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PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-MANAGEMENT AMONG REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIOECONOMIC PROFESSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract

The article examines the psychological characteristics of self-control and self-management among representatives of socio-economic professions in the context of intolerance of uncertainty. Based on an analysis of contemporary scientific approaches, the concept of intolerance of uncertainty is defined. The content of self-control, self-regulation, self-monitoring, and self-management under conditions of uncertainty is clarified. An empirical research programme was developed. The sample comprised 63 representatives of socio-economic professions -psychologists and educators aged 29 to 56 years. Groups with high and low levels of intolerance of uncertainty were identified within the overall sample. A qualitative descriptive-comparative analysis of self-control and self-management was conducted in the contrasting groups of socio-economic professionals with high (High-IU) and low (Low-IU) levels

of intolerance of uncertainty. The Low-IU group was characterised by the ability to monitor their internal states, behaviour, and ongoing activity; realistically evaluate their capabilities and performance outcomes; and adapt behavioural strategies to current circumstances. These professionals also demonstrated a more flexible attitude towards uncertain situations and a lower tendency to experience disorganisation in response to change. In the High-IU group, less developed self-monitoring may hinder the maintenance of professional organisation in ambiguous situations. These professionals may perceive conditions of uncertainty as more threatening, potentially complicating decision-making and reducing confidence in their ability to control the course of events.

Keywords: tolerance; intolerance of uncertainty; self-control; self-management; self-monitoring; self-evaluation; self-regulation; socioeconomic professionals; interpersonal interaction; psychological characteristics; personality.

Introduction. Contemporary society is characterised by considerable instability, rapidly changing social processes, and a growing number of situations involving prolonged uncertainty. The full-scale war in Ukraine, socioeconomic transformations, forced changes in lifestyle, information overload, and unstable professional and life prospects have had a profound effect on psychological functioning. Prolonged uncertainty is no longer a short-term crisis factor; it has become an enduring psychological context of everyday life that requires individuals to mobilise internal resources and reconsider their mechanisms of adaptation.

The problem of uncertainty has become particularly salient in Ukrainian society since the beginning of the full-scale war. A substantial proportion of the population lives under chronic stress related to threats to life, forced displacement, the disruption of established life plans, the loss of social ties, and the need to adapt to new realities. Uncertainty about the future has become an integral part of everyday life for many people, prompting growing scholarly interest in the psychological mechanisms that support adaptation under such conditions.

Particular attention should be paid to representatives of socioeconomic professions, especially psychologists and educators, whose work is grounded in continuous interpersonal interaction and entails responsibility for supporting the psychological well-being and development of others. In wartime, these professionals are not only personally exposed to prolonged stress and uncertainty but also work with people experiencing traumatic events, loss, forced displacement, emotional instability, and adaptation difficulties. This increases their psychological workload and places greater demands on their ability to maintain

emotional balance, regulate their own responses, preserve professional organisation, and make well-grounded decisions in the absence of complete and unambiguous information.

Professional situations in the socio-economic sphere are often characterised by the unpredictability of other people's behaviour, ambiguous outcomes of interaction, the need to revise previous decisions quickly, and the necessity of combining professional standards with an individualised approach to each participant. Under such conditions, intolerance of uncertainty may intensify anxiety, rigidity in professional attitudes, excessive attempts to control the situation, or avoidance of difficult decisions. By contrast, well-developed self-control and self-management skills help professionals monitor their internal states and behaviour, evaluate the effectiveness of their actions, modify interaction strategies in a timely manner, and sustain goal-directed activity.

Accordingly, examining self-control and self-management among representatives of socio-economic professions in the context of intolerance of uncertainty has both theoretical and applied significance. Comparing self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement among psychologists and educators with different levels of intolerance of uncertainty can clarify which components of self-management may be particularly vulnerable, or conversely may function as resources, in complex and changing conditions of professional interaction.

Research problem. In psychological science, uncertainty is viewed both as an objective characteristic of a situation and as a subjectively constructed experience. Its objective dimension is defined by insufficient, ambiguous, or contradictory information, multiple possible outcomes, and the impossibility of fully predicting how events will unfold. Its subjective dimension reflects how an individual evaluates the lack of certainty, the extent to which it is perceived as threatening, and the person's capacity to continue goal-directed activity without complete knowledge of the future. Therefore, identical external conditions may elicit very different reactions, ranging from the mobilisation of cognitive activity to anxiety, avoidance, or behavioural inhibition.

The construct of intolerance of uncertainty emerged within cognitive models of anxiety. Early definitions encompassed negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions to the unknown. Birrell, Meares, Wilkinson, and Freeston demonstrated in their review of factor-analytic studies that the construct extends beyond worry and combines a need for predictability, negative appraisals of uncertainty, and a tendency towards cognitive or behavioural inhibition [9]. Carleton further specified intolerance of uncertainty as a dispositional incapacity to endure an aversive response triggered by the perceived absence of

salient information [10]. From this perspective, its core is not objective danger itself, but the experience of the unknown as unacceptable.

At the same time, tolerance and intolerance of uncertainty should not be treated mechanically as fully interchangeable poles of a single continuum. Tolerance describes a readiness to engage with novelty, complexity, and multiple possibilities, whereas intolerance primarily concerns rejection of the unknown and anxiety about possible future events [3, 9]. The disruptive role of uncertainty is explained in Grupe and Nitschke's integrated model of uncertainty and anticipation in anxiety. The authors identify five interrelated processes: inflated estimates of the probability and cost of potential threat, heightened attention to threat cues and hypervigilance, deficient safety learning, cognitive and behavioural avoidance, and increased reactivity to unpredictability [11]. This configuration explains why seeking maximum certainty does not necessarily restore control: substantial resources may be diverted towards repeated checking, reassurance seeking, and anticipatory modelling of danger rather than towards the task at hand.

Contemporary research conceptualises intolerance of uncertainty as a transdiagnostic psychological construct. A meta-analysis by McEvoy and colleagues demonstrated robust associations with various forms of emotional distress, although the magnitude of these associations depends on the measures and methodology used [12]. Its transdiagnostic status does not imply that high intolerance of uncertainty is evidence of a specific disorder; rather, it represents a broad vulnerability mechanism that may sustain worry, avoidance, rumination, and decision-making difficulties in both clinical and non-clinical samples.

One of the most consistently established lines of research concerns the relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and emotion regulation. Ouellet and colleagues proposed an integrative model in which intolerance of uncertainty and limited access to effective regulation strategies mutually sustain prolonged worry [13]. A meta-analytic and systematic review by Sahib, Chen, Cárdenas, and Caele, which synthesised 91 studies, found a moderate positive association between intolerance of uncertainty and maladaptive regulation strategies and an inverse association with adaptive strategies [14]. Thus, difficulties in the face of the unknown may involve not only the intensity of emotional responses but also the capacity to recognise them in a timely manner, reappraise the situation, and select an appropriate course of action.

Ukrainian studies extend these findings by considering traumatic and wartime contexts. Hromova found that greater intolerance of uncertainty among military personnel was associated with a less balanced time-perspective profile, including stronger orientations

towards a negative past and a fatalistic present [15]. In a study of adults, Yatsiuk and Savyshen linked intolerance of uncertainty with exaggerated threat appraisals, pessimistic expectations regarding one's capacity for self-regulation, catastrophising, anxiety, and stereotyped thinking [16]. These findings indicate that during wartime uncertainty acquires not only informational but also existential meaning because it concerns safety, the future, and the perceived capacity to influence one's own life.

The theoretical basis for studying self-control is the conception of self-regulation as a cyclical feedback process. In Bandura's social cognitive theory, behaviour is regulated through self-observation, comparison of outcomes with personal standards, and self-reactions [1]. Kanfer and Karoly similarly viewed self-control as a sequence of self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement [17]. Mezo operationalised this model in the SCMS, shifting the emphasis from an abstract notion of willpower to specific skills that individuals can activate while pursuing goals [4, 5].

Within this model, self-monitoring provides information about one's internal state, behaviour, and progress towards a goal. Without sufficient monitoring, an individual may fail to notice when a chosen strategy no longer fits the situation. Self-evaluation involves comparing outcomes with relevant criteria, while its adaptiveness depends not only on the existence of standards but also on their flexibility. Self-reinforcement encompasses the ways in which activity is maintained or modified through positive and aversive self-reinforcement. These components are therefore not isolated traits: the outcome of each preceding stage provides information for the next, whereas the SCMS total score reflects the coherence of the complete self-regulatory cycle [4, 6].

Several psychological mechanisms may explain the relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and self-management. First, attentional focus on potential threats reduces the resources available for monitoring ongoing activity. Second, the need for an error-free prediction makes self-evaluation criteria more rigid and may lead individuals to discount intermediate achievements. Third, an inhibitory response to the unknown complicates the transition from analysis to action and weakens self-reinforcement. Conversely, stronger self-control may support the maintenance of an extended time perspective and action in accordance with long-term goals even when the outcome is not guaranteed [7].

Previous empirical research indicates that intolerance of uncertainty may be accompanied by reduced self-control through a constricted future time perspective [7] and, under prolonged demands, by self-regulatory fatigue and depletion of cognitive resources [8]. However, most studies have focused on anxiety, emotional dysregulation, burnout, or

psychopathological symptoms, while the structure of self-management as conceptualised in the SCMS has received considerably less attention. In particular, little is known about the configuration of its components among representatives of socio-economic professions, for whom self-regulation is an important condition of professional interaction. This gap defines the focus of the present empirical study.

Thus, the research problem was to determine how self-control and self-management differ between representatives of socio-economic professions with high and low levels of intolerance of uncertainty. Addressing this question makes it possible to identify more precisely which processes—monitoring one's own activity, evaluating outcomes, or self-reinforcement—appear most vulnerable when intolerance of uncertainty is pronounced.

Aim of the study. The study aimed to conduct a qualitative descriptive-comparative analysis of self-control and self-management among representatives of socio-economic professions with high and low levels of intolerance of uncertainty and to determine the expression of self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, and the SCMS total score in the contrasting groups.

Research hypothesis. It was expected that the self-control and self-management patterns of representatives of socio-economic professions with high and low levels of intolerance of uncertainty would differ qualitatively. Specifically, the low-intolerance group was expected to demonstrate higher self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, and overall self-control and self-management.

Methods and instruments. The empirical study was conducted at International University. The sample comprised 63 representatives of socio-economic professions – psychologists and educators aged 29 to 56 years. The professional specificity of the sample lies in the fact that their work involves intensive interpersonal interaction, emotional engagement, and decision-making in ambiguous situations. Participation was voluntary and based on confidentiality and informed consent. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the conditions of participation, and the anonymity of the collected data. The survey was administered online using Google Forms.

Two complementary psychodiagnostic instruments were used: the IUS-12 to assess the overall level and two dimensions of intolerance of uncertainty, and the SCMS to evaluate successive components of self-management. This combination made it possible to compare the way uncertainty is experienced with the configuration of skills involved in monitoring, evaluating, and sustaining one's own activity.

Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS-12) by R. N. Carleton (Ukrainian adaptation by H. M. Hromova) [3]. The IUS-12 was used to assess experiences of prolonged uncertainty. It is a shortened version of the original scale developed by M. Freeston and colleagues and is a contemporary instrument for measuring intolerance of uncertainty as a transdiagnostic psychological construct associated with anxiety, distress, and maladaptive responses to stressful situations.

The two-factor structure of the IUS-12 provides a more specific account of these mechanisms. Prospective IU reflects the cognitive need to know what will happen, the desire to avoid unexpected events, and excessive planning. Inhibitory IU refers to the paralysing effect of uncertainty, difficulty initiating action, and a tendency to postpone decisions. The Ukrainian adaptation supported a bifactor interpretation in which the general intolerance of uncertainty score is considered alongside the specific subscales [3]. This distinction is particularly important for the present study because cognitive anticipation of threat and behavioural-emotional inhibition may relate differently to the components of self-management.

The full 16-item Self-Control and Self-Management Scale (SCMS) by P. G. Mezo, in the Ukrainian adaptation by O. V. Savchenko and D. H. Lavrynenko, uses response options ranging from 0 ("very undescriptive of me") to 5 ("very descriptive of me"). The instrument comprises the Self-Monitoring, Self-Evaluating, and Self-Reinforcing subscales, together with a total self-control and self-management score. Higher scores indicate more developed self-regulatory skills [4; 6].

For the qualitative descriptive-comparative analysis, participants were assigned to contrasting groups according to their overall intolerance of uncertainty. IUS-12 raw scores were converted to percentile scores, providing a common basis for identifying the extreme intervals. SCMS scores were likewise expressed as percentiles for the construction and comparison of group patterns. The analysis compared the overall level, peaks and relative reductions, within-pattern relationships, and the most pronounced between-group differences.

The extreme percentile intervals were used to distinguish a high-intolerance group (75th–100th percentiles; High IU, $n = 23$) and a low-intolerance group (0th–25th percentiles; Low IU, $n = 12$). The contrasting-group analysis therefore included 35 participants; the results of 28 participants with intermediate scores were not used to construct the group patterns. Because no inferential test of between-group differences was performed, the observed differences were interpreted as descriptive tendencies rather than statistically significant effects. The results are presented in Figure 1.

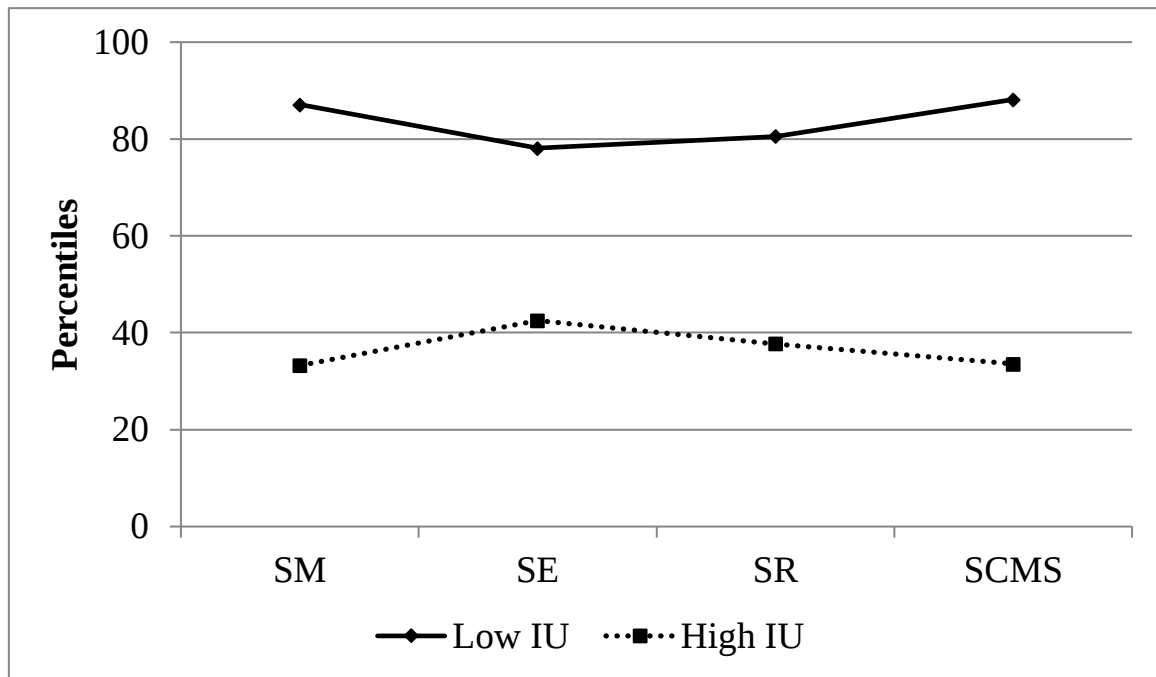


Figure 1. Self-control and self-management among representatives of socioeconomic professions with different levels of intolerance of uncertainty

Notes. SM – Self-Monitoring; SE – Self-Evaluating; SR- Self-Reinforcing; SCMS – total self-control and self-management score. Values are presented as percentiles.

Results and discussion. Visual analysis of Figure 1 showed that the Low-IU group was located in the fourth quartile of the distribution, with component scores ranging from the 78th to the 88th percentile. The highest values were observed for the SCMS total score and Self-Monitoring, while Self-Reinforcing and Self-Evaluating were somewhat lower. This configuration reflects a generally coherent self-management cycle, with a particularly strong capacity to monitor one's internal state, behaviour, and ongoing activity.

In the professional context of psychologists and educators, this pattern may constitute an important resource when working with ambiguous situations. Developed self-monitoring facilitates timely awareness of one's emotional responses and changes in interactions with students, clients, or colleagues, whereas self-evaluation and self-reinforcement support adjustment of professional strategies and maintenance of motivation when outcomes are not guaranteed.

The comparatively lower Self-Evaluating score within the Low-IU pattern remained in the high range. It should therefore be interpreted not as a deficit but as the least pronounced component of an otherwise well-developed system. Overall, this group demonstrated a greater

readiness to preserve internal organisation, analyse intermediate outcomes, and continue goal-directed activity under conditions of professional uncertainty.

The High-IU group was located considerably lower, between the 33rd and 42nd percentiles. Self-Evaluating formed the relative peak of this pattern, followed by Self-Reinforcing, whereas the lowest values were observed for the SCMS total score and Self-Monitoring. This configuration indicates an uneven pattern: the capacity to compare outcomes against established criteria appears relatively more preserved, while monitoring of the current state and coherence of the complete self-management cycle are less developed.

The largest descriptive differences between the groups were observed for the overall level of self-control and self-management and for Self-Monitoring. For representatives of socioeconomic professions, this may indicate particular vulnerability in the component responsible for continuously tracking one's own responses and promptly adjusting behaviour during unpredictable interpersonal interaction. A heightened need for certainty may redirect attention away from the immediate course of contact towards reassurance seeking, anticipation of risk, or avoidance of mistakes.

At the same time, the observed patterns do not justify equating high intolerance of uncertainty with professional incompetence. The SCMS assesses general self-management skills rather than the quality of educational or psychological practice. The observed configuration should therefore be viewed as a potential self-regulatory vulnerability that may become more salient under prolonged stress, insufficient information, and emotionally demanding professional situations.

Conclusions. The qualitative descriptive-comparative analysis revealed distinctly different configurations of self-control and self-management in the contrasting groups of socioeconomic professionals. All SCMS components were located in the high range in the Low-IU group, whereas the High-IU group displayed a considerably lower pattern at the descriptive level. These findings were consistent with the hypothesis; however, because no statistical test was performed, this support remains descriptive.

Self-Monitoring and the SCMS total score were the most pronounced indicators in the Low-IU group. This reflects coherence of the complete self-management cycle and a capacity to observe one's own responses, evaluate intermediate outcomes, and regulate further activity. For psychologists and educators, such a configuration may support flexible responses to unpredictable changes in professional interaction.

The High-IU group displayed an overall lower pattern, with Self-Monitoring and the SCMS total score as its least pronounced indicators. Self-Evaluating was relatively more

preserved. Thus, elevated intolerance of uncertainty may be associated not so much with a complete absence of evaluation criteria as with difficulties in continuously monitoring one's internal state and integrating separate regulatory actions into a coherent cycle.

These tendencies are particularly relevant to socio-economic professions because psychological and educational work requires continuous sensitivity to the changing responses of others, emotional self-regulation, and rapid adjustment of interaction strategies. Less developed self-monitoring under high intolerance of uncertainty may complicate the preservation of professional organisation in ambiguous situations, although it is not in itself an indicator of professional incompetence.

The practical significance of the findings lies in the advisability of incorporating exercises aimed at developing tolerance of uncertainty, reflective self-monitoring, flexible self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement into the professional education, psychological support, and supervision of psychologists and educators. Such interventions may help maintain internal organisation and professional resilience under prolonged wartime and social stress.

The study is limited by the small and unequal sizes of the contrasting groups, the broad age range, the inclusion of psychologists and educators in a single sample, the online data-collection format, and reliance on self-report measures. Future research should statistically test between-group differences, account for professional experience and age, and compare psychologists and educators separately.

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