

# THE COMPARISON OF PERSONAL TRAITS OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR MUSICIANS

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## Abstract

The existing research findings as to the differences in the personal structures of professional and amateur musicians are related mainly to the motivational aspects of the personality including social motives, self-expression and self-achievement. The personality traits has less been studied. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate the differences between the professional and amateur musicians in global personality traits as well as the impact on their psychological well-being and adaptivity. On a sample of a 122 participants split into two non-equivalent sub-groups of professional and amateur musicians in quasi-experimental fashion differences between the global personality traits and their impact on the individuals` adaptivity and well-being were assessed with Mann-whitney U-test. Dispositional traits were assessed with four psychodiagnostic methods including Five-Factor Inventory (MacCrae&Costa), the Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Multi-Factor Personal Questionnaire Adaptivity and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scales. It has been found out that professional musicians differ from amateur in higher levels of neuroticism, anxiety, asthenic features and overall level of psychological well-being. It is worth while mentioning in particular that despite high level of neuroticism and anxiety the professional musicians enjoy an overall high level of psychological well-being which has signified the therapeutic and harmonizing role of musical activity on the human-being.

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**Keywords:** Musicians, amateur, professional, emotional states, psychological well-being

## Introduction

Specifics personality characteristics of musicians attracted the attention of the researchers (E.Kemp, O.Blinova, B.Barash, D.Kirnarskaya,

G.Cipin, A. Gotsdiner, L. Bochkarev, A. Goldenveiser, E.Gurenko, V.Petrushin). Most scientists concentrate their attention on such personality traits of the musicians as anxiety, introversion, artistry, self-concept and also the aspects of the optimal concert state, a special attention is focused on the preparation for the performance and the state of concert anxiety (E.Kemp, N.Rozgdenstvenskaya, B.Kirnarskaya etc.)

A lot of psychological researches prove the positive influence of the involving into the musical activities on the physical and psychological health of the person (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Clift & Hancox, 2001; Coffin, 2005; Coffman & Adamek, 1999; Coffman & Levy, 1997; Dabback, 2008; Ellis, 1996; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Faivre-Ransom, 2001; Forrester, 1975; Hartley, 2003; Heintzelman, 1988; Juttas, 2006; Olseng & Burley, 1987; Rohwer, 2002, 2009, 2010; Shansky, 2010) but there are few investigations focused on researching of amateur musician personality.

The comparison of personal characteristics of amateur and profession musicians is a fairly new field of research. D.Coffman investigated the personality traits of elderly participants of amateur band whose traits might have been less adaptive and flexible than younger amateur musicians. K. Bondar investigated the sphere of values of amateur and professional musicians but the research is not related to personality traits.

M.Nikitchev also adds to professionally important features a psychological disposition of the performer to a particular musical style. A.Kemp and Krueger (1979) proved that there are psychological features that can be found in all groups of musicians. That are – introversion, independence, sensitiveness, anxiety and psychological androgyny. Kemp (1981a) found introversion, pathemia and intelligence to be significant traits of musicians while other traits were context specific and depended on the age and experience of the musician.

Using the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (or 16PF) for the musician`s personality diagnostics A.Kemp proves that professional musicians are dominant (E+), lively (F+), socially bold (H+) and private (L+). Kemp calls Panthemia with its primary factors (sensitivity, imagination, outgoingness) a fundamental aspect of the musicians` personality, because of their involvement with aesthetic objects. He also notices that one of the leading personality components is introversion, a significant level of independence, even with the elements of aloofness among the more talented musicians. Kemp also suggested that introversion may generally be linked to instrumental skills of musicians.

Studying the peculiarities of musicians` anxiety N. Rozgdenstvenskaya defines the specifics of this phenomenon and calls it “artistry anxiety”. The scientist proved that there is no correlation between the level of concert anxiety and personal anxiety which was diagnosed with

the help of D.Taylor`s Anxiety Scale. McAllister (1997), while observing a larger and more age-appropriate sample of middle-school band students, found instrumentalists were not significantly different in personality from a general population of middle-school students not enrolled in band.

Bell and Cresswell (1984) examined the relationship between personality traits of twenty-eight high-school instrumentalists and personalities of the general school population. They found high-school instrumentalists significantly differed from their non-musical peers when establishing norms for these populations. They also suggest that personality traits may identify those students who would be successful in music performance.

After the research of character features of professional musicians (A.Kemp), Don Coffman decided to compare the personality profile of professional musicians with amateur ones hypothesizing that they would have the same character strengths but less pronounced. The results appeared somewhat unexpected: instead of lower level of intensity in trait characteristics, pertinent to the amateur musicians, they were found to differ qualitatively from the trait profile of professionals. Most people are expected to score within the average 68% of the 16 PF standard score ranges and this sample`s profile is within the expected ranges on all primary and global factors. A closer examination of the amateur group profile showed some movement away from the mid-point for one of the global factors (Independence) and four primary factors: Reasoning (B), Dominance (E), Liveness (F), and Vigilance (L). So this sample demonstrates the tendency toward being more accommodating (IN-), deferential (E-), serious (F- ), trusting (L-), and thinking more abstractly (B+).

It is also important to add that Coffman carried out his investigation on a sample of amateur elderly people. The researcher pointed out that because of the age his research participants were found to be less adaptive and flexible than younger amateur musicians. The main traits of amateurs were seriousness, trustfulness and proneness to risk.

The professionals who worked with amateur ensembles observed high level of motivation specific to amateurs, an evident pleasure they experience in the course of music performances and an active social interaction with other members of the band (Cavitt, 2005; Coffman, 1996; Coffman & Levy, 1997; Cope, 2005; Palmer 2008, Rohwer, 2002).

Though some researches findings (Coffman, 1996, Coffman & Adamek, 201) showed that the primary motives for joining an amateur music ensemble are social and musical – people want to express themselves musically in company with others, not by themselves, the progress in the acquisition of musical performance skills is often an important motive for

entering the musical ensemble of amateur musicians (Coffin, 2001; Coffman & Adamek, 1999; Darrough, 1990; Juttas, 2006; Shansky, 2010).

**The objective** of this research was to compare the personality traits of professional and amateur musicians to identify their potential role in enhancing their psychological well-being and adaptive abilities of the representatives of this professional occupation.

**The hypotheses** of the research is the suggestion that the level of the involving into the music activity both professional and amateur will influence on the personality traits formation and also on the level of psychological well-being and personal adaptive abilities that are regarded to be a result of experience of successes and achievements in different spheres of life - in professional realization and harmony in personal life.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The sample of participants, involved into the empirical research included participants, aged 18-60 years (83 female, 39 – male). The group of professional musicians was represented by students of M.Glinka Dnipropetrovsk Conservatoire and the orchestra musicians of T.Shevchenko Drama Theatre. The comparison group - of amateur musicians, was represented by the students of Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University and their adult friends and relatives for whom music is a hobby. Participants were not paid for their services but they had an opportunity to get an individual feedback of the results of the personal psychological data.

### ***Data tools***

In the course of research the following data tools were used.

***The Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989)*** adapted for the native culture by T.Shevelenkova and T.Fesenko. It is a multi-scale inventory comprising questions about the actual individual well-being at the present life stage. The inventory consists of 84 statements and six scales: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a Likert scale of 1(strong disagreement) to 6(strong agreement).

***Multi-factor Personal Questionnaire «Adaptivity»*** (A. Maklakov, C.Chernyanin, 1993). The questionnaire is intended to assess different levels of disadaptational disorders primarily of asthenic and psychotic nature. The Inventory comprises 165 questions of a yes/no scale and has structural levels of Disadaptational disorders, Behaviour regulation, Communicational potential and Moral normativity.

***NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa et al., 1992, adapted by V.Orel)***, comprising questionnaires for assessing the Global Big Five personality

factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to new experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness. The inventory comprises statements assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***The Hospital Anxiety and Depression scale HADS*** (A.S. Zigmond, R.P. Snaith, 1983, **adapted by** M. Drobizhev). The inventory has a high discriminant validity in assessing two disorders: anxiety and depression. It has 14 statements with 4 answer variants with the growth of symptomatology.

### **Procedure**

The comparative analysis of personal traits of professional and amateur musicians was performed in the course of a quasi-experimental empirical research with two non-equivalent groups of participants (professional and amateurs), the differences in the personality traits of which were assessed with the help of Mann-Whitney U-test. One of the groups – the group of professional musicians was additionally split into 3 subgroups on the criterion of proficiency attained by them (secondary musical college students, conservatory students and theatre musicians with the experience of work).

### **Results and Discussion**

The statistic analysis with the help of **Mann-Whitney U test** presents statistically significant differences between the groups of professional and amateur musicians in the following scales: the Anxiety scale (HADS), autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life (The Scales of Psychological Well-Being), neuroticism (NEO Five-Factor Inventory), moral normativity, asthenic state («Adaptivity»), neuroticism, extraversion, openness to the new experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness (Figure 1).

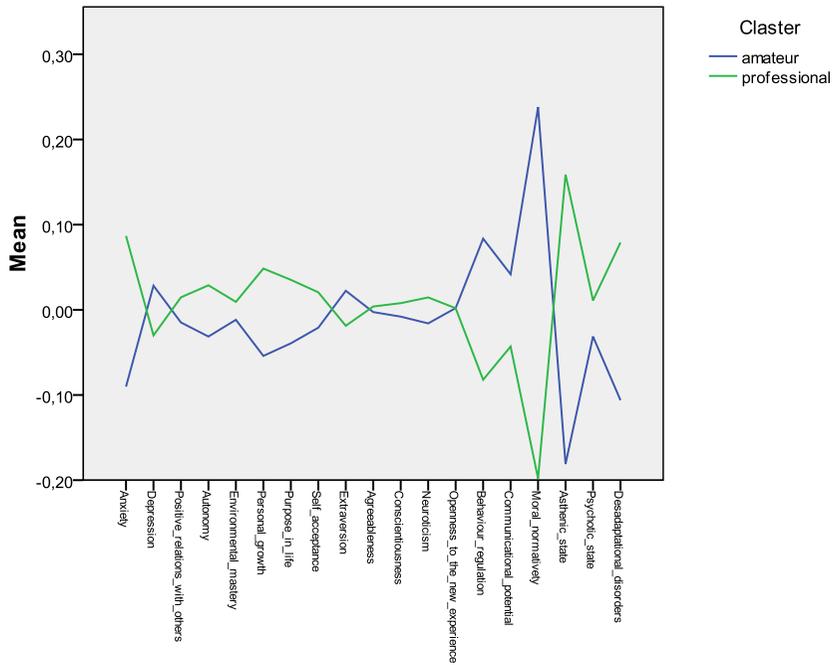


Figure1. The results of the clusterization of the sample

So, the professional musicians differ from amateurs by a high level of independence, ability to resist the social pressure in their thoughts and actions, to regulate their behavior. They have a sense of potential realization, a sense of continuous self-development and self-perfection with time, sense of life meaningfulness and also life goals (table 1).

**Table 1:** Between-group differences in the character strength variables of the Scales of Psychological Well-Being

The compared variables	Means value		Means value	Asymptotic means
	Professional musicians	Professional musicians		
Positive relations with others	59,53226	61,01695	1536	0,128
Autonomy	<b>59,29032</b>	<b>54,52542</b>	<b>1227</b>	<b>0,002*</b>
Environmental mastery	58,30645	56,57627	1710	0,537
Personal growth	<b>67,06452</b>	<b>60,38983</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>0,0001**</b>
Purpose in life	<b>67,82258</b>	<b>62,76271</b>	<b>1188,5</b>	<b>0,001**</b>
Self-acceptance	56,08065	52,62712	1547	0,143

\*p≤.05

\*\*p≤.01

On the other hand professional musicians have a high level of anxiety and neuroticism as it can be seen in tables 2 and 3. Our data as to the

difference of anxiety are in-line with the data of other scholars (A.Kemp, Rozhdensvenskaya) who also pointed on it. In behavior it can be seen as a lack of responsibility, deviation of a reality, petulance. They anxiously wait for the troubles; they easily give themselves up to despair and depression. Such persons have psychological problems in stressful situations when they feel pressure. They are very vulnerable and touchy.

**Table 2:** Between-group differences in the character strength variables of The Hospital Anxiety and Depression scale

The compared ariables	Means value		U <sub>emp</sub>	Asymptotic means
	Professional musicians	Amateur musicians		
Anxiety	<b>7,112903</b>	<b>5,762712</b>	<b>1288,5</b>	<b>0,005*</b>
Depression	4,33871	5,186441	1482	0,07

\*p≤.05

\*\*p≤.01

Other significant differences are related to the high level of anxiety, asthenic symptoms (Adaptivity) which are manifested as a high level of situational anxiety, sleeping disorders, hypochondria, high level of fatigue, weakness, low tolerance to unfavorable factors of professional life, especially in extreme or stress situations.

**Table 3:** Between-group differences in the character strength variables of NEO Five-Factor Inventory

The compared variables	Means value		Means value	Asymptotic means
	Professional musicians	Professional musicians		
Extraversion	50,3871	53,23729	1473	0,065
Agreeableness	52,6129	53,11864	1772,5	0,769
Conscientiousness	52,91935	50,59322	1626	0,292
Neuroticism	<b>51,90323</b>	<b>47,71186</b>	<b>1423</b>	<b>0,035*</b>
Openness to the new experience	58,22581	57,67797	1822,5	0,973

\*p≤.05

\*\*p≤.01

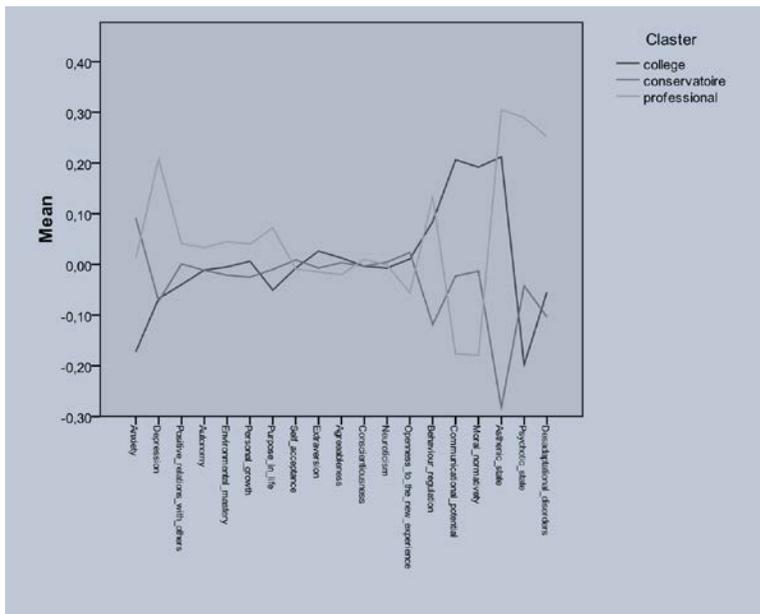
It has been also revealed that the group of amateur musicians is characterized by a high level of moral normativity, high developed socialization, adequate self-appraisal of their role in a group, sticking to the accepted group norms and also high level of emotional stability in comparison with professional musicians (table 4). At the same time the subjective estimation of their psychological well-being in the group is lower than in the group of professional musicians.

**Table 4:** Between-group differences in the character strength variables of the Multi-factor Personal Questionnaire «Adaptivity»

The compared variables	Means value		U <sub>emp</sub>	Asymptotic means
	Professional musicians	Professional musicians		
Behaviour regulation	3,580645	4,050847	1532,5	0,117
Communicational potential	4,112903	4,288136	1824	0,979
Moral normativity	<b>4,403226</b>	<b>5,440678</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>0,001**</b>
Asthenic state	<b>3,854839</b>	<b>3,576271</b>	<b>1385</b>	<b>0,012*</b>
Psychotic state	3,951613	3,898305	1728	0,582
Desadaptational disorders	3,951613	3,745763	1541,5	0,119

\*p≤.05

\*\*p≤.01



**Figure 2.** The results of the clusterization of the sample of professional musicians

As it was mentioned above, the group of professional musicians was split into additional subgroups of different levels of proficiency. The number of participants of these groups was not enough for the exposure of the statistically significant difference (23-college students, 26-concervatoire students, 11-orchestra participants), but some peculiarities of their personal patterns can be seen in Figure 2. It shows that personal characteristics of the college and conservatoire graduates are similar to the normal standardized means of the scales. The comparison of 3 proficiency level subgroups has showed that only one of them with the lowest level of proficiency (college students) showed noticeable difference in the level of depression. It can also be seen that the students of musical college are characterized by a high level

of anxiety, which subgroup was the youngest one among the participants of the research. So the prospects of further research in this direction is the extension of the group of professional musicians in order to get more detailed information about the personal traits of the musicians in different levels of their professional carrier and also of different musical specializations.

Our data complement the data of other scholars` data in the aspect of the impact of involvement into musical activity on a psychological well-being of the individuals which has not been studied before.

### **Conclusion**

The hypothesis of the research has been confirmed – the level of involvement into musical activity influences not only the personality trait characteristics of the participants but also their level of psychological well-being and adaptive abilities. The research proved the statistically significant difference in several personal traits of professional and amateur musicians.

The professional musicians in comparison with amateur musicians are prone to autonomy, independency, personal growth, a sense of continuous self-development and self-perfection with time; they are capable to resist social pressure. At the same time they have higher level of anxiety, neuroticism and asthenic features as well as low of level of tolerance to unfavorable factors of professional activity particularly under stressful situations.

The amateur musicians show a highly developed capacity of socialization, adequate self-appraisal of their role in a group, orientation to maintenance to normative behavior as well as a high level of emotional stability in comparison with professional musicians.

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