THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study investigates relations between Big Five personality traits and beliefs about the education of preschool children held by prospective early childhood pedagogues.

METHOD

SAMPLE

- Part of the study “Transition of academically and vocationally qualified educational professionals into the labor market”
- N = 1,137 prospective childhood pedagogues attending 111 professional schools of social pedagogy and 33 universities
- Online- and paper-pencil survey

MEASURES

- Beliefs: 15 items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)
- Big Five (Gerlitz & Schupp, 2005): 15-items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
- Control variables that have been shown to be predictive in previous studies

RESULTS

- Ambitious profile: pedagogues with comparatively high endorsements on all educational beliefs
- Moderate profile: pedagogues with medium endorsements on all educational beliefs
- Reserved profile: pedagogues with comparatively low endorsements on all educational beliefs

- Pedagogues with higher agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism were more likely to be members of the ambitious profile relative to the moderate profile
- Pedagogues with higher conscientiousness and openness were more likely to be members of the ambitious profile relative to the reserved profile
- Pedagogues with higher openness were more likely to be members of the moderate profile relative to the reserved profile

PREDICTION OF LATENT PROFILE MEMBERSHIP

- Latent Profile Analysis
- Statistical fit criteria: Akaike’s Information Criterion (AIC), Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), sample-size-adjusted BIC (SSABIC), and Entropy
- Multinomial Logistic Regressions

DISCUSSION

- Big Five are related to beliefs about the education of preschool children: Explanation relies on theoretical work of McCrae and Costa who presume congruence between beliefs and personality traits
- Higher neuroticism is associated with membership to the ambitious profile: Risk of overload with regard to problems in realizing the amplitude of desirable educational goals for preschool children (Dippelholfer-Stiem, 2002)
- Respondents who do not have any particular interest in preschool education as a field of work are more likely to be members of the reserved profile: Members with divergent occupational interests tend to have a specific personality structure which is incongruent with the beliefs about education of preschool children
- Personality traits should be part of the curriculum in educational institutions for pedagogues
- Staff coaching that considers practical guidelines that focus on the personality requirements of the labor force (Howard & Howard, 2001) could be another way to assist them in finding a good balance between desirable and realizable educational goals for preschool children

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