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Skills and representations of the human resources recruiter Psychology students and psychologists in comparison

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Abstract

In this paper we tried to investigate and compare the representations held by students of psychology and psychologists in the human resources recruiter, compared to the characteristics and skills that he should have to effectively manage an assessment process. From the results obtained by administering the Adjective Check List and a questionnaire specially constructed on the basis of the "Dictionary Skills" by Spencer and Spencer, the figure of the recruiter is characterized by the possession of high professional, interpersonal and communication skills, and awareness of the characteristics of the organizational reality for which he works. The repertoire of skills appears to be significantly defined and there are important similarities between the representations of the two groups, confirming that psychology students have a professional self already structured consistent with the psychological profession.

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1. Introduction

Recruitment and selection may be a simple reaction to the company's need to meet their staffing needs or take the form of activities by which the company creates conditions for the development of a wealth of strategic resources. With a view to generating value, it becomes essential not only to stop the evaluation of technical and professional knowledge, skills seen as the threshold, but carefully consider the deeper powers of each candidate, consisting of motives, traits, attitudes and values (Spencer, Spencer, 1993).

2. Problem Statement

In today's context, not exhaustively regulated by laws, other professionals improvise recruiters of human resources and also often they have large gaps relative to the area of psychological skills. It seems entirely appropriate that this role can be covered effectively by a competent professional psychologist, preferably specialized in procedures and assessment processes also in order to effectively face all the elements of distortion (Gandolfi, 2003). Today, all the specialist activities of selection of human resources should be conducted by experienced psychologists' organizations, to the extent that the objective of these activities is on the evaluation of the

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psychological qualities of the subject under consideration: intellectual qualities, behavioral, motivational, personality. The knowledge of human psychology should be integrated with knowledge of the mode of labor organizations (Castiello, 2006). These skills should already have been acquired via university education. The University is a decisive stage in the development of the future professional self and in the socialization processes at work early (Super, 1990).

3. Theoretical reference

The selection of personnel is the strategic function that takes care of selection and integration of new employees in the company. The ultimate objective of the evaluation process and selection of human resources is the real integration between the knowledge of the person, of his motives, his personal and professional projects and analysis organization, the manner of its internal functioning, its strategies, and development projects (Trentini, 1995). The ideal to be pursued would be to assign each man to work his best for himself and his company, because everyone should make the best use of their aspirations in the best way for him and the company should make the best use of their global human resources (Dunette, 1999).

The role of recruiter can therefore be seen in the development of public and private organizations who want to create value through their human capital.

In this sense the skills, namely the set of abilities, knowledge, and experiences that the person has become the cornerstone on which to focus not only the university and specialist training in a broad sense but also and especially the subsequent redefinition of recruiter's skills understood as an engine of development strategy in situations of profound and relentless change.

Several studies have been made to define the concept of "professional competence".

The competence can be defined as "ability and abilities that an individual possesses and demonstrates" (Ulrich et al., 1989) that is like the "dimension of behavior manifest and evident that enables a person to act in a competent way" (Woodruff, 1993); "an intrinsic feature connected to a superior performance in a job or situation" (Spencer, Spencer, 1995). The competences, representing the outcome of a continuous learning process, must be discovered, encouraged, directed, preserved and defended by obsolescence.

One of the most famous studies on professional skills was developed by Boyatzis (1981). The author identified 30 skills which he divided into four clusters: the ability of action and achievement, people management skills, analytical reasoning abilities, knowledge areas.

In 1989, Spencer and Spencer studied the skills found in over 200 professional roles and identified them as "Models of managerial skills" characterized by 20 articulated core skills in 6 areas that are also part of the role of the teacher: realization skills, skills assistance and service, skills of influence and direction, managerial skills, cognitive skills, skills of personal effectiveness. These areas of expertise are also being investigated in our scientific study.

4. Purpose of study

The objective of this study was to explore the representations of the selector of human resources owned by the students of Psychology, potential future recruiters in training, compared to the characteristics and skills that he should have to manage an effective selection process and the same representation in the possession of Psychologists engaged in selection.

Objective of the survey is to compare this representations of the selector of human resources among students of Psychology and psychologists who are engaged in selection. Through this comparison it is also possible to investigate the characterization of psychology students' professional selves.

5. Method and instruments

Two instruments were administered. The first purpose built structure on the competency model of Spencer & Spencer (1993), was designed to investigate six areas of expertise related to the figure of the recruiter. The other

instrument is the Adjective Check List ACL (Gough, Heilbrun, 1980) suitably adapted to the investigation.

The "Questionnaire for the analysis of the skills of the recruiter" was purpose-built and inspired by the "Dictionary of Competencies" of Spencer and Spencer (1993). It aims to investigate the different areas of expertise related to the figure of the recruiter, including: area of operational skills and realization, area of skills and assistance service, area of influence skills, area of managerial skills, area of cognitive skills and area of personal effectiveness skills.

All items require pre-coded answers, which can be answered with a score from one (minimal agreement) to five (maximum agreement) according to the Likert-type scale, depending on how much each statement is considered adequate to represent the type of skills that a teacher recruiter should possess. The battery of items related to each topic is distributed randomly in the questionnaire to avoid the problem of response set.

In order to explore the perceptions and representations possessed compared to the skills and quality of recruiter, in the survey a version of the ACL "Adjective Check List" by Gough and Heilbrun (1960, 1965) was administered to those involved. The Adjective Check List (ACL) consists of 300 adjectives or adjectival phrases commonly used to describe themselves, others, concrete objects, places, abstract concepts, ideas and various projections of the self. In giving a description, the person who compiles the test simply marks the words that they deem related to the keyword/phrase stimulus and whose collection is considered adequate to describe a comprehensive, analytical and differential. This test is characterized by 37 scales. A version of Adjective Check List suitably adapted for the purposes of research and administered to each person involved in the survey, refers specifically to the stimulus phrase: "The recruiter is...".

6. Subjects

They have been involved in surveying a total of 207 subjects, 159 females (77%) and 48 males (23%): 105 psychology students and 102 psychologists. The 105 students in their last year of the Faculty of Psychology. The group consisted of 75 (71%) females and 30 (29%) males aged between 19 and 45 years, with an average age of 23,5 years. The group of 102 psychologists is composed of 84 females (82%) and 18 (18%) males aged between 28 and 53 years, with an average age of 35,5 years. All the psychologists involved have done, or carry out activities related to recruitment. 46% of them specialize in clinical psychology, 28% in the development and education, 18% in the psychology of work and organizations and the remaining 8% in other areas.

7. Results

7.1. Results of Adjective Check List ACL

Analysis of the data that emerged from Adjective Check List ACL (Table 1) revealed the following.

Psychology students. The recruiter, in the eyes of these future psychologists, a person is characterized by a high degree of confidentiality and a little impulsive and eccentric behavior (No CKD). He has the intention to meet his commitments, while remaining firmly within the limits of what was agreed and seriously applying himself. His "I" is based on moderation, and a cautious assessment of others. He is described as having a professional touch that you can rely on (Unfav), but at the same time clearly oriented in scope, determined to do well; in short, a tenacious worker with clear ideas about his self (Ach) (End). Achievement motivation seems to lie not so much in a competitive drive, as in a persistent need to live according to criteria of high efficiency and social relevance (Suc) (Mls). His strong points are will and ambition (Sun) (S-Cfd). In their view, the interviewer should show a strong sense of duty, shunning frivolity and things that are non-essential. High scores have emerged on the scales "Ord" and "Int", related to dimensions such as objectivity and rationality, stability control their impulses, logic and foresight. His main features are intellectual ability (A-4), and prompt response and effectiveness in interpersonal relationships (Iss) (Dom); this does not mean that the breeder "ideal" should have a friendly relationship with the "others"; in fact, about the size of the scale of femininity (Fem), there were a trend of low scores, to keep others at a distance, sometimes even to be skeptical of the intentions of others and to reject approaches from others. Indeed, the

marked adjectives denote a person capable of discipline, with praiseworthy qualities of attention to the commitments (ISS) and its obligations but that is in difficulties when it comes to expressing affection and/or tenderness (A) (Ac).

Psychologists. The recruiter is represented as a private person, conventional and not inclined to impulsive behavior or eccentricity (No CKD). They are seen as a professional who you can rely on, oriented to the fulfillment of obligations and commitments prefixes (Unfav). He is a tenacious, energetic, worker possessing a strong sense of initiative and a persistent need to live according to the criteria of high efficiency and social relevance (Ach). The strengths of the breeder are: ambition, safety, strong will, but also friendliness and the ability to manage relationships and guide the actions of the group towards the achievement of objectives (Dom). He is represented as a conscientious person, with a strong sense of duty (End). He is rational and objective and does not tolerate distractions or obstacles in the pursuit of his purposes, but also tends to avoid changes and new things (Ord). Other features that distinguish him are: logic and predictability (Int), enterprise and the ability to carry through their own initiatives (S-Cfd), the breadth of interests, the fluid design, readiness replies (cps). The recruiter is also seen as someone who tends to exert a strong influence on others, being able to plan and organize carefully and make decisions in an accurate and careful (MLS), but on some occasions, tends to show a narcissistic side (ISS) and can be too wary of the intentions of others, showing caution and being defensive (Nur). Finally, the recruiter is perceived by our sample of psychologists as a person who is independent, effective, tough and sure of their means (Suc; Aba). He is dogmatic, stubborn (FEM), productive, focused on the job, and fighting for success, power and recognition, but just to achieve their goals, may forgo spontaneity. They can suppress their feelings and then be uncomfortable when they have to express affection, love and tenderness (A, AC) In the end, the cunning, logic, intellectual skills, and ability to plan and complete all necessary work to achieve the goals stated tend to be offset by a cylinder engine controlling their own behavior. They have a desire to keep others at a distance and face considerable difficulty in giving free rein to instinct (A-4).

Table 1. Significant Means and SD scores reported for Scales of ACL (Students and Psychologists)

Students			Psychologists		
Scale	Mean	SD	Scale	Mean	SD
1. No CKD	38,45	6,10	1. No Ckd	39,7	6,00
3. UNFAV	41,80	8,23	3. Unfav	42,1	6,78
5. ACH	63,59	11,11	5. Ach	61,1	8,87
6. DOM	61,99	10,12	6. Dom	63,6	6,65
7. END	61,20	9,36	7. End	66,0	8,29
8. ORD	62,14	10,84	8. Ord	70,2	9,16
9. INT	58,88	13,32	9. Int	60,6	11,64
17. SUC	38,78	6,70	10. Nur	40,4	7,21
18. ABA	41,16	5,81	17. Suc	37,7	5,50
22. S-CFD	62,79	8,70	18. Aba	40,6	4,20
24. ISS	73,78	9,20	22. S-Cfd	59,8	7,80
25. CPS	67,90	11,07	24. Iss	72,6	7,89
26. MLS	58,38	10,80	25. Cps	66,5	9,09
28. FEM	38,29	6,60	26. Mls	59,7	10,84
31. A	65,15	9,01	28. Fem	34,0	6,22
33. AC	37,34	9,91	31. A	67,5	7,98
37. A-4	63,78	14,22	33. AC	33,6	9,01
			33. AC	33,6	13,70

7.2. Results of Questionnaire for the analysis of the skills of the recruiter

Analysis of the data that emerged from Questionnaire for the analysis of the skills of the recruiter revealed the following.

Area of Operational skills and realization

Students. An analysis of the scores related to the items that assess operational skills ($M=3.67$), shows that perception of the recruiter as a result-oriented person (item 1), alert order, quality and thoroughness, possessing initiative, curious, and tended to give their best (Item 42) (Table 2).

Psychologists. The items in this area report an mean score of 3,54 (Table 9), intermediate value, especially as it relates to the breeder sufficiently results-oriented person (item 1), but also attentive to the order and quality, curious, with a good spirit initiative, aimed to measure themselves against standards of excellence and prone to systematic control of information. The psychologists do not consider, however, that the breeder must do more than is required by the job (item 42) (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Operational skills and realization (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Operational skills and realization	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item 1	3,89	0,90	0,81	3,31	4,02	0,89
Item2	3,86	0,87	0,75	3,40	3,74	0,96
Item3	3,83	0,95	0,91	3,40	3,70	0,93
Item4	3,66	1,10	1,21	3,40	3,58	1,03
Item40	3,64	0,89	0,79	3,40	3,46	0,97
Item41	3,51	0,91	0,84	3,40	3,78	0,97
Item42	3,31	1,01	1,03	3,36	2,48	1,22

Area of Skills and assistance service

Students. The mean values ($M=3,48$) show the expectation from students that the recruiter should be someone who can effectively manage relationships. In particular, he should be available to the report (item 26), but at the same time strike a balance between emotional involvement and distance, (item 32, item 59) not exceeding in one and other (Table 3).

Psychologists. The items in this area have a mean score of 3,24 (Table 9). The highest average score of item 21 which is the expectation of our sample indicates that the recruiter can be a person capable of listening. Consequently, the breeder is also represented as a person willing to understand others, available to the relationship, empathic, and customer-oriented and focused to meet customer needs. The breeder should be able to handle interpersonal relationships in a balanced manner, avoiding responding to the desires of others (item 43) or getting involved emotionally (item 59) (Table 3).

Table 3. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Skills and assistance service (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Skills and assistance service	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item5	3,80	0,80	0,64	3,72	0,95	0,90
Item6	3,83	0,81	0,65	3,80	0,99	0,98
Item21	3,73	1,02	1,04	4,16	0,84	0,71
Item26	3,94	0,88	0,77	3,82	1,10	1,21
Item29	3,85	0,80	0,64	3,56	0,73	0,54
Item31	3,59	1,01	1,03	3,58	0,97	0,94
Item32	2,36	1,08	1,17	2,42	1,07	1,15
Item38	3,26	0,94	0,88	2,84	0,89	0,79
Item43	3,54	0,91	0,83	2,50	1,13	1,28
Item44	3,66	0,84	0,71	3,44	1,05	1,11
Item59	2,68	0,98	0,96	1,76	0,85	0,72

Area of Influence skills

Students. The recruiter is given the possession of qualities such as confidence, sociability and the ability to build relationships ($M=3,79$). A good knowledge of climate and corporate culture are considered important for effective management of the recruitment process (item 46), along with the ability to be aware of the organizational reality in which they work (item 8) (Table 4).

Psychologists. In this area the mean scores is equal to 3,79 (Table 9), a higher mean value than the previous areas. It highlights the importance attached to quality social recruiter (item 54, item 9) but, more importantly, the knowledge that he should have the organizational reality in which it is inserted (item 8) and knowledge, consequently, climate and corporate culture (item 46) (Table 4).

Table 4. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Influence skills (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Influence skills	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item7	3,21	1,12	1,26	2,62	1,24	1,55
Item8	3,99	0,89	0,80	4,72	0,61	0,37
Item9	3,91	0,80	0,64	3,88	1,10	1,21
Item28	3,96	0,80	0,64	3,74	0,88	0,77
Item37	3,79	0,84	0,70	3,82	0,83	0,68
Item45	3,38	1,05	1,10	2,82	1,04	1,09
Item46	4,08	0,81	0,65	4,64	0,72	0,52
Item54	4,00	0,75	0,56	4,10	0,74	0,54

Area of Managerial skills

Students. The mean scores of the items of this area is 3,40 (Table 9). The recruiter is perceived as a profession-oriented social contact, inclined to teamwork and cooperation (item 48, item 12). The need to command is not felt to be necessary to be a good recruiter (item 11) (Table 5).

Psychologists. The items in this area reported a mean score of 3,37 (Table 9). The most significant values are those of item 12, which shows a representation of a recruiter as a collaborative, inclined to teamwork and cooperation. Also according to psychologists it is not necessary to have a predisposition to the command to be a good recruiter (item 11) (Table 5).

Table 5. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Managerial skills (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Managerial skills	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item10	3,36	0,97	0,94	3,36	1,12	1,26
Item11	2,73	1,14	1,29	2,60	1,21	1,47
Item12	3,76	0,89	0,79	4,06	0,87	0,75
Item47	3,50	0,86	0,73	3,00	1,14	1,31
Item48	3,83	0,85	0,73	3,54	1,05	1,11
Item49	3,06	1,18	1,40	3,26	1,08	1,18
Item50	3,59	0,98	0,95	3,78	0,84	0,71

Area of Cognitive skills

Students. The students believe that an effective recruiter must have good cognitive skills, and analytical thinking, conceptual, high level of intelligence and critical thinking ($M=3,58$). That which is given greater importance, however, is the possession of technical/professional skills (item 15) and knowledge of the fundamental principles of psychology (item 53) (Table 6).

Psychologists. The mean score in this area is 3,74 (Table 9). This is fairly high and highlights the importance that our group attaches to the possession of certain cognitive skills for the interviewer, including: analytical thinking

skills (item 13), conceptual thinking skills (item 14), critical (item 36). But the psychologists surveyed believe that a good recruiter should especially know the basics of psychology (item 53) and possess good technical skills or professional (item 15) (Table 6).

Table 6. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Cognitive skills (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Cognitive skills	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item13	3,46	1,04	1,09	3,96	0,99	0,98
Item14	3,48	1,02	1,04	3,88	0,77	0,6
Item15	4,05	0,81	0,66	4,28	0,83	0,7
Item22	3,66	0,91	0,83	3,66	0,87	0,76
Item36	3,63	0,89	0,79	4,04	0,78	0,61
Item39	3,65	0,94	0,89	3,50	1,05	1,11
Item51	3,46	0,84	0,71	3,62	0,81	0,65
Item52	3,05	0,98	0,96	3,08	0,88	0,77
Item53	3,84	0,88	0,77	4,28	0,99	0,98
Item60	3,50	0,90	0,81	3,08	1,01	1,01

Area of Personal effectiveness skills

Students. The mean values indicate that students perceive the interviewer as a professional with great personal qualities, particularly of self-confidence and social adaptability ($M=3,71$). The recruiter seems like a strong, confident, person able, to control their emotions and engaged in achieving business goals (item 58, item 16) (Table 7).

Psychologists. The area related to the skills of personal effectiveness, in all areas, reports the highest average score ($M=3,92$) (Table 9). This indicates that, according to psychologists great personal qualities are necessary for proper management of the recruitment process; specifically: trust, security and self-awareness (items 17, 56, 35); continued commitment to business goals (item 58), and above all, self-control, or the ability to recognize and manage their emotions (item 16, item 55) (Table 7).

Table 7. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Personal effectiveness skills (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Personal effectiveness skills	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item16	3,91	0,77	0,59	4,00	0,95	0,90
Item17	3,90	0,79	0,62	4,06	0,65	0,42
Item18	3,60	0,91	0,83	3,64	0,98	0,97
Item19	3,33	1,00	1,01	3,52	1,15	1,32
Item23	3,89	0,78	0,61	3,78	0,89	0,79
Item24	3,81	0,84	0,71	3,98	0,74	0,55
Item30	3,83	0,91	0,83	3,94	0,79	0,63
Item35	3,30	0,91	0,82	4,06	0,71	0,51
Item55	3,66	0,90	0,81	3,92	0,9	0,81
Item56	3,60	1,00	1,00	4,00	0,7	0,49
Item57	3,76	0,82	0,66	3,80	0,88	0,78
Item58	3,95	0,83	0,68	4,34	0,72	0,51

Area of Others skills

Students. This area includes items that relate largely to behavioral and communication skills, such as privacy, introversion and motivation to do the task ($M=3,01$). Among the most important features that a recruiter should have demonstrated to you is the ability to communicate (item 27) and moralism (item 33) is considered less important or unnecessary. The way to ask questions is regarded as important in the management of a selection process and the

first impression you get from the candidate (Table 8).

Psychologists. This area is characterized by a mean of 2,97 (Table 9). Three out of five items (20, 33, 34) obtained an average score quite low, while the other two items (25, 27) reported a significantly higher average score. These data, taken as a whole, indicate that, according to psychologists involved in research, a good recruiter should, above all, have good communication skills and be motivated to the task, and, conversely, should not be overly introverted, reserved and moralist (Table 8).

Table 8. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$), SD and Variance scores reported for Area of Others skills (Students and Psychologists)

Items for Area of Others skills	Students			Psychologists		
	Mean	SD	Variance	Mean	SD	Variance
Item20	2,29	1,07	1,14	1,88	0,82	0,68
Item25	3,99	0,77	0,59	4,36	0,63	0,4
Item27	4,44	0,84	0,70	4,50	0,65	0,42
Item33	2,10	1,03	1,05	1,62	0,81	0,65
Item34	2,24	1,05	1,09	2,50	1,05	1,11

Table 9. Mean ($1 \leq M \leq 5$) scores reported for areas of skills

Area of skills	Mean	Mean
	Students	Psychologists
Operational skills and realization	3.67	3.54
Skills and assistance service	3.48	3.24
Influence skills	3.79	3.79
Managerial skills	3.40	3.37
Cognitive skills	3.58	3.74
Personal effectiveness skills	3.58	3.92
Others skills	3.01	2.97

7.3. Comparison between the scores of the Adjective Check List and the Questionnaire for the analysis of the skills of the recruiter

By comparing the data from the administration of the two instruments significant correlations emerge ($\alpha < 0.05$) between Adjective Check List and ACL and other items of the “Questionnaire for the analysis of the skills of the recruiter”. The most significant correlations seem to confirm the prevalence of an association on the part of subject involved, including the figure of the recruiter and the skills of collaboration, commitment, technical and professional expertise and positive ambition work. The negative correlations emerged indicate that a versatile and totally voluntary recruiter will never be emotionally distant.

8. Discussion

Psychology students have a perception of the figure of a professional recruiter as capable, confident, aware of the organizational situation of the company he works for, and able to reconcile business needs with those of the candidate to be recruited. The representation of the selector of human resources "ideal" is under the influence of psychological studies, especially in the determination and allocation of basic skills.

According to psychologists surveyed, the skills required for a good recruiter are: awareness of organizational reality, knowledge of climate and corporate culture, good communication skills, motivation and commitment in achieving the objectives constant, but also the knowledge of the fundamental principles of psychology and, in general, the possession of social qualities. He must be characterized by high personal effectiveness understood as trust, security and self-awareness and commitment in achieving the objectives. Effective action is essential and the recruiter must have knowledge of organizational reality and have very good technical/professional knowledge.

Moralism is considered less useful or even counterproductive. Also the emotional as well as the opposite approach, namely the excessive distance, introversion or predisposition to the command.

First area of expertise in terms of importance is to be to influence students and the personal effectiveness skills of psychologists. Overall, the level of importance given to different areas of expertise can be considered almost analogous. This confirms that psychology students are in the final year of their studies. There was a significant awareness of the characterization of the professional identity of the psychologist who will work in the context of selection of human resources. The repertoire of skills appears to be significantly defined and there are significant similarities between the representations of the two groups, confirming that psychology students have already established a professional self consistent with the psychological profession.

9. Conclusions

By the data that has emerged from surveys it is possible to draw some conclusions. The first concerns the emphasis on the interviewer in the process of recruiting; in fact its role does not end in the administration of tests, since the features, identified as basic to be a good recruiter are the knowledge of the applicant's organizational and possession of appropriate interpersonal and communication skills. The primary requirement is to combine precision and accuracy in choosing a running speed of the process. Expertise is essential in order to implement a selection process for new resources that could be used as a true moment of value creation for the companies. The second conclusion is that the profession of the interviewer can not be left to improvisation. It can not be done by just anyone who believes they have a good intuition or good ability to "understand others", but it requires adequate training, some experience in the field, and a strong motivation and a constant commitment to keep updated. This aspect appears to be present in the representations of psychologists but also in those of the students of the university where it plays a decisive role in the development of the future professional self in terms of early socialization to work

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