

## PERSONALITY TRAITS AND AGGRESSION IN EGALITARIAN AND PATRIARCHAL FAMILIES

ADINA LUCIA PETRUȚI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Association of Integrative Research, Counselling and Psychotherapy, Timisoara, Romania

Corresponding author: Adina Lucia Petruți, [adina.petruți@email.com](mailto:adina.petruți@email.com)

**ABSTRACT.** The study presents comparative data about the aggression dynamic in the family based on its egalitarian and patriarchal characteristics. Tests have been applied to 40 people from 20 families, 10 families of egalitarian type and 10 of patriarchal type. The obtained results can be used as guidelines in the counselling of families with dysfunctions generated by aggressive behaviour.

**KEYWORDS:** family, egalitarian, patriarchal, aggression, personality traits.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the family knows an extremely fast transformation. The two last decades offers information of unexpected changes to which the family institution is subjected to (Vlăsceanu, 2009).

These changes, materialized in the proliferation of juvenile cohabitation, a higher marriage age or big age differences between partners, the late arrival of a child, the partners' education level alignment, the wife's strong social life participation, widening of the generation gap, have led to an increased rhythm of role changing in families and their defective assimilation by partners (Bata, 2004).

Hence, possible aggressive reactions concerning the behaviour adopted by one of the family members appeared.

Working with families or even with members of the society, allows therapists to observe individuals inside the system and how they participate and which are their roles inside the family and the society; how do their actions influence the couple, the family or even the entire system (Vișcu, 2014).

A fundamental concept used in this study is that of the family, referring especially to family types.

In order to summarize several family definitions, Adina Băran (2006) in her book about families, from a social-pedagogical perspective, defines the term as follows:

“Family is a social group that will or will not include adults of both genders (for example, single parent families), will or will not include one or more children (for example, couples without children), that can or are not born in their marriage (for example, adopted children or a partner's children from a previous marriage).

The relationship of the adults can or cannot originate in marriage (for example, couples that live together) they can or are not sharing a common house (for example, couples that commute). Adults can or not have a sexual cohabitation and their relationship can involve socially valorised emotions such as: love, attraction, respect for the parents and admiration.” (Băran, 2006).

The individuals' life in the family institutional frame contains two essential elements: a biological side, constant, almost unchanged during time and a social side, in permanent change.

From a sociological point of view, family represents the typical example for a primary group characterized by strong relationships of the “face-to-face” type through the association and intimate collaboration of all its members (Bata, 2004). Thus some family typologies can be pointed out.

One of them would be related to the origin family (the father's family) and the conception family (conjugal family).

The first one is the family in which you are born and raised and the second one is the one built through your own marriage. Family can also be characterized through the inclusion level of the family group in the nuclear family (consisting of husband, wife and their children) or extended (that includes the other relatives).

Another criterion to be taken into consideration in the study of the family would be the way authority is exerted. Two family systems are thus distinguished: patriarchal, matriarchal or egalitarian.

In the patriarchal system, the authority in the family is held by the eldest man in the extended family or by the husband in the nuclear family type.

In the matriarchal systems, authority is held by the eldest woman or the wife (Vlăsceanu, 2009). Obviously, the present confirms that the most common model is represented by the egalitarian system, the power and authority being equally divided among husband and wife.

At some point, the dynamic of family relations can include such acute aggression elements destabilizing the family. In order to attempt explain these imbalances, aggressive behaviours have been taken into consideration.

According to theories that explain aggression, this study has also been based on aggressive behaviour as a reactive behaviour. From the point of view of reactive theories, aggressive behaviour is a reaction to the frustrating, disagreeable situations (Dănilă, 2009).

Freud's theory on the expression of instincts being frustrating, an aggressive impulse being induced, has been later assumed by other scientists from the Yale University, USA. This theory states that "the emergence of aggressive behaviour is always based on the existence of frustration" and "the existence of frustration always leads to certain aggression forms" (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Cositoare and Sears in Berkowitz, 1989). Based on results obtained from studies regarding frustration – aggression relation that have been developed during time, researchers considered that, in the frame of this relation "one must take into consideration the emotional and moral maturity/immaturity of the people, as well as the determined tolerance to frustration, among others, the character and temper, education and life experiences" (Preda, 1998, p. 46).

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The main objective of this research refers to the identification of the personality characteristics, including the aggressive dimension with regard to the appurtenance to the two family types: patriarchal and egalitarian. The purpose is to show that there is a significant difference in the aggression dimension depending on the appurtenance of the members to a patriarchal and an egalitarian type family.

## 3. RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

The members of two family lots were used in this study, women and men, counting in total 40 people from the Arad County.

The first lot consisted of 10 egalitarian type families with ages between 20 and 30 years and the second lot made out of 10 patriarchal type families between the age of 45 and 60 years.

The instruments used were:

The Freiburg personality questionnaire (FPI), which is a multiple phase personality questionnaire developed by J. Fahrenberg, H. Selg, R. Hampel and is built by combining a classic psychological system with one extracted from the psychiatric neology that can be used in the clinical domain, as well as in the non-clinical (Fahrenberg et al., 2010).

FPI contains 212 items, grouped into nine scales, to which 3 more scales were added in order to obtain a global image of the investigated personality. The questionnaire is tested in a group or individually, with no time limit (usually, it takes around 30-40 minutes to complete the questionnaire). The answer charts are corrected with the help of an answer grid or the computer. In order to perform an investigation with the FPI you require the questionnaire, the answer sheet for an isolated exam, the correction and elaboration of the final profile being facilitated by 12 grids (one for each variable of the questionnaire) and the presented scales.

The content of the questionnaire questions refer to states and behaviours, attitudes, habits and bodily complaints.

The construction of the FPI is based on the factor study of the items and their grouping in the nine factors that describe the personality dimensions that are part of the questionnaire. The interpretation of the questionnaire is based on the use of the behavioural criteria - that explains the two poles of the each scale – and that are described in the test manual. Plus, based on the inter correlation study between the questionnaire's scales, certain relations between these have been established that allow a more nuanced interpretation.

The test authors operate with two standard types, in stanine or in nine nominal classes and T quotas. The original manual of the test contains standards for all questionnaire forms, separately for the feminine and masculine population. A general standard for both populations is also presented. The stanine standard is being worked with more often, separately for the feminine and masculine population. The standardization in nine normalized classes is a very precise allotment system proportional to the Gauss curve. In such a standard, the average is situated around the class 5 level, 54% of the population being found between classes 4 and 6 – this being the area in which the normal average behaviour oscillates. Any abnormality from this area is interpreted as tendency

(classes 2-3; 7-8) or as specific dominant note (classes 1 and 9) (Fahrenberg et al., 2010).

The experiment contained the following variables:

- Independent variable: the family system (patriarchal and egalitarian)
- Dependent variable: the personality dimensions (Edginess, Aggression, Depression, Excitability, Sociability, Calmness, Domination tendencies, Inhibition, Honesty, Extroversion, Emotional instability and Masculinity)

#### 4. RESULTS

In order to verify the hypothesis regarding the difference in aggression for the two family types, the two subject groups (patriarchal type and egalitarian type families) have statistically been compared

through personality traits as decisive factor for the aggression and the independent variable, family type, using the Independent Sample Test method (analysis between the average differences).

From Table no. 1 the following can be observed: 38 statistical liberty degrees a coefficient  $p < 0,05$ , so that for the next personality dimensions, the following significance thresholds have been obtained: FPI4 Excitability ( $p=0,018$ ), FPI7 Domination tendencies ( $p=0,044$ ) significant from a statistical point of view, FPI6 Calmness ( $p=0,000$ ), Emotional instability ( $p=0,001$ ) strongly significant from a statistical point of view.

Table no. 2 presents differences based on the family type (N=20 people, women and men, members of egalitarian type families, N=20 people, women and men, members of patriarchal type families).

Table no.1 T SPSS Test

				t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance threshold	Average difference
FPI1	Edginess	,000	1,000	,731	38	,469	,450
FPI2	Aggression	1,038	,315	-1,659	38	,105	-,850
FPI3	Depression	,707	,406	-1,148	38	,258	-,650
FPI4	Excitability	2,526	,120	-2,484	38	,018	-1,200
FPI5	Sociability	,041	,841	,788	38	,436	,400
FPI6	Calmness	,089	,767	3,920	38	,000	1,750
FPI7	Domination tendencies	1,128	,295	-2,081	38	,044	-1,050
FPI8	Inhibition	1,328	,256	-,982	38	,333	-,500
FPI9	Honesty	1,484	,231	-,458	38	,650	-,300
FPI10	Extroversion	,021	,887	-,204	38	,839	-,100
FPI11	Emotional instability	,468	,498	-3,427	38	,001	-1,700
FPI12	Masculinity	,056	,814	-,873	38	,388	-,450

Table no. 2 Family type differences

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
FPI1	1	20	4,70	1,949	,436
	2	20	4,25	1,943	,435
FPI2	1	20	4,35	1,694	,379
	2	20	5,20	1,542	,345
FPI3	1	20	4,95	1,932	,432
	2	20	5,60	1,635	,366
FPI4	1	20	4,55	1,191	,266
	2	20	5,75	1,803	,403
FPI5	1	20	5,80	1,609	,360
	2	20	5,40	1,603	,358
FPI6	1	20	5,75	1,372	,307

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
FPI7	2	20	4,00	1,451	,324
	1	20	5,05	1,791	,400
	2	20	6,10	1,373	,307
FPI8	1	20	4,40	1,729	,387
	2	20	4,90	1,483	,332
FPI9	1	20	3,85	2,277	,509
	2	20	4,15	1,843	,412
FPI10	1	20	5,10	1,518	,340
	2	20	5,20	1,576	,352
FPI11	1	20	4,35	1,387	,310
	2	20	6,05	1,731	,387
FPI12	1	20	5,55	1,538	,344
	2	20	6,00	1,717	,384

From Table 2 one can extract significant differences from a statistical point of view regarding the aggression dimension depending on the family type, so that the personality dimensions: Excitability, Calmness and Emotional instability have higher values in the patriarchal family type, whereas in the egalitarian family type the Domination tendency as a personality dimension has high values.

According to theoretical concepts, in the patriarchal system, family authority is held by the husband, while in the egalitarian system the power and authority are relatively divided among husband and wife.

In order to identify the aggression tendency in the four personality dimension types between men and women the T Test from SPSS is used, having as independent variable the masculine gender and the feminine gender and as dependent variable the personality dimensions Excitability, Calmness, Domination tendencies and Emotional instability.

From Table 3 the following can be observed: 38 degrees of statistical data with a coefficient of  $p < 0,05$ , so that for the next personality dimensions the following significance thresholds have been obtained: FPI4 Excitability ( $p=0,018$ ), FPI6 Calmness ( $p=0,026$ ), FPI11 Emotional instability ( $p=0,048$ ) significant from a statistical point of view.

Table no. 3 Test T SPSS

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
FPI4	Excitability	,257	,615	2,484	38	,018	1,200
FPI6	Calmness	,019	,890	-2,323	38	,026	-1,150
FPI7	Domination tendencies	,703	,407	1,652	38	,107	,850
FPI11	Emotional instability	,404	,529	2,042	38	,048	1,100

Table no. 4. Differences based on gender

	sex	N (1. men, 2. women)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
FPI4	1	20	5,75	1,650	,369
	2	20	4,55	1,395	,312
FPI6	1	20	4,30	1,658	,371
	2	20	5,45	1,468	,328
FPI7	1	20	6,00	1,522	,340
	2	20	5,15	1,725	,386

	sex	N (1. men, 2. women)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
FPI11	1	20	5,75	1,803	,403
	2	20	4,65	1,599	,357

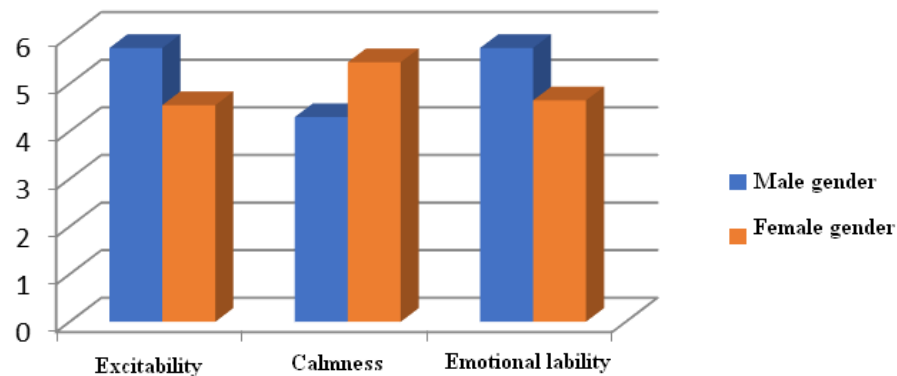


Fig. 1 Male-female comparison from the personality dimensions point of view

From Table no. 4 one can extract statistical differences between women and men from a personality dimension point of view: for the Excitability dimension for men increased values that indicate irritability states, reduced tolerance to frustration, foolish talk (threats), lack of patience, discomfort, violent emotions, rage and aggression have been obtained; and for the Emotional instability dimension, masculine gender subjects show an unstable spirit, are always tensed, impassive, violent and often feel misunderstood and aggrieved.

For the Calmness dimension, women have obtained increased values the show patience, optimism, good humour with fast and efficient action.

Thus the hypothesis was partially validated which states that there are significant differences in the aggression dimension based on the affiliation of the members to the patriarchal or egalitarian family type. From a statistical point of view, in the patriarchal family type the dominance belongs to the man who is aggressive and uni-personal, whereas the egalitarian family is characterized by a psychological and moral equilibrium.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study was the general investigation of aggression reality inside families, the identification and analysis of aggression types inside families, hence the members of two family lots were used, women and men, a total of 40 people from the Arad County.

According to the theoretical concepts, in the patriarchal system the authority is held by the

aggressive and uni-personal husband, whereas in the egalitarian system the power and authority are relatively divided between husband and wife and there is a psychological and moral equilibrium.

One of the limits of this study could be the social desirability because this is a delicate subject, under social opprobrium and tends to be masked and maintained only in the limits of family intimacy.

The data obtained has partially confirmed the first two hypotheses, so that from a statistical point of view, significant differences have resulted depending on the affiliation of the members to a certain family type and also significant differences depending on the education level of the family members.

These aspects can guide therapists in the couple counselling of aggressive people, thus being able to reconsider the values that the patriarchal or egalitarian family structure is based on. One important characteristic is the embracing of behaviours based on knowing the status-role of each family member and adjusting it at a cognitive and relational level when needed.

## REFERENCES

- Berkowitz, L.** (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 106(1), Jul 1989, 59-73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59>
- Bata, D.** (2004). *Familia în dinamica societății*, Sibiu: Lucian Blaga University Publishing House\
- Băran A.** (2006), *Familia azi. O perspectivă sociopedagogică*, Bucharest: Aramis

**Dănilă, A.K.** (2009). *Violența în familie. Teorii, particularități și intervenții specifice*. Iasi: “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University.

**Dollard, J., Doob, L. W., Miller, N. E., Mowrer, O. H., & Sears, R. R.** (1989) *Frustration and aggression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University

**Fahrenberg, J., Hampel, R., & Selg, H.** (2010). *Freiburg Personality Inventory FPI-R. Primary data from the standardization sample 1982*. [Translated Title] (Version 1) [Files on CD-ROM]. Trier: Center for Research Data in Psychology: Psych Data of the Leibniz Institute for Psychology Information ZPID. <https://doi.org/10.5160/psychdata.fgjn82fr19>

**Lorenz K.** (1998) *Asa zisul rău (despre istoria naturală a agresiunii)*, Bucharest: Humanitas

**Preda, V.** (1998) *Delicvența juvenilă o abordare multidisciplinară*. Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University press

**Vîșcu L.** (2014), Cultural influences in the exercise of family roles. Case study, *Christian international conference: Puterea de a fi altfel (The power to be different)*, PFA 2014, West University of Timisoara, 30-31 October 2014, Bucharest: EDP, ISBN 978-973-30-3757-6 (Ed. A2).

**Vlasceanu L.** (2009). *Sociologie*, Bucharest: Polirom