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## Relationship between personality traits and individual response to conflict situations in adolescents

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**Abstract.** The evaluation and treatment of internalizing disorders in children and adolescents has a long and rich tradition in the psychology and clinical psychiatry of the child. However, the use of longitudinal data to elucidate the evolution and outcome of these conditions, as well as their assessment and treatment, is less developed in the embryonic development stage. However, there have been interesting developments and significant progress has been made. The emergence of the field of developmental psychopathology in the last 10 years (Achenbach, 1982, Cicchetti, 1984; Rutter & Garnezy, 1983; Sroufe & Rutter, 1984), with emphasis on the continuity and discontinuity of the behavior between the embryonic phase, childhood, adolescence, is particularly welcome and timely, providing a good concern for the future. The identification of the dimensions of the personality structure is very important during the adolescence period, because during this period the correct development of the adolescents is based on stimulating several areas in close connection with their activity. A balanced teenager chooses activities that contribute to character development, self-confidence, socializing skills, identifying passions and making decisions. Behavior disorder can be defined as persistent disruptive behavior, in which the young person repeatedly violates the rights of others or the social norms corresponding to the age. It is often preceded by opposition and defiance in the early years and can become more slippery during adolescence. Symptoms include property damage, lying or theft, harassment, breaking rules, and aggression toward humans or animals. Adolescents with behavioral disorders often have concomitant disorders, such as depression, suicidal behavior, and poor relationships with peers and adults. Consequences include school problems, school expulsions, academic and professional failure and problems with the law. Parents and families need support to help ensure that young people do not get away from school, and that severely affected adolescents should turn to mental health professionals for assessment and care.

**Keywords.** relationship, traits, personality, response, conflict, adolescence

### I. Personality traits

Defining the word personality would be a good way to start the chapter that takes into account different theories of personality. However, writing a definition is not that simple. The various responses that people have given to this approach have materialized in history in various cultural constructions such as philosophy, religion, art, politics and science. Each of us begins our search again; as children seeking identity, and later as adults reflecting on our

identity, we wonder who we are and join other travelers on the path of self-seeking.

In common speech, the term personality usually refers to one's public image. Thus, people say "Becky has a terrible personality" or "If Jeff had a more dynamic personality ..." in ancient Greece. In the Greek theater, there were often more roles in a play than the number of actors. Thus, the actors changed their masks to allow the public to know that they are taking on different roles. The concept of social roles, however, does not include the complications that are involved in the long search for self-understanding.

There is a limited common understanding between personality theorists about the proper use of the term personality. Gordon Allport has described and classified over fifty different definitions. For Allport, personality is something real in an individual that leads to behavior and characteristic thinking. For Carl Rogers, personality or "self" is an organized and consistent model of "I" perception, which underlies an individual's experiences. For B. F. Skinner, an influential behaviorist, the word personality was not necessary. Skinner didn't think it was necessary or desirable to use a concept like self or personality to understand human behavior. For Sigmund Freud, the father of contemporary psychoanalysis, personality is largely unconscious, hidden and unknown.

Each theorist presents his own understanding of the term personality. On the one hand, this explains why there are so many theories about personality. Although such a variety of definitions and theories can be confusing and even disturbing, it does not mean that theories are not useful. Each provides a perspective on the problem of the self and each can be helpful to us as we develop our own answers.

The features were formulated based on popular psychology and medicine and natural language. The history of the traits can be approached in several ways, by following the equivalents of extraversion and neuroticism identified in different eras (Eysenck and Cookson, 1969; Eysenck, 1981) or by emphasizing the evolution of the currently dominant personality model of the "five factors". (Goldberg, 1993)

Carr's and Kingsbury's 1938 article analyzed conceptually many fundamental aspects of personality psychology. They emphasized the predictive nature of the traits, knowing the traits of a person predicts how likely she will behave. They formulated the idea that traits are not directly observable, they can only be deduced from behavior. This is the vision of renowned theorists of personality. McCrea and colleagues (2000) stated that traits cannot be directly observed, but must be deduced from patterns of behavior and experiences that are known to be valid indicators of traits.

Feature terms are used to distinguish people's behavioral styles. The history of the science of personality traits belongs especially to the 20th century. During this period, psychometric techniques have been developed that support the derivation and validation of features. Correlation and factor analysis are common tools of the personality psychology researcher dealing with traits. Personality trait systems exist at the primary and broader levels of traits. Broader features are called *dimensions or domains*.

The model that has proven influential in the last decades of the twentieth century to date is the *five-factor model*, which recognizes personality variation in the directions of neuroticism, extraversion, openness / intellect, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Personality traits are descriptions of phenotypes.

## **II. Conflicts**

Conflicts are an inevitable feature of human interactions. Especially in adolescence, conflicts with parents about everyday problems are common, mainly because of the

realignment of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescents' efforts for autonomy (Collins and Laursen, 2004).

A meta-analysis by Laursen et al. (1998) showed that conflicts with parents most often occur in early adolescence and gradually decrease thereafter. However, such conflicts are not necessarily detrimental to adolescent development. The way conflict is handled is of crucial importance (Adams and Laursen, 2007).

A study by Branje et al. (2009) did indeed show that conflict resolution styles mitigated the impact of conflict on adolescent adjustment.

Conflict resolution or management is defined as the behaviors that people adopt during a conflict. It is important to distinguish conflict management behaviors from conflict outcomes. Although both constructs are related, the former refers to behaviors that arise during conflicts, while the latter refers to the effect or impact of the conflict (Laursen and Collins, 1994).

Inspired by Kurdek's (1994) work on conflict resolution in romantic couples and the literature on adolescent conflict, a study on this topic focused on four styles of conflict resolution that adolescents use in their parenting disputes. Positive problem solving involves trying to understand the other's point of view and negotiating conflict effectively to find a compromise. Conflict involves destructive behaviors, such as verbal attack of the other, defensive attitude or loss of self-control. Withdrawal involves avoiding the problem, avoiding discussions and removing it. Conformity implies the approval of the other party without expressing your point of view.

According to theories of person-environment interaction, a potential determinant of adolescent conflict resolution styles is their personality. Adolescent personality tendencies may influence their perceptions of conflict, affective responses during conflicts, and how much they appreciate the relationship with someone. (Graziano et al., 1996)

Researchers have often suggested that preferred conflict resolution styles are gender-related, but gender differences do not always occur (Feldman and Gowen, 1998). Gender differences would be predicted based on gender schema theory, whereby individuals process information in a manner that is consistent with socially constructed gender stereotypes (Bern, 1984). Of the different styles identified in the specialty literature, two that are particularly relevant in considering gender differences are compromise and confrontation; these styles are also the most reliable, based on the evidence presented by Charlton (2001).

The compromise, used more and more in the adolescent years (Owens, Daly and Slee, 2004), involves a calm discussion and a resolution that moderately meets the needs of both parties - behaviors consistent with female gender stereotypes. Compromise is considered a constructive and adaptive way of conflict resolution and, therefore, as a strategy to be promoted among young people. (Scott, 2002)

In contrast, confrontation is viewed as a destructive response, the ability to diffuse anger is seen as an important ability in promoting constructive conflict resolution (Scott, 2002). The confrontation includes aggressive behavior and verbal attacks on the other party. Such behaviors are in line with male stereotypes and have been consistently demonstrated through aggressiveness research, being displayed more by boys than by girls. (Owens, 1996).

### **The research objectives**

O1: Assessment of personality characteristics and individual response to conflict situations in adolescents.

O2. Identification of the type of individual response to conflict situations according to gender.

### Research hypotheses

H<sub>s1</sub> We suppose that there are correlations between the personality traits of adolescents and the strategies for evaluating the individual response (coercion, confrontation, compromise, withdrawal, reconciliation / flattening, extraversion, kindness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, autonomy) with regard to conflict situations.

H<sub>s2</sub> It is assumed that there are significant differences in the individual response to conflict situations in girls and boys.

### The method used. The tool used

The method used in this study was the survey based on three questionnaires: the personality factor questionnaire with 5 CP5F factors, the assessment tool of the individual response to conflict situations, adapted by Keneth Thomas-Ralph Kilman

### Analysis and interpretation of results

*Hypothesis 1.* We assume that there are correlations between the personality traits of adolescents and strategies for evaluating the individual response (coercion, confrontation, compromise, withdrawal, reconciliation / flattening, extraversion, kindness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, autonomy) with regard to conflict situations.

The verification of Hypothesis 1 was based on the results obtained by applying the 5-factor CP5F Personality Questionnaire and the Instrument for assessing the individual response to conflict situations (adapted by Keneth Thomas-Ralph Kilman).

*Table 1 Correlation table - personality traits and individual response to conflict situations*

#### Correlations

			C Enforcement	CReconciliation adjustment	CP5F Extraversion	CP5F Autonomy
Spearman's rho	CEnforcement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	<b>-.479**</b>	<b>.214*</b>	<b>.411**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.047	.000
		N	86	86	86	86
	CReconciliation adjustment	Correlation Coefficient	<b>.479**</b>	1.000	<b>-.228*</b>	<b>-.241*</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.035	.026
		N	86	86	86	86
	CP5F Extraversion	Correlation Coefficient	<b>.214*</b>	<b>-.228*</b>	1.000	<b>.450**</b>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	.035	.	.000
		N	86	86	86	86
	CP5F Autonomy	Correlation Coefficient	<b>.411**</b>	<b>-.241*</b>	<b>.450**</b>	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.026	.000	.
		N	86	86	86	86

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table obtained confirms the presumption that between the two aspects, the personality traits and the response to conflict situations, there are correlations.

The Extraversion factor correlates with the Forced strategy with a correlation coefficient of 0.214, and this means that the higher the level of extroversion, the greater the tendency to displace the impact that differences between people have on their relationships. and to the belief that self-sacrifice and the importance of continuing the relationship above one's own goals are necessary in resolving the conflict. It also correlates with the Reconciliation / Planning strategy with a correlation coefficient of 0.228, and this means that the higher the level of extroversion, the more there is the belief that the conflict itself is neither good nor bad, but usually this is a symptom of some tension in a relationship and should be treated as such.

The autonomy correlates positively with the same factors, with the Forcing strategy having a correlation coefficient of 0.411, and this means that the higher the level of autonomy, the greater the tendency to displace the impact of the differences between people on their relationships and on the belief that self-sacrifice and placing importance on the continuation of the relationship above their own goals, are necessary in resolving the conflict. It also correlates with the strategy through Reconciliation / Planning with a correlation coefficient of 0.241, and this means that the higher the level of autonomy, the more there is the conviction that the conflict itself is neither good nor bad. (Table 1)

**In this case, it can be considered that hypothesis I is valid.**

The verification of Hypothesis 2 was based on a comparative analysis between girls and boys, after equalizing the sample, considering the individual response to the conflict situations, registered in the Instrument for the evaluation of the individual response to conflict situations (adapted by Keneth Thomas-Ralph Kilman).

**Table 2 Comparison result Nonparametric U Mann Whitney test - individual response to conflict situations in girls and boys**

Ranks				
	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
C Confrontation	Male	26	<b>21.17</b>	550.50
	Female	26	<b>31.83</b>	827.50
	Total	52		
C Compromise	Male	26	23.63	614.50
	Female	26	29.37	763.50
	Total	52		
C Reconciliation / Flattening	Male	26	<b>32.06</b>	833.50
	Female	26	<b>20.94</b>	544.50
	Total	52		

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>			
	C Confrontation	C Compromise	C Reconciliation / Flattening
Mann-Whitney U	199.500	263.500	193.500
Wilcoxon W	550.500	614.500	544.500
Z	-2.572	-1.380	-2.669
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.168	.008

a. Grouping Variable: Sex

The values obtained show that there is a significant difference between girls and boys in the case of Reconciliation / Flattening and Confrontation, where the significance threshold is less than 0.05.

In table 2 it is observed that the male participants have the average value of the Reconciliation / Flattening factor - 32.06, compared with the female participants - 20.94 and in the case of the Confrontation factor, the male participants have the average value of 21.17, compared to the average ones. female gender - 31.83, so it can be stated that male subjects have a higher level in the Reconciliation / Flattening factor, which means that boys have a higher tendency to believe that the conflict in itself is neither good and not bad, but that is usually a symptom of some tension in a relationship and should be treated as such.

Also, male subjects have a lower level in the Confrontation factor, compared to female subjects, and this means that girls greatly value both personal goals and interpersonal relationships. They see conflicts as problems that need to be resolved and look for solutions that solve both personal goals and those of the opposing camp.

**In this case, it can be considered that hypothesis 1 is valid.**

*Hypothesis 2.* It is assumed that there are significant differences regarding the individual response to the conflict situations in girls and boys.

The verification of Hypothesis 2 was based on a comparative analysis between girls and boys, after equalizing the sample, considering the individual response to the conflict situations, registered in the Instrument for the evaluation of the individual response to conflict situations (adapted by Keneth Thomas-Ralph Kilman).

**Table 4.22 Start indices - individual response to conflict situations, in girls and boys**

		<b>Statistics</b>				
		CEnforcement	CConfrontation	CCompromise	CWithdrawal	CFlatteningReconciliation
N	Valid	52	52	52	52	52
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		5,35	5,96	6,96	6,31	4,96
Median		5,00	6,00	7,00	6,00	4,00
Mode		5	6	7	5 <sup>a</sup>	3
Std. Deviation		2,835	1,868	1,980	1,925	2,664
Variance		8,035	3,489	3,920	3,707	7,097

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

In Table 4.22. the starting statistical indices are presented: mean, median, standard deviation and mode. Taking into account the existing reality, respectively the data string, with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (S.P.S.S.) program, the normality of the distribution was checked first.

**Tabel 4.23 Test of normality – individual response to conflict situations in girls and boys**

Tests of Normality							
	Sex	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
CEnforcement	Male	,115	26	,200*	,929	26	,072
	Female	,125	26	,200*	,961	26	,404
CConfrontation	Male	,165	26	,068	,963	26	,454
	Female	,136	26	,200*	,949	26	,221
CCompromise	Male	,127	26	,200*	,950	26	,229
	Female	,175	26	,039	,910	26	,026
CWithdrawal	Male	,155	26	,107	,949	26	,225
	Female	,144	26	,172	,941	26	,144
CFlatteningReconciliation	Male	,143	26	,183	,933	26	,093
	Female	,262	26	,000	,889	26	,009

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Kolmogorov Smirnov calculation presents the significance threshold for the normality of distributions, greater than 0.05 for the Forcing and Withdrawal factors, and less than 0.05 for the Confrontation, Compromise and Reconciliation/Flattening factors.

For the comparison between the two independent samples, where  $N_1, N_2 \leq 30$ , we used the Student t test for Forcing and Withdrawal variables, and the nonparametric U Mann Whitney variant for the Confrontation, Compromise and Reconciliation-Plane variables, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, where we obtained the following results.

**Tabel 4.24 Comparison result Parametric test T Student - individual response to conflict situations in girls and boys**

Group Statistics					
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CFortare	Male	26	5,42	2,996	,587
	Female	26	5,27	2,721	,534
CRetragere	Male	26	6,08	1,853	,363
	Female	26	6,54	2,005	,393

#### Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
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		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diffe rence	Std. Error Diffe rence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
CEnforce ment	Equal variances assumed	,441	,510	,194	50	,847	,154	,794	-1,440	1,748
	Equal variances not assumed			,194	49,54 5	,847	,154	,794	-1,441	1,748
CWithdrawal	Equal variances assumed	,126	,725	-,862	50	,393	-,462	,535	-1,537	,614
	Equal variances not assumed			-,862	49,69 4	,393	-,462	,535	-1,537	,614

In Table 4.24, it is observed that there are no significant differences between male and female subjects with respect to the Forcing variable and the Withdrawal variable.

**Table 4.25 Comparison result Nonparametric U Mann Whitney test - individual response to conflict situations in girls and boys**

**Ranks**

	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
C Confrontation	Male	26	<b>21.17</b>	550.50
	Female	26	<b>31.83</b>	827.50
	Total	52		
C Compromise	Male	26	23.63	614.50
	Female	26	29.37	763.50
	Total	52		
C Reconciliation Flattening	Male	26	<b>32.06</b>	833.50
	Female	26	<b>20.94</b>	544.50
	Total	52		

**Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	C Confrontatio n	C Compromise	C Reconciliatio nFlattening
Mann-Whitney U	199.500	263.500	193.500
Wilcoxon W	550.500	614.500	544.500
Z	-2.572	-1.380	-2.669

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.168	.008
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a. Grouping Variable: Sex

The values obtained show that there is a significant difference between girls and boys in the case of Reconciliation / Planning and Confrontation, where the significance threshold is less than 0.05.

In table 4.25 it is observed that the male participants have the average value of the Reconciliation / Flattening factor - 32.06, compared with the female participants - 20.94 and in the case of the Confrontation factor, the male participants have the average value of 21.17, compared to the average ones. female gender - 31.83, so it can be stated that male subjects have a higher level in the Reconciliation / Flattening factor, which means that boys have a higher tendency to believe that the conflict in itself is neither good and not bad, but that is usually a symptom of some tension in a relationship and should be treated as such.

Also, male subjects have a lower level in the Confrontation factor, compared to female subjects, and this means that girls greatly value both personal goals and interpersonal relationships. They view conflicts as problems that need to be resolved and seek solutions that solve both personal and adversarial camp goals.

**In this case, it can be considered that hypothesis I.7 is valid.**

Researchers have often suggested that preferred conflict resolution styles are gender-related, but gender differences do not always occur (Feldman and Gowen, 1998). Gender differences would be predicted based on gender schema theory, whereby individuals process information in a manner that is consistent with socially constructed gender stereotypes (Bern, 1984). Of the different styles identified in the specialty literature, two that are particularly relevant in considering gender differences are compromise and confrontation; these styles are also the most reliable, based on the evidence presented by Charlton (2001).

The compromise, used more and more in the adolescent years (Owens, Daly and Slee, 2004), involves a calm discussion and a resolution that moderately meets the needs of both parties - behaviors consistent with female gender stereotypes. Compromise is considered a constructive and adaptive way of conflict resolution and, therefore, as a strategy to be promoted among young people. (Scott, 2002)

In contrast, confrontation is viewed as a destructive response, the ability to diffuse anger is seen as an important ability in promoting constructive conflict resolution (Scott, 2002). The confrontation includes aggressive behavior and verbal attacks on the other party. Such behaviors are in line with male stereotypes and have been consistently demonstrated through aggressiveness research, being displayed more by boys than by girls. (Owens, 1996).

### Conclusions

After investigating a batch of 124 subjects, using the 5-factor CP5F personality questionnaire and an adaptation of the individual response assessment tool to conflict situations after Keneth Thomas-Ralph Kilman, we obtained significant differences between male and female adolescents, based on the aspects we identified.

The male subjects recorded a higher level in the Reconciliation / Placement factor, which means that the boys have a higher tendency to believe that the conflict itself is neither good nor bad. Also, the male subjects have a lower level in the Comparison factor, compared to the female subjects, and this means that the girls highly value both their personal goals and

their interpersonal relationships. They view conflicts as problems that need to be resolved and seek solutions that solve both personal and adversarial camp goals.

Boys have a higher tendency to display emotional components of dysphoria, suicidal ideation, guilt, difficulty sleeping, fatigue and lack of energy, compared to girls. Girls have a higher tendency to feel low self-esteem.

For girls it is important to have great freedom and diversity in actions, to make decisions and to make plans according to their own standards, and it is also important to focus on building, developing and maintaining pleasant, uncompetitive relationships with the people they come into contact at school, at work or in any other field. It is also important for boys to have the opportunity to lead others, to make decisions and to take responsibility for their work and for others, as they want to have influence and dominance over the people they work with.

The higher the level of extroversion, the greater the tendency to displace the impact that differences between people have on their relationships and to convince themselves that self-sacrifice and the importance of continuing the relationship above their own goals are necessary in resolving conflict, and even more so is the belief that the conflict itself is neither good nor bad. The higher the level of autonomy, the greater the tendency to displace the impact that differences between people have on their relationships and to convince themselves that self-sacrifice and the importance of continuing the relationship above their own goals are necessary in resolving also, the more there is the conviction that the conflict itself is neither good nor bad.

The more introverted a person is, the more symptoms of anxiety, nervousness, worry and somatic problems that are well above the levels commonly felt by most adolescents, the more pronounced the tendency is. to provide the answers associated with the presence of stress, including an increased level of agitation, sensations of depersonalization and relapse and memory of the traumatic event, the more there is a tendency for it to complain primarily of dysphoria, but also of distress and sadness, withdrawal, disinterest in different activities and removal of friends, the more it feels a low level of self-esteem, the more difficult it is to get involved in relationships with other people, the more there is a tendency to take a defensive attitude towards the people in his life.

The lower the friendliness factor, the greater the chance of displaying antisocial behaviors, such as theft, beating, lying, cruelty to animals, destruction, breaking rules at home and at school, problems with the police or with school authorities or other behavioral problems, the greater the tendency for substance use, the greater the predisposition to violent behavior, the more expresses excessive anxiety and clinical symptoms of unexpectedness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension and sleep disorders, the more there is a tendency for a person to complain primarily of dysphoria, but also of distress and sadness, withdrawal, disinterest in different activities and withdrawal from friends, and behaviors are problematic or disruptive in school can affect school progress.

The lower the level of conscientiousness, the greater the chance of displaying antisocial behaviors, such as theft, beating, lying, cruelty to animals, use of a weapon during a beating, destruction, breaking of rules at home and at school, problems with the police or school authorities or other behavioral problems, the more there is a tendency for these people to complain primarily of dysphoria, but also of distress and sadness, to report sadness, withdrawal, disinterested in different activities and withdrawal from friends, there are also these express more excessive anxiety and clinical symptoms of stress, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension and sleep disorders, there is a greater chance of consuming substances, there is a tendency of suicidal ideation and the active existence of attempts their suicide, and there is also a tendency for problematic or disruptive behaviors at

school that can affect school progress. Also, the higher the level of conscientiousness, the greater the tendency to adopt a defensive attitude.

The lower the emotional stability, the greater the tendency to display disruptive behavior, the greater the tendency for the predisposition to violent behavior, the greater the tendency to encounter school problems, the greater the tendency to develop anxious behavior, a more pronounced tendency to provide responses associated with the presence of stress, including an increased level of agitation, depersonalization sensations and relapse and recall of the traumatic event, a greater tendency for sleep difficulties, fatigue and lack of energy, as well as a tendency for the existence of feelings of fear, worry and the perception of being fat, compulsive eating behavior, regurgitation of food and aversion to food.

The lower the level of autonomy, the greater the tendency to adopt a defensive attitude in interpersonal relationships.

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