

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL GAMES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT ON PERSONALITY TRAITS

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Abstract

According to the American Psychological Association, personality is a concept composed of traits, emotions, and behavioral patterns that reflect each individual's unique way of adapting to objective reality and the external environment, influencing their actions and thoughts. Personality is seen as a set of characteristics whose manifestation occurs in an individual's interactions with those around them and with the external environment.

It's good to know that personality develops in stages, referring to how it evolves throughout life, influenced by environmental, psychological, and biological factors. From this perspective, several specialists have highlighted models to explain this process.

Keywords: *personality, traits, emotions, model, self-esteem*

1. THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN SOCIAL AND SCHOOL ADAPTATION

Specialized literature shows us that personality is an important element and influences how students adapt to the social environment, as well as to the school environment. From this perspective, a brief analysis helps us identify the following personality traits that contribute to social adaptation: extraversion (children with an extroverted temperament make friends more easily and are more active in group activities); agreeableness (students with higher levels of agreeableness show more empathy toward those around them and are better accepted by their peers). Regarding school adaptation, we identify the following personality traits that facilitate the process: conscientiousness (conscientious students possess better organizational skills, responsibility, and perseverance); openness to experience (plays an important role in establishing motivation for learning); and emotional stability.

In the same vein, personality can directly influence the social relationships people develop and even their quality. From this perspective, extraversion is associated with a high capacity to form positive interactions, given that individuals who possess this personality trait are open and have a predisposition toward communication. Agreeableness leads to the emergence and maintenance of prosocial behaviors, which facilitates harmonious relationships. Conscientiousness is an element that supports taking on social responsibilities, leading to the ability to respect the social context and the rules of a group one encounters.

Regarding social relationships, it's good to know that attachment styles can significantly influence the quality of interactions and integration into society. Attachment styles are those emotional and behavioral patterns that are formed in the relationship with attachment figures during childhood. Attachment styles influence a child's emotional and social development and the relationships they will form in adulthood.

Family is important in the process of children's personality development, having a significant impact on the values and behaviors they choose to adopt, as well as how they will interact in society. To the extent that the family environment is characterized by acceptance, love, and support, children have more opportunities to develop increased self-esteem and self-confidence, which significantly contributes to the formation of a healthy personality. Children who receive consistent emotional support are better equipped to cope with life's challenges; they are able to express their emotional experiences in a healthy way and more easily develop strong interpersonal relationships. Also, the risk of developing psychological problems is lower, precisely because adolescents who feel supported by their families exhibit a higher level of well-being. Thus, appropriate family support becomes a protective factor against psychological disorders.

The family environment is also important from the perspective of the self-identification process children go thru. If they feel accepted and appreciated by family members, it will be easier for them to develop a positive self-image, which significantly influences their behaviors and attitudes outside the family environment. We cannot overlook that the impact a family environment has on a person extends beyond childhood. The entire support a child receives and the emotional experiences they associate with their family environment influence what their adult life will look like.

It should be mentioned that there is a significant association between events that occur within the family and the risk of developing personality disorders. In other words, events that an individual experiences and perceives as traumatic can have an impact on personality development, referring to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, neglect, the loss of a parent, separation from parents, or exposure to intense conflicts, among many others. All these experiences can affect an individual's psychological structures and mechanisms.

2. RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL GAMES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, pedagogy and psychology have become two essential fields that intertwine harmoniously in understanding and developing the child. These emphasize both cognitive and socio-emotional development. Within this framework, research conducted in this field is more than just a tool; it's a way to explore potential and also identify the most effective methods that teachers can apply in the classroom.

This paper was outlined based on the conviction that play represents more than just a way for students to have fun.

I observe that play is an important pillar in a child's development; thru play, they form their personality, develop emotional skills, and consolidate adaptive social behaviors.

The philosophy of this research is based on a humanist vision of education. It recognizes that each child is unique and that the importance of harmonious development, both intellectually and socio-emotionally, is vital. We started from the hypothesis that personality traits such as conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, or imagination can be enhanced thru games in a structured, organized, and safe environment.

This research takes a quantitative approach; the analysis of the data obtained using the instrument allowed for the formulation of objective conclusions as well as the identification of potential future directions.

What can we, the teaching staff, do to ensure the optimal development of children during their school years? First and foremost, let's show empathy toward each individual, accept their different learning paces, encourage them, and continue to improve ourselves to learn how to awaken the desire for knowledge in new generations.

This research aims to highlight the influence of educational games for personal development on personality traits and academic performance.

Overall Research Objective

The overall objective of the research is to investigate the impact of educational games for personal development on personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness, imagination, benevolence) and on school performance in primary school children, aiming to identify the changes produced on an emotional, behavioral, and educational level.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Children who participate in educational games for personal development will score significantly higher on emotional stability and school performance after the intervention, compared to their initial scores.

Hypothesis 2: Participating in educational games will lead to a significant increase in children's extroversion, imagination, and conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3: After completing the educational activities, children will demonstrate an increased level of benevolence, expressed thru empathy, a desire to help, and cooperation within the group.

To assess the impact of educational games for personal development on personality traits and school performance among children, I used a 28-item questionnaire designed to be completed by parents. The psychological instrument used in the study was inspired by the HiPIC - Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children, but adapted to the context in which it was used and supplemented with items relevant to measuring the variables under investigation. The items cover the following dimensions:

- Extraversion (sociability, public speaking)
- Conscientiousness (organization, task completion)
- Emotional stability (managing frustration, reaction to stress)
- Agreeableness (respect for those around you, cooperation)
- Openness to experience (interest in knowledge, curiosity)
- Imagination and creativity (inventiveness, original ideas)
- Benevolence (desire to help, prosocial behaviors)
- School performance (attention, academic results, involvement)

For each item in the questionnaire, the parent was asked to choose the frequency of the described behavior on a 5-point scale, where 1 means "never" and 5 means "always." The questionnaire was completed by parents at two distinct points: before and after the educational games were applied.

The purpose was to measure any changes in the child's observable traits, specifically regarding school involvement, benevolence, and empathy.

Educational games for personal development used in the intervention:

1) I Can! - is a game that focuses on overcoming obstacles and students' fears. It is structured into difficulty levels, each level corresponding to a year of study, and is based on overcoming

limiting beliefs. Its aim is to develop self-confidence and positive thinking. At the same time, it helps children learn that failure is part of development and encourages emotional self-regulation in the face of potential difficulties. The students will draw and write what they believe they cannot do. The paper on which the drawing was written will be buried, the children will say goodbye to "I can't" and meet his brothers. I will try, I will look for solutions, I will succeed, and they will replace "I can't" with "his brothers" in their vocabulary.

2) Big Steps - the game is designed to help overcome shyness and aims to encourage emotional expression in various school settings. The exercise includes a role-playing game where students are given simple situations they are afraid to respond to, and then they are encouraged to find ways to overcome that situation, for example, by seeking help from their classmates.

One of the advantages of current personal development games involves the ability to develop alternative thinking in the face of difficulties in emotional language development, but more than that, they aim to improve active participation in class and contribute to the strengthening of emotional intelligence, empathy, and cooperation.

3) Solutions - the educational game was created for children with the aim of developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Several teams are formed, and the students face various situations that can make them feel constrained, for example, "I made a mistake on the math exercise." The team needs to collaborate to find multiple solutions, but it's important to encourage students to identify an alternative to negative thoughts like "I can't," focusing instead on solutions and plans like "I'll try again more carefully" or "I learn from mistakes." The activity takes place in the classroom, with steps leading to the resolution of a specific situation, and students benefit from the "Box of Solutions," from which they choose cards with positive ideas or encouraging messages. This exercise develops emotional and cognitive self-regulation, improves the ability to cope with challenges or situations that students perceive as difficult, and also promotes a proactive attitude and collaborative learning.

4) "Brave Emotions" - the game is aimed at students, with the objective of recognizing and expressing emotions, as well as developing self-confidence.

The following materials were used for the activity:

- A large tree drawn on a whiteboard or cardboard
- Leaves made from colored paper
- Markers or colored pencils

Each child receives two leaves; on one, they are asked to draw an image representing a fear or insecurity they have experienced at school or at home, and on the second leaf, they are asked to write or draw how they managed the emotion, what they did at that moment, and what they could do in a similar situation in the future. The tree in the game is divided into two parts: the lower part is titled "the root of fear" where leaves with images representing fear and insecurity are placed, and the upper branches represent "the leaves of courage" where students will put the leaves they wrote or drew on about how they overcame the situation.

Table 1. Normality Analysis of Variables: Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Imagination, Benevolence, and School Performance (before the games)

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Extraversiune_pre	.200	40	.000	.929	40	.015
Constiinciozitate_pre	.114	40	.200 [*]	.964	40	.237
Stabilitate_emotionala_pre	.193	40	.001	.915	40	.005
Imaginatie_pre	.163	40	.009	.929	40	.015
Benevolenta_pre	.137	40	.055	.947	40	.058
Performanta_scolara_pre	.200	40	.000	.886	40	.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 2. Normality Analysis of Variables: Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Imagination, Benevolence, and School Performance (after the games)

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Extraversiune_post	.186	40	.001	.914	40	.005
Constiinciozitate_post	.104	40	.200 [*]	.976	40	.540
Stabilitate_emotionala_post	.226	40	.000	.913	40	.005
Imaginatie_post	.201	40	.000	.906	40	.003
Benevolenta_post	.112	40	.200 [*]	.962	40	.190
Performanta_scolara_post	.200	40	.000	.886	40	.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The data normality analysis was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, considering the relatively small sample size.

The results obtained indicated that, before the intervention was applied, the variables of conscientiousness and benevolence showed a distribution compatible with the normal model, as the significance values were higher than the threshold of 0.05. In contrast, the variables of extraversion, emotional stability, imagination, and school performance did not meet the normality condition, suggesting the presence of skewed distributions.

Following the educational intervention, the distribution of the variables followed a similar pattern: conscientiousness and benevolence retained their characteristics of normality, while the remaining dimensions investigated continued to show significant deviations from normality.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the variables of extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, imagination, benevolence, and school performance (before the games)

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Extraversiune_pre	40	17	24	20.13	1.667	.491	.374	-.516	.733
Constiinciozitate_pre	40	28	37	33.38	2.157	-.272	.374	-.119	.733
Stabilitate_emotionala_pre	40	22	29	24.80	1.843	.698	.374	.314	.733
Imaginatie_pre	40	9	14	12.00	1.396	-.357	.374	-.568	.733
Benevolenta_pre	40	12	21	15.93	2.411	.012	.374	-.279	.733
Performanta_scolara_pre	40	7	11	8.77	1.310	.008	.374	-1.287	.733
Valid N (listwise)	40								

In the initial assessment, the variable means indicated moderate levels of manifestation of the investigated traits, with extraversion and school performance having the lowest values, and conscientiousness and emotional stability showing higher levels. The intervention using educational games was followed by significant increases in the averages for all measured dimensions. Extroversion showed a notable development, as did imagination, while emotional stability and conscientiousness experienced a clear improvement, supporting the idea that the proposed activities had a positive impact on both personality traits and academic performance.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the variables of extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, imagination, benevolence, and school performance (after the games)

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Extraversiune_post	40	25	30	27.13	1.418	.393	.374	-.825	.733
Constiinciozitate_post	40	40	49	44.25	2.010	.017	.374	.077	.733
Stabilitate_emotionala_post	40	28	33	30.25	1.296	.326	.374	.116	.733
Imaginatie_post	40	14	18	16.15	1.252	-.133	.374	-1.058	.733
Benevolenta_post	40	18	27	22.08	2.269	.138	.374	-.270	.733
Performanta_scolara_post	40	10	14	11.77	1.310	.008	.374	-1.287	.733
Valid N (listwise)	40								

Although the descriptive analysis indicated a relatively small dispersion of scores (standard deviations between 1.2 and 2.4), normality tests signaled some deviations from the Gaussian model, which necessitated a differentiated statistical approach between variables.

However, the consistency of the average growth suggests a clear trend of improvement in the dimensions targeted by the research following the educational intervention.

Although the skewness and kurtosis coefficients fell within acceptable ranges, the results of the normality tests were decisive in the choice of analysis methodology. Thus, for variables with a normal distribution, the paired t-test was chosen, while for the other dimensions, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for paired samples was selected, which is suitable for non-parametric data.

Hypothesis 1: Children who participate in educational games for personal development will score significantly higher in emotional stability and school performance after the intervention, compared to the initial assessment (Increase in emotional stability and school performance).

For Hypothesis 1, it was found that the distribution of scores for both variables deviates significantly from normality. Therefore, for the analysis of pre- and post-intervention differences in this hypothesis, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test will be used, a non-parametric method suitable for data that do not follow a normal distribution.

Hypothesis 2: Participating in educational games will lead to a significant increase in children's extroversion, imagination, and conscientiousness (Improving Personality Traits).

Regarding Hypothesis 2, the analytical approach will be differentiated based on the behavior of each variable. Thus, since extraversion and imagination did not show a normal distribution, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test will be applied to them. Instead, for conscientiousness, which met the condition of normality both before and after the intervention, the analysis of differences will be performed using the paired samples t-test.

Hypothesis 3: After completing the educational activities, children will exhibit an increased level of benevolence, expressed thru empathy, a desire to help, and cooperation within the group (Increasing Prosocial Behaviors). For Hypothesis 3, the data showed a normal distribution of the variable both before and after the intervention. Consequently, to test this hypothesis, the paired t-test will be used, as the necessary conditions for applying a parametric test are met.

CONCLUSIONS

Children who participate in educational personal development games will score significantly higher in emotional stability and school performance after the intervention, compared to their initial scores. The results obtained by applying the Wilcoxon test show that the hypothesis is statistically significant. Therefore, children who participated in the educational personal development games demonstrated a significant increase in emotional stability and school performance. We can explain the validation of the hypothesis by the fact that well-structured activities, starting from clearly defined objectives and focused on personal development, contribute to the improvement of emotional self-regulation.

Children have the opportunity to identify, label, and express emotions within a safe yet predictable framework, which also helps reduce anxiety levels and affective reactivity. At the same time, we can take into account that educational games facilitate the experiential learning process precisely because they allow for the learning and practice of alternative coping strategies, leading to an increased sense of internal control and also an increased sense of self-efficacy.

Another perspective thru which we can explain the statistically significant results in relation to the first hypothesis is that the presence of a positive relationship with the activity facilitator contributes to improved emotional stability, promoting secure attachment and consistent emotional validation. Furthermore, exposure to such an environment that involves communication, cooperation, and adherence to clear rules helps develop social and emotional skills, which are precisely the important elements in balanced emotional functioning.

The association between educational strategies and emotional self-regulation is confirmed.

Educational programs based on the development of social and emotional behaviors lead to better school adjustment. Additionally, it helps reduce behavioral issues.

In the same vein, educational games activate multiple cognitive processes simultaneously, such as working memory, attention, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving. All the mentioned elements have a direct impact on academic learning skills. From this perspective, research in neuropsychology suggests that training executive functions in game contexts helps improve overall academic performance.

Participation and involvement in educational games can have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation because children feel encouraged to engage in learning tasks if they are perceived as enjoyable and relevant to their needs and desires. Educational games are designed to take into account children's cognitive level, as well as their emotional level and interests, specific to their stage of development.

Educational personal development games encourage them to explore more and more information about themselves, leading to a clearer and more positive self-image. Improving self-esteem leads to an increased level of confidence in one's abilities, which plays an important role in motivating students to actively participate in school activities, shaping the belief that they will succeed and that their effort is valuable and essential.

Furthermore, educational games for personal development can help children participate in the process of self-discovery or even discover and remember positive traits and qualities they were unaware of without contexts for personal reflection.

Educational games contribute to reshaping self-perception in a beneficial way if supported by constructive feedback. We can think that educational games lead to a feeling of usefulness and social recognition. The context favors the development of intrinsic motivation for learning, and the fear of failure or performance anxiety is replaced by openness and curiosity. These mechanisms contribute to the development of strong

emotional stability, which, over time, effectively supports adaptation to school demands and helps achieve better results.

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