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## **DISRUPTIVE EFFECTS IN HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT**

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### **Abstract**

According to the literature invoked in our paper, assessment can be a means of subjective measurement, a factor of issuing a value judgment based on certain particular theory, which has the status of preventing the continuous study that could lead towards improvement or the achievement of the highest possible performance. Regarding the disturbing factors, once settled, they induce quite significant and at the same time relevant variations either at the same examiner at different times or at different examiners. Disruptive effects that may occur in school assessment are: the Halo effect, the anchoring effect, the Pygmalion effect or Oedipal effect, the examiner's personal equation, the central tendency effect, the similarity effect, the contrast effect, the order effect, the logic error and role effect. In our paper we will present several of these disruptive effects found by students in different situations in high school classes. These are disruptive effects reported in a research that involved a number of one hundred students. They were asked to describe one of the assessment errors they had experienced during the evaluation process. The main conclusion of the research is that all these students were subjectively assessed in some situations, so there were various disruptive effects in the assessment.

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## 1. Introduction

The entire evaluation process represents feedback for both the teacher and the students. Feedback that can lead to assessment of the activities which are carried out, but also to their improvement (Herlo, 2020).

In this evaluation process, value judgments about the process and product of learning are exposed on the basis of certain pre-established criteria (Manolescu, 2010).

Through evaluation of the school results one can determine the extent to which the objectives and goals of the training program have been achieved and one will be able to see whether the teaching and learning methods applied have been effective for the students (Joița, 2003).

The evaluation is an integral part of the theory of education in its entirety, which includes principles, concepts, but also techniques related to the measurement and assessment of school results and the entire didactic process (Cerghit & Radu, 1990).

The concept of evaluation is considered a continuous process from the moment a development project is conceived until the results are correlated and compared with the objectives that are pursued (Todoran, 1982).

The evaluation activity brings forward the valorisation, assessment and interpretation of the information that resulted from the learning process (Schaub & Zenke, 2001).

According to Charles Hadji (1992): there are only three philosophies of evaluation, to which we can associate the same number of emblematic figures: the expert evaluates in order to measure, the judge assesses in order to give the value, and the philosopher interprets in order to tell the meaning. (Hadji, 1992, p. 74)

The evaluation has been present for a very long time in this process of educating the individual, but it has not been given as much attention as before (Figari & Lopez, 2012).

The disruptive effects that may occur in school evaluation are: the Halo effect, anchoring effect, Pygmalion effect or Oedipal effect, the examiner's personal equation, the central tendency effect, the similarity effect, the contrast effect, the order effect, the logical error and the role effect (Trif & Voiculescu, 2013).

The Halo effect „conveys a wrong component in the assessment of performance or personality characteristics arising from the irradiation of a sequential impression” (Schaub & Zenke, 2001, pp. 92-93).

The anchoring effect refers to the overevaluation of certain results obtained because they draw attention to the less expected things, recognized in the forms of answer offered by students (Cucoș, 2006).

The Pygmalion effect, or Oedipus effect, presents the teacher's preconceived idea of the students' abilities and performances (Miron, 2020).

The personal equation of the examiner refers to the different requirement of the teacher (Cucoș, 2014).

The effect of the central tendency: the teacher avoids giving both high and low grades in order not to make errors in his assessment and not to underestimate the students (Cucoș, 2014).

The similarity effect is based on the fact that the teacher tends to evaluate his students in relation to himself (Cucoș, 2006).

The contrast effect consists of „subjective amplification of the difference in value between the answers or successive papers of two subjects, when there is an appreciable difference between them” (Miron, 2020, p. 179).

The order effect occurs when the teacher has to evaluate a considerable number of students. The first students who are evaluated are favored because their answers are overvalued, except for the first student and in his case the effect is contrary. Within this effect the teacher should have a pre-defined examination grid and use it while assessing (Miron, 2020).

The logical error „consists in substituting important evaluation objectives and parameters through secondary purposes, such as the accuracy and systematicity of exposure, the effort of the student to achieve certain (even mediocre) results, the degree of conscientiousness, etc.” (Cucos, 2006, p. 402).

The role effect is highlighted by the internalization of certain standards that are unknown to the forming space, due to constraints imposed by the role that the teacher has to play or by the expectations that are to be reached in the evaluation (Cucos, 2014).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Evaluation can be a subjective means of measurement, a factor for issuing a value judgment centered on particular theories, and it has the status of preventing the continuous study that could lead to improvement or achieving the highest performance. Regarding disruptive factors, once they are established they can induce quite significant and at the same time relevant variations either for the same examiner at different times or for different examiners. The disruptive effects that may occur in the school evaluation are: the Halo effect, the anchoring effect, the Pygmalion effect or Oedipus effect, the examiner's personal equation, the central tendency effect, the similarity effect, the contrast effect, the order effect, the logical error and the role effect.

The study includes the presentation of these disruptive effects encountered in different situations in high school classes by students.

## **3. Research Questions**

Throughout our research we wanted to identify the disruptive factors that may appear in school evaluation by presenting various examples offered by students. The disruptive effects that may occur in the school evaluation are: the Halo effect (see the table 1), the anchoring effect, the Pygmalion effect or Oedipus effect (see the table 2), the examiner's personal equation (see the table 3), the central tendency effect (see the table 4), the similarity effect (see the table 5), the contrast effect (see the table 6), the order effect (see the table 7), the logical error and the role effect (see the table 8). We point out that, before carrying out this exercise of identifying the disruptive effects encountered in the evaluation, the students were presented in turn what each of these effects means.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Identifying certain disruptive factors that may occur in school assessment in high school classes.

## 5. Research Methods

During the research, the way of investigating the disruptive factors that may appear in the school evaluation in high school classes was the case study method.

## 6. Findings

The sample of subjects included one hundred students from three high schools in Alba County, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade.

**Table 1.** Examples given by students for the Halo effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
32	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“I will tell you in a few words my example of this Halo effect. Being a student in the 10th grade, and the Maths teacher living next door to us in the same neighborhood and knowing my parents, she always offered me at least half an extra point on each grade, and my colleagues and I could see this. She always gave me this score by saying, “well, we have to take care of the neighbors.” So I think the teacher was subjectively evaluating my Maths skills. Of course I liked the fact that I was getting “high” grades, but this difference the teacher made was not exactly appropriate.” (M., male, 17 years, 10th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The second example</b></p> <p>“My Biology teacher has always had something to say about me because he did not like my outfit. Indeed, being a little more eccentric, I was going out of the everyday pattern, so in the eyes of the professor I was very different from my colleagues in this fashion aspect. Therefore, he never forgot to penalize me for a low grade, an never forgot to make inappropriate observations whenever we met in a formal setting.” (I, male, 18 years old, 11th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The third example</b></p> <p>“I will describe very briefly a story that produced this Halo effect in my assessment. My father was playing football with the Romanian teacher’s husband on the synthetic field. One day he was asked by my father to leave the game for a few minutes for another colleague to enter and play on the field. This did not suit my teacher’s husband, as there was a little verbal conflict between him and my father, the next day I began to be “penalized” either in response or through grades by the teacher. I will mention that from the next day I did not receive more than a seven from her.” (E., female, 18 years old, 11th grade)</p>

**Table 2.** Examples given by students for the Pygmalion or Oedipus effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
9	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“Being a performance skier, national junior champion in the sport I practice (I will not mention it for personal reasons), there were teachers who gave me high grades because of this. I certainly didn’t mind getting high grades, but I knew that these weren’t my abilities, because I was also missing from school many times because I was either training or going to the training camp.” (E., male, 17 years old, 10th grade).</p>

**The second example**

“Because a teacher once caught me cheating on one of the subjects (I will not specify what the subject was), that semester he did not give me a higher grade than five, even though after that unfortunate event I tried to fix what I had broken, he did not forgive me. I can say that even most teachers, because they found out in school about that episode in which I was caught cheating, some of the teachers in the class made sure that they did not give me the grades I deserved, which were much lower than before.” H, male, 17 years old, 10th grade)

**The third example**

“I’m going to tell one of my episodes that still marks me because it’s happening at this moment. From the moment I came to high school, being now a student in the 12th grade, I was always underappreciated by my colleague. The level of both is the same as the knowledge, but in most subjects I am underappreciated compared with my colleague. I can give you an even more concrete example here, having a Maths test and solving all the requirements offered, both in the same way, I received one point less on the grade than my colleague. This underestimation comes from the fact that my colleague’s parents have a different financial and professional situation than my parents. I wouldn’t mind if the teachers who make this difference were a little more “invisible,” but unfortunately they are not.”—V., male, 19, 12th grade.

**Table 3.** Examples given by students for the personal equation of the examiner

Number of identified cases	Example text
4	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“I am glad that I can present this episode that I went through when I moved from another country here in Romania. I grew up to the age of 14 in France, together with my parents who had gone to work since I was a little boy, and from the age of 16 when I was entering the ninth grade we returned together to Romania. So I think that once I entered ninth grade, from the very beginning I was disadvantaged by the teachers in the class compared to the other colleagues, Because I was always underappreciated and not assessed enough by them in comparison with the other teachers at the school I came from in France. I can say that I was underappreciated in grades and sometimes jokes were made on my part from teachers because of the accent I had gained in these years.” (V., male, 9th grade, 16 years old).</p> <p><b>The second example</b></p> <p>“I will present in these few lines the appearance of this effect of the personal equation of the examiner that arose when the Physics teacher retired. He had a personal style at the time of his assessment, being very objective by his methods. Another teacher came in his place, of course, having a different style of teaching and evaluation, he began to evaluate us in a subjective way, giving us grades that sometimes demotivated us.” (D., female, 17 years old, 10th grade).</p> <p><b>The third example</b></p> <p>“Moving with my parents from another county to Alba County (the reason being my father’s job) I was received in a special way by my colleagues, but not by some teachers. I say this because there were teachers who at first almost every hour were evaluating me in a not-so-fitting way saying, “Let’s see what our colleague from city X knows.” This might have demotivated some people, but I was always motivated to prepare more and more and to answer all the questions that I was asked by those teachers.” (A, male, 17 years old, 10th grade).</p>

**Table 4.** Examples given by students for the central tendency effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
3	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“The newly arrived Geography teacher offered us only grades of nine and ten during one semester. I think that these notes that I received were not exactly the ones I deserved and I think that she gave us these grades because she was in her first year of activity.” (M., female, 18 years, 11th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The second example</b></p> <p>“In my case, the Physical Education teacher didn’t give grades lower than seven when he was evaluating. I think that he had a certain conception that made him have that style of giving marks, possibly a certain scale that he had established. At the same time, I think about the fact that he was in his early years of teaching, and maybe this also influenced this assessment in some way or another.” (C., female, 19 years old, 12th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The third example</b></p> <p>“This effect was present for me and my classmates in music class. The Music teacher gave us all grades of ten during one semester, all of us having ten as our average at the end of the semester.” (I, female, 17 years old, 10th grade).</p>

**Table 5.** Examples given by students for the similarity effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
27	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“One of the most common episodes that fits into this effect is that our Biology teacher gave his child as an example every class. As a student in Medicine, he was always the example the teacher gave to us in the following form: “My boy ... does things the following way”, “My boy ... has been selected to attend the conference ...” “My boy ... is conscientious and is carrying out all his projects”, “if my son was able to pass the BAC exam so can you.” (I, female, 19 years old, 12th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The second example</b></p> <p>“One of my most beloved teachers is always giving us this example: ‘I did things this way and everything went well, surely if you do the same as I did, you will succeed,’ which I do not think is proper for the teacher to give himself as an example for the activities he did.” (C, male, 19 years old, 12th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The third example</b></p> <p>“This example is somewhat funny because it brings the Romanian teacher into discussion. When we did not know how to answer a question he asked us or we did not write a word correctly, he offered us the so-called “presents”; what were they? The presents were punishments, which meant that we had to write a certain number of times either a definition or a word. He told us that this is the way his Romanian teacher did things and that this was strategy he used with his students, being convinced that it will bear fruit and that they will learn from their mistakes” (M., female, 18 years old, 11th grade).</p>

**Table 6.** Examples given by students for the contrast effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
8	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>"In a multiple choice exam, this error of assessment occurred, namely the contrast effect. More specifically, I remember that before offering the final answer I circled other variants that I then cut, not understanding exactly which correct answer I chose. That's why the</p>

teacher of that subject gave me a three-point lower grade on that test because esthetically speaking, “the work didn’t look pretty.” (I., female, 18 years old, 11th grade).

**The second example**

“At the Romanian class in the 9th grade I needed a grade to have my average for the end of the first semester. What happened was that, at the end of the last class when I was given this opportunity to be assessed, the teacher got an “important” call telling me that I should try to answer more quickly to what she was going to ask me because she was going to have to leave school early that day. I understand that by then I had to have a certain number of grades for that subject, but because of the problems I had I could not participate during the semester in a normal way to classes. So I can only tell you that after that phone call we had to cut short the assessment time, and the grade given was lower for the reason “7 is enough for your average”, and the averages of that subject up to that moment were not lower than nine” (L., female, 19 years old, 9th grade).

**The third example**

“The event that I went through and that ultimately had a happy ending for me went as follows. Inadvertently or because of fatigue, the Chemistry teacher had given us a multiple choice test; when we got the results I noticed that my grade was lower by 5 points. I had wondered how I could get a five, knowing that I had prepared for that test, and so without much thought I asked the teacher if she could evaluate my work again. She was nice, and we looked together over the answer options given by me, and the final grade came with five extra points, which meant I deserved the top grade because I had answered all the exercises correctly.” (N, male, 19 years old, 12th grade).

**Table 7.** Examples given by students for the order effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
16	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“In my case I could say that I was under assessed in relation to my colleagues on an oral History exam because I was the first to answer. The teacher asked me even more questions than the next colleagues, and I think he was even more demanding when he gave me the grade, which unfortunately was certainly at least one point below the grade I deserved.” (V., female, 17 years old, 10th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The second example</b></p> <p>“At one of the Romanian classes in the 11th grade, I was evaluated among the first from a literary commentary, I think I was underassessed compared to the other colleagues who in turn were questioned and evaluated from the same literary work. I was asked more questions than my colleagues who followed me. In my case, I was not given a grade, but the teacher considered giving one or two points extra for the next grade to those who answered correctly. I received the maximum points offered by her, just like the other colleagues who were assessed, but I think that my first colleague and I were" tormented" a little bit with more questions than the others.” (M., female, 18 years old, 11th grade).</p>
	<p><b>The third example</b></p> <p>“I think I’ve been a somewhat ‘victim’ of this effect several times before, the main reason being that I was getting the same grades as my colleagues who were assessed before me. The teacher did not make any difference between the answers I offered, even if at one lesson he was assessing somewhere up to three students, we all received the same grade. This happens all the time in Geography classes.” (R., female, 19 years old, 12th grade).</p>

**Table 8.** Examples given by students for the role effect

Number of identified cases	Example text
1	<p><b>The first example</b></p> <p>“This role effect specifically has been encountered in many situations, in many cases by me. I would like to describe the fact that one of my parents is a teacher in this school unit where I am a student, and for this reason I believe that the teachers are always “taking care” of me when they evaluate me. I say this because I observe it, and it is also seen that I am always evaluated and appreciated in a subjective way and not in an objective one. I am at the age when I think that my knowledge, abilities, skills should be appreciated properly and not taking into account mainly the aspect mentioned above.” (S., female, 19 years old, 12th grade).</p>

## 7. Conclusion

As we can observe from the examples provided above by the students, we do not find two of the disruptive factors that could exist in evaluation. Those who were not found in our study refer to the anchoring effect, respectively the effect of logical error.

Unfortunately, there are still such errors that some teachers make either willingly or without realizing it. It would certainly be appropriate to reflect more on how we conduct the assessment of our students. It would be beneficial to try to be objective in the assessment process we provide in the classroom, taking into account each student, the aspirations that each individual has, the way they reflect their opinions on some topics and be as correct as possible in order to avoid these disruptive effects that can interfere with the evaluation of knowledge and beyond.

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