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# Unmitigated Agency and Communion in the Leader-team Member Relationship

**Dorota Jendza**

Department of Organization and Management, University of Gdansk, Poland

### ABSTRACT

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*Empowerment, Unmitigated agency, Unmitigated communion, Leadership*

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#### \*Correspondence:

[dorota.jendza@ug.edu.pl](mailto:dorota.jendza@ug.edu.pl)

This article explores unmitigated agency and communion, extreme forms of the core personality dimensions, and their manifestations in organisational roles, particularly between leaders and team members. The aim of the study was to identify differences in unmitigated agency and communion between leaders and team members. The study integrates a comprehensive literature review with an empirical study. The methodology includes a quantitative analysis using scales to measure unmitigated agency and communion among members of public and private organisations. The study sample includes 810 individuals. The results of the study showed no significant differences in unmitigated agency between leaders and team members in different sectors. There are differences between leaders and team members in unmitigated communion and between public and private organisations. Understanding the presence of unmitigated communion can help organisations to design better management practices that balance these characteristics to enhance team and leadership effectiveness. The findings argued for awareness and management of these extreme traits to support healthier and more productive organisational environments. This study contributes to the knowledge of extreme personality dimensions in organisational environments, highlighting that extreme unmitigated communion is present and manifests in leadership roles and organisational sectors. The research presented offers insights into the behavioural implications of these traits, providing a basis for further investigations and practical applications in the development and management of organisations.

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The construct of agency and communion is very much connected to people's social functioning. Agency determines the ability to achieve goals and is connected to ambition, dominance, determination, efficiency and task consistency. Communion, on the other hand, is the ability to form interpersonal relationships and is connected to empathy, understanding, support, concern

for others, kindness and solidarity (Wojciszke, 2009). According to Wojciszke (2009), the categories of agency and communion are basic categories for describing and valuing people. They are considered to be the main aspects of human existence, as people pursue their goals and, on the other hand, are members of a community and participate in social relations.

In addition to 'ordinary agency and communion', there is an extreme form - unmitigated agency and unmitigated communion (Helgeson & Fritz, 2000). Unmitigated agency is characterised by an excessive focus on the self, on the achievement of goals and tasks, and a negative perception of others, while unmitigated communion means such a strong focus on other people and relationships with them that it leads to a negation of one's own agency and the cessation of one's own goals (Helgeson, 2003). A review of research (Helgeson, 2003; Helgeson & Fritz, 2000; Wojciszke, 2009) on agency and communion and unmitigated agency and communion shows that these constructs are primarily linked to psychology.

In social psychology, it is pointed out that agency and communion shape differential social functioning. In interpersonal relationships, people adopt either a recipient attitude, linked to the agency or a giver attitude linked to communion (Wojciszke, 2009). These two ways of functioning in social life shape different information processing, action motivation and behaviour (Helgeson, 2003; Helgeson & Fritz, 2000; Wojciszke, 2009). Within social psychology, the focus has been on identifying behaviours associated with agency and communion and unmitigated agency and communion (Helgeson, 2003; Helgeson & Fritz, 2000). These behaviours have been correlated with personality traits (Ghaed & Gallo, 2006), as well as with problem behaviours that may emerge as a result of increased unmitigated agency and communion (Buss, 1990; Helgeson, 2003; Helgeson & Fritz, 1998, 1999, 2000; Helgeson & Lepore, 1997).

The themes of agency and communion and unmitigated agency and communion are also addressed within mental and physical health psychology. In this area, the relationship between unmitigated agency and communion and adaptation and coping with chronic illness is primarily explored (Berg et al., 2008; Bruch, 2002; Helgeson et al., 2019; Helgeson & Fritz, 1999; Mosher & Danoff-Burg, 2008; Piro et al., 2001; Trudeau et al., 2003). Relationships between these constructs and sexual behaviour, which are important in close relationships, are also explored (Mosher & Danoff-Burg, 2005; Nagurney & Bagwell, 2009).

In the area of management science, only the construct of agency and communion is present. The extreme dimensions of agency and communion, i.e. unmitigated agency and communion, are not present in research. In the field of management science, agency and communion are analysed in the context of the factors that shape it. Elements such as goals, communication, information sharing, motivation (Wilkinson, 1998; Wooddell, 2009), supportive leadership role and motivation (Chen et al., 2001; Whiting & Whiting, 1975), leadership style (Chin & Smith, 2004; Greenleaf, 2002; Hoch, 2013; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013; Mukhlisin et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2014) and the organisational member (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Thus, it can be said that unmitigated agency and communion is only present in the fields of psychology: social, mental and physical health and personality psychology, while very rarely are these constructs present in research in the field of organisational and team management. However, the use of the constructs - unmitigated agency and communion - in management research could be important for several reasons. Unmitigated communion, although seemingly

positive, can lead to overprotectiveness (Helgeson & Fritz, 1998, 1999). In contrast, individuals with unmitigated agency tend to dominate and control others (Helgeson, 2003). The presence of both of these constructs may limit the development of independence, self-efficacy and cooperation in organisational relationships. Analysing the presence of unmitigated agency and communion in organisational relationships would provide insight into a wider spectrum of organisational behaviour. Understanding how these extreme behaviours manifest themselves in the leader-team member relationship could contribute to better human resource management, the creation of more effective and healthy work environments and the adaptation of management strategies to the needs of different groups of employees.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to explore how unmitigated agency and communion are manifested in different organisational roles and types of organisations, taking into account the interactional impact of these two variables on the aforementioned constructs. The research was conducted among team leaders and team members employed in Polish public and private organisations. This study is important for several reasons. Firstly, it introduces the constructs of unmitigated agency and communion into the field of organisation and management research. These constructs are described through various behaviours specific to unmitigated agency and communion. Knowing how unmitigated agency and communion manifest themselves in the leader-team member relationship makes it possible to explore new behaviours occurring in the leader-team member relationship, depending on the organisation. Secondly, using the construct of unmitigated agency and communion has made it possible to identify differences between leaders and team members within organisations in the behaviours undertaken. Knowledge of this contributes to understanding how organisational role shapes organisational behaviour. Thirdly, the use of the construct of unmitigated agency and communion made it possible to identify differences between public and private organisations in the behaviours undertaken. Knowing this makes it possible to understand how an organisational context such as the sector of activity (public or private) interacts with the manifestation of specific behaviours. Fourthly, the use of the construct of unmitigated agency and communion made it possible to identify differences between leaders of different organisations (public and private) in the behaviours undertaken.

Understanding these aspects is essential not only for management theorists but also for practitioners seeking to create more integrated, effective and harmonious workplaces. This knowledge can contribute to the development of more effective management strategies that support both the individual development of employees and the overall performance of the organisation.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of Agency and Communion in the Leader-team Member Relationship**

The theoretical framework for the construct of agency and communion in the field of management is the concept of empowerment. According to this concept, the task of managers is to create such a work atmosphere that the members of the organisation have a sense of belonging to communion and perceive the work environment as a space for enhancing self-esteem, dignity, as well as self-realisation (Spreitzer, 1995). There are two approaches to empowerment: organisational and psychological.

In the organisational approach, empowering the individual aims to create working conditions that make full use of the employee's skills and knowledge to achieve the organisation's goals (Wilkinson, 1998). It, therefore, seeks to remove structural and organisational barriers and constraints that cut off certain groups' access to valuable resources and the use of their capabilities (Jarrar & Zairi, 2002). From a management perspective, empowerment means creating an environment where employees feel encouraged to be involved in decision-making and to perform tasks more independently. In management practice, this is done by modelling or changing organisational factors such as goals, communication, information sharing, motivation (Wilkinson, 1998; Wooddell, 2009) and building a supportive leader-employee relationship. In this area, attention is paid to leader motivation (Chen et al., 2001; Whiting & Whiting, 1975) and leadership style (Chin & Smith, 2004; Greenleaf, 2002; Hoch, 2013; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013; Mukhlisin et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2014).

A different context is adopted by the psychological perspective, according to which employees differ in their level of motivation for work and their preference for the goals they want to achieve in work. This means that when introducing the concept of empowerment into an organisation, attention is paid not only to external conditions but also to the employee's subjective conditions, such as a sense of self-efficacy, influence and competence (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zimmerman, 1995). From this perspective, it is important to shape the conditioning to enhance the psychological characteristics of employees (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

## Literature Review

In the area of management, agency and communion are major attributes of the relationship between leader and team members. It is believed that effective leadership requires high levels of agency (Hannah et al., 2008). Many leadership models attribute higher levels of agency to the leader, thus highlighting the asymmetry of agency between leader and subordinates (Tourish, 2012). This is supported by research showing differences between position in the organisational hierarchy and feelings of agency and communion (Smith et al., 2008), according to which those in higher positions in the organisation are more agency and those lower in the hierarchy more community. The asymmetry between leaders and team members in terms of agency and communion becomes apparent primarily in leaders' personality traits, behaviours and employees' perceptions of leaders.

The most frequently cited traits of leaders are those associated with agency - assertiveness, drive for achievement, self-confidence (Yukl, 1990; Zaccaro et al., 2001). This asymmetry is also evident in behaviour (Keltner et al., 2003). It has been noted that a consequence of having power is the existence of two behavioural systems: the 'striving for' system and the 'inhibiting' system, which are activated depending on the position occupied in the organisational structure. According to the researchers (Keltner et al., 2003), people in positions of power activate the 'striving for' system because they have access to resources and feel more freedom to act. In contrast, individuals in subordinate positions activate the inhibition system, which is associated with less access to resources and limited autonomy. The 'striving for' system is characterised by a greater propensity to act and motivation to achieve goals (Chen et al., 2001). The inhibition system triggers a focus on threats, sensitivity to negative stimuli, and controlled information processing (Keltner et al., 2003).

Research also shows that moderate causality among leaders is perceived positively by employees. A leader with a moderate level of assertiveness as an element of agency is perceived by employees as capable of achieving goals, making choices and making decisions, while leaders with low assertiveness or excessively high assertiveness are perceived as ineffective. Employees perceive that low levels of assertiveness bring social benefits but undermine goal achievement. Excessively high levels of assertiveness help to achieve goals and objectives, but such a leader is perceived as antagonistic (Ames & Flynn, 2007).

Research has also noted that the intensity of agency and communion is influenced by various factors and can change dynamically (Boiral et al., 2009). One of the conditions shaping agency and communion is the type of organisation (Tomkins et al., 2020). In public organisations, leaders often experience an asymmetry between an excessive sense of responsibility and an actual sense of control and influence over the situation. This specific form of asymmetry manifests itself in situations where leaders must be held accountable for actions and decisions for which they are not necessarily directly responsible. As a result, their actual ability to influence events and processes is significantly reduced because their sense of responsibility far exceeds their causal capacity.

Leaders in public organisations may also be less causal due to their dependence on political connections, external evaluations and societal demands (Ciulla, 2017; Tomkins et al., 2020). Leadership in public organisations is a good example to illustrate the tension between agency and communion. Leaders in public organisations are required to work with a diverse range of organisations, and they must balance performance with the expectations and needs of citizens and other stakeholders. As highlighted by Crosby and Bryson (2018) and Ospina (2017), this dynamic environment requires public leaders not only to manage complex relationships but also to adapt to ever-changing societal demands, which often limits their ability to effect meaningful change and directly influence reality.

The level of agency among leaders is also influenced by the goals of the organisation (Kim, 2009, 2011). These goals vary depending on whether one is dealing with a public or private organisation. Private organisations focus on optimising profits and gaining a competitive advantage, whereas in public organisations the priority is to deliver public services for the benefit of society, the region or the state, with an emphasis on acting in accordance with the law, impartiality and an apolitical approach (Kettl, 2006).

Another important aspect is how leaders pursue their goals. They may do so more independently of others and on their own or more collectively in collaboration with other actors (Sullivan et al., 2012). Different leadership styles are characterised by different levels of agency (Wolfgramm et al., 2015). For example, a transactional leader (Bass & Avolio, 1997), who independently dictates direction, shows greater agency compared to a shared leadership leader (Barnett & Weidenfeller, 2016), where influence and control is distributed among team members (Pearce & Conger, 2002). In more democratic leadership styles, for example, in shared leadership, some influence is delegated to others who assume responsibility for performing specific management functions or leadership roles (Hoch, 2013; Wang et al., 2014). In such leadership models, communion and the characteristics that determine it, such as trust, collectivism and shared responsibility, play a major role (Hoch, 2013). Therefore, agency and communion among leaders vary according to leadership style (Wolfgramm et al., 2015). Causality will be different in transformational, collective, and servant leadership (Chin &



Smith, 2004; Wolfgramm et al., 2015), in which power is used to develop others the leader serves (Greenleaf, 2002). Such a leader places the needs of others above his or her own (Banks & Ledbetter, 2004). Thus, asymmetries in the leader-subordinate relationship do not necessarily lead to greater power, control or influence for the leader but may also imply a division of these attributes within the team (Tomkins et al., 2020).

The analysis of existing research on agency and communion in the context of leader-subordinate relationships points to important gaps that justify the need for further research on agency and communion. First, research has tended to focus on moderate agency and communion, which may not capture the full picture of power dynamics and their impact on organisational behaviour (Chen et al., 2001; Keltner et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008). Extreme forms of agency and communion can also manifest in the leader-team member relationship, which can be disruptive to teamwork. For example, unmitigated agency results in conflict and destructive behaviours, such as seeking dominance, desiring revenge, treating others with extreme detachment and manipulating others to achieve goals (Helgeson, 2003). In contrast, unmitigated communion leads to destructive behaviours such as overprotectiveness, excessive intrusion into the lives of others and excessive control (Helgeson, 2003).

Secondly, existing research often takes a fragmented approach to the analysis of agency and communion, focusing on single elements. In the case of agency, it is assertiveness (Ames & Flynn, 2007) or self-efficacy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and in the case of communion, it is trust (Ilies et al., 2005) or openness in relationships (Kernis, 2003). These components are important but do not exhaust the full spectrum of the construct of agency and communion. Thirdly, researchers focus on identifying differences between leaders and team members in agency and communion (Smith et al., 2008), neglecting the interactional analysis of the various factors influencing agency and communion in organisations.

These criticisms point to the need for a deeper understanding of the existing asymmetries in agency and communion in the leader-team member relationship. In this study, extreme forms of agency and communion behaviour were introduced into the analyses, and the interactional impact of two factors, organisational role and organisational type on unmitigated communion and agency was considered.

Taking into account findings from the research (Chen et al., 2001; Hannah et al., 2008; Keltner et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Tourish, 2012), it was assumed that team leaders would be distinguished by greater unmitigated agency than team members. It was also assumed that leaders in public organisations would have higher levels of unmitigated communion than leaders in private organisations (Ciulla, 2017; Crosby & Bryson, 2018; Kim, 2009, 2011; Ospina, 2017; Tomkins et al., 2020).

## Method

### Sample

The study aimed to analyze unmitigated agency and communion according to the variable of organizational role (team manager vs team member). The sampling technique was purposefully designed to ensure adequate diversity among participants, with a focus on including both team leaders and team members to examine potential differences based on organizational roles. Participants were selected using a snowball sampling method, where initial participants referred others who met the study's criteria. This approach was chosen to reach a diverse sample across

different organizational roles and sectors. Participants were categorized into two main groups: team leaders and team members. Team Leaders refer to a person who holds a formal leadership position, overseeing the team's work and making strategic decisions. Team Members refer to a person who was part of a team but did not hold a formal leadership position, focusing on executing tasks and contributing to the team's goals.

The following steps were taken to identify whether a participant was a team leader or a team member: Participants were asked to specify their current role within their organization during the recruitment process. A screening question in the survey explicitly asked participants to indicate if they were a team leader or a team member. Participants were asked to specify their gender (options included male, female, and prefer not to say). Participants were required to provide their age. Participants indicated whether they worked in the public or private sector. Participants provided the number of years they had been working in their respective roles.

A total of 810 individuals participated in the survey (82.5% were female, 16.4% were male, and 1.1% did not specify gender). The sample included 161 team leaders (27 from public and 134 from private organizations) and 649 team members (172 from the public and 477 from the private sectors). The mean age of participants was 28 years ( $SD = 9.1$  years), and the mean years of work experience was 6.13 years ( $SD = 7.18$  years), minimum - 1, maximum - 35 years. The conditions of the study included ensuring that all participants were currently employed and had at least one year of work experience. This was to guarantee that the respondents had sufficient exposure to organizational environments and roles to provide relevant insights into the research questions.

### **Procedures and Instruments**

In order to measure unmitigated agency and communion, we used a scale developed by Wojciszke and Szlendak (2010) consisting of 22 statements. This scale has been adapted to Polish cultural conditions, as it is important for psychometric tools to be adapted to the cultural context of the population in which they are used. Cultural conditions affect the way in which individual statements in the scale are interpreted, which may alter the results of the measurements. Adapting the scale to linguistic and cultural specificities increases its reliability and relevance in the population under study. Using an instrument developed in a different language and for a different culture can lead to errors related to the (mis)understanding and (mis)interpretation of statements.

The scale was developed following the ideas of Bakan (1966) and Helgeson (2003), which are fundamental to the understanding of two dimensions of personality: unmitigated agency and communion. Bakan defined causality as the focus on achievement and dominance and communality as the concern for relationships and the well-being of others. Helgeson elaborated on these ideas, showing their impact on health and adaptive behaviour. The Polish version of Wojciszke and Szlendak's scale integrates these theories with the cultural context, allowing for an in-depth study of the Polish population. An example item for the scale of unmitigated agency is: *"I focus so much on accomplishing my tasks that I forget about the rest of the world"* and for the scale of unmitigated communion *"I always put the needs of others before my own"*. Each survey participant was asked to indicate how true each opinion was for the person surveyed on a scale of 1 (*definitely no*) to 7 (*definitely yes*). The result of each subscale was the average of the specified items. [Appendix](#) includes all statements.

According to the tool's authors, the reliability analysis showed high internal consistency of the subscales (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the unmitigated agency subscale  $\alpha = .73$  and for the unmitigated communion subscale  $\alpha = .86$ ). The index value obtained in this survey was also satisfactory, being  $\alpha = .75$  for the unmitigated agency subscale and  $\alpha = .84$  for the unmitigated communion subscale. The survey was conducted in May-July 2023 in Polish private and public organisations. Questionnaires were prepared in Qualtrics and distributed online. Information about the survey was disseminated via social media.

A two-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the results, as it allows for the simultaneous examination of the effect of two independent variables (type of organisation and organisational role) on the dependent variable (level of unmitigated agency and communion). Two-factor ANOVA is particularly useful when we want to understand whether there is an interaction between the independent variables, that is, whether the effect of one variable on the dependent variable varies according to the level of the other variable.

## Results

In the two-factor ANOVA analysis, no significant differences were observed in the level of unmitigated agency between public and private organisations ( $F(1, 80) = 1.94$ ;  $p = .16$ ), as well as between organisational roles ( $F(1, 80) = .34$ ;  $p = .56$ ), suggesting that the level of unmitigated agency does not differ significantly between team leaders and team members. Furthermore, there was no significant interaction effect between organisation type and organisational role ( $F(1, 80) = .70$ ;  $p = .40$ ), as shown in Table 1.

In contrast, as shown in Table 2, there is a significant difference in the level of unmitigated communion between public and private organisations ( $F(1, 80) = 10.52$ ;  $p = .001$ ) regardless of organisational role. The level of unmitigated communion is significantly higher in public organisations ( $M = 44.26$ ;  $SD = 8.62$ ) than in private organisations ( $M = 42.9$ ;  $SD = 8.6$ ).

**Table 1**

*Distribution of the Results for Unmitigated Agency as Dependent Variable*

Independent variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Type of organisation	1.94	.16
Organisational role	0.34	.56
Organisation type x organisational role	0.70	.40

Note. *F* (Analysis of Variance), *p* (value)

**Table 2**

*Distribution of the Results for Unmitigated Communion as Dependent Variable*

Independent variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Type of organisation	10.52	.00		
Public			44.26	8.62
Private			42.39	8.60
Organisational role	4.77	.02		
Team leader			43.52	8.21
Team member			42.69	8.74
Organisation type x organisational role	3.22	.07		

Note: *F* (Analysis of Variance), *p* (value), *M* (Mean), *SD* (Standard Deviation)

Table 3 shows the results of comparisons between public and private organisations on various aspects of unmitigated communion. The analysis showed that there is a greater problem in public organisations ( $M = 4.78$ ;  $SD = 1.38$ ) than in private organisations ( $M = 4.60$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ) in refusing help when someone asks for something ( $F(1, 80) = 9.66$ ;  $p = .002$ ) and members of public organisations feel worse ( $M = 4.87$ ;  $SD = 1.35$ ) than members of private



organisations ( $M = 4.78$ ;  $SD = 1.37$ ), if they are unable to help other people ( $F(1, 80) = 4.19$ ;  $p = .04$ ).

Members of public organisations are more attentive to the needs of others when meeting their own needs ( $F(1, 80) = 3.95$ ;  $p = .04$ ;  $M = 3.97$ ;  $SD = 1.38$ ) than members of private organisations ( $M = 3.77$ ;  $SD = 1.38$ ). They also derive more pleasure from making others happy ( $F(1, 80) = 4.62$ ;  $p = .03$ ;  $M = 4.70$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ) than members of private organisations ( $M = 4.41$ ;  $SD = 1.33$ ). There was also a significant difference in the realisation of one's dreams and plans - members of public organisations are more likely to give up their own dreams or plans if they conflict with the desires of someone close to them ( $F(1, 80) = 10.59$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $M = 3.64$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ) than members of private organisations ( $M = 3.37$ ;  $SD = 1.39$ ).

**Table 3**

*Differences between Organisations on Specific Items Describing Unmitigated Communion*

Unmitigated communion - items description	Public organisations		Private organisations		(F)	(p)
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)		
I always put the needs of others before my own	3.85	1.33	3.77	1.42	1.10	0.29
I can only feel happy when others are happy	4.27	1.48	4.04	1.38	2.76	0.09
I can't say no when someone asks me for help	4.78	1.37	4.60	1.34	9.66	0.00
I feel terrible when I am not able to help someone in need	4.87	1.35	4.78	1.38	4.19	0.04
I am not able to satisfy my own needs if this would interfere with the needs of others	3.97	1.38	3.77	1.38	3.95	0.04
My greatest pleasure is bringing joy to others	4.70	1.30	4.41	1.33	4.62	0.03
I give up my own dreams or plans if they conflict with the desires of someone close to me	3.64	1.43	3.37	1.39	10.59	0.00
I often act in spite of myself in order not to make others uncomfortable	3.87	1.48	3.72	1.46	3.61	0.05
Good relationships with others are more important to me than success	4.87	1.33	4.75	1.34	1.38	0.23
I strongly experience the unpleasantness of others	4.92	1.30	4.85	1.39	0.94	0.33
I am more able to take care of others than myself	4.48	1.46	4.30	1.56	2.39	0.12

Note. F (Analysis of Variance), p (value), M (Mean), SD (Standard Deviation)

There is a significant difference in the level of unmitigated communion between people in different organisational roles regardless of the type of organisation ( $F(1, 806) = 4.77$ ;  $p = .02$ ). Unmitigated communion is higher among team leaders ( $M = 43.52$ ;  $SD = 8.21$ ) than among employees ( $M = 42.69$ ;  $SD = 8.74$ ). The item differences are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Differences between Organisational Roles on Specific Items Describing Unmitigated Communion*

Unmitigated communion - items description	Team leader(s)		Team member		(F)	(p)
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)		
I always put the needs of others before my own	3.84	1.5	3.78	1.37	0.77	0.38
I can only feel happy when others are happy	4.19	1.49	4.07	1.39	1.03	0.30
I can't say no when someone asks me for help	4.71	1.35	4.63	1.35	5.40	0.02
I feel terrible when I am not able to help someone in need	4.66	1.33	4.84	1.37	0.10	0.74
I am not able to satisfy my own needs if this would interfere with the needs of others	3.87	1.34	3.81	1.39	1.30	0.25
My greatest pleasure is bringing joy to others	4.58	1.31	4.46	1.33	1.40	0.23
I give up my own dreams or plans if they conflict with the desires of someone close to me	3.71	1.41	3.37	1.40	13.05	0.00
I often act in spite of myself in order not to make others uncomfortable	3.84	1.49	3.73	1.45	2.59	0.10
Good relationships with others are more important to me than success	4.96	1.24	4.73	1.36	3.21	0.07
I strongly experience the unpleasantness of others	4.81	1.27	4.89	1.40	0.00	0.96
I am more able to take care of others than myself	4.29	1.46	4.36	1.56	0.02	0.86

Note. F (Analysis of Variance), p (value), M (Mean), SD (Standard Deviation)

As shown in Table 4, there were significant differences between leaders and team members. Leaders are more ( $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) than team members ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) unable to say no when someone asks them for help ( $F(1, 80) = 5.40$ ,  $p = .02$ ) and they give up more ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) than team members ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) on their dreams when they conflict with the needs of others ( $F(1, 80) = 13.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

When examining the effect of the two independent variables (organisation type x organisational role) on the overall construct of unmitigated communion, it was observed that there was no significant interaction effect between organisation type and organisational role on the level of unmitigated communion ( $F(1, 80) = 3.22$ ,  $p = .07$ ). This means that the level of unmitigated communion did not differ between organisation type and organisational role.

However, when analysing the effect of the two independent variables (organisation type x organisational role) on the individual variables included in unmitigated communion there was an interaction effect for three variables.

Team leaders in public organisations have a significantly greater problem saying no when someone asks them for help ( $F(1, 19) = 7.54$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $M = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) than team members in these organisations ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) and team leaders in private organisations ( $F(1, 16) = 10.14$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ).

Team leaders in public organisations are more likely to give up their dreams and plans if they conflict with the desires of others ( $F(1, 19) = 9.39$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) than team members in these organisations ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) and team leaders in private organisations ( $F(1, 16) = 8.22$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ).

In business organisations, leaders are more likely to give up their dreams and plans ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) than team members ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ). The effect occurred at the limit of significance ( $F(1, 60) = 3.73$ ,  $p = .05$ ).

The third issue was related to a negative feeling when not being able to help someone in need. In business organisations, team members ( $F(1, 60) = 5.27$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) were more likely to feel negative emotions when they could not help someone ( $M = 4.85$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) than team leaders in these organisations ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ).

In contrast, team leaders in public organisations ( $F(1, 161) = 5.98$ ,  $p = .01$ ) were more likely to feel negative emotions about not being able to help ( $M = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than leaders in private organisations ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ).

## Discussion

The first thesis assumed that team leaders would have higher levels of unmitigated agency than team members. This thesis was supported by research reports (Keltner et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Tourish, 2012) according to which those higher in the organisational hierarchy showed a higher sense of agency and those lower in the hierarchy a higher level of communion.

The results of the conducted study do not support this thesis. Leaders have significantly higher levels of unmitigated communion than team members. The analysis conducted shows that leaders differ significantly from team members in certain communal behaviours. They have a greater problem than team members in refusing to help when asked to do so and are more likely to abandon their plans when they are incompatible with the needs of others.

The higher level of unmitigated communion among leaders can be explained by their motivation. Individuals with power are motivated by different motives to exercise power - some are motivated by a desire to care for others (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). For such motivated leaders, helping others, caring and concern for others are important. Such leaders are willing to sacrifice their own goals for the achievement of others when there is a discrepancy between their personal goals and those of their team members. The aforementioned studies show that when in power with caring motivation - selfish goals give way to the desire to serve others and having power can enhance the pursuit of pro-social goals (Chen et al., 2001).

The high level of unmitigated communion among team leaders is perhaps a result of the fact that the study involved team leaders who may have wanted to see themselves as communal. Communion-mindedness may be a valued trait by them, and therefore the assessment of the behaviour may differ from the actual behaviour because we tend to overestimate ourselves (Alicke & Govorun, 2005). In a situation where respondents prefer a particular trait, they may be more likely to indicate answers that describe the preferred dimension.

In the context of empowerment, leaders who exhibit higher levels of communion are potentially better able to support their teams by sharing power and responsibility, resulting in more engaged and motivated employees. Empowerment in this context means not only granting greater autonomy but also building a strong communal culture in which employees feel valued and important to the organisation (Chin & Smith, 2004; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 1998; Wooddell, 2009).

The analysis also showed that in business organisations, team members were significantly more likely than leaders to feel negative emotions when they could not help someone. As reported in the literature, a sense of communion has a significant impact on workplace attitudes and behaviours. Studies by Moorman and Blakely (1995) and Boyd and Nowell (2023) found that a strong sense of community positively correlates with citizenship behaviour, commitment, psychological wellbeing and work motivation. Additionally, as Hue et al. (2022) note, leaders who emphasise interpersonal relationships often promote collectivist values among their teams, leading to an increase in cooperative behaviour among employees. In the context of our results, it can be hypothesised that team members feeling supported by leaders may react more emotionally to their inability to help.

It was also hypothesised that leaders of public organisations would have higher levels of unmitigated communion than leaders of private organisations. This thesis referred to a number of studies conducted among leaders of public organisations, which concluded that public leaders are compelled by various external conditions to interact collectively (Ciulla, 2017; Crosby & Bryson, 2018; Ospina, 2017; Tomkins et al., 2020).

The analysis shows that leaders in public organisations have a significantly greater problem than business leaders in refusing help when asked for it. They are also more likely than business leaders to abandon their plans if they clash with the needs of others. Public leaders were significantly more likely than business leaders to feel negative emotions when they could not help someone.

Additionally, the study's analysis revealed statistically significant differences between public and private organisations in terms of unmitigated communion. It was noted that in the public sector, it is a challenge to refuse help when someone asks - a much more difficult task than in private organisations. Public sector employees also show stronger tendencies to consider

and prioritise the needs of others over their own. They are more likely to give up their own plans and ambitions when these clash with the expectations or needs of others, highlighting their deep-seated concern for the common good. Additionally, their inability to help is associated with distinct emotional discomfort. They derive the most satisfaction when their actions contribute to the happiness of others, reflecting the high level of community orientation in these organisations.

In the context of the research literature, the results obtained reflect important differences in mission and goals between public and private organisations. As indicated by the studies of (Vezeteu & Verboncu, 2020) and (Kim, 2009, 2011), public organisations are inherently focused on social service and meeting the needs of a broader group of stakeholders, which is a manifestation of their main objectives: providing public services, promoting social good and acting in accordance with the rule of law and impartiality. In contrast, private organisations focus their activities mainly on generating profits and gaining a competitive advantage.

These differences in priorities may explain why public sector employees (including leaders), exhibit higher levels of unmitigated communion. The values and cultural norms acquired through working in the public sector encourage the development of behaviours focused on empathy, willingness to help, or sacrificing one's own interests for the common good. As suggested by (Hammon et al., 2023; Suong, 2021), Public Service Motivation (PSM) encourages employees to benefit others and influence social well-being, which directly translates into a higher propensity for communal behaviour and may explain the higher levels of uninhibited commonality observed in the study.

Additionally, according to a study by (Jiartana et al., 2023), the psychological sense of community, which includes belonging, meaning, a sense of support from other organisational members and emotional connection, is strongly developed in public organisations. This sense of community correlates positively with engagement in citizenship behaviours, commitment and psychological well-being, which may further explain why employees of public organisations are more likely to act for the benefit of others, even at the expense of their own needs (Boyd & Nowell, 2023). Employees of public organisations in such settings are more likely to take on additional responsibilities beyond their job description, support each other, as well as avoid unnecessary confrontations (Hue et al., 2022). Additionally, individuals working in public organisations are characterised by high social responsibility (Boyd & Nowell, 2023; Molines et al., 2022).

The analysis of the results of the research shows that unmitigated agency does not show a dependence on the type of organisation or organisational role. It appears that it may be more related to other organisational factors such as shared values, strategy, organisational structure, management system, leadership style, employee skills, environment, shareholders, stakeholders, ideas, networks and mission, as suggested by Waterman et al. (1980). Furthermore, it is possible that unmitigated agency is a more individual trait and that organisational factors may only modulate its expression, enhancing or suppressing its manifestations (Wojciszke & Cieślak, 2014).

In light of (Smith et al., 2008) research, it is also known that agency tends to correlate with a position in the organisational hierarchy, with those in authority displaying greater agency, while those lower in the hierarchy tend to be more communal in their attitudes. However, our study did not find differences in levels of unmitigated agency according to organisational role.

It is possible that the leaders participating in the study perceived themselves as communal rather than causal, which may reflect their focus on relationships with other people rather than solely on their own goals.

In the context of empowerment, the lack of differences found in levels of agency between leaders and team members may suggest that empowerment is evenly distributed within the organisation, regardless of hierarchy. This could mean that employees at different levels of the organisation feel empowered to act and make decisions, which is a positive sign of effective empowerment.

## Conclusions

The research found significant differences in levels of unmitigated communion between public and private organisations. Public sector employees show higher levels of unmitigated communion, which may be due to their greater focus on community service, the common good and responsibility for the interests of the wider society. These findings suggest that organisational mission and goals have a significant impact on employees' behaviour, leading them to be more dedicated to others and more concerned about the social good.

Leaders, compared to team members, show higher levels of unmitigated communion. They are more likely than team members to be forced to give up their own goals for the needs of the group and are more likely to have a problem refusing to help when someone asks them for help. These results show how organisational roles influence behaviours related to caring for others.

Differences in behaviour between leaders of public and private organisations were also identified. Leaders from the public sector are more likely to experience conflict between their own goals and societal expectations, have more difficulty in refusing to help and experience very much when they cannot help others. This is due to differences in organisational priorities and goals, highlighting perhaps the influence of organisational culture on individual attitudes and decisions.

In contrast to (Smith et al., 2008) results, which suggested that agency was related to the position in the organisational hierarchy, this study found no dependence of agency on organisational role. This may indicate the more complex dynamics of the influence of other organisational factors on perpetuity, such as organisational culture, values, as well as individual personality traits of employees. The results of the study also suggest that leadership behaviours may differ from those identified by Keltner et al. (2003). In this study, leaders showed a greater tendency towards communitarianism, which contrasts with the 'striving for' and 'inhibiting' model proposed by Keltner et al. (2003), where leaders activate the 'striving for' system and employees activate the 'inhibiting' system. This may be due to differences in research methodology or changes in the work environment over the years (Peterson et al., 2012; Spears, 2010).

In light of the results obtained, theories regarding the influence of power position on behaviour may need to be reinterpreted. The study did not confirm that higher agency depends on the position in the organisational hierarchy. Perhaps the theory needs to be developed to include additional variables such as: motivation and individual differences in leadership attitudes, hierarchy level, type of organisation, age of the leader. It is possible that leaders in different contexts may demonstrate different levels of agency and communion. This can suggest



that power is not associated with a universal effect of agency or communion but may be shaped by a range of contextual and personal factors.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the integration of extreme forms of agency and communion in the context of team management and organisational psychology. This study revealed that the construct of unmitigated communion manifests itself in the interactions between leaders and team members and in organisations operating in different sectors.

The knowledge that the construct of unmitigated communion occurs both in the leader-team member relationship and in organisations depending on their type provides possible suggestions for further research that can contribute to the identification of the relationship of unmitigated communion with new team and organisational behaviours and the impact of this construct on employees and organisational leaders.

Future research could focus on how leaders' different leadership styles and personalities affect their levels of unmitigated communion and agency and how these factors affect leadership effectiveness and team performance. It may be also an interesting to explore the impact of different types of organisations and industries on leaders' levels of communality and agency.

### **Practical Implications**

The results presented here reveal the dynamics of different behaviours among members of public and private organisations. The awareness of what factors shape the differences in social functioning allows us to better understand possible processes and changes in the organisation. In addition, the knowledge of how participants in different types of organisations function allow for a better understanding of the organisational phenomena taking place and, as a result, to consciously guide and support the development of those organizations.

The structure of the identified and observed behaviours provides information about the motives of individuals. Isolating the behaviours from the information about people's motives to act in particular ways (whether it is a desire for power, autonomy or a sense of belonging and caring for others) hinders practical management, and thus it is essential to take them into consideration. The research presented explores these contexts and motives. The knowledge of the level of unmitigated communion can be used to motivate people.

It can be said that the awareness of prevailing attitudes makes it possible to make informed use of various management methods and tools in order to perpetuate and change certain organisational phenomena in line with the management strategy adopted.

### **Limitations**

It is also worth noting that the results obtained may depend on how the research was conducted. The methodology, the measurement tools used, the research sample and other factors may affect the results and their interpretation. The fact that the tool did not cover the various factors influencing the behaviour of those in leadership roles, or the fact that the research was guided towards unmitigated agency rather than an agency - may have affected the results. Additionally, the selection of the research sample, the research was conducted among people who wanted to participate in the study, so they had a specific motivation. It could be said that the participants' willingness to participate in the study showed their desire for support and communion. Other results could, perhaps, be obtained by conducting research among company managers in "real-

life conditions” – for instance, in companies. The research sampling scheme and, thus, the motives to participate in the research project can be treated as two of the most important limitations.

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## Appendix

### *Scale to Measure Unmitigated Agency and Communion*

#### **Unmitigated agency**

I focus so much on achieving my tasks that I forget about the rest of the world.  
I pursue my goals regardless of what others think.  
A person is worth as much as he or she has achieved in life.  
I never get overly involved in the problems of others.  
I get angry when someone's problems prevent me from achieving my goals.  
I don't have enough time to take care of other people's problems.  
Relatives resent me for not spending enough time with them.  
When I am working, I don't let others bother me.  
When I concentrate on my work (studies), I don't have enough 'space' to deal with people.  
You have to take care of your professional position first, even if it interferes with your family life in the short term.  
If I set myself a goal, I pursue it, even if my relatives oppose it.

#### **Unmitigated communion**

I always put the needs of others before my own.  
I can only feel happy when others are happy.  
I can't say no when someone asks me for help.  
I feel terrible when I am unable to help someone in need.  
I am not able to satisfy my own needs if this would interfere with the needs of others.  
The greatest pleasure for me is making others happy.  
I give up my own dreams or plans if they conflict with the desires of someone close to me.  
I often go against myself in order not to make others uncomfortable.  
Good relationships with others are more important to me than success.  
I strongly experience the annoyances of others.  
I am more able to care for others than for myself.