).

#### *4. Career counselling, initial training of teachers and psychologists, entrepreneurial personality*

The role and the effects of implementing career counselling interventions for the students represents the core of the forth research direction. My activity as a member in the JOBS research project (The Job Orientation Training in Business and Schools, a Swiss-Romanian cooperation programme) materialised in publications which highlighted the fact that learning opportunities become effective through learning and teaching engagement leading to learning outputs. In this sense learning, as aspired to in the JOBS project, is an education process building up knowledge, competence and self-competencies. Moreover, learning is also a process that changes these competences in the sense of strengthening an individual's potential and possibilities and these individual resources are activators of the development process. The other dimension of this research direction refers to the entrepreneurial personality. Our results indicated the necessity to take into account the personality traits for future entrepreneurship training, showing that people who are aware of their entrepreneurial potential are more likely to get involved in entrepreneurial training and will benefit more from it. The training can provide them with the chances to learn new entrepreneurial skills, which may be helpful for their future business, developing entrepreneurial capabilities, and contributing to entrepreneurial identities and cultures at individual, collective and social levels.

The third part of these thesis presents my future research directions which will continue my previous research. One of these direction refers to the prediction of academic (mal)adjustment at university level. Our aims are to design a model including personal, motivational and background factors which predict academic (mal)adjustment. Our study will analyse the antecedents of adjustment, the mediating effects of several variables such as learning strategies, or prior achievement. By using a repeated measures and longitudinal design, we aim to highlight the dynamics of these factors during the first two academic years. We also aim to identify profiles of at risk students regarding the adjustment during the first university year, but also profiles of successful students. As a multidimensional approach, our research will identify several patterns of adjustment (low/high achieving students who drop out, voluntary drop-out, non-voluntary dropout) resulting from the interaction of personal, learning, motivation and background factors. Our results will be the starting point of proposals of educational interventions aiming to minimise further risks of academic drop-out or underachievement during the university education. Another research direction concerns the career counselling topic, as we aim to develop a complex model of the interactions of socio-demographic aspects (age, gender, parental style, parents' support, type of family, etc.) and individual characteristics (self-concept, attribution style, learning motivation, professional interest, personality traits) on learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences). Further validation of the Entrepreneurial Personality Inventory will allow us also to perform a more deep analysis of the antecedents and consequences of entrepreneurial orientation and intention.

The last part consists of the references included in the present thesis.