

**PSIHOEDUCAȚIE POZITIVĂ  
ȘI  
OPTIMIZARE UMANĂ**

Volumul 2



**CORNEL L. MINCU**  
- coordonator -

**PSIHOEDUCAȚIE POZITIVĂ  
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- Psihoeducație pozitivă și sănătate -



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# THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ON DRIVE REACTIONS

**Nicolae Dumitrașcu & Cornel Laurențiu Mincu**

It is almost a common place that a higher level of instruction is associated with a series of mental processes and personality traits that differentiate- in general- these people from those with a lower level of education. For instance, as most the performance and personality tests indicate, the people with a higher level of education show more complex mental processes, a higher level of aspiration, a greater need for achievement, a greater capacity for reflection, more creativity, highly sophisticated Ego defense mechanisms, a wider range of emotions and interests, strong internal censorship and so on.

Actually, Szondi himself was preoccupied with how the drives can be "humanized" or "socialized"- of course, as an effect of a higher education- leading to socially valuable behaviors. In his well-known work *Triebdiagnostik*, he presents a series of syndromes reflecting what he calls "drive humanization", that is a process of socialization of the "raw", "natural" impulses, which are invested in abstract or creative activities. On the other hand, he speaks of certain "common" drive configurations met in those he calls- in an elitist and pejorative way- "l'hommes de la rue".

To the latter category belong the individuals with a simple psychological functioning, without capacity to sublimate and oriented to the pragmatic, tangible aspects of life. Their typical drive reactions are  $h+$  (sensuality and need for tenderness oriented to the concrete objects),  $s+$  (need to

actively manipulate the environment),  $k^-$  (repression, realist and conformist censorship) and  $p^-$  (projection, irrational thinking).

At the other extreme, Szondi describes various forms of "drive humanism" referring to the people with a more elaborate self-consciousness and complex or abstract interests. The typical drive reactions are  $h^-$  and/or  $s^-$  (sublimation of the erotic and aggressive impulses),  $p^+$  (mentalization, spiritual censorship) and  $k^\pm$  (ideal formation and adaptation to the reality (Szondi, 1973).

As for the "gender" variable we tackled in our study, Szondi speaks of certain "feminine" and "masculine" drive configurations, according to the theoretical signification deriving from the drive doctrine. Of course, the privileged place of these differences is the *Sexual* vector which, among other things, shows the subject's psychosexual identification. However, another important vector from this point of view is the *Ego* vector. Here, Szondi speaks of masculine vectorial reactions (e. g.  $k^\pm p0$ ) and feminine reactions (e. g.  $k0 p^\pm$ ).

Our study aimed to point out how the variables *level of instruction* and, respectively, *gender* influence the subjects' drive reactions. Our goal was to determine which factors and vectors are the most sensitive to these variables, in a way consistent or not with the Szondi's assumptions. By using a methodological design based on contrasting groups, we consider that the findings might be used in the future to contribute to the construct validity of the test reactions.

As for the variable *level on instruction*, we supposed-according to Szondi's ideas- that a higher education is associated with: a) an increasing capacity to sublimate aggressive and erotic impulses ( $h^- s^-$ ); b) stronger ethical and moral censorship ( $e^+ hy^-$ ); c) a superior capacity of mentalization and self-consciousness ( $p^+$ ), as well as a greater tendency to narcissism, non-conformism and individualism in

perceiving the world and acting ( $k+$ ); d) a stable ( $d-$ ) and secure ( $m+$ ) attachment.

As for the *gender* variable, we supposed that there would be significant differences between men and women, particularly in *Sexual* and *Ego* vectors, according to the theoretical masculine/feminine model postulated by Szondi in his drive doctrine.

### ***Methods and subjects***

The subjects were a group of 464 Romanian adults, with ages between 19 and 50 years old (see the tables in the attached file). Among them, 139 graduated only primary or high school, and 325 are students or college graduates. Taking the *gender* variable, 137 are men and 327 are women.

Unfortunately, the groups are not equivalent: both the variable *level of instruction* and *gender* are balanced, in direction of higher studies and, respectively, of the women. Each subject was administered once the Szondi test. After splitting the subjects' data in dichotomic groups (higher and lower instruction, males and females), we computed the relative frequency of each factorial and vectorial reaction. Then we used the Z test to determine the significant differences between the groups.

### ***Data and discussion***

Considering the variable "level of instruction", in the following table we noted only the factorial and vectorial reactions where significant differences occurred between groups.

a) In the *Sexual vector*: as expected,  $h-$  occurred more frequent in the subjects with "higher education". It shows a greater capacity to deny the sexual impulses and sublimate them in complex mentalized activities.

**Table 1.** Significant "Z" differences between the factorial reactions, considering the variable "level of instruction"

<b>Factorial reaction</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Percents (%)</b>	<b>Z value</b>	<b>p</b>
h-	Lower education	7.2	<b>2.57</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	14.8		
h + !	Lower education	21.6	<b>2.94</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	10.2		
s +/-	Lower education	15.8	<b>2.17</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education	24.3		
s 0	Lower education	25.2	<b>2.41</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education	15.1		
e +/-	Lower education	22.3	<b>2.7</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	11.1		
hy +	Lower education	8.6	<b>2.54</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education	2.2		
k +	Lower education	1.4	<b>3.89</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	8.6		
p +	Lower education	17.3	<b>5.05</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	38.5		
p -	Lower education	36.7	<b>5.45</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	12.3		
d +	Lower education	38.8	<b>4.87</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	16.3		
d -	Lower education	13.7	<b>6.58</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	37.8		
m +	Lower education	35.3	<b>1.96</b>	p=0.05
	Higher education	44.9		
m -	Lower education	15.1	<b>2.09</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education.	8		
m 0	Lower education	15.8	<b>1.98</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education	8.9		
m + !	Lower education	10.1	<b>2.51</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education.	18.5		

**Table 2.** Significant "Z" differences between the vectorial reactions, considering the variable "level of instruction"

Vectorial reaction	Group	Percents	Z value	p
h+ s0	Lower education	15.8	<b>2.36</b>	p<0.05
	Higher education	7.7		
k- p-	Lower education	27.3	<b>4.83</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	7.7		
k- p+	Lower education	10.8	<b>5.6</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	31.7		
d- m+	Lower education	13.7	<b>5.04</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	33.2		
d+ m-	Lower education	15.8	<b>4.51</b>	p<0.01
	Higher education	1.5		

On the other hand, the members of the "lower education" group seem more often frustrated in their need for sensuality and tenderness:  $h+$  occurs in them twice as frequent than in the other group. However, the  $h+$  reaction without accentuation occurs basically with the same frequency in both groups. It is actually, as Szondi (1973) and Deri (2000) show, the most frequent reaction in the general population.

The subjects with higher education show significantly more often the  $s\pm$  reaction, which can be viewed as a preoccupation with acceptance or denial of the aggressive impulses. It indicates a partial successful attempt to socialize and sublimate them in mentalized activities (with  $p+$ ).

Finally, the subjects with lower education use more often the  $s0$  valve to express their frustrations and tension through compulsive agitation or direct motor discharges. On the contrary, as seen above, the subjects with higher level of education are more inhibited from this point of view and more

preoccupied with the problem of controlling and sublimating aggressiveness.

We would have expected to occur between the groups a significant difference concerning  $s$ - reaction, which actually didn't happen. Are there perhaps some other variables (e. g. passivity/initiative) affecting the  $s$  factor more than the educational level?

As a vectorial reaction, the only statistical significant difference between the groups is the  $h+ s0$  reaction, in the direction of the "low education" group. It occurs twice as often in them than in the other group. Szondi (1973) interprets this reaction as "aggressiveness and activity of infantile or senile type". Hence, it is a non-humanized reaction.

b) In the *Paroxysmal* vector, it is interesting that, according our data, there are no differences between the groups regarding the ethical censorship ( $e+$ ). Thus, Susan Deri's assumption that  $e+$  occurs more often in highly educated people is not supported. At the same time, the subjects with lower education are more preoccupied with controlling their hostility ( $e\pm$ ). They seem to experience more often a state of tension, in which culpability is mixed up with anger.

As expected, the subjects with a lower education show three times more an  $hy+$  reaction, indicating a lower tendency to control the emotional display. We have to notice at the same time that there are not significant differences between groups in  $hy-$  reaction, the latter being the most frequent reaction in both groups. This means that, on the whole, the moral censorship is well rooted in the individuals, no matter their educational level, even if among the subjects with lower education occur more often individuals with weaker censorship.

c) In the *Ego* vector, a very significant difference occurs in the  $k$  factor: the people with higher education show more

often a  $k+$  reaction. As Szondi stated, a higher drive humanization is associated often with the tendency to intellectualisation, narcissism and non-conformism. It is worthy to note that Jean Melon found the people with  $k+$  reaction have a greater average number of Original Rorschach responses. Hence, we expected to find more often in the highly educated persons a non-conformist trait in their thinking and behaviour, even though we can't say that these traits would be general and characteristic for them in general: only 8.6 % of these subjects present this configuration.

We should note that  $k-$  reaction remains the most frequent  $k$  reaction, indicating the neurotiform realist censorship, specific to our "rational" modern society.

As for the  $p$  factor, the  $p+$  occurs indeed much more often in the group with higher education (more than twice), indicating a superior capacity for mentalization, introspection, self-consciousness and Ego ideal formation. Conversely, the subjects with a lower educational level show more often the  $p-$  reaction: they use more often irrational cognitive schema in interpreting reality (projection) and have a lower capacity to introspection.

In the *Ego* vector we have two vectorial combinations showing significant differences. The first is  $k- p-$  (occurring almost four times more often in the subjects with lower education). It is the Ego of the "common man", who lacks the feeling of his individuality, with a projective irrational thinking, unable of introspection, but at the same time disciplined and realist.

The second is  $k- p+$ , occurring in the higher education group three times more than in the other group. It indicates that their superior capacity of reflection and consciousness is associated with a realist attitude and capacity to critically evaluate wishes and aspirations.