

**Aptitude level, values and school performance in University students****Nivel de aptitud, perfil de ingreso, valores, rendimiento académico en jóvenes Universitarios**

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**Abstract**

The presente investigation was carried out at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, with young people from the 2014-2019 generation of the psychology career (Campus Zacatecas), the objective of this study is to identify if there is a correlation between the level of aptitude, of the values (social, theoretical, aesthetic, economic, political and religious), the income profile and high academic performance at the end of the degree, in university students. It was carried out under a quantitative approach, with a correlational scope. The type of design is non-experimental-transactional, since there was no manipulation of the variables and the information was collected in a single moment. The sample was non-probabilistic, for convenience, it consisted of 89 women and 17 men. The analysis was performed through the statistical package SPSS, obtaining the parametric test (chi<sup>2</sup>). Regarding the findings found, it was identified that the values variable, especially in the theoretical and social values, considered in the income profile of said generation, is not a predictor of high school performance at the end of the psychology degree, as well as at the education level, there was no significant correlation found.

**Ability Value System, School Performance, University**

**Resumen**

La presente investigación se realizó en la Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, con jóvenes de la generación 2014-2019 de la carrera de psicología (Campus Zacatecas), el objetivo del presente estudio es identificar si existe una correlación entre el nivel de aptitud, de los valores (social, teórico, estético, económico, político y religioso), el perfil de ingreso y el rendimiento académico alto al finalizar la licenciatura, en los jóvenes universitarios. Se realizó bajo un enfoque cuantitativo, con un alcance correlacional. El tipo de diseño es no experimental-transaccional, ya que no se presentó manipulación de las variables y la recolección de la información se realizó en un solo momento. La muestra fue no probabilística, por conveniencia, constó de 89 mujeres y 17 hombres. El análisis se realizó a través del paquete estadístico SPSS, con la obtención de la prueba paramétrica (ji<sup>2</sup>). Respecto a los hallazgos encontrados se identificó que la variable valores, sobre todo en los valores teórico y social, considerados en el perfil de ingreso de dicha generación, no es predictora del rendimiento escolar alto al concluir la carrera de psicología, así como en el nivel de aptitud no se encontró una correlación significativa.

**Habilidad, Sistema de valores, Rendimiento Escolar, Universidad**

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## Introduction

Admission to higher education is a process that consists of several stages, in addition to the fact that it is necessary to consider precise indicators for the selection of the most suitable applicants, who meet a defined admission profile, which places them as candidates to have a successful school career, and contribute to the reduction of dropout rates in higher education institutions. On the other hand, the level of aptitude is a necessary and relevant element that must be taken into account, since it is not enough to have the applicant's interest in the chosen career, but the level of aptitude is optimal to be reviewed and considered in any career, not to mention in the case of psychology, because of what it implies in this regard De Garay (2003) states:

*To the extent that our higher education system manages to have more information about the profile of its students and their school trajectories, the authorities and faculty are in a better position to implement various policies that serve their population, (p. 2).*

On the other hand, Vargas, Ramírez, Cortes, Farfán and Heinze (2011) agree that the high school of origin, personality traits, characteristics of creative thinking could influence the student's academic performance. Other variables to consider are also study habits, thinking styles, as well as values. However, for the intention of the present research, the variable values becomes relevant, due to the nature of the same that will be addressed later; added to this is the great loss of values that at a social level have been in detraction, this has an important impact on young people in general and specifically on young university students. The objective of the present study is to identify if there is a correlation between the entrance profile, the level of aptitude, values and school performance at the end of the bachelor's degree in young university students.

## Problematization

There is currently a high rate of high school students who wish to continue their university studies, therefore, in spite of the high demand, universities must have mechanisms to attract all those students who can adapt to the demands of university life.

In addition to having and knowing a previous school career that can predict a successful trajectory at the end of higher education, therefore, the admission process of an institution serves as a milestone in educational programs (PE). According to various evaluation and accreditation agencies such as the Inter-institutional Committees for Higher Evaluation (CIEES), the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (COPAES), point out the need to have standards for the trajectory of students, the National Association of Universities of Higher Education (ANUIES) considers the monitoring of students to prevent and reduce educational backwardness, reduce failure rates, raise graduation rates among other aspects.

The Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ) after 190 years of foundation is conceived as the "Maximum House of Studies" of the state according to the First Report of Activities (2022) issued by the Rector Jesús Ibarra Reyes currently has 120 educational programs within the 33 academic units, for the school year 2021-2022, the total enrollment amounted to 41,698 students 47. The total enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year was 41,698 students, 47.7% women and 52.3% men, as well as a teaching staff of 2,767 professors integrated into the different educational programs: 1,557 men and 1210 women, 74% of whom are research professors. However, an important fact is that the largest student population is concentrated at the undergraduate level, with a population of 27,118 students. Within the admission policies the UAZ establishes the following:

*Students entering the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas "Francisco García Salinas" in any of its areas, units and programs must have the basic knowledge and skills, of the previous level, that guarantee an adequate performance in the level to which they apply for admission. Likewise, they must have the necessary attitudes and values to make them responsible for their formative process and assume an active position in the study and development of the projects and work required, coinciding with the purposes, goals and mission of the institution (UAZ Model XXI Century, 2005, P.37).*

After the above, it can be inferred that all students, especially those pursuing a bachelor's degree, go through an admission process, which considers and takes into account the elements of all the aspects mentioned above, on knowledge and skills, therefore, this potentiates the possibility that those who enter the university are really students who will have an exceptional performance in their school career.

The Academic Unit of Psychology has been founded more than 35 years ago, it is characterized for being one of the three main careers with the largest number of enrollment within the UAZ, currently has 5 more extensions, not counting the Zacatecas Campus located in the capital of Zacatecas, which represents the largest number of the population, followed by the municipality of Fresnillo, Jalpa, Juan Aldama, Ojocaliente and Jerez de García Salinas.

In recent years we have observed behaviors and attitudes, lack of interest, low motivation for the fulfillment of school tasks, low academic performance, cognitive deficiencies, confrontations with teachers (verbal), loss of values, substance abuse and in general negative attitudes and defiance in some students of the psychology career, object of study (we are talking about a really minimal percentage), however it is alarming, since being the psychology career, it would be expected that the student population, after having gone through an admission process in which variables such as variables such as: study habits, values, thinking styles, personality and vocational definition considered with a favorable level of aptitude for the entrance to the psychology career, these aspects, considered as unfavorable and undesirable for a student in training as a mental health professional, are manifested and detected.

On the other hand, when reviewing the academic performance at the end of the career, it has not been the most suitable in the generation under study, therefore a question arises that arises for the development of this research that is stated below is there a correlation between the entry profile, values, level of aptitude and academic performance of the students of the 2014-2019 generation of the psychology career?

### Hypothesis

Hi: "There is a relationship between the entry profile, aptitude level, values and academic performance at the end of the psychology career in the students of the 2009-2014 generation".

### Theoretical perspective

In this section a theoretical dissertation of each of the variables that we have taken up for the elaboration of the research is exposed, it is considered that they are aspects of utmost importance to achieve an understanding on the topic to be developed, these variables are intertwined, without a doubt, since, having a clarity on the meaning of these, will therefore generate a greater understanding of the elements to be addressed.

### Values

First of all, we will deal with the subject of values, it is of utmost importance to approach and reflect on why they are basic at the moment of approaching education, since the school is considered the second most relevant institution in the formation of the human being, besides the family; in the latter, values are learned in an imitative way, through models, mainly given by primary figures, although this is not always the case. However, in school values are explicitly transmitted at a cognitive and theoretical level, so it would be expected that formal education contributes to the internalization and reproduction of values.

It is necessary to emphasize that society, the community, the environment in which one grows and lives, have a considerable influence on the issue of values, since it is in this environment that, in recent years, there has been a tremendous crisis of values, there is currently a wave of complex and varied psychosocial problems, as an example of this, is the violence that is on the rise day after day in Mexico.

Regarding the topic of values from a psychological perspective, some authors consider them as: "enduring beliefs or mental representations, referring to modes of behavior and desirable states or ends of existence" (Rockeach, 1973; Swartz, 1992; cited in García, Grimaldo and Manzanares, 2016, p. 230).

Therefore, we could then interpret that these beliefs are the ones that allow subjects to adopt certain types of behavior in society and daily life, in which the school context is no exception.

The value system of each person or subject in the same way leads to make important decisions and evidently when referring to a university career, it takes on a significant relevance and even more if it is a psychology career, in which it would be expected that the applicants have a significant inclination in values such as the social and theoretical mainly. According to Blesedell, Crepeau, Ellen and Schell (2008) "Values constitute a significant part of a profession" (p. 1005).

In addition, it is worth mentioning that "people's values are important predictors of behavior, interests and attitudes, for example, of students' academic performance, interpersonal bonds and voting behavior" (Castro and Nader, 2006, p. 158).

One of the most representative authors on the subject of values is undoubtedly Schwartz, who proposes 10 motivational values in which he highlights the following:

*The 10 basic values common to all cultures are self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universality. These make up a dynamic system, organized in a circular system in which the basic values are grouped by their compatibility and in their opposite position, has the values that are incompatible or contrary, that is, those that represent a contradiction between the objectives and that, therefore, would generate a conflict in the individual (Schwartz, 1992; cited in Abella, Lezcano and Casado, 2017, p. 126).*

Consequently, it is convenient to explore and know the values of those aspiring to enter the university, in order to have greater confidence that those who are being trained really have solid and rooted values, which will allow a more ethical praxis, once they have completed their professional training and are inserted in the labor market.

### Aptitude Level and Entrance Profile

After the above, it is convenient to expose the term aptitude level, since it indicates if the applicant to enter a career really has the skills, competencies and knowledge required explicitly in the entrance profile (this will be discussed later); since these are aspects that will have an imminent impact not only in the school career, but also in the exercise of the profession in the labor market. From the perspective of psychology, the Dictionary of Psychology defines it as: "Potential capacity that makes an individual apt for a certain activity. Generally the aptitude is revealed precociously and, in most cases, pre-existent to learning, although it can remain latent throughout life" (p. 111).

After the above, it is agreed that the higher the level of aptitude presented by an applicant to the entrance of the psychology career, the school trajectory, translated into academic performance, will be high. Once the aspect related to the level of aptitude has been raised, it is appropriate to introduce the entry profile variable, since it is known that at the basic, middle and higher education levels, in each of the programs and study plans through the curriculum, each of the entry profiles are explicitly mentioned, together with the graduation profiles (currently translated into skills and competencies). According to Gonzalez, Lara, Pinedo and Crespo (Gonzalez, Lara, Pinedo and Crespo), the entry profile is defined as:

*Conceptual description of the desirable characteristics of the new student in terms of knowledge, skills and favorable attitudes to study and finish with greater chances of success the studies he/she starts. In addition, it gives an account of the academic options taken, academic grades obtained and sociological data of interest (p. 13).*

Each university has the autonomy to build the entry profile according to the career and area, however, this task does not exempt from considering aspects and guidelines on which each of them is based; in this regard, in the labor field, employers are generally consulted in order to identify the problems, needs and current issues to be addressed and resolved by health professionals, on the other hand we must consider the educational policies and the competencies required both generic and specific in a global context;

Hence the emergence of one of the most praiseworthy and innovative projects in which are reflected, described, discussed, argued and oriented in this sense in the field of higher education, this project is called Tunning-Latin America (2004-2007) in which the main objective is to achieve convergence with a guiding axis in which the aforementioned aspects are exposed and described.

### Academic performance

In another order of ideas, one of the variables that should be addressed is academic performance, defined by Pilco (2022) as "the result of the student's capabilities, which shows what he/she has learned in the teaching-learning process" (p. 17), since the student's school career is measured both in a quantitative and qualitative aspect; when the quantitative term is referred to, it means issuing a grade, which is to provide a hard and fast score. 17), since the student's school career is measured both in a quantitative and qualitative aspect; when referring to the quantitative term, it means to issue a grade, this is to provide a hard data, which is represented by the number 0 to 10 according to the measure used, which categorizes the level of knowledge and/or learning obtained in a subject, subject or until the completion of formal education, as is the degree, in other words is to answer the question "how much did the graduate learn? On the other hand, when addressing the qualitative aspect, it is alluded to indicate what the graduate knows how to do, in observable terms, here also come into play, the skills and competencies acquired, in this regard Gutiérrez, Granados and Landeros (2011) define academic performance as: "The number of subjects passed by a student in a career, in others by the result of a specifically designed test, as well as by the average of grades of the subjects taken" (p. 18).

However, the qualification is an aspect in which there are several factors, such as the student's ability to learn, study habits, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and motivation, the latter coined by Usan and Salavera (2018) learning styles, vocational definition, factors related to health, family type, socio-cultural level, geographic location, to the teaching practice, which entails, the teacher's personality style, didactics, training, educational planning and the type of evaluation that is performed;

Therefore, it is complex at the moment of assigning a grade, since it is also implicit in several occasions values of judgment on the part of the teachers. Likewise, Chadwick and Reyes (cited in Carpio, Henríquez and Pacheco, 2022, p. 38) point out that "academic performance is related to the expression of skills and psychological factors of the student...".

Therefore, despite all the elements implicit in the academic performance, the average is important because even at the social, labor, family and personal level, a person who concludes with a high average at the end of any educational level, the expectations placed on him/her will be significant, and if it is a profession, it will not be the exception, since it would be expected that he/she is a well prepared, intelligent professional, with mastery of his/her area among other aspects; on the other hand, he/she could benefit to continue with postgraduate studies in programs attached to the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) sponsored by the Federal Government.

### Method

The present study was developed with a quantitative approach according to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, (2015), the scope of the research is correlational, since it is intended to identify whether there is a relationship or association between one or more variables. In this case, the correlation between the entry profile, values, aptitude level and academic performance at the end of the course is addressed.

The type of design is non-experimental since there was no manipulation of the variables at any time, with transectional cohort, since the data are collected at a single moment. The unit of analysis was constituted by the applicants of the 2014-2019 generation, to enter the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology (UAP) of the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ).

### Procedure

Initially, we turned to the coordination of the Center for Attention and Student Services (CASE) of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (UAZ), formerly known as the Undersecretary of Attention to Young University Students;

In 2000, the Assessment Booklet of the Comprehensive Profile of the Young University Student was proposed for the first time; this booklet was composed of: 1) a psychopedagogical questionnaire, 2) a psychometric test of general intelligence and 3) a comprehensive diagnostic questionnaire. In 2005, the booklet was reintroduced for the selection of applicants for some careers.

As of 2009 (due to an institutional policy), it is designated as the sole responsible for building and carrying out the admission process of applicants for the entire university (previously it was only for some careers). After the above, the following instruments were applied for the generation under study: 1. Tea Ediciones Personality Test (this was not part of the Diagnostic Booklet), 2. Study Habits Test: "I learn to know myself as a student", 3.

For the purposes of this research, the CASE provided the information of the applicants to enter the psychology career only, for this purpose the data were of 443 people, however, the final sample consisted of 106 cases, 89 women and 17 men, since all those cases that did not have complete information in each of the aspects to be considered in the entrance profile were purged (the information was provided digitally on a USB, since the content was stored in an Excel sheet).

Once this information was available, we went to the School Department of the Psychology Academic Unit, in order to request the lists of the graduates, which contained the final averages of that generation. After this, we proceeded to perform the corresponding analysis through the SPSS statistical package, considering on this occasion the specific information of the results of the values test, the level of aptitude upon entering the career, as well as the average grade obtained at the end of the career, a contingency table was prepared to identify the data and thus perform the corresponding cross and identify the correlation by means of (chi2).

They were classified by dimensions according to the previously mentioned evaluated values, in which they were classified with aptitude levels (at the entrance of the career), as well as a number was assigned (1=not apt), (2=averagely apt) and (3=apt), to validate the average at the end of the career.

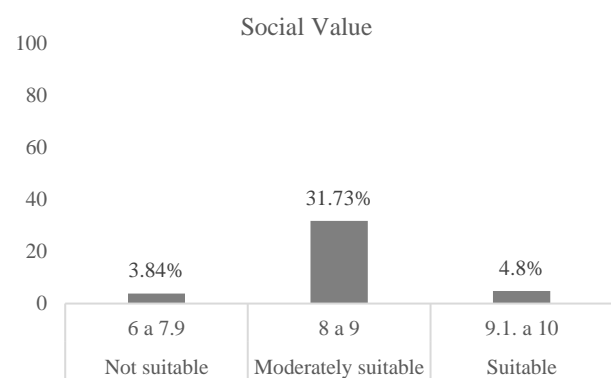
It was categorized as follows, those who obtained an average of 6 to 7.9 were considered low, the average of 8 to 9, was considered as medium and finally, those who obtained a grade of 9 or more, were considered as high.

### Instrument

The Gordon W. Allport Test is a scale that was designed primarily for use with college students or adults who have some type of college-level education. It is Likert-type and its objective is to determine the relative importance of the six basic interests or motives, the values evaluated are six: 1. theoretical value, 2. economic value, 3. aesthetic value, 4. social value, 5. political value, and 6. religious value. It consists of 120 items (Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (2001; cited in García, 2018, p. 449).

### Results

In this section we will present the results of each of the values, levels of aptitude and academic performance in the students of the 2014-2019 generation, graduates of the psychology career of the UAZ, for the first instance, the social value is shown (Graphic 1).

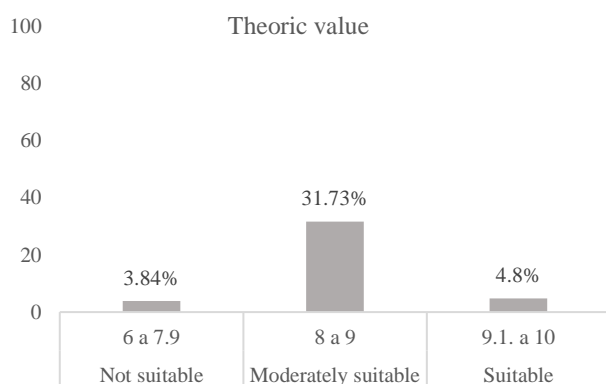


**Graphic 1** Social value, level of aptitude and academic performance

As we can see, the students who were considered unsuitable for the entrance profile, in relation to the final academic performance was low, this corresponds to 3.84% equivalent to 4 students, with respect to the applicants who were in the moderately suitable range, upon entering the career, 31.73% equivalent to 33 students were obtained. 73% equivalent to 33 students, finally, those who were apt to enter the career, 4.8% equivalent to 5 students, therefore it is a significant data since although in the social value they were moderately apt.

The average is adequate, although it is not the average, high, at least it is important as a qualification.

Regarding the theoretical value (Graphic 2) shows the results on the level of aptitude when entering the career and the academic performance at the end of it.

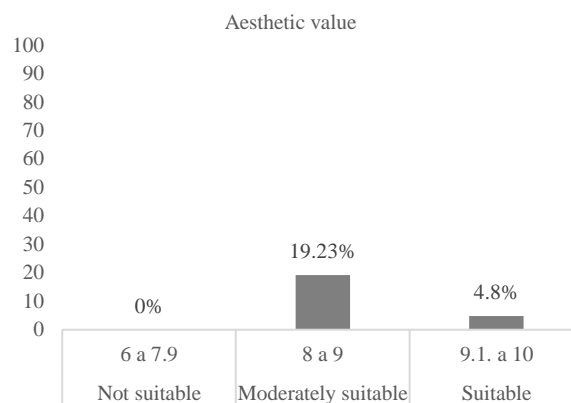


**Graphic 2** Theoretical value, aptitude level and academic performance

As we can see, when entering the career, 0.9% of the students were considered unfit, being 10 students, with respect to the entrance profile, in relation to the final academic performance was low, of the applicants who were in the moderately fit range, when entering the career, 3.8% were obtained, equivalent to 4 students, finally, those who were fit at the entrance to the career, 1.9% equivalent to 2 students, therefore, the final academic performance was low.

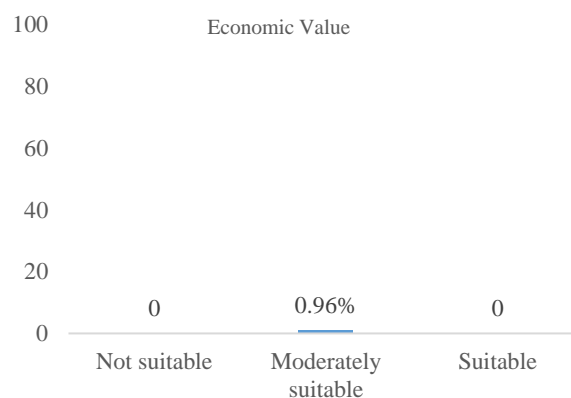
Finally, those who were apt to enter the career, 1.9% equivalent to 2 students were observed, therefore it is a significant data since although in the social value they were moderately apt, the average is adequate, although it is not the average, high, at least it is important as a qualification.

Regarding the esthetic value, the level of aptitude and school performance (Graphic 3) shows the results.



**Graphic 3** Aesthetic value, level of aptitude and academic performance

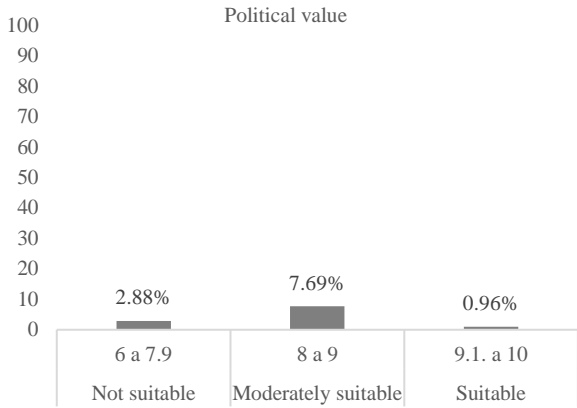
It is identified, the students at the entrance to the career that were considered not apt, regarding the entrance profile, in relation to the final scholastic performance is null, regarding the applicants that were in the moderately apt range at the entrance to the psychology career, with predominance by the aesthetic value, they obtained 19.23% equivalent to 20 students, finally, those that were apt at the entrance to the career, it is observed 4.8% equivalent to 5 students, therefore, it is a significant data since the scholastic performance is high. In the case related to the economic value (Graphic 4) shows the results.



**Graphic 4** Economic value, level of aptitude and academic performance

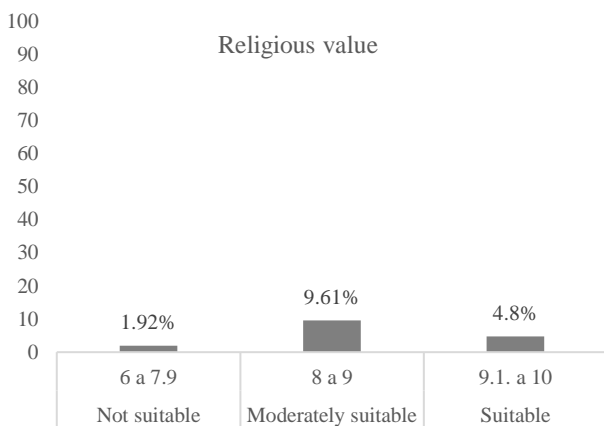
As we can see, the students who were considered unsuitable to enter the career, with respect to the entrance profile, in relation to the final academic performance is null, with respect to the applicants who were in the moderately suitable range to enter the psychology career, with predominance by the economic value, they obtained 0.96% equivalent to 1 student, finally, those who were suitable to enter the career, 0% equivalent to 0 students are observed.

In turn, Graphic 5 shows the results obtained in relation to the political value.



**Graphic 5** Political value, level of aptitude and academic performance

The students who were considered unsuitable upon entering the career, with respect to the entrance profile, in relation to the final academic performance is 2.88%, corresponding to 3 students, with respect to the applicants who were in the moderately suitable range upon entering the psychology career, with predominance for the political value, they obtained 7.69% equivalent to 8 students, finally, those who were suitable upon entering the career, 0.96% equivalent to 1 student is observed. Finally, Graphic 6 shows the data in relation to the religious value.



**Graphic 6** Political value, level of aptitude and academic performance

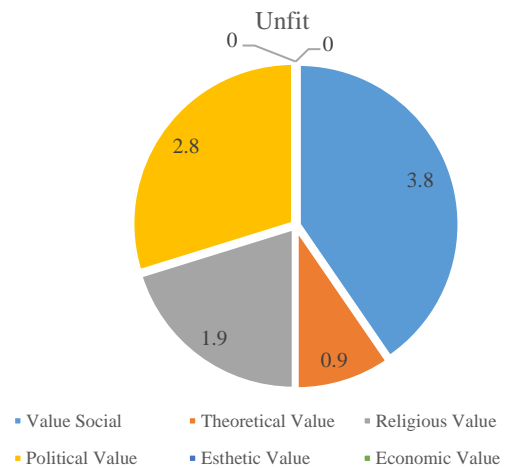
It can be seen that the students who were considered unsuitable to enter the career, with respect to the entry profile, in relation to the final academic performance is low, 1.92%, corresponding to 2 students, with respect to the applicants who were in the range moderately suitable to enter the psychology career.

With a predominance of religious value, they obtained 9.6% equivalent to 10 students, finally, those who were suitable to enter the career and obtained a high average of 9.1 to 10, corresponds to 4.8% equivalent to 17 students.

According to what was indicated in the CASE, the ideal values to enter the psychology career are the social value in the first instance and the social value, however, according to the results obtained in the sample, the bulk of the percentage presents a preference for the social value, second place for the aesthetic value and third place for the religious value.

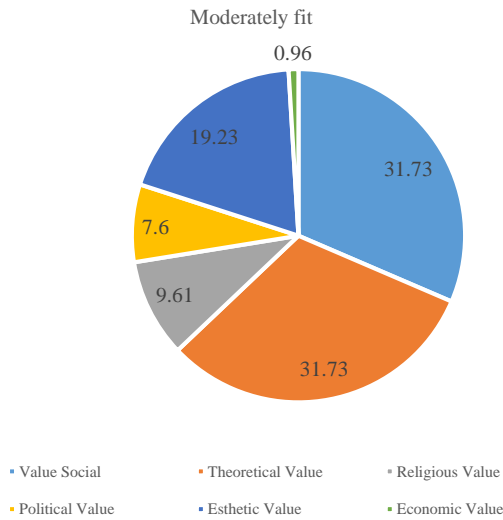
This is a significant fact, since the psychology career is distinguished by the fact that the vast majority of the subjects are inclined to the review of paradigms, models or complex theories that are aimed at understanding the various problems related to biopsychosocial aspects that will influence the behavior of human behavior, in the case of this generation, their interest in the theoretical value was not high.

On the other hand, (Graphic 7) shows the percentage of students who were ineligible to enter the degree program in the different values, as well as the average at the end of the course, (Graphic 8) illustrates the percentage of students who were moderately eligible to enter the course and the final average, (Graphic 9) shows the applicants who were eligible to enter the course and the academic average. Graphic 10 shows the level of aptitude and academic performance in the 2014-2019 generation.

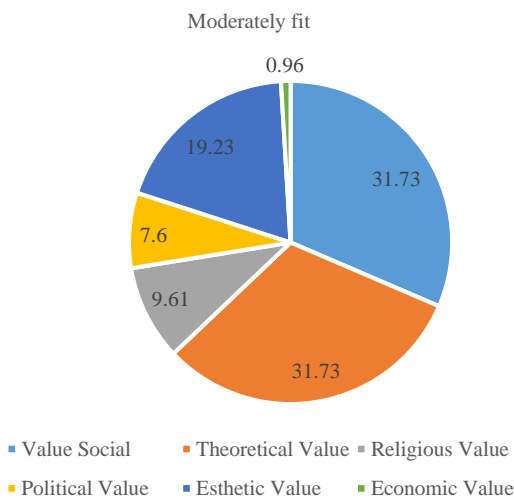


**Graphic 7** Unfit students, values and school performance



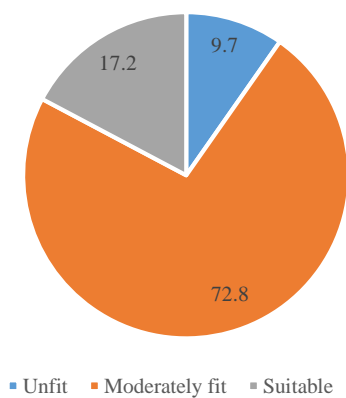


Graphic 8 Moderately fit students, values and school performance



Graphic 9 Able students, values and school performance

Aptitude levels and academic performance



Graphic 10 Aptitude level and school performance in the 2014-2019 generation

In the case of the value study instrument the ideal value for the entry profile is the social, as a second instance is the theoretical value, the results of the  $[\chi^2=208.00, gl=28, p=.00]$ , so no correlation is found between the social value and the career average.

Discussion and conclusions

While it is true that values are a key element in relation to the formation of young people, in view of the crisis currently being suffered about them worldwide, it is imperative to strengthen them, in all formal education, however significantly in higher education, since ethics is a fundamental aspect, in this regard Chapa and Martinez (2011) in their study on university values in young students point out "... it is transcendental that universities are prepared to organize the fulfillment of them and that it is one of the bases of principles and values to apply them in the productive sector where they work"(p. 5). In the case of the values variable, no significant correlation was found between the type of value and the academic performance of the students; although it is true that most of the applicants showed a preference for the social value, although they were categorized in the moderately apt dimension and with an average of 8 to 8.9.

After the above, our research hypothesis was not proven since there is no significant correlation between the values, the level of aptitude and school performance, at the end of the psychology career. However, this does not mean that values are not relevant at the moment of knowing the profile of the applicants, but rather that once admitted to the career, aspects that could be improved for a successful school career are identified. In this regard, according to some authors (Bartone *et al.* 2009; Arango, Clavijo, Puerta and Sánchez 2014; Moral 2011 and Beltrán, Torres, Beltrán, García, 2005), they are not useful in the construction of the university entrance profile since they are considered for other purposes.

Therefore, the findings found inform us that the values are not predictors of high academic performance in the school career of the university student. In the graduates of the 2014-2019 generation the predominant value was social which is a relevant data for the area of psychology.

This study is a precedent to consider admission policies, to follow up students, to identify those who could be vulnerable to drop out in the first years of the career; as well as aspects related to failure, learning difficulties, among others.

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