

*Section: Research and innovations in PPT***CLIENT'S PERSONALITY STRUCTURE AS A GUIDE TO THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONFLICT****Evgeniya Yordanova-Karageorgieva**

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Abstract

The present study has a dual purpose: To explore the correlation between the big five personality traits and conflict-handling strategies according to Thomas-Kilmann's Conflict Mode Instrument and the personality typology and conflict processing as per the balance model of positive and transcultural psychotherapy. There were 302 participants in the study, 372 women and 70 men. Our analysis shows significant correlation between all Thomas-Kilmann's five personality traits and Avoidance as a conflict handling strategy. The traits Neuroticism, Consciousness and Agreeableness are positively associated with all five conflict handling strategies – Competition, Avoidance, Collaboration, Compromise and Accommodation. The Extraversion does not only relate to Competition, while Intellect/Imagination is related only to Avoidance. These findings show that personality traits have stable links with conflict resolution styles. We attempt to find a parallel between the two research lines which may eventually expand into broader scientific work. Data can be useful in conflict prevention and prediction. It can also be useful for psychotherapists in preparing working hypotheses and therapeutic tasks in the course of psychotherapy.

Keywords: personality traits, personality typology, Big Five Factors model, conflict, Positive Psychotherapy

Introduction

In contemporary everyday life, conflicts are a person's second shadow, following them at any step. Whether the person is an active participant in them or just a passive bystander, conflict tension accumulates at the inter-psyche level. Ever since Deutsch (Deutsch, 1973) authors who studied the nature of conflicts have unanimously agreed that using an appropriate strategy for resolving them is one of the main predicaments as to the quality of the end result. This is the reason why scientists in the field of Psychology have been looking for models to predict conflict inclinations as per given personality specifics. The end goal here is obtaining systemized

information to help reduce conflicts and their aftermath in the workplace, in interpersonal relationships, and in any other areas of human functioning they which affect.

The present article is an attempt to comprehend the behavioral attitudes toward conflict situations. To achieve that goal, we chose the hugely popular in scientific circles personality traits model of "The Big Five Factors", and on the other hand the four types of personality structure as per Fr. Riemann (2002), based on the four basic behavioral impulses. Conflict inclination was studied with the help of the Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument (Thomas, 2008), and conflict behavior was

analyzed as per the balance model as part of the conflict dynamics study of the client-therapist contact (Peseschkian, 2016). We decided to challenge the theoretical grounds and statistical analyses by studying them through the viewpoint of the positive psychotherapists who participated in “The Client’s Personality Structure as a Guiding Light to Conflict Inclination” workshop hosted by Evgeniya Yordanova at the Jubilee Conference of “30 Years of the Bulgarian Positive Psychotherapy Society – Fruit of Time”, Bulgaria, 2023

Data and conclusions drawn in the present study could be practically applicable in the psychotherapeutic process when building working hypotheses and assigning therapeutic tasks to clients.

1.1. Behavioral strategies for coping with conflicts

1.1.1. The Thomas-Kilmann conflict model instrument for measuring behavioral styles in a conflict situation

In scientific circles, the study of behavioral strategies for coping with conflicts is based on two dimensions. Such a two-dimensional space is the basis of the widely-used model for behavior at the time of conflict (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). That model’s concept framework sits on two independent dimensions – assertiveness and cooperation (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Thomas, 2008). They largely overlap with the Key conflict as described by N. Peseschkian (2016) that is rooted in the collision of two contradictory behavioral inclinations, namely Politeness and Honesty. Assertive behavior as per the Thomas-Kilmann model aims at satisfying a person’s own needs. A cooperative inclination on its own is focused on other people’s needs. Within that two-dimensional space, the authors differentiate five different tendencies, characteristic of the behavioral styles for coping with conflict: Competition, Collaboration, Compromise, Avoidance, and Accommodation (Figure 1).

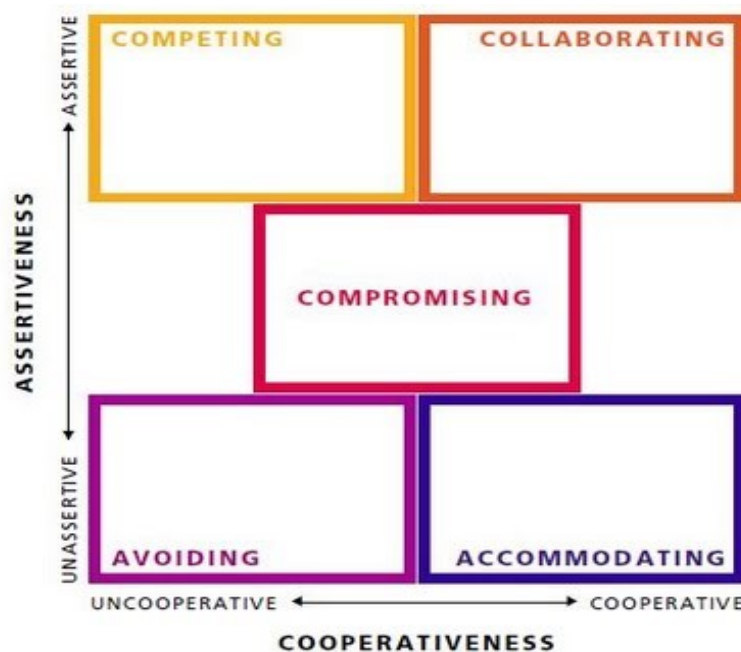


Figure 1. Behavioral styles for coping with conflict situations

Source: Thomas (2008)

- Competition – assertive and non-cooperative behavior occurs when an individual strives to achieve his/her own goals and interests at the expense of everybody else.
- Collaboration: the individual deploys simultaneously assertive and cooperative behavior in order to achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution for both sides in a conflict

- situation.
- Compromise: a behavior which is characterized by an attempt to reach an acceptable resolution to the conflict which partially satisfies the individual participants' needs. The authors place compromise in between the two behavioral dimensions.
 - Avoidance: a non-assertive and non-cooperative inclination in which the conflict is ignored. There is no attempt to reach a resolution by either side.
 - Accommodation: a non-assertive and cooperative behavior in a conflict situation in which the individual strives to satisfy other people's needs at the expense of his/her own

1.1.2 Four forms of conflict processing in transcultural and Positive Psychotherapy

N. Peseschkian (2016) defines four universal areas of conflict processing that are valid at all times independently from the individual, social, and cultural differences between people. Based on the four media of cognitive ability, these forms help us understand how a person sees themselves and the reality surrounding them.

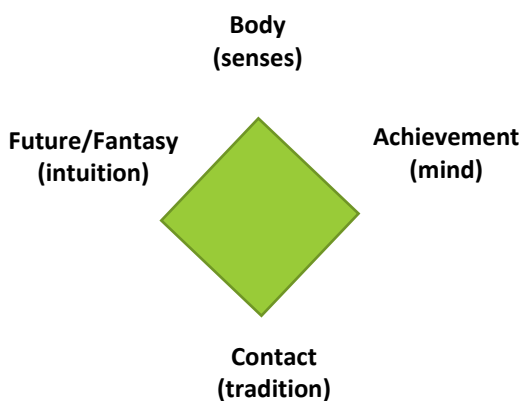


Figure 2. Balance Model by N. Peseschkian (2016)

The contents of these four areas of conflict processing cover the psychological and physical achievement and the way a person divides it when coping with conflict situations:

- Body: includes the senses area, the way the body is perceived, and the care it receives with regard to ailment-good health and “exploitation”. It features a

person's sleep and wake mode, eating habits, sports and physical activity, sex, and sexuality.

- Achievement: includes the social roles we play on a daily basis. It features the personal concept of success and their juxtaposition to social norms – education, professional career, domestic chores, and hobbies.
- Contact: includes Creation and maintenance of relationships with others, the skill to look for a supportive social environment. A contact can be directed both externally, to partners, children, parents, friends, and internally – with regard to oneself.
- Future/Fantasy includes intuition, imagination, planning, fears and doubts, dreams and daydreaming.

The balance model provides us with an opportunity to understand how priorities are ranked, leading us to the basic patterns in conflict processing, thus helping us to illustrate the conflict dynamics.

1.2. The “Big Five Factors” model and personality structure

1.2.1. „The Big Five Factors“ model (Costa & McCrae, 1991)

The balance model provides us with an opportunity to understand how priorities are ranked.

Recent scientific research has reached a consensus in using the five personality factors model. The key types in it are known as Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Collaboration, and Openness to Experimentation (Costa & McCrae, 1991). In the text below we provide a short description of these characteristics and their expected connections to the coping behavior strategies at conflict times.

The need to connect to others and belong to a social setting is key to an extrovert. The resource is expressed in the interpersonal abilities for socialization, self-confidence, and initiative in establishing contacts (Costa & McCrae, 1991). The person focuses on friendly relationships, which is why every conflict is considered to be a threat. Strong extroverts are also characterized by assertiveness and low levels of critique in their interactions (Funder,

Furr & Colvin, 2000). It is expected that people of extrovert characteristics would direct their efforts at reaching an agreement in times of conflict, relying on strategies that seek compromise and collaboration. The above is confirmed in empirical research in which a statistically significant positive relationship exists between Collaboration and Extraversion (Jones & Melcher, 1982).

Neuroticism is described as an emotional instability and lowered adaptivity. Such inclination is often accompanied by negative emotions such as guilt, fear, anger, and anxiety. The authors (Costa & McCrae, 1991) claim that high levels of neuroticism correlate with impulsive behavior under stress. Confrontations may prove to be a task impossible to handle for anxious and depressive personalities, a task accompanied by rising levels of tension. Neurotic personalities may attempt to reduce it by utilizing coping with conflict strategies such as accommodation or compromise. On the other hand, low levels of self-control in these individuals (Slessareva & Muraven, 2004) correlate with angry outbursts and aggressiveness (O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996; Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015).

The character trait of Conscientiousness is related to abilities such as planning and execution of tasks in a responsible manner. High levels of expression of that trait are accompanied by equally high levels of discipline and self-control (Moberg, 2001). It has been proven empirically that such people avoid being domineering and aggressive in their interpersonal relationships (Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015). That is why in a conflict situation we could expect their high levels of conscientiousness to relate to a strategy aiming at collaboration, accommodation, or avoiding the conflict altogether.

According to Costa and McCrae (Costa & McCrae, 1991) the Cooperation dimension is a resource in the direction of trust, compromising, and being helpful. Such personalities are motivated to maintain beneficial interpersonal contacts. When they find themselves in a conflict situation, they validate the different points of view. (Wood & Bell, 2008). On the contrary, low levels of this personality trait are related to skepticism and a competitive and antagonistic inclination. When present, caring for the conflict outcome may link this trait with an inclination to compromise. This has been confirmed

empirically in a study (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996), that reports that high levels of Cooperation lead to a larger number of compromise or strategies for coping with conflict. Such people are inclined to be polite at the expense of their own needs (Bruck & Allen, 2003). On the contrary, individuals with low Cooperation levels would prefer strategies that are related to a fight to achieve their personal goals. (Moberg, 2001)

The fifth trait in the "Big Five Factors" is Openness to Experimentation. We pay particular attention to two of its facets – active use of imagination and intellectual curiosity (Costa & McCrae, 1991). Individuals with high levels of this trait are characterized as being self-reflective and being able to identify their own emotions. They strive to search for new positive experiences. We could expect such individuals with high levels of imagination and intellect to look for an adaptive and flexible approach when trying to resolve a conflict situation. Such inclination is related to an attempt to address conflicts directly and search for their optimal resolution. (Moberg, 2001). Low levels of Imagination and Intellect lead to abiding by the rules, the established order and preserving the status quo. (McCrae, 1996) – specifically suggesting the presence of difficulty in understanding other people's points of view. As a result, we would expect such individuals to find an unresolved conflict to be bothersome and to opt for a quick and effective approach to resolution.

1.2.2. Personality types (Riemann, 2002)

Personality characteristics can serve to a great extent as a description of a wider individual typology. It includes temperament and is grounds for fears and action impulses. We are all carriers of a variety of different character traits, but their unique combination builds the fundamentals of our personality. Such knowledge can make us predictable and be utilized successfully in the psychotherapeutic process when assisting the working hypotheses and constructing the therapeutic tasks for the client. It has been more often than ever before that psychotherapeutic research uses Fritz Riemann's theory, published in his "Basic Fear Forms" book, as grounds for personality structuring. As a result of his psychotherapeutic work, the author stipulates four types of

personalities based on a central existential fear – histrionic, compulsive, depressive and schizoid.

Histrionic structured personalities are afraid of loneliness, and limitations and needs are detrimental to them. A leading impulse here is the need for variety and current change. Provoking new experiences and participation in spontaneous adventures leads to life with no clear plans or goals, a life for the moment. Secondary abilities, related to abiding by social norms and rules are considered fatal. Punctuality, planning, understanding timing, and responsibility are boring and often deficient in people with expressed histrionic structures. A central problem for the histrionic personality is the lack of a certain and stable identity. The question about authenticity finds an internal reflection in the way these people run away from reality by adopting “roles”. Their abilities are strong in the direction of spontaneity, feeling of freedom, and finding variety in life, but such people could also behave impulsively. They are lively, generous, and know how to express themselves well. Two basic concepts for the histrionic personality is “I don’t care what happens when I am gone” and “Charm is crucial to success”.

The second type of personality structure as per Fritz Riemann (2002) is the compulsive one. A leading impulse here with regard to behavior and inclinations is the need for order and control in order to protect tradition. Individuals with domineering compulsive fundamentals limit or do not allow changes as they lead to the accumulation of conflict tension. Overestimating the need for security is a major problem that is reflected in the fear of taking a risk. Such people want to learn to swim without ever entering the water. On the other hand, they do possess a resource directed at being careful, planning with a purpose and for longer periods of time, as well as an inclination for consistency. Unlike the histrionic personality, what we can observe here is a secure and stable identity with a strongly expressed loyalty to rules and regulations. These are abilities that help avoid chaos in life. A leading concept with these personalities is “May everything remain as it was”.

Riemann identifies personalities where the fear of loneliness is dominant and becoming an independent I is not an option as being depressive. A leading impulse with them is the need for connection and unconditional love – both in giving and receiving. Such symbiosis

creates a feeling of security in depressive personalities. This is how a partner and children become over valuable which is a prerequisite for developing a dependency on being in contact with them. It also makes their fear of separation and loss even more acute. The debt they feel toward family and friends very often leads them to neglect their own personal boundaries and autonomy. We can identify a resource here in the directing of basic abilities. They are capable of unconditional care and are loyal friends. As the fantasy of evil in others or themselves is taboo with them, people with depressive personality structures strive to adhere to a number of altruistic virtues – humility, readiness to give in, peacefulness, selflessness, and complicity. Their behavior is often dominated by the concepts of “I need you because I love you” or “I love you because I need you”.

The last, fourth personality structure described by Riemann (2002) is the schizoid one. The dominant impulse of these people is the impulse for self-protection, uniqueness, and independence. Such a need is also dominated by the fear of opening oneself and establishing emotional closeness. Living in isolation and loneliness is preferred and safe, and the world revolves only around them as the center of the universe. The schizoid personality’s fantasies often sound like “People are looking at me weird! I wonder what the rest of the people think of me...”. The schizoid type has a strongly developed rational side to themselves. They are brave enough to be themselves and to rely on their own resources such as intellect, consciousness, and reason. A leading concept for this personality type is “The strong person is strongest when alone!”

Methodology

2.1. Aim of the study

The present article is an attempt to compare conflict behavior in the form of statistical correlations between character traits and strategies during times of conflict, on the one hand. On the other hand, our interest is focused on the very same connection but based on the personality typology and supplemented by conflict processing as per the balance model of positive and transcultural psychotherapy. For the purpose of the second task, we have used the data derived through a long-standing and

well-established psychotherapeutic practice described in the book “Basic Forms of Fear”. Hypotheses regarding the correlation between personality structure and reaction to conflict have been checked by means of questions concerning the experience of 60 practicing and in-training therapists in a workshop titled “The Clients' Personality Structure as a Guiding Light for their Conflict Inclination”, hosted by Evgeniya Yordanova, (Varna, Bulgaria, 2023).

We are trying to determine whether there is a connection between personality characteristics and behavior in situations of conflict and In addition, if we can implement these scientific results in a positive psychotherapist's practice.

2.2. Hypotheses

HYPOTHESIS 1 We expect the personality traits of the Big Five Factors to be in significant correlation with the attitudes to conflict according to the Thomas-Kilman Model.

HYPOTHESIS 2 We assume that character traits play a defining role in personality structure. The specifics of inclinations in conflict resolution could be differentiated with the help of the Positive Psychotherapy balance model.

2.3. Methods

In order to prove our hypotheses, the first part of our study is a quantitative one. The end results are based on statistical data.

Empirical data for the first part of our study is collected from 372 respondents, representing a wide spectrum of demographic variety, age, and professional employment. We chose the short version of the Big Five Factors measuring methodology for measuring their personality characteristics. According to its authors, (Donnellan et al., 2006) it has good criteria validity and the present study demonstrates a solid internal consistency (from $\alpha = 0.628$ to $\alpha = 0,758$). We also chose the Kilman-Thomas measuring instrument for behavioral styles in a conflict situation to study the subjects' reactions to conflict. (Kilman & Thomas, 1977). Their claims were transformed into five different Likert-type scales in order to avoid limiting the ipsative data. Upon confirming the reliability of the scales, we were able to establish their very good internal consistency, suitable for scientific research (from $\alpha = 0,750$ to $\alpha = 0,821$).

The second part is a qualitative and analytical study of psychotherapeutic practice. As a foundation here we use the personality structure model described by Fritz Riemann (2002), resulting from the author's long years of clinical experience. He puts forward four basic individual typologies according to the leading fears and needs:

1. Histrionic type – leading here is the fear of stagnation and rules, experienced as deprivation of freedom. Thus the driving force is for constant change.
2. Compulsive type – fear is provoked by the change that is experienced as uncertainty. For these persons, the need is for order and control.
3. Depressive type – fear of being accompanied by fear of loss and separation. Here the driving impulse is for connecting and surrender.
4. Schizoid type – at the forefront of these families as the fear of self-giving experienced as dependence and risk of loss of one's own-self. Thus, the need here is to preserve the individuality.

The author describes reactions to conflict which are specific for each personality structure. In terms of content these can be expanded following the balance model of Positive Psychotherapy through which the Actual conflict is viewed.

Once described and proved by practice with clients, the connection between the personality structure and the reaction to conflict (according to the balance model and the Thomas – Kilman Model) has been qualitatively studied in the practice of 60 positive psychotherapists who took part in the conference “30 years of the Bulgarian Positive Psychotherapy Society – Fruit of Time”, Bulgaria, 2023

Results

For the purpose of the present study, we conducted a linear correlational analysis by using the Pearson correlation. The strength of the correlation relationship is graded as per the following scale: 0 – 0,3 weak; 0,3 – 0,5 moderate; 0,5 – 0,7 significant; 0,7 – 0,9 high and over 0,9 – very high (Ermolaev, 2003).

Table 1.
Relationship between the personality traits from the “Big Five Traits” model and the behavioral strategies utilized in conflict situations (N = 372)

<i>Behavioral style when in conflict</i>	<i>Personality traits from the “Big Five Factors” model</i>				
	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Conscientiousness	Cooperation	Imagination /Intell
Competition	,017	,126*	,180**	,113*	,001
Avoidance	,232**	,214**	,221**	,278**	,162**
Collaboration	,228**	,173**	,184**	,193**	-,046
Compromise	,283**	,191**	,179**	,181**	-,008
Accommodation	,305**	,147**	,137**	,209**	-,033

** The correlation is significant at level 0.01 (double-sided test)

* The correlation is significant at level 0,05 (double-sided test)

Table 1 illustrates that there are no personality traits that are not linked in a given way to the behavioral strategies deployed during conflicts. In Extraversion, the analysis shows a positive connection to the well-intentioned conflict styles. Judging from their intensity they are ranked as follows: in the first place is the moderate one with Accommodation ($r = 0,305$; $p < 0,01$), followed by significantly weak connections with Compromise ($r = 0,283$; $p < 0,01$), Collaboration ($r = 0,282$; $p < 0,01$) and Avoidance ($r = 0,232$; $p < 0,01$).

Neuroticism is significantly positively related to each of the five strategies. The strongest connection there is with the Avoidance style ($r = 0,214$; $p < 0,01$), followed by the weak, but significant connections with Compromise ($r = 0,191$; $p < 0,01$), Collaboration ($r = 0,173$; $p < 0,01$), Accommodation ($r = 0,147$; $p < 0,01$), the weakest connection being the one with Competition ($r = 0,126$; $p < 0,01$). The Conscientiousness trait is also in a significant positive connection with all behavioral styles. It is also the case here that the strongest correlation is the one with the Avoidance strategy ($r = 0,221$; $p < 0,01$), followed by Collaboration ($r = 0,184$; $p < 0,01$), Competition ($r = 0,180$; $p < 0,01$), Compromise ($r = 0,179$; $p < 0,01$) and Accommodation ($r = 0,137$; $p < 0,01$). We can identify similarities in the Cooperation

personality trait as well. The strongest connection here is the one with the Avoidance strategy ($r = 0,278$; $p < 0,01$), followed by Accommodation ($r = 0,209$; $p < 0,01$), Collaboration ($r = 0,193$; $p < 0,05$), and Compromise ($r = 0,181$). The weakest connection here is the one with the Competition style ($r = 0,131$; $p < 0,01$).

Intellect and Imagination are in a weak, but significant connection with Avoidance ($r = 0,162$; $p < 0,01$) only. The correlation with Collaboration, Accommodation, and Compromise is negative, but far from being statistically significant (as follows: $r = -0,046$; $p = 0,373$; $r = -0,033$; $p = 0,528$ и $r = -0,008$; $p = 0,877$).

The second stage of the present study comprises an analysis of scientific and practice-based literature in the field of personality structure and specific attitudes to conflict. As has already been stated, theoretical data has been qualitatively checked by means of questions referring to Hypothesis 2 and this question has been asked of 60 positive psychotherapists.

If we take into account the theoretical grounds for describing a histrionic personality, we would expect it to deploy the ostrich strategy in times of conflict. People with this personality type were found to be impulsive and blaming other people. For them, attack, whether physical

or verbal, is the best protection strategy. Despite the above, aggression here is short-lived and such individuals do not hold a grudge. The internal conflict in dominating histrionic structures is embodied in the strong threat on behalf of outside temptation that such people give easily into. Tension resulting from this conflict dynamics is often redirected into fear of foreign objects, for example, agoraphobia, which would provide them with a chance to limit their contact with other people.

When interpreting the data collected from the workshop participants' experience, as well as the theoretical foundations of defining the histrionic personality (Riemann, 2002), with regard to conflict processing in the balance model of Positive Psychotherapy, the data can be grouped as follows:

Body – blaming others (people or circumstances) leads to an uncertainty that people with histrionic personalities find an escape from in disease. The hidden behavioral motive, despite being unconscious, is a lie. A secondary benefit of somatization here is gaining some extra time. We could expect accentuations in maintaining youthful or attractive physical appearance – from clothing to plastic surgery interventions.

Achievement – weakly developed area, as logic and rationalization are considered to be boring.

Contact – a histrionic personality is intensive, passionate, and demanding in relationships. Conflict tension escalates if they do not feel worthy of love and adoration. Fidelity is not important to them and such personalities often end up in love triangles. We can find conflict processing in the outlet which they receive when they see adoration in other people's eyes. This is how a dependency on their liking can be developed. The leading concept in the Contact area sounds like "You are my mirror that reflects my shine". Such attitude borders narcissism.

Future/Fantasy – it is very often that we find conflict localization of histrionic personalities exactly here: they live in an imaginary fantasy world, with no limiting or correcting reality.

The compulsive personality is characterized by a strongly developed I. Studying the basic conflict in such individuals may lead us to a childhood accompanied by a lot of punishment. Negative effects such as anger, guilt, stubbornness, and hostility were believed appropriate to be suppressed. In adulthood, the

desire to reject and dominate anything new turns into a generational conflict. Such people would find it hard as their children grow up or their own parents age. Individuals with an expressed compulsive type find it very hard to back down in a conflict. They strive to put together a plan to cope with the problem, including programmed decisions that look reasonable and which anyone involved in the particular conflict must follow. Such behavior is, on the surface, similar to the compromising strategy in conflict resolution. The answer to the question of whether the compulsive personality confers with the other side is key. They are more inclined to impose an obligation to be followed by everyone and believe this is how the conflict gets resolved. Of course, affect needs to be swallowed and self-discipline should be deployed. Their power hunger is a prerequisite for them to opt for a competitive behavioral style at conflict times.

How would the compulsive personality look like in the balance model, striving to bring as little change as possible to anything? (as per Riemann, 2002)

Body – it is often turned into a means for achieving goals without necessarily receiving the necessary care. As a result of the suppressed affects, psychosomatic reactions are possible, such as heart problems, blood pressure problems, and headaches.

Achievement – the strive for perfectionism can turn into a fear of "making the first step", which can sometimes blossom into a full lack of action. The function of such behavior is to avoid failure. On the other hand, the compulsive personality's attitude could be sublimated into over-activity by pursuing a professional goal, one after the other, with intricate preciseness. The strive for control can turn into obsessions such as maniacal dusting. This is how fixating on obsessive-compulsive activity transfers the actual problem onto something basic from everyday life.

Contact – the obsessive-compulsive personality strives to follow tradition in rules and regulations, as well as anything of firmly set and outdated nature in family, society, or morals. Such behavior can lead to dogmatism, conservatism, prejudice, and certain forms of fanaticism. When in partnership, people with histrionic personalities are inclined to instruct their partners on what they should be. It is possible that they view their partners as their

own internal part of the I. They require a lot of adaptation and they also expect lots of consideration. But, on the other hand, they do have a sense of responsibility and remain loyal. When in contact with them one witnesses more rules than emotional expression.

Future/Fantasy – such personalities are led by an uncompromising principle, a sort of “internal rule”. This area can be rich in various anxieties. It is not a rare occurrence to witness fear of things coming to an end, which is accentuated by fear of death. It is very often that people with such dominant obsessive peculiarities remain stuck at the planning stage and never actually carry the plans out.

People with dominant depressive personality structures (as per Riemann, 2002) have a strongly expressed deficit in separation during the interaction stage. People whom they feel close to are typically idolized. Furthermore, it is possible that their dependence on the people they idolize turns into a means for coping with their basic conflicts. Making oneself dependent on one’s partner and vice versa provides the security that the other person will never leave. Such inclination leads us closer to a strategy that would aim at avoiding confrontation as they could make the significant others distance themselves. It is quite possible that such dynamic, depressive personalities can direct aggression toward themselves when put in a conflict situation.

Body – when in a conflict situation, it is very common to observe discomfort in the throat, esophagus, and stomach areas. They are most likely a result of the swallowed and untold personal needs that were set aside so that other people’s needs could be satisfied. Aggression is unacceptable for the depressive personality and if they cannot find an outlet, such as a relationship with an aggressive partner, for example, who serves as an ersatz for the suppressed aggressive impulse, they can direct aggression at themselves. It is possible for such people to end up in self-hate and self-devaluation, exercised as a rejection of their own body and lack of care for it, even self-harm. With such individuals, a disease and a hospital stay could be the only acceptable option for them to allow someone to take care of them, thus circumventing their internal conflict.

Achievement – in a conflict situation we could observe a decrease in cognitive ability. A weak memory can be viewed as failure prevention, as

the depressive personality type is inclined to believe that they will not make it. With them, a profession is hardly ever meant to just make money, it is considered a calling through which they take care of others – social workers, nurses, etc.

Contact – it is very often that conflicts are localized in that area in particular in the depressive structure. It is heavily loaded with built-up conflict tension, to a point where it becomes painful and unbearable for the individual. Such people feel as though they live in a “magical circle”. It is exactly their clinging to a partner that leads to crises as they try to set themselves free from the noose of that dependence. And that feeds into the fear of abandonment: “I can’t be without you!”

Future/Fantasy – most frequently thoughts in that area are directed at a pessimistic outlook on the future.

In the fourth personality structure, the schizoid, the need for individuality and uniqueness is a leading force. That is why the basic conflicts here could be localized in establishing a deep emotional contact, trusting partnership relations, or finding oneself in a dependency situation, for example, from a disease. On the other hand, these individuals have extremely well-developed abilities to communicate from a distance – through letters or messages. Aggression very often turns into the only way to function socially, which suggests guarding of personal boundaries. Such an inclination comes close to competition as a conflict resolution strategy, where individual needs will be set as priorities.

Body – schizoid personalities very often have strongly developed senses. When placed in a conflict situation, it is possible for them to manifest psychosomatic reactions in the contact and exchange organs, such as asthma attacks or eczema.

Achievement – this is the area where people with schizoid personality structure most often process conflict. Economic and financial independence is perceived as the only way to self-protect.

Contact – a schizoid personality builds a wall between him/herself and others, as they are considered a threat to their individuality. They can be cold, distanced, and insensitive to the point where arrogant behavior is developed. This is how they will find a partner leaving less painful, for example. A partnership is often

accompanied by mistrust and jealousy. Spontaneity in relationships with others is interpreted as an attempt for something wrong to be hidden or to survive the feeling of guilt. The schizoid type prefers professional type relationships and being united with people through shared ideology.

Future/Fantasy – a leading factor here are abstractions and ideas that more often than not are global and directed at changing the world.

Guidelines for therapeutic practice and hypotheses for therapeutic tasks

Consistently based on both theory in scientific literature and the professional experience and intuition of the participants in the Jubilee Conference “30 years of the Bulgarian Positive Psychotherapy Society – Fruit of Time”, Bulgaria, 2023, the following psychotherapeutic tasks were drawn based on the client’s dominant personality structure. The results are featured in Table 2.

Table 2.
Therapeutic tasks based on the client’s personality structure in dependence on the bearable boundaries of change in psychic inclinations and concepts

Personality Type	Tasks in the Therapeutic Process
Histrionic structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Instead of avoiding reality, learn to operate within its rules and regulations. – Build up readiness to analyze yourself and mature. – Get ready for refusals that are necessary.
Compulsive structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reach a balance between preserving the status quo and adapting to constant changes that go hand in hand with life. – Develop the skill to change yourself, to adapt to the requirements of the moment. Be flexible instead of rigid. – Integrate and assign value to what scares you, such as emotions, for example. – Develop the skill to be spontaneous.
Depressive structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Build up independence and autonomy to an extent where you are independent from your partner and surroundings. – Develop the skill to clearly express your own needs and wants. – Knowing one cannot escape from the subjective existence could balance out the readiness to give up on oneself. It is not fatal if you are not a priority from time to time. – Develop the skill to differentiate in the direction of establishing an I – You boundary.
Schizoid structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop skills for being emotionally close. – Be brave enough to share your uncertainty in yourself, look for feedback and compare your feelings with reality.

Discussion

A review of psychological literature reveals that the interest is directed at finding and studying variables that affect a person's behavior in conflict situations and strategies for favorable outcomes (Avruch, 2012, Schoupe et al., 2014 and others). Personality characteristics prove to be a major factor in defining behavioral patterns that affect the individual's conflict readiness, as well as his/her preferred coping strategies in such cases (Antonioni, 1998, Moberg, 1998, 2001; Van den Stock, 2015).

On the one hand, the psychotherapeutic process focuses on development of conflict dynamics. A psychotherapist follows a client's individual and unique experience. But even within the professional client-therapist interaction, fundamental prerequisites could be considered that take into account given client characteristics that help us in building working hypotheses and therapeutic tasks .

The aspiration to find a systematic sequence in an individual's behavioral strategies, dominated by personal character features, leads scientists' attention to the wide-range model of "The Big Five Factors" (Costa & McCrae, 1991). Additionally, it is not uncommon in psychotherapeutic practice to take into account the individual's personality structure which again plays a guiding role in perception and response to conflict situations. One of the models that has gained popularity in that regard is Fritz Riemann's model described in his book "Basic Forms of Fear" (Riemann, 2002).

The histrionic personality type holds a number of characteristics and the manifestation of the Extraversion trait. Both of them share as foundational the need for connection but with no deep emotional contact. They love having fun, feeling free, and enjoying the pleasures of the moment. They are "Virtuosos in creating indefinite ideas and expectations for potential miracles and magical outcomes" (Riemann, 2002, 176). We could expect both histrionic individual structures and extroverts to look for a mutual agreement in a conflict situation, a behavior close to the behavioral styles of Accommodation ($r = 0,305$; $p < 0,01$), Compromise ($r = 0,283$; $p < 0,01$) and Collaboration ($r = 0,282$; $p < 0,01$). Such an inclination towards conflicts is based on the histrionic personality's need to maintain various contacts, passionate and intensive, without the

burden of conflict tension. On the other hand, such people could be impulsive and illogical. We could find the root cause of their basic conflict in the oedipal phase and the formation of competitive skills. When in a conflict situation, that can reflect in a reaction addressed toward the person instead of the situation. This is how aggression with the tendency to generalize can be activated by a minor critique or offense.

We have already discussed that the depressive personality structure holds well-developed primal abilities. It is characterized by establishing emotional contact skills and empathy, and in general, these are well-meaning people. These specifics correlate with the cooperation dimension as per Costa and McCrae (Costa & McCrae, 1991). people with depressive personalities "avoid tension and prevent confrontation, so that there is peace, as well as because it may lead to their being alienated from their partners." (Riemann, 2002, 70). That is the reason why, when placed in a conflict situation, we can expect them to exercise the Avoidance and Accommodation styles. Such significant connections were observed with the Cooperation trait as well, namely ($r = 0,278$; $p < 0,01$) и ($r = 0,209$; $p < 0,01$).

We can find the specifics of the compulsive personality structure in the description of the conscientiousness trait. In both of them, we find strongly expressed secondary abilities, high levels of responsibility and awareness, careful planning, and a need for security. Maintaining tradition and old-time concepts can make it hard for a compulsive personality to comprehend different points of view during conflicts. When trying to resolve a crisis situation, such an individual could be led by principle but also could be intolerant. As a consequence, we could speculate that in both the conscientiousness trait and the compulsive personality structure the most significant connections will be the ones with the following conflict strategies: Avoidance ($r = 0,221$; $p < 0,01$), followed by Collaboration ($r = 0,184$; $p < 0,01$), and Competition ($r = 0,180$; $p < 0,01$).

The final personality structure type, the schizoid, is characterized by independence and self-sufficiency. Suppressed emotions are a challenge and could lead to manias. "Nothing restrains or stops aggression, it is not integrated into the whole schizoid person's personality" (Riemann, 2002, 35) The highly developed rational side and intellectual curiosity of these

individuals brings them closer to the fifth personality dimension – Openness to Experimentation. (Costa & McCrae, 1991). We could speculate that the preferred conflict resolution behavioral style will follow in line with the same tendency as per Costa and McCrae, namely – the conflict avoidance inclination ($r = 0,162$; $p < 0,01$). We could find an explanation for such behavior in those with schizoid personalities' desire to stay at a distance from contacting the world surrounding them.

Conclusions

The main aim of our work was twofold. The first was to investigate whether there are significant relationships between personality traits and conflict-handling styles. We have shown that every one of the Big Five traits correlates statistically with certain conflicts behaviours. Secondly, based on the achievements of the therapeutic practice, we have considered that different personality structure types prefer specific behaviours for dealing with conflicts. Although the research has its limitations, qualitative research methods from the psychotherapeutic work reveal the relationship between personality structure types and personality traits. Additional research is needed to prove statistically the tendencies in psychotherapeutic practice. Such knowledge can be essential in understanding the universality of human behavior in conflict situations and thus may be of assistance to all professionals in the helping professions.

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