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Creative Environments for Sustainability in Organizations Promoting the Education of Vulnerable Groups

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Abstract: Developing creativity in socio-educational organizations facilitates progress towards sustainability, benefiting its professionals and users. The objective of this work is to analyze the creative climate in organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups to promote sustainability through Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). A descriptive–correlational study was conducted with 203 professionals from associations, foundations, and social services councils. The CPPC-17 scale was applied, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, nonparametric tests, and cluster analysis. The results showed that the professionals presented high levels of creative potential. The opportunity to participate in work groups and the freedom to perform tasks favored creativity in the organizations. The main obstacles to creativity were the lack of incentive to take risks and of rewards for creative ideas. The profile of professionals with high levels of creative climate was mainly composed of association workers and those trained in Education, Psychology, and Speech Therapy. Significant differences were obtained in variables related to the organization (e.g., typology) and in personal variables, such as the academic background of the trainers. These findings should be considered to improve the creative climate in these organizations with a view to providing quality, egalitarian, and equitable education.

Keywords: creative climate; organizations; vulnerable groups; social–educational intervention; trainers; quality education; equality; equity



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1. Introduction

Considering that sustainability in organizations implies the “ability to continuously evolve successfully by appropriately integrating social, economic, and environmental dimensions” [1], it is crucial to respond creatively. Creativity is a multidimensional, multi-disciplinary, and complex concept that favors the generation of novel and useful ideas [2]. Creative tools will allow offering innovative solutions that facilitate social transformation to advance and discover new ways to accelerate transitions to sustainability [3,4]. Therefore, the implementation of new ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and points of view will generate new models and paths to favor profitability and growth in organizations [5]. Although perspectives on creativity and sustainability may differ within an organization [6], the promotion of creativity, the development of policies, and the implementation of innovative processes are fundamental aspects to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [7] in areas such as business [8], education [9], or technology [10].

Creative environments represent a dimension of creativity in which creative people act, and creative processes and products are determined [11,12]. Environments, both physical and social, are important for the development of creativity [13]. The concept of a creative climate, as a way to measure creativity in organizations [14], is defined as a set

of “observed and recurrent patterns of behavior, attitudes, and feelings that characterize creative life in the organization” [15] (p. 165). Ekvall’s model, one of the most widely used to explain this concept, points out different factors that could foster the creative climate from the point of view of individuals (e.g., members’ emotional involvement, trust, and openness) and organizations (e.g., freedom granted, time to generate new ideas) [16]. In order to understand the dynamics of creativity in the organizational framework, it is necessary to combine the individual level with the organizational level. The individual level is characterized by novel and appropriate actions of the workers. The organizational level contemplates the operational logic (culture, structure, and processes) that guide the activities carried out in the work environments [17].

Despite the existing difficulties in assessing the creative climate in organizations [18], different evaluation instruments were identified. The instruments reviewed refer to different aspects, especially related to organizational creativity, such as taking risks in tasks [16], work group support [19], or time to develop new and valuable ideas [20]. New versions of some of these instruments have been published with the aim of reducing their length or adapting them to other contexts [21,22].

A systematic review revealed the relevance of creative environments in formal education and their impact on student performance and professional development [23]. In this context, educators have been designated as creative professionals, considering the need for engagement to provide students with opportunities to share knowledge from both the physical world and the world of ideas [24]. In non-formal education, a social context within organizations that allows the design and implementation of original solutions is essential [4]. Creativity has been considered a phenomenon that enhances the motivation for innovation and learning among professionals working in organizations [6]. Therefore, a favorable creative climate could facilitate the challenge of change [25] and improve attitudes, motivation, job performance [17], and the longevity of organizations [26]. In addition, the sustainability of organizations will also depend on openness to different ways of thinking, offering new ideas, and developing capabilities to deal with ambiguity when solving problems [27].

In the case of socio-educational organizations aimed at intervening with vulnerable groups, with characteristics that put them at risk of needing assistance or of being excluded [28], training and guidance for seeking jobs and a home, and economic or legal support are offered [29]. In these organizations, sustainability is also fundamental [30,31], which must be strengthened by improving inclusion and equity from the formative process. This is in line with SDG 4 (which focuses on the development of Quality Education), SDG 5 (to contribute to Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (referring to Reducing Inequalities) [32]. For such purposes, a favorable creative climate could positively impact professionals’ work and users’ empowerment [33], problem solving processes [34], communication [35], participation, and socialization [36]. Thus, it is essential to design and implement effective, sustainable [37], and innovative [38] educational intervention strategies in training processes with vulnerable groups.

In recent years, there has been an increase in research on the creative climate in business environments [39–41]. However, employee creativity in organizations, which could produce lasting competitive advantages, has not received much attention [42]. In research on the evaluation of the perception of the creative climate, a need has been detected to characterize professionals from different occupations and demographic groups [11], as well as to compare the creative climate scores of various typologies of organizations [43]. In organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups, the studies identified on creativity are scarce. In the context of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), one study highlighted the need to motivate and encourage professionals to be creative, with the management offering the freedom to make decisions [44]. Another study concluded the need for creative professionalism in fundraising [45]. A correlation was also found between professionals’ psychological empowerment and creative performance through the mediating effect of job satisfaction [46]. Likewise, educators in NGOs provided better care and learning

opportunities for users by applying creative strategies for the spatial organization of the classroom, such as arranging students' desks in groups instead of rows [47]. In nursing homes, learning orientation, risk-taking, and job satisfaction had a positive impact on innovation [48]. Regarding sustainability in NGOs, it has been considered a key aspect that interventions are sustainable to empower individuals and communities, although this aspect involves challenges [31].

Considering the benefits derived from creative environments to promote sustainability, this study will contribute to the literature on the topic by providing information on the creative climate in organizations working with vulnerable groups. The professional trainers' vision of the organizations' characteristics directly impacts their creative performance and behaviors [49]. Since there is a great demand for creative approaches to sustainable development [50], the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of organizations in terms of creativity will also make it possible to guide actions that have a positive impact on organizational competitiveness [51], on employee performance (e.g., completing work assignments on time) [52], and their well-being [53]. In addition, creative practices could contribute to reducing the social exclusion and inequalities (SDG 10) of vulnerable people [54], and promote gender equality (SDG 5). This would further facilitate quality education (SDG 4). The reinforcement of the training process (SDGs 4 and 5) was addressed by some NGOs with a project-based learning (PBL) experience to promote sustainability competencies [9]. Aligned with SDG 10, it was developed in a project for junior researchers to detect and resolve social inequalities in a rural context in India [30].

This work is framed in the European project Worldplaces—Workplaces Working for Women's Integration (GAP-101038328), whose mission is to design, implement, and evaluate tools supported by creative methodologies for socio-educational intervention with vulnerable groups, specifically vulnerable migrant women in Spain, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Germany, Portugal, and Italy.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the creative climate in socio-educational organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups to promote sustainability through Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). The following Specific Objectives (SOs) have been established:

- Determine the professionals' creative potential as a function of personal and organizational variables (SO 1).
- Identify factors that favor or impede creativity in these organizations as a function of personal and organizational variables (SO 2).
- Characterize professionals' profiles as a function of aspects of the creative climate, considering personal and organizational variables (SO 3).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design and Participants

A non-experimental, descriptive correlational, cross-sectional, quantitative study was conducted using the survey method. A total of 203 professionals participated in this research (165 women, 36 men, and 2 people with non-binary gender). Their mean age was 42.92 years old (SD = 10.86). They were trained in different fields: Education (36.50%), Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources (36.50%), Psychology and Speech Therapy (11.8%), Business (9.90%), Law (2.50%), Communication and Information (1%), Sociology (1%), Industrial, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (0.50%), Hispanic, Classical and Ancient World Philologies (0.50%).

The professional trainers worked in various Spanish associations (53.70%), foundations (20.70%), and social services councils (25.60%). These organizations focus on socio-educational intervention with vulnerable groups, specifically migrants, refugees, vulnerable women, people with disabilities, older dependents, and vulnerable minors. The mean months of work experience of the participants in the organizations were 140.67 (about 12 years) (SD = 123.67), and they performed psycho-socio-educational (44.80%), managerial (30%), and administrative (25.20%) functions.

2.2. Instrument, Procedure, and Data Collection

The Creative Potential and Practiced Creativity Scale (CPPC-17), a previously validated version adapted to the Spanish population [22], was applied. It is based on a trifactorial model [55] and has been used in other studies [56,57]. This instrument has been selected due to its brevity (17 items) and its adaptation to the Spanish context. Also, it contains aspects related to individual creative capacities, as well as to the creative process, which are associated with sustainable development [50].

The CPPC-17 evaluates three aspects related to the creative climate in organizations: creative potential (Dimension 1), referring to professionals' creative self-efficacy [58], their talent or experience performing the job, their ability to take risks by trying new ideas, and solving problems creatively; practiced creativity (Dimension 2), describing the workplace opportunities to use experience, skills, creative abilities, and come up with ideas for improvement [59]; and organizational support (Dimension 3), related to items from the KEYS survey: Assessing the Climate for Creativity [19], which refer to the recognition, encouragement, and rewarding of creative ideas in the organization.

The CPPC-17 is composed of 17 items. In Dimension 1, the instrument presents 6 items on creative potential (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to solve problems creatively"), Dimension 2 includes 5 items on practiced creativity (e.g., "At work I have the opportunity to use my skills and creative abilities"), and Dimension 3 presents 6 items related to organizational support (e.g., "Innovative and creative ideas are rewarded in my work"). The degree of agreement with each item is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A list of possible addressees was drawn up to apply the CPPC-17 to professionals of Spanish socio-educational organizations aimed at intervening with vulnerable groups. Subsequently, a random sample of 500 employees was selected, considering as inclusion criteria their intervention with vulnerable groups (immigrants, refugees, vulnerable women, people with disabilities, dependent elderly, and vulnerable minors) in the Spanish context. The organizations were contacted by e-mail, and the questionnaire and information about the project were sent to the addresses included on their web pages. Also, a brief explanation of the data to be collected was specified, inviting all the organization's professionals to participate. All responses to the questionnaire ($n = 203$) were used. It was not necessary to discard any participant's response.

The questionnaire was sent to the participants to be filled out using Google Forms. It contained the study's objective, the guarantee of anonymity, and informed consent. The first part of the questionnaire requested the profile data of the professional taking the survey (gender, age, academic background associated with the job, number of months of experience in the organization, position/category within the organization, and functions performed) and data on their organization (Spanish region where it was located, type of organization, and vulnerable groups with which they intervened); the second part presented the 17 items that participants rated from 1 to 5.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires were introduced into the Excel program for systematization and analysis using SPSS.24 software. First, the results were tested for normal distribution using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistic. As the data did not have a normal distribution in any of the scores ($p = 0.00$), a nonparametric test was applied.

The variables analyzed were classified according to personal and organizational aspects, in line with SDGs 4, 5, and 10. The personal variables analyzed were gender, in line with SDG 5 (male, female, or non-binary), based on the raw scores obtained in the questionnaires; age, related to SDG 10 (19 to 35 years old, 36 to 49 years old, or 50 to 66 years old), based on the frequency distribution of the variable and considering the percentage accumulated in the data obtained; and academic background, related to SDG 4 (Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources; or Law and Business), according to the areas of knowledge of the Spanish

educational legislation [60]. As for the variables related to the organization, they are all related to SDG 10, and they were type of organization (association, foundation, or social services council), according to the Spanish classification proposed concerning organizations in the Third Sector of Social Action (associations and foundations) [61], adding the social services councils [29]; experience in the organization (1 to 30 months/up to 2.5 years, 31 to 228 months/2.5 to 19 years, or 229 to 444 months/19 to 37 years), based on the frequency distribution of the variable age and considering the percentage accumulated in the data obtained; and functions (psycho-socio-educational intervention, management or administration), elaborated from the raw scores obtained in the questionnaires.

A two-factor factor analysis distributed the items into two distinct parts (Figure 1), to respond to Specific Objective 1 (SO 1) and Specific Objective 2 (SO 2). In line with the study of creativity in organizations [16,17], this analysis showed how the creative climate is influenced by the individual (Dimension 1) and organizational (Dimensions 2 and 3) levels.

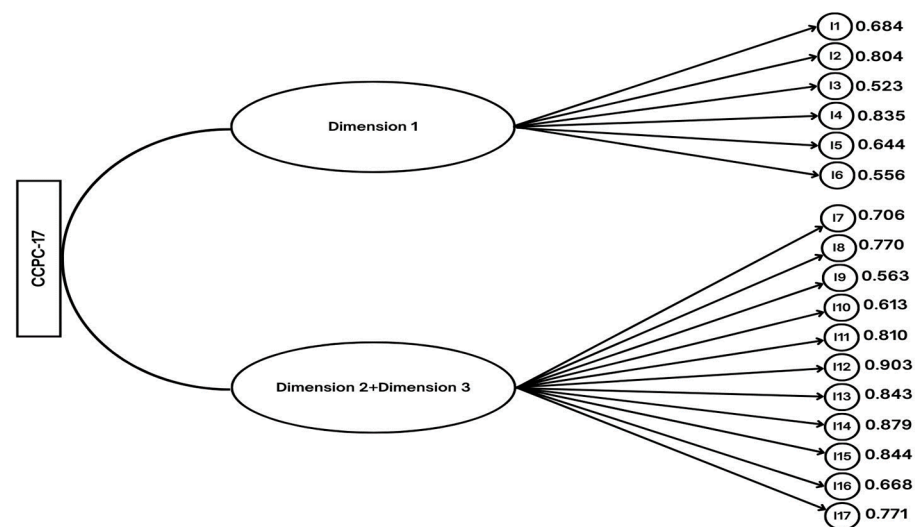


Figure 1. Factor analysis of the CCPC-17 items.

To determine the professionals' creative potential as a function of the personal and organizational variables (SO 1), descriptive statistics were calculated (mean and standard deviation) for the scores in the items of Dimension 1 (Items 1 to 6, Σ of the scores obtained in each item \div number of participants ($n = 203$); maximum score for each item = 5 points). Also, the mean score in this dimension was calculated (Σ of the scores obtained in Items 1 to 6 \div number of participants ($n = 203$); maximum score = 30 points). We applied the Kruskal–Wallis test to analyze the items according to the indicated personal and organizational variables (gender, age, academic background, type of organization, experience, and functions).

To identify factors that could favor or impede creativity in organizations as a function of the different variables (SO 2), we calculated descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for the scores of the items comprising Dimensions 2 and 3 (Items 7 to 17, Σ of the scores obtained in each item \div number of participants ($n = 203$); maximum score for each item = 5 points). In this case, we did not calculate the mean score of the dimensions because the objective was to analyze the factors associated with each item (e.g., "I have the opportunity to participate in work teams;" "In my organization, creative work is recognized;" "In my organization, people are encouraged to take risks"). We applied the Kruskal–Wallis test to analyze the item scores according to the personal and organizational variables (gender, age, academic background, type of organization, experience, and functions).

To characterize professionals' profiles as a function of aspects of the creative climate (SO 3), we conducted a cluster analysis considering the total scores (Σ of the scores obtained in Items 1 to 17; maximum score = 85 points). This resulted in two groups as a function

of the scores obtained (higher and lower). For each cluster, we calculated the percentage encompassing the respective classifications of the variables. We used the chi-square test with a significance level of less than 0.05 to analyze the existence of significant differences in the distribution of the variables for each cluster.

3. Results

The results obtained fulfill the objectives previously established concerning professionals' creative potential, factors that favor or impede the implementation of creativity, and professionals' creative profiles to promote sustainability, mainly aligned with SDGs 4, 5, and 10. As mentioned above, the results are presented according to personal variables (gender, age, and academic training) and variables related to the organization (type of organization, functions performed, and months of experience).

3.1. Professionals' Creative Potential (SO 1)

The results yielded a mean score in professionals' creative potential (Items 1 to 6) of 23.27/30 points (SD = 3.27). The participants' scores for each item were close to 4 points, as shown by the trends (Figure 2). The items with higher mean scores in creative potential were "I have the talent and skills to do my job well" (I5; M = 4.10, SD = 0.70) and "I feel comfortable trying new ideas" (I6; M = 4.05, SD = 0.74). In contrast, the items that obtained a lower mean score were "I think I am good at generating innovative ideas" (I1; M = 3.64, SD = 0.75) and "I have the ability to further develop the ideas of others" (I3; M = 3.68, SD = 0.76).

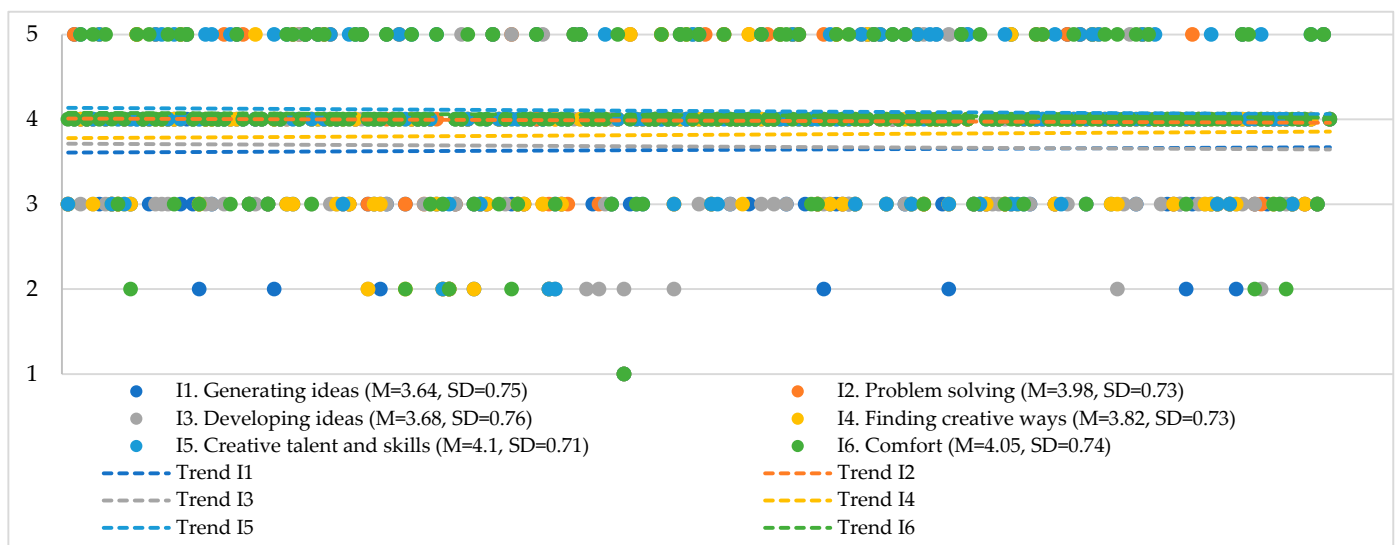


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics on creative potential (Items 1–6). Note: Each colored circle represents the response of the respective participants ($n = 203$).

The analysis of the scores (Items 1 to 6) according to personal variables (gender, age, academic background), related to SDGs 4, 5, and 10, did not show significant differences. However, the variables related to the organization (typology, experience, and function), associated with SDG 10, revealed significant differences in the function performed by the professionals (psycho-socio-educational intervention, management, or administration) and the type of organization (association, foundation, or social services council) in two items (Table 1). The differences in the function performed were obtained in Item 2 ("I am confident about my ability to solve problems creatively"). Management (M = 4.10, SD = 0.75) and administrative staff achieved higher mean scores (M = 4.10, SD = 0.73) than professionals in the psycho-socio-educational field (M = 3.84, SD = 0.70). Concerning organizational typology, significant differences were obtained in Item 5 ("I have the talent and skills to

do my job well”), in favor of professionals from foundations (M = 4.24, SD = 0.73) and associations (M = 4.16, SD = 0.65) versus the social services council (M = 3.86, SD = 0.74).

Table 1. Kruskal–Wallis test on several variables and creative potential.

Item	Gender	Age	Academic background	Organization	Experience	Function
1. Generating ideas	159	536	871	391	577	140
2. Problem solving	559	628	660	112	827	23 *
3. Developing ideas	300	260	796	292	765	737
4. Finding creative ways	140	909	471	287	771	197
5. Creative talent and skills	683	84	617	21 *	95	167
6. Comfort	234	560	489	86	584	920

Note: Gender: male, female, or non-binary; Age: 19–35 years old, 36–49 years old, or 50–66 years old; Academic background: Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources; or Law and Business; Organization: association, foundation, or social services council; Experience: 1–30 months/up to 2.5 years, 31–228 months/2.5–19 years, or 229–444 months/19–37 years; Function: psycho-socio-educational intervention, management, or administration. * The significance level is $p < 0.05$.

3.2. Factors Favoring or Hindering Creativity in Organizations (SO 2)

The scores obtained (Items 7 to 17) yielded factors that favor/hinder organizational creativity (Figure 3). The highest mean scores were obtained in “I have the opportunity to participate in work teams” (I9; M = 4.24, SD = 0.92) and “I am free to decide how to carry out my tasks” (I10; M = 4, SD = 0.99). The items with a lower mean score were those corresponding to: “In my organization, people are encouraged to take risks” (I16; M = 3.09, SD = 1.09) and “Innovative and creative ideas are rewarded in my job” (I17; M = 3.01, SD = 1.07).

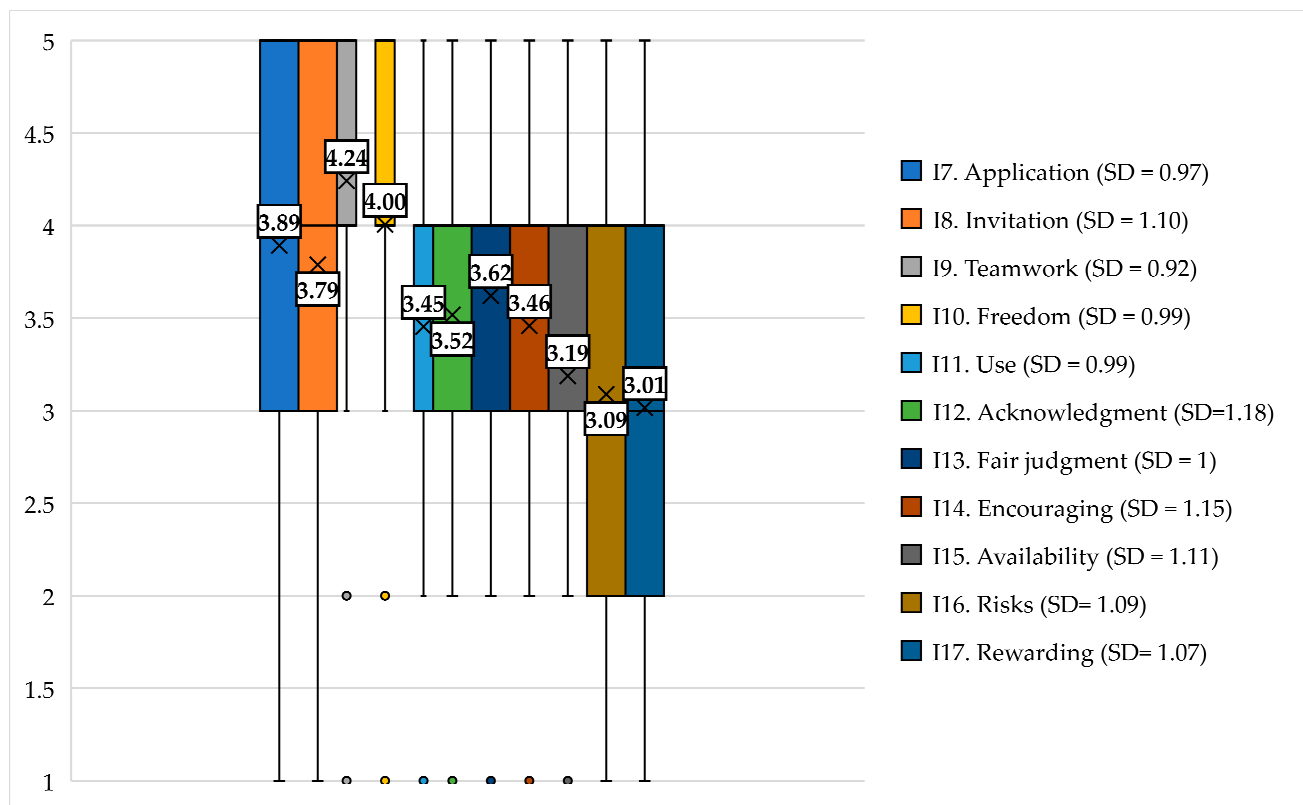


Figure 3. Descriptive statistics from factors that favor/hinder creativity (Items 7–17). Note: The ranges of the respective items are represented in the colors shown in the figure.

The analysis of Items 7 to 17, according to the personal and organizational variables under study, revealed significant differences in the type of organization (association, foundation, or social services council), experience in the organization (1–30 months/up to 2.5 years, 31–228 months/2.5–19 years, or 229–444 months/19–37 years), and age (19–35 years old, 36–49 years old, or 50–66 years old), all of them related to SDG 10, and professionals' academic background (Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources; or Law and Business), in line with SDG 4. No significant differences were observed in gender (male, female, or non-binary), according to SDG 5, or function (psycho-socio-educational intervention, management, or administration), associated with SDG 10 (Table 2).

Table 2. Kruskal–Wallis test of factors that favor/hinder creativity.

Item	Gender	Age	Academic background	Organization	Experience	Function
7. Application	586	425	13 *	7 *	355	751
8. Invitation	982	127	3 *	0 *	4 *	92
9. Teamwork	890	12 *	95	0 *	35 *	157
10. Freedom	509	108	6 *	6 *	1 *	149
11. Use	536	523	50	46 *	87	988
12. Acknowledgment	160	370	1 *	1 *	173	219
13. Fair judgment	458	911	1 *	12 *	493	289
14. Encouraging	392	264	13 *	1 *	134	269
15. Availability	884	239	6 *	0 *	204	171
16. Risks	566	341	34 *	0 *	155	774
17. Rewarding	575	263	4 *	9 *	201	106

Note: Gender: male, female, or non-binary; Age: 19–35 years old, 36–49 years old, or 50–66 years old; Academic background: Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources; or Law and Business; Organization: association, foundation, or social services council; Experience: 1–30 months/up to 2.5 years, 31–228 months/2.5–19 years, or 229–444 months/19–37 years; Function: psycho-socio-educational intervention, management, or administration. * The significance level is $p < 0.05$.

Concerning the organization's typology (SDG 10), professionals from foundations and associations scored significantly higher on all the items than personnel from social services councils. Higher values were obtained in Items 9 (association: $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.11$; foundation: $M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.15$; social services council: $M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.15$) and 10 (foundation: $M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.17$; association: $M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.13$; social services council: $M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.17$). In contrast, the most prominent significant differences in the lower scores were obtained in Items 15 ("my organization has good mechanisms in place to encourage and develop creative ideas"; social services councils: $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.18$; associations: $M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.13$; foundations: $M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.18$) and 16 (social services councils: $M = 2.59$, $SD = 2.59$; associations: $M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.12$; foundations: $M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.17$).

Concerning the amount of experience in the organization (SDG 10), significant differences were obtained in three items (Items 8, 9, and 10), with lower mean scores for professionals with more months of experience in the organization: Item 8 ("At work, I am invited to present ideas for improvement"; 229–444 months: $M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.17$; 31–228 months: $M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.13$; 1–30 months: $M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.20$), Item 9 (229–444 months: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.14$; 1–30 months: $M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.17$; 31–228 months: $M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.11$), and Item 10 (229–444 months: $M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.16$; 31–228 months: $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.12$; 1–30 months: $M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.19$).

Regarding age (SDG 10), significant differences were observed in Item 9, with higher mean scores obtained by professionals aged 19–35 ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.16$), compared to professionals aged 36–49 ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.11$) and 50–66 ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.13$).

Regarding academic background (SDG 4), significant differences were obtained in the scores of most of the items (Items 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17). Significantly higher scores were obtained by professionals with training in Law and Business, Education, Psychology, and Speech Therapy. In contrast, significantly lower scores were obtained by professionals with training in Labor Relations, Social Work, and Human Resources. Higher scores were observed in Items 9 (Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy: $M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.12$; Law and Business: 4.25 , $SD = 0.18$; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources: $M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.12$) and 10 (Law and Business: $M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.22$; Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy: $M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.14$; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources: $M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.14$). In contrast, lower scores were obtained in Items 16 (Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources: $M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.12$; Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy: $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.13$; Law and Business: $M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.20$) and 17 (Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources: $M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.15$; Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy: $M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.15$; Law and Business: $M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.24$).

3.3. Professionals' Profiles as a Function of the Creative Climate (SO 3)

Based on the scores obtained for the creative climate scores (Items 1 to 17), two distinct profiles of professionals were identified. Profile 1 (Cluster 1, $n = 153$) obtained significant higher mean scores in creative climate ($M = 67.18$, $SD = 5.86$) than Profile 2 (Cluster 2, $n = 50$) ($M = 48.32$, $SD = 7.68$).

Considering the total scores in creative climate (sum of the scores for Items 1 to 17), Profile 1 and Profile 2 differ significantly in the prevalence of professionals according to the personal aspect of the academic background (Education, Psychology and Speech Therapy; Labor Relations, Social Work and Human Resources; or Law and Business; $\chi^2 = 0.02$), related to SDG 4. Significant differences were also identified in the organizational variable typology (association, foundation, or social services councils; $\chi^2 = 0.00$), associated with SDG 10 (Figure 4).

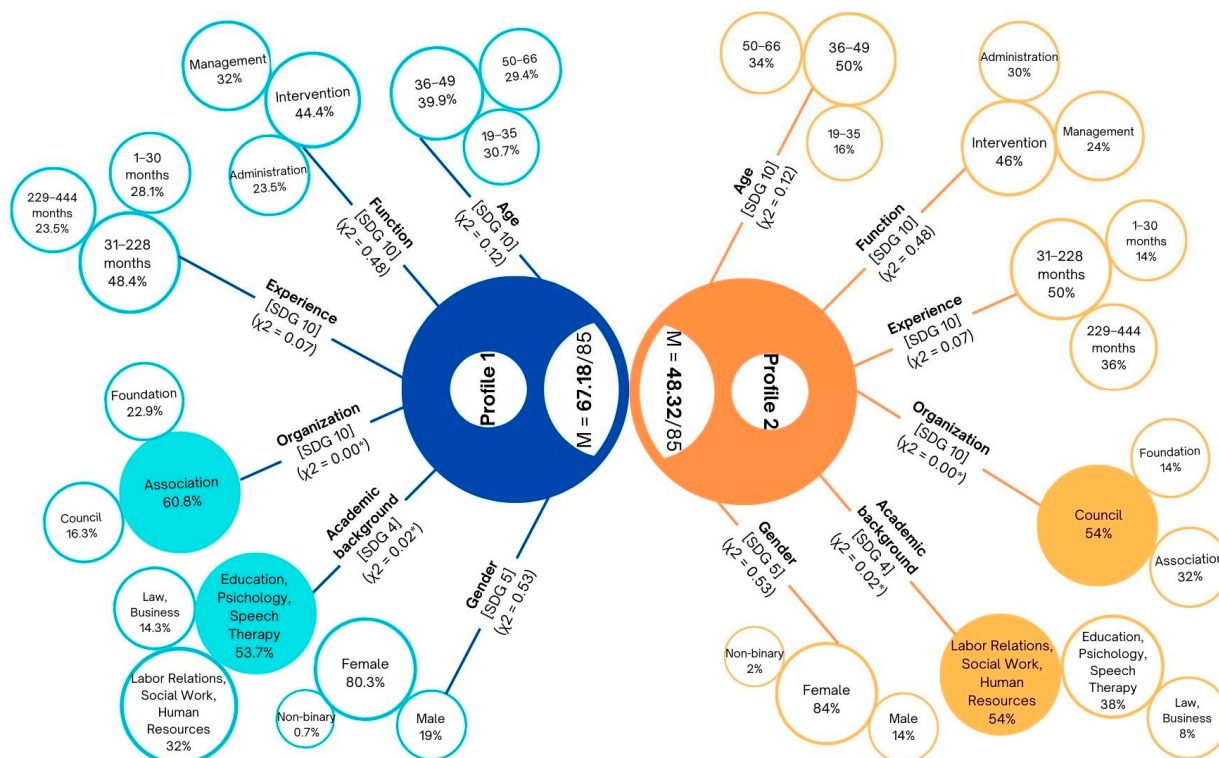


Figure 4. Characterization of the professional profile according to the level of creative climate. Note: * The significance level is $p < 0.05$.

Profile 1 showed a significantly higher prevalence of professionals working in associations. Likewise, there was a prevalence of professionals with an academic background trained in Education, Psychology, and Speech Therapy. For Profile 2, significantly higher prevalences were identified among professionals working in social services councils, as well as in the case of professionals whose academic background was in Labor Relations, Social Work, and Human Resources. No significant differences were identified in the rest of the personal variables, related to SDGs 5 and 10 (gender and age), or those related to the organization (function and months of experience), in line with SDG 10.

Regarding gender (male, female, or non-binary), the participants with higher (Profile 1) and lower (Profile 2) scores in creative climate showed a non-significant distribution ($\chi^2 = 0.53$), with women being the majority group in both profiles. Concerning age (19 to 35 years old, 36 to 49 years old, or 50 to 66 years old) ($\chi^2 = 0.12$), the professionals 50–66 years old were the most represented in both profiles.

In the function variable (psycho-socio-educational intervention, management, or administration) ($\chi^2 = 0.48$), the psycho-socio-educational personnel represented nearly half of the participants in both profiles. Similarly, concerning the months of experience in the organization (1 to 30 months/up to 2.5 years, 31 to 228 months/2.5–19 years, or 229 to 444 months/19 to 37 years) ($\chi^2 = 0.07$), the personnel with 31–228 months (2.5 to 19 years) represented half of the profiles.

4. Discussion

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has called on organizations to implement creative strategies and innovation initiatives to meet sustainable development challenges [62]. Creativity and sustainable development are related in a circular and continuous discourse of concepts and methodology transversal to the 17 SDGs [50]. The SDGs stress the need for the active participation of organizations, appealing to their creativity and innovation to create value for the common good, such as reducing poverty, eradicating hunger, or protecting biodiversity [63]. In particular, as stated, in organizations with socio-educational intervention aimed at vulnerable groups, the development of SDG 4 (to improve the quality of education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 10 (reduction of inequalities) [32] is fundamental.

In the present study, in general, attending to the creative potential of professionals in the organizations, high levels of creative talent, and willingness to try new ideas were detected in the trainers, aligned with SDG 4. Creative self-efficacy, defined as the perception of one's creative abilities, positively impacts professionals' intrinsic motivation and organizations' creativity [58], and is a predictor of work behavior and job performance [49]. In addition, individual employee creativity has multiple benefits, such as seeking and offering support or job satisfaction, considering some detriments (e.g., ostracism among coworkers or stress in newcomers) [64].

Regarding the variables that could influence creative potential, significant differences in two items were identified in the professionals' functions and the type of organization, both variables related to the organization, in line with SDG 10. For one of these items, managers and administrators showed significantly higher confidence in the ability to solve problems creatively. However, a study in the technology sector [6] showed different perspectives on the relationship between creativity and sustainability, since managers focus on large-scale innovations and employees on daily problem solving. All in all, managers should apply tools to develop a work context that enhances employees' creativity [65]. Significant differences were also identified in an item related to talent and creative skills, favoring professionals from the Third Sector of Social Action organizations (associations and foundations), with significantly higher results than those from the public administration (social services councils). However, one study has shown the importance granted to creativity by public employees [66].

Among the factors that could favor creativity in organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups, the opportunity for their professionals to participate in work groups

and the freedom to decide how to carry out tasks were the most decisive aspects. These aspects are in line with the sustainability principles of collaboration, participation, equality, equity, health, education, and democracy [67]. One study [68] argues that team building and conflict management in work environments are fundamental. In work teams, the team climate for creativity will positively influence the team's learning orientation and collective problem solving [64]. Likewise, other factors favoring creative environments are the existence of sufficient resources, having enthusiastic leaders with communication skills [69], the presence of challenging tasks, or the support of the members of the organization [70]. Another study [71] finds significant positive relationships between a flexible management system, motivation for higher achievement, and freedom in using resources that foster a creative climate in organizations.

The present study also revealed some factors that could hinder organizational creativity, such as the low incentive to take risks and the absence of rewards for creative ideas. Other aspects that may hamper creative performance in organizations are the workload pressure [19], the available time [72], the existence of a rigid and authoritarian organizational culture and structure [70], criticism and rejection of creative ideas [53], or physical environments characterized by noise, high temperatures, or lack of space [73].

The organizational typology and academic background stand out among the influenced variables for the identification of factors that favor or hinder organizational creativity. To a lesser extent, the results could also depend on personal and organizational factors, such as professionals' experience in the organization or their age, in line with SDG 10. Other authors [43] identified age as a factor that could influence the levels of creativity in organizations. In addition, they identified other variables such as the institution's size, its competitiveness in the external environment, centralization, or leadership style.

The professionals' profile concerning the creative climate showed significant differences in the variables type of organization (associated with SDG 10) and the professionals' academic background (in line with SDG 4). No significant differences were identified in personal variables such as gender (SDG 5) or the age of the trainers (SDG 10). In terms of organizational variables, such as months of experience or functions performed (SDG 10), no significant differences were identified either. Depending on the type of organization, professionals from associations make up a majority in the profile of high scores in creative climate, whereas professionals from the public sector (social services councils) were the least represented. In this line, administration managers in the United States perceived the inferiority of professionals' creativity in the public sector [74]. Another study showed that NGO educators applied more creative classroom management strategies than government educators [47]. Along the lines of some authors [69,75], there is a need in academic background for social workers with critical thinking to produce creative solutions contributing to social development. In the profile with higher scores, the majority representation of professionals in Education, Psychology, and Speech Therapy is noteworthy. In this sense, another study [76] points out the relevance of creativity in the training of education professionals. Finally, distinct daily workplace experience profiles in relation to creative climate indicators (e.g., freedom, challenging work, work group support) were also identified [49].

5. Conclusions

In general terms, professionals in socio-educational organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups have a high creative potential. In addition, according to the variables analyzed, it is impossible to support the influence on the creative potential in terms of gender (SDG 5), academic background (SDG 4), age, type of organization, experience in the organization, or the functions performed by the professionals (SDG 10). This reinforces and fosters the course towards quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5).

According to factors favoring or hindering creativity in these organizations, teamwork and the possibility of professionals' freedom to develop creative practices with vulnerable groups favor organizational creativity, but the scarce assumption of risks and the absence of rewards for creative ideas hinder creativity. Furthermore, discrepancies in terms of personal

variables (academic training of professionals and age) and those related to the organization (type of organization and experience in the institution) were found. These aspects should be considered when improving the creative climate to strengthen the contribution to the sustainability of these organizations, especially to reduce inequalities (SDG 10).

The professional profiles identified, in terms of the creative climate, show that the most influential variables were associated with the type of organization (SDG 10) and the trainer's academic background (SDG 4). However, it should be positively noted that there were no significant differences in terms of variables that could increase the gender gap (in line with SDG 5) or inequalities in the organization (SDG 10), which should be considered by promoting quality, egalitarian, and equitable education, to ensure sustainability in socio-educative organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups.

6. Limitations and Prospects

A limitation of this study is that the data were collected in a single country, so the results and conclusions obtained could vary when analyzing the creative climate in other contexts. We analyzed the responses provided by professionals of associations, foundations, and social services councils, excluding other educational institutions that promote the training of vulnerable groups, such as schools.

A complementary perspective to this study could be the application of instruments that provide qualitative data (e.g., interviews, discussion groups), as well as the analysis of the viewpoints of other participants involved in the creative process, such as vulnerable groups. Furthermore, although personal and organizational variables aligned with SDGs 4, 5, and 10 were considered, future lines of research could focus on analyzing the creative practices of trainers and evaluate the sustainability of organizations that intervene with vulnerable groups [77].

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