

PRRAEPGDA 2020**Personal and Regulatory Resources in Achieving Educational and Professional Goals in the Digital Age****CONSCIOUS SELF-REGULATION, PERSONALITY FEATURES AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT DYNAMICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING**

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Abstract

The article presents the results of comparing conscious self-regulation of achieving academic goals, personal characteristics, and academic performance in groups of students with different dynamics of psychological well-being during the transition from 5th to 6th grade. The longitudinal research design was used: measurements were taken in the 5th and 6th grades. Three groups of students (N = 98) that differ in the dynamics of psychological well-being during the transition from 5th to 6th grades were identified: positive, negative, and stable dynamics. The results showed that 71 % of students retained and improved their level by updating their regulatory and personal characteristics. The identified groups differ in regulatory resources actualized in the 5th grade. Sixth graders, who have maintained and improved their well-being, achieved this due to a high level of self-regulation. It was shown that the increase in self-regulation by only five percent is significant in well-being and performance in the group, which in the fifth grade had its lowest level. The significant role of a positive attitude to learning and high cognitive activity in ensuring the positive dynamics of psychological well-being and performance is noted. The results obtained in the study will help in developing strategies to increase the psychological well-being of students, and the prevention of psychological problems during the formation and development of personality in adolescence.

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Keywords: Conscious self-regulation, personality traits, attitude to learning, psychological well-being, longitude, academic success.



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1. Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate the psychological well-being (PWB) of secondary school students. In the last decade, the issue of students' PWB is of great interest to researchers (Burmistrova-Savenkova & Fomina, 2018; Steinmayr et al., 2018). Several recent studies focus on relationship between PWB and self-processes: self-control (Ronen et al., 2016) and self-direction (Moreira et al., 2015). Particularly interesting is the research on positive relationships between PWB and self-regulation (Fomina et al., 2019). The identification of regulatory PWB predictors seems promising, given the results of studies already completed. Thus, the positive influence of conscious self-regulation (SR) on the academic achievements of students and their students is shown (Fomina et al., 2019).

We view conscious SR within the framework of differential approach - as a system of cognitive processes (planning, modeling of significant conditions for goal achievement, programming actions, results evaluation) and personal characteristics (flexibility, independence, reliability, responsibility), which acts as a meta-resource for achieving goals (Morosanova, 2014). SR is a significant predictor of both PWB and academic performance (Fomina et al., 2020), and acts as a mediator of the influence of personal dispositions: extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, in the PWB-performance relationship (Fomina et al., 2019).

The K. Riff's approach is used to study students' PWB. It emphasizes satisfaction with one's self-realization in specific life circumstances, the harmony of goals, values, meanings (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). It has been shown that PWB is a prerequisite for the mental and physical health of adolescents, as it is positively associated with academic success, positive relationships with peers, lower levels of stress in the academic environment (Antaramian, 2017).

The foundation for positive functioning in the future is laid during the school period (Caprara, et al., 2017). This creates a need for longitudinal studies of the PWB dynamics in adolescence. Several works have shown the prognostic capabilities of PWB in adolescence (Converse, et al., 2018; Yang, et al. 2019). The analysis across different ages indicates that the level of psychoemotional distress of older adolescents significantly exceeds that of younger ones (Podolsky et al., 2011).

2. Problem Statement

Among adolescents, the least studied group appears to be the 6th graders (West et al., 2010). There are changes in level and quality of their PWB (Oriol et al., 2017), decreased academic performance, worsened behavior, decreased motivation, and engagement (West et al., 2010). However, researchers report both the positive and negative PWB dynamics (Gutman et al., 2019; Main et al., 2019).

3. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions. Is there a dynamic of students' PWB during transition from 5th to 6th grade? If so, how their regulatory and personality characteristics are changing? What is the role of cognitive activity and emotional-motivational attitude to learning in groups with different paths of PWB? Does the conscious SR change in the sixth grade compared with the fifth, and what processes and features are more pronounced in groups with different paths of PWB?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the specifics of regulatory, personal, and motivational characteristics of adolescents with different paths of WB during the transition from 5 to 6 grade.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Measures

For our study, we have selected a set of measures, assessing regulatory, personality, and motivational features.

1. The psychological well-being of students was assessed with «Well-Being Manifestation Measure Scale» (Masse, et al., 1998), which consists of six scales: «Control of Self and Events», «Sociability», «Happiness», «Social involvement», «Self-esteem», «Mental Balance» and the integral scale «Psychological well-being». Cronbach's alpha – 0.57 to 0.78.

2. The questionnaire «The style of self-regulation of educational activity, SSUD-M» (Morosanova & Bondarenko, 2017) was used to assess the development of conscious self-regulation. The questionnaire evaluates the regulatory and personal characteristics of students: planning, modeling, programming, results evaluation, flexibility, independence, reliability, responsibility, the general level of self-regulation. Cronbach's alpha – 0.65 to 0.82.

3. Motivation was assessed with «Attitude towards learning in middle and high school», the Russian adaptation of Spilberger's Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). It includes six scales: cognitive activity, achievement motivation, anxiety, anger, motivation to avoid failure and general level of attitude towards learning. Cronbach's alpha – 0.50 to 0.89.

4. Personal characteristics were assessed using the «Big Five Questionnaire - Children version». Measured scales: «Neuroticism», «Extraversion», «Openness», «Agreeableness» and «Conscientiousness». Cronbach's alpha – 0.86 – 0.91.

5. The average score in the main subjects was used as indicator of academic performance.

5.2. Sample

This article analyzes the data of a two-wave longitudinal study: the first wave – 5th graders, the second – same children a year later (6th grade). The sample included 98 (53 males and 45 females) 10 – 12 years old students (mean age = 11, SD = 0.28) of Russian secondary schools. Everyone participated on a voluntary basis with the written agreement of the parents.

6. Findings

6.1. Is there a dynamic of PWB in students during the transition from grade 5 to 6?

The results of PWB means comparison did not show significant differences between 5 and 6 grades ($p = 0.86$). The general level of PWB in grade 5 was 96,90, in grade 6 – 96,33. At the same time, the general level of self-regulation significantly decreased ($p = .029$) from 31.98 in the 5th grade to 30.40 in the 6th grade. But this decrease did not lead to a significant decline in academic performance (see Fig.

1). To analyze the reasons for the decline in the average level of conscious SR, we identified groups with a decrease, increase, and stability of PBW. We calculated the difference between the indicators of the General level of PWB obtained in grades 6 and 5 for each respondent. Then we estimated the standard deviation of this difference and divided our subjects into three groups based on calculated deviation: the extreme groups formed around the values below -0.5σ and above 0.5σ . The group with positive dynamics of PWB consisted of 28 respondents (61 % of boys), the group with stable PWB included 44 respondents (57 % of boys), the group with a decline in PWB consisted of 28 respondents (42 % of boys).

The analysis demonstrates that half of the sample retained their PWB level in 6th grade (“Stable PWB” group). Figure 1 shows that this group has a high level of academic performance. This group retains the same level of PWB despite the decline of academic performance in 6th grade. The group with increased PWB also shows the growth of academic performance.

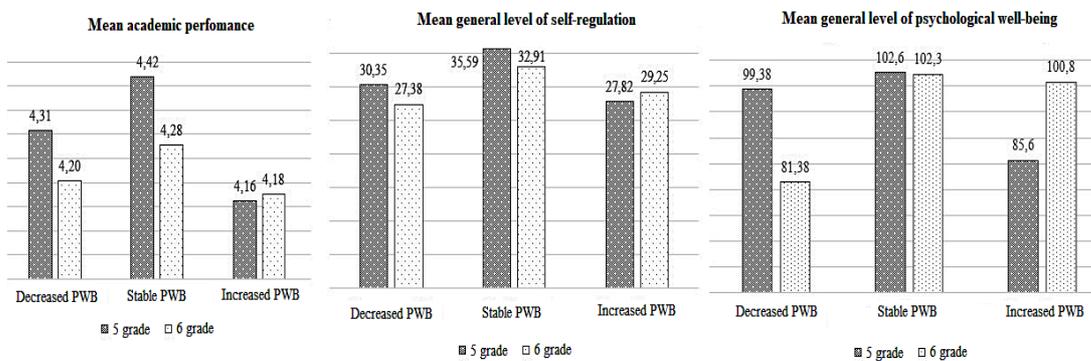


Figure 1. Academic performance, general level of psychological well-being and conscious self-regulation mean values in students with different PWB dynamics in 5 and 6 grades

6.2. What happens to cognitive activity and attitude to learning in groups with different PWB trajectories?

To answer the question of what emotional and personality mechanisms underlie the changes in psychological well-being, academic performance, and self-regulation, we analyzed the change in these characteristics in three groups in 6th grade (Table 1).

Table 1. Attitude to learning in groups with different PWB dynamics

Indicator	Group with decreasing PWB (N = 26)			Group with stable PWB (N = 44)			Group with increasing PWB (N = 28)		
	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W
	M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ	
Cognitive activity	18.27 ± 2.71	16.15 ± 3.1	-2.83**	19.14 ± 3.24	18.70 ± 3.30	-0.56	16.82 ± 3.74	18.64 ± 3.74	2.04*
Achievement motivation	19.92 ± 2.93	17.19 ± 3.4	-3.21**	20.14 ± 3.46	19.27 ± 3.66	-1.47	18.68 ± 3.18	19.00 ± 3.74	-0.28
Anxiety	11.50 ± 5.04	13.19 ± 3.7	-1.88	9.89 ± 3.55	10.93 ± 4.24	2.18*	13.11 ± 5.08	10.93 ± 3.74	-2.41*
Anger	10.42 ± 4.81	13.04 ± 4.4	-2.51*	9.30 ± 3.89	9.43 ± 3.76	0.54	11.86 ± 5.78	11.25 ± 3.74	-0.55
Motivation to avoid failure	12.85 ± 2.88	14.77 ± 2.1	-3.13**	11.48 ± 3.51	12.34 ± 3.75	2.47*	14.21 ± 3.26	13.86 ± 3.74	-0.93
General level of attitude to learning	3.42 ± 14.29	-7.65 ± 10.7	-3.78***	8.61 ± 13.65	5.27 ± 13.99	-2.75**	-3.68 ± 15.2	1.61 ± 12.69	2.52*

Note: significant differences are shown in **bold**, trends are shown in *italics*; * - $p < 0.05$, ** - $p < 0.01$, *** - $p < 0.001$

The results show that, generally, students tend to have high levels of learning activity and achievement motivation and low levels of anxiety and anger. However, two groups (“Decreased PWB” and “Stable PWB”) showed a decline in the general level of attitude to learning, mainly due to a decrease in cognitive activity and achievement motivation. This is especially true for the “Decreased PWB” group ($p < 0.001$). Also, there is a distinct growth of anxiety in the “Stable PWB” group.

The group "Increased PWB" demonstrates an increase in cognitive activity, a decrease in anxiety, and a generally positive attitude to learning.

6.3. How regulatory and personality features change in groups with different PWB trajectories?

Table 2. Regulatory features in groups with different PWB dynamics

Indicator	Group with decreasing PWB (N=26)			Group with stable PWB (N=44)			Group with increasing PWB (N=28)		
	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W
	M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ	
Planning	4.50±1.36	3.58±1.96	-2.54*	5.02±.98	4.41±1.58	-2.58**	4.32±1.42	4.04±1.93	-0.80
Modeling	2.96±2.01	3.69±1.46	2.41*	3.98±1.81	4.36±1.20	1.20	3.11±1.79	3.79±1.48	1.66
Programming	4.50±1.36	3.69±1.16	-2.81**	5.11±1.02	4.16±1.41	-3.69***	4.04±1.20	3.75±1.65	-0.89
Results evaluation	3.08±1.90	3.00±1.96	-0.23	3.68±1.58	3.86±1.77	0.66	3.25±1.82	2.71±1.38	-1.22
Flexibility	3.46±1.39	3.81±1.44	0.97	4.34±1.22	4.05±1.36	-1.30	3.43±1.57	3.89±1.45	1.50
Independence	4.35±1.02	3.00±1.70	-3.07**	4.57±1.00	4.98±1.13	-1.63	3.21±1.37	3.50±1.50	0.59
Reliability	3.27±1.61	3.23±1.61	-0.11	4.02±1.73	3.75±1.77	-1.38	2.75±1.84	3.71±1.58	2.86**
Responsibility	4.23±1.42	3.69±1.76	-1.53	4.86±1.27	4.30±1.76	-2.22*	3.71±1.78	3.86±2.12	1.01
General level of SR	30.35±8.47	27.46±5.6	-2.10*	35.59±8.19	32.27±5.63	-2.72**	27.82±9.91	29.25±8.36	0.64

Note: significant differences are shown in bold, trends are shown in italics; * - $p < 0.05$, ** - $p < 0.01$, *** - $p < 0.001$

The regulatory features analysis shows, that the “Stable PWB” group differs from the other two groups by the highest general level of SR and all of the indicators. The next is the “Increased PWB” group, and the “Decreased PWB” group has the lowest values (Table 2).

The “Decreased PWB” group demonstrated a significant decline in Planning, Programming, Independence, and General level of SR. Only Modeling showed significant growth, but whether it has a positive contribution to academic performance remains to be clarified. The “Stable PWB” group showed a significant decline in Planning, Programming, Responsibility, and General level of SR. In our view processes in these two groups are associated with a decrease in cognitive activity and interest in learning. Thus, students are less likely to set learning goals, show initiative, and willingness to take responsibility for their results.

The “Increased PWB” group does not show a significant decline in regulatory indicators, while the Reliability demonstrates significant growth. The Results evaluation in this group shows the lowest values in comparison with other groups. This result is consistent with an increase in cognitive activity since, for this group, external appraisals are less important than interest in learning and involvement in educational activities.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of personality factors (Big 5) in groups with different PWB dynamics

Indicator	Group with decreasing PWB (N=26)			Group with stable PWB (N=44)			Group with increasing PWB (N=28)		
	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W	5 grade	6 grade	Wilcoxon's W
	M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ		M ± σ	M ± σ	
Extraversion	43.50±9.18	40.15±8.29	-1.93	47,09±7,29	48,02±7,51	0.68	41.04±8.91	44.36±8.17	1.56
Neuroticism	30.19±10.00	36.38±8.90	3.00**	25,61±10,12	29,64±9,48	3.63***	28.82±9.77	30.14±9.42	0.24
Conscientiousness	45.96±9.34	39.88±6.36	-3.46**	49,11±8,75	47,14±8,96	-2.51*	41.93±8.36	42.82±10.50	0.85
Agreeableness	47.31±9.32	43.19±9.96	-1.91	51,07±9,53	50,55±8,77	-0.73	42.75±9.24	45.93±9.97	2.13*
Openness to Experience	48.65±8.79	42.23±6.52	-3.31**	51,70±8,42	50,25±8,36	-1.28	43.04±9.96	44.25±7.87	0.92

Note: significant differences are shown in **bold**, trends are shown in *italics*; * - p < 0.05, ** - p < 0.01, *** - p < 0.001

The comparison of personality factors' means in 6th grade demonstrated that the “Stable PWB” group shows the highest values of all indicators, except for Neuroticism (the lowest among the groups). The “Increased PWB” group shows average level of all factors, and the “Decreased PWB” group has low scores (Table 3).

However, we can point out the processes that may contribute to the identified decrease in self-regulation. The groups “Decreased PWB” and “Stable PWB” showed a significant increase in Neuroticism, most likely due to an increase in anxiety. Since well-being does not decrease in the “Stable PWB” group, we argue that a high level of SR helps these students cope with the difficulties, while students of the “Decreased PWB” group can't use this resource. A decrease in Conscientiousness also negatively contributes to academic performance in these groups.

The group “Increased PWB” demonstrates growth in all factors, which reflects the development of personality. Agreeableness is slightly higher than other indicators, which indicates a positive attitude of 6th graders to class activities and their peers.

6.4. Discussion

In the presented study we managed to identify three groups of students with different dynamics of PWB during the transition from grade 5 to grade 6. We identified consistent trajectories of changes in regulatory, personality, and emotional-motivational indicators. The results contribute to the understanding of the processes behind the changes in academic performance and well-being in groups.

The fact that almost half of sixth graders maintained the high PWB level is one of the most important results. Undoubtedly, this stability of psychological well-being is supported by a high level of conscious self-regulation. An increase of the general level of the SR only by 5 %, led to significant growth of PWB and academic performance in the group that had the lowest PWB level in the 5th grade.

Significant results are obtained for changes in the level of Neuroticism. The results show that Neuroticism supports high academic performance in 6th grade. There is a small amount of research showing a positive correlation between Neuroticism and academic performance in 12-13 – year – old students (Kufiyak & Tihonova, 2019). Moreover, it has also been shown that children with fewer problems in the mental sphere have a high level of neuroticism. And we, following the received data on the emotional state of our respondents, tend to agree with these conclusions.

A decrease in the personal characteristics of Conscientiousness and Openness to experience in the “Decreased PWB” and “Stable PWB” groups are somewhat concerning. As shown in our research, these traits usually act in a regulatory function (Morosanova & Kono, 2003). Since Openness to experience has positive correlations with both cognitive activity and conscious self-regulation, especially with the goal planning process, such negative dynamics have already begun to affect academic performance. The results are highly consistent with data on the contribution of noncognitive characteristics in academic performance and psychological well-being (see Antaramian, 2017; Fomina et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2019).

A consistent decrease in the "positive triad" – academic performance, PWB, and self-regulation – found in the “Decreased PWB” group may be a criterion for the need for assistance to such students. The regulatory, motivational, emotional, and personality indicators identified in the study that determine this decline may help teachers and psychologists identify appropriate areas of work with students.

7. Conclusion

Thus, we identified groups of students that differ in the dynamics of psychological well-being during the transition from 5th to 6th grade. An analysis of the trajectories of changes in the PWB showed that the majority of students (71 %) were able to maintain and increase its level by updating their regulatory and personal properties. However, on the example of a group with a decrease in well-being, it was shown that the potential of these properties may not be enough to organize focused behavior to achieve both high academic performance and psychological well-being.

Groups with different paths of PWB differ in regulatory resources actualized in the 5th grade. Those sixth-graders who maintained the high well-being achieved in the fifth grade, as well as those who raised it, undoubtedly achieved this, due to the high level of conscious self-regulation. Increasing self-regulation by only two points led to a significant increase in well-being and academic performance in the group, which in the fifth grade had its lowest level. A significant role in ensuring the positive dynamics of psychological well-being and performance also belongs to a positive attitude towards learning and high cognitive activity. The results of our studies suggest that the development of self-regulation and the support of cognitive activity will positively affect the development of strategies to increase the psychological well-being of students, the prevention of psychological problems during the formation and development of personality in adolescence.

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