

Relationship between academic goals and prosocial behaviour in social work university students

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Abstract. This study analysed prosocial behaviour and academic goals in a group of Social Work university students. It also identified whether certain combinations of different factors of prosocial behaviour generated different profiles of prosociality. Finally, a verification was performed as to whether any statistically significant differences existed between the groups differentiated according to their academic goals (learning, achievement and social reinforcement). The *Prosocial Behaviour Scale* (1993), and the *Academic Goal Trends Questionnaire* (AGTQ, 1991), were administered to a sample of 328 Social Work university students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 30 years ($M = 22.56$; $DT = 4.89$). The cluster analysis identified three profiles of prosocial behaviour: a high prosociality profile, a profile of low prosocial behaviour, and a group with a predominance of empathy and trust. The results revealed statistically significant differences between the profiles obtained based on the academic goals they pursued. This finding suggests the need to study prosocial behaviour more in-depth and to design programmes that further strengthen Social Work students' learning goals.

Keywords: Prosocial behaviour; academic goals; university students; Social Work.

[es] Relación entre metas académicas y conducta prosocial en estudiantes universitarios de trabajo social

Resumen. Este estudio analiza la conducta prosocial y las metas académicas en un grupo de estudiantes de Trabajo Social. Asimismo, identifica si existen combinaciones de factores de conducta prosocial que den lugar a diferentes perfiles de prosocialidad. Finalmente, se comprueba si existen diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los grupos obtenidos respecto a las diferentes metas académicas (de aprendizaje, de logro y de refuerzo social). La *Escala de conducta prosocial* (1993) y el *Cuestionario de tendencias de metas académicas* (AGTQ, 1991), fueron administradas a una muestra de 328 estudiantes universitarios de Trabajo Social. El rango de edad fue 18 a 30 años ($M = 22.56$; $DT = 4.89$). El análisis de conglomerados identificó tres perfiles de conducta prosocial: un perfil de alta prosocialidad, un perfil de baja conducta prosocial y un grupo con un predominio de empatía y de confianza. Los resultados revelaron diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los perfiles obtenidos con respecto a las metas académicas que persiguen. Esto sugiere la necesidad de profundizar en el conocimiento de la conducta prosocial y en el diseño de programas que potencien mayor medida las metas de aprendizaje de los estudiantes de Trabajo Social.

Palabras clave: Conducta prosocial; metas académicas; estudiantes universitarios; Trabajo Social.

Sumario. Introduction. Method. Results. Conclusions.

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Introduction

Since its inception, Social Work has directed its efforts towards improving the quality of life of individuals, families, groups, or communities, through personal support, by addressing specific and concrete needs relating to the personal, family, social, labour, health, and economic spheres, among others (Lopez, 2018; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Ortega,

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2015). Thus, among social workers' essential competences, is the ability to interrelate with vulnerable people and groups in order to nurture their well-being. Social workers must therefore dispose of those necessary skills to execute their work efficiently. To this end, a major personal variable allowing the performance of Social Work is prosocial behaviour (Lopez, 2018; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Rubilar, 2020).

Prosocial behaviour includes those actions tending to help or benefit other people, irrespective of the intention to be pursued with this help. Such behaviour is the result of multiple individual and situational factors including personal variables and empathic traits (Eisenberg et al., 2007). It is understood as a tendency to give rise to actions, belonging to the sphere of habits, practices and social interactions, that are characterized by the beneficent effects they produce on another person (Caprara & Pastorelli, 1993). There are several different types of actions that make up prosocial behaviour, such as physical and verbal help, material giving, verbal comfort, confirmation and positive appreciation of the other, deep listening, empathy, and solidarity, as well as the expression of unity with others (Hafenbrack et al., 2020; Kok et al., 2018; Shier et al., 2020). All these skills, important in the individual, receive relevance in professions related to the social sciences, such as Social Work (Suriá et al., 2019; Meneses & Coulon, 2020). In this way, through prosocial behaviour, we seek to create a certain climate in which to initiate a dialogue that allows clients to define themselves with respect to their own person and their own problems, to free themselves, and to find the necessary resources to solve their conflicts, activating their own initiatives and sense of responsibility. Thus, the professional's task is based on the relationship established with people and it aims far beyond the distribution of material aid. The professionals they try to help people to find new conditions, new means to face the difficulties in which they find themselves and thus, with them, solve their problems and rebuild their lives (Meneses & Coulon, 2020).

For this reason, the existing literature highlights the importance of these prosocial behaviours during interventions between social workers and clients and this variable has in fact been identified as a predictor of success (Duncan et al., 2002; Friedlander et al., 2006; Idareta Goldaracena et al., 2017; Osmond & O'Connor, 2006, among other authors).

Nevertheless, while such behaviours are important of Social Work performance, future professionals also need to acquire the basics, undergo training and present sufficient motivation (Flexner, 2001; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Suriá et al., 2019).

In reference to this, the current scenarios of Social Work conditioned by the weakening of the Welfare State and growing globalization, entail an increase in the pressure exerted on social workers who, although motivated by their vocation, are involved in the demands of organizations, the demands of citizens and their principles and professionals (Barrera Algarín et al., 2015; De la Fuente & Sánchez 2012). For all these reasons, the work of the social worker requires great motivation and vocation for their work so as not to suffer wear and tear in the exercise of their profession (de-la-Fuente-Roldán & Sánchez-Moreno, 2012; Ramiro & Montaña, 2017; Soto-Rosales & González-Losada, 2018).

Looking at the published literature on the motivation and vocation of future social workers for their degree, some authors frequently report disenchantment with the profession (Lopez, 2018; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Ortega, 2015). Thus, as Flexner points out, (2001), based on the experiences of the student collective who undertake vocational training in Social Work, not all present a sufficient background or motivation to properly exercise their profession.

Regarding university students' motivations for their university degree, many motivation models and theories provide a conceptual foundation as well as empirical data on the key role of prosocial behaviour (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020; Dweck & Elliot, 2005; Pintrich & Schunk, 2006). Among them, we selected the theory of Goal Orientation, specifically, that of the academic goals pursued by students. These models distinguish two major types of academic goals: learning goals and performance goals. Students with learning goals are interested in acquiring new skills and improving their knowledge, even if they make mistakes; students for whom performance goals predominate require positive assessments of their abilities and seek to avoid negative judgments (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Carvajal et al., 2017; Esparza-Reig, 2020). For their part, other authors, such as Hayamizu and Weiner (1991), divided performance goals into social reinforcement goals and achievement goals. Social reinforcement goals refer to students' inclinations to learn for the purpose of obtaining approval and avoiding the rejection of parents and teachers. Achievement goals reflect students' tendency to learn with the objective of obtaining good academic qualifications and advancing in their university studies.

Due to the specificities of the Social Work profession, the choice of degree involves learning goals, achievement goals, as well as social goals (Cortez-Rojas et al., 2020). Regarding learning goals, a range of both international and national studies (Rubilar, 2020; Ruiz-Gutierrez & Santana-Vega, 2018; Sultana & Wirtz, 1992), point out that some young people choose to study the degree for altruistic reasons: they like to work with people at risk of exclusion, children, families and they carry out notable social work. Other studies on the other hand, have found that the choice of Social Work degree is also determined by achievement or social goals: for low-income students, it represents a means of social mobility, offering an opportunity to pursue higher education studies when their family cannot afford to finance the studies of their choice or because they consider it more accessible or less difficult than other degrees (Cortez-Rojas et al., 2020; Esparza-Reig, 2020; Meneses & Coulon, 2020).

The interest in types of goals and how they relate to motivation for social work realisation and subsequent performance dates back to the 1970s in the United States and England. A debate was then launched as to whether social workers who entered the profession were politically motivated or whether they did so for personal or professional

reasons (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020; Collins et al., 2010; Osmond & O'Connor, 2006; Vincent, 1996). There seems to be a consensus among these authors that most Social Work students engage in their studies for the purpose of personal development (learning goals). They differentiated the reasons for choosing the profession of Social Work, linking them directly either to personal or professional motivations.

Moreover, Pearson's study (1973), concluded that the motivation of people who aspire to obtain the social worker degree or title is different from that of those who are already specifically engaged in the profession. According to his hypothesis, Social Work professionals feel very close to the sphere of values and political choices, seeking to help others, in addition to achieving a personal goal and doing something useful in life, entering the world of social values throughout their training and daily professional practice (performance and achievement goals). Thus, evidence seems to exist in the literature that these students have a vocation and are intrinsically motivated to follow the degree.

In addition, for comparative purposes, O'Connor et al. (1984), examined goals across a range of groups spanning different degrees and concluded that Social Work students were more concerned with personal growth and that it was later that they became further engaged, after undergoing an education directed towards social change. Among this group, the author distinguished students considered as traditional i.e. who wish to help others and/or make a social change, and a second group of students, concerned with personal growth.

Finally, Villegas-Castrillo (2009), analysed altruistic philanthropic motivation in current Social Work practice and maintained that such motivation is present throughout students' academic life. And, going even further, not only does such motivation affect the academic field, but it needs to be maintained throughout a professional career.

Following a review of the literature on motivation and prosocial behaviour, no study was found offering an in-depth analysis of their relationship in Social Work students. Focusing on prosocial behaviour, no studies were found on the combinations of different components of prosocial behaviour (physical and verbal help, deep listening, empathy, and solidarity) resulting in different profiles of this construct among such students. Finally, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have been published on differences in academic goals according to the prosocial behaviour profiles of university students, which take into account not only the general motivation but also the different goals constituting that academic motivation (e.g. learning, achievement and social goals).

Based on these considerations, three objectives were set out in this study.

1. To learn about the predisposition towards prosocial behaviour and academic goals in a sample of Social Work university students.
H1. Significant differences exist in participants' prosocial behaviour and academic goals.
2. To identify whether the participants presented combinations of different prosocial behaviour dimensions, giving rise to different profiles, which could be defined according to the weight of each dimension within each profile.
H2. Different prosocial behaviour profiles exist depending on the weight of each prosocial behaviour component.
3. To relate the obtained prosocial behaviour profiles to the different academic motivation scores (learning goals, achievement goals and social reinforcement goals) of future Social Work professionals.
H3. Statistical differences exist among academic goals based on prosocial profiles.

1. Method

Participants

A transversal series of cases was studied. It consisted of an intentional sample of students - for accessibility reasons - from the University of Alicante. A total of 328 students enrolled in the Social Work degree participated. They were aged between 18 and 30 years, with an average age of 22.56 ($DT= 4.89$). Of these, 228 (69.7%) were female and 100 (30.3%) were male. The sample students were in different academic years (39.4% in the first year; 20.8% in the second; 37.7% in the third; and 18% in the fourth year). Table 1 presents the distribution of the sample by age, sex and academic year.

Table 1. *Sociodemographic profile*

	Profile	No.	%
Gender	Woman	228	69.7
	Man	100	30.3
Year	1st	130	39.4
	2nd	68	20.8
	3rd	59	18
	4th	71	37.7

	18-22	139	42.9
Age	23-26	92	27.8
	27-30	97	29.7
		328	100

Instruments

- *Sociodemographic questionnaire*; an ad hoc questionnaire was used to collect sociodemographic data: gender, age and academic year.
- The *Spanish version of the Prosocial Behaviour (PB) scale*, by Caprara and Pastorelli (1993). This scale measures the prosocial behaviours of *altruism, trust and empathy*, differentiating between subjects who are mostly prosocial from those who are not, based on a total score of 45 points. It consists of 15 items, of which 10 describe the behaviour in relation to altruism, trust and empathy, and five are control items. The format consists of three response alternatives (1= never, 2= sometimes, 3= often), depending on the frequency of occurrence of each described behaviour.

This instrument was selected for its brevity (it requires approximately 10 minutes to complete), for its specialisation (it measures several prosociality dimensions) and because it has been validated both in its original and Spanish version (it presents suitable psychometric properties). Thus, Cronbach's alpha for the full test in both versions was adequate (.71 and .91 respectively) and showed evidence of appropriate concurrent validity.

In order to verify the questionnaire's psychometric properties in the study sample, the scale's factorial structure was examined using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Principal Components technique, followed by the Varimax rotation to obtain a better understanding of the resulting matrix. A total of 70.06% of the variance was explained by the scale (33.21% variance was explained by the first factor, 20.31% by the second, and 17.41% by the third). In addition, an internal consistency assessment was conducted to check the questionnaire's reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, indicating adequate consistency ($\alpha=.77$).

Following the criteria established by Nunnally et al. (1995), indices between .70 and .80 were considered adequate for the total questionnaire.

- *Achievement Goal Tendencies Questionnaire (AGTQ)*; Hayamizu & Weiner, 1991). This questionnaire consists of 20 items evaluated using a five-point scale (1 = never; 5 = always). It allows analysing three types of goals: (a) *Learning Goals (LG)*; 8 items): these items evaluate students' tendency to engage in academic tasks in order to learn, acquire new knowledge and increase their competence; (b) *Achievement Goals (AG)*; 6 items): analyse students' tendency to learn with the intention of obtaining good grades in exams and advancing in their studies; and (c) *Social Reinforcement Goals (SRG)*; 6 items): reflecting students' tendency to learn in order to receive approval and to avoid the rejection of parents and teachers. Thus, the interpretation of the direct scores obtained in the "learning goals" subscale can range from 8 to 40, while in the "achievement goals" and "social reinforcement goals" subscales, they can range from 6 to 30.

With regard to the psychometric properties, both the original questionnaire (Hayamizu & Weiner, 1991) and the Spanish version (García et al., 1998), produced adequate scores. In this study, the internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were suitable for all subscales (.81 for Learning Goals, .73 for Achievement Goals and .72 for Social Reinforcement Goals).

Procedure

The procedure for collecting information consisted in administering the questionnaire to the sample of students of the University of Alicante. To disseminate the questionnaire, a collaboration proposal was made to any students who wished to participate voluntarily and anonymously through a university campus online advertisement. The questionnaire was hosted on the Campus network for two months. Once the study's participants had given their informed consent, the estimated administration time was approximately 15 minutes.

Statistical Analysis

The frequencies and percentages were obtained for the sociodemographic data. To check for statistically significant differences between academic goals and prosocial behaviour based on independent variables (gender and age), the Student's *t*-test was used for gender and the variance analysis (ANOVA) for age. To identify prosociality profiles, a 2-step cluster analysis was performed. This exploratory test was used as it is designed to reveal natural clusters within an information set that would not otherwise be visible. The procedure can also determine the optimal number of clusters automatically.

The profiles were defined based on the different combinations of the three prosocial behaviour dimensions evaluated in the Caprara and Pastorelli Prosociality Scale (1993): altruism, trust and empathy.

Subsequently, a variance analysis (ANOVA) was performed of the obtained clusters so as to analyse the statistical significance of the differences between prosocial behaviour groups based on academic goals. Finally, post hoc tests were conducted to identify the groups that presented differences between them. Scheffé's method was used because the groups did not have the same number of participants. The direct index of η^2 was applied to analyse the magnitude or size of the effect of these differences. The size of the effect (standardised mean difference or d index; Cohen, 1988) was also calculated to quantify the magnitude of the observed differences. The data was analysed using the statistical package SPSS version 20.0.

2. Results

Prosocial behaviour and academic goals based on gender and age

Upon examination of the average prosocial behaviour scores among the groups, a moderately high level was found for the participants ($M=28.89$, $S.D = 4.29$), statistically significant differences having been observed between groups according to gender [$t_{(326)} = 2.640$, $p = .007$], the size of the effect being moderate ($d = .64$). No statistically significant differences in prosocial behaviour were observed according to age [$F_{(3,327)} = 2.078$, $p = .148$].

Average scores regarding academic goals were found to be moderate for the three types of academic goals, with statistical differences having been observed according to age, $F_{(2,327)} = 2.906$, $p < .001$. Thus, the *post hoc* comparisons indicated higher averages in the older group for the learning goals ($M=26.40$; $S.D = 4.12$) and achievement goals ($M=22.0$; $S.D = 4.54$); and in the younger group, higher scores were obtained for social reinforcement goals ($M=19.30$; $S.D = 4.02$) than the other groups. As for the academic goals according to gender, higher average scores were observed in women than in men compared to the learning goals ($M=30.06$; $S.D=5.12$), while the results showed higher averages in social reinforcement goals ($M=16.54$; $S.D=3.01$) in males [$t_{(326)} = 1.860$, $p = .006$].

Table 2. Average scores and standard deviations for prosocial behaviour and academic goals based on gender and age

		Academic goals							
		Prosocial behaviour		Learning goals		Achievement goals		Social reinforcement goals	
		<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>
Gender	Woman	27.30	3.52	30,36	5.12	21,38	5,35	11,05	5,51
	Male	23.26	4.28	27,92	6.70	18,47	4,54	16,54	3,01
	Total	28.89	4.31	26,40	4.12	19,24	5,06	14,24	8,23
	Sig.	$t_{(2,327)} = 2.640$, $p = .007$				$t_{(326)} = 1.860$, $p = .006$			
Age	20-29	24.12	3.04	24.02	5.81	14.67	6,04	19,30	4.02
	30-39	23.88	4.07	29.63	5.66	21,46	5,35	15,05	5,51
	40-49	24.65	4.22	30.59	4.81	22,09	4,54	10,54	3,01
	Total	28.89	4.31	26.40	4.12	19,24	5,06	14,24	8,23
	Sig.	$F_{(3,327)} = 2.078$, $p = .148$				$F_{(326)} = 2.906$, $p < .001$			

Identification of prosocial behaviour profiles

Cluster analysis, which focuses on the maximum homogeneity in each group and the largest differences between them, determined 3 prosociality dimension groups. In this way, prosocial behaviour was included within a group (cluster 1) consisting of 60 (18.30%) students with low levels in all three prosocial behaviour dimensions (altruism, trust and empathy), a group with a predominance of trust and empathy (cluster 2) consisting of 120 participants (36.50%), and a third group (cluster 3), with a predominance of high levels of prosocial behaviour (altruism, trust and empathy) made up of 148 students (45.20%), (see Figure 1).

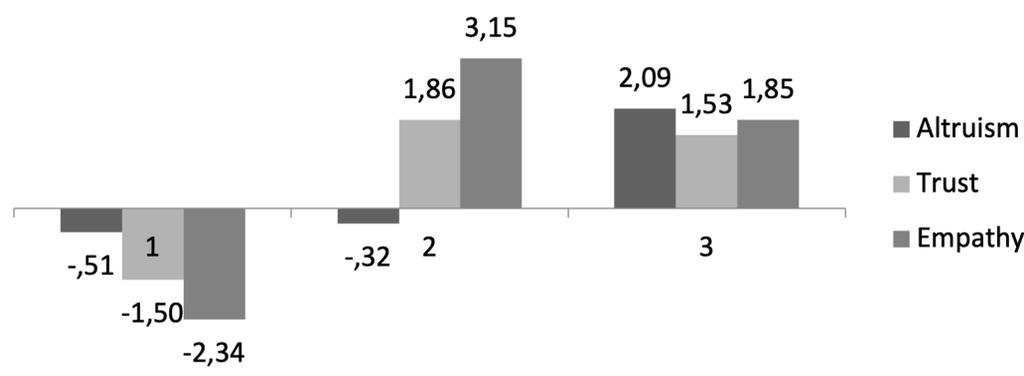


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the three-cluster model: Cluster 1 (Low scores in the 3 prosocial behaviour dimensions), Cluster 2 (High score in trust and empathy and low score in altruism) and Cluster 3 (High scores in the 3 prosocial behaviour dimensions).

Prosocial behaviour inter-group differences in academic goal dimensions

The results of the average scores of the different academic goals are described next. Regarding learning goals, the Group with high scores in the three prosociality dimensions i.e. Group 3, presented significantly higher averages than Group 2 and Group 1, ($F_{(2,327)} = 6.21$, $p < .05$, $h^2 = .25$), the size of the effect in the post hoc analysis between Group 3 and Group 2 being moderate ($d = 0.42$) and high between Group 3 and Group 1 ($d = 0.82$) and Group 2 ($d = 0.48$). For its part, Group 2 showed higher scores than Group 1 ($d = 0.45$).

With respect to achievement goals, statistically significant differences were observed between the clusters, ($F_{(2,327)} = 3.94$, $p < .05$, $h^2 = .32$); Group 3 and Group 2 were found to present high scores for this type of goal compared to Group 1 ($d = 0.34$ and $d = 0.30$).

Finally, when comparing social reinforcement goals by group, higher scores were observed in Group 1, ($F_{(2,327)} = 14.50$, $p < .001$, $h^2 = .51$, compared to Group 3 ($d = 0.80$), and to Group 2 ($d = 0.69$).

Table 3. Standard means and deviations obtained by the three groups and values of Prosocial behaviour (PB) eta squared (η^2) for each academic goal

Self-concept factors	Group 1 Low PB		Group 2 High Empathy High Trust Low altruism		Group 3 High PB		Total		$F_{(2,99)}$	p	η^2
	M	$S.D.$	M	$S.D.$	M	$S.D.$	M	$S.D.$			
Learning goals	18.22	5.71	25.42	5.90	33.08	4.51	25,40	4,12	6.21	.014	.25
Achievement goals	20.40	4.57	23.06	5.24	22.86	4.46	22,24	5,06	3.94	.026	.32
Social reinforcement goals	24.03	4.52	19.19	6.12	18.65	3.73	20,24	8,23	14.50	.000	.51

3. Discussion

In this work, we explored the relationship between prosocial behaviour and the academic goals of young students. Different objectives were set out to this end. The *first objective* was to understand the levels of prosociality and academic goals of Social Work university participants, according to gender and age. Mean scale scores reflected moderately high prosocial behaviour. These results suggest that generally, students who follow the degree are predisposed to help others (Flexner, 2001; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Suriá et al., 2019). Similarly, a higher level of prosociality is observed in girls. The fact that these prosocial behaviours were more present among women is supported by Caprara and Steca (1993). The latter pointed to a differential pattern originating in social and cultural stereotypes that attribute a greater emotional sensitivity to women, as well as a greater tendency towards assisting and being concerned with the psychosocial and affective variables of the most disadvantaged (Kok et al., 2018; Longobardi et al., 2019).

With regard to the influence of age on prosocial behaviour, no differences were observed between the different age groups. Thus, while it is true that prosocial behaviours evolve with age, such behaviours may already be present in the participants' behavioural repertoire since, according to the literature on the subject (Eisenberg et al., 2007;

Lindeman et al., 1997), prosocial behaviour, moral reasoning and the ability to understand the internal and external states of others, is a sign of maturity which develops in both adolescents and young, culminating in middle age.

When examining students' academic goals, moderately high learning goals were reflected. This follows the same direction as that of other authors who point out that Social Work students have vocational goals towards their studies (Cortez-Rojas et al., 2020; Steinberg et al., 2007). When attending to academic goals based on gender, it is observed that girls are more concerned with educational and achievement goals and boys with those of social recognition goals. These results corroborate previous findings according to which girls seek to develop their skills and excel in academic motivation (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020; Ruiz Gutiérrez & Santana Vega, 2018), focusing on learning goals (Dent & Koenka, 2016), while other studies have found that boys approach the learning process in a superficial way, making little use of academic goals (Dweck & Elliot, 2005), probably because they are more concerned than girls about conveying a positive image of themselves in class (Resino et al., 2019). In this sense, the fact that the quest for social image is particularly associated with men can be explained by the fact that today still, society assigns them the relevant professions more easily. Moreover, men tend to focus on physical activities, as they constitute an element of prestige and individual or group recognition (Resino et al., 2019). Similarly, they are more interested in personal, social, economic and political independence. These goals stimulate their motivation to achieve just as girls pursue academic goals for the degree (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2019; Dweck & Elliot, 2005; Ruiz-Esteban et al., 2018).

In addition, the effect of age on academic goals was observed among the participants: as Social Work students advanced in age, the importance they attached to both social recognition and achievement goals decreased and their motivation to learn their degree increased further. An explanation for this trend could be found in the change of attitudes that students experience throughout their career, becoming more concerned with social issues and less with the acceptance of peers (Cortez-Rojas et al., 2020; Steinberg et al., 2007).

- Regarding the *second objective*, that of analysing the possible combinations of the prosociality dimensions of Social Work students, in order to identify different profiles of prosocial behaviour, based on the weight of each of the dimensions of the scale (altruism, trust and empathy), the cluster analysis identified three distinct profiles: a group with a high-score profile in the three prosocial behaviour components (Group 3); a second group with low scores in altruism and high scores in trust and empathy (Group 2); and a third profile with low scores in all three dimensions, i.e. in altruism, trust and empathy (Group 1). These results therefore confirm our second hypothesis according to which different profiles of prosocial behaviour exist depending on the weight of the dimensions of this construct. By focusing on the number of participants that make up each profile, the cluster analysis confirmed a higher prevalence of participants with high scores in global prosocial behaviour (Group 3); a second group with high scores in trust and in empathy and low in altruism (Group 2); and finally, a lower number of students with low scores in all three prosocial behaviour dimensions. This, in line with the first hypothesis raised, reflects that a high percentage of the students who study the degree in social work are motivated to learn their university career. To a lesser extent, students with limitations in the development of learning goals coexist and, therefore, that not all future social workers present a vocation and motivation for their university career. These results corroborate those of different authors (Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; Flexner, 2001; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020), who have found that choosing a career in social work also it may represent an opportunity to pursue higher education for other reasons, for example, due to lack of means, because it is more accessible or less difficult than other degrees. This can have repercussions on academic achievement (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Carvajal et al., 2017; Esparza-Reig, 2020), and professional performance (de-la-Fuente-Roldán & Sánchez-Moreno, 2012).

Thus, different investigations emphasize the role of motivation in academic success. In turn, the profession of social worker is a profession that requires dedication and vocation due to its complexity on many occasions (Collins et al., 2010; Osmond & O'Connor, 2006; Ramiro & Montaña, 2017; Soto-Rosales & González-Losada, 2018).

In this sense, this profession is immersed in difficulties, depending on different bodies and services, and with it, in a greater vulnerability for social workers to fully develop their work activity (Barrera Algarín et al., 2015; De la Fuente & Sánchez 2012). Therefore, the role of motivation and vocation for their profession is essential (de-la-Fuente-Roldán & Sánchez-Moreno, 2012; Ramiro & Montaña, 2017; Soto-Rosales & González-Losada, 2018).

- Referring to the *third objective*, the results supported the third hypothesis, the average scores of the three clusters found revealed statistically significant differences among the profiles of prosociality. Thus, in terms of participants' goals of learning for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and increasing their competence (learning goals), the data reflect higher scores in the high prosocial behaviour group (Group 3), compared to the other groups (Group 1 and Group 2). These results follow the same line of different studies that have found that prosocial behaviour is significantly associated with intrinsic motivation or learning goals (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Meneses & Coulon, 2020; Suriá et al., 2019). In this sense, different authors have pointed out that the prosocial behaviour of students is positively related to other behaviours related to a high commitment to the motivation to learn. Thus, prosocial behaviour has been associated with greater involvement in academic tasks and attitude towards learning (Ruiz-Esteban et al., 2018), with the use of learning strategies (Pintrich & Schunk, 2006), and with greater motivation and attitude towards schoolwork (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020).

With respect to achievement goals dimension second (or students' tendency to study in order to obtain good grades in exams and to advance in their studies), the results reflected that Group 2 (high empathy, high trust, low altruism) and Group 3 (high prosocial behaviour), differed from Group 1 (low prosocial behaviour). The latter suggests that in order to develop achievement goals, the dimensions of trust and empathy are essential and the dimension of altruism less relevant.

These results are in line with those obtained by Inglés et al. (2011), who pointed to the strong association between prosocial behaviour, specifically empathy and trust, and achievement or performance goals. Specifically, trust and empathy function as mediating variables between the competence of seeking to excel and academic achievement, contributing to the improvement of both domains (Inglés, et al., 2011); as such, it represents a positive and statistically significant predictor of academic success (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020; Inglés et al., 2011; Pintrich & Schunk, 2006).

Finally, in terms of third type of academic goals, social reinforcement goals (or students' tendency to study in order to gain approval and to avoid the rejection of parents and teachers), the results reflected a greater use of these strategies in the group with a low prosocial behaviour score (Group 1). In this sense, people with high social reinforcement goals may be more interested in their personal image, while people who show high prosocial behaviour towards peers are more concerned with helping others, their own image being less important (Butler-Warke & Bolger, 2020; Carvajal et al., 2017; Dent & Koenka, 2016; Inglés et al., 2011; Pintrich & Schunk, 2006).

Based on these results, this work reflects that the majority of social work students are motivated to learn their degree. Also, that a high percentage shows prosocial behaviour. Similarly, that high levels in the three dimensions that make up prosocial behaviour are associated with learning goals. Finally, although social skills are related to the most appropriate interpersonal and social development of future Social Work professionals, not all dimensions of prosocial behaviour have the same weight in terms of successful academic goals.

Nevertheless, this study presents some limitations that should be compensated in future research. The main limitations of the study include those typical of any transversal research, those arising from the use of self-reports as an information collection method, and those related to the imbalance between the female and male sample. This imbalance, however, exists in the population, since Social Work students are mostly women, making it difficult to generalise the results to the male population. Furthermore, one cannot overlook the difficulties of applying a questionnaire online, since the results may be biased.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the results are indicators of high levels of motivation to learn and prosociality of future social workers. However, although the results are positive, there is still a percentage of students with low levels of prosocial behaviour and little motivation to learn their studies. This alerts us so that, from the university context, we continue striving to generate changes and design new and better ways to promote skills that will be important for the development of skills that strengthen the future professional performance of students.

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