

Positive Personality Traits As an Element of Creating the Image of a Physical Education Teacher

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Mirosław Zalech

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw,
Faculty of Physical Education in Biała Podlaska, Poland

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Abstract

Background: *To create a positive image among students, a Physical Education teacher should get to know their expectations and visions. The aim of the work was to identify the most significant positive traits which a Physical Education teacher should possess and to identify relations between variables determining students' choices.*

Material/Methods: *The results obtained from 744 students (471 females and 273 males) from two upper-secondary schools (1st school n=393; 2nd school n=351) were analysed. The research used a diagnostic poll method – questionnaires. Respondents were asked a half-open question and were supposed to indicate three most significant positive features which should characterise a Physical Education teacher. The analysis was made with the use of the log-linear modelling method.*

Results: *The research indicated the most desired features which should characterise a Physical Education teacher. The analysis of relations ($p < 0.05$) between independent variables (school \times gender \times year) and a dependent variable (selection of a particular characteristic) allowed revealing a second-order interaction for five traits (calm, caring, understanding, trustworthy, having a sense of humour) and a third-order interaction for three personality traits (fair, benevolent and consistent). There did not appear any relations between independent variables and the selection of such personality traits as self-possessed, friendly and being a partner.*

Conclusions: *Features which, according to students, should characterise a Physical Education teacher should serve as foundations for building a positive image or as the basis for modifying the existing one. Moreover, such knowledge of factors influencing the differentiation of the expectations of students may help a current correction of an attitude to them and to strengthen the teacher's authority.*

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Address for correspondence:

Dr Mirosław Zalech

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Faculty of Physical Education, Akademicka 2, 21-500 Biała Podlaska,

Phone: +48 507 139 101, e-mail: miroslaw.zalech@awf-bp.edu.pl

Introduction

An increase in the significance of information for achieving success by people (groups) and organisations has led to the fact that creating an image became an important element of socio-economic life. An image is a picture created on the basis of observations, beliefs, impressions and thoughts about a particular object [1]. It is a subjective collection of various and most frequently fragmentary, both positive and negative elements constituting the way a particular individual is perceived [2].

Companies [3,4], areas of tourism reception [5] or politicians [6] have already recognised the benefits which can be gained from the creation of a positive image. Until recently it did not mean too much for employees of public trust institutions such as health service or education. Social significance as well as the uniqueness of a profession was sufficient to ensure being positively perceived by others. Changes came together with social and technological progress, resulting mainly from the rising level of education of citizens and from the development of communication technologies. At that time an image gained significance and became one of the important ways of communication with the surroundings.

The way in which a teacher's job is perceived in a contemporary society is, apart from the attitude, skills and knowledge possessed by teachers, influenced by such factors as traditions and the level of the development of education, government policy, attitude of teachers to their profession, strength and direction of professional organisations' influence, the importance of education in a society or the accessibility of education [7]. Teachers performing various functions in the process of education and upbringing should focus more on the way in which they are perceived by others, i.e. by parents, superiors, colleagues or students. Certainly, the image created might differ depending on the recipients and their expectations. It indicates the fact that an image is a category which is (1) individualised, (2) changeable and (3) internally complex. Taking up the task of creating or modifying one's own image requires getting acquainted with the expectations of recipients and their ideas first, and subsequently, starting its creation.

The aim of the research was to define what personality traits, according to upper-secondary school students, are the most significant in a Physical Education teacher and to indicate which variables differentiate their choices.

Material and methods

The research was conducted among 813 students of three years (1st, 2nd, 3rd) in two comprehensive upper-secondary schools (1st and 2nd Upper-Secondary School – 1LO and 2LO) located in the town belonging to the Lublin region. Factors which differentiated both schools included prestige and tradition (1LO<2LO), location (1LO – residential area, 2LO – city centre), number of physical education teachers employed (1LO>2LO), sports facilities and emphasis put on sports activities (1LO>2LO), an opportunity to develop sports interests (1LO>2LO) and the level of selection while recruiting students to school (1LO<2LO). The task the subjects were to fulfil included indicating three positive traits which should distinguish a Physical Education teacher. Respondents selected from among the following traits: fair, being a partner, benevolent, patient, calm, consistent, caring, understanding, trustworthy, friendly, with a sense of humour, self-possessed or they could add one feature of their own. The research was anonymous and included 437 students from the 1st Upper Secondary School, 44 of whom either did not give any answer or indicated too few or too many traits. The task was performed correctly by 393 students (243 females and 150 males). In the 2nd Upper-Secondary School the research included 376 students, 25 of whom realised the task incorrectly. Three traits were indicated by 351 students (228 females and 123 males). The data of all the subjects (n=744) who indicated three most significant traits were brought into analysis. In order to do this, a log-linear analysis was used, while the results were accepted as statistically significant for the level of $p<0.05$. Calculations were made with the use of Statistica 8 software. The reliability of the tool was assessed on the basis of results obtained during a pilot study by means of a test-retest method repeated with a week break (n=63 students). Kappa coefficient was 0.90.

Results

The analysis of the particular traits selected by students revealed that the most desired features characterising a Physical Education teacher are understanding (53.49%), fairness (47.31%), patience (39.25%) and a sense of humour (39.25%). The least frequently indicated traits included being caring (6.05%) and “other traits” (3.49%). The last option was indicated by 14 people from the 1st and 2nd Upper-Secondary School. They mentioned such features as sporty, hardworking, helpful, goal-oriented, active, demanding, taking into consideration students’ abilities while giving grades, kind, good-looking, responsible, engaged in work and unbiased.

According to both female and male students, the most significant features characterising a Physical Education teacher are the same. The difference results only from the percentage of females and males who indicated each of these traits. Almost 50% of male subjects considered a sense of humour as the most significant feature, slightly fewer of them indicated fairness, almost 40% selected understanding and almost every third one chose patience. The majority of female subjects indicated that the most significant features characterising a teacher include understanding and fairness. The third most frequently selected feature was patience and the fourth one was a sense of humour (Fig. 1).

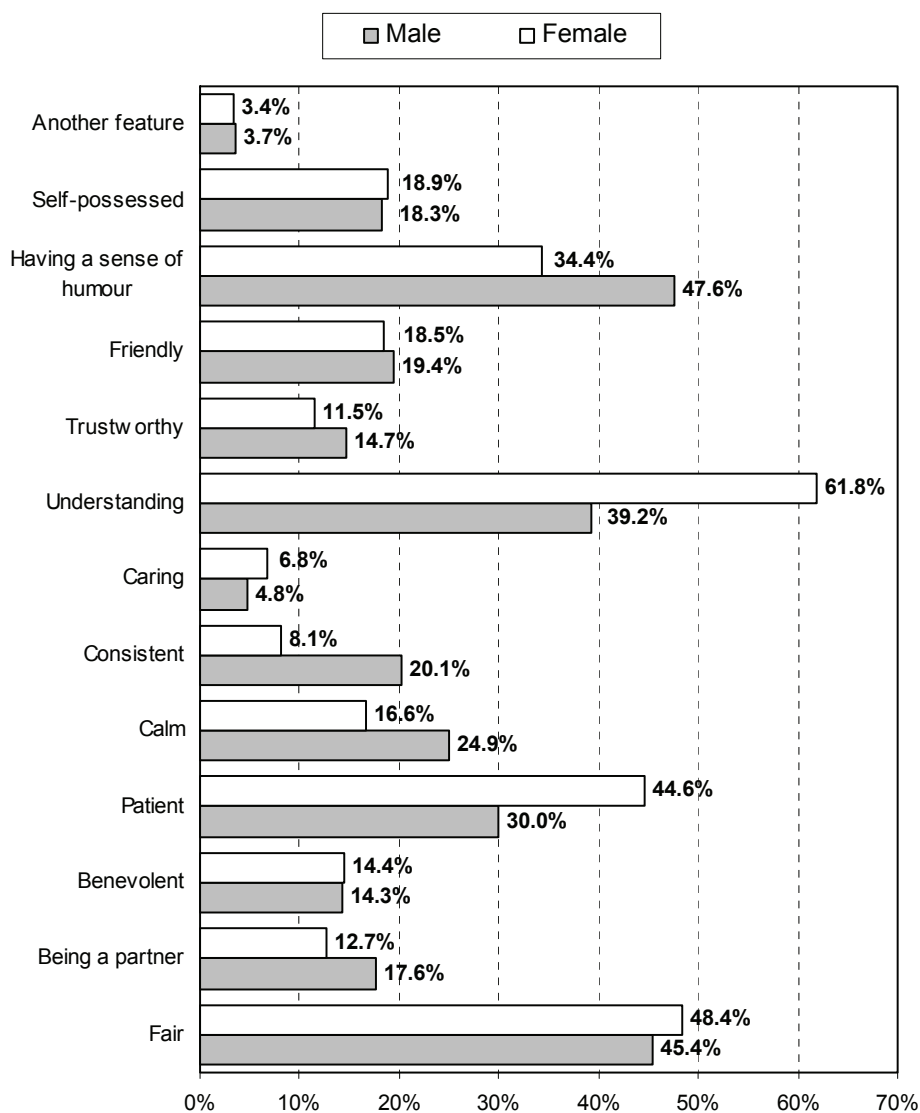


Fig.1. Percentage of selecting particular features by female (n=471) and male (n=273) subjects

In the next part of the research the log-linear analysis was carried out for each of the 12 traits. The option “another characteristic” was excluded due to the fact that there were too few people who indicated it and the answers were too diversified.

A simultaneous test of all interactions indicated that the inclusion of third-order effects for all eleven traits and a fourth-order effect for the feature “patient” (Table 1) would significantly improve the adjustment of the model ($p < 0.01$). Basing on this, it can be stated that the analysed variables are inter-dependant. Additionally, for the feature “patient” it was revealed that there exists an interaction between all the analysed variables, i.e. School x Gender x Year x Choice (χ^2 Maximum likelihood ratio = 9.37, $df = 2$, $p = 0.0093$). The test of marginal and partial relations of the remaining features indicated significant dependencies between some variables. The analysis of these relations revealed, inter alia, correlations existing between independent variables and a dependent variable (“Choice”) (Table 1).

Tab. 1. Marginal and partial relations test of variables for the features which a teacher should be characterised by (significant second- and third-order interactions for each feature at the level of $p < 0.05$ were taken into consideration)

Traits	Effect*	Partial relation		Marginal relation	
		χ^2 (df)	p	χ^2 (df)	p
Fair	School x Year	21.36 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	17.95(2)	.0001	17.71 (2)	.0001
	School x Year x Choice**	5.96 (2)	.0507	6.18 (2)	.0454
Being a partner	School x Year	21.64 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	16.88 (2)	.0002	17.71 (2)	.0001
Benevolent	School x Year	21.95 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	16.74 (2)	.0002	17.71 (2)	.0001
	School x Year x Choice**	3.37 (1)	.0665	4.78 (1)	.0289
Calm	School x Year	22.18 (2)	.0001	21.19 (2)	.0000
	Gender x Choice**	7.20 (1)	.0073	7.69 (2)	.0056
	School x Gender x Year	18.14 (2)	.0001	17.71 (2)	.0001
Consistent	School x Year	21.47 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	Gender x Choice**	22.24 (1)	.0000	22.14 (1)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	17.50 (2)	.0002	17.71 (2)	.0001
	Gender x Year x Choice **	6.77 (2)	.0339	6.49 (2)	.0389
Caring	School x Year	20.09 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Choice **	4.47 (1)	.0346	5.67 (1)	.0173
	School x Gender x Year	17.73 (2)	.0001	17.71 (2)	.0001
Understanding	School x Choice **	4.14 (1)	.0419	7.10 (1)	.0077
	Gender x Choice**	36.36 (1)	.0000	35.06 (1)	.0000
	Year x Choice**	11.57 (2)	.0031	11.85 (2)	.0027
	School x Gender x Year	14.53 (2)	.0007	17.71 (2)	.0001
Trustworthy	School x Year	21.74 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	Year x Choice **	9.30 (2)	.0096	8.68 (2)	.0130
	School x Gender x Year	17.98 (2)	.0001	17.71 (2)	.0001
Friendly	School x Year	21.30 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	17.56 (2)	.0002	17.71 (2)	.0001
Having a sense of humour	School x Year	21.80 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	Gender x Choice**	13.31 (1)	.0003	12.53 (1)	.0004
	School x Gender x Year	17.16 (2)	.0002	17.71 (2)	.0001
Self-possessed	School x Year	21.46 (2)	.0000	21.19 (2)	.0000
	School x Gender x Year	18.20 (2)	.0001	17.71 (2)	.0001

* (1) School; (2) Gender; (3) Year; (4) Choice; ** interactions with a dependent variable “Choice”

Searching for models was based mainly on the relations between factors connected with a dependent variable. Interactions of this type were especially interesting with regard to the aim of the research. The analyses that took into consideration the above assumption allowed selecting models which

explain in a satisfactory way the appropriateness of adjusting to the data observed for every feature (Table 2).

Tab. 2. Models explaining the abundance for particular personality traits

Traits	Model*	Maximum likelihood ratio χ^2	df	p
Fair	321,431	5.112	6	.5295
Being a partner	321,4	14.089	11	.2281
Benevolent	321,421	7.618	8	.4717
Calm	321,42	12.533	10	.2510
Consistent	432,321	5.658	6	.4625
Caring	321,41	9.324	10	.5017
Understanding	321,42,41,43	5.454	7	.6047
Trustworthy	321,43	7.221	9	.6141
Friendly	321,4	4.961	11	.9330
Having a sense of humour	321,42	7.877	10	.6409
Self-possessed	321,4	11.262	11	.4216

* (1) School; (2) Gender; (3) Year; (4) Choice

A log-linear analysis for such features as being a partner, friendly and self-possessed did not reveal any interactions with a dependent variable.

Second-order interactions were revealed between gender of the subjects and their choice of such features as calm, having a sense of humour and understanding. The first two features were selected by male subjects respectively 1.5 and 1.38 times more often than that by female subjects, whereas the third feature was indicated 1.55 times more often by female than by male subjects. The year in which the respondents were studying and which is directly connected with the respondents' age conditioned the selection of such traits as trustworthy and understanding. The analysis of the first feature revealed that 1st-year students selected it 1.88 times more often than 2nd-year students and 1.61 times more often than by 3rd-year students. However, the feature "understanding" was chosen by the 2nd-year students 1.35 times more often than by 1st-year and 1.13 times more often than 3rd-year students. The quotients of the frequency of selecting both features by respondents from the 2nd and 3rd year were similar. The school which the respondents attended appeared to be a factor differentiating the choice of such traits as being caring and understanding. Students from the 1st Upper-Secondary School selected being caring 1.96 times more often than respondents from the 2nd Upper-Secondary School, whereas understanding was selected the other way round (1.2).

A statistically significant dependence was revealed between the selection of the feature "consistent" and the respondents' gender and year of studying. The analysis of the quotient of the frequency of choosing the feature indicated that the 1st-year and 3rd-year male students selected this feature less frequently than their female peers, whereas the 2nd-year male students selected it more often (Fig. 2).

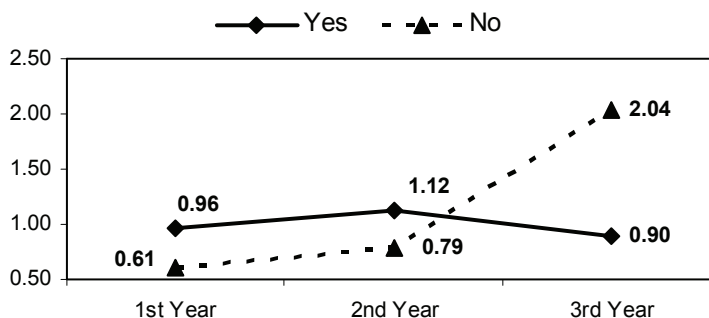


Fig. 2. Quotient of the frequency of choosing the feature "consistent" between male and female students

The 3rd-order interaction was revealed between the selection of the feature “benevolent” and the students’ gender and school. The quotient of the frequency of choosing this feature between males from the 1st and the 2nd Upper-Secondary School was 1.19, whereas between females it was 0.91. Female students from the 1st Upper-Secondary School did not perceive this feature as significant for a Physical Education teacher more frequently (1.29 times) than their female peers from the 2nd Upper-Secondary School (1.51).

The choice of the feature “fair” depended on the year in which the respondents were studying and the school they were attending. The 1st- and 3rd-year students from the 1st Upper-Secondary School indicated this feature more frequently than students of the same years of the 2nd school. The quotient of the frequency of choices made by people from the 1st and the 2nd Upper-Secondary School is presented in Figure 3.

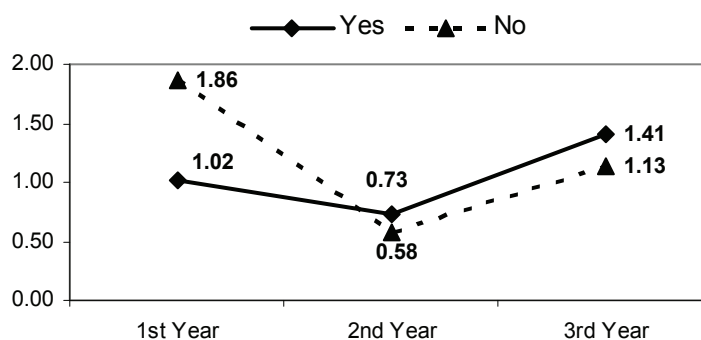


Fig. 3. Quotient of the frequency of choosing the feature “fair” between respondents from the 1st and the 2nd Upper-Secondary School

Discussion

Tasks which teachers encounter, their duties and competences [8] as well as desired features constituting an ideal teacher [9,10] have been described in literature in detail. An ideal teacher should be prepared for performing various functions and roles in the process of education and upbringing [11,12,13,14]. Pursuing such an ideal requires a variety of elements which to a smaller or larger extent constitute the image of a teacher. Creating a positive image well-associated among students, parents and superiors is one of the more difficult and more complex tasks. It results from personal differentiation of both teachers and people creating this image.

As it was revealed by the research, one of the most desired characteristics of a Physical Education teacher chosen by upper-secondary-school students was “understanding”. It indicates how significant it is for students to have a teacher who is tolerant of their mistakes, is able to unite the group, gives a chance to correct one’s mistakes, does not point out their mistakes continuously and does not over-criticise. The importance of this feature also results from the fact that its insufficient level in a teacher, especially in the cases when students have low self-esteem, may lead to the loss of self-confidence and discouragement [15]. The majority of students believe that people performing the profession of a teacher should act in a fair way. It has a fundamental meaning while evaluating the students’ progress and behaviour. It is required from teachers to set clear criteria which do not favour any of the class members and to use professional impartiality while taking any decisions. This feature is easily noticeable by students, whereas its lack may lead to improper relations in class [16,17]. According to students, a teacher should also be patient. Signs of this feature include persistent heading towards the aim and the ability to wait for the realisation of the given tasks for a longer time or to wait for weaker students to complete a task. According to the respondents, a good teacher is a person who is characterised by a sense of humour and does not take himself, his subject and surroundings too seriously. Students perform their duties more quickly and eagerly in the atmosphere of joy and pleasure [18]. The fact that students want some understanding and patience from their teachers shows indirectly that they realise their own imperfections. Due to the fact that they sometimes behave in an improper way, they need more time to master some technical elements.

Research on female and male students of upper-secondary schools carried out by other authors revealed that they believe that traits which are very useful in a profession of a Physical Education teacher are patience, understanding, physical fitness and objectivity [19]. In another research, when asked to list the main traits of a teacher upper-secondary school students pointed to understanding, fairness and self-possession as well as good nature, knowledge, good level of education and honesty [20]. These features are also desired in teachers by students attending lower-secondary schools [21]. Despite the fact that various methods have been used in the previous research [19,20,21,22] an attempt might be made at indicating fundamental personality traits of a teacher which are valued more than others by the youth. It allows one to create one's own image among students more consciously, and the development of these traits might lead to the growth of the authority. It results from the fact that professionalism alone, without properly shaped personality traits of a teacher, does not guarantee a success or social profits [23].

The analyses carried out in this work revealed statistically significant relations between students' choices of particular personality traits and a school they attend, gender and year of studying. The differences between the anticipated teacher's personality traits depending on the type of school which the subjects attended and their gender has already been described in literature; however, it has not been statistically proved [22]. Differences in personality traits chosen depending on the type of school attended may stem from the socio-educational background which students come from and which they are currently in. Another reason for the diversity of choices depending on the school or the year of studying might also be constituted by experiences which students have or have had with their Physical Education teachers. Furthermore, the influence of the year of studying on the choice made might be determined by the students' maturity, their socio-intellectual development and expectations and needs changing with age. Gender seems to be a natural differentiating variable resulting from mental differences between men and women [24]. The research and analyses let us presume that paying more attention to the shaping of the desired personality traits by teachers will help to strengthen their professional position while creating the picture of a teacher who is a trustworthy and modern role model for students [25].

Conclusions

The collected data and their analysis allowed for the following findings and conclusions:

1. The personality traits most frequently indicated by students as the desired ones should constitute the foundations for building a positive image or help to modify an existing one. A positive image among students may improve relations with them, facilitate classroom work, increase authority or help to shape proper attitude to physical culture.
2. It was revealed that there is a need for Physical Education teachers to model their image among students depending on their place of work (school), gender and students' age. Knowledge of the desired personality traits depending on the indicated variables may enable the teacher to correct the current attitude to students and may lead to exerting more efficient influence on them.
3. The shaping of such personality traits as fairness, understanding and patience should become one of significant elements taken into consideration in the curricula for future teachers and in training and re-education programmes for present teachers.
4. The process of teacher education should be enriched with examples of skills enabling teachers to reveal the desired traits in contact with the youth in form of a range of behaviours taking into account students' age, gender or school environment.

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