

THE TEACHER'S AUTHORITY IN THE OPINION OF STUDENTS OF THE LOMZA STATE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND THE PROCESS OF ADAPTING TO UNIVERSITY LIFE

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Abstract

Introduction: Currently, there is an ongoing discussion on the authority, the results of which indicate, among other things, the need for authority and show a large change in the understanding of this concept. In modern society, changes in the meaning and function of authority can be observed, which are related to the change in the understanding of values and norms. An authority figure increasingly assumes the figure of an idol. Still, authority is one of the main pillars of social life, and a condition for success in all activities, especially in upbringing and education. Hence, the issue of a teacher's authority, including academic teachers is a subject of interest to many educators. The authority held by students has a very significant impact on the professional work of an academic teacher. Since authority is gained through one's own attitude and one's own influence, it is necessary to be fully aware of these conditions.

Aim of the study: The aim of the research was to determine the authority of an academic teacher viewed by students of the Lomza State University of Applied Sciences (LSUAS) and to analyse authority in the aspect of the process of adapting students to university life.

Material and methods: The study used the diagnostic survey method, to which the survey technique was carried out, using for this purpose an anonymous survey questionnaire of the authors' own design "Adaptation difficulties of students". The research was conducted in the academic year 2015/2016 among students of the first year of full-time first-cycle studies at the LSUAS in 12 fields of study. A total of 314 people were questioned. The research results were compiled using the Statistica 6.0 program by calculating: Pearson's chi-square test values, Mann Whitney Z-U test values, Kruskal Wallis test values, simple and weighted arithmetic means, standard deviation, contingency coefficient ckor. The differences between variables were tested at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: The analysis of the issue concerning the authority of academic teachers shows that the vast majority of students (72.6%) of LSUAS claim that not all teachers are an authority figure for them. Only a few believe that there are no teachers who would be an example and a role model for them. The above indications are stated by mostly men. The group of respondents (22.9%) are those for whom academic teachers are an authority figure and such statements were made mainly by women.

Conclusions: In the opinion of the vast majority of LSUAS students, not all academic teachers are authority figures. This group of respondents presents a low level of adaptation to university life. Among the elements of the academic teacher's authority indicated by the respondents, the leading place is occupied by the ability to transfer knowledge, then knowledge and competence, and the ability to be interested in the subject. The group of students indicating these features is characterized by a high level of adaptation. According to the majority of students, the key personality traits of an academic teacher include: understanding and tolerance, communicativeness and intelligence. This group of respondents has the highest level of adaptation to university life. In the field of physiotherapy studies, gender is a variable determining the opinion of students regarding the authority of an academic teacher in favour of men.

Key words: authority, academic teacher, competence

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Introduction

There are many different definitions of the word authority, which are formulated from different points of view. It derives directly from the Latin words auctoritas, whose meaning

includes among others: importance, influence, model, example, and credibility (1). Authority is the respect that a person enjoys due to his knowledge or moral attitude, a person who is regarded as a role model, has an impact on the attitudes and thinking of other people, and is also highly respected.

According to Ryszard Stach, authority is recognition and social respect attributed to a person, social group or institution. Moreover, the source of authority can be skills and knowledge, personality traits, ways of acting and acting in accordance with generally valued values (2). Maria Żebrowska and Barbara Łuczyńska recognized authority as the result of one- or two-way interaction between two people, two groups, or a person and a group, in the course of which one of the parties acquires a tendency to model his/her way of thinking or attitude after the behaviour represented by the other party (3).

Young people really need authority figures and role models, and if they are not found at home, students look for them in schools and often rely on the so-called social authorities (4). The perception of a man as a socially recognized authority is inseparably connected with social opinion, and the consequence of which is a good or bad reputation. If both the opinion and reputation of a given person are positively received by members of a given group, that person may be perceived as a social authority in their eyes. Man's behaviour, his way of life and valued values are the basis of his morality, which is one of the criteria for recognizing it as a model of conduct worth following (5).

Currently, there is an ongoing discussion over the authority, and the results of which indicate, among other things, the need for authority and show a large change in the understanding of this concept in social life. In modern society, changes in the meaning and function of authority can be observed and are related to the change in the understanding of values and norms. An authority figure increasingly assumes the figure of an idol. Still, authority is one of the main pillars of social life, a condition for success in all activities, especially in upbringing and education (6). Hence, the issue of a teacher's authority including academic teachers is a subject of interest to many educators. The authority perceived by students has a very large impact on the professional work of an academic teacher. Since authority is gained by one's own attitude and one's own influence, it is necessary to be fully aware of these conditions (7).

Each society has in its hierarchy certain values that it considers the most valuable. Authority has accompanied humanity since the dawn of time, but it has changed over the years. The meaning given to the term "authority" is varied, and this may be due to the fact that the word itself is ambiguous. It evokes many terms that elicit ambivalent feelings (8). Authority is a universal phenomenon, which is why many sciences have studied it. In philosophy, authority occupies an important place in the theory of knowledge because it is one of the most important concepts characterizing the path to truth (9). The concept of "authority" is mainly dealt with in social psychology. This science links the phenomenon of authority with the phenomenon of interpersonal interactions. In a pedagogical view, it is recognized as a model or specific qualities and competences of educators, increasing their ability to influence pupils, transferring knowledge, attitudes, values and honing specific skills (10). The above teachings

recognized authority as an inherent feature of society because it is society that creates it.

A teacher's authority can only be created as a result of appropriate experiences that he will provide students in the course of mutual interactions. These can be both direct experiences - based on one's own actions as well as indirect ones involving other people's interactions. Thus, the basis for recognizing the teacher's authority are experiences allowing students to conclude that respecting his instructions serves the interest of students and ensures the achievement of the desired consequences (11).

The proper way for teachers to build their own authority is most often to make efforts to play a positive role in realizing the aspirations of their students. In the professionalism of the modern academic teacher, the importance of specific and high competences is also emphasized (12). A characteristic feature of competences is their subjective character, so they are a personality trait. The psychopedagogical literature defines various competences that an academic teacher should acquire and develop. They are embodied in the didactic, educational and diagnostic activities of the teacher and allow students to perform tasks at the appropriate, specific level (13).

The aim

The aim of the study was to determine the authority of an academic teacher by students of the Lomza State University of Applied Sciences (LSUAS) and to analyse authority in the process of students adapting to university life. In the course of the research, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. Are academic teachers an authority figure for students and to what extent is this related to the process of adaptation to university life?
2. What are the elements of the academic teacher's authority according to the respondents and is it related to their perception of studies?
3. Do the personality traits of an academic teacher translate into students' perception?
4. Does gender differentiate the above variables?

Material and methods

The study used the diagnostic survey method, to which the survey technique was carried out, using for this purpose an anonymous survey questionnaire of the authors' own design "Adaptation difficulties of students". The research was conducted in the academic year 2015/2016 among students of the first year of full-time undergraduate LSUAS studies in 12 fields of study. A total of 314 people were questioned. In pursuit of the research objective, three degrees of levels of studies were adopted: low, medium and high, based on the following adaptation indicators:

- the time took to make a decision about studies,
- knowledge gained from high school,
- degree of satisfaction with studies,

- grade point average after the first year of study.

The research results were compiled in the Statistica 6.0 program by calculating: Pearson's chi-square test values, Mann Whitney Z-U test values, Kruskal Wallis test values, simple and weighted arithmetic means, standard deviation, contingency coefficient ckor. Differences between variables were tested at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results

The analysis of the issue of the authority of academic teachers shows that the vast majority of LSUAS students (72.6%) claim that not all teachers are an authority figure for them. Only a few believe that there are no teachers who would be an example and a role model for them. This was the perception of most men. The group of respondents (22.9%) who perceived academic teachers as authority figures were mainly women. Considering this issue in terms of fields of study, it should be noted that in the opinion of students of three majors: Automation and Robotics, Dietetics and Food Technology, all academic teachers are, to a greater or lesser extent, authority figures for them. In addition, the analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the variables only in Physiotherapy, where gender determines the opinion of students regarding the authority of the academic teacher in favour of men (Table 1).

Table 1. The authority of academic teachers in the opinion of LSUAS students

Courses of study	Response categories						
	Sex	N	Yes [%]	No [%]	Not everyone [%]	Chi2	P
Physiotherapy	F	34	20.59	0.00	79.41	12.31	0.002*
	M	3	33.33	33.33	33.33		
	Total	37	21.62	2.70	75.68		
Administration	F	24	41.67	4.17	54.17	2.88	0.236
	M	8	12.50	0.00	87.50		
	Total	32	34.38	3.13	62.50		
Management	F	21	9.52	0.00	90.48	4.54	0.103
	M	10	10.00	20.00	70.00		
	Total	31	9.68	6.45	83.87		
Automation and Robotics	F	2	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.33	0.568
	M	14	14.29	0.00	85.71		
	Total	16	12.50	0.00	87.50		
English philology	F	8	0.00	25.00	75.00	4.20	0.122
	M	6	33.33	0.00	66.67		
	Total	14	14.29	14.29	71.43		
Nursing	F	29	34.48	3.45	62.07	2.27	0.322
	M	5	20.00	20.00	60.00		
	Total	34	32.35	5.88	61.76		
Dietetics	F	16	12.50	0.00	87.50	0.14	0.707
	M	1	0.00	0.00	100.00		
	Total	17	11.76	0.00	88.24		

Cosmetology	F	32	21.88	3.13	75.00	-	
Food Technology	F	15	40.00	0.00	60.00	0.13	0.719
	M	4	50.00	0.00	50.00		
	Total	19	42.11	0.00	57.89	-	
Information technology	F	4	0.00	0.00	100.00	1.01	0.603
	M	29	13.79	6.90	79.31		
	Total	33	12.12	6.06	81.82	-	
Physical education	F	4	50.00	25.00	25.00	5.14	0.077
	M	7	0.00	14.29	85.71		
	Total	11	18.18	18.18	63.64	-	
Social work	F	32	28.13	3.13	68.75	1.22	0.543
	M	6	50.00	0.00	50.00		
	Total	38	32.58	2.63	65.79	-	
Total	F	221	24.89	3.17	71.95	4.08	0.130
	M	93	18.28	7.53	74.19		
	Total	314	22.93	4.46	72.61	-	

Source: own research. * statistically significant relationships. P- level of statistical significance

This issue, analysed in the context of perception, indicates that the largest group of respondents, for whom not all academic teachers are authority figures, presents a low level relation to the subject being studied. The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the individual variables. and the coefficient ckor proves the average strength of their relationship (Table 2).

Table 2. The authority of academic teachers in the opinion of LSUAS students in the context of adaptation

Adaptation level	Response categories			
	Yes [%]	No [%]	Not everyone [%]	Total [%]
Low	9.30	11.63	79.07	13.74
Medium	23.65	3.94	72.41	64.86
High	29.85	1.49	68.66	21.40
Total	23.00	4.47	72.53	100.00

Source: own research. Pearson's chi2 = 11.68417. df = 4. p = 0.01986. $p < 0.05$. ccor = 0.189700

Among the elements of the authority of an academic teacher indicated by the respondents the ability to transfer knowledge is at the forefront. This is what most students of Administration Management, Automation and Robotics, Nursing, Food Technology and Information Technology think. Other important elements of authority in the opinion of the respondents relate to the knowledge and competence of teachers and the interest in the subject. These claims are mainly made by students from Physiotherapy, Dietetics and Social Work. According to the respondents, the personality characteristics and objectivity are the least important elements of the authority figure of an academic teacher. In this case, the analysis did not show statistically significant relationships between the variables, i.e. gender and the elements of the teacher's authority (Table 3).

Table 3. Elements of the academic teacher's authority in the opinion of LSUAS students

Courses of study	Response categories						
	Sex Test	N	Know-ledge and compe-tence	Ability to transfer knowledge	Persona-lity	Objecti-ivism	The ability to be in-terested in the subject
Physiotherapy	F	34	0.78	0.76	0.34	0.41	0.48
	M	3	0.80	0.87	0.27	0.40	0.67
	Total	37	0.78	0.77	0.34	0.41	0.49
	Z		0.12	0.56	0.41	0.03	1.26
	P		0.902	0.575	0.682	0.977	0.208
Administration	F	24	0.68	0.78	0.33	0.38	0.73
	M	8	0.50	0.83	0.55	0.50	0.60
	Total	32	0.63	0.79	0.39	0.41	0.70
	Z		1.62	0.18	1.73	1.13	1.08
	P		0.104	0.854	0.083	0.260	0.281
Management	F	21	0.63	0.72	0.50	0.32	0.64
	M	10	0.70	0.80	0.62	0.36	0.50
	Total	31	0.65	0.75	0.54	0.34	0.59
	Z		0.46	0.64	0.88	0.61	1.38
	P		0.648	0.522	0.378	0.542	0.168
Automation and Robotics	F	2	0.90	0.90	0.20	0.50	0.50
	M	14	0.71	0.83	0.31	0.37	0.55
	Total	16	0.73	0.84	0.29	0.39	0.54
	Z		0.93	0.08	0.90	0.70	0.30
	P		0.353	0.935	0.367	0.481	0.761
English philology	F	8	0.63	0.78	0.35	0.40	0.83
	M	6	0.60	0.80	0.47	0.33	0.80
	Total	14	0.61	0.79	0.40	0.37	0.81
	Z		0.28	0.00	0.62	0.48	0.07
	P		0.780	1.000	0.534	0.629	0.945
Nursing	F	29	0.63	0.86	0.41	0.37	0.61
	M	5	0.56	0.76	0.56	0.50	0.32
	Total	34	0.62	0.84	0.44	0.38	0.56
	Z		0.52	0.16	1.10	0.38	1.79
	P		0.602	0.874	0.270	0.706	0.073
Dietetics	F	16	0.80	0.70	0.36	0.36	0.53
	M	1	0.20	0.80	0.60	0.40	1.00
	Total	17	0.76	0.71	0.38	0.36	0.55
	Z		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	P		1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Cosmetology	F	32	0.71	0.81	0.44	0.36	0.61
Food Technology	F	15	0.72	0.58	0.32	0.33	0.73
	M	4	0.90	0.75	0.25	0.30	0.70
	Total	19	0.76	0.83	0.31	0.33	0.73
	Z		1.30	0.97	0.37	0.05	0.22
	P		0.193	0.330	0.708	0.958	0.827

Information Technology	F	4	0.65	0.90	0.90	0.45	0.70
	M	29	0.69	0.82	0.38	0.28	0.52
	Total	33	0.68	0.83	0.37	0.30	0.54
	Z		0.46	0.45	0.34	1.31	0.84
	P		0.649	0.653	0.735	0.190	0.399
Physical Education	F	4	0.60	0.75	0.55	0.45	0.65
	M	7	0.43	0.66	0.63	0.54	0.74
	Total	11	0.49	0.69	0.60	0.51	0.71
	Z		1.00	0.58	0.29	0.20	0.39
	P		0.319	0.559	0.770	0.842	0.695
Social Work	F	32	0.71	0.71	0.41	0.39	0.62
	M	6	0.77	0.73	0.50	0.43	0.57
	Total	38	0.72	0.71	0.42	0.39	0.62
	Z		0.50	0.36	1.13	0.40	0.46
	P		0.614	0.717	0.259	0.687	0.648
Total	F	221	0.70	0.78	0.39	0.38	0.62
	M	93	0.66	0.80	0.44	0.37	0.57
	Total	314	0.69	0.78	0.41	0.37	0.61
	Z		1.42	0.60	1.39	0.11	0.97
	P		0.156	0.549	0.164	0.916	0.331

Source: own research. Z - Mann Whitney U test. P - level of statistical significance

The elements of the authority of an academic teacher considered in the context of adaptation show that the majority of students who indicate the ability to transfer knowledge by teachers presents a full adaptation to university life. In addition, the analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the variables. One of the elements of the academic teacher's authority - personality - determines the level of students' adaptation to university life (Table 4).

Table 4. Elements of the academic teacher's authority according to LSUAS students in the context of adaptation

Response categories	Total		Adaptation						Kruskal-Wallis test	
	X	SD	Low		Partial		Full		H	P
			X	SD	X	SD	X	SD		
Knowledge and competence	0.69	0.29	0.73	0.30	0.66	0.30	0.70	0.28	3.50	0.174
Ability to transfer knowledge	0.78	0.25	0.74	0.25	0.79	0.26	0.80	0.23	3.97	0.137
Personality	0.41	0.27	0.34	0.28	0.46	0.27	0.38	0.26	10.81	0.005*
Objectivism	0.37	0.25	0.35	0.29	0.40	0.24	0.36	0.24	3.41	0.182
The ability to be interested in the subject	0.61	0.30	0.56	0.35	0.61	0.28	0.63	0.28	1.23	0.540

Source: own research. *dependencies statistically significant. P- level of statistical significance. X- simple arithmetic means. SD - standard deviation.

The personality of the teacher is one of many factors affecting the students' development which forms their permanent personality and character traits. A student relating with the teacher in a personal context is mentally ready to accept everything that comes from the teacher and also to adopt standards of conduct (14).

The issue of the personality traits of an academic teacher in the opinion of the respondents considered in terms of adaptation proves that the vast majority of students who indicated understanding and tolerance as the key features are the easiest to adapt to university life. The analysis showed statistically significant relationships between variables in the case of intelligence and sense of humour. These are the personality traits of the teacher which, in the opinion of students, determine the level of their adaptation to university life (Table 5).

Table 5. Personal characteristics of an academic teacher in the opinion of LSUAS students and the adaptation process

Response categories	Total		Adaptation						Kruskal-Wallis test	
			Low		Partial		Full			
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	H	P
understanding and tolerance	0.52	0.38	0.47	0.34	0.52	0.38	0.61	0.40	4.90	0.086
cordiality	0.30	0.36	0.35	0.41	0.32	0.36	0.25	0.31	1.98	0.372
supervision and control	0.06	0.17	0.06	0.15	0.06	0.19	0.06	0.17	0.97	0.615
leaving students independent	0.04	0.15	0.04	0.13	0.03	0.13	0.05	0.18	0.96	0.618
understanding the problems of young people	0.32	0.36	0.27	0.32	0.36	0.37	0.31	0.36	2.54	0.281
communication and suggestions	0.48	0.38	0.46	0.40	0.50	0.38	0.47	0.38	0.68	0.713
intelligence	0.36	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.29	0.34	0.42	0.38	8.20	0.017*
sense of humour	0.28	0.32	0.18	0.23	0.30	0.35	0.31	0.32	7.45	0.024*
appropriate behaviour	0.28	0.34	0.29	0.34	0.25	0.33	0.31	0.35	1.11	0.574
fairness	0.33	0.38	0.31	0.39	0.34	0.37	0.32	0.39	0.49	0.783

Source: own research. * statistically significant relationships. P- level of statistical significance. X – simple arithmetic means. SD- standard deviation.

Summary

1. In the opinion of the vast majority of LSUAS students, not all academic teachers are seen as authority figures. This is a group of respondents presenting a low level of adaptation to university life.
2. Among the elements of the academic teacher's authority indicated by the respondents, the most important is the ability to transfer knowledge. The next are knowledge and competence as well as the ability to be interested

in the subject. The group of students indicating these features is characterized by a high level of adaptation.

3. According to the majority of students, the key features of an academic teacher's personality include: understanding and tolerance as well as communication and intelligence. This contained the group of respondents with the highest level of adaptation to university life.
4. In the field of physiotherapy studies, gender is a variable determining the opinion of male students regarding the authority of an academic teacher.

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