

# About General Factor of Personality (GFP)

## Basic information about GFP

### Summary

The General Factor of Personality (GFP) is the most general personality dimension, being identified in the recent personality psychology (Musek, 2007; more than 300 scientific articles in top scientific psychological reviews thereafter). It represents a basic dimension of personality, which is evolutionary based and heritable, yet also the result of socialization, child rearing strategy and education. The GFP is a measure of general personal and social adjustment, characterized by high versus low emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and intellectual openness («good versus difficult personality»). Thus, it can be defined as a dimension of social effectiveness, which is desired in order to reach the important goals in the life: respect, well-being, health, self-esteem, good work, partnership and family relations, success in academic and job career, effective leadership and successful stress management and coping. It is positively related to the ethical standards and morality, wisdom, emotional and social intelligence and negatively related to the »dark triad« (narcissism, macchiavellianism, psychopathy).

According to these features, the GFP very probably represents the most informative personality dimension measuring general personal and social effectiveness of human being. Better than the majority of existing measures of personality, social effectiveness and adjustment can be therefore used for practical objectives in counselling, personnel selection, management, organizational settings, industry, prediction of job and career efficiency or successfulness, stress management and similar.

### Common sense notion of the GFP

Everybody knows the expressions like "he/she is basically a good person", "he is a good fellow", "she is a wicked person" and similar. All languages have many thousand words denoting traits and other characteristics of personality. The General Factor of Personality is a basic scientifically defined dimension that integrates core characteristics of the people with socially adapted and effective positive, "good" personality versus the characteristics of socially less acceptable non-pleasant, "difficult" personality. Thus, the GFP is the scientific counterpart of the common sense concept of "good" versus "difficult" personality. Thus, it is the most general and basic dimension of personality that we know.

### Brief description

General Factor of Personality (GFP) is a most general, evolutionary based and culturally stable dimension of personality. People high on GFP are emotionally stable, conscientious, agreeable, extraverted and open-minded, while the persons low on GFP tend to be neuroticistic (nervous, anxious, vulnerable to stress), unconscientious (casual), disagreeable (unpleasant) and narrow-minded. GFP is probably most predictive personality dimension and represents a basic personality disposition for social and work effectiveness, ethical and moral

behavior, health, well-being, high self-esteem and good interpersonal relations. The GFP is easy to measure with appropriate questionnaire(s).

### **GFP Questionnaire – The inventory measuring GFP**

The GFPQ (General Factor of Personality Questionnaire) is a short, yet highly valid and reliable measure of the GFP. It can be used for predicting affect and emotionality, well-being, happiness and quality of life, mental health, psychopathology, self-esteem, self-concept and self-construals, motivation, coping, burnout, social desirability, impression management, approval seeking, social and emotional intelligence, empathy, spirituality, religiosity, wisdom, dark triad (negative correlations with GFP), values and ethics, decision making and leadership styles, maybe even intelligence. The predictive strength of the GFP is further expected in other psychological and behavioral domains, which are related to the above mentioned: healthy life style; academic and professional achievement and success; satisfaction with partnership, family life, professional life and job career; global life satisfaction and successfulness.

Therefore, the GFPQ can yield better and more simply attainable results than the majority of existing measures in assessing personal, social and emotional effectiveness and can be effectively applied in counselling, personnel selection, management, organizational settings, industry, prediction of job and career efficiency or successfulness, stress management and similar.

## **A bit more detailed**

### *Emergence of the GFP*

GFP is the result of the most recent paradigm of personality structure in psychology. The recent research of personality revealed the existence of highest-order factor of personality labeled general factor of personality (GFP; Musek, 2007). Consequently, a new structural paradigm in personality theory could be proposed with the GFP at the top of the structural hierarchy of personality. The subsequent research results confirmed the role of the GFP in the personality structure and also confirmed the salience of the proposed models with several levels of the structural hierarchy. Therefore, a new hierarchical structural model of personality could be formulated on the basis of the results. The new structural paradigm implies several levels of generality with the GFP at the apex (the pyramidal model of personality structure, see Figure 1).

Since then, a great deal of research has been dedicated to the higher-order factors of personality, including GFP, and to the structural hierarchy of personality (Figueredo et al., 2004, 2007, 2016; Hirschi, 2008; Just, 2011; Loehlin & Martin, 2011a, 2011b; Musek, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011; Petrides et al., 2010; Rushton, 2012; Rushton & Erdle, 2010; Rushton, Bons & Hur, 2008, Rushton et al., 2009; Rushton & Irwing, 2008, 2009a,b,c; Schermer & Vernon, 2010; van der Linden, 2011; van der Linden, Bakker, & Serlie, 2011; van der Linden, Nijenhuis, & Bakker, 2010; van der Linden, Nijenhuis, Cremers & van de Ven, 2011; van der Linden et al., 2010; Vecchione, Alessandri, Barbaranelli, & Caprara, 2011; Veselka et al., 2009a,b).

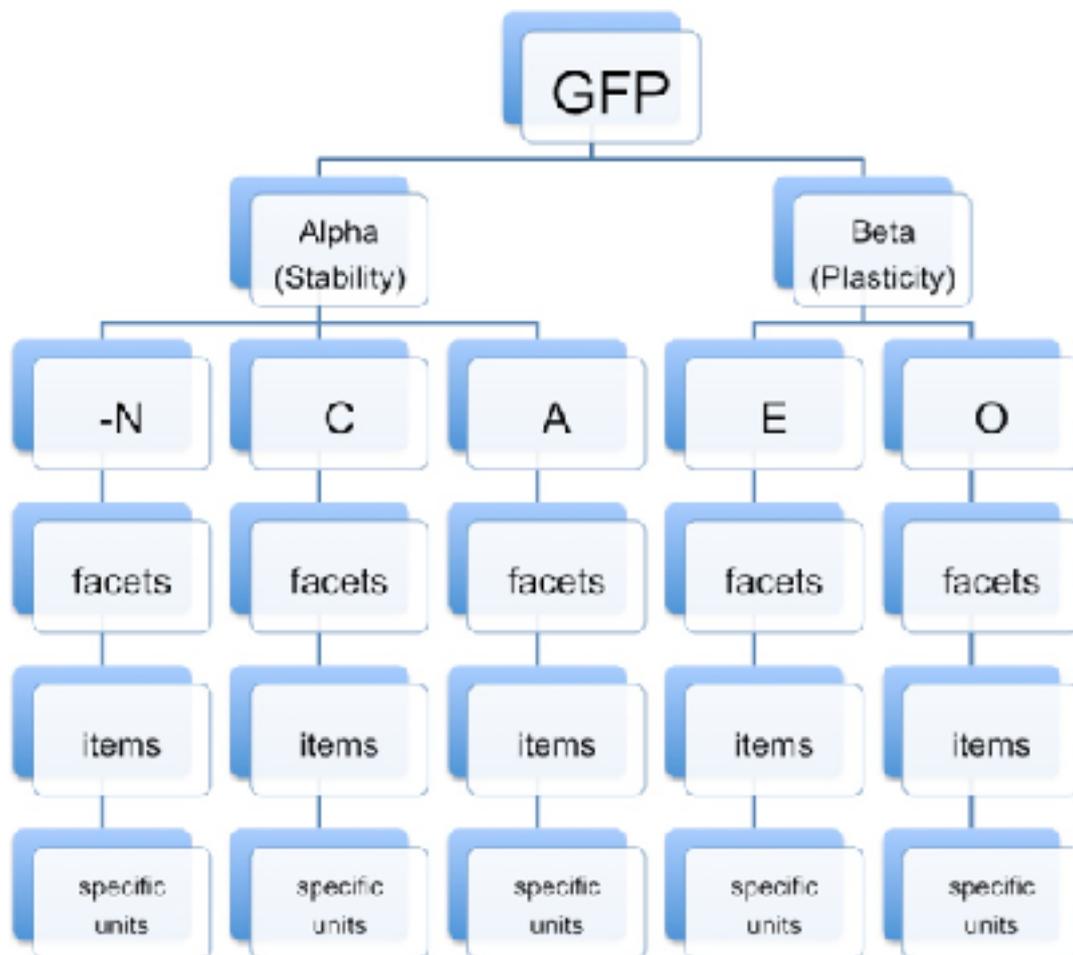


Figure 1. The pyramidal model of the personality structure. The model comprises six levels of generality extending from special units, questionnaire items, facet dimensions, Big Five (neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and conscientiousness), Big Two (stability and plasticity superfactor) and, finally, to General Factor of Personality (GFP).

GFP is characterized by high versus low Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness, and by high versus low higher-order factors of personality, Stability, and Plasticity. Therefore, I proposed a comprehensive theoretical model of personality structure with the GFP at the highest level of the hierarchy. GFP was interpreted as a basic personality disposition that integrates the most general non-cognitive dimensions of personality. It is associated with social desirability, emotionality, motivation, well-being, satisfaction with life, and self-esteem. It also may have deep biological roots, evolutionary, genetic, and neurophysiologic.

*What GFP means more exactly?*

Since the beginning, the substantive interpretations prevail in the majority of the respective empirical and theoretical research of the GFP (for the review, see Figueredo et al., 2016; Irwing, 2013; Just, 2011; Musek, 2010; Rushton & Irwing, 2011; Van der Linden et al., 2016). Almost all substantive interpretations regard the GFP as a complex dimension reflecting socially approved behavior and

attitudes that pervades all most important personality including the Big Two, the Big Five. As substantial meta-trait, the GFP has a very broad influence on human behavior (Van der Linden et al., 2016). In this line of conceptualizing the GFP, practically all authors emphasize the strong connections to the other non-cognitive psychological domains including the affect, well-being and self-esteem (Musek, 2007, 2010; Rushton & Irwing, 2011; Van der Linden et al., 2016) as well as the probable biological, genetic and evolutionary bases of the GFP (Figueredo et al., 2016; Rushton & Irwing, 2011; Van der Linden et al., 2016).

"According to the loadings on the Big Five, the Big One can be described as the combination of high versus low Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness. It represents the behavioral characteristics of emotionally stable, agreeable, conscientious, extraverted and intellectually open individuals versus neurotic, disagreeable, careless, introverted, and close-minded persons." (Musek, 2007)

"Being high on g-factor of intelligence is a perfectly conceivable thing, but what means being high on personality? The first plausible answer is that the Big One is simply a blend of all aspects of personality dimensions that are positively valued." (Musek, 2007a, pp. 1226). GFP strongly correlates with the variables (Affect, Well-being and Self-esteem), which are associated with social adjustment but cannot be reduced to the social desirability or impression management as response styles. Thus, GFP should represent a dimension based on the shared variance of real and stable socially approved behavior.

As Rushton and Irwing (2011, p. 132) made it clear: "High scores on the GFP indicate what is meant by someone having a "good" personality; low scores indicate what is meant by a "difficult "personality, in other words someone who is hard to get along with. Individuals high on the GFP are altruistic, agreeable, relaxed, conscientious, sociable, and open, with high levels of well-being and self-esteem. Because the GFP defines clear positive and negative poles, it provides potential for understanding the socially "advantaged" (those with high levels of emotional intelligence) as well as the socially "challenged" (those more likely to suffer a personality disorder). The GFP can be viewed as a dimension of social effectiveness."

#### *GFP as a measure of general (personal and social) adjustment and social effectiveness*

In the previous research, very robust correlations between the GFP and measures of emotionality, motivation, well-being and self-esteem have been found (Lachman et al., 2008; Musek, 2007, 2008, 2009; Rocke & Lachman, 2008). Indeed, the correlations between GFP and general factor of well-being range up to 0.80 (Musek, 2008). Very probably, the Big One is a measure of personality adaptation and could be therefore interpreted as the general dimension of the personal adjustment (Lachman et al., 2008; Musek, 2007, 2009; Rocke & Lachman, 2008). Together with the general factors of motivation, emotionality and well-being it composes a very general psychological dimension covering the non-cognitive part of personality and represents the conative counterpart of the general factor of intelligence (Musek, 2008).

The GFP is reflecting the real, substantive variance in personally and socially adapted behavior (Lachman et al., 2008; Musek, 2007, 2010a; Rocke & Lachman, 2008), it is universal (Aghababaei, 2013; Musek, 2010a; Rushton et al., 2008; Van der Linden et al., 2015; see also the review in the Chapter 3 of this book), heritable (Figueredo et al., 2004; Loehlin, 2011a, 2011b; Loehlin & Martin, 2011; Rushton, Bons & Hur, 2008), evolutionary based (Figueredo & Rushton, 2009; Figueredo et al., 2016; Musek, 2007; Rushton et al., 2008; Veselka et al., 2009), and neurophysiologically traceable (DeYoung & Gray, 2009; Musek, 2007).

In another article, reviewing the GFP interpretations, Van der Linden, Dunkel & Petrides (2016) concluded that the conception of the GFP as a general measure of social effectiveness is the most plausible. As the authors summarized in the abstract of the article:

"The General Factor of Personality (GFP) is a higher-order factor causing lower-order personality traits to show consistent correlations in a socially desirable direction. The literature on the GFP reveals that there are various scientific interpretations of this construct. One interpretation is that it is a substantive factor reflecting general social effectiveness and exerting a broad influence on behavior. Another interpretation is that it merely reflects methodological or statistical artifacts and has no further relevance for personality research. We review the empirical literature on the nature of the GFP, its possible links to evolutionary processes, and its relation to other constructs overlapping with social effectiveness. We conclude that the substantive interpretation of the GFP is the most plausible, whereas the notion that it is a psychologically meaningless methodological artifact would be rather difficult to uphold." (Van der Linden, Dunkel & Petrides, 2016, pp. 98)

### *Evolutionary basis of the GFP*

From the theoretical point of view, the GFP can be postulated within the biological framework consisting of modern concepts of evolution, supported by genetic and neuroscientific evidence. Thus, the GFP can be cogently conceptualized within the solid frame of modern and even classic theory of evolution with all necessary genetic and neuroscientific apparatus. From the standpoint of the theory of evolution, the GFP should be interpreted in the context of the Life History Theory and Differential *K* Theory. Both predict the coevolution of personality traits, which are oriented towards the social benefits in human species. The evolutionary background of the GFP implies the genetic basis that should be realized through the functioning of the neural structures and associations being involved in the processing of the Big Five correlations constituting GFP. The genetic research clearly proved the heritability of GFP and the neuroscientific research strongly suggests that GFP should be linked with the inhibitory control and the activation of prefrontal cortex and limbic structures.

Thus, the theory of evolution represents a theoretical framework of the GFP construct. The evolutionary basis of the GFP is further corroborated by extensive genetic and neuroscientific research demonstrating the substantial heritability of the GFP and possible neurological, neurophysiological and neurochemical factors connected with the GFP. The biological basis renders the

GFP not only an empirically supported construct but also a construct, which has a salient theoretical foundations.

*GFP as predictor of successful life, positive thought, self-esteem and well-being*

We already encountered the evidence that the GFP is a evolutionary based measure of social effectiveness (see also Dunkel et al., 2016; Dunkel, Nedelec & Van der Linden, 2015; Dunkel & Van der Linden, 2014; Musek, 2010; Rushton & Irwing, 2011; Van der Linden et al., 2012). In the literature, we can trace several studies linking various aspects of social effectiveness with the GFP (for a review, see Van der Linden, Dunkel & Petrides, 2016). The persons with higher GFP scores are more popular and likeable (Van der Linden et al., 2010; Van der Linden, 2011), more humorous (Aitken Schermer et al., 2013), more successful in job performance (Sitser, Van der Linden & Born, 2013; Van der Linden, Te Nijenhuis & Bakker, 2010), They also more strongly behave in the socially prescribed manner (Bell, Woodley, Schermer, & Vernon, 2012; Dunkel, 2013) and are more effective in decision-making strategies (Dunkel et al., 2014). The GFP is also definitely associated with higher levels of social knowledge and skills (Van der Linden et al., 2014). Finally, the GFP is very substantially related to the emotional intelligence, especially trait emotional intelligence (Van der Linden, Tsaousis & Petrides, 2012; Veselka et al., 2009). In our own research, we found the correlation of the GFP with emotional intelligence in the range between .50 and .60, whereas the GFP was the strongest personality predictor of the emotional intelligence (Musek, 2010, pp. 272).

In the scientific research of the GFP we can find the examples of the variables and domains, where we can expect the potential predictive power of the GFP: affect and emotionality, well-being, happiness and quality of life, mental health, psychopathology, self-esteem, self-concept and self-construals, motivation, coping, burnout, social desirability, impression management, approval seeking, social and emotional intelligence, empathy, spirituality, religiosity, wisdom, dark triad (negative correlations with GFP), values and ethics, decision making and leadership styles, maybe even intelligence. The predictive strength of the GFP is further expected in other psychological and behavioral domains, which are related to the above mentioned: healthy life style; academic and professional achievement and success; satisfaction with partnership, family life, professional life and job career; global life satisfaction and successfulness.