

Regine Blackman

PSY441 RO Theories of Personality

Dr. Stephen Maret

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Lesson 1- Essay Question 3

3. What does a correlation coefficient signify? Explain the differences between positive and negative correlations. Give examples of each kind of correlation.

A correlation coefficient is a numerical index of the size and direction of an association between two variables. The direction of a correlation coefficient can be either positive or negative and indicates the degree of the relationship between two variables. Positive correlations indicate that an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in another; while negative correlations indicate that an increase in one variable is associated with a decrease in another variable (Ryckman, 2013, p. 9).

For example, a theorist might want to research relations between positive self-image and high academic achievement in adolescents. The results of the study, would rely on defining the characteristics of a positive self-image (by self-report or testing-in), the sample groups' study habits, and access to the research participants' academic test scores. In the case of a positive correlation, the students categorized as having a positive self-image, would also rank higher in academic achievement over students who did not report positive self-image or test into that category.

However, using the same study group and adding an additional variable, researchers might find a negative correlation between high academic achievement and patience toward students who struggle academically. This negative correlation would indicate that the higher a

student's academic achievements, the lower their tolerance toward their peers who lag behind in lessons.