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Dynamics of volitional qualities in self-development of university students

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Annotation. In today's rapidly evolving society, where innovation is a key economic driver, specific qualities, such as volitional traits, have become indispensable for a successful professional life and the ability to cope with future uncertainties. Consequently, fostering volitional qualities-such as determination, perseverance, self-control, and resilience- is crucial for university students aiming to excel in a globally competitive environment. The study aims to assess the level of volitional qualities among undergraduate students using a self-assessment questionnaire. Data from 193 respondents were collected and analyzed using a quantitative research approach. In this study, we utilized the following psychodiagnostic methods: «Self-Assessment of Students' Volitional Qualities» by N.E. Stambulova, the «Questionnaire for Assessing Persistence» by E.P. Ilyin and E.K. Feshenko, and the «Self-Assessment of Willpower» by N.N. Obozov. Additionally, we employed mathematical data processing methods and the SPSS software. Results show that first-year students had moderate volitional qualities in self-control and decisiveness, while second-year students scored high in perseverance and decisiveness, and moderate in purposefulness and self-control. Third-year students had high scores in decisiveness and perseverance but moderate in self-control, while final year students scored high in purposefulness, perseverance, and self-control, but moderate in decisiveness. A positive and significant relationship was found between factors of volitional qualities and self-development. The study concludes that enhancing volitional qualities among university students will prepare them for future challenges in work and life.

Keywords. Decisiveness, perseverance, purposefulness, self-development, self-control.

Introduction

The relevance of the research problem

The development of life skills and confidence in young people, especially students, to tackle academic and future life responsibilities, starts with the interactions, support and instruction they receive during their formative years. The university is recognised as the pinnacle of the education system, where individuals can receive comprehensive preparation to overcome future obstacles. However, this system is not immune to certain challenges. Studying at a university is an important stage in the professional and personal growth of a student, which can determine future career success in the chosen profession. Significant during the period of study at university is the quality of preparation and extent of self-development which are important for any student who desires to excel and make relevant contributions in their future profession. Importantly, in today's changing society where innovation has become the driving force of the economy, certain qualities are needed for a successful professional life and to cope with future uncertainties.

In the 21st century, volitional qualities have become an essential disposition for university students to succeed in a changing, globally competitive society. Therefore, university students desiring personal development need to strive to cultivate volitional qualities. Volitional qualities can refer to a set of cognitive and behavioural characteristics that enable an individual to pursue their goals despite challenges, setbacks or distraction. These qualities include determination, purposefulness, perseverance, persistence, self-discipline, resilience and self-control, decisiveness, endurance, initiative, accuracy, and diligence, among others [1]. Developing volitional qualities can help individuals overcome internal obstacles such as procrastination, self-doubt and anxiety, as well as external obstacles such as financial constraints, social barriers or limited opportunities. By cultivating these qualities, individuals can enhance their professional and educational development, achieve their objectives and improve their overall well-being [2].

Higher education plays an essential role in preparing future professionals to face global challenges and transform society toward a sustainable future [3]. As a result, the education of these individuals should receive urgent attention to ensure that they possess the necessary skills and qualities to thrive in their chosen fields. A strong and well-rounded personality, the ability to work independently and make decisions and the willingness to continuously learn and improve are important qualities for future professionals to possess. Furthermore, university education is an independent preparatory process that allows students to develop their potential, and failure to develop these volitional qualities could be detrimental to their future success. Considering the present stage of the reorganisation of the system of higher professional education in Kazakhstan, significant changes are taking place aimed at updating its present structure and technology of the learning process to meet the requirements of the Bologna Process Convention [4]. It has become essential to examine the level and the pattern of relationships that exist among the measure of volitional qualities (decisiveness, perseverance, purposefulness and self-control) in undergraduate university students.

Most research on self-development has been concerned with the cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of human development with little attention to the personal qualities of young

people who are under training in higher education [5], [6], [7], [8]. Self-development is a critical aspect of a university student's academic journey [9]. It involves the process of continuously improving oneself through acquiring new knowledge, skills and experiences. University students can achieve self-development by actively seeking opportunities to learn, such as attending lectures, workshops and seminars, participating in extracurricular activities and engaging in community service [10]. They can also develop their critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills by taking on challenging assignments, collaborating with peers and seeking feedback from their professors [11]. Self-development helps university students to become well-rounded individuals who are better equipped to navigate their personal and professional lives beyond the university.

Volitional qualities are attributed to individual psychosocial characteristics that enable a person to face difficulties and achieve academic success. Despite the importance of volitional qualities to the successful development of future professional and academic success, this construct has not gained sufficient research attention. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that volitional strategies can be beneficial in enabling students to maintain their concentration on tasks [12], [13]. These strategies involve students utilising mental imagery to achieve excellent academic results, reminding themselves of their original goals, incentivising themselves for completing assignments and contemplating the potential outcomes they may encounter if they display carelessness or procrastination towards academic tasks [14]. According to Husman, McCann and Crowson volitional qualities, such as taking action to neutralise negative thoughts and emotions, can help students maintain and enhance their motivation and engagement with academic tasks [15]. By using such strategies, students are better equipped to overcome obstacles and complete their assignments successfully.

Evidence abounds on the importance of volitional qualities in the holistic development of the future generation of professionals. For instance, Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly [16] explored the role of volitional qualities, such as self-control, self-regulation and self-discipline in the personal development of university students. Their findings revealed that these qualities were positively associated with academic achievement and life satisfaction. Credé and Phillips [17] investigated the relationships between volitional strategies, such as goal setting, planning, and self-monitoring and academic success among college students. The researchers found that students who used these strategies were more likely to achieve their academic goals. Another study by Klassen and Krawchuk examined the mediating role of volitional processes, such as self-regulation and goal orientation, in the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance among university students. The outcome of their study indicates that volitional processes mediated the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance [18].

Moreover, the impact of a mindfulness-based intervention on self-regulation and self-control as components of volitional qualities among university students was investigated by Hanley, Lyddy and Reilly [19], and they found that the intervention was associated with improvements in self-regulation and self-control. In a recent study, Steel and Klingsieck [20] examined the effectiveness of a volitional intervention, which included goal setting and planning on academic procrastination among university students. The researchers found that the intervention was

associated with reductions in academic procrastination. Researchers have quite succinctly studied the problem of volitional qualities in relation to the professional orientation of a person, but there is a lack of research devoted to the study of volitional qualities in the process of university undergraduate students, who are potential future professionals.

Aim of the study. The aim of this study is to examine the dynamics and the pattern of relationships that exist among the measure of volitional qualities (purposefulness, perseverance, self-control and decisiveness) in undergraduate university students. To achieve this objective, it was hypothesised that the levels of volitional qualities will be high in undergraduate university students and that the relationships that exist among volitional qualities will be positive and significant on self-development.

Research methods

A quantitative research approach of survey type was adopted for data collection and analysis. This approach allows for the collection of data that can be analysed statistically, which provides a more precise understanding of the population being studied. The population consists of university undergraduate students in a university in the eastern part of Kazakhstan, and 193 of the students (83.94% female and 15.9% male) were randomly selected to participate in the study. This was done through the convenience sampling method which is a non-probability sampling procedure of selecting a sample from an easily accessible population [21].

A self-report volitional qualities assessment tool developed by Griban and colleagues and a personal growth initiative by Robitschek were adopted to collect data from the participants [2, p. 513], [22]. The tool consists of three sections with section A involving biographical information of the participants such as age, gender and the student year in the university. The second section consists of the four volitional qualities that are of interest in this study which include purposefulness (13 items), perseverance (11 items), self-control (5 items) and decisiveness (8 items). In all, the tool comprised 37 items in a 5-point Likert response format where 1 = "not true about me at all", 2 = "slightly true about me", 3 = "not sure", 4 = "might be somewhat true about me", and 5 = "describes me very well". To establish the internal consistency of the measuring tool, a pilot study was carried out using 30 non-participants in another university in a different region. Subsequently, the Cronbach alpha approach was used to determine the reliability coefficient. Each of the qualities reported good internal consistency as follows: purposefulness ($\alpha = 0.86$), perseverance ($\alpha = 0.82$), self-control ($\alpha = 0.63$) and decisiveness ($\alpha = 0.76$). Overall, the whole measuring tool had a 0.83 Cronbach alpha value indicating high reliability of the research tool. Examples of some of the items are purposefulness; I constantly and steadily aspire toward achieving a goal, I can adjust and adopt a new plan for life improvement. Perseverance: *my persistent desire to acquire new knowledge, skills, and abilities aimed at further life improvement is strong, I have an active desire to overcome shortcomings*. Self-control: *I possess the ability to control my feelings, emotions in different situation that I found myself, I can keep myself from harmful actions, habits, and misdemeanors (ceasing tasks performance, skipping classes, bad habits)*. Decisiveness: *I like to take timely decisions on the necessary actions in terms of responsibility to the group, team, teacher; taking timely adoption of new methods to achieve my*

stated goal in extreme conditions is part of me. Self-development was measured using Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS). The focus of the scale is to measure individual readiness for self-improvement. The PGIS consists of nine items with a response format ranging from 1 = definitely disagree to 6 = definitely agree. Some examples of the items are as follows: *I have a good sense of where I am headed in my life, and I know what my unique contribution to the world might be.* The internal consistency of the scale using Cronbach alpha was 0.89 which is judged to be reliable.

Experimental base

Ethical clearance was granted by both the Ministry of Education and Science and the National University Astana, Kazakhstan. The informed consent form requesting the students' voluntary participation in the study was first distributed. After a week, those who consented to be part of the study signed the form and returned it. The participants were assured that the information gathered would be used for research purposes only, and the confidentiality of the information provided was guaranteed. As part of international research ethics, the participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers as their responses were expressions of their perceived potential. The authors also assured the participants that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time they feel so without any penalty. The administration of the instrument lasted for two weeks. A total of 240 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 193 were recovered fully completed. This represented an 80% response rate. The data was subsequently coded and analysed using the SPSS version 26 software.

Research results

The data collected was analysed using two statistical techniques – descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency distribution, was used to determine the levels of the participants' volitional qualities. On the other hand, inferential statistics, particularly multiple correlation, was employed to establish the relationship among the identified components of the volitional qualities. Bivariate correlation is a statistical technique that examines the correlation coefficient as well as indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two or more variables.

The first concern of the study is to examine the levels of volitional qualities in undergraduate university students.

Table 1

Levels of Volitional Qualities in Undergraduate University Students

Years	Levels	Volitional Qualities			
			Perseverance	Self- control	Decisiveness
First-year	High level	29,8	34,04	19,15	29,8
	Middle level	36,2	38,3	57,5	51,1

	Low level	34,04	27,7	23,4	19,1
Second-year	High level	25,5	19,6	23,5	17,5
	Middle level	54,9	72,5	54,9	72,5
	Low level	19,6	7,8	21,6	10,6
Third-year	High level	37,8	42,2	31,1	51,1
	Middle level	35,5	28,9	44,4	24,4
	Low level	26,7	28,9	24,4	24,4
Fourth-year	High level	50	40	40	26
	Middle level	40	36	38	60
	Low level	10	24	22	4

Table 1 indicates the levels of volitional qualities of the students who participated in the study. From the table, the volitional qualities of first-year students were moderate with a 57.5% level of self-control, and a 51.1% level of decisiveness but low in purposiveness and perseverance. In the second-year students, both perseverance and decisiveness were moderate at 72.5%, while purposefulness and self-control were equally moderate at 54.9%. Third-year students had high volitional qualities of 51.1% in decisiveness and 42.2% in perseverance but were moderate in self-control with 44.4%. In final-year students, volitional qualities of purposefulness were reported high with 50% of the students, while 40% of them had perseverance and self-control qualities. Also, 60% had decisive qualities. By implication, the volitional qualities required for future professionals vary and are dynamic across years of study in the university.

The second concern of this study was to determine if there were significant relationships among the components of the volitional qualities of undergraduate university students.

Table 2

Summary of Inter-correlations of Volitional Qualities on Self-development

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Self-development	193	28.01	5.01	1				
Purposefulness	193	26.9	5.32	0,383**	1			
Perseverance	193	21.1	3.14	0.341**	0.193	1		
Self- control	193	9.38	4.26	0.391*	0.347**	0.237*	1	
Decisiveness	193	3.54	1.34	0.410**	0.213*	0.377**	0.204*	1

**correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-Tailed)*

Table 2 shows the inferential statistic of inter-correlations among components of volitional qualities. As shown in the table, relationships exist and were positively significant with self-development as follows: purposiveness ($r = .383$; $p < 0.05$), perseverance ($r = .341$; $p < 0.05$), self-control ($r = .391$; $p < 0.05$), decisiveness ($r = .410$; $p < 0.05$). This means that significant positive relationships exist among the factors. Also, the direction of the relationship was positive.

The study examined the dynamics of volitional qualities in undergraduate university students in Kazakhstan. Findings from the descriptive and inferential statistics showed that the dynamics of volitional qualities in university students vary by the year of study. Specifically, some qualities are found to be recessive in the early year, while others are dominant in the same year. For example, self-control and decisiveness were slightly dominant among first-year students, while purposiveness and perseverance were recessive. Both perseverance and decisiveness were also slightly dominant in second-year students, while self-control and decisiveness were dormant. In the third year, the predominant qualities in students as expressed by the participants were decisiveness and self-control, with purposiveness and perseverance not being active. In the case of the final-year students, purposefulness was actively dominant, while perseverance and self-control qualities were slightly active. However, self-control was recessive. As mentioned earlier in the study, the quality of preparation and extent of self-development are important for any student who desires to excel and make relevant contributions in their future profession. Findings from this study have further juxtaposed the significance of university education in the full realisation and development of qualities required in a dynamic world full of uncertainties.

This finding is supported by previous studies on the importance of volitional qualities to individuals' life and career success including Anikeeva and Parshutin, Ivanov et al., Li and Wong, Soatov and Mambetalina and Turarova [1, p. 151], [23], [24], [25], [26]. Importantly, Anikeeva and Parshutin found that volitional features are psychological characteristics required to make a productive and effective future employee [1, p.153]. Griban and colleagues established that cultivating volitional qualities enhances professional and educational development which is helpful for students in achieving their educational objectives and improving their general well-being [2, p.514]. Also, Mambetalina and Turarova study revealed the presence of moral-volitional qualities such as self-will and motivation in senior university students [25, p. 52]. This implies that as students navigate through the university system, they develop volitional qualities through educational activities. Similarly, the study of Deimann and Bastiaens examined volition qualities such as consequence control, metacognition, emotion control, and volitional self-efficacy as motivational constructs to avoid distractions in distance learning education [27]. They conclude that the development of volitional constructs is important to meet learners' individual needs and prepare them for the future world of work.

Furthermore, the second outcome of this study was that significant and positive relationships exist between self-development and the construct of volitional qualities (purposiveness, perseverance, self-control and decisiveness). The result indicates the direction of the relationships with self-development was positive, meaning that the four constructs of volition relate to self-development. In other words, as each of these constructs increases, the chance of the students being self-developed also raises. This result laid credence on other studies [28] which have evidently established the nexus between volition qualities and related constructs. Importantly, the study of Credé and Phillips [5, p. 173] affirmed the relationship between volitional strategies, such as goal setting, planning and self-monitoring and academic success among college students. Another study by Klassen and Krawchuk [17, p.342] found that volitional processes mediated the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance. Similarly, a mindfulness-based intervention was found to be associated with improved self-regulation and self-control [12, p. 744].

Conclusion

The study examined the dynamics of volitional potentials in relation to the self-development of university students in a selected university in the Republic of Kazakhstan. A quantitative design of survey type was employed for both data collection and analysis. Findings revealed that some qualities were found to be recessive in the first year in the university, while others were dominant. Specifically, self-control and decisiveness were slightly dominant in first-year students, while purposiveness and perseverance were recessive. For the second-year students, both perseverance and decisiveness were also slightly dominant, while self-control and decisiveness were dormant. In the third year, the predominant qualities in students as expressed by the participants were decisiveness and self-control, with purposiveness and perseverance not being active. In the case of the final-year students, purposefulness was actively dominant, while perseverance and self-control qualities were slightly active. However, self-control was recessive. The study found a positive and significant correlation between self-development and constructs of volitional qualities. It should be stressed that the study examined the few volitional potentials in university students as qualities that could contribute to self-development in the pursuit of their educational objectives as well as in the preparation for the life that lies ahead. The presence of these qualities is only preliminary and may not be used to generalise the entire study population. Therefore, future studies can focus on enhancing these volitional qualities and also increasing the sample size. The authors, therefore, suggest volitional qualities booster interventions that can enhance and aggravate university students' self-development desire to prepare them for future responsibilities. Additionally, volitional qualities should be included in the school curriculum across all educational levels starting from primary to higher institutions.

Authors' contribution

Turarova G.U. – author of the collection of material on the theoretical part and the choice of research tools, conducting the study, statistical analysis of data and interpretation of the results of the study, design of the text.

Ozdogru A. – author of critical revision of the content of the article and consultation.

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ЖОО студенттерінің өзін-өзі дамытудағы ерік сапаларының динамикасы

Аңдатпа. Инновация экономиканың негізгі факторы болып табылатын қазіргі қарқынды дамып келе жатқан қоғамда ерікті қасиеттер сияқты ерекше қасиеттер табысты кәсіби қызмет пен болашақтың белгісіздіктерімен күресу үшін таптырмас болды. Демек, табандылық, шыдамдылық, өзін-өзі бақылау және өміршеңдік сияқты ерікті қасиеттерді дамыту жаһандық бәсекеге қабілетті ортада табысқа жетуге ұмтылатын университет студенттері үшін өте

маңызды. Зерттеудің мақсаты – өзін-өзі бағалау сауалнамасы арқылы студенттердің ерікті сапаларының деңгейін анықтау. 193 респонденттің деректері сандық зерттеу тәсілін қолдана отырып жиналды және талданды. Бұл зерттеуде келесі психодиагностикалық әдістерді қолдандық: Н.Е. Стамбулованың «Студенттердің ерік-жігерін өзін-өзі бағалау», Е.П. Ильин мен Е.К. Фешенконың «Табандылықты бағалауға арналған сауалнамасы», Н.Н. Обозовтың «Ерік күшін өзін-өзі бағалау». Сонымен қатар, деректерді өңдеудің математикалық әдістерін және SPSS бағдарламалық жасақтамасы қолданылды. Нәтижелер бірінші курс студенттерінің өзін-өзі бақылау және шешімділік түріндегі ерік сапалары қалыпты деңгейде екенін көрсетеді, ал екінші курс студенттері табандылық пен шыдамдылық сапалары жоғары көрсеткіштерді, сондай-ақ табандылық пен өзін-өзі бақылау сапалары орташа көрсеткіштерді көрсетті. Үшінші курс студенттері табандылық пен шыдамдылықтың жоғары көрсеткіштерін көрсетті, бірақ өзін-өзі бақылауда орташа, ал соңғы курс студенттері табандылық, шыдамдылық және өзін-өзі бақылау сапалары бойынша жоғары көрсеткіштерді көрсетті, бірақ табандылық орташа деңгейде болды. Ерікті қасиеттер мен өзін-өзі дамыту факторлары арасында оң және маңызды байланыс табылды. Зерттеу университет студенттерінің ерік сапаларын дамыту жұмыста және өмірде болашақ сынақтарға дайындайды деген қорытынды жасауға болады.

Түйін сөздер: Шешімділік, табандылық, мақсатқа бағыттылық, өзін-өзі дамыту, өзін-өзі бақылау.

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Динамика волевых качеств в саморазвитии студентов вуза

Аннотация: В современном быстро развивающемся обществе, где инновации являются ключевым фактором экономики, особые качества, такие как волевые качества, стали незаменимыми для успешной профессиональной деятельности и способности справляться с неопределенностями будущего. Следовательно, развитие волевых качеств, таких как решительность, настойчивость, самоконтроль и жизнестойкость, имеет решающее значение для студентов университетов, стремящихся преуспеть в глобальной конкурентной среде. Цель исследования - оценить уровень волевых качеств у студентов с помощью анкеты для самооценки. Данные от 193 респондентов были собраны и проанализированы с использованием количественного исследовательского подхода. В данном исследовании мы использовали следующие психодиагностические методики: «Самооценка волевых качеств студентов» Н.Е. Стамбуловой, «Опросник для оценки настойчивости» Е.П. Ильина и Е.К. Фешенко, «Самооценка силы воли» Н.Н. Обозова. Кроме того, мы использовали математические методы обработки данных и программное обеспечение SPSS. Результаты показывают, что студенты первого курса обладали умеренными волевыми качествами в виде самоконтроля и решительности, в то время как студенты второго курса показали высокие показатели в виде настойчивости и решительности, а также умеренные - в виде целеустремленности и самоконтроля. Студенты

третьего курса показали высокие показатели по решительности и настойчивости, но умеренные по самоконтролю, в то время как студенты последнего курса показали высокие показатели по целеустремленности, настойчивости и самоконтролю, но умеренные по решительности. Была обнаружена положительная и значимая взаимосвязь между факторами волевых качеств и саморазвитием. В исследовании делается вывод о том, что развитие волевых качеств у студентов университетов подготовит их к будущим испытаниям на работе и в жизни.

Ключевые слова: Решительность, настойчивость, целеустремленность, саморазвитие, самоконтроль.

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