

# STUDY REGARDING THE INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST AND THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER

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**Abstract:** *Interpersonal behavior is or can be considered to be a great challenge. Having the diversity of individuals as a starting point, this study, centered on interpersonal behavior with all its nuances, raised our interest and curiosity, because the studies that were conducted so far, referring strictly to the personality and interpersonal behavior, gave birth to many papers uncovering notorious aspects that are treated as laws, in compliance with the new tendencies found in psychology. Starting from the premise that the integrity of relationships is always selective and dynamic, this study tried to identify the interpersonal behavior tendencies on which one should focus more during the process of training the future specialists.*

**Key words:** *physical therapist, physical education teacher, interpersonal behavior.*

## 1. Introduction

The social systems, at all levels and in all of their forms of organization, imply a complex network of relationships between persons, groups, organizations, and institutions, relationships that represent the main condition for the respective structures to function. There is a clear distinction between social and individual both in social philosophy, and in sociology and social psychology. "The distinction between social and inter-human resides in the distinction between the personal Ego (with which we are born), and the social Ego (acquired during ontogeny, through socialization)" [1].

"The analysis and evaluation of personality from an interpersonal perspective has in view the study of the orientation of personality within the interpersonal relationships space, meaning its specialization when performing interpersonal behaviors, a process that happens according to the internal factors of the personality - its factorial structure - and to the psycho-social conditions of the environment in which it lives" [2] [6].

## 2. Theoretical premises

Social relationships designate all types of interactions between the components of a social system: persons, groups,

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organizations, institutions, as well as between these and the objective forms of activity (material and spiritual goods, norms, models, ideologies, beliefs, theories, etc.). Social relationships express one of the basic characteristics of the human being, the one to form itself and manifest through an ensemble of ties with the other members of the community: parents, brothers, friends, colleagues, groups, organizations, etc. [5].

In the large category of social relationships, interpersonal relationships occupy a special position, having a constitutive function for all of the other forms of social relationships, structures, processes, and phenomena [3] [4]. Groups, organizations, or social institutions cannot be conceived outside a complex succession of interpersonal relationships, which in turn are conditioned and modeled in time by the processes that take place within these structures; so, there are dynamic relations of causality and reciprocal conditioning between the two dimensions.

The interpersonal relationships represent those direct and reciprocal interactions between persons, in which there is a conscious and direct psychological involvement. Due to their direct, bilateral, and psychologically-emotionally impregnating character, interpersonal relationships constitute a distinct and fundamental category of social relations, with manifestations and influences in all levels of social existence: psycho-individual, social, and socio-cultural.

The interpersonal relating style represents an important dimension of a person, having the value of a functional invariant, together with the cognitive style, self image, character structure, etc. [3], [4]. The relating style has at its core the model of primary relationships, but its final configuration depends on many other factors: the temperament-character traits of the subject, the social intelligence, the

structure of the Ego and of self image, the nature and quality of the experience acquired during ontogeny, the socio-economic status, the characteristics of the main groups the subject belongs to, the socio-cultural models and norms that regulate the social relations.

The human society is not composed of identical individuals, who recognize themselves in others like in a mechanical mirror, and who impose their own pattern to others, but of people with a specific, unique identity. The social condition for this uniqueness is the acceptance of diversity, of the other as an individual. The moral that can be drawn from such an image is not founded on imposing certain abstract and general standards, but on the reciprocal acceptance of the unique and responsible individualities. Thus, the accent is on responsibility, not obligation. From this derive the difficulties of the relationship with the other. Therefore, one must understand the other by accepting him/her, and then creating a favorable environment, atmosphere for the development of the relationship, based on mutual respect.

Three main elements can be identified in the structure of interpersonal relationships: the socio-affective component, the communicational component, and the influence component. The affective-evaluative component plays the determining role in relation to the other components (communication, influence, or co-action) within the preferential relationships. These can be assessed through a series of indices with operational value: direction of the affective orientation, persistence, founding, dynamics, and symmetry.

According to humanistic psychology, a truly stimulating human environment is founded on sincere, open, authentic communication. This gives the chance to openly manifest one's personality.

People are considered to be, in principle, equal, so, as a consequence, the relationships between them must be based on a reciprocal acceptance of their value; self-acceptance, as a supreme value, is an intrinsic condition, complementary with accepting the other person's value. Respecting the autonomy leads to the idea that the human being is a creature whose development cannot be manipulated and planned from outside, but only through his/her own initiative, taking paths that are freely chosen by each individual. Any push from another person, even if it is made with noble intentions, is foreign to this orientation.

In this context, we aimed to assess the interpersonal behavior in two professional categories in which the inter-human relationships are very important, and condition the success: physical therapists and physical education teachers.

The physical therapist - patient, and the physical education teacher - student relationship becomes important due to the need for a permanent feedback for the regulation of the therapeutic act, and for the differentiated treatment of the students, respectively, aiming to accomplish the set goals and to ensure the quality of the therapeutic act, and a good training of the students, respectively, without omitting the effects of interpersonal interaction.

### 3. Hypotheses

This study started from the hypothesis stating that the assessment of the interpersonal dimension in the physical therapist and the physical education teacher can highlight the aspects upon which one should insist more during the training of these professional categories.

### 4. Research methods

The main research method used in this

study was the inquiry, applying the Questionnaire for the assessment of interpersonal behavior [6]. The questionnaire evaluates the measure in which the studied persons have tendencies toward domination, sociability, conformity, activism, facilitation of relations, altruism, creativity, objectivity, and cooperation. For each of these tendencies, a scale from 1 to 5 was applied, in which 1 represented *the least*, and 5, *the most*.

### 5. Contents of the research

The questionnaire was applied directly, being filled out by a number of 46 high-school students, in relation to 20 physical education teachers, and by a number of 55 patients in relation to 25 physical therapists. The results were recorded, centralized, calculating the minimal scores, the maximal scores, the sums, and the averages for each tendency of the interpersonal behavior for the two professional categories.

### 6. Results

Figure 1 shows that the average value recorded by the physical therapists in regards to domination is the lowest one, which proves that the physical therapy specialists are not authoritarian; they do not manifest any rough behavior in their relation to the patients, and do not manifest any desire to control and subordinate the others.

The average values regarding the tendency toward conformity show that the physical therapy specialists accept, respect, and promote the patients' customs.

Regarding the facilitation of relations, the average values were higher, meaning that physical therapists can easily establish relationships, both affectively, and action-related, and they are agreeable, which is

very good for interpersonal relationships.

The average tendency toward sociability proves that attributes such as affection, friendship, communication are not foreign to physical therapists.

The objectivity, as a tendency, envisages having principles, being impartial, detached from personal feelings, at which the physical therapists recorded high average values, the patients appreciating these qualities.

With relatively smaller values we have the average tendency toward activism, regarding involvement and direct participation, dynamism, energy, motivational qualities, attributes that are well developed in the physical therapists.

Altruism scores very highly among physical therapists, the generosity, friendship, and non-focus on their own interests when it comes to patients being really appreciated.

The physical therapists' creativity, their interest towards the new, their originality, suggestions, new propositions, contribute to the favorable development of the therapeutic relationship, and to personal development.

The average values for the cooperation tendency shows the physical therapists' openness toward collaboration and their ability to participate toward reaching a common goal.

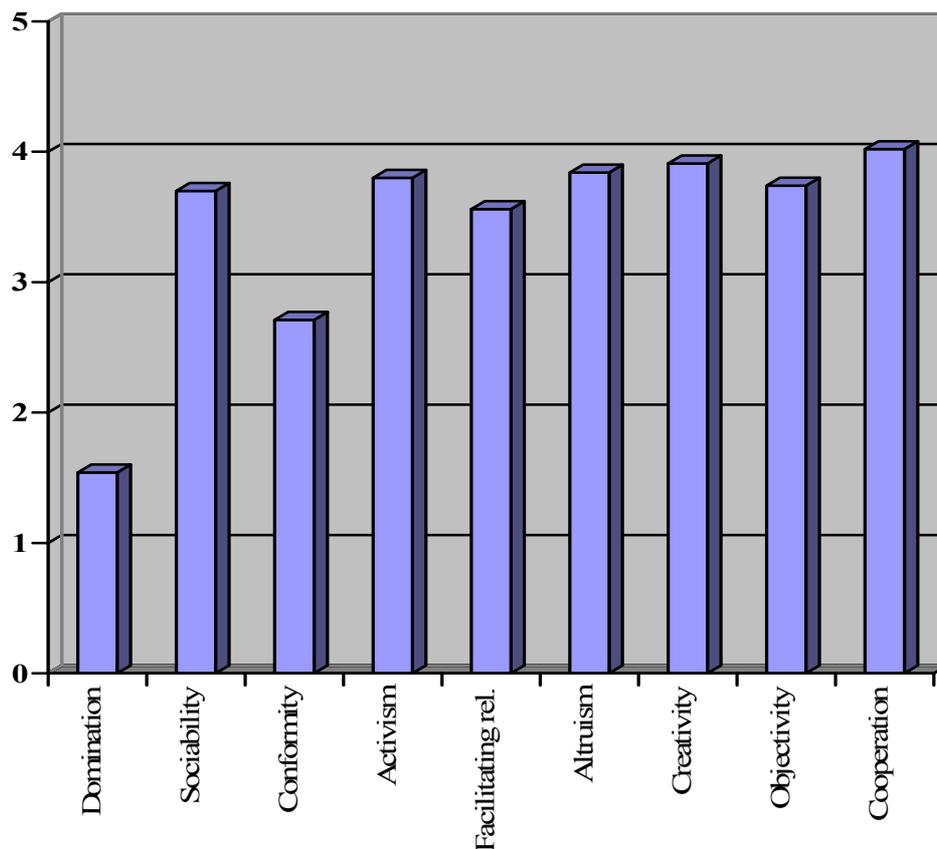


Fig. 1. *The average values calculated for the physical therapists' interpersonal behavior tendencies*

In regards to the physical education teachers, Figure 2 shows that the average value recorded for the domination tendency is the smallest, the teachers not being preoccupied with controlling and subordinating the others, and not manifesting rough, authoritarian behaviors.

The average tendency toward sociability is followed, at a close distance, by the tendency toward conformity and activism. The PE teachers can easily establish contacts, are friendly, communicative, they respect the customs and traditions of the group, they get involved easily in its activities, they are dynamic, energetic.

In regards to the facilitation of relations, the average values were a bit smaller, which draws attention on the PE teachers' desire to make an effort for the relationships to work.

Altruism was highly appreciated within the group, the generosity and friendship influencing the professional and social performances.

The average values calculated for the creativity tendency, for the interest manifested toward the new and originality proves the PE teachers' ability to have a real contribution to the development of the group.

The average values for the tendency toward objectivity (envisaging principles and impartiality) have recorded favorable scores.

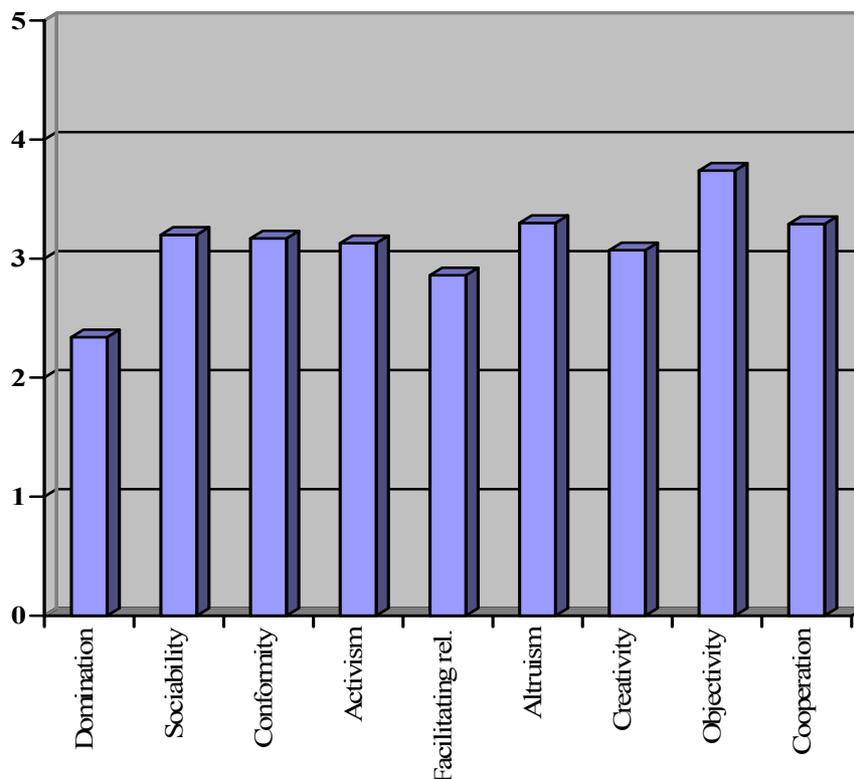


Fig. 2. *The average values calculated for the physical education teachers' interpersonal behavior tendencies*

In the interpretation of the results, the average value of 3 was taken into consideration, on the scale used to measure each tendency, this value being considered a balance between the positive and negative components of the tendency, the values below 3 representing the prevalence of negative components, and values above 3 representing the prevalence of positive components.

Thus, both in physical therapists and in PE teachers one can observe a prevalence of positive components, regarding the tendencies toward sociability, activism, altruism, creativity, objectivity, and cooperation, the PE teachers recording average values above 3 also for the tendency toward conformity.

Both the physical therapists and the PE teachers have recorded average values below 3 (showing a prevalence of the negative components of that particular trait) for the tendency toward domination, this meaning that they have a tendency more toward submission. Physical therapists show too much nonconformity, while the physical education teachers have a too high tendency toward making the relations too tense.

## 7. Conclusions

- Each of the 9 interpersonal behavior tendencies can be found in variable proportions in the behavior of the studied subjects, defining being the positive or negative components that are prevalent:
  - *The tendency toward domination*, recording average values below 3 in both groups, shows that both professional categories present a certain degree of insecurity, due on one part, to an insufficient knowledge of their own potential and limitations, and on the other, to an insufficient mastering of the methods they can use to impose themselves in front of the patients, and students, respectively.
  - *The tendency toward sociability*, recording average values above 3 in both groups, shows the subjects' good and relatively balanced ability to manifest affection, friendly behavior, communicative behavior, and interact with the patients, and the students, respectively.
  - *The tendency toward conformity* finds a good balance in the PE teachers (3.17), and is a bit more inclined towards nonconformity in physical therapists (2.71). The causes for the prevalence of nonconformity in physical therapists can be the same as the ones presented for the tendency toward domination, but also the exaggerated desire to prove their empathic qualities in their relations with the patients.
  - *The tendency toward activism*, recording average values above 3 shows that both professional categories are characterized by dynamism, energy, and willingness to get directly and actively involved in common activities.
  - *The tendency toward facilitating the relations* is well-balanced in physical therapists, whereas in the PE teachers, the imbalance is more toward making the relations tenser, rather than facilitating them. There is thus a necessity to train the physical education teachers so that they would be more willing to make an effort to maintain the quality of the relationships that they establish.
  - *The tendency toward altruism*, recording average values above 3, shows the existence, in both categories, of generosity, friendly attitude, desire to help the others,

and to offer this help without the need for a reward. The results are refreshing, altruism being a part of the moral qualities that make out the ideal profile of a physical therapist. In the PE teachers, the non-dominance of self-centering and egotism contributes to the facilitation of a correct approach toward the students and their adequate training.

- *The tendency toward creativity*, recording average values above 3 shows the interest of both professional categories for the new, originality, and their willingness to accept suggestions and to establish new goals, which is all beneficial for their continuous steps towards perfection, and for ensuring the effectiveness of their activities.
- *The tendency toward objectivity*, recording average values above 3, shows the existence of certain positive components, such as impartiality, having principles, ability to detach oneself from own feelings, all of these constituting traits that can only facilitate the interpersonal relationships.
- *The tendency toward cooperation*, recording average values above 3, shows the subjects' willingness and ability to put more emphasis, in their work, on uniting their efforts with other specialists', or even their patients' or their students' efforts, to reach their goals and to ensure a professional efficiency.
- The presence in a larger proportion of negative behaviors for the tendency toward dominance (submission, unquestioned acceptance of other people's opinions and demands), in both categories, makes necessary the modification of the way in which the education process of the future

specialists is approached, in the sense that one needs to put more emphasis on the activities through which they would get to know better their potential and limitations, improve their self-esteem, internalizing the assertive behavior, and trying to find ways to impose, within reasonable limits, their own demands and opinions to their patients and students.

- It is necessary that during the formation process, the future physical therapists should develop the necessary skills to balance better the dogmatic with the non-dogmatic attitude, conformity with nonconformity, because nonconformist behavior manifested too much can affect the quality of the relationship and can alter the therapeutic results.
- The future physical education teachers will have to be educated to develop their ability to evaluate the quality of the relationships they establish, to improve their communication skills, and their abilities to use certain ways to properly adapt their own attitudes and behaviors according to the situations, in order to facilitate the creation of relationships.

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