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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN NEGATIVE RELATIVE ASPECTS: THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY AND COMMUNICATION STYLE²

The research aimed at the exploration of gender differences in the quality of close relationships with a mother, a father, a sibling, a partner, and a friend concerning the negative exchange in the form of conflicts and antagonism, as well as the role of personality traits and communication styles in the development of individual differences. The sample consisted of 400 participants (69% females), age from 19 to 51. Data were collected using the short version of personality questionnaire Big Five Plus Two (VP+2-70), questionnaire about close relationship quality Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI), and the scale for estimating communication skills, Communicator Style Measure (CSM). The results confirmed gender specificities concerning a degree of the negative exchange in the relationship types, and their correlations with personality traits and communication style. Females had stronger negative exchange with partners and fathers, while males had it with siblings. Extraverted females had more conflicts with their mothers. Higher Openness and Positive Valence of males was followed by greater conflicts with partner and lower Antagonism with friends, whereas the higher Consciousness was followed by greater negative exchange with siblings. Daughters with more assertive communication and sons with more expressive communication had stronger degree of confrontations with parents. On the other hand, males with more assertive communication, and females with more expressive communication had stronger conflicts with partners. Stronger negative exchange of females with fathers and partners was probably due to their greater orientation to deal with relationship problems and emancipation needs. The

² The data used in this paper were obtained during the research conducted for the purpose of developing a doctoral dissertation entitled "Individual and social determinants of close interpersonal relationships: The importance of personality traits, family interactions, and communication".

result that more assertive women had stronger degree of conflict with parents maybe the results from the fostering of the honest communication in the family of origin. Confronting more assertive women with their parents may stem from fostering honest and directive communication in the family of origin. Given that the society pressures males to be independent, the result that more expressive males had stronger negative exchange with their family of origin had been expected. These findings showed that expressiveness indicate immaturity. The willingness of more assertive men to engage in a negative exchange with a partner indicates their involvement in the relationship.

Key words: gender, communication style conflicts, personality traits, relationships with loved ones

Introduction

Close interpersonal relationships determine psycho-social development of every individual. They are recognized as socialization agents and providers of the context for the early childhood development. However, they keep their important role throughout the life by helping us in satisfying our needs, reaching our goals, and staying healthy. In order to get more realistic picture of the close relationship experiences, we have to reconsider the problems in their functioning.

Firstly, the quality of close relationships is mainly investigated as a bipolar dimension for the satisfaction with romantic and marital relationships (Fincham & Rogge, 2010). The accumulation of knowledge has showed that quality includes other positive aspects of the relationship experiences like interaction, intimacy, respect and affection, as well as negative ones like conflicts, antagonisms, criticism, rejection, and violence (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985, 2009; Vangelisti, 2006). Persons experience and express to various degrees unpleasant emotions, negative thoughts and attitudes, as well as undesirable behaviors towards the loved ones. Dysfunctional events in relationships cannot be avoided (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998), but can be used as an alarm for the change. They are the main challenge to intimacy because they can lead to a decline in the quality of the relationship and its termination. "Among the most commonly studied negative phenomena there are abuse and sexual violence, communicational and interactive problems (i.e. conflicts), the beginning and termination of relationships (i.e. jealousy), and problematic relationships" (Perlman & Carcedo, 2011, pp. 5-6).

Conflicts and Antagonism in the Close Relationships

There are many forms of negative exchanges in close relationships, but we have constrained our research to conflict and antagonisms. The most frequently studied negative events in the close relationships are conflicts occurring in the situations in which a person does not like behavior, feelings, and thoughts of close persons (Eldridge, 2009). Authors of the instrument used for this paper have conceptualized the conflict as a quarrel and contrasting, and the antagonism as unpleasant and boring behavior (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). They focus on the behavior and avoid to deeply explore nomological network of these constructs. They conceptualize the conflict just through its emotional aspect. The conflict is more completely defined as a dynamic process between independent parties when they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements, and interfere with the achievement of their goals (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). The antagonism is in the conflict theory understood as a result of collision between autonomy and connection (Erbert, 2000). This concept also occurs in personality theory as the negative pole of the Agreeableness or reduced motivation to maintain positive social relationships with others (Lynam & Miller, 2019). Extreme values on this dimension indicate psychopathological aggressive tendencies with

manifestations of dominance and grandiosity (Holden, Roof, McCabe, & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). It has an important role in the interpersonal circumplex model of personality, and represents a combination of coldness and dominance (Lynam & Miller, 2019).

Occurring disagreements or negative exchanges with the loved ones may represent both a constructive phenomenon and a driver of development (Shantz & Hartup, 1992, according to Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003). Numerous authors believe that they are natural and inevitable relational phenomena necessary for the further development of close relationships, as well as the social and emotional development of the persons involved. They represent a chance for us to get to know ourselves and others better (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996; Sanford, 2009). However, people differ in the frequency and strength of their occurrence, as well as in the success of resolving them. These individual differences point to the importance of exploring the correlates of conflict and antagonism in close relationships, which are the factors that contribute to their occurrence, development, and resolution. Certain correlates concern the role of individuals in close relationships, others are related to the state of a close relationship, with some originating outside the close person or the relationship itself (Neff & Frye, 2009).

Important correlates of the relationship quality are personality traits, because they affect the beginning and development of the communication. In this paper, the Big Five plus Two model has been used (Čolović, Smederevac, & Mitrović, 2014), which is created as a result of a psycholexic study in our country. This model integrates the traits covered by the Big Five and two evaluation dimensions of the Positive and Negative Valence. In the shortened instrument, Neuroticism measures a negative affect and depression, Extraversion measures sociality and cordiality, Conscientiousness measures persistence, perseverance, and a responsible attitude towards obligations, Openness measures orientation towards art and various intellectual activities, while Aggression measures the anger. In terms of evaluative dimensions, Positive valence measures narcissism, while Negative valence measures manipulative tendencies and, to a lesser extent, a negative self-image. In the following text, we have overviewed relevant findings regarding a negative exchange mentioned in the same dimensions.

Agreeableness is the most important determinant of the conflict. It stems from the successful internalization of anger and frustration control (Graziano et al., 1996), and leads to conflict avoidance and forgiveness (Park & Antonioni, 2007). Pleasant individuals negatively evaluate the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies focused on demonstrating power (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, & Hair, 1996). Neuroticism is associated with a more frequent occurrence of negative relational events, due to their erroneous and predominantly negative interpretations followed by negative emotional states, and ineffective ways of responding to conflict situations in the form of avoidance, distancing and neglect (Berry & Willingham, 1997). Extraversion is characterized with the tendency to

initiate and maintain relationships, as well as to emotionally engage in it, but can lead to dominant and competitive behavior (Park & Antonioni, 2007). Empirical evidences have not confirmed yet that extraversion leads to more conflicts (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). Conscientiousness is associated with a higher incidence of pressure-driven conflicts due to the inability to achieve ambitious goals, while Openness protects against destructive conflicts by increasing adaptability to the demands of others (Park & Antonioni, 2007). Narcissism powerfully generates conflicts in deeper relationships because it is characterized by a tendency to underestimate others, selfish and aggressive behaviors, lack of warmth, trust, and forgiveness as well as vindictiveness (Wurst et al., 2017). Greater self-esteem leads to a more success in the conflict resolution (Frone, 2000).

An important, but unclear personal correlate of conflict and antagonism is a communication style. In this study, the communicator style is "the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood" (Norton, 1983, p.19). Norton (1983, p.12) has assumed that the communicator style as the meta-message can either negate or reinforce the message, and can also "disconfirm, ambiguate, transcend, or obscure meaning". According to Norton (1983), communication styles are typical profiles on the descriptors Friendly, Impressive, Contentious/Argumentative, Attentive, Precise, Animated, Dramatic, Open and Dominant style, and a special self-evaluative dimension - Communication Image. Friendly style determines the absence of hostility in communication and the pursuit of intimacy. Impressive style measures the noticeability and memorability of communication. Relaxed style indicates the degree of absence of anxiety in communication. Contentious style measures the propensity to seek and provide explanations and reasoning. Attentive style measures the willingness to pay attention to what others are saying. Precise style measures the focus on accuracy and detail during communication. Animated style measures the frequent use of gesture. Dramatic style measures imagery and overstatement in communication. Open style measures an extrovert and affordable way of communication. Dominant style measures the tendency to take control in communication. The reduction of descriptors have resulted in the dimensions Active (dramatic, lively) versus Relaxed and Indirect (attentive, supportive) versus Directive (dominant, argumentative), which some also recognize as equivalent to Ozgud's dimensions of Evaluation and Dynamism (Ganster, Petelle, Baker, Dallinger, & Backus, 1981, according to Baker & Ganster, 1985; Graham, 1994). Most studies of the dimensionality of communication styles identify Assertiveness and Love (Waldherr & Muck, 2011). Non-directivity would correspond to Assertiveness, and Relaxation to Love. It is important to note that among personality-oriented researchers, the communication style is seen as a characteristic adaptation of a person who is partly genetically determined (Waldherr & Muck, 2011). It turns out that the communication style determines a conflict management (Sillars, Canary, & Tafoya, 2004). Negotiation occurs when communication is cooperative direct, conflict avoidance occurs when cooperative and

indirect, direct quarrel occurs when competitive and direct, and indirect quarrel occurs when competitive and indirect. Sometimes, factors such as socio-cultural characteristics or environmental circumstances can lead to the conflict situations. Thus, conflict situations and antagonism are more common if the loved ones experience stressful situations, e.g. at work or related to financial hardship (Frye & Karney, 2006). Relational problems are shaped by the cultural values of the environment or the ethnic group to which the person belongs, especially those concerning the determination of appropriate feelings and behavior towards close persons (Eldridge, 2009).

An important aspect to consider when studying conflicts and antagonism in close relationships is the type of close relationship itself. Close relationships differ from each other both in terms of formation and in their nature. Each relationship has its own mechanisms of functioning, serves different motivational systems, meets different needs and goals of individuals, patterns of behavior and interaction, and socio-psychological functions (Hinde, 1979; Takahashi, 2003). All this generates differences between the negative exchange specific for different relationship types. Regardless of the existence of conflicts and negative feelings, family relationships, as a type of involuntary relationship, continue to exist because they cannot be terminated formally (Koerner, 2009). When it comes to the consequences of negative relational phenomena arising from voluntary relationships (marital relations, friendships), the situation is completely different, since they most often lead to a decline in the quality of the relationship and eventual termination. It is not surprising that conflicts and antagonism, which are linked to numerous variables of physical and mental health, mortality rates and devastating effects on posterity, are the most widely studied single topics in the studies of marital relationships (Fincham, 2009).

Gender Differences

Gender is a very important correlate of conflicts and antagonism in close relationships and numerous researchers (Black, 2000; De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Fischer & Evers, 2011). They have explored gender differences in the various negative aspects of the close relationships i.e., the frequency of the occurrence, the way of their resolution, and the influence on the relationship.

Numerous theories are trying to describe, explain, and anticipate thoughts, feelings and behavior of males and females in the close relationships. According to socio-biological theory, the causes of the gender determined relational differences could be in different genetic predispositions, while constructivists understand gender as a social construct, and attribute these differences to the influence of the society (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2000). The most pertinent view is multideterminacy of gender differences that attribute the causes of differences to biological and personal dispositions, social and economic status, attitudes and stereotypes about gender roles (Impett & Peplau, 2006).

The importance of gender differences in close relationships sometimes seems to be overemphasized (Impett & Peplau, 2006; Jelić, Kamenov, & Huić, 2014). Although women attribute greater importance to close relationships than men (Cross & Madison, 1997), they equally value and expect honesty, trust, and responsiveness as the basic foundations of close relationships (Vangelisti & Daly, 1997). Certain gender specificities concern the behavioral level of relationships, and are most expressed in communication. Women prefer to talk about feelings and personal topics in order to develop intimacy and closeness, while men prefer impersonal topics and participation in joint activities as a way of developing relationships. In addition, women prefer to talk about relationships, which is less practiced by men (Winstok, Smadar-Dror, & Weinberg, 2018). When women support others, they tend to empathize and talk about problems, while men tend to support through specific problem-solving. Regarding the conflict resolution, men tend to minimize problems and withdraw, while women tend to talk about problems (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2000).

There is no agreement on gender differences regarding negative exchanges with the loved ones. In traditional societies, women tend to suppress their anger, and men express it more directly (Fischer & Evers, 2011). However, meta studies show that modern women are more prone to hostility and stress, while men are readier to withdraw from the quarrel and focus on the problem solving (Woodin, 2011). It seems that social roles in the conflict situation have changed. Women, on the other hand, have more negative, but also positive interpersonal exchanges as well as larger, more diverse and richer social networks, resulting in their better social integration (Schuster, Kessler, & Aseltine, 1990).

A review of the existing literature indicates that the gender specificities of the influence of personality traits, and communication styles on the negative exchanges with the loved ones are insufficiently explored. The aim of the research was to determine the existence of gender differences in expressing the dimensions of quality of close relationships, negative exchanges (conflicts and antagonism), with their relatives (a mother, a father, a sibling, a partner, a friend), as well as to determine the role of personality traits and communication styles as possible determinants of these differences.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The data were collected by the convenience sampling method on the territory of Novi Sad. The response rate was 75%. The sample consisted of 400 adult participants (69.3% women). The participants' age ranged from 19 to 51 ($M = 29.12$, $SD = 7.75$). Most participants finished high school (55.5%) or higher education (42.8%), and a small percentage of them finished just primary education

(1.8%). The participants responded on the questionnaires using the pen and paper method. Prior to administering the questionnaires, participants were clarified the purpose of the survey and guaranteed anonymity.

Instruments

Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). This inventory was used to assess the participants' perceptions of supportive and negative interactions with a mother, a father, a sibling, a friend, and a partner. The NRI included 9 scales that measured various aspects of relational experience such as Affection, Admiration, Reliable alliance, Intimacy, Companionship, Instrumental help, Nurturance of the other, Conflict, and Antagonism. We used just subscales Conflict ("How much do you and this person disagree and quarrel?"), and Antagonism ("How much do you and this person get annoyed with each other's behavior?"). They consisted of three items, and ratings were done on the standard five-point Likert scales, and anchored points ranged from 1 (*little or none*) to 5 (*the most*). The Conflicts subscale measures the frequency of disagreements and the presence of feelings of anger, while Antagonism indicated the presence and expression of intolerance. Cronbach's alpha reliability for different types of the close relationships ranged from .72 to .81 for Conflicts, and .75 to .87 for Antagonism.

Big Five Plus Two – Short Version (VP+2-70; Čolović, Smederevac, & Mitrović, 2014). The questionnaire is based on the psycholexical approach to the structure of interpersonal traits in Serbian language. VP+2-70 is a shortened version of the questionnaire Big five plus two (Smederevac et al., 2010). VP+2-70 is consisted of seven scales: Neuroticism ("I often feel anxiety"), Extraversion ("I love people"), Conscientiousness ("I always finish what I start"), Aggressiveness ("I get angry often"), Openness ("I am a creative person"), Positive ("I am a born winner"), and Negative valence ("I sometimes think that I am a scary person"). Every scale is consisted of 10 items followed by five-point Likert scales for the response ranged from 1 (*I do not agree at all*) to 5 (*I totally agree*). In the present study, the reliability of subscales was satisfactory, and the Cronbach alpha values for each subscale's internal consistency were between .82 (Conscientiousness) and .88 (Neuroticism).

Communicator Style Measure (CSM; Norton, 1983). This questionnaire individually measured the specific communication style. The questionnaire contained 50 descriptions of the communication style, out of which only 45 items were scored, with the associated five-point Likert scales in range from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). Three items were reverse-scored to ensure positive responses and received higher scores. The following descriptors included the Friendly style ("I readily express my admiration for others."), Impression leaving style ("What I say usually leaves an impression on people."), Relaxed style ("I am very relaxed in communication."), Contentious style ("When I disagree with somebody, I am very quick to challenge them."), Attentive style ("I am a very careful communicator."),

Precise style ("I am very precise in communication."), Animated style ("I tend to constantly gesture when I communicate."), Dramatic style ("I dramatize a lot."), Open style ("I am an extremely open communicator."), and Dominant style ("I am dominant in social situations."), as well as the self-evaluative subscale Communication Image ("I am a good communicator").

Factor analysis, the principal component method using Promax rotation validated the latent structure of CSM questionnaire items (Appendix, Table A). Cattell's scree test and interpretability of obtained pattern matrix showed that the two-factor structure made the most sense. The items "I am very relaxed in communication.", "I am extremely open in communication.", "What I say usually leaves an impression on others.", "I am very precise in communication" had the highest loadings on the first factor, so it's called Assertiveness. This factor combined items from the subscales Relaxed, Open, Impressive, Friendly and Precise style, as well as from Communication image. This factor analysis showed that Communication image was not, as the Norton (1983) had assumed, construct dependent of all the other scales, but rather the indicator of the self-confidence that described Assertive communicators. The items "I often exaggerate as I speak to emphasize the essence", "I usually express what I want to say both physically and vocally", "Once I get wound up in a heated discussion I have a hard time to stop myself", had the loadings on the second factor. This factor combined the items in the Argumentative, Dramatic, Dominant, and Animated subscale, and was named Expressiveness. The correlation between Assertiveness and Expressiveness was .46. Other authors also identified similar dimensions (Waldherr & Muck, 2011). Assertiveness was found to be most significantly positively correlated with Extraversion and Openness, and negative with Neuroticism, while Expressiveness was correlated with Aggression, Negative Valence, and Neuroticism (Appendix, Table B). These relationships were gender independent. In the present study, internal consistency reliability coefficients for the CSM dimensions were .86 for Assertive communication, and .80 for Expressive communication.

Data Preparation and Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 24.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for the data storage, tabulation, and analysis. The analyses used average summative scores based on the previous research and factor validations of individual scales. Missing data were substituted with expectation-maximization method. For VP5+2-70 and CSM scale scores, the missing percentage was below 1%. A significantly higher percentage of missing responses was observed for the NRI scale. The largest percentage of missing data was observed on the parts of NRI subscale, intended to evaluate relationships with friends (31%), followed by a mother (20%), a father (16%) and finally a brother and a partner (8%). The missing data on these scales were not replaced because the reasons for not answering them were not clear.

Descriptive statistics was used for the overview of the sample structure and study variables separately by gender. Given the significant deviation from the normal distribution of variables from the domain of the negative exchange, further choice of techniques in the analysis was limited to nonparametric methods. Gender differences were checked with Mann-Whitney test. Correlation analyzes were done separately for genders with the Spearman rho coefficient. The significance of gender differences between Spearman correlations was verified by the analysis of critical interval overlaps (Cumming & Finch, 2005). It turned out that there were no statistically significant differences despite differences in the strength that allowed for interpretation of the results, thus the obtained differences should be accepted with reservation.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

In this section we presented descriptive statistics for the researched variables from the domains of negative exchange with close persons, personality traits, and communication by gender (Table 1). In the domain of negative exchange, substantially positively asymmetric distributions were observed for the scores on Conflict and Antagonism with a mother, a father, a sibling and a friend, while significant negatively asymmetric distributions were observed only for Conflict with a partner in both genders. This indicated that respondents reported to a lesser extent that conflict and antagonism were present in relationships with a father, a mother, a sibling, and a friend. More extreme aberrations from normal distributions were found for females. They reported a higher degree of conflict with partners and less negative exchange with siblings. Antagonism with the partner was normally distributed in both groups. Negative valence was moderately positively skewed in the group of males. Only females had moderately positively skewed distribution of scores on the Neuroticism scale. Negatively skewed distribution was also observed for the scores on Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness in both groups. Variables from the domain of communication were normally distributed. In the domain of personality traits, the severe positive skewness had distribution of females on the variable.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for study variables by gender

Variables	Males						Females								
	N	Min	Max	M	SD	z(Sk)	z(Ku)	N	Min	Max	M	SD	z(Sk)	z(K)	
Father	Conflict	99	1	5	2.05	0.71	5.80	7.54	236	1	4.67	2.25	0.79	4.97	2.08
	Antagonism	99	1	4.67	2.07	0.77	3.40	2.11	236	1	4.67	2.24	0.80	5.75	1.92
Mother	Conflict	99	1	4.67	2.12	0.84	3.61	1.39	219	1	4.67	2.08	0.78	6.07	2.83
	Antagonism	99	1	5	2.09	0.92	5.09	3.33	219	1	5	2.09	0.78	6.92	3.90
Sibling	Conflict	110	1	4	1.90	0.56	2.35	3.55	259	1	4.33	1.80	0.56	7.64	8.90
	Antagonism	110	1	4.33	1.92	0.61	3.26	3.39	259	1	4.67	1.92	0.58	8.91	14.02
Partner	Conflict	112	1	5	3.68	1.01	-2.68	-0.71	259	1	5	4.07	0.96	-6.81	0.95
	Antagonism	111	1	5	2.92	1.17	1.64	-1.71	259	1	5	3.51	1.14	-1.55	-3.52
Friend	Conflict	77	1	4.33	2.18	0.72	3.98	2.91	198	1	4.67	2.23	0.70	4.43	2.64
	Antagonism	77	1	4.67	2.17	0.76	4.01	2.21	198	1	4.67	2.19	0.69	5.42	3.53
Aggressiveness		123	1.1	4.8	2.75	0.80	0.11	-1.41	277	1	5	2.63	0.84	2.91	-0.93
Extraversion		123	1.5	5	3.93	0.69	-2.36	0.74	277	2	5	4.00	0.61	-4.14	1.13
Neuroticism		123	1	3.9	2.40	0.77	-0.21	-2.09	277	1	4.7	2.29	0.82	3.96	-0.60
Openness		123	1.2	5	3.92	0.71	-3.78	2.96	277	2.1	5	3.84	0.63	-2.89	-0.34
Conscientiousness		123	1.3	5	3.71	0.77	-1.56	-0.27	277	2	5.8	3.91	0.69	-2.80	-1.54
Negative Valence		123	1	4.7	2.05	0.77	4.25	1.68	277	1	4	1.73	0.65	9.33	6.53
Positive Valence		123	1.7	5	3.44	0.67	1.11	-0.81	277	1	5	3.26	0.74	-0.29	0.11
Assertiveness		123	1.76	5	3.70	0.53	-0.91	1.29	277	2.05	4.9	3.70	0.52	-1.25	0.30
Expressiveness		123	1.93	4.71	3.20	0.58	0.71	-0.76	277	1.21	4.93	3.07	0.62	-0.64	1.21

Note. N – number of participants; Min/Max – range; M – mean; SD – standard deviation; Sk – skewness, Ku – kurtosis; z – standardized values.

Gender Differences

Mann-Whitney tests showed statistically significant gender differences in Conscientiousness, $MWU = 14509.00$, $z = -2.37$, $p < 0.05$, Negative valence, $MWU = 12505.50$, $z = -4.25$, $p < .01$, Positive valence, $MWU = 14849.50$, $z = -2.05$, $p < .05$, Conflict with a father, $MWU = 9942.50$, $z = -2.20$, $p < .05$, Conflict with a sibling, $MWU = 12150.50$, $z = -2.31$, $p < 0.05$, Conflict with a partner, $MWU = 10893.50$, $z = -3.85$, $p < .01$, and Antagonism with a partner, $MWU = 10296.50$, $z = -4.35$, $p < .01$. In the domain of negative exchange, females had significantly higher scores on the dimensions Conflict with a partner and Conflict with a father, and Antagonism with a partner only (Table 1). Males scored higher on the Conflict with a sibling. In the domain of personality traits, females had significantly higher scores on Conscientiousness and less on Negative and Positive valence.

Table 2
Gender differences in explored variables with Mann-Whitney test

Variables	<i>MWU</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Me_m</i>	<i>Me_f</i>
Conflict with a father	9942.50	-2.20	.03	6.00	6.00
Antagonism with a father	10440.50	-1.57	.12	6.00	6.00
Conflict with a mother	10483.00	-0.48	.63	6.00	6.00
Antagonism with a mother	10537.00	-0.41	.68	6.00	6.00
Conflict with a sibling	12150.50	-2.31	.02	6.00	5.00
Antagonism with a sibling	14018.50	-0.25	.80	6.00	6.00
Conflict with a partner	10893.50	-3.85	.00	12.00	13.00
Antagonism with a partner	10296.50	-4.35	.00	8.00	11.00
Conflict with a friend	7146.00	-0.84	.40	6.00	6.00
Antagonism with a friend	7218.00	-0.71	.48	6.00	6.00
Aggressiveness	15338.00	-1.59	.11	2.70	2.60
Extraversion	16132.00	-0.85	.40	4.00	4.00
Neuroticism	15346.00	-1.58	.11	2.30	2.20
Openness	15662.50	-1.29	.20	4.00	3.90
Conscientiousness	14509.00	-2.37	.02	3.70	4.00
Negative valence	12505.50	-4.25	.00	1.90	1.60
Positive valence	14849.50	-2.05	.04	3.40	3.30
Assertiveness	16900.50	-0.13	.90	3.71	3.67
Expressiveness	15183.00	-1.74	.08	3.14	3.07

Note. *MWU* - Mann-Whitney-U statistic; *p* - significance level; *Me* - median.

Relationships between Personality Traits, Communication Styles and Negative Exchanges with the Loved Ones by Gender

In order to check relationships of personality traits, communication styles, and negative exchanges with the loved ones by gender, we used Spearman rho correlations separately for males and females (Table 3). Strengths of correlations were in the range from weak to moderate.

Overview of correlations showed us that Aggressiveness, Neuroticism, and Negative valence had stronger positive correlations, while Conscientiousness had more negative correlations with dimensions of negative exchange in all types of relationships. Aggressiveness was positively weakly correlated to both dimensions of the negative exchange with a father, a mother, and a sibling in both genders. However, results showed that Aggressiveness was slightly more correlated with dimensions of negative exchanges in the group of women (.23-.40) than men (.20-.37), especially in the relationship with a mother. The only exception was the relationship with a father, where the correlation was slightly stronger for males. For women, there were observed positive correlations between Aggressiveness and both dimensions of negative exchange with friends, while the only positive correlation for men was in Conflicts with friends. The weakest correlation was found for the relationship between Aggressiveness and Antagonism with a partner in the group of females. A higher score on Neuroticism was followed by a higher degree of negative exchange on both dimensions in all types of relationships except in the relationship with a partner. We found a negative correlation between Neuroticism and Conflict with a partner in both genders. Neuroticism was more relevant for the negative exchange in relationships, especially conflict with fathers of males, than for women. Negative valence was positively correlated with both dimensions of negative exchange in all types of relationships except with a partner. Values of Pearson correlation coefficients were almost the same. Conscientiousness was negatively correlated with both dimensions of negative exchange with the father. Correlations of Conflict with the father and Antagonism with the father were quite stronger in the group of males than in the group of females, respectfully. Conscientiousness was negatively correlated with the Antagonism in the exchange of a mother and a friend. In the group of men, Conscientiousness was negatively correlated with Conflict and Antagonism with a sibling, as well as with Conflict with a friend. All significant correlations between Conscientiousness and dimensions of negative exchange were slightly stronger for men. Extraversion was very important personality trait for negative exchange with partners. Its correlations with Conflict and Antagonism in the group of males were stronger than its correlations with Conflict and Antagonism in the group of females. Higher scores on Extraversion were followed by higher scores on the negative exchange subscales with partners in both genders. We found negative correlations of Extraversion and both dimensions of negative exchange with the mother just for females.

Table 3
Spearman correlations between constructs according to gender

Variable		Negative exchange											
		Father		Mother		Sibling		Partner		Friend			
		Conf	Antag	Conf	Antag	Conf	Antag	Conf	Antag	Conf	Antag	Conf	Antag
Aggressiveness	m	.37**	.25*	.30**	.23*	.28**	.20*	-.06	-.11	.23*	.14	.23*	.14
	f	.33**	.32**	.39**	.40**	.33**	.23**	.04	.13*	.30**	.27**	.30**	.27**
Extraversion	m	-.12	-.02	-.09	-.10	-.08	.00	.35**	.31**	-.13	-.16	-.13	-.16
	f	-.06	-.08	-.16*	-.17*	.04	-.05	.23**	.20**	-.03	-.06	-.03	-.06
Neuroticism	m	.35**	.26**	.25*	.21*	.26**	.09	-.24*	-.16	.23*	.23*	.23*	.23*
	f	.24**	.24**	.20**	.20**	.21**	.17**	-.14*	-.04	.31**	.26**	.31**	.26**
Openness	m	-.17	-.09	-.10	-.09	-.12	-.03	.20*	.15	-.17	-.23*	-.17	-.23*
	f	-.10	.00	-.14*	-.06	-.06	-.04	.07	.07	-.09	-.04	-.09	-.04
Conscientiousness	m	-.35**	-.32**	-.14	-.25*	-.25**	-.21*	.12	.14	-.24*	-.30**	-.24*	-.30**
	f	-.15*	-.21**	-.12	-.20**	-.10	-.10	.01	-.03	-.13	-.22**	-.13	-.22**
Negative valence	m	.35**	.33**	.24*	.29**	.34**	.26**	-.10	-.11	.31**	.26*	.31**	.26*
	f	.29**	.30**	.30**	.32**	.28**	.23**	-.06	.06	.29**	.27**	.29**	.27**
Positive valence	m	-.06	.00	.13	.09	-.01	.04	.20*	.18	-.09	-.24*	-.09	-.24*
	f	-.08	-.05	.02	.07	.02	-.02	.06	.06	.02	.04	.02	.04
Assertiveness	m	-.06	-.06	.02	-.04	-.02	-.03	.25**	.26**	-.07	-.15	-.07	-.15
	f	-.18**	-.13*	-.18**	-.08	-.05	-.08	.09	.14*	-.09	-.04	-.09	-.04
Expressiveness	m	.25*	.19*	.25*	.19*	.15	.11	.12	.03	-.01	-.10	-.01	-.10
	f	.07	.14*	.08	.16*	.14*	.11	.05	.17**	.04	.11	.04	.11

Notes. Conf – Conflicts; Antag – Antagonism.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Openness and Positive valence did not have many significant correlations with the dimensions of negative exchange. In the group of men, Openness was positively correlated with Conflict with a partner, and negatively with Antagonism with friends. In the group of women, greater Openness resulted in less Conflict with the mother. Males had a mild positive correlation between Positive valence and Conflict with the partner, and negative with Antagonistic exchanges with friends.

Men with higher Assertiveness had a greater degree of Conflict and Antagonism with the partner, while women just had a higher degree of Antagonism with the partner. In the group of women, Assertiveness was weakly negatively associated with both dimensions of negative exchange with the father, and only with Conflict with the mother. Expressiveness was slightly positively correlated with both dimensions of the negative exchange with the father and the mother in the group of men. In the group of women, Expressiveness was weakly positively associated with Antagonism in exchange with the father, the mother, and the partner. In addition, it was weakly positively associated with Conflicts in exchange with the sibling.

Discussion

In this paper we explored the gender differences in the negative interpersonal exchange (conflicts and antagonism) with the loved ones (a mother, a father, a sibling, a partner, a friend), as well as gender's moderating role in the relationship of personality traits, communication style, and negative exchange. The study found gender differences in the degree of negative exchanges with the loved ones. In addition, it showed that gender weakly moderated effects of personality traits and communication styles on the degree of negative exchanges.

Positively skewed distribution of scores on the dimensions of negative exchange with members of the family of origin and friends for both genders, but especially for females, indicated that our participants had a tendency to avoid conflicts and antagonism with them. Family relationships continued to exist as a lifelong base of attachment, support, and assistance, to which individuals were directed almost daily (Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994), but negative exchanges declined with growing of distance and decreasing common tasks. However, females had obviously stronger tendency to confront more with their partners. These results showed that relational conflicts relocated from the family of origin to the family of procreation, or just to the relationship with the partner that dominate in adulthood (Collins & Madsen, 2006). This increased negative exchange was partly caused with the problems that cohabitation or functioning in dyad brought. Given that the partnership is a type of voluntary relationship and thus more sensitive to negative experiences, greater mutual attention and effort are needed. Voluntary in nature, a friendly relationship records a less negative ex-

change. Since adulthood, the social network of close friends has narrowed, but it retains an important role in providing support and assistance (Carstensen, 1992). In addition, developmentally viewed, in the adult friendships, friends are more supportive than competitive.

The study has pointed to certain gender differences in negative relational experiences. The main finding is that women have more pronounced negative exchanges with their partner and the father. The results could be partly attributed to the tendency of women to value and focus on close relationships (Cross & Madison, 1997). Their engagement encourages them to make the effort to maintain closeness and attachment which requires discussing relational problems and accepting changes (Winstok et al., 2018). Men, on the other hand, avoid discussing relational problems and tend to retreat in the face of the woman's efforts to change something. Findings that women tend to have more negative exchange with important male figures indicate their need for emancipation, as well as the protest against social roles of males as the authority that is still valid in our society (Petrović, 2006). It seems that the unconditional acceptance of the males' authority and demands is replaced with questioning their authority, conflict situations and intolerance. It is possible that women transfer the work model of relation from the father to the partner, continuing to practice a similar style of communication. A possible explanation of the increased negative exchange in the relationship daughter-father could be in the decline of interactions, and feelings of closeness and intimacy that starts in adolescence (Kapor Stanulović, according to Petrović, 2006).

The study indicates that the gender weakly moderates correlations between personality traits and negative exchange with the close ones. We can speak more about gender similarities concerning the relationships between certain personality traits and negative relational exchange. Aggressiveness, Neuroticism, and Negative valence have exerted adverse effects on close relationships, in both genders, which is in line with the previous research (Robins, Caspi, & Moffit, 2002). Their detrimental effects come out of the misinterpretation of relational events as overwhelmingly negative, threatening, and hostile (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991; Graziano et al., 1996). Consequently, more negative emotional states and reactions occur in an interpersonal situation, which diminishes the quality of the relationship (Furr & Funder, 1998). The obtained positive correlations of Negative valence with dimensions of negative exchange have been expected because of negative experiences of self that indicate lack of integration and unwillingness to engage more deeply with oneself, probably indicating an avoidance to deal with others as well. However, in this research, Neuroticism and Extraversion had generally stronger effects on the negative exchange of males, while Aggressiveness had more effects on the negative exchange of females. It was probably because the rejecting of gender determined social role, like in the case of more aggressive woman or neurotic men, led to unacceptance and various problems with the close ones. Extraversion was accompanied with more conflicts with a partner

regardless of gender. The fact that it was more correlated in the group of males was explained with their higher dominance and engagement in the relationship that probably resulted in stronger females' protest. In the group of females, Extraversion was a protector from negative exchanges with the mother. This could be explained with the positive effect of warmth, and the positive affect on the maintenance of relationships between mothers and daughters. Gender was not a moderator of relationships between negative valence and dimensions of negative exchange.

Conscientiousness has had a positive effect on close relationships in both genders, contradicting to the assumption that the ambition it incorporates would have a detrimental effect on relationships. It has a special role in the protection from Antagonism that is more detrimental type of the negative exchange. Conscientious persons are committed to close relationships and take relational obligations seriously (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). They are more likely to contact family members (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998), and to work on reducing conflicts with close persons (Parker, Lüdtke, Trautwein, & Roberts, 2012). This conflict solving orientation is probably partly due to their active and constructive approach to problems (Heller et al., 2004). This trait has been more important protector of negative exchange for males. Males that are more committed to relationships through solving actual problems and fulfilling their obligations report less negative exchange. It seems that their close persons accept them more as they accept their social roles to the greater extent.

Males with higher Openness and Positive Valence have had more conflicts with a partner and less antagonism with friends. The question is whether this finding can be explained by the atypical willingness of the more opened men to reconsider their relationship with a partner, and to unconditionally accept their friends due to increased tolerance. On the other hand, Positive valence, as an indicator of narcissism, certainly can lead to the humiliation of partners (Wurst et al., 2017). Females with higher openness have reported less conflicts with the mother, which is probably caused by their greater tolerance and orientation to understanding others. Earlier research suggests an inconsistent pattern of correlations between openness and close relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998, Heller et al., 2004). This is partly explained by the fact that more open persons strive to understand others and approach problems constructively (Park & Antonioni, 2006). The reason for the insignificance of the other correlations can be partly attributed to the intellectual orientation of our Openness scale.

In the operationalization of the communication style, we have chosen the two-factor model of Assertiveness and Expressiveness (Waldherr & Muck, 2011). Their relationships with personality traits let us to understand them better. Assertiveness has indicated a constructive approach to communication and Expressiveness as a dysfunctional approach. The results of the study have indicated that both communication factors predominantly color relational experiences. In general, assertive style is protective for women while expressive style is a generator

of negative exchanges, especially in relationships with the family members. Males with higher assertive style have had more negative exchanges in the domain of partnerships, while females have only had higher antagonism with the partner. This probably stems from the fact that more involvement and honesty in the relationship leads to the orientation on problem-solving, and consequently to the dealing with existing conflicts. In the group of women, assertiveness has led to less conflict with their parents. This result may indicate that non-authoritarian family relationships and allowance to participate in the decision making have helped them to develop an assertive style, and also had a beneficial effect on the quality of closeness and attachment within the family of origin. This finding also confirms that engagement in communication and problem-solving has more positive effects in the long run (Sillars et al., 2004). The expressive style of communication in both genders proves to be unfavorable, especially for relationships with parents, especially in the group of men. It can be attributed to its accompanying negative relational messages in the form of stressing personal power and domination, disrespect for the interlocutor that can create the relational tension and intolerance (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). The expressive style does not follow the stereotype of male as a calm and intelligent authority, but rather as a nervous and instable, feminized person. Correlations of expressive communication with negative exchange have been weaker or insignificant in the group of males, but it also disturbs the quality of most relationships. The lesser importance of expressiveness is likely to stem from their orientation to maintain close relationships pleasant (Mihic & Petrović, 2009). Such a relationship requires an affective communication orientation, which provides ego support, listening, respect, comfort, as necessary for a sense of closeness and attachment (Burlison, 2003). Since the conflicts and antagonisms have been more expressed in the case of "gender-inappropriate behavior", we conclude that it confirms our expectations deduced from the social role theory that our social environment protest if we do not behave according to stereotype.

The generality of the study results is limited by weak to moderate correlations and statistically insignificant gender differences. On the other hand, interpreted differences are indicative from the point of significance level of correlations. A further problem is the transversal study design and collection of information just through a self-report. In the field of conflicts, techniques based on dyad research, collecting assessments of other conflict participants, or observing relationships may be more appropriate. Another issue is the uncontrolled effects of adulthood developmental stages and specificities of the family in which they currently live. A shortage of substantial differences in correlations of conflicts and antagonism with other variables has indicated that it should be worked on the discriminant validity of these concepts. There is a lack of relationship with own children in NRI (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Children are very important part of the social network of many adults, and it would be important to know if they, as members of the family of procreation, suffer because of frequent and destructive negative

exchange. There is vagueness of the reasons for not responding to the NRI for some roles, and further processing of such incomplete data is needed. It would be useful in the future to ask participants to explain why they decide to not answer questions concerning specific relationship type. It may be more convenient for the respondents to identify the individuals who make up the most important parts of their network, and to respond accordingly. It would be also good to explore gender specific determinants of negative exchange as mechanism to maintaining healthy boundaries with close persons.

Results can be used in creating the programs for supporting family in resolving marital conflicts. The result that partners are most exposed to the negative aspects of relationships indicates the need to build programs to strengthen partnerships through mastering constructive conflict resolution skills and assertive communication.

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Appendix

Table A
Pattern matrix for two factors solution on the items of CSM

Items	F1	F2
3 I readily express my admiration for others. (friendly)	.38	
4 What I say usually leaves an impression on people. (impression leaving)	.59	
5 I leave people with the impression of me which they tend to remember. (impression leaving)	.59	
6 To be friendly, I habitually acknowledge verbally other's contribution. (friendly)	.54	
7 I am a very good communicator (communication image)	.46	
8 I have some nervous mannerisms in my speech. (relaxed R)	.51	-.52
9 I am a very relaxed in communication. (relaxed)	.63	
10 When I disagree with somebody, I am very quick to challenge them. (contentious)		.46
11 I can always repeat back to a person exactly what was meant. (careful)	.52	
13 I am a very precise in communicator. (precise)	.59	
14 I leave a definite impression on people. (impression leaving)	.53	
15 The rhythm or flow of my speech is sometimes affected by my nervousness. (R) (relaxed)	.40	-.52
16 Under pressure I come across as a relaxed person. (relaxed)		
17 My eyes reflect exactly what I feel when I communicate. (animated)	.43	
18 I dramatize a lot. (dramatic)	-.36	.47
19 I always find it is very easy to communicate on one-on-one basis with strangers. (communication image)	.36	
20 Usually, I deliberately react in such a way that people know that I am listening them. (careful)		.45
21 I really like listening to people carefully. (careful)	.45	
22 Very often I insist that others attach documents or present some evidence of what they are saying. (precise)		.47
23 I'm trying to take control when I'm dominant. (dominant)		.61
24 It burdens me when a discussion is left during which there is something unclear. (contentious)		.48
25 In most social situations, I usually perform strongly. (dominant)		.47

26	My non-verbal communication is very expressive in social situations. (animated)	.45	
27	The way I speak usually impresses people. (impression leaving)	.56	
28	Usually in communication I act on people. (friendly)	.56	
29	While communicating I actively use a lot of facial expressions. (animated)	.37	
30	I often exaggerate while speaking to emphasize the substance. (dramatic)	.64	
31	I'm very careful while communicating. (careful)	.50	
32	As a rule, I openly express my feelings. (open)	.47	
33	I don't usually tell others much about myself until I get to know them well. (open)		
34	I regularly tell jokes, anecdotes and stories when I communicate. (dramatic)	.22	
35	I tend to constantly gesture when I communicate. (animated)	.42	
36	I'm extremely open communicator. (open)	.60	
38	I'm very good at communicating in a small group of strangers. (communication image)	.35	
39	During discussions, I insist on precise definitions (precise)		
40	In most social situations I often engage in communication. (dominant)	.36	.37
41	I find it extremely easy to maintain the conversation with members of the opposite sex whom I just met. (communication image)	.38	
42	I like to be precise in communication. (precise)	.48	
44	Usually both physically and vocally I express what I want to say. (dramatic)	.63	
46	It's easy to give away personal things about myself. (open)	.33	
47	I am dominant in social situations. (dominant)	.45	
48	I'm always ready for controversy. (contentious)	.55	
49	Once I get wound up in a heated discussion, I have a hard time stopping myself (contentious)	.61	
50	I am always very friendly in communication (friendly)	.56	
	Eigenvalue before rotation	8.88	3.15
	Eigenvalue after rotation	7.78	6.85
	Explained variance before rotation (%)	20.17	7.15

Table B
Correlations amongst dimensions of communication and personality traits by gender

	Males (N=123)		Females (N=277)	
	Assertiveness	Expressiveness	Assertiveness	Expressiveness
Aggressiveness	-0.01	.50**	-0.03	.47**
Extraversion	.59**	.24**	.61**	.27**
Neuroticism	-.26**	.23*	-.20**	.07
Openness	.53**	0.16	.49**	.29**
Conscientiousness	.24**	-0.12	.17**	-0.05
Negative valence	-0.04	.43**	-.14*	.34**
Positive valence	.37**	.39**	.46**	.35**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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**RODNE RAZLIKE U NEGATIVNIM
RELACIJSKIM ASPEKTIMA:
ULOGA OSOBINA LIČNOSTI I
KOMUNIKACIJE**

Istraživanjem su proverene rodne razlike u dimenzijama kvaliteta bliskih odnosa – negativnim razmenama (konflikti i antagonizam) sa bližnjima (majka, otac, sibling, partner, prijatelj), kao i utvrđivanje uloge osobina ličnosti i stilova komunikacije kao mogućih individualnih determinanti tih razlika. Uzorak je sačinjavalo 400 ispitanika iz Novoga Sada i okoline (69,3% ženskih), starosti od 19 do 51 godina. Prikupljanje podataka je realizovano putem skraćene verzije upitnika ličnosti Velikih pet plus dva (VP+2-70), upitnika kvaliteta bliskih odnosa Inventara mreže socijalnih odnosa (NRI) i skale za operacionalizaciju komunikacije Mera stilova komunikacije (CSM). Rezultati potvrđuju rodne specifičnosti izraženosti negativne razmene u pojedinim tipovima odnosa i njihovih veza sa osobinama ličnosti i stilovima komunikacije. Žene su imale veću negativnu razmenu s partnerom i ocem, a muškarci sa siblingom. Ekstravertnije žene se više sukobljavaju s majkom. Veću Otvorenost i Pozitivnu valencu muškaraca prate veći Konflikti s partnerom, a manji Antagonizam s prijateljima dok veću Savesnost prati veća negativna razmena sa siblingom. S roditeljima se sukobljavaju ćerke sa asertivnijom i sinovi s izražajnijom komunikacijom dok se s partnerima sukobljavaju asertivniji muškarci i izražajnije žene. Veća spremnost žena da se upuštaju u negativne razmene s očevima i partnerima verovatno proizlazi iz njihove veće usmerenosti na bavljenje relacijskim problemima i težnje ka emancipaciji. Sukobljavanje asertivnijih žena s roditeljima možda proizlazi iz negovanja iskrene komunikacije u primarnoj porodici. S obzirom da društvo forsira samostalnost muškaraca, očekivan je nalaz da će se s primarnom porodicom sukobljavati izražajniji muškarci. Ovaj rezultat ukazuje da je izražajnost i donekle izraz nezrelosti. Spremnost asertivnijih muškaraca na negativnu razmenu s partnerom ukazuje na njihovu veću uključenost u odnos.

Ključne reči: konflikti, osobine ličnosti, relacije sa bliskim osobama, rodne razlike, stil komunikacije