



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF AUTONOMY AND COMPETENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS OF THE  
UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE CAMPECHE

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out with the objective of investigating the relationship between the type of motivational regulation of behavior, the perception of competence and autonomy with the educational backwardness of psychology students. It was carried out with a population of 340 students, of which 28% were male and 72% were female. Two Likert scales were used: Behavior Regulation Scale (adapted from the Markland and Tobin Physical Activity Behavior Scale) with a Cronbach alpha of  $\alpha.65$  and the Basic Psychological Needs Scale, Created from the Theory of self-determination, with a Cronbach alpha of  $\alpha.77$ . The results indicate that 51% of pupils with educational backwardness have an extrinsic motivation, compared to only 2% of those with no backwardness. 31% of the students with lag are perceived without the necessary competences for this level of study as opposed to 10% of the students without lag. Through this study the relationship between intrinsic motivation, the perception of competence and autonomy can be demonstrated as indicators of permanence in the studies, while being directed towards an extrinsic motivation with a perception of low level in competence and autonomy, Would denote a high probability of educational lag.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation is indissoluble to all human action; this is implicit in making decisions, taking risks, getting involved in activities, in being persistent and proactive. And talking about motivation now involves reference to the interaction between an individual and his environment, being in this case the school. Certainly one of the areas in which the motivation is motivated is the academic and specifically in the learning and consequently in the academic performance. The drive to learn can have a strong adaptive value. Cervantes (1998) in this regard comments that the mission of the school in general terms is to awaken in students the taste for learning (and it can be added that in teachers). Santos (1990), cited in Polanco (2005), defines motivation as "the degree to which students strive to achieve academic goals they perceive to be useful and meaningful."

From the point of view of teaching practice, it means motivating the student to do something through promotion and awareness. To motivate is to predispose the student to participate actively in the work in the classroom. The purpose of motivation is to arouse interest and direct efforts to achieve defined goals. Educators regularly discuss the importance of optimizing intrinsic motivation for classroom learning (Sipeck, 1993). Many learning tasks offer potential intrinsic prizes, but an extrinsic motivator is needed to guide the task (de Catanzaro, 2001). According to Maquilón and Hernández (2011), in the school context it is important to note that attitudes, perceptions, expectations and representations that the student has of himself, the task to be accomplished and the goals he intends to achieve are factors that guide And direct the student's behavior in the academic field. Intrinsic motivation is generated in many individuals attracted by the interest in knowing the world or explaining phenomena. Success in overcoming challenges is one of the main ingredients of intrinsic motivation, the deep focus of learning, and a competitive orientation to self-improvement of the high

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performance approach (Maquilón and Hernández, 2011). Studies by Harter (cited by the University of Seville, 2003), revealed that the motivational orientation is highly related to the perception of educational competence. Doménech and Gómez (2011) find that students who perceive their basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy and affinity) tend to take a deep approach to learning and conversely, students who perceive their less satisfied needs tend to adopt a superficial approach.

### Statement of the Problem

The higher education system is one of the fundamental pillars of human rights, so the system must “increase their capacity to live in the midst of uncertainty to transform and provoke change. To meet social needs and promote solidarity and equality; ... and put students at the forefront of their concerns in the perspective of lifelong education so that they can be fully integrated into the world, society of knowledge of the coming century (UNESCO, 1998) In Torres and Trápaga (2010). To make this possible, it is necessary at first to recognize that students are an important constant of the educational process, and that these have certain expectations, interests, motivations or beliefs about the school institution that must be considered if it is intended to generate improvements in the educational task through comments, observations and concerns on the part of the academics about the students. Regarding different behaviors such as lack of commitment and dedication to not doing readings or exercises of feedback, the neglect to deliver works both in time and in form, the significant increase in absenteeism and a sense of disappointment towards the study, occasionally causing school dropout to other educational institutions or causing school lag. In addition, statistical data obtained from the self-assessment of the program of the Degree in Psychology, presents a lag of 20% in the students of eighth semester who owe one or more subjects and that therefore they will have to lengthen their time of stay in the Faculty to be able to complete his Degree. Similarly, in a school practice where the students of the 4th semester of psychology were asked how they perceived their qualification, 82% considered it sufficient and what is representative is that 75% conforms to their result. It is from these data that arises the concern for the realization of this study.

### Research Questions

- What is the perception of satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of competence and autonomy of students with and without educational lag?
- What is the type of behavioral regulation most evident in students with and without educational lag?
- What would be a strong motivational profile of students with and without educational lag?

### Objective of the Study

This study was aimed at students of the Degree in Psychology, their perception of competence and autonomy, as well as the type of regulation of motivational behavior prevalent, with the intention of exploring their relationship with educational lag.

### Hypothesis

The relationship between the hypothesized variables is structured in two moments:

The general hypothesized model is shown in Figure 1.

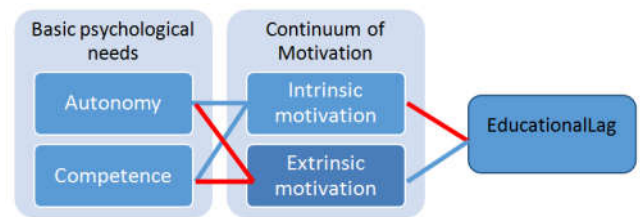


Figure 1. General Hypothesized Model. Lines ——— positive relationship. Line - - - - negative relation

Based on the configuration of the proposed model, (Hypothesis 1. A)

The perception of satisfaction of basic psychological needs generates an intrinsic motivation that leads to an absence of educational lag.

It is also predicted:

The perception of non-satisfaction of the basic psychological needs generates an extrinsic motivation that leads to the presence of educational lag.

### Body Text

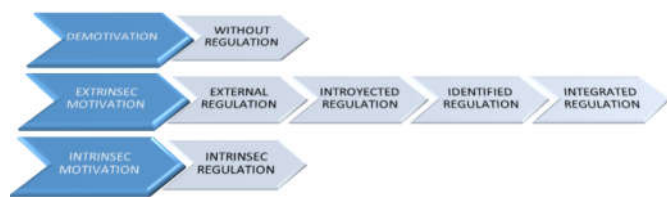
#### Review of Literature Review

The theory of self-determination constitutes an organismic theory about optimal human motivation, that is, tends to see the organism as active, volitional and initiator of behaviors. Endorsed by the numerous studies carried out in the field of education during the last three decades, especially in primary and secondary education. (Domenech and Gomez, 2011). Self-determination is defined as the behavior that leads the subject to "act as the main causal agent of their life and make choices and make decisions regarding their own quality of life, without unnecessary external influences or interference" (Peralta, Zulueta, and González -Torres, 202). Self-determination is the primary goal of the educational process and indeed of all vital development (Decy and Ryan, 2000). This theory considers that all human behavior is motivated by three primary and universal psychological needs that seem to be essential to facilitate optimal functioning, psychological growth, social development and personal well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). These are: Autonomy: desire of choice and feeling of being the initiator of one's own actions. It does not mean independence or total freedom, but rather internal acceptance and commitment to motivated behavior. A certain degree of autonomy is required in terms of choice and control, so that the subject initiates their behaviors and not only acts in response to the requirements of others, that is, to self-regulate. (Roces and González-Torres, 1998).

**Competence:** Desire to interact effectively with the environment and for this sense of competence to positively influence intrinsic motivation, it is necessary that it be accompanied by autonomy. And

**Affinity:** relationship with others, desire to feel connected with others and feel respected by them (Doménech and Gomez, 2011)

These three needs are regulated by the conditions of the environment, and thus the contexts or climates that favor optimal challenges, positive feedback, freedom and choice, opportunities for self-direction, recognition of feelings, promotion of Social relations and group cohesion, will help to achieve intrinsic motivation. (Deci et al, 2000). Motivation not only differs in quantity or level (highly motivated or poorly motivated), but also in different types of motivation. The Theory of Self-Determination explains that to be involved in a task can be described in three different motivational states: demotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. These states are presented through a continuum, ranging from demotivation or reluctance, through passive obedience to personal commitment and finally enjoyment or interest (Ryan and Deci, 2000).



**Figure 2. Continuous self-determination showing the types of motivation**

At the top is the demotivation, which is without motivation, a state in which the person has neither an intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. This demotivation can arise when psychological needs are not met. In this sense people tend to be unmotivated when they lack a sense of effectiveness or a sense of control over some desired results. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the middle of the figure are four types of extrinsic motivation that are distinguished by the degree of autonomy:

**A) External regulation:** without any autonomy and the contingency at stake are incentives or consequences. Example when a student performs an activity only for the extra point in the learning unit.

**B) Introjected regulation:** it is somewhat autonomous and the contingency at stake is to avoid feeling guilty, raising self-esteem. Example when a student attends classes because they must meet certain academic standards It is experienced as an internal pressure that leads to certain things in particular, such as the student who may feel guilty for not studying. (Deci and Black, 2000).

**C) Regulation identified:** this regulation is mainly autonomous and the contingency at stake are the valuation and feeling of importance. The person has decided that the activity is important and therefore freely chooses to carry it out, experiencing a sense of direction instead of obligation and pressure (Méndez-Giménez, Cecchini, and Fernández-Río, 2012), feels less internal conflict And more responsibility to induce and maintain the behavior (Deci and Black, 2000). Example of a student doing school activities because he wants to improve his overall grade.

**D) Integrated regulation:** completely autonomous and the contingency at stake is the assessment of congruence. It shares characteristics with intrinsic motivation but it is not yet because the behaviors are performed to achieve important results on a personal level rather than the inherent interest and enjoyment in the activity. (Méndez-Gimenez, *et al*, 2012) Example students study because they reflect what they want to be as professionals.

Beneath the figure is the intrinsic motivation, which reflects the full confirmation of the autonomy of the person and reflects those occasions in which an activity generates spontaneous satisfactions derived from nourishing the psychological needs of the person. (Reeve, 2010, p98). For Deci and Ryan (1991), intrinsically motivated behaviors can occur without external rewards, are involved for their own benefit, that is, for pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction derived from self-participation and are challenging. Cited in (Méndez-Giménez, Cecchini, and Fernández-Río, 2012, p53). The STD proposes that when a motivational state moves towards intrinsic motivation it results in a deeper understanding, greater participation, persistence or effort, and a more positive attitude. (Vallerand, 2007), as well as meaningful learning and creativity (Ryan and Deci 2000). High levels of intrinsic motivation in the school setting are desirable, as this means that students will participate for reasons not limited to the influence of the environment.

## Methods

**Study:** Non-experimental research, Type of cross-sectional design.

**Subjects:** The research was carried out with 340 participants, undergraduate students in psychology (1st to 9th semester), of which 27.94% (95) of the masculine gender and 72.06% (245) of the feminine gender, with a rank of Age from 17 to 32 years ( $M = 20$   $D = 1.8$ ). The choice of sample was based on a non-probabilistic procedure for convenience.

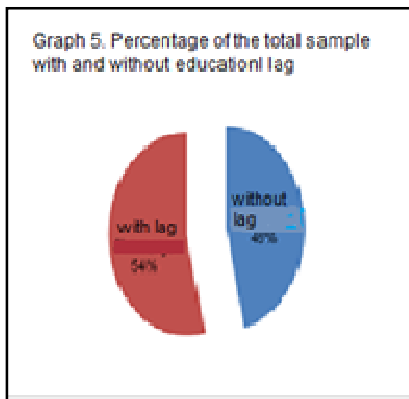
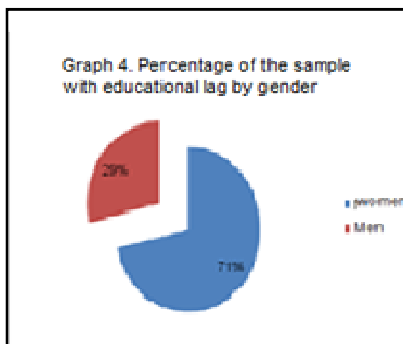
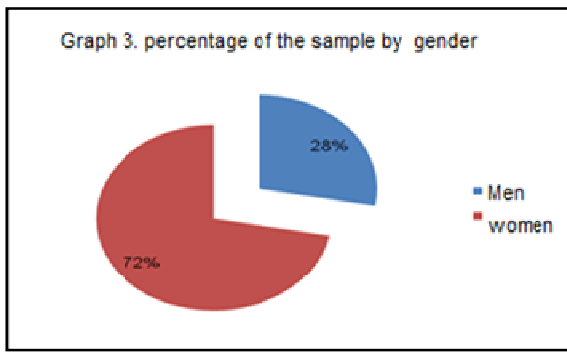
## Instruments

We used two scales, Likert type, with a range of five responses from Totally according to Totally Disagree, with scores from 0 to 5. The first was the Behavior Regulation Scale. This scale was adapted from Markland and Tobin's (2004) Physical Exercise Behavior Regulation Scale (BREQ-2). As this scale is not standardized in Mexican population its validity was determined from the judging of three psychologists, teachers with the ideal profile that have taught the subject of Motivation, while its stability was evaluated in the application to the pilot group, through Alpha reliability analysis of Cronbach, where the  $\alpha.65$  coefficient was obtained. This scale is subdivided into 5 indicators based on the continuum of motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985). The second Scale of Basic Psychological Needs. (Annex 3). This instrument was created from the theory about Self-determination, and from a semantic network, where youngsters from the sixth semester were asked to translate into a leaf what for them meant a university student towards when he felt competent, autonomous and With affinity. Subsequently and to obtain validity of content, it was judged with Teachers that have imparted the Unit of Learning of Motivation and Emotion and pilot the instrument with students of eighth semester. Cronbach's alpha shows a reliability level of  $\alpha.77$

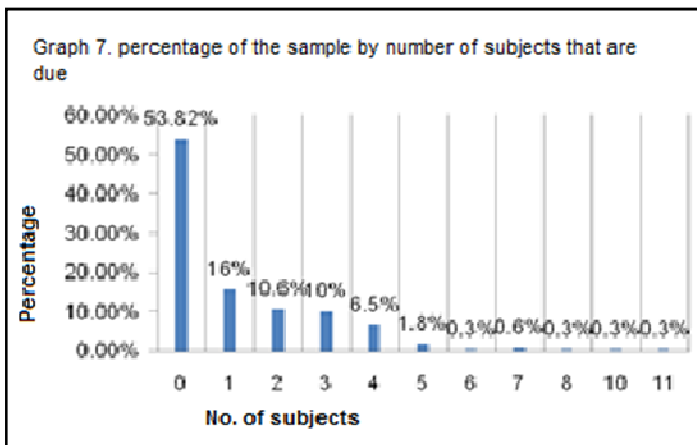
## GENERAL RESULTS

The sample consisted of 340 students of the Psychology Degree, of which 27.94% (95) of the male gender and 72.06% (245) of the female gender. Graph 3. It is representative to consider that 29% (45) of the men and 71% (112) of the women present an educational gap of one or more learning

units (Graphs 4). In other words, 46% of the total sample is found to have educational backwardness. (Figure 5)

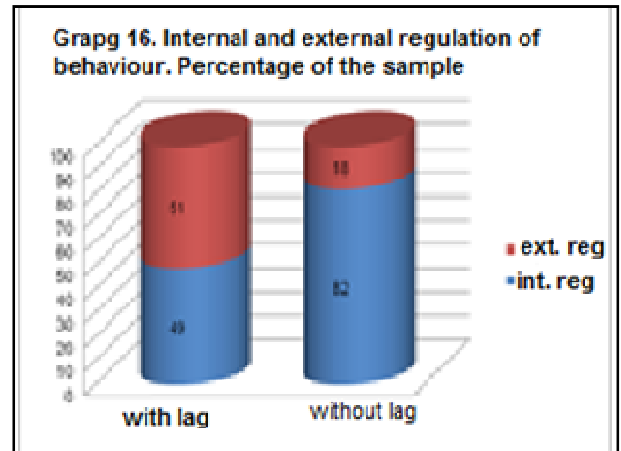


The behavior of the sample in relation to the number of debts is as follows. Students who owe a subject represent 16% (53), who owe two or three subjects are 20.6% (70), students who owe 4 or 5 subjects are 8.3% (28); students who owe more than 6 and up to 11 subjects are 1.8% (6). (Figure 7)



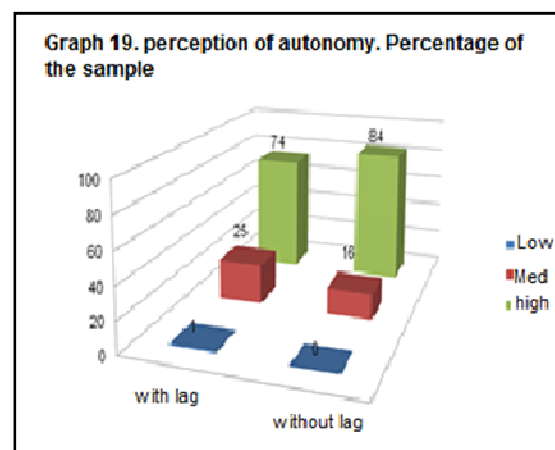
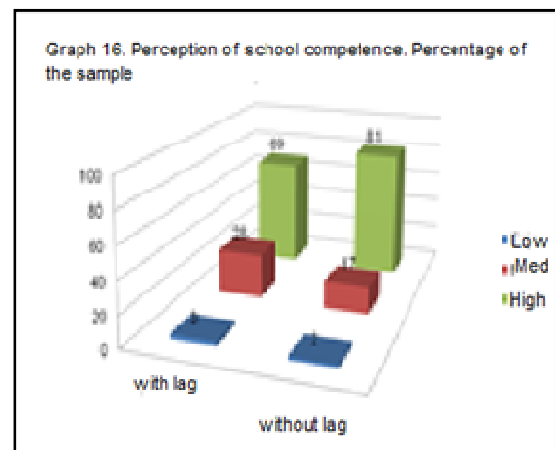
Results to the first research question. What is the type of behavior regulation in students with and without lag?

Regarding the regulation of behavior, we consider the two major areas of external regulation and internal regulation. In this sense, we found that 51% of students with lag have a high score in external regulation, whereas in students without lag only 2% is in a high score.



Results to the second research question. How is the perception of basic psychological needs in students with and without educational lag?

Recall that the three basic psychological needs according to the Theory of self-determination are competence, autonomy and affinity. Thus, in students with a lag in the perception of competence, only 69% are high, 28% are at an average level and 3% are at a low level. In contrast, students without lag 81% are in a high score, 17% in an average level and 2% in a low level. (Chart 17)





As for the psychological need for autonomy, students with lag are at 74% (116) at a high level, while 25% (39) are at an intermediate level and 1% (2) are at A low level. Compared with students without lag, we see a slight increase, since it is 84% (154) that is located at a high level and 16% is located at a medium level. (Graph 19)

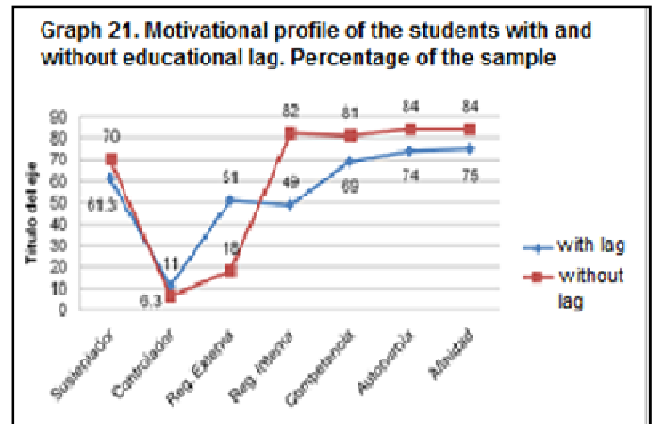
**Motivational profile graph of 2 students with school rezagement based on media**

The following results were obtained by roughly performing a motivational profile of students with school lag considering the means or standard deviation for each of the constructs in the sample of students without school lag. In Profile 1 we observed a student with an average of 7 in the previous semester, with a debit of 5 learning units, they emphasize on the other constructs the fact of having a low score in the internal regulation, that is to say their appreciation regarding the study It arises from within, there is no enjoyment or self-interest. Likewise their levels of perception of their competence and autonomy are located within the low scores, being able to be a student who feels insecure about the competition that is required as a student as perseverance, goals to achieve, initiative for new challenges and tasks. Effort for the improvement, accomplishment of works or actions according to those requested, clear and precise participation in class, integration of the learned. On the other hand, it is perceived not as the author of his actions but by external situations, being able to expect instructions from teachers or colleagues to carry out the tasks or actions entrusted to them, fears failure, avoids defending their opinions, and follows what others propose.

Likewise, their basic psychological needs score below average, that is to say, this student is perceived as controlled by external factors, not as author of their own actions, this can lead to the fact of not satisfying their need for competition, as student. He also fails to establish interpersonal relationships of affinity with his peers.

**General graph of the motivational profile of students with and without school rejection per percentage**

According to the results found in Graph 21 below, we present the integrated data that make up the motivational profile of students with and without educational lag.



**DISCUSSION**

This study demonstrated that the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and affinity are

SUBJECT	1						
AVERAGE	7						
DEBT	5						
	AVERAGE	SCORE	DESVEST.		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
DEMOTIVATION	6	6	3				
INTROYECTA	9	9	3			X	
IDENTIFIED	15	16	3			X	
EXTERNAL	6	4	3			X	
INTERNAL	15	10	3			X	
COMPETENCE	102	84	16				
AUTONOMY	92	78	11				
AFFINITY	89	85	10				X

SUBJECT	11						
AVERAGE	7						
DEBT	4						
	AVERAGE	SCORE	DESVEST.		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
DEMOTIVATION	6	12	3				X
INTROYECTA	9	7	3				
IDENTIFIED	15	14	3				
EXTERNAL	6	9	3				X
INTERNAL	15	4	3				
COMPETENCE	102	64	16				
AUTONOMY	92	58	11				
AFFINITY	89	46	10				

**Motivational profile1. Case 1**

In Profile 2 we appreciate a student with an average of 7, with a debit of 4 learning units. The scores that are in high scores in comparison with the average are: demotivation, that is to say it has not found reason or the reason why it is necessary to continue studying and at the same time it is governed by external motivations on the part of its parents or companions.

positively related to intrinsic motivation, which would help us to explain its relation with the school deficit in students with and without debit of subjects. Likewise, and continuing the first line of the hypothesis, we find that there is a positive relationship with a level of significance of 0.01, between the need for competition and intrinsic regulation ( $r = .278$ ), while a negative relation With the external regulation ( $r = - .201$ ). Regarding autonomy, we found a positive relation at a

significance level of .05 with intrinsic regulation ( $r = .189$ ), and without any statistically significant relation with extrinsic regulation. In other words, students' perception of competence and autonomy is linked to perceiving themselves as being intrinsically motivated, while feeling extrinsically motivated reduces their level of competence, although not significantly their level of autonomy. The hypothesis of this research is accepted, since as explained, there is a positive relationship between the perceived motivational environment, the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, the regulation of behavior and the product of not owing subjects. That is to say, students with a school deficit present low scores in their motivational profile, regarding their perception of autonomy and competence. They are determined as doubtful people of their own skills and capabilities, who feel that their behavior is out of reach, motivated mainly by External factors and not an internal motivation that moves them toward the achievement of their objectives, which in most cases do not arise. Likewise, there is a greater incidence of demotivation by the study, without a clear meaning of why or what they are studying.

This study suggests that students with school lags feel socially pressured because they show high levels of external regulation. A timely analysis, cooperative work with the mentoring program and teachers, would result in a clarification of goals and interests on the part of the student. Along with this social pressure, there is the perception of not meeting their psychological needs of competence and autonomy. One of the opportunities that teachers have to increase students' sense of competence is feedback from their performance when the student receives feedback. Another opportunity is to provide a clear structure on what is expected of the work and what will be assessed during the class period. On the other hand the inflexibility in the requirements, the time limits and the imposition of tasks the only thing to do is to diminish the motivation and the loss of autonomy in the students. Answering the research question What is the perception of satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and affinity of students with and without educational lag?, It was possible to detect that students with educational lag have a lower perception Regarding their competence, level of autonomy and affinity, compared to students who have no lag. As reviewed in theory, competence is the feeling that action is actually taken when certain challenges posed by the environment or by oneself are achieved or fulfilled. The word competition is very close to self-efficacy, and as is well known many of the students lose or fail in self-efficacy in school settings. (Dweck, 1999, quoted in Filak and Sheldon, 2003) According to the Theory of Self-Determination these three needs when they are satisfied, psychological well-being is promoted and an optimum functioning and performance in the environment is more appreciable. In contrast, when the person does not meet these needs, his / her performance is less creative, effortless and wrong, being able to derive in the school environment, in a school delay or in school drop-out.

In response to the research question What is the motivational profile of undergraduate students in psychology with and without school backwardness? It is important to note that although the motivational profiles show some similarity, there is no profile equal to the other, Obtained as many profiles as people who participated in the study. The data were combined to give an overview of the students' perception of their self-determination, however, each case has certain important features to consider in an individualized tutoring job. It was

observed that students with no schooling lag have a self-determined motivational profile, with scores higher than in comparison with students with a school deficit. That is, the former consider a supportive environment in the classroom, the regulation of their behavior is intrinsically motivated and self-perceived with greater competence, autonomy and affinity. In conclusion, it is considered that increasing a motivational climate sustaining students' autonomy will develop a better sense of competence, resulting in a better school performance, with creativity, meaningful learning and psychological well-being. Detect in students the motivational factors related to their self-determination, in initial semesters, could help us in the creation of spaces, where they review various topics that support their sense of competence, work together with teachers to create strategies that Help the sense of autonomy and the implementation of techniques in which affinity is fostered. Orient the student and provide him with the possibility of internalizing external factors that lead him to a more intrinsic regulation, and therefore his performance in the school is of better use and the debit of subjects is reduced.

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