

Abstract

The Council for Social Work Education lists the ability to "tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts" as one of the educational policy outcomes for undergraduate social work programs (2015, p. 4). However, there are currently little to no existing statistics regarding how well social work students or social workers in general can tolerate ambiguity while working through ethical dilemmas. This study will examine the correlations between attachment style, personality qualities and the ability to tolerate ambiguity in the context of a social work ethics class. Attachment styles in close relationships are often correlated with how people handle other life circumstances such as decision-making. The Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) will assess the participants' attachment styles. The Multiple Stimulus Types Ambiguity Tolerance Scale-II (MSTAT-II) will measure the participants' ability to tolerate ambiguity. The researchers will use the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) personality inventory to measure specific personality qualities such as openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Then they will analyze the data for correlations between student attachment styles, personality qualities and tolerance for ambiguity. The researchers hypothesize that students with secure attachment styles will score higher on the ambiguity tolerance scale and that those with insecure attachment styles score lower on the ambiguity tolerance scale. In addition, the researchers expect that specific personality qualities will correlate to varied scores on the ambiguity tolerance scale. This research would provide valuable insight for social work educators because they would be aware of the potential risk factors and protective factors that students may have coming into their social work education and specifically, an ethics class. They would then be able to create learning environments that support students who are more at-risk in the area of tolerating ambiguity.