



**PERSONALITY AND PROFESSIONAL TRAITS:
HOW INTERPERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS DEFINE SOCIAL WORKERS**

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Abstract

It is considered that self-awareness is a fundamental element in personal and professional development, especially in social assistance, where constant contact with the other implies self-discovery, self-knowledge, reflection, change (Alicke, Zhang, Stephenson, 2020). In this context of the need for self-knowledge and understanding, the objective of this paper is to highlight the existing differences according to gender and self-acceptance in terms of interpersonal characteristics developed early in the family: "Feeling of social communion - prosocial", "Agreement - compliance", "Taking the lead - leader", "Desire for recognition - approval" and "Being on guard - caution", dimensions measured with the BASIS-A questionnaire.

A series of demanding and transversal skills are the prerogative of this profession, among which, conflict management, leading and mediating relationships, compassion, agility, assertive approach, etc. It is necessary to create contexts for evaluating the interpersonal traits of social workers and highlighting the interpersonal styles within the broad framework of the global evaluation of their personality. In this sense, we used the BASIS Questionnaire (Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire - USAQ) and the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire. The results indicate differences regarding gender and unconditional acceptance on the dimensions of feeling of social communion, leadership quality, recognition, approval.

Keywords: *interpersonal traits; social workers; recognition-approval; social communion feeling.*

Introduction

Social workers must maintain a healthy self-concept and manage their emotions to avoid burnout and remain effective in their roles. This includes recognizing mistakes and learning from them, embracing continuous self-improvement, and maintaining self-compassion. The motivation behind this study is to achieve a deeper understanding of the personality characteristics of social workers and to highlight these as specific traits of individuals pursuing a career in social work.

This paper highlights gender differences regarding these individual stereotypes and beliefs that contribute to the development of problem-solving strategies related to the three major life tasks: relationships with others, work, and intimacy. Furthermore, by introducing the variable of unconditional self-acceptance as a pragmatic alternative to the concept of self-esteem, the study details these gender differences and provides an overview of the entire personality structure.

The five major dimensions or interpersonal styles analyzed in this study are:

- Belonging – Sense of Social Communion (BSI) – measures characteristics reflecting how the individual feels they belong in the world. If an individual generally feels they belong to a group, they are more likely to be cooperative, sociable, and possess interpersonal skills. The feeling of social communion (or social community) refers to a deep sense of belonging, connection, and shared purpose within a group, society, or community (Allen, 2020; Allen et al., 2022). It encompasses the recognition that individuals are part of a larger whole, with shared values, responsibilities, and a sense of mutual support. This feeling is grounded in the belief that human beings are inherently social creatures and thrive best when connected to others (Hagerty et al., 1992).
- Agreement/Compliance (GA) – reflects the degree to which a person is agreeable and avoids conflicts.
- Taking the Lead (TC) – reflects a person's preference to be the leader and/or dominant person in relationships. This dimension reflects the degree to which a person is directive and controlling by nature.
- Desire for Recognition (WR) – describes the individual's tendency to be success-oriented, focused on achievements, and seeking the approval of others. The need for professional approval among social workers refers to the desire to be recognized, validated, or affirmed by peers, supervisors, or the broader professional community.

While seeking some level of professional approval is natural and can be motivating, an excessive need for approval can indicate underlying issues that may affect the effectiveness and well-being of a social worker (Tutko, 1963).

- Being on Guard (BC) – identifies people who are sensitive to affect, oriented towards feelings, and who feel compassion for others. The individual's tendency to approach life with caution likely formed in a discouraging family environment that was either unpredictable or sometimes painful. The individual can approach life with caution or choose an unpredictable and risky approach.

The introduced variable, self-acceptance, is an important trait for any human relations specialist, favoring performance in communication and interaction in general. It is positively associated with mental health and higher levels of life satisfaction (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001); the same authors suggest a negative association with anxiety and depression symptoms and with low self-esteem. "Feeling of Social Communion"/social communion: The feeling of social communion (or social community) refers to a deep sense of belonging, connection, and shared purpose within a group, society, or community. It encompasses the recognition that individuals are part of a larger whole, with shared values, responsibilities, and a sense of mutual support. This feeling is grounded in the belief that human beings are inherently social creatures and thrive best when they are connected to others. This sense of belonging can be manifested through mutual support and solidarity (Mason, 2000), shared purpose and values (Mahar, Cobigo, Stuart, 2013), cooperation (Ooi, Cortina, 2023), trust, and empowerment.

Purpose

The present research aims to identify the role that the interpersonal characteristics, "Feeling of social communion - prosocial", "Agreement - compliance", "Taking the lead - leader", "Desire for recognition - approval" and "Being on guard - precaution"; developed early in the family, have on the unconditional acceptance of one's own person and implicitly on the global assessment of one's own person. In the same context, the present study also aims to research the differences between genders, social workers in terms of these individual stereotypes, beliefs that contribute to the development of strategies for solving the problems that come in the face of the three great tasks of life: the relationship with others, work and privacy.

Sample

The study sample consists of a number of 72 people, 36 people (50%) male, and 36 people (50%), female, social workers from public services and NGOs. The age of the subjects is between 18 and 55 of years. All subjects participated voluntarily.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1. Interpersonal characteristics, developed in early childhood within the family, are manifested differently depending on the gender of the person.

Hypothesis 2. The interpersonal characteristics, developed in early childhood within the family, manifest differently depending on the person's gender and the unconditional acceptance of one's own person.

Hypothesis 3. The way a person accepts himself is influenced by interpersonal characteristics, developed early in the family.

We made a quasi-experimental, unifactorial, intersubject design, the independent variables being the sex of the subjects and the unconditional acceptance of one's own person.

Instruments

The Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) (2001, Chamberlain and Haaga); BASIS–A Inventory (Basic Adlerian Scales for Interpersonal Success – Adult Form) (Wheeler, Kern, & Curlette, 1993).

Results

In order to observe whether there are differences for personality characteristics according to gender within the first specific hypothesis, we performed descriptive processing for the dimensions "Feeling of social communion - prosocial", "Agreement - compliance", "Taking the lead - leader", "Desire of recognition - approval" and "Being on guard - precaution", dimensions measured with the BASIS-A questionnaire.

The evaluation of the feeling of social communion showed that there are tendencies towards differences between the two averages obtained for men ($m = 36.61$) and women ($m = 35.33$), the average obtained by the group of men being higher (Table No. 1). It can be said that the feeling of social communion in men is more pronounced than in women.

For the Agreement -Compliance dimension, which explores the degree of adoption of others' norms, the differences according to gender are very small. The application of the non-

parametric U Mann Whitney inferential test for the assessment of compliance indicates that the differences in means for the two groups are very small, men ($m = 20.17$) and women ($m = 20.22$) and the value of $u = 646$ at a threshold $p = 0.982$, statistically insignificant. It can therefore be said that the adoption of others' norms, compliance does not differ between men and women.

Table No 1. *Results of descriptive processing*

Social communion feeling – prosocial		
	Masculine	Feminine
N	36	36
Mean	36,61	35,33
Median	37,00	36,50
Mode	37	34
St. Deviation	2,79	4,76
Minimum	33	21
Maximum	43	41

For the scanning of leadership qualities (Table 2), the analysis of means indicates differences between men ($m = 22.00$) and women ($m = 19.50$). Therefore, there are differences in terms of leadership qualities, responsibility and organization in men compared to women, this aspect being valid for the sample taken in the study. For the Desire for recognition – approval dimension, for both men and women, measured with the BASIS-A questionnaire, which rates the need for approval for a job well done in the subjects studied. The averages obtained on the two groups show differences, the average for men being $m = 41.06$ and for women $m = 38.39$, which makes us say that men have a greater need for approval from others than women.

The result for the Dimension Being on guard – caution dimension 5t/5 are noted in Table 3. It can be seen that differences regarding this dimension in men ($m = 15.89$) compared to women ($m = 18.17$), with other in other words, women are more cautious and attentive to the social environment, but at the same time more unpredictable than men, at least in the case of the studied sample.

Table No.2. *Results of descriptive processing*

Taking the lead– leader		
	Masculin	Feminin
N	36	36
Mean	22,00	19,50
Median	20,50	20,00
Mode	18	13
St. Deviation	5,19	4,88
Minimum	15	12
Maximum	33	27

Table No.3 *Results of descriptive processing*

Being on guard – precaution		
	Masculin	Feminin
N	36	36
Mean	15,89	18,17
Median	16,00	19,50
Mode	8	12
St. Deviation	6,22	7,13
Minimum	8	8
Maximum	28	28

To verify hypothesis 2, the BASIS-A questionnaire tests were applied and the level of acceptance was measured with the USAQ questionnaire. The results indicate that the feeling of social communion in men with high acceptance of one's own person is more pronounced than in those with lower acceptance; also, women with a high score of acceptance of one's own person have a pronounced prosocial feeling compared to women with a score low self-acceptance. In men's groups, both those with a low acceptance score and those with a high self-acceptance score present a stronger sense of social communion than women. An interesting result is that men with a low level of self-acceptance show a higher degree of compliance ($m = 20.33$) than men with a higher level of unconditional self-acceptance ($m = 20.00$). In the groups of women, things are the opposite way, in the sense that women with a lower level of unconditional acceptance of their own person reveal a lower degree of agreement and adoption of rules ($m = 20.20$), compared to the group of women with a higher level of unconditional acceptance of one's own person ($m = 20.25$).

Men with lower acceptance of themselves are more motivated by rules, routine ($m = 20.33$) than women with low unconditional acceptance of themselves ($m = 20.20$), and in the case of groups with high acceptance, men with high self-acceptance are more intolerant of

rules, more rebellious ($m = 20.00$) and women with a high level of self-acceptance are more obedient, forgiving, disliking conflict ($m = 20.25$).

Tabel No. 4 *Results of inferential processing*

BASIS – A Dimensions	Hi square	Threshold
Feeling of social communion - prosocial	1,415	0,234
Agreement - compliance	0,018	0,892
Taking the lead - leader	0,205	0,651
Desire for recognition - approval	3,448	0,036
Being on guard - caution	3,607	0,058

We also discovered leadership characteristics in men with a low acceptance score ($m = 22.11$), more than women with low unconditional acceptance of one's own person ($m = 19.50$). As expected, men with a low level of unconditional acceptance of themselves are more concerned with the expectations of others, the importance of success and the approval of others being greater than for men with high unconditional self-acceptance. The same situation occurs in women. From the analysis of the sets of results, it can be concluded that the dimension of Being on guard - caution is more pronounced in men with higher unconditional acceptance of one's own person than in those with lower acceptance, also, the caution trait is more obvious in women with acceptance unconditional self-esteem higher than in the group with lower acceptance.

Hypothesis 2 is supported by the desire for recognition – approval dimension, the value of the coefficient $\chi^2 = 3.448$ at a threshold $p = 0.036$ is statistically significant, confirming that there are differences according to gender and the level of unconditional self-acceptance in terms of social recognition and the approval of the others (situation explained in table 4)

In order to highlight the influence that early developed personality traits have on the way subjects accept themselves, we used multilinear regression, the stepwise method. Thus, the chosen regression model demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences between the estimates provided by the regression equation performed on the variables involved (the five factors of interpersonal style and unconditional acceptance of one's own person) compared to the estimates based on the average values. In the ANOVA analysis of variance, we obtained the coefficient $F = 5.401$ at a significant threshold $p = 0.07$. The percentage of the

dispersion of the criterion variable (in this case the unconditional acceptance of one's own person) explained by the evolution of the predictors (the five interpersonal dimensions) is given by the coefficient of multiple determination $R^2 = 0.135$. In conclusion, in the case of the performed regression equation, two of the 5 criterion variables influence self-acceptance, these being caution and the desire for recognition, approval.

Table 5 shows the results of the ANOVA test, the coefficient F and the threshold at which it is significant, the coefficients of determination, the unstandardized coefficient b, the standard deviation, the standardized coefficient beta, the value of the coefficient t and its significance threshold for the regression performed with the predicted factor: the variable of unconditional acceptance of one's own person.

Table No. 5 *Coefficients and regression thresholds.*

Unconditional self-acceptance	ANOVA		Coefficients			T test	
	F	p	b	σ	β	t	p
Constance	5,401	0,007	2.092	0,410	-	5,102	0,000
Precaution			2.155E-02	0,008	0,289	2,549	0,013
Recognition			-2.485E-02	0,010	-0,278	-2,448	0,017

From everything we gathered through data, we can affirm that unconditional self-acceptance is positively influenced by the caution factor and negatively affected by the recognition desire.

Limits

Taking into account the limited resources and the small number of subjects included in the four groups, the analysis carried out with the help of the BASIS A and USAQ questionnaires can form a basis for further research or for re-editing the study with an extended number of subjects.

Conclusion

The present study indicates the existence of some tendencies of differences between men and women on the investigated dimensions, in other words, the studied personality characteristics are manifested differently in men than in women. The tendency to approach life with caution, affective sensitivity, feeling orientation, and compassion implies unconditional

acceptance of one's own person, while success and achievement orientation as well as the desire for social approval led to lower unconditional acceptance and implicitly to a personality disharmonious. The research is relevant in that it investigates the personality characteristics of social workers, highlighting differences according to gender and unconditional acceptance, providing valuable information to these specialists who are constantly in the position of self-analysis and expanding their understanding and consciousness in contact with others in need.

In the practice of social assistance, these results can be used in the better organization of services by delegating tasks to one or another category (men or women) depending on the identified features and the specific requirements of the position. Also, within the programs systematically provided to social workers, activities can be integrated to raise awareness of these needs for recognition, compliance or social belonging and to build contexts that allow their provision and development. The differences between men and women on the measured dimensions.

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