

Self-assessment of school experiences and well-being of children with intellectual disabilities: An exploration of their cognitive, emotional and motivational dimensions and their school experiences to improve education policies

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship of emotional, cognitive and motivational dimensions associated with learning experiences in the school context of children with atypical development (RM).

Method: Quantitative methodology based on psychometric assessment was the method used in the present study. Two types of questionnaires as the Self-Determination and Experience Questionnaire and Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) were used that aim to identify the experience in cognitive, emotional and motivation dimensions as well as social support for achieving autonomy of students with atypical development. The study included 50 children in an age-range from 15 to 18 years, with an mean age of 16 years who attended 5 Educational Institutions of Tirana.

Results:

Results showed a moderate level of anxiety in students with lower expectations of achievement in classroom tasks ($Z = 2.285$; $Sig = 0.222$) while higher in external activities ($Z = 2.254$; $Sig = 0.433$). The Friedman test on profiles of experiences related to different activities reported significant differences between the five activities in the scale of expectations and performance ($Chi\ square = 13,960$; $Sig = 0.007$). The Wilcoxon test indices showed higher values for activities within the class ($Z = -2.727$; $Sig = 0.106$) while the Mann - Whitney test data reveals no significant differences between MR levels. Two other clinically significant differences appeared in the Self-Determination and Experience Questionnaire where students with mild MR reported lower scores on task perception and understanding ($Z = -2.052$; $Sig = 0.038$) while those with moderate levels of MR reported lower levels of introjected motivation ($Z = -2.789$, $Sig = 0.005$).

Conclusions: An internal coherence with the answers given by our sample, as well as the qualitative information collected in site, led us to confirm that more out-of-class assisted activities improve the cognitive, emotional and motivational dimensions of students with atypical development toward increased psychosocial well-being

Keywords: Psychological dimensions, Experience, Mental Retardation, Self- Evaluation, Learning Climate.

Introduction

In recent decades, attention has been paid to scientific study and finding the most effective forms of helping, well-being and quality of life of individuals, especially those with atypical development. The discipline of positive psychology, which is already either a reality in Albania and Kosovo, combines approaches to assessing subjective well-being that favor on the one hand the analysis of the dimensions of the experience of happiness and on the other hand promote the dimension of evaluation. Kahneman and Riis (1999) have pointed out the importance of the difference that both empirically and conceptually define the dimension of the welfare experience as the totality of transient states experienced in a given time interval. In the evaluative dimension the authors include the universal subjective assessment regarding the quality of life of the subject at the given moment.

These welfare study approaches rely mainly on the evaluation of objective indicators as in the professions related to psycho-social service the prevailing perspective is that which focuses on disease intervention and its general elements (Sala, 2004). Other researchers as Diener et al. (1997) noted the importance of assessing and quantifying the well-being of individuals, groups, and societies based on their subjective indicators as well as the individuals themselves who provide data on health state, satisfaction in different areas of life, their achieved results and future goals (Delle Fave, 2007).

The most significant issues of our daily life are related to healthy decision making and the level of psycho-physical well-being achievable depending on our priorities. Psychic definition of subjective indicators of well-being constructs the object of well-being in its extensive whole (Delle Fave, 2005). Therefore, it can be assessed anything that receives a subjective assessment of the person himself. Central constructs in this view are the satisfaction and reward for what may have been achieved in the past, hope and optimism in the future, and happiness and the

experience of well-being in the present through scientific instruments and methods (Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi, 2000; Hefferon and Boniwell, 2011). Researchers efforts to identify a positive and healthy experience can be classified into three main arguments: the positive experience of a given situation; the characteristics of a positive personality and the characteristics of the social and community context that can facilitate the understanding of well-being (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi 2000). As hedonistic perspectives like that *eudaimone* is related to the affective dimension and the perception of experiences and situations that give pleasure (Kubovy, 1999).

Eudaimonic Flourishing Construct

A well-articulated theoretical model that incorporates both the *hedonic and eudaimonic* views of well-being is the flourishing model (Keyes, 2007). The concept of prosperity is seen by the author as the most complete definition of subjective well-being and is characterized by 13 dimensions presented in the following table:

- two hedonic dimensions (perception of a positive affective state and satisfaction from personal life);
- six dimensions related to psychological well-being (self-acceptance, personal growth, having goals in life, perception of mastery of the environment, perception of autonomy and having positive interpersonal relationships);
- five dimensions of social well-being related to the best eudaimonia functions (social acceptance, social realization, social contribution, social coherence and social integration).

As it can be referred from the table below, an individual may be in a state of flourishing when he exhibits increased levels in at least one of the dimensions of emotional well-being and in at least one of the six dimensions of psychological and social welfare. In contrast, the condition of persons who exhibit low levels in the same dimension criteria is described by the author as "languishing", i.e., the highest degree of anxiety and disease sensation.

Tab. 1. Dimensioned of Flourishing according to Keyes (adapted from Keyes, 2007).

	Dimension	Individual Features
Emotional Welfare	Positive affective state	The person usually in a state of joy, interest in life, in a good mood, happy, calm and peaceful, full of life.
	Life Satisfaction	Is habitually or widely satisfied of one's life in general or to specific life domains
Psychological Welfare	Self-acceptance	Has a positive attitude towards himself, accepts himself, appreciates most of his personal characteristics.
	Personal growth	Seeks new challenges, is aware of its potential, perceives a sense of continuous development
	Life intentions	Recognizes a direction and a meaning in his own life.
	Mastery of the environment	Practice his ability to select, manage and shape the environment to adapt it to his needs
	Autonomy	The person is guided by personal standards and values internal, socially accepted.
	Positive Relations	Owns, or is able to build, intimate relationships and trustworthy social networks.
Social Welfare	Social acceptance	Has a positive attitude, acknowledges and

	accept human differences
Social realization	The person believes that people, groups and societies can positively evolve and grow.
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Social contribution	The person sees his daily activities as useful and appreciated by society and others.
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Social coherence	The person is interested in society and social life and finds that they are sufficiently understandable and meaningful
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Social integration	The person feels that he belongs to a community and has the support of it.

An equally important line in this treatment is the analysis of the attributes of causality of the subject's own behavior and the behavior of others, based on Heider (1958) theory on the internal or external causes of the individual and persistent or unstable causes in certain times and situations. This tendency to explain success or failure depending on enduring attributes or "*attributive styles*" can be categorized into several main modalities such as strategic engagement style, depressive style, negative style, external dependency style and competent style (Ravazzolo, De Beni Moè, 2005).

In each of these styles, subjects can attribute causality to their own or others' competencies while maintaining a given psychological position. The authors have argued that in

students with learning difficulties and atypical development, the competence style is more prevalent because the subject tends to attribute success to his skills and the failure to the lack of these skills. This argument is also confirmed by the data of this study. Researchers have pointed out that there is an attributive connection between the state of persistent failure and the development of the so-called "learned impotence", a process originally described by Seligman (1975) to characterize the feeling of incompetence accompanied by self-expectation of failure and disengagement to change (De Beni & Moè; 2000).

Attributes are thus a milestone in learning and competence acquisition situations as they influence students' experiences and behaviors in

completing tasks and performance. Attributive style influences emotional experiences, self-confidence in abilities, feelings of shame about abilities perceived as lacking, satisfaction from commitment and success in performing tasks, or feelings of guilt if no competence is displayed, gratitude for support, or anger for not having and increase self-esteem when a task is achieved or frustration when efforts are not rewarded with the expected result (Weiner 1985; Bandura 1997; 2001). Maximum experience is achieved by increasing the level of concentration and satisfactory involvement in the activity, perception of control over the situation, intrinsic motivation and obtaining satisfaction derived from them. The Flow method, addressed in the present study, is in fact associated with daily activities that require active involvement and performing enjoyable activities (Delle Fave & Massimini 2004).

Intellectual disability and its connection to psychological welfare

We can talk about intellectual disability when we refer to the noticeable manifestations of specific or universal cognitive deficits that can have various etiopathogenetic causes that can be described as "*mental retardation*". By the term Mental Retardation, DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) describes a clinical condition characterized by below-average intellectual function, according to assessments scored by standardized IQ tests. This condition is associated with difficulty in maintaining a behavior appropriate to the standards associated with chronological age and cultural context. Cognitive deficit appears during the period of childhood or adolescence and determines the course of a person's development throughout life. Mental retardation can be classified today based on scores on a person's intellectual and social fitness tests on a scale ranging from mild to severe. The four typologies of MR include: mild MR (IQ from 55 to 70); moderate MR (IQ from 40 to 54); severe MR (IQ from 25 to 39) and deep MR (IQ <25). Various researchers have also associated the disorder with certain cognitive deficits such as selective attention deficits involving memory,

semantic categorization, and the use of certain information to solve problems (Hagen & Huntsman 1971; Davies, Sperber & McCauley 1981; Merrill & Bilsky 1990; Merrill 1990; Tomporowski & Hager 1992). Individuals with intellectual disabilities seem to learn mostly in "automatic" form and use the rules and forms obtained without intentional control without always adhering to tasks (Cocchi et al., 1994). For Ziegler et al. (1999) individuals with MR have lower mental responses than the predicted normal abilities of their chronological age, including specific cognitive deficits affecting this mental state. In his studies, the author opposed the tendency to attribute intrinsic cognitive problems to all individuals with MR without considering external influencing factors regarding it as a misunderstanding of the characteristics of this disorder (Ziegler & Balla, 1982; Ziegler & Hodapp, 1986, Ziegler & Bennett-Gates, 1999). From the analysis of motivational and personality influencing factors, Ziegler et al. (1999) described five main trends as: 1) Tendency for positive feedback; 2) Tendency of negative reaction; 3) Low expectations for success; 4) Tendency to be led from the outside; 5) No motivation for own abilities. These aspects of personality are influenced by the specific experiences lived by individuals with intellectual disabilities due to their cognitive deficits and environmental demands that are above their individual capabilities. The cognitive deficit limits themselves have a strong impact on the ability of children with MR to adapt and integrate in different life contexts. Various authors have studied the way in which individuals with acquired physical disabilities can find growth opportunities in their experience (Elliott, Kurylo and Rivera, 2002). This possibility depends on several interrelated factors such as healthy behavioral pattern or personality characteristics and the living environment and social context. This dynamic construct was described by researchers as "*psychological increase as a result of acquired disability*" (Elliott et al.2000). This model highlights the role of individual characteristics and differences such as acquired behaviors or personality traits and traits related

to the environment and social context in which the individual lives which affect the way the disabled individual assesses his or her condition. The possibility of an adaptation is influenced first of all by the degree to which the disability interacts with the objectives and desires of the individual and by the form in which the latter processes his experience through certain positive symbolism. This elaboration of subjective experience has an impact on both elements of construct adaptability such as psychological well-being and physical health which mutually influence each other. Other research on quality of life has highlighted the “*disability paradox*” phenomenon of Albrecht and Devlieger (1999).

Method and Procedure

Purpose

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship of emotional, cognitive and motivational dimensions associated with learning experiences in the school context adapted to Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985, 2000) and Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000) as theoretical and methodological reference points.

Materials and Procedures

Since the beginning of the present study, conducted during the 2019-2020, we aimed to develop an assessment tool that could be valid for professional uses in school and clinical psychology. Instruments of this nature are intended to be used accurately and scientifically for students with atypical development and especially with MR. A grid called “*Competency Guide*” was created and made available to teaching staff, assistants, psychologists and students in an informative way, where the instruments used for the purposes of this study were selected. These instruments allowed us to explore the functioning of students' basic skills such as attention, memory, etc. and the competencies set in specific tasks and situations such as management of difficulties, group work, etc.

Assessment was done by completing forms and tabs on a five-level scale and creating a student functionality profile. These forms were distributed through email addresses given by consensus by participants for the purposes of

this study. This assessment approach through the “*Guide of competencies*” provides the opportunity to analyze the factors that favor the development of individual potentials in students with atypical development (Ryan et al. 2008). After receiving permission from the Education Directorates of the cities where the development of the study was determined, we created a list of representative schools. After compiling the list, we met with school principals where the purpose, process, innovations and main parameters of the research were explained.

A meeting was scheduled with the teaching staff where the project was explained and the importance it carried for the teacher and the leaders as leaders in the education system. After the approval of the teaching staff, psychologists and educators who would like to be participants, we asked for a second meeting with the parents to obtain their permission to work with the children outside of the official teaching hours. The administration of the process was carried out 7 days after the first meeting by e-mail for adult participants and at classroom schedules for students.

The educational institutions selected in the study referred to the purpose and basic methodology used in it.

After collection, data were encoded in SPSS version 26 program for descriptive analysis and non-parametric tests.

Instruments

For the purposes of this study, two types of questionnaires were used with the aim to research students' experience in cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions as well as social support for achieving autonomy of students with atypical development. Both assessment instruments were adapted to the specific characteristics of the atypical development of students with intellectual disabilities, as the sample-target of this study. The responses received were of the Likert scale response format on an ascending scale format (“*Not at all*”, “*Little*”, “*Enough*” and “*Very much*”) that allows the processing and evaluation of the dimensions under consideration.

In order to establish contact with students and facilitate psychological communication, we have added two open-ended questions, to gather certain information related to the motivational aspect.

The two instruments used include:

a. *Self-determination and Experience Questionnaire.*

This questionnaire consists of 18 separate items: 8 items for self-determination and 10 items for the characteristics of subjective experience while performing tasks. This combination was performed to obtain a more complete profile of the intended dimensions of the evaluation. The 8 items of self-determination research are taken from the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire for students with learning disabilities (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The original questionnaire consists of 17 arguments that explore the typology of motivation that encourages students to apply appropriate behaviors and have good school performance. The subject is asked to describe the form in which the typology of motivation in each item has influenced his or her behavior. For the purposes of the present research, 3 items were used for each type of motivation, the questions were translated and adapted into Albanian and simplified to be in line with the cognitive difficulties of the student participants in it. In our questionnaire the student was asked to show how much each type of motivation influenced the engagement in the tasks, through a 4-point response rate, as in the original questionnaire. Each answer gets a score from 1 to 4; the scores of each item are added to calculate the total scoring of each subscale (Internal motivation scale; Identified motivation scale; Introjected motivation scale and External motivation scale). The remaining 10 items related to subjective experience were taken from "Flow Questionnaire" by Delle Fave & Massimini and Delle Fave (2000) and Bassi & Della Fave (2012). The original questionnaire includes 70 items, some with open answers while others with Likert scale responses from 0-8. The original questionnaire is further divided into three main sections with items describing the experience of Flow and the subjects being

interviewed, general items exploring the psychological characteristics of the respondent and of the "anti-flow" experiences, i.e. descriptions opposite to the optimal experience of the subject. For the purposes of this study, 10 closed-ended questions were taken that explore the psychological characteristics to develop the profile of experiences related to an activity. We have simplified the items in lexical and syntactic terminology to make them as understandable to our sample. In the 10 items included here the respondent is asked to indicate the extent to which the described emotions, thoughts and motivations have been characteristic of the subject's experience while performing the tasks. The response scoring rate is 4 points, the same used for the first questionnaire. The answers to the experience questionnaire are specifically analyzed.

b. *Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ)*

The original questionnaire consists of 15 items in the full version and the items in the short form with 7-point Likert scale answers. The questions explore the learner's ability to perceive the support of teachers and educators to ensure the autonomy of students with atypical development. As the authors themselves argued, the questionnaire is appropriate depending on the specific learning context. For the purposes of this study, the abbreviated form items were used, translated and adapted in the Albanian language and scored with the same evaluation score of 4 points as in the previous questionnaire. The answer "Not at all" is scored with 1 point, "Little" with 2 points, "Enough" with 3 points and "Very much" with 4 points. The calculation of the total scoring was performed by the average scoring between items that represents in this line the level of perceived support for autonomy.

Administration of Questionnaires

The administration of the questionnaires of this study was carried out according to the suggestions of Finlay and Lyons, who argue that in individuals with intellectual disabilities the administration of self-reporting, unlike the general population, to complete an assessment form where the easiest and understandable way

should to be used for the individual with this developmental problem (Finlay & Lyons, 2001).

Sample

This present research included 50 children in an age range from 15 to 18 years old, with an average age of 16 years old who attended 5 Educational Institutions of the city of Tirana: 10 students from the 9-year school "Edith Durham"; 10 students from the high school "Petro Nini Luarasi"; 10 students from "Ismail Qemali" high school; 10 students from "Qemal Stafa" high school and 10 students from "Sami Frashëri" high school. The selection of schools was made based on data from the Institute for Educational Development (EDI) of Albania and the Tirana Education Office (DAR Tirana) for the territorial distribution of students with atypical development for the 2019-2020. Selection distribution was performed evenly to maintain data balance. Parents of students with intellectual disabilities were contacted through cooperation with School Directorates and through an Informed Consent form, which explained the objectives of the study and gave parental approval for student participation in the study. Subjects included in the study exhibit an intellectual disability that specifically consists of: 25% with borderline cognitive state; 40% with light MR; 25% with moderate MR and 10% with severe MR. Each subject was asked to compile both questionnaires with a total of 100 questionnaires.

Criteria of analysis

To analyze the internal consistency of the experience and disposal questionnaires, the

Tab. Descriptive statistics for the Self-determination questionnaire (range btw 2-8) in school activities

Subscale	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
intrinsic motivation	5.96	2.00	2.00	8.00
Identified motivation	6.00	1.50	3.00	8.00
Introjected motivation	4.98	1.485	2.00	8.00
External motivation	4.00	2.00	2.00	8.00

The following table show descriptive data on the degree of teacher engagement of students with

Cronbach Alfa index was calculated on the scores obtained from each subject in the completed questionnaires. For the items section of the Self-Regulation Questionnaire, the scoring calculation was performed according to the standard modalities defined by the authors themselves. Through the Mann Whitney test we estimated the differences between the variables of the subjects' experience. The Wilcoxon test was used to understand changes in learning patterns. Non-parametric tests are appropriate for this study given the lack of a more representative sample and the difficulty of accessing data with them.

Results

The analysis of the following data was performed after assessing the specific weight of the variable sub-scales in relation to motivation, engagement and involvement as well as the individual differences in the responses of students with MR.

As can be seen from the following analytical tables and statistics, in relation to the four typologies of motivation analyzed appear on average higher values in the degree of intrinsic and identified motivation that represent the typologies of motivation that are better integrated. Mean levels of introjected motivation are intermediate levels to the response rate, while external motivation carries lower levels than other scaling typologies. SD values in the range from 1,485 to 2.00 indicate a sufficient and discreet dispersion regarding the data collected.

atypical development. Data on teachers' responses on students' engagement in the tasks

they have to perform reveal a good degree of commitment ($M = 19$) while the standard

deviation shows sufficiently discreet dispersion data for the collected data ($SD = 17.9$).

Tab . Descriptive statistics for the subscale of Commitment observed by the teacher (range btw 6 -24) in school activities

Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
19	17.98	9	24

The Mann Whitney test was used to analyze differences in students' responses on intrinsic motivation and expectations of academic achievement. The data showed a moderate level of anxiety in students with lower expectations of achievement in classroom tasks ($Z = 2.285$; $Sig = 0.222$) while higher in out-of-class activities ($Z = 2.254$; $Sig = 0.433$). The data are coherent with those argued by Flow Theory for the link between perception and the ability to respond to task demands, anxiety levels in-class activities and the inclusion of satisfaction in extracurricular activities. These data have emerged stronger and prevail in the cognitive aspects of activities within the classroom. Out-of-class activities are involved in the emotional and motivational aspects. These results are also in line with the literature suggestions of Delle Fave et al (2005; 2011) who argue the influence of experience on creative activities.

The Friedman test on profiles of experiences related to in-class or out-of-class activities reported significant differences between the five activities in the scale of expectations and performance ($\text{Chi square} = 13,960$; $Sig = 0.007$), for the degree of intrinsic motivation ($\text{Chi square} = 27,919$; $Sig = 0.000$), for the degree of external motivation ($\text{Chi square} = 10,659$; $Sig = 0.031$) and perceived levels of anxiety ($\text{Chi square} = 24,681$; $Sig = 0.000$). Even in the subscale of involvement and engagement in student tasks, completed by teachers, Friedman indices appear different from activity profiles ($\text{Chi square} = 13.509$; $Sig = 0.009$).

Other identified and introjected motivation scales showed no significant differences in Wilcoxon post-hoc tests. In the calculation of the indices, the modalities provided by the literature were followed to divide the nominal value of alpha (0.05) for the number of resultants and as a critical point of specific weight of static importance we selected 0.05.

According to this analysis, we were able to decipher these data: students exhibited higher performance expectations in out-of-class activities ($Z = - 2.456$; $Sig = 0.001$), in frontal lesions ($Z = - 3.00$; $Sig = 0.003$) and motor activities ($Z = - 3.014$; $Sig = 0.000$). Intrinsic motivation for classroom activities has shown higher results ($Z = - 3.401$; $Sig = 0.001$) than other logical activities while motor activities ($Z = - 3.001$; $Sig = 0.001$) are also high along with other activities. These data are in line with our expectations on the various motivational stimuli of productive activities in students with atypical development.

In terms of external motivation, the indices are higher in cognitive and logical activities ($Z = - 3.004$; $Sig = 0.003$). Thus, the students of this study sample, have a perception to make greater efforts in logical activities when they are encouraged by educators and teachers than when they are motivated only internally.

To assess the presence of significant differences between the two typologies of activities, inside and outside the classroom, we used the Wilcoxon test. The data showed higher values in activities within the class ($Z = -2.727$; $Sig = 0.106$).

The Mann-Whitney test was used to understand the differences between MR levels on their competencies to accomplish the tasks. Data did not show significant differences between mild and moderate MR levels that had the highest scores on the LCQ questionnaire regarding task performance ($Sig < 0.05$). The highest difficulties of cognitive nature were characterized in the group with severe MR which consequently did not show any impact on the cognitive, emotional and motivational dimensions involved in fulfilling the tasks.

Two other clinically significant differences appeared in the Self-Determination and Experience Questionnaire where students with

mild MR reported lower scores on task perception and understanding ($Z = -2.052$; $Sig = 0.038$) while those with MR moderate reported lower levels of introjected motivation ($Z = -2.789$, $Sig = 0.005$). It can be said therefore, that students with mild intellectual disabilities are more aware of their difficulties in completing tasks while those with higher cognitive difficulties have tendencies of introjected motivation and lower adaptability. These data are in line with the studies of Ziegler et al. (1999) according to whom, when faced with logical and math tasks, students with moderate level of MR are more focused on external motivation and approval of others than on the full understanding of the problem and its real solution.

Regarding the analysis of teacher evaluation for engagement in activities, the data show lower indices in motor activities ($Z = -2.901$; $Sig = 0.002$) while the highest performance was evaluated in out-of-class activities ($Z = -3.001$; $Sig = 0.003$). This means that students are more involved in creative and leisure activities than those valued by their teachers in other teaching contexts. Teachers also reported that students with atypical development exhibit great difficulty in performing cognitive and logical exercises in addition to other activities.

The Kruskal-Wallis test confirmed clinically significant differences between groups with different MR severity levels in all scales and sub-scales of the used questionnaires.

Tab . Results of the Kruskal Wallis test for comparing groups with low, medium or high levels of performance

Subscale	Kruskal Wallis Test	
Success expectations	Chi Square	17.346
	Significance	.632
intrinsic motivation	Chi Square	4.42
	Significance	.576
Identified motivation	Chi Square	4.895
	Significance	.543
Introjected motivation	Chi Square	13.00
	Significance	.0001
External motivation	Chi Square	16.00
	Significance	.0001

More specifically in the expectations for success ($r = .632$; $p < 0.05$), intrinsic motivation ($r = .576$; $p < 0.05$) and identified motivation ($r = .543$; $p < 0.05$) students have shown a commitment and involvement higher in terms of significance than in the other two typologies of motivation.

The results are also consistent with literature on the strong connection between improved performance and high levels of emotional well-being, task motivation, and success.

Discussion

Collected results in the study, in coherence with the answers given by our sample, as well as the

qualitative information that experience in relation to the cases has given us, led us to confirm that the customized instruments used for this study are suitable for the dimensions of subjective experience in the sample of students with intellectual disabilities. The answers given by this sample are coherent with the literature reviews and especially with Flow theory in the correlations of cognitive, emotional and motivational dimensions and the relationship between expectations of performance and involvement of students'. It is also clinically important how the factor of integration and inclusion of students as a group in a task promotes their engagement and reduces anxiety

levels while performing tasks. It was also revealed how the characteristics of the experience during these activities were similar to the experiences of pleasure and commitment that occur during the creative leisure activities at school.

It can be understood that leisure activities outside the classroom affect students' perceptions and promote self-determination and well-being. In terms of emotional dimensions, an important finding that is consistent with Flow theory showed that there are higher levels of anxiety in students with lower expectations of success. In its entirety, the present study allowed us to verify the appropriateness of the research instruments used to understand the dimensions of experience in subjects with intellectual disabilities, excluding cases of severe MR. Analysis of cross-group differences with different levels of MR severity showed how good understanding of intellectual functions does not have a strong impact on the evaluation dimensions of experience. Assessing the typologies of school activities allowed us to deepen our observations about the characteristics, cognitive, emotional, and motivational dimensions of the student's subjective experience. From the observations of descriptive statistics and differences of experience profiles related to the five types of activities studied, differences between learning situations emerged. Exercises of cognitive and logical character have shown changes of clinical significance along with other activities; students with atypical development see themselves as less competent and anxious when they have to perform activities of cognitive nature. From the point of view of the motivational elements researched, it was observed how activities within the classroom are expected by students with less commitment and intrinsic satisfaction. The data collected in the study are coherent with the expectations predicted by Flow theory for the relationship between perceived ability, engagement, and emotional, cognitive, motivational, and experiential characteristics. As shown by our results, if the student perceives the required task as easier and more creative, he or she is more likely to have a stronger

commitment and inner satisfaction than when this perception is done for a more difficult task as those of logical and mathematical typology. An interesting finding of this study was the relationship between perception of boredom and the development of competencies and skills in fulfilling a task. Boredom levels, in fact, were higher when the task was considered more demanding compared to the student's perceived abilities. This data is also in line with literature analyzes that have argued for a more quantitative reading of the Flow experience model (Delle Fave, Massimini, Bassi, 2011).

To facilitate the analysis, competency values were divided into three different levels of distance from the subjective mean. The data showed a general tendency for the experience to deteriorate with changing conditions between levels, a tendency similar to what studies have described as "*learned impotence*", i.e., the expectation of failure and inability to do something to cope with the situation causes disengagement from a certain activity, which can be further aggravated if it is in conditions of reinforcement. This data is also congruent with literature reviews, where studies on the dynamics of transitions between affective states can characterize learning activity (D'Mello & Graesser; 2012).

If the individual who is in the process of learning, if confronted with contradictions, anomalies, discordances or obstacles to his objectives experiences a state of cognitive imbalance. Failure to restore this balance can develop a state of frustration, which if not addressed in time, leads to boredom of experiencing the feeling of occasional failure.

The demand on teachers to assess student performance in activities inside and outside the classroom allowed us to assess the relationship between this indicator and self-assessment of well-being. The data collected from the cross-group differences test with performance levels show a congruence between teachers' assessment and students' experience reflected on their success expectations and competencies in the face of tasks of different natures. The cross-item analysis in the LCQ questionnaire and the dimensions of the experience self-assessment

and the analysis of the difference of the variables between the groups with different scores in the LCQ, allowed us to explore the relationships between the dimensions and subjective characteristics of school experiences. Results showed that in applied school activities within the classroom is revealed a reduced ability of the student to focus and motivation in solving tasks. The perception by the student that in performing his activities will be a supportive context for his needs for autonomy and well-being, will increase the levels of motivation and active involvement of the student in coping with certain tasks or situations of school life.

Conclusion

In the present research we made an attempt to explore in a new perspective of psychology the sense of well-being depending on the self-assessment of students with atypical development. Our main objective was to understand this dimension of child welfare through protocols and instruments of targeted research for students with intellectual disabilities. Another objective related to the assessment of the course of subjective experiences, motivation and performance of students with MR. Throughout this study we looked at the analysis of the influence of cognitive, emotional and motivational factors on subjective experiences in persons with cognitive deficits.

Research of this nature is still underdeveloped in the Albanian psychological context. The shortcomings of these genuine studies have brought a limit to the full analysis and review of the contextual literature. It is thus very important not only to encourage more direct study for this group of children but also to foster research models, specific research methods to study the experiences of students with intellectual disabilities in the tasks to be completed and tailored psychoeducational strategies to fill the gaps that probably leave room for prejudice for this population group. In the present research we focused on the study of emotional, cognitive and motivational dimensions and learning experiences in the school context according to Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 2000) and self-assessment theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985;

2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000) as theoretical and methodological reference points. The data collected in the study sample showed that the perception of activities as less engaging than can be afforded by children with atypical development actually have higher indices of motivation, engagement, positive affective state as opposed to the initial assumption put on this category of children. These data are also coherent with the literature reviews on everyday experience (Delle Fave, Massimini e Bassi, 2012) and the variables of affective states in the learning process (Graesser & D'Mello, 2012).

From the analysis of the results of our study, the activities performed in the classroom were differentiated from those outside the classroom through the models of experience included in them. In both activity typologies addressed in this study there was a correlation between the responses collected in our sample and the data reported in the literature on creative activities (Bassi & Delle Fave, 2012).

These data are especially important for the motivational aspects of the tasks as in the activities inside the classroom the levels of engagement, involvement and control of the situation are not related to the integrative stimulation of motivation while in the out-of-class activities and creative activities this level of involvement and integration is high. Differences of clinical significance emerged in the analysis of certain competencies in classroom work such as cognitive-logical skills and practical out-of-class activities. As shown either in the literature, the biggest problem encountered in these cases of students with intellectual disabilities is the development of motivation styles that is oriented to avoid failure rather than finding solutions. Although out-of-class activities for students with atypical development, activities of leisure time are more structured, they allow people with intellectual disabilities to experience positive experiences and psychosomatic well-being, essential also for their social integration. The data collected are coherent with the literature reviews on the interrelationships between dimensions of motivation, learning conditions, coping with anxiety and worry in task solving.

Significant data were also collected from performance assessments provided by teachers; the data in this study were congruent between what was referred by teachers and what was described by students about their expectations for success and related experiences. The data showed, as confirmed by the literature, a strong link between performance in activities and higher levels of emotional and motivational well-being.

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