

## VALUE ORIENTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONAL STRUCTURES IN DANCE STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on value orientations and motivational structures of dance students. It also compares the results found in dancers with an average population of their age. Method of LMI standardized questionnaire, which consists of seventeen scales of professional achievement motivation, was used to collect the data.

The research sample consisted of 13 female dancers - students (aged 17 - 19 years) of the seventh (last but one) class of a dance conservatory. They are to become professional dancers. They follow general high-school subjects and they usually attend three or four ninety-minute-long dance lessons each day.

The results of this pilot study showed stronger achievement motivation in dance students than in their peer population.

**Key Words:** *LMI questionnaire, Value orientation, Motivation, Dance*

**JEL Classification:** Z13 - Social and Economic Stratification

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

To be professionally successful requires having appropriate cognitive abilities and achievement motivation (Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Schuler & Prochaska, 2011). If the behaviour of a certain profession is not focused on an achievement as a main goal, the achievement motivation plays even more important part (Schuler & Prochaska, 2011). He names sport and artistic performances as examples of such professional achievements. That is why we decided to conduct this survey on a group of dance students who are to become professional dancers.

The achievement motivation depends on (mainly, but not exclusively) self-consciousness, tendency of emotional conflict between expectations of success and fear of failing, aspect of activity, difficulty of tasks, mastering objects or humans, and experiencing proud for one's achievements (Atkinson & Feather, 1966; McClelland, 1985; Murray, 1938; Weiner, 1985).

Cassidy and Lynn (1989) see motivation as a component of: work ethic, pursuit of excellence, status aspiration, competitiveness, dominance, acquisitiveness for money and material wealth, and mastery, out of which Schuler and Prochaska (2011) highlight components of dominance and status aspiration.

By analyzing other motivation theories Schuler and Prochaska (2011) suggest that motivation can be seen as something going "across" other big personality characteristics, something which stresses potential features especially relevant in a professional context. Another way of viewing achievement motivation is as a "super factor" combining neuroticism, diligence and cordiality. Schuler and Prochaska (ibid) came to the conclusion that achievement motivation cannot be understood as a limited construct; a global behavioural orientation reflecting different features of personality should be used instead.

## **2. METHODS**

The aim of the LMI method is to represent all relevant dimensions of achievement motivation, which would allow using it both in personality research and in practice (Schuler & Prochaska, 2011).

### **2.1. The questionnaire**

Particular items of the questionnaire were created in the professional context; however, this context is not limiting their validity. The LMI test should be applicable in all areas of life where the attempts to succeed are being experienced.

The questionnaire consists of 17 dimensions connected to achievement motivation in a professional context. Each scale is represented by 10 items - questions; the questionnaire consists of 170 questions which can be answered in a seven-degree scale (from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”).

The scales (dimensions) of the questionnaire are following (Schuler & Prochaska, 2011):

- Endurance – for managing tasks set by ourselves or by others
- Domination – tendency to influence others and lead them, use other people for one’s own purpose.
- Involvement – willingness to work hard, a job has a priority to other life activities
- Trust in success – success is seen as a very likely result of one’s behaviour; skills, abilities and knowledge are believed to be successfully used.
- Flexibility – willingness to adjust to different and new circumstances at work; changes are not a problem, they might be even needed.
- Flow – concentration to problems without being disrupted.
- Braveness – positive assumption about activity results, concerning possibilities of failing; ability to manage stress and strain.
- Internality – belief that activity results are caused by the person himself and the person is responsible for them.
- Compensational effort – managing fear of failing, not lowering professional demands or running away from the work.
- Pride for achievements – need to experience positive feeling of success. Such people can be easily conducted by their ambitions.
- Willingness to learn – effort to absorb new pieces knowledge, which is valuable not only when directly used.
- Difficulty preferences – choice of the level of task risks; difficult task are preferred to the easy ones.

- Autonomy – one's own responsibility is preferred to directives of others; one's own decisions are highly valued.
- Self-control – ability to organize well one's work, to concentrate on it and not to postpone tasks.
- Status orientation – importance of good and important roles in social environment and front position in social hierarchy; the career and its promoting is important.
- Competitiveness – competitors are seen as motivations for professional achievement; competitions and constant comparing with others are being looked for.
- Being strong-minded – relationship to the future; having ideas about tasks solutions, making both personal and professional plans long time in advance.

## **2.2. Research sample**

The Dance conservatory, where the participants of the research have recruited from, is the oldest one of such a type in the Czech Republic. It was founded in 1945; in those days it was a dance department of a State Conservatory. Nowadays the studies at the school last eight years - students enter after finishing their fifth grade of elementary school, at the age of twelve.

The choice of the participants was intentional. They had begun the cooperation with the researcher the year before, when they were studied during direct observation and some of them participated in a focus group interview (Vrbová, 2010). The particular class (that is age) of respondents was chosen with regard to their comparatively long existence (seven years) at the school and also their coming-soon professional dance career. The LMI method itself also played an important part in choosing the participants; the norms had been created out of 16 years old and older participants (Schuler & Prochaska, 2011).

Respondents participated in the research in their free time (after school classes), and they were promised a small financial reward for their participation. The final number of 13 participants included six participants of the last year focus group interview; the other seven participants did not take part in the interview one year ago, but they were familiar with the researcher.

### **2.3. Data collection**

In order to contact respondents, researchers could use a contact list, which was created about a year ago during another research at the Dance Conservatory. One student was contacted first and she was asked to spread the information about the survey among her classmates both by email sent by the researchers and by reminding it face to face as well. The day of data collection was agreed upon.

The researcher arrived at the school in the afternoon (after the lessons were finished that day) three days before the last school day. This fact was both positive and a bit negative - the students were not stressed about exams any longer; on the other hand some students of the class did not come because they had felt like having a holiday already and had not wanted to be at school when they had not had to.

The students and the researcher gathered in a small classroom with chairs and desks. To begin the data collection, students were asked to describe the last school year concerning their dance experiences. They were generally speaking about more opportunities they had had, they had chances to perform in several theatres in different towns in the country, as well as abroad, and they also cooperated with the National Ballet Ensemble.

After this warm-up, a researcher's brief presentation of the grant and its objectives followed, respondents had the opportunity to ask any questions, which occurred in their minds. Then the researcher explained to them how the data collection would look like, the form of the LMI questionnaire was introduced and the way of marking the responses was explained. Respondents were asked to confirm - sign an agreement - their voluntary participation in the project. There was some time for them to ask questions and think about whether they wanted to participate in the project or not. Students were said they could leave if they wanted to, and they were also guaranteed an anonymous way of analyzing data given by them.

Then the data collection itself took place. While respondents were filling out their questionnaires, the researcher was ready to answer questions or resolve ambiguities. A few questions occurred during the process, mostly concerning correct understanding a particular question or whether a question was focused on general situations or particular (dance or school) environments. After the dancers completed the filling out their questionnaire, there was some

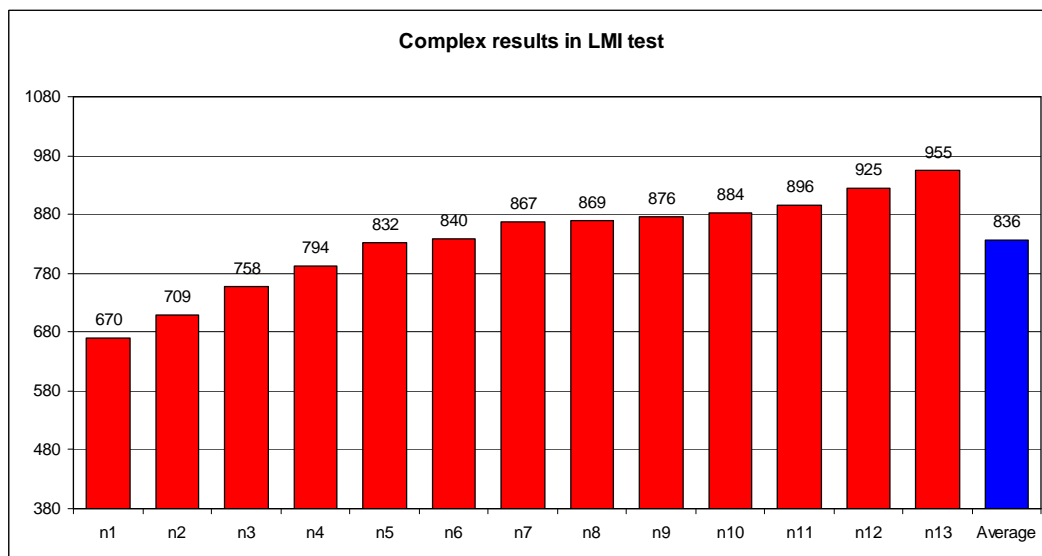
time for common evaluation of impressions, exchanging contacts and information on how the findings will be transferred back to the students.

### 3. RESULTS

The obtained data were assessed in LMI computer program.

The first graph (Figure-1) shows complex LMI test results of each respondent (n1, n2... n13). All seventeen dimensions were assessed together. The theoretical minimal score is zero, the maximal is 1080 points. The higher score, the higher motivation the person has. The lowest score was 670 points (out of 1080), the highest one was 955 points (out of 1080); the variability within the group was 285 points. The average score of the dance group (n=13) was 836 (77,4% of the theoretical maximum 1080).

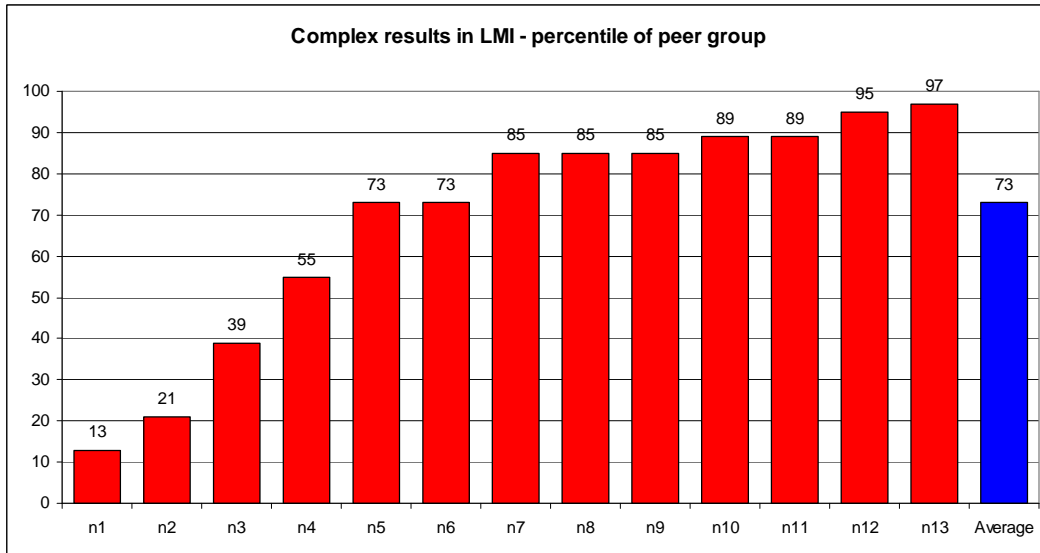
**Figure-1: Complex results in LMI test**



The results show that a majority of the members of the group is highly motivated to succeed. The second graph (Figure-2) compares individual scores of the respondents (n1, n2,... n13) with their peer population as a whole. The possible scores of percentiles range from 0 to 100. Two members of the group seem to have a low motivation (only 13, respectively 21 percent of their peers are less motivated than they are). However, nine members of the group show motivation which is higher than in 73 percent (and more) of their peers. The two most highly

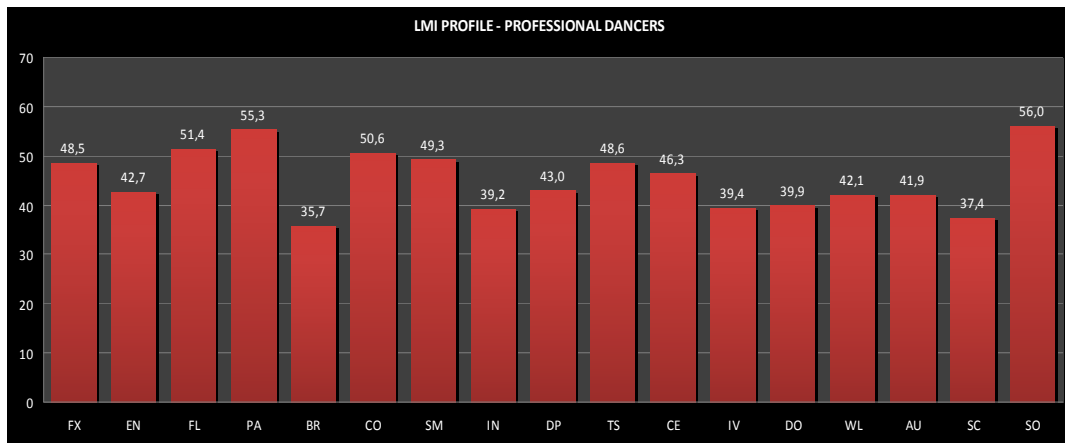
motivated members have reached higher motivational score than 95, respectively 97 percent of their peer population. The average score of the group is 73, which means that they are (in average) more motivated to be professionally successful than seventy-three percent of their peer population.

**Figure-2: Complex results in LMI – percentile of peer group**



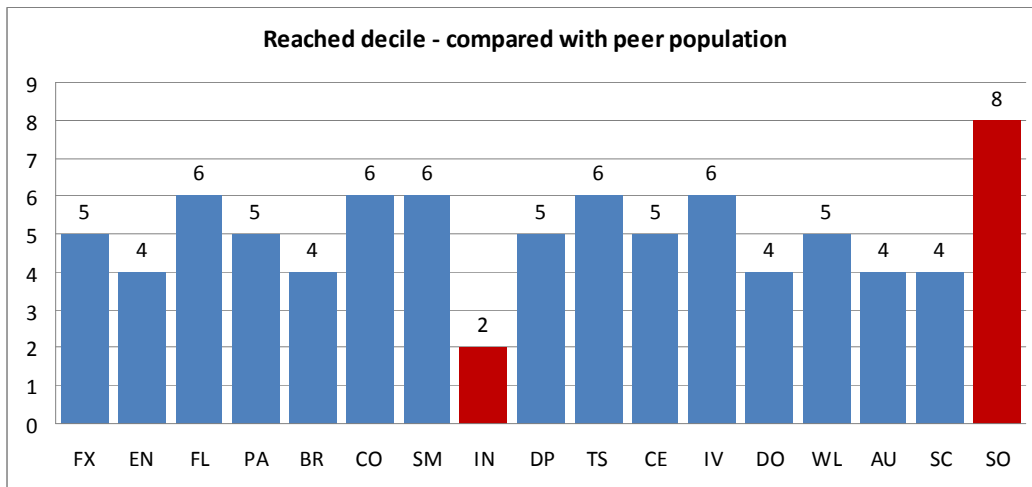
How strongly the particular scale (dimension) of the LMI test is represented in the dance group can be seen in Figure-3. The possible maximum of each scale is 70 (each one is represented by ten questions – statements with seven-point range of answers;  $10 \times 7 = 70$ ). None of the scales seems to appear really extraordinary. Slightly higher scores were reached in the scales of Pride for achievement, Flow and Status orientation. But if we look at the comparison of the scale scores with the peer group (Figure-4), we can see no big differences in the scores when they are compared with the peer population.

**Figure-3: Group scores of each LMI scale (dimension)**



fx – flexibility	sm - being strong-minded	do – domination
en – endurance	in – internality	wl - willingness to learn
fl - flow	dp - difficulty preferences	au – autonomy
pa - pride for achievements	ts - trust in success	sc - self-control
br – braveness	ce - compensational effort	so - status orientation
co – competitiveness	in - involvement	

**Figure-4: Reached decile in each scale (dimension): compared with peer population**





However, there are two exceptions: First, the dancers show comparatively low score in the scale of internality. This suggests that they do not generally explain results and consequences of their behaviour by their own abilities, activities and inner causes. Why is it so? One explanation may be the strict regime the students experience (during the classical dance lessons especially) and that they may feel themselves being under control of their teachers – who are responsible for the success or fail of their students.

Second, only two tenths of their peers show stronger status orientation than the respondents. The interpretation suggests that these future professional dancers want to get acknowledged, reach important positions, be unique, and have some influence on others. If we consider the future jobs of these young dancers, all of the mentioned characteristics fit well. To become a solo dancer in a theatre – ballet ensemble is much more desirable than to become just a choir dancer.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

First of all we need to state there is no aim to generalize the findings on the whole young dance population. We are very well aware of the small size of the studied group. However, this kind of respondents was examined for the first time and the results have suggested some interesting evidence.

The dance students generally seem to be highly motivated compared with their peers. They show low internality, they seem to attribute their activity results mostly to external conditions. On the other hand they are more highly status oriented than their peers. These differences might be caused by their life style – dancing on professional level. Such interpretations need to be supported by further research though.

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