

AGENTIC AND COMMUNAL OIRENTATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE YOUTH EDUCATIONAL CENTER PUPILS

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Abstract: In social sciences, agency means the ability of an individual to influence other individuals or the wider network of social relations. Communion means following the values important for the community. Agency and communion and their unmitigated forms have a strong influence on social judgments and behaviors. Unmitigated agency leads to negating relations with others and disregard for their goals, while unmitigated communion means excessive concentration on others and disregard for own needs. Agentic and communal orientation in both forms may be helpful in explaining the determinants of social adjustment disorders. The present study involved 456 individuals aged 17 to 20 ($M = 17.31$; $SD = 0.68$) from Youth Educational Centers (YEC) in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in Poland and independent individuals from sheltered accommodation. The Scales for Measuring Agentic and Communal Orientation, Unmitigated Agency, and Unmitigated Communion were used. The respondents have a greater sense of community than agency. They obtained lower results on the unmitigated agency and communion scale than on the agentic and communal orientation scales. The respondents staying at YEC for the first time obtain a much higher result than those staying for the second time on the unmitigated agency scale. Better grades at school were associated with an increase in the results on the agency scale.

A low sense of self-agency is a common feature of young people with traits of social maladjustment. The higher sense of self-agency in the respondents' group, caused by YEC educational impact, may contribute to social readaptation.

Keywords: pupils of the Youth Educational Centre, agentic orientation, communal orientation, unmitigated agency, unmitigated communion, social maladjustment

Introduction

Youth Educational Centres are a network of resocialization centers for socially maladjusted youth. Adolescents between the 13th and 18th years of age who are endangered by social risk factors and social dezadaptation are placed there based on a court ruling. While YECs are relatively efficient at assisting their pupils in minimizing their educational gaps, their achievements in the field of family therapy and youth resocialization remain underwhelming. Young people return to destructive environments as soon as they turn 18, which often effectively negates the effects of resocialization. Even if the pupils leave the centers well-motivated and determined to continue their education or work while abiding by the principles of social coexistence, their families are often unable to support their resolution and frequently have a demoralizing effect.

Henceforth, only a small percentage of former YECs residents are able to benefit from their stay in the facility after they return to the family environment. Despite having undergone resocializing treatment, the majority of YECs' pupils fall into addiction and conflict with the law, eventually resulting in a prison sentence. In response to the dissatisfactory results of resocializing treatments conducted in these facilities, I was inclined to search for previously unsurveyed psychosocial factors that could contribute to improving the results of resocialization. To illuminate this area, I chose agentic and communal orientations as the main focus of my study.

Wojciszke describes agency and communion as fundamental dimensions of social perception [Wojciszke, 2010]. In line with the thesis of Hegelson and Fritz [Helgeson & Fritz, 2000] that agency is positively associated with various indicators of mental health, Wojciszke and Cieślak [Wojciszke & Cieślak, 2014] state that the greater agency and communion, the higher the sense of happiness, self-esteem and task-oriented reaction to stress, and the lower the tendency to depression and anxiety. It can therefore be assumed that the higher sense of self-agency in socially maladjusted young people may contribute to their social readaptation. Considering this, I have conducted research at a number of Youth Educational Centres in

Poland, aiming to analyze agency and communion as psychosocial correlates of the life goals of young people at risk of social exclusion.

Methodology

Context

The present paper focuses on a fragment of a broader study on psychosocial correlates of life goals of young people at risk of social exclusion. Exploratory in nature, the study was carried out in rehabilitation facilities (YEC) in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in 2018.

Youth Educational Centers (YEC) cater for socially maladjusted children and adolescents who require special organization of learning, work and upbringing methods. They are referred to by the Family and Juvenile Departments of District Courts (under the Act on Juvenile Delinquency Proceedings), which impose an educational measure in the form of placement in the YEC. The tasks of the YEC include eliminating the causes and symptoms of social maladjustment and preparing the pupils to live in accordance with the applicable social and legal standards.

Characteristics of the sample group

The study involved 456 individuals aged 17 to 20 ($M = 17.31$; $SD = 0.68$) that stayed at Youth Educational Centers (YEC) in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in Poland. In accordance with the law, pupils stay in YEC until the age of 18, but the study also covered independent individuals, staying in sheltered accommodation or branches of the centers. In the group of respondents, women represented 59.2%, and men represented 40.8%. Currently, there are 5,468 pupils in 97 YEC centers in Poland (SIO, 2020). Such a large number of girls participating in the study results from the specificity of the centers in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship: 6 for girls, 5 coeducational ones, 9 for boys, and the fact that the individuals that participated in the study had declared their willingness to participate. The Mazowieckie Voivodeship was selected because of the largest number of such centers in it.

At the research stage, efforts were made to provide a possible representative sample of young people. The gender, age and period of stay in the YEC were controlled. The average age in the studied group of independent pupils was 17.5 years (with $SD = 1.02$). Most individuals stayed at the YEC for the first time (51.5%) or the second time (36.4%).

Research tools and method of analysis

The Scales for Measuring Agentic and Communal Orientation, developed by Wojciszke and Szlendak, were used, including two scales: the Scale for Measuring Agentic and Communal Orientation, the Unmitigated Agency and Unmitigated Community Scale [Wojciszke & Szlendak, 2010].

Socio-psychological research indicates that agency and communion are the two basic dimensions that are the basis for the perception of oneself and others [Friske, Cuddy, Glick, 2007]. The survey allows you to examine a total of four areas related to the perception mechanism of:

- agentic orientation – focusing on oneself and one's own goals,
- communal orientation – focusing on other people and relationships with them,
- unmitigated agency orientation – excessive concentration on oneself and ignoring relationships with others,
- unmitigated communion orientation – excessive concentration on others combined with ignoring social relationships.

Moreover, it was also confirmed that the analyzed four scales of perception of oneself and others are correlated with the selected psychological variables:

- the Agency Scale is correlated with the Masculinity Scale (no correlation with the Femininity Scale), the Big Five traits, type A personality, task-oriented and emotional responses to stress,
- the Communion Scale is related to the Femininity Scale (no correlation with the Masculinity Scale), the Big Five traits,
- the Unmitigated Agency Scale – is correlated with the Masculinity Scale (although lower than in the case of the Agency Scale), type A personality, task-oriented and emotional responses to stress,
- the Unmitigated Communion Scale is correlated with emotional responses to stress.

The following research questions were formulated in the study presented here:

- What level of communal and agentic orientation does the surveyed group represent?
- Is there a relationship between communal and agentic orientations and the gender of the respondents?
- Is there a relationship between communal and agentic orientations and a repeated or longer stay in the YEC?
- Is there a relationship between communal and agentic orientations and academic performance?

Data collection

A total of four dependent variables was analyzed: agency, communion, unmitigated agency and unmitigated communion, and three independent variables: gender, number of stays at the MOW and academic performances as well as three independent variables: gender, number of stays at YEC and academic performance.

In terms of psychometric properties, it was obtained that the measurement accuracy was high - the value of Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from 0.73 (for the Unmitigated Agency scale) to 0.93 (for the Communion Scale). The tool can therefore be used both in scientific research and in individual diagnosis.

Factor accuracy was confirmed by performed exploratory factor analyses, which explained, respectively: 32% for the Agency and Communion Scales and 23% of the variance for the Unmitigated Agency and Unmitigated Communion Scales.

All statistical calculations were performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics program. The number and percentage of the occurrence of a given category were used to describe the qualitative data while the quantitative variables were characterized using the following descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation and the minimum and maximum value. Before starting the analyses, all the quantitative variables were checked for data distribution using two distribution measures: skewness and kurtosis. The results were considered statistically significant when the probability of making a Type I error was no more than 5% ($p < 0.05$).

Study results

The table below presents the basic descriptive statistics for the variables characterizing the measurement of agentic and communal orientation. In addition, it was shown that the distributions of all indicators deviate from the normal distribution (they show the features of a leptokurtic distribution), which means that a large percentage of the results falls within a narrow range (a large number of people obtained similar results)

Table 1. Study results using the Agentic and Communal Orientation Scale and the Unmitigated Agency and Unmitigated Communion Scale – descriptive statistics

Scales	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
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agency scale	1.0	7.0	5.11	1.11	-0.97	1.64
communion scale	1.5	9.0	5.90	1.31	0.13	1.42
unmitigated agency scale	1.0	7.0	4.15	1.00	-0.06	1.33
unmitigated communion scale	1.0	7.0	4.44	1.09	-0.33	1.15

Source: own studies.

Table 2. Agentic and Communal Orientation – distribution of the results in accordance with the adopted standards (the size of each group is given in brackets).

	Orientation scale:			
	agency	communion	unmitigated agency	unmitigated communion
low	16.00% (68)	5.00% (23)	49.30% (205)	36.10% (150)
average	63.40% (269)	45.40% (207)	46.20% (192)	55.50% (231)
increased	20.50% (87)	42.50% (194)	4.60% (19)	8.40% (35)
high	0	7.00%	0	0
Total	100% (424)	100% (456)	100% (416)	100% (416)

Source: own studies.

The obtained results should be treated as average; only in the case of the communion scale, high results (7%) were reported. A detailed distribution of the results is presented in Table 2.

The t-test analysis for dependent samples confirmed that the respondents were characterized by a greater sense of communion than agency (both in the case of ordinary scales and unmitigated agency and communion scales). The differences turned out to be significant at the level of $p < 0.001$. It was also shown that the respondents obtained lower results on the scales of unmitigated agency and communion than in the case of the agentic and communal orientation indicators. The obtained result is presented graphically below (Fig. 1).

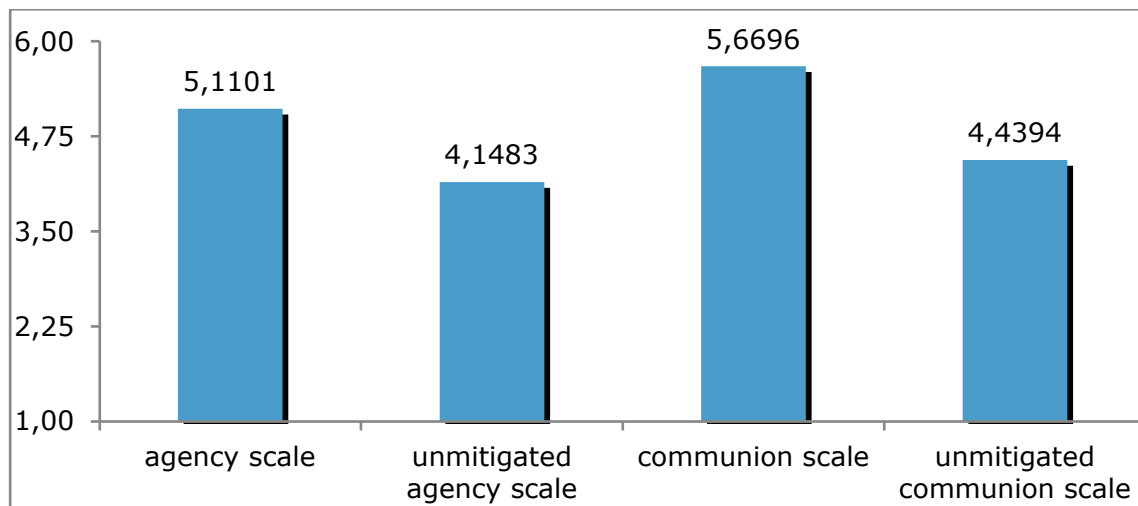


Fig. 1. Obtained arithmetic means of the variables of the agentic and communal orientation as well as unmitigated agency and unmitigated communion orientation.

Source: own study.

A higher score on the communion and agency scale than on the scale of unmitigated forms of these variables is a desirable phenomenon, because each of the unmitigated forms has negative connotations.

No major differences between girls and boys in the results on the agency and communion scales were confirmed (cf. Fig. 2). The only significant differences were found in the case of the unmitigated communion scale ($p < 0.05$) - it was observed that girls scored higher than boys.

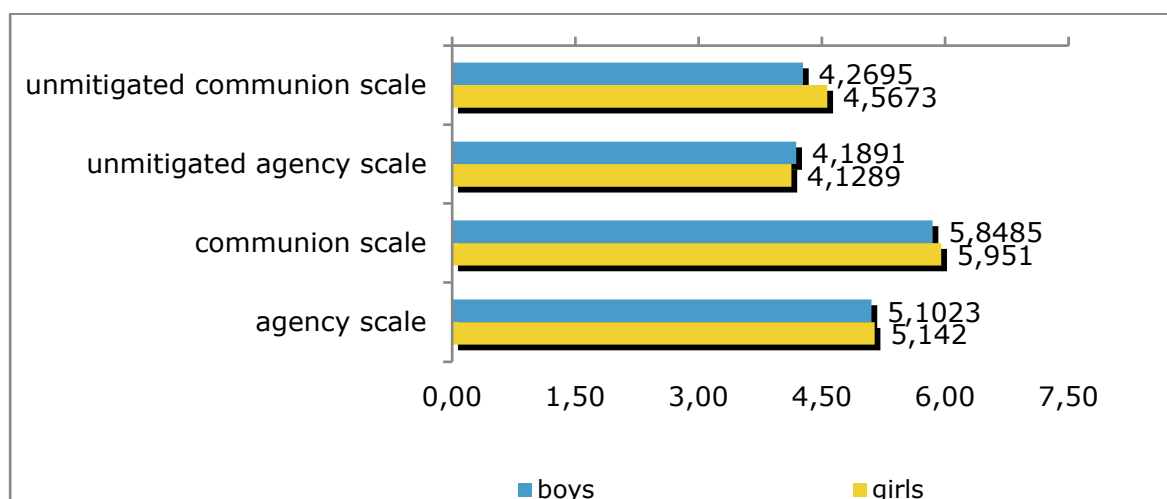


Fig. 2. Means of the agency and communion scales depending on gender.

Source: own studies.

The results confirmed the conclusions of Wojciszke and Szlendak also in this group of respondents (Wojciszke & Szlendak, 2010). Girls showed a stronger communion and unmitigated communion. In this group, a higher level of agency and unmitigated agency was not confirmed in the boys surveyed compared to the girls.

Performing an analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test verified whether individuals staying at YEC for the first time differ from those staying at YEC at least for the second time. The obtained results showed that in terms of the analyzed variables, the existence of significant differences between the compared groups was not confirmed. It was only shown that the respondents staying at YEC for the first time obtained a significantly higher result than the second group on the scale of unmitigated agency ($p < 0.01$; cf. Fig. 3 and Table 3).

Table 3. Relationship between the number of stays at YEC and the scale of agency and communion.

Scales	Mann-Whitney U test	Wilcoxon test	Z	P
Agency	16382.5	66785.50	-0.53	0.598
Communion	18638.5	25659.5	-1.06	0.290
Unmitigated agency	13345.5	62486.50	-2.62	0.009
Unmitigated communion	14658	20014.00	-1.38	0.167

Source: own study

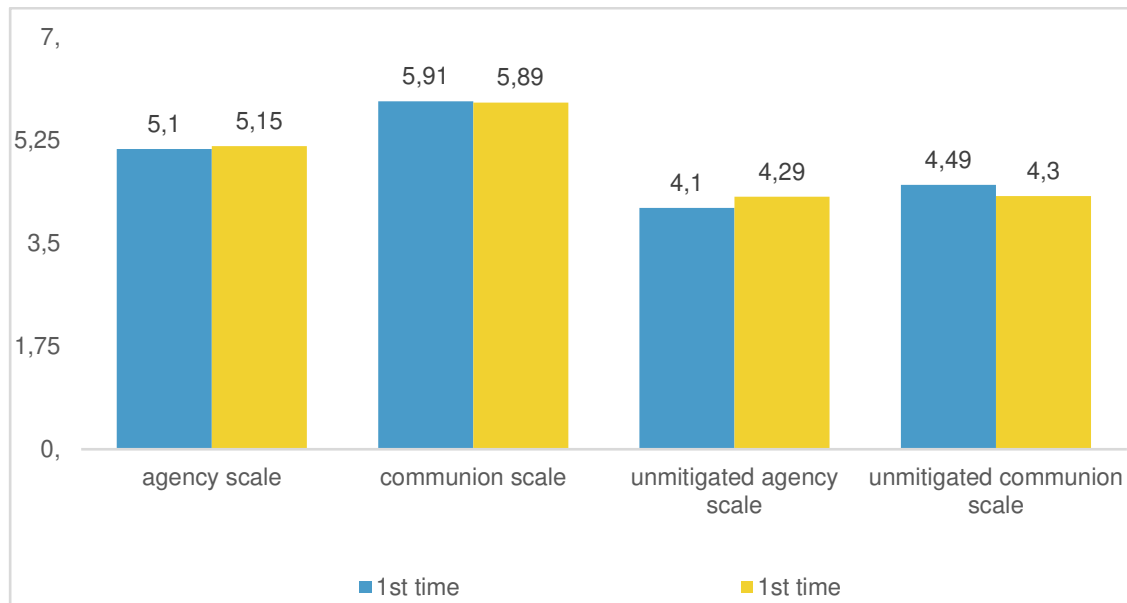


Fig. 3. Means of the analyzed variables regarding agency and communion depending on the stays at YEC.

Source: own study.

Using the Spearman's rho correlation analysis, it was examined whether there is a relationship between the analyzed variables and the learning outcomes of the studied adolescents. It turned out that getting better grades at school was associated with an increase in the results on the agency scale; the remaining correlations turned out to be statistically insignificant (Table 4).

Table 4. Relationship between the analyzed variables and learning outcomes - values of Spearman's rho correlation coefficients

Scale	rho
Agency	0.127*
Communion	0.081
Unmitigated agency	-0.041
Unmitigated communion	-0.062

Note: * The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Discussion

The terms agency and communion were first used by Bakan in 1966. Helgeson developed the concept of agentic and communal orientation in the 1990s, treating them as personality traits (Helgeson, 1994). She defined **agency** as concentration on oneself and realization of one's own goals (me - the goal-achiever), and **communion** as concentration on other people and relationships with them. **Unmitigated agency** is understood as strong concentration on one's own self and one's own goals, resulting in the negation of social relations and the goals that others pursue, and **unmitigated communion** – this is a trait that causes a strong focus on others that leads to the negation of personal goals and one's own agency. The consequence of orientation on these extreme forms may be (in the former case) cold treatment of others, inability to give and receive support, coming into conflicts, manifesting domination, taking revenge, and eventually reaching for stimulants and drugs, failure to behave in line with the norms, deteriorating mental health and Type A behavior pattern (constant tension, hyperactivity). Unmitigated communion leads to destructive behavior in close relationships, overprotection and excessive control of the partner, inability to accept support, consequently causing anxiety, stress, and depression, overall deterioration of mental health [Wojciszke, 2010]. According to a more recent definition provided by Banks. In the social sciences, agency means the ability by which an individual may influence other individuals or influence the wider network of social relations through such action, and is usually invoked in the context of the problem of power. Relations between individual agency and structures that limit the possibility of its completely free expression (e.g., legal and educational systems) are one of the main research areas in the modern social sciences [Banks, 2009, p. 35].

Although the concept is usually applied exclusively to human activities, some social researchers attribute agency to objects as well. What distinguishes human activity from activity of other acting subjects is its intentionality and determination. Communion is most often defined as following the values that are important for the community: having common characteristics, owning or experiencing something together.

Affective responses to other people vary depending on characteristics attributed to them. The strongest (negative) emotions are evoked by someone's immorality, weaker emotions (positive) – someone's morality. It is a puzzling fact that information about someone's physical ability is almost indifferent to us. The sign of an emotion depends on our attitude to a given person. Success of a person we like evokes positive emotions in us, and of a person we do not like – negative emotions, and it is opposite with failures. Moral behavior of a person we like

evokes positive affective responses while ethical behavior of a person we do not like is indifferent to us. Immoral behavior of a person we like evokes more negative emotions in us than a similar act of a person we do not like. This phenomenon can be explained by higher expectations towards a person we like. To sum up: someone else's agency affects us much less than someone else's communion and mainly when the agency causes positive effects for the communion. Do we use the same criteria to judge ourselves?

In interpreting our own behavior we use agentic categories much more often than communal ones when we describe what we are like but also when we talk about what we would like to be like. If we make a self-assessment, agency turns out to be a much stronger characteristic. The role of communion in assessment of ourselves is minor. The same pattern was observed when the individuals surveyed were asked to recall their own behaviors (or behaviors of other individuals), positive or negative, regarding one of both dimensions. The results indicated that successes and failures had an impact on the self-esteem or judgment of another person, and that memories of moral and immoral behavior only influenced the judgment of others, and were of no significance for the judgment of oneself. Such a conclusion, inconsistent with common-sense predictions ("if I did well, then I should think better of myself"), corroborates Wojciszke's claim that everyone thinks of themselves as a moral person, even though their actions often contradict it (they cheat, lie, take unfair, selfish decisions) [Wojciszke, 2010].

Overestimating our own morality is caused by the fact that at the moment of achieving goals we do not think about their moral aspect, we consider them only in terms of efficiency. If for some reasons, however, we consider our own conduct to be immoral, we experience the sense of guilt and stop it. In this way, we do not pursue activities that we consider to be non-normative when we perform them, and if that is the case, we have no reason to judge our own morality poorly.

Interestingly, we usually consider agentic traits to be more important in people with whom we have a symbiotic relationship. In one study, participants valued their lawyer's agentic (rather than communal) traits much higher, although they made exactly the opposite evaluations of their opponent's lawyer - they preferred the lawyer to be moral rather than competent [Wojciszke, 2010].

Nonetheless, concentration on the agency of one's own actions is not the only factor that inhibits our involvement in other interpretations of them. Studies show that making judgments about oneself in the field of morality is aversive [Wojciszke, 2010]. This is due to the fact that extracting information from semantic memory (containing, *inter alia*, abstract knowledge about

our traits and predispositions) about a property (e.g., "I am honest") activates episodic memory regarding past events from our life as well as content inconsistent with the declared honesty or morality.

Although it is a functional phenomenon, because thanks to the information extracted from episodic memory, we are able to limit the applicability of the premises prompted by semantic memory at the moment when we are to formulate the current image of the self, but in this particular case it means that a favorable general judgment will always be accompanied by an unpleasant memory. Since we cannot change the events from the past that reflect badly on us, or part with the belief, which is valuable to us, that we are a moral person, we are stuck in this unresolvable cognitive discrepancy that causes ruminating, i.e. persistent tormenting ourselves with recurring negative thoughts [Klebaniuk, 2010].

As Wojciszke and Baryła have shown, ruminations appear as a result of attributing morality to ourselves, but not when we attribute efficiency to ourselves (Baryła & Wojciszke, 2000). This also leads to a temporary decline in self-esteem and motivation for taking action to increase it, e.g., by crediting oneself to a greater degree with positive efficiency characteristics.

Another type of common phenomenon is considering behavior that serves realization of one's own interests as generally moral. It can be explained by referring to unconscious egocentrism in interpreting occurring events (e.g., by assuming that others know the same thing about us as we do), an automatic, involuntary evaluation of everything we encounter as good or bad. Partly also by issuing moral judgments in a non-reflective, intuitive way, without moral reasoning, based only on automatic evaluation. All this means that the relation of a given event to our interest becomes the basis of moral judgment, and because we are someone that most intensely and consistently works for our own good, no wonder - concludes Wojciszke - that we consider ourselves a highly moral person.

Based on the ideas of Bakan [Bakan, 1966] and Helgeson [Helgeson, 1994] Wojciszke and Szlendak constructed a tool to measure agentic and communal orientation as well as unmitigated agency and unmitigated communion. The tool for measuring the agentic and communal orientation consists in the selection of adjectives, while the extreme variations in the measurement require taking an attitude to the statements that describe the manifestations of these phenomena. [Wojciszke & Szlendak, 2010].

Many premises make it possible to formulate a thesis about the domination of moral categories in the process of perception of another human (i.e. from the observer's position), and of efficiency categories - in the perception of one's own behavior (i.e. from the actor's position). This results, first of all, from the difference in the cognitive goals that we pursue by taking the

position of an actor (thus observing our own behavior) or an observer (observing someone else's behavior). From the actor's point of view, we strive to achieve some states of affairs, which requires constant monitoring of our own actions due to how far it brings us closer to the established goal [Wojciszke & Baryła, 2000, pp. 395-396].

When observing and evaluating actions of other people, we focus primarily on identifying their goals or intentions (i.e. the sense of their actions), because the attribution of their characteristics so requires. Moving towards specific goals is a defining component of many characteristics, and assigning intentions - a fundamental element of moral judgments. Such tendencies result in a readiness to analyze other people's behavior in moral categories. One's own efficiency is extremely important for individuals from the point of view of the effectiveness of their actions, and the efficiency of other individuals is of interest to us because of whether or not their actions bring us good [Peters & Czapiński, 1990].

The concept of gender differences significantly extends beyond biology and also includes cognitive and perceptual mechanisms through which biological differentiation is translated into social differentiation. There are also differences in the sphere of family life, culture and politics. An example of this phenomenon may be a different way of socialization of both sexes and different social expectations towards men and women. Most studies confirm that boys and girls vary considerably in many aspects [Remplein, 1966]. It is commonly believed that there are certain behaviors characterized as "typically masculine" and "typically feminine", which is explained by biological differences. By stating "I am a woman" or "I am a man" we send a clear message. The information contained in it goes beyond the field of biology - it includes reference to personality traits, temperament, and the way we behave [Renzetti & Curran, 2008].

The effect of distinguishing between biological and cultural gender is the identification of elements that are part of human identity, but also those that depend on the broadly understood socio-cultural-historical context. Socially defined gender traits affect different perception of the characteristics and behavior of men and women. "People satisfy their needs, develop potentials (biological, mental, social) in accordance with the requirements of the environment," which differ depending on gender (Sęk, 2001, p. 49). The gender differences also apply to mental health (anxiety disorders, depression and addictions). The male stereotype assumes that they are more resistant to stressors and are better at stress management strategies. In women, these elements have much higher parameters due to the roles they play. A woman's tasks are traditionally defined in relation to relationships with other people, of which the greatest importance is attached to marriage [Mandal, 2004].

During the upbringing process, girls are taught interpersonal skills and the superiority of such feelings as: attachment, closeness, empathy, caring, responsibility for interpersonal relationships (Brannon, 2002). The consequence of the gender-differentiated socialization is teaching girls to take responsibility for relationships and act as caretakers in them (Fitzpatrick & Sollie, 1999). Men perceive situations that involve intimacy situations in terms of a threat to their power and as a weakness (Mandal, 2004). Boys are not expected to focus on relationships, but on preparation for professional work in order to later obtain the possibility to support their family (Mandal, 2004). When it comes to emotional behavior, boys are required to hide their emotions rather than reveal them. As a result, they have less need to engage in relationships and form close bonds [Plopa, 2002].

Researchers have formulated their concepts relating to gender specificity on issues such as independence, competition, achievements, and the definition of rules that guide behavior, with less emphasis on empathy, attachment, and care, which are significant to women (Piaget, Erickson, and Kohlberg in particular). Gilligan's view was that Erickson talked about women in the context of their relationships with men. On the other hand, men look for intimacy only after they have achieved identity, which indicates a different development of boys and girls in this sphere. In girls, identity is built on the basis of a relationship with a man. Marczak points out that the source of differences is more and more often seen in the social constructs of femininity and masculinity as well as their consequences, and not in the biological properties of men and women [Marczak, 2011]. It is related to the unequal pace of development of both sexes in psychophysical terms and a different way of socialization due to gender. Creating romantic relationships from a developmental perspective is an expression of the desire to establish and maintain close relationships and at the same time a significant stage in human social development [Collins & Sroufe, 1999]. Early adulthood is a special period when decisions are made about emotional stabilization and the search for a permanent partner. During adolescence, girls perform development tasks faster than boys in the area of building more durable and mature relationships with peers of both sexes, achieving a social role, gaining independence from parents and other adults, and preparing for family life and marriage [Waldowski, 2002]. Due to a different socialization path, they are characterized by a greater communion and sometimes even unmitigated communion than boys of the same age. Boys in adolescence, due to the implementation of development goals, are more focused on agency (also in the unmitigated form). The results of this research confirm this thesis. The surveyed girls at YEC showed higher results on the communion scale, while boys obtained higher results on the agency scale.

Extensive studies of adolescents that display behaviors expressing a tendency to exceed social norms and have difficulties in functioning in a group indicate the dominance of such features as low self-esteem, a sense of rejection by loved ones, hopelessness and pointlessness [Jones, 1988]. Such an arrangement of features indicates low social and emotional competences and **prediction or even expectation of own failure**, which is characteristic of them. Then the problem is when in the teenager's environment there is no tendency to balance social and remedial deficits, and the young person, without having direct close ties, becomes incapable of carrying out development tasks. On the one hand, it secondarily distorts interpersonal contacts, on the other, it creates an attitude of cynicism and rejection of life in its various dimensions. In the light of the research by Piotrowski and Zajęczkowski, the level of alienation of adolescents, caused by a lack of social support, increases the risk of pathological behavior [Piotrowski & Zajęczkowski, 1999]. The studies cited and analyzed by Jones indicate a strong self-concentration and a secondary reduced sensitivity of socially maladjusted youth to the needs and problems of others (**unmitigated agency**).

The thesis of Helgeson and Fritz that agency is positively associated with various indicators of mental health [Helgeson & Fritz, 2000], is confirmed by the research of Wojciszke and Cieślak [Wojciszke & Cieślak, 2014]. The authors state that the greater the agency and communion, the higher the sense of happiness, self-esteem and task-oriented reaction to stress, and the lower the tendency to depression and anxiety. The exception is unmitigated agency, associated with a tendency to type A behavior (which does not disappear even after the control of unmitigated agency), resulting in excessive concentration on one's own goals (which is the essence of both type A behavior and unmitigated agency).

The repeated stay in the YEC of the studied group indicates the ineffectiveness of educational impact or leaving the center prematurely. On the other hand, the results stating a lower level on the scale of unmitigated agency of the studied group may indicate positive effects of rehabilitation impact in this sphere. The relationship between the learning outcomes and the pupils' sense of agency was also analyzed. The obtained results show that the higher the grades in learning are obtained by the pupils, the higher their scores are on the agency scale, which means that the self-efficacy of the respondents increases with the grades. The other correlations turned out to be statistically insignificant.

Studies by other authors show that a high percentage of YEC pupils fall behind in school. Most of them are still at the junior high school stage when they reach the age of majority. As already mentioned, a low sense of self-agency or even the expectation of failure in undertaken actions is a common feature of young people that show the features of social maladjustment. It

can be assumed that the first successes and obtaining positive results in learning, resulting in a higher sense of self-agency, are caused by educational impact at YEC. It will probably increase the self-esteem and strengthen the educational and professional aspirations of the youth covered by the study, which may contribute to their social readaptation.

Conclusions

The behaviors observed in the present research imply that the interviewed youth carry negative convictions regarding themselves, others, the future, and the world in general. These basic findings are consistent with the popular resocialization pedagogy view that minors often suffer from disorders in the cognitive structures of personality, leading to adaptation problems. Low self-esteem coupled with a strong disbelief in social justice and other maladaptive convictions are often related to cognitive distortions [Mudrecka, 2015].

Agency and community are particularly significant factors in youth social development, especially in the case of youth at risk of social exclusion. The conducted research demonstrates that the interviewed YEC pupils exhibit a higher sense of community than agency, both in the case of ordinary scales and unmitigated community and agency scales. Additionally, girls exhibit a higher sense of community and unmitigated community than boys. Their tendency to focus primarily on interpersonal relations can be explained by their low self-esteem and need for support from others. Unmitigated community, however, entails excessive dependence on other people and disregard for social relations, which makes the affected youth vulnerable to the influence of lawbreaking groups. The results also indicate that pupils staying in YEC for the second time show a lower sense of unmitigated agency than those staying for the first time. Unmitigated agency causes young people to excessively concentrate on own needs while ignoring the needs and feelings of others and often leads to violent and/or criminal behavior. Last but not least, a link between agency and studying results was observed - the higher the sense of agency, the better the studying results.

Socially maladapted youth often struggle at school and are particularly susceptible to the influence of criminal groups. Youth Educational Centres aim to both help their pupils catch up to their peers in terms of education and discourage them from associating themselves with criminal environments. The broad implication of the present research paper is that monitoring agentic and communal orientation indicators provides data crucial to developing successful resocialization programs. By stimulating adolescents' sense of agency, counsellors should be able to broaden their pupils' interests and improve their constructive problem-solving skills.

Such stimulation should include a choice of appropriate motivational activities that prompt pupils to improve their social skills. Further studies should investigate a broader scope of pupils, including both adolescents at risk of social exclusion and those who are not disadvantaged. Additionally, research focusing on zero-sum thinking has a potential to complement the findings presented in this research.

Declarations

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Conflict of interest

The author declares they have no conflict of interest and were not affiliated with the institution at which the research was conducted.

Availability of data and material

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and its supplementary materials.

Ethics approval and consent

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent (to participate and for publication) was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

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