

# Choosing a university degree is not linked to personality

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Two of every three young people at the age of starting university don't have a clear idea of what to study. Credit: SINC

Researchers from the University of Cádiz (UCA) have studied the connection between professional preferences and personality, based on interviews and questionnaires carried out on 735 secondary school students from the province of Cadiz. The results indicate that personality does not have an influence when choosing a professional career.

"The data shows us that there is no strong relationship between the choice of university degree (vocation) and personality traits. As a result the use of personality questionnaires in career guidance processes will have to be reconsidered and taken as relevant information", Manuel Antonio García Sedeño, main researcher of the study and professor of Evolutionary and Educational Psychology at UCA, explains to SINC.

The participants in the study which the journal *Psychological Reports* recently published were selected during the academic year 2004-2005 through a random teacher in the province of Cadiz. In total, 735 students from the 4th year of ESO (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Compulsory Secondary Education), of which 371 were boys (50.5%) and 364 girls (49.5%) of between 17 and 20 years old.

To discover the schoolchildren's vocational factors the 'Kuder-C' questionnaire was used, which evaluates their professional interests according to 10 different fields of work: outdoors, mechanical, arithmetic, scientific, persuasive, artistic, literary, musical, administrative and social assistance; and which is aimed to help students to focus their training activities and choose a career.

The Cattell questionnaire was also used to evaluate personality factors and obtain results related to leadership ability and creativity, as well as a motivation fluctuation rate.

In addition, all the participants were asked to indicate what subjects they would like to study out of 52 university degrees. This variable was given the name "Degree" and two different groups were created based on the preferences: Science / Technology and Humanities / Social Sciences.

## **Two of every three students don't know what they want to do**

"Two of every three young people at the age of starting university don't have a clear idea of what to study, so useful information tools need to be provided", García Sedeño points out.

The data obtained reconfirmed that "the sex of the individual is not an important variable in the connection between [personality](#) traits and

general preference for topics studied at university".

Social researchers link extroversion with mechanics, arithmetic and persuasion. On the other hand, having strong determination has a negative link with the artistic factor.

The team states that the trait of independence is negatively linked with persuasive work and interest in social assistance.

Professional career development theories are being revised and are grouped under the concepts of 'professional maturity' (the capacity for making decisions on life in general and in particular on careers) and 'relevance' (the value that individuals attribute to each of the roles they play in their lives).

This study is part of a series of projects on professional guidance and motivation which the UCA research team has carried out.

**More information:** Manuel Antonio García Sedeño, José I. Navarro, Inmaculada Menacho. "Relationship between personality traits and vocational choice". Psychological Reports, 105(2):633-42, Oct 2009.

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