

Gender Differences in Hungarian Social Workers' Professional Identity Components

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ABSTRACT

Gender imbalance among social worker professionals is a potential problem in social service provision, and is indicative of social workers' relatively low social prestige. The problem affects social worker professionals and service users globally. The dominant discourse on care, gender and gender imbalance (public perceptions on the profession, pay gaps and social positions) is deeply rooted in cultural traditions. In Hungary, a Soviet type emancipation and was present before the system change in 1989, strengthening women's positions in the labor market and inviting them into practically all areas of work. At the same time the concept of care, connectedness and dialogue could not have a genuine and personal-level voice in these societies what has an impact on social workers' and service users' current positions. Authors, relying on Carol Gilligan's theory on ethics of care, argue that care may have different manifestations but it is a common human orientation and responsibility. To study the gender aspects of social worker identity, authors employ Identity Structure Analysis, a unique method to explore identity issues, such as one's or a social group's evaluations, identifications and conflicted areas. Based on our results we can conclude that women social workers in Hungary have more core and less secondary profession-related constructs than men do. Further, they are more accepting about wounded healer-type transformations in the development of professional identity, and are less receptive to some elements of government rhetoric. At the same time, they value an academic degree in Social Work less than men do.

Keywords: ethics of care; gender imbalance; identity structure analysis; professional identity; social workers