

## CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF PASSIVE AGGRESSION IN THE YEARS OF EMERGING MATURITY IN WOMEN

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**Abstract:** The lives of young people, both in Bulgaria and in the Balkans, have undergone substantial qualitative changes in recent decades. This is due to the increased cultural and economic development, which makes the young people free, mobile and independent. A period of independent exploration and experimentation on different social roles is assisted. It is known as the transition from adolescence to adulthood and is analyzed in psychology as a separate and independent period of human development of emerging maturity. It is different in both duration and content in the cultures and countries that are the subject of the survey.

The survey was conducted in the period 2008 to 2013 with a total of (n = 498) females from Bulgaria (n = 116); Greece (n = 98); Macedonia (n = 92); Serbia (n = 95) and Turkey (n = 97).

With more clusters and factors respectively, are the subscales linking the passive aggressiveness with behavior, oriented towards looking for assistance and assertive behavior.

**Keywords:** passive aggressiveness, seeking help, assertive behaviour

Emerging maturity exists only in cultures that allow young people a prolonged period of independent social roles and their exploration during late adolescence and twenties. It is a period of life, which is culturally constructed, not universal and unchangeable [14]. This assumption gave rise to the idea of studying and comparing this age with five cultures - Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, Macedonian and Serbian. In personality psychology, it is postulated that passive aggressive behaviour is passive resistance to follow social expectations of others in interpersonal and/or professional situations. Passive aggressiveness is associated with the desire to get something desirable, for which there is no possibility to turn into reality, and fear of the object that stands in the way to the possibility of being satisfied [6]. Passive aggressiveness is a partially unconscious mechanism that can manifest itself as: a studied helplessness; delay; stubbornness; resentment; sulks and/or deliberate failure of actions. It is mostly verbal and has the characteristics of manipulative techniques like: hypocrisy; selective remembering; penchant for revenge; need to control others through misrepresentation; unloading of mental stress by squabbles and malicious rumors, relying on the belief that the other then will be "broken" by his/her own feeling of guilt [3]. The passive aggressive personality is afraid of the challenges most often trying to avoid competition indirectly.

Passive aggressiveness is more common in women who are not self-assertive as such [4] because:

- they are afraid to take responsibility and risks; maintain relationships, which are detrimental to them (let the; selves be "trodden down"); demonstrate being misunderstood, and undervalued by others,
- neglect their appearance and health and become increasingly limited in their thinking;
- they blame others for their failures and do not bother to vote, so they often passively support Governments, in which they do not believe;
- they are more strongly influenced by: discrimination; economic losses; loss of beloved ones; sexual violence; messages, reactions and gestures of the parents (in childhood).

Passivity is potential energy in women, and activity – the release of this energy. The latter points to the male pole (behaviour), associated with instability, vulnerability and impulsivity, while the real female passivity is: a state of quiet, stability; receptivity; inner isolation and invulnerability [2].

The passive-aggressive personality disorder is a sustainable model of negative attitude and/or passive resistance to the requirements for proper presentation, beginning in early adulthood [9]. Its symptoms are: passive resistance against carrying out of routine social and professional tasks; complaints about being underestimated and misunderstood, sulking and readiness for scandals; unprovoked criticism and ridicule of authorities; envy of and indignation against successful people; continuous complaints of personal misfortune; fluctuations between hostile challenge and remorse; enviable ability to distort truth and readiness for scandals.

Intensive conflicts relating to passivity in women, fluctuate continually between weakness and strength; the identification with others and self-assertion, self-dissatisfaction and pride [12]; labile affectivity; behavioral

contradictions, dissatisfaction with the "I-images"; deficiency of regulatory control and interpersonal ambivalence [6]. Passive aggressiveness most often is reflected in the following behavioral and situational characteristics: impartiality (indifference) and uncertainty (evasiveness); laments; whimsicality and the absence of a willingness to compromise.

Researchers also associate passive aggressiveness with obsessive and compulsive actions of personality [13]. It is usually hiddenly aggressive, uncompromising and forcibly imposes its own standards on all other people. The moment that they try to do something against her, their proposals are invariably averted because the person is guided by a hypersensitivity to shame and guilt [8]. Characteristics of the obsessive-compulsive personality are behavioral rigidity, emotional supercontrol, cognitive limitation, pessimism and lack of willingness to compromise [7].

Passive-aggressive people are in most cases [16], dissatisfied with their lives. They tend to claim they are morally right in all situations. The lack of a sense of humor does not allow them to realize that they isolate themselves, they are unreasonably arrogant, and therefore cannot hyperbolise the irritating in the object because they accept events "much too seriously" and exhibit encoded behaviour [19].

### SETUP OF THE COHORT STUDY

The goal of the study is to examine and establish at a theoretical and empirical level, constructed on its basis, the essence, relations and differences between the dimensions of internal personality traits in national identity of women in youth age in a Balkan socio-cultural context. However, it is assumed they are not posed *en nixibo* (LAT. of nothing), but are the product of the history of their families in the Balkan national States as a result of the European historical perspective.

The study was carried out in the period 2008 – 2013. Its objects (after obtaining their consent) are women (female students) with a mean chronological age (by country): Bulgaria – 21.52; Greece-21.02; Macedonia – 19.22; Serbia – 21.33, and Turkey – 21.94. Participants are from the following universities: Republic of Bulgaria – PU "P. Hilendarski", Plovdiv (n = 116); Republic of Greece – Aristotelian University (Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης), Thessaloniki (n = 98); Republic of Macedonia – Skopje University "St. Cyril and Methodius" (Univerzitet "St.Cyril and Metodij"), Skopje (n = 92); the Republic of Serbia University of Belgrade (Univerzitet u Beogradu), Belgrade (n = 95) and the Republic of Turkey – University of Uludag (Udulg universitesi) Bursa (n = 97). Total n = 498 subjects.

The survey includes a central questionnaire Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS) [18], which was translated by certified translators in Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Serbian and Turkish languages. There were repeated translations for verification of the validity of the translation and preserving the author's concept. They were realized by the team of the research (psychology students, studying in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia and Turkey and a PhD student in psychology majoring in psychology and Slavic Philology – Serbian and Croatian languages).

The questionnaire [18] was created as a tool for the study of internal personal relations concerning the aggressive and assertive mindsets. The method has been repeatedly refined and widely used as a tool, both for intercultural research and the provision of standardized and reliable means for collecting information on the phenomenal image of the investigated.

As major indicators of internal personal behavior are used 11 variables. The study of the psychometric characteristics of the questionnaire registered high performance in adapting it to the studied socio-cultural contexts. The results show high alpha Cronbach coefficients for inner confidence, low levels of disturbing circumstances and have high social rating.

The following indicators were distinguished, structured by a finite number of items (n = 95): "Total aggressiveness" (TA); "Passive aggressiveness" (PA); "Expression of anger" (EA); "General assertiveness" (GA); "Defense persistence" (DP); dependence (D); shyness (S); "Manipulated attractiveness" (MA); "Deconfliction" (DC) "Seeking help" (SH), "Harmless Initiative" (HI) and "desire for praise" (DfP).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following procedures were carried out to improve the content validity of the tool:

To establish the internal validity of the tool for the study of internal personal relations (IBS) [18] by individual subscales structuring it, as a criterion is used the factor alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of Cronbach. In the present survey  $\alpha = .826$  (in the original questionnaire  $\alpha = .839$ ), which demonstrates a high level of internal validity. In subscales of the adapted and standardized tool (IBS-2) ratios are as follows: PA (0.885); S (0.921); DC (0.856); D (0.855); GA (0.842); DP

(0.842); MA (0.812); EA (.800); SH (0.751); HI (0.703). All results for internal validity and connectivity by subscales can be interpreted also as valid and reliable.

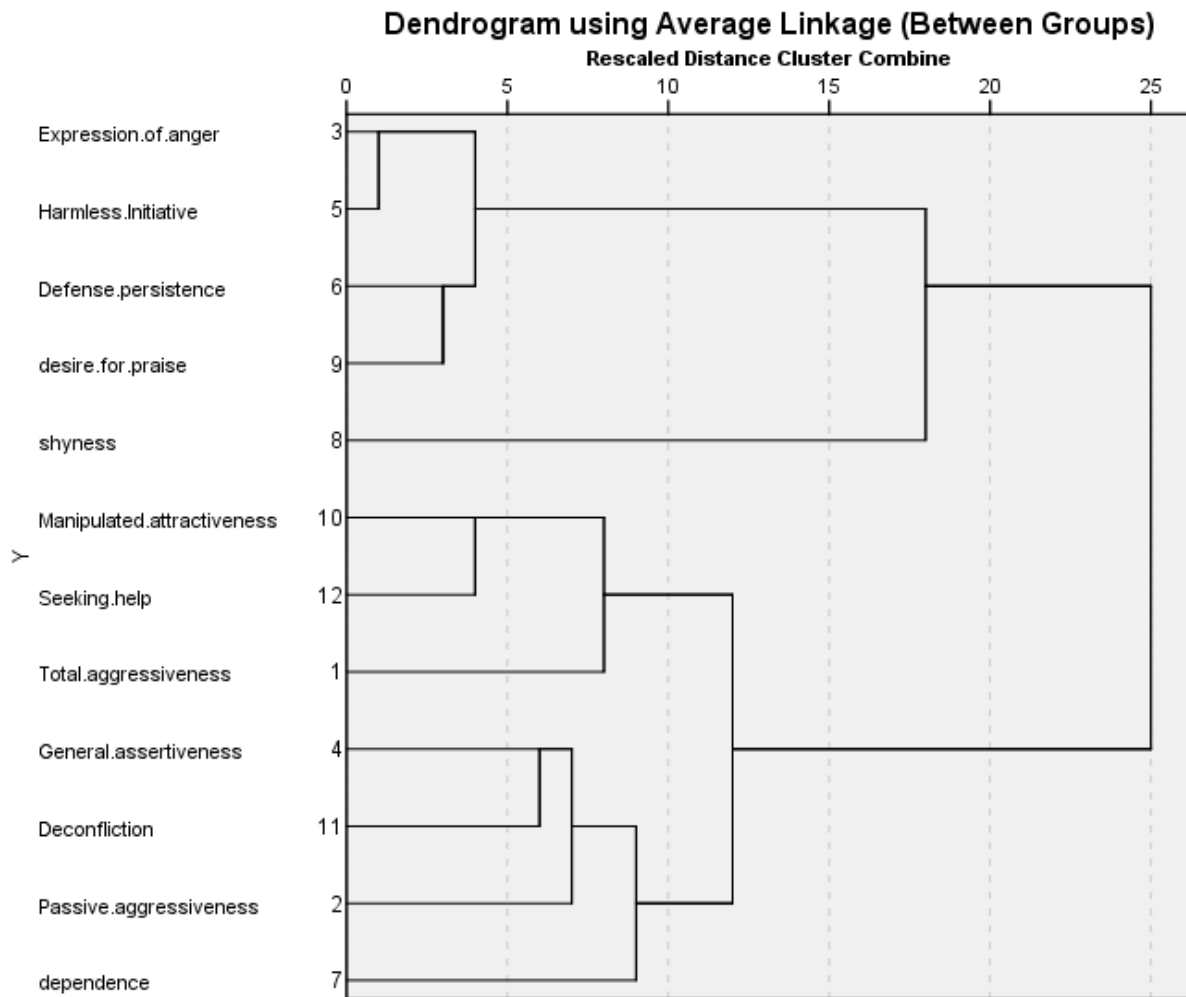
To clarify the distance between the subscales of IBS-2 in each of the surveyed groups and the totality of women as a whole (n = 498) the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied. Because of the relatively large volume of the groups, even the lower in absolute correlation coefficients are statistically significant at significance level  $p < 0.01$  (Table №1).

**Table : Internal validity and consistency of the scales obtained by the ratio and correlation of Pearson between passive aggressiveness and other subscales**

№	Correlations between passive aggressiveness and ...	States					
		Bulgaria	Greece	Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey	For all aggregation
1.	Conflict avoidance (CA)	.264		.276	.249	.439	.274
2.	Seeking Assistance (SA)	.247	-	-	-	.471	-
3	Manipulated attractiveness (MA)	.270	-	-	-	.402	-
4	Expressing anger (EA)	-	.334	.312	.356	.253	.292
5	Defensive persistence (DP)	-	.306	.280	.241	-	.164
6	Desire for praise (DP)	-	.263	.349	-	.233	.151
7.	Shyness (S)	-	-	.442	.257	-	.215
8.	Dependence (D)	-	-	.389	-	.256	.225
9.	Harmless initiative (HI)	-	-	-	-	.431	.205
10	General assertiveness (GA)	-	-	-	-	.296	.153

In Table №1 are presented significant linear correlations between passive aggressiveness (PA) and: (EA) (DC); (D); (S); (HI); (DP), (GA) and (DfP) for the individual subscales and across the investigated aggregate.

Based on the conducted correlation analysis is applied a hierarchical cluster analysis of the results in each subscale and of the instrument as a whole is applied. Using intergroup relations Dendogram №1 was constructed

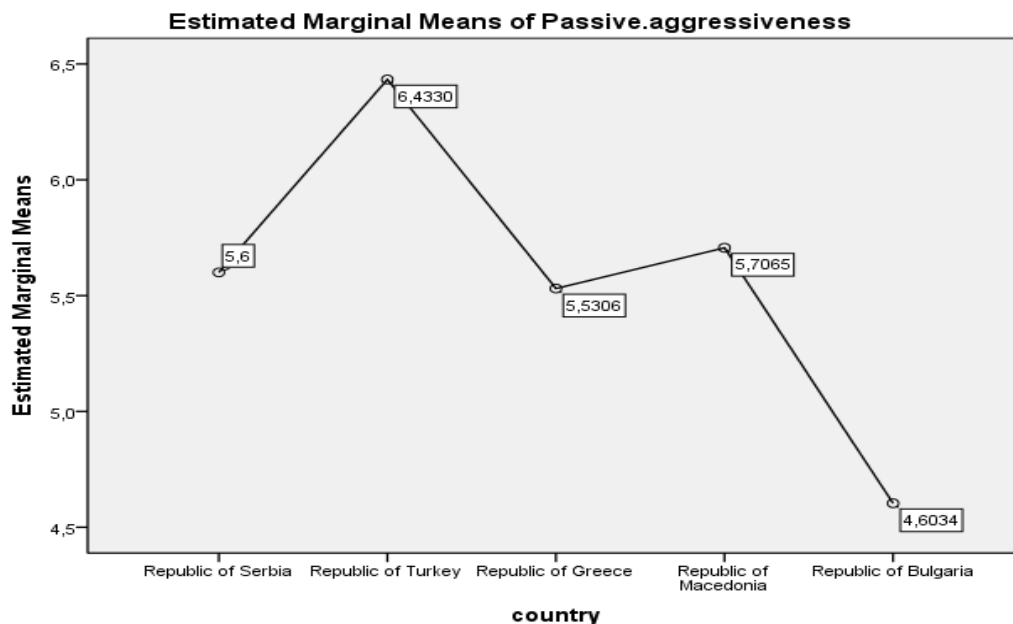


With most clusters and factors respectively are the subscales, linking passive aggressiveness (PA) and: (GA) and (SH)

A dispersion analysis using the F-criterion of Fisher and Duncan was performed for detection of factor structure of the tool (IBS-2) and the establishment of statistical significance on individual criteria.

The "passive aggressiveness" (PA) criterion showed a statistically significant difference -  $F(6,443.650) = 16.309$ ;  $p < 0.000$ .

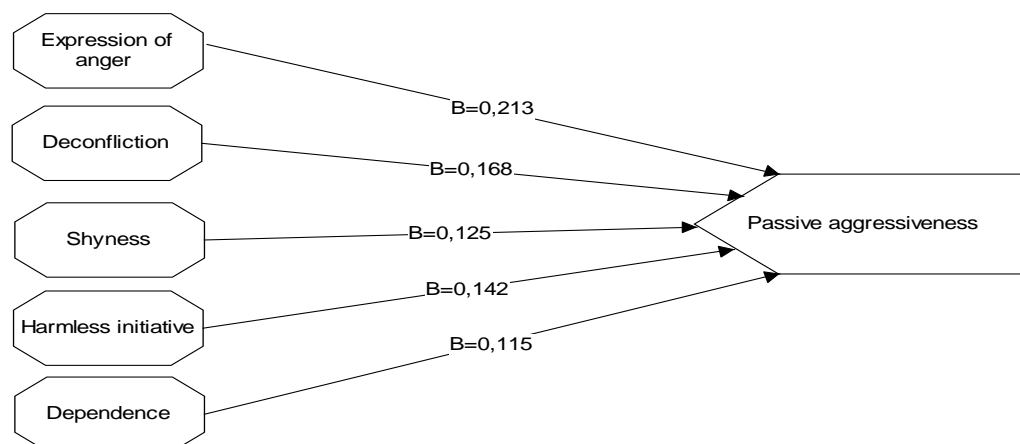
Graphic 1



Graphic №1 shows that:

- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the Turkish group increases with the increase of indicators determined by: (EA); (DC); (D); (S); (HI); (DP); (DfP) and (GA).
- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the Macedonian group increases with the increase of indicators determined by: (EA) (DC); (D); (S); (HI); (DfP)
- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the Bulgarian group increases with the increase of indicators determined by: (DC) and (SH) and decreases with increasing (MA).
- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the Greek group increases with the increase of indicators determined by: (EA) (DP) and (DfP).
- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the Serbian group increases with the decrease of indicators determined by: (DC); (EA) (DP) and (S).
- Passive aggressiveness (PA) in the total study aggregate covers all subscales. Its profile in the Bulgarian group differs in principle from all others because it is determined only by (SH) and (MA).

To establish relationships between the components of IBS-2, the method of multiple regression analysis is also applied. It assesses the extent to which two or more indicators influence the criterion and which ones have the greatest influence. Data are presented (at  $p < 0.05$ ) in Figure №1.



The highest level "passive aggressiveness" is determined by the increased level of "expression of anger" and "desire to avoid conflict interactions."

"Passive aggressiveness" is moderately influenced by the effects of "harmless initiative" and "shyness". In contrast to the level of "general aggressiveness", this of "passive aggressiveness" is increased by the same predictors. It can be assumed that when reducing "general aggressiveness", this increases the level of "passive aggressiveness".

Increasing the values of the predictor "praise" is associated to a low degree with the dependent variable "passive aggressiveness".

- The study has established that passive aggressiveness is associated most frequently with seeking assistance. Women do not usually pursue immediate satisfaction, neither of their own interests nor those of other parties. They recognize the existence of conflicts, but react by withdrawal or suppression against them [20]; [21]; [17]. Individuals recognize the right of "privacy" and the right of everyone "to mark" their territory. If their withdrawal in a situation of conflict is impossible or undesirable, they can avoid their passive resistance. Seeking help is an uncomplaining and unassessing attitude to the behaviour of others as an irreversible fact of reality. The participants do not assert themselves, do not openly declare their demands and experiences, dare not refuse, belittle themselves, and always place themselves second in a competitive situation. Seeking help can begin in the form of "diplomatic" withdrawal, but always until "better times" or simply a "stronger" position with fewer threats [15].

- The research established that passive aggressiveness is also associated with symptoms of dependent behaviour in women. Dependent women feel insecure when they do not receive support. They have difficulties in making decisions if they lack advice and encouragement for their efforts. Often they are afraid to take responsibility and do not take on tasks that others think are not worth it [11].

In a manifestation of behavioral dependence are observed: difficulties in expressing disagreement with new projects; fears of execution of the activity by themselves; lack of self-confidence and commitment to unrealistic fears that the individual can be left alone to take care of themselves [11].

Dependence goes to extremes in an effort to receive care and / or support from others to the extent that the person voluntarily performs unpleasant things. She feels helpless after the end of an intimate relationship and frantically searches for a new one, which would become a source of care and support.

- The research established that passive aggressiveness is also associated with assertive behaviour. Through it is manifested a desire for self-assertion and self-elevation by escaping from their problems and experiences of grief, shame and guilt; voluntary acceptance of some of the behavioral effects (especially if unfavorable) in critical situations [5]; [1].

With assertive behavior women defend their identity by preserving its diversity. They try to assert their rights without conflict and do not "burden" personal contradictions with sharp, negative and abusive assessments. Assertive behaviour is associated with asserting their own independence by specifically addressing and mastering the incorrect attitudes and prejudices. Assertiveness is also associated with the ability to press (seduce) the other, in order to win and protect their own understanding. This is realized without evasions, euphemisms, innuendo and excuses (rejected is the other's request for assistance, not the human inside).

All of the above is implemented without inflicting harm, with an excessive demonstrative and obsessive assertiveness by rejecting others.

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