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## Cross-cultural Study of Teacher Passivity through the Lens of Educational Transactional Analysis

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the article is to present the research results based on the concept of passivity in accordance with the assumptions of transactional analysis – one of the psychotherapeutic modalities in the humanistic school of thought. Passivity is defined as behaviors that block constructive and solution-oriented actions.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The main research methods included diagnostic surveys and questionnaire techniques. The study used the “Reality of an Educator” questionnaire by Anna Pierzchała (2013). 441 respondents provided their answers from the four countries mentioned above. The differences were identified using the Kruskal–Wallis test, the equivalent of a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) that is commonly used for independent samples.

**Findings:** The comparative cross-cultural research on teacher passive behaviours indicated significant educational differences between countries. The lowest levels of passivity were reported in Guatemala [1] and the highest in Ukraine. The Hofstede Model of Cultural Dimensions enabled to outline some generic tendencies concerning passive behaviours in the countries studied. Individually reported levels of passivity were bridged with cultural determinants resulting from teachers' social functioning.

**Practical Implications:** The study offers some guidelines for tackling teacher passivity and identifies strategies of enhancing problem-solving skills. The most common passive behaviour across all countries was overadaptation, which underlined the importance of developing teachers' awareness of interpersonal phenomena from the point of view of transactional analysis.

**Originality/Value:** The research presented has not been carried out before and at this stage has an exploratory character, indicating certain interculturally declared patterns and at the same time determining areas for further investigation. Transactional analysis appears to be a useful theoretical construct in the design of cross-cultural comparative studies.

**Keywords:** Passivity, transactional analysis, teacher, cross-cultural studies.

**JEL codes:** Y80.

**Paper Type:** Research article.

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## 1. Introduction

A significant number of institutions and governments around the world are currently trying to improve teaching and learning, both at the individual and at the systemic level. For years, discussions have taken place internationally regarding the direction, process, and rationale for changing education systems and ensuring that every child has access to a quality education (UNICEF, 2019). Years ago, it was noted that education in its present form does not respond to the challenges of the 21st century, and the current, post-industrial educational process is outdated (Robinson, 2009). It seems that despite numerous discussions in the field of education, much remains to be done. Taking an interdisciplinary perspective based on the concepts that have been developed beyond the strict domain of education provides valuable opportunities for innovative diagnosis and in-depth analysis. Hence, in this study, it was decided to use elements of educational transactional analysis to offer a fresh perspective.

Introducing reforms through legislation is only a starting point, and teachers are the final agents of change that implement new strategies. Having an in-depth understanding of educators' circumstances, especially the factors that impede or hinder the transformation of teaching and learning, is useful when considering changes, both at the individual and at the structural level.

In this study, the authors used the concept of passivity derived from transactional analysis to explain the factors that may be slowing down the strategic implementation of change, considered within the context of social functioning. Unfortunately a lot of research in the field of psychology traditionally ignored the impact of culture, even though *“there are noteworthy conceptual differences regarding the ways in which culture and behavior interrelate.”* (Segall, Lonner, and Berry, 1998). Recently, we are witnessing greater developments in social sciences that challenge the Western – centric approach to the study of human behaviour and the extrapolation of the data from WEIRD societies (Western Educated Industrialised Rich Democratic) that may lead to skewed and reductionist conclusions in psychological research (Heinrich, 2020). With this in mind, the authors took account of the need to validate interculturally the concept of passivity by comparing and contrasting teacher passivity in various cultural contexts (i.e., Guatemala, United Kingdom, Poland, and Ukraine).

## 2. Theoretical Incentive for the Research

There are a number of approaches to explain teacher functioning in the education process, one of which is transactional analysis (TA); this particular theory was originally developed in the 1950s by Eric Berne. TA is a theory of personality, a system of psychotherapy and psychological counselling, a method for improving organizations, and a description of human development that also applies to the field of education (Stewart and Joines, 2009). The creator of TA was a Canadian

psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who believed that psychological concepts should be more accessible in order to effectively support individuals in times of challenge. TA is a very practical and pragmatic approach that is based on psychodynamic, behavioral, and systemic thinking (Berne, 1963) without the unnecessary use of the hermetic language of psychoanalysis. Thus, it paves the way for precise qualitative and quantitative descriptions of specific classroom teacher behaviors. Moreover, TA enables to formulate hypotheses regarding teachers' internal motivational mechanisms. This combination of intrapsychic processes with interpersonal processes bridges the gap between teacher phenomenology and their externally observable behavior. Due to this, TA is becoming increasingly more popular in education (Barrow *et al.*, 2001; Jagieła, 2004; Łęski, 1997; Pierzchała, 2010; 2013; Widawska 2016a; 2016b).

Considering the main research problem indicated in the introduction concerning the role of teacher behavior in the planning and implementation of changes in educational systems around the world, this study constitutes an attempt to describe a significant aspect of individual social functioning, namely passivity. Diagnosing the major passive strategies amongst teachers can be a starting point for designing policies that effectively reduce the risk of failure during educational reforms. A comprehensive picture of educational passivity is also helpful for describing and understanding interpersonal classroom phenomena that undermine the effectiveness of an educational endeavor. The very notion of passivity in TA is related to the concepts of frame of reference and discounting, which will be explained below.

### **3. Frame of Reference**

People perceive reality through a specific filter of their subjectivity, called a frame of reference. "An individual's frame of reference is the structure of associated (conditioned) responses (neural pathways) [...] in response to specific stimuli. It provides the individual with an overall perceptual, conceptual, affective, and action set which is used to define the self, other people, and the world both structurally and dynamically" (Schiff and Schiff, 1975). In order to maintain a coherent sense of self, people employ defense mechanisms that enable them to maintain their individual frame of reference. It is a process of organizing and structuring perceptual stimuli that happens through redefining (Mellor and Schiff, 1975a) and discounting (Mellor and Schiff, 1975b). Individuals selectively pay attention to specific elements of a given situation, so that some aspects are minimized while others exaggerated, which produces a final picture that is consistent with the expectations established during childhood.

Schiff and Schiff (1975) implied that individuals have different frames of reference depending on their early experiences and parental influence. Parental and cultural impacts are crucial, because they define the way a growing child perceives reality. Interpersonal communication is possible to the extent that two people agree on aspects of their frames of reference in order to define reality together.

In the context of education, it can be assumed that both teachers and students have their own individual frames of reference, which directly affects their perception of the teaching–learning process. Therefore, teachers representing different countries will also differ in their perception of reality, due to the various influences of their cultural conditioning.

In addition, some have frames of reference that are adequate to the here and now and take full account of their skills and capacities. However, some people operate from outdated, past, and inadequate frames of reference that limit their range of problem-solving skills. This phenomenon is a problem in the classroom because both teachers and students might ignore some aspects of themselves, others, or situations, and thus exhibit self-limiting behaviors. For example, in some collectivistic cultures, students speak only when the teacher addresses them personally (Hofstede, 1986). This is considered ineffective because it limits the amount of potential interaction between teacher and student. Therefore, an individual's frame of reference is crucial in determining one's performance, which, in the context of education, would equate to the quality of the teaching and learning processes.

#### **4. Discounting**

In order to maintain a stable frame of reference, individuals discount aspects of themselves, others, or a situation. “The person who discounts believes or acts as though some aspect of the self, other people, or reality is less significant than it actually is. Impact is reduced, usually purposefully, to maintain a frame of reference” (Mellor and Schiff, 1975a). Each of us perceives the world through their subjective cognitive structures in order to maintain a sense of coherence. The intrapsychic process that accompanies discounting consists of unconsciously recreating relational patterns established in the past. Discounting results from ignoring or omitting information relevant to a solution of a problem in a given situation (Stewart and Joines, 2009), because recognizing this information as significant contradicts the perception of reality that has been established early in the parent–child relationship. Both teachers and students may discount aspects of themselves, others, or situations in the teaching–learning process, which reduces their ability to solve problems and the effectiveness of educational activities.

Assuming that one of the goals of teaching and learning is to expand individual frames of reference to perceive reality more broadly (i.e., outside of the current frame of reference), the role of the teacher is pivotal in expanding students' perceptions. The educator is the one who initiates the process of developing autonomy. Updating pupils' frames of reference and reducing discounting can be considered as one of the most crucial tasks in the teacher–student relationship, as this behavior models thinking and creates expectations in the classroom. In this regard, it is important for educators to function adequately to the here and now and to become aware of their perceptual patterns that could potentially lead to

overlooking important aspects of themselves, students, or any given classroom situation. This would be an ideal scenario to support learners' autonomy.

## 5. Passive Behaviors

Discounting is an internal process that manifests itself externally through passive behaviors (Schiff and Schiff, 1971). Stewart and Joines (2009) emphasized that passivity takes place when an individual ceases to perform certain activities or performs them ineffectively. In the context of education, "passivity will occur when the student ceases to be active or ceases to provide information about himself" (Jagięła, 2004). Passivity in the context of TA means any behavior aimed at avoiding the solution of a problem situation and associated with the restoration of limiting relational patterns from the past.

When a teacher or student stops providing information about themselves, they avoid responsibility for certain elements of the educational situation that are relevant to the teaching and learning process. Passive behaviors are separated into several categories (Schiff, 1975; Pierzchała, 2013):

- *Doing nothing*: a lack or avoidance of behaviors that are relevant to the solution of a current problem (e.g., when the class is not listening, the teacher ignores the students' behavior and does not require them to focus on the task).
- *Overadaptation*: behaviors based on excessive adaptation of individuals to the real or imaginary expectations of others bypassing their own goals (e.g., the teacher uses teaching methods required by the institution regardless of their professional judgement and without a fair assessment of students' needs).
- *Agitation*: a category of passive behaviors that are aimless and repetitive and only serve to discharge the tension arising when trying to solve a problem (e.g., the teacher starts walking nervously when the class is not listening, instead of trying to silence the class by talking or changing the activity).
- *Incapacitation (1) or violence (2)*: (1) can take the form of a psychosomatic illnesses, drug addiction, or severe psychological distress, and the vector of tension is directed inwards and involves self-defeating behaviors and extreme avoidance of responsibility for solving the problem (e.g., a stressed teacher starts to reach for alcohol instead of seeking counseling or supervisory support); while (2) involves aggressive behaviors that force the environment to solve a problem that a person wants to avoid, and the vector of tension is directed outwards to escape responsibility of thinking about the situation (e.g., the teacher starts screaming at students instead of thinking about the educational difficulties of a given group and analyzing behavioral input in this situation).

The behaviors described above are called passive because they enable a person to avoid responsibility and prevent active problem-solving. Students or teachers who exhibit passive behaviors will cause discomfort to those around them and force others to think and problem-solve for them, which is their subconscious goal. This is accompanied by the unconscious recreation of past symbiotic relationships (Schiff & Schiff, 1971), whereby people intend to force the environment to look after them or to avoid having their needs met. For example, a student who does not respond at all (doing anything) can finally “force” the teacher (overadaptation) to ask a question to another student. At this point, the student ignores their thinking capacity (e.g., not asking for help), while the teacher adapts to the scenario proposed by the student.

Such relationship patterns are mutually co-created and interdependent, because both individuals need to display complementary reactions for a symbiotic relationship to be established. It should be noted that passive behaviors are a result of discounting, so the person is not aware of ignoring important aspects of themselves, others, or a situation that would otherwise contribute to the solution of a particular problem. However, growth and learning require conscious effort, which means clearly identifying, patterns of discounting, and taking actions based on an updated frame of reference that adequately and accurately represents the individual’s current resources, skills, and knowledge. This statement applies to teachers and students, though the emphasis is placed on the teacher’s capacity to facilitate students’ development. For this reason, identification of patterns of passive behaviors in education is necessary to create conditions for autonomous behavior.

The first step leading toward improved contact between teacher and student in the classroom is the awareness that results from the identification of passive behaviors. Passivity is a phenomenon that occurs when two people adopt complementary attitudes leading to an unconscious recreation of dysfunctional relational patterns from the past. For example, a teacher who yells in a lesson (violence) will be strict and demanding to enforce complete compliance from the students. Therefore, students adapt (overadaptation), instead of taking responsibility for their learning process. Awareness of these relational dynamics, especially on the part of the teacher, enables them to break the interlocking behavior patterns and paves the way for building individual autonomy. The teacher can name their needs instead of suppressing them by aggression and can therefore take actions that will be effective in the situation (e.g., support of a school counselor). Students can start thinking independently and change their behaviors that “provoke” the teacher to yell. In this way, a dysfunctional relational pattern can be modified and replaced with a new one that is more relevant to the current teaching and learning situation.

## **6. Scope of the Research – Defining the Research Questions**

As mentioned before, individuals belonging to various cultures hold different frames of reference resulting from their varied experiences in the parent–child relationship. Thus, their perception of the classroom situation will be a function of the cultural

programming to which they were exposed. Hofstede (2011) proposed the following definition of culture: “Culture is collective mind programming that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from others” (2011). Given the definition of Hofstede (2011) and Schiffs (1975), it can be surmised that members of one culture, including teachers, will share common elements (i.e., similar perceptions and interpretations of reality) in their frames of reference. Schiffs (1975) suggested that individuals differ in terms of meaning-making based on their frames of reference. Therefore, there are not only individual, but also collective differences that result from cultural programming.

When examining patterns of passivity, it can be assumed that culture-specific passive behaviors result from collective and shared elements of the frame of reference represented by a particular culture. These shared elements can be compared to shared cognitive structures (Romney and Moore, 1998), which implies that they exist within specific semantic domains as related to the “pictures” of passive behaviours that exist in the teachers’ minds from various cultures. Given this assumption, these can be measured with a greater degree of accuracy and, broadly speaking, enable to connect internal cognitive representations with external behaviour.

Thus, the authors undertook a cross-cultural study of passive teacher behaviors in order to examine the factors contributing to the observed differences. The authors assumed that making meaningful cultural comparisons is possible within a broad and universal framework that also takes account of the culturally determined differences based on the specific culture (Ember and Ember, 2009). The framework used for this comparison is the concept of passivity derived from transactional analysis. Thus, the authors decided to identify the culturally specific patterns displayed by educators from various regions in the world.

Promoting autonomous and proactive attitudes is considered to be an antidote to passive behaviors that undermine the teaching and learning processes in many classrooms around the world and prevent or slow down the effective implementation of changes. There are specific questions that arise when considering passivity cross-culturally:

- To what extent are passive teacher behaviors culturally universal?
- How significant are the culturally determined differences in the passive teacher behaviors in the countries studied?

## **7. Procedure of Designing the Research Tool**

The study used the “Reality of an Educator” questionnaire by Anna Pierzchała (2013). The tool was created in Poland and has already been used in a number of studies conducted by the Educational Transactional Analysis Research Team operating at the University of Humanities and Sciences of Jan Długosz in Częstochowa (Poland). The main purpose of this tool is to determine if and to what

extent passive behaviors are displayed by people involved in the educational process.

Individual questions in the questionnaire contain behaviors and attitudes that are characteristics of doing nothing, overadaptation, agitation, violence, and incapacitation. The questionnaire deliberately distinguished incapacitation and violence, which are traditionally considered together in TA due to their identical mechanism of formation. The separation of incapacitation and violence enables researchers to accurately determine the direction of the energy vector related to the discharge of tension when facing a problem situation. In the case of violence, the energy is expelled outward (e.g., through an act of aggression or vandalism), whereas in the case of incapacitation, the energy is directed inwards and usually causes psychosomatic symptoms. The questionnaire consists of thirty items: five for each passive strategy and an additional five for the lack of passivity that was omitted in the following analysis.

The tool successfully passed the verification procedure. Its validity was determined thanks to pilot studies and the support of experts familiar with the subject of passivity as it relates to TA. The reliability of the questionnaire was also determined (i.e., the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was calculated for the whole questionnaire, as well as separately for each strategy), along with its discriminatory power. In TA, passivity manifests itself through several behaviors, and the mechanisms of their formation are the same. These assumptions enabled researchers to sum up the results obtained by respondents in individual subscales in order to determine the overall level of passivity, hence the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  determination for the entire set. The reliability factor value for the questionnaire is  $\alpha = 0.87$ .

The following values of the reliability coefficient were obtained for individual passive strategies: doing nothing,  $\alpha = 0.71$ ; overadaptation,  $\alpha = 0.69$ ; agitation,  $\alpha = 0.61$ ; violence,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ; and incapacitation,  $\alpha = 0.81$ . Three language versions were prepared on the basis of the Polish tool: English, Ukrainian, and Spanish. The English, Spanish, and Ukrainian versions were prepared using a back-translation procedure by native speakers that was subjected to piloting, and the translations were refined to reduce discrepancies. The final versions were used in the actual research.

The research was conducted in direct contact with educators who had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. The research was carried out by the authors of this article. The study took place in the following countries: Poland, Ukraine, Guatemala, and the United Kingdom. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

## **8. Research Subjects**

The research concerning passivity through the lens of TA was conducted among educators working in four culturally different countries: Guatemala, Poland,

Ukraine, and the UK. A total of 441 respondents took part in the research. Women constituted 73.7% of the total sample ( $n = 325$ ), while 21.5% were men ( $n = 95$ ); 4.8% of the respondents did not specify their sex ( $n = 21$ ). The average age in the sample was 40.5 years; the standard deviation was 9.27. The smallest group of respondents were those with the least seniority, fewer than 5 years ( $n = 41$ ), of which the most numerous were represented in Guatemala and the UK. Every fourth person ( $n = 102$ ) had between 5–10 years of teaching experience, every third respondent between 11–20 years ( $n = 143$ ) and over 20 years ( $n = 137$ ), while the group of most experienced teachers was represented by Polish and Ukrainian professionals. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the respondents broken down by the country in which the survey took place.

**Table 1.** *Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample*

	Guatemala ( $n = 100$ )		Poland ( $n = 118$ )		Ukraine ( $n = 119$ )		Great Britain ( $n = 104$ )	
	Number of people	%	Number of people	%	Number of people	%	Number of people	%
<b>Sex</b>								
Female	38	38	102	86	109	91.5	76	73
Male	47	47	15	13	7	6	26	25
No data	15	15	1	1	3	2.5	2	2
<b>Age (M <math>\pm</math> SD)</b>	39.3	9.60	43.5	8.06	42	9.82	37.2	9.61
<b>Work Experience</b>								
< 5 years	10	10.0	7	5.9	5	4.2	19	18.3
5–10 years	26	26.0	14	11.9	24	20.2	38	36.5
10–20 years	33	33.0	42	35.6	35	29.4	33	31.7
> 20 years	20	20.0	53	44.9	53	44.5	11	10.6
No data	11	11.0	2	1.7	2	1.7	3	2.9

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $n$  = number of people;  $M$  = mean value;  $SD$  = standard deviation.

**Source:** Own study.

The number of individual samples was selected in terms of the place of study, and the authors wanted to maintain their parity. The only differences arose from the need to remove some questionnaires due to missing data or because the respondents quit the research (i.e., the questionnaire was only partially completed). The demographic characteristics of the research sample, such as age and gender, were therefore random and were not controlled in any way. When analyzing the summary presented in Table 1, some noticeable characteristics differentiate the populations.

The proportion of men to women participating in the research in individual countries seems to be particularly important. Guatemala has by far the greatest percentage of men—47% ( $n = 47$ )—while the lowest—6% ( $n = 7$ )—was observed in the Ukrainian sample.

## 9. Results

The research data obtained in four different locations around the world was used to compare the extent to which the respondents resorted to passivity, as defined in TA terms. The differences were identified using the Kruskal–Wallis test, the equivalent of a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) that is commonly used for independent samples. The selection of a nonparametric test was dictated by the nature of the scale used in the questionnaire (the Likert scale), which adopts an ordinal character. At the same time, the data were analyzed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which indicated that the assumption of normal distribution of variables must be rejected. The variables do not have a normal distribution, which disqualifies them from the use of parametric tests. The analysis of results should begin with a comparison of the summative occurrence of passive behaviors in the four populations studied without dividing it into individual strategies. Statistical analysis indicates significant differences between respondents representing the country-specific groups. The figures are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Passivity in the studied populations (without strategies division)*

Research Location	Average Rank	<i>H</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
UK	231.93	66.74	55.01	3	0.0000
PL	240.18				
UA	266.63				
GT	132.69				

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ; *H* = Kruskal–Wallis test;  $\chi^2$  = chi-squared; *d* = average deviation; *p* = *p*-value, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

The level of significance of the test, which in each case was below 0.05, and the values of the factor *H* lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The Kruskal–Wallis test assumes no significant intergroup differences. This result implies the existence of significant differences between the studied populations. Subsequently, the data was analyzed by post-hoc tests to reveal specific differences in the occurrence of passivity in the given teacher populations.

**Table 3.** *Post-hoc tests for passivity*

Variable: Passivity (summative)	Indicators:	Independent variables (grouping): Study location			
		Kruskal–Wallis test: $H(3; N = 441) = 66.74; p = 0.0000$			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
UK	<i>z</i>	—	0.48	2.03	5.56
	<i>p</i>	—	1.000000	0.255129	0.000000
PL	<i>z</i>	0.48	—	1.60	6.20
	<i>p</i>	1.000000	—	0.660816	0.000000
UA	<i>z</i>	2.03	1.60	—	7.75
	<i>p</i>	0.255129	0.660816	—	0.000000

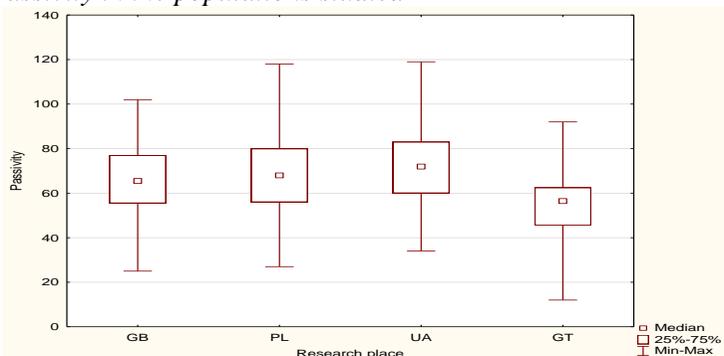
<b>GT</b>	<i>z</i>	5.56	6.20	7.75	—
	<i>p</i>	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

To visually illustrate this, the distribution of the respondents' responses is also shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Passivity in the populations studied



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ .

**Source:** Own study.

The data suggest that respondents from Guatemala perceive themselves as being more effective in dealing with a problem situation than the representatives of other groups. It also implies that teachers in Guatemala are more likely to accept responsibility for the undertaken tasks and declare more diverse and non-stereotypical approaches while avoiding symbiotic relationships with other participants of the educational process. The Kruskal–Wallis test revealed significant differences in all the categories of passive behavior. Specific figures are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Kruskal–Wallis test for passive behaviors

Passive Behavior	Location	Average Rank	<i>H</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Doing nothing</b>	UK	221.17	33.74	27.06	3	0.0000
	PL	248.00				
	UA	246.13				
	GT	159.06				
<b>Overadaptation</b>	UK	242.25	55.77	39.50	3	0.0000
	PL	210.64				
	UA	273.14				
	GT	149.08				

<b>Agitation</b>	UK	259.29	47.61	50.72	3	0.0000
	PL	223.67				
	UA	246.51				
	GT	147.66				
<b>Violence</b>	UK	195.47	16.75	12.61	3	0.0056
	PL	241.15				
	UA	246.57				
	GT	193.34				
<b>Incapacitation</b>	UK	221.13	75.50	77.18	3	0.0000
	PL	247.16				
	UA	271.75				
	GT	129.60				

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $H =$  Kruskal–Wallis test;  $\chi^2 =$  chi-squared;  $d =$  average deviation;  $p =$  p-value, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

The value of the  $H$  factor indicates significant intergroup diversity for all passive behaviors. The average rank values set Guatemala apart, which was already indicated when considering the summative scores for passivity in the samples studied. To further analyze the differences, however, it is useful to carry out post-hoc tests. Subsequently, the article will examine in detail all passive behaviors, namely doing nothing, overadaptation, agitation, violence, and incapacitation. As mentioned before, the data for violence and incapacitation will be analyzed separately, despite their identical mechanism of formation. The behavioral manifestations of this category of passive behaviors are in such contrast that combining them would be misleading.

### 9.1 Doing Nothing

Doing nothing, the least counterproductive passive behavior, showed considerable differences across the countries' studies, as illustrated in Table 5 and Figure 2.

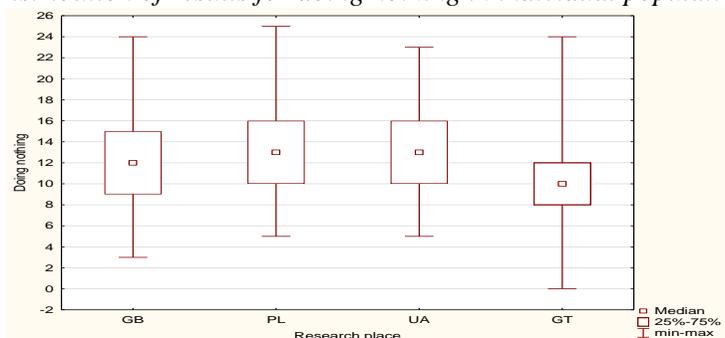
**Table 5.** Post-hoc tests for doing nothing

Passive Behavior: Doing Nothing	Indicators:	Independent variable (grouping): Study location			
		Kruskal–Wallis test: $H(3; N = 441) = 33.74; p = 0.0000$			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
<b>UK</b>	$z$	—	1.56	1.46	3.48
	$p$	—	0.705856	0.868140	0.003015
<b>PL</b>	$z$	1.56	—	0.11	5.13
	$p$	0.705856	—	1.00000	0.000002
<b>UA</b>	$z$	1.46	0.11	—	5.03
	$p$	0.868140	1.00000	—	0.000003
<b>GT</b>	$z$	3.48	5.13	5.03	—
	$p$	0.003015	0.000002	0.000003	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of results for doing nothing in individual populations



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ .

**Source:** Own study.

Table 5 shows that, similar to summative passivity, the only statistically significant differences are revealed in the case of teachers from Guatemala, compared with all other populations. Figure 2 also indicates that Guatemalan teachers identify with this passive behavior to a lesser extent than other groups. The median of their answers was 10 and was lower by 2 than for educators in the UK and by 3 for teachers from Poland and Ukraine. At the same time, the vast majority of responses in this group were clustered around the median. The range of results between the 1st and 3rd quartiles (Q3–Q1) was 4. This is the lowest value in relation to the other groups and indicates a consistently homogenous identification with this passive behavior. Equally, there were some individuals in this group that significantly differed in their declared level of doing nothing. Amongst them there were those who do not identify with passivity at all, as well as those who identify with it to a significant extent.

The data presented suggest that teachers from Guatemala declare their resignation from action in the face of difficulties less frequently and actively try to overcome them. This should be distinguished from a conscious decision to avoid taking action. When doing nothing, a person does not confront the problem because the tension they experience is too high, and this impedes their action-taking. Guatemalan respondents declared such functioning to a significantly lesser extent.

## 9.2 Overadaptation

More intercultural differences in the use of transactional passivity were identified for overadaptation strategies. The indicators are presented in Table 6 and Figure 3. The analysis of results indicates, again, that the answers obtained from respondents from Guatemala significantly differ from other groups studied. The relationship is similar;

educators from Guatemala identify themselves with overadaptation to a lesser extent than respondents from other populations.

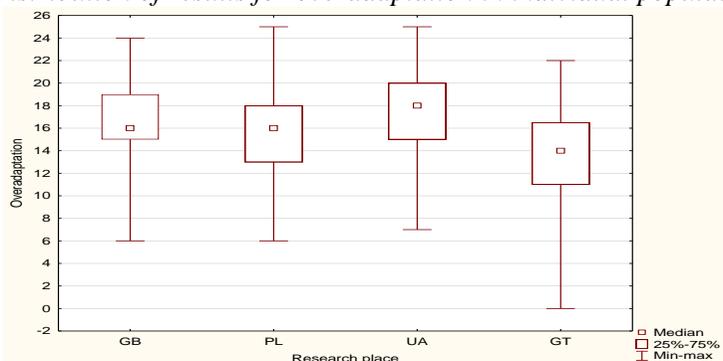
**Table 6.** Post-hoc tests for overadaptation

Passive Behavior: Overadaptation	Indicators:	Independent variable (grouping): Study location			
		Kruskal–Wallis test: $H(3; N = 441) = 55.77; p = 0.0000$			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
UK	$z$	—	1.84	1.81	5.22
	$p$	—	0.390856	0.425751	0.000001
PL	$z$	1.84	—	3.77	3.55
	$p$	0.390856	—	0.000960	0.002282
UA	$z$	1.81	3.77	—	7.17
	$p$	0.425751	0.000960	—	0.000000
GT	$z$	5.22	3.55	7.17	—
	$p$	0.000001	0.002282	0.000000	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

**Figure 3.** Distribution of results for overadaptation in individual populations



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ .

**Source:** Own study.

This means that they perceive themselves as less affected by external circumstance and limitations that impact their professional activities. They are able to consistently set and achieve their goals. It is worth noting that this time, not only the results between the first and third quartiles are in the lower ranges of the scale, but also this group of respondents contained individuals who completely do not identify with overadaptation.

Significant differences in the levels of overadaptation were revealed between teachers from Poland and Ukraine. This indicates that Ukrainian teachers resort to this passive behavior to a greater extent. However, this difference, although statistically significant, is not as high as that displayed by the Guatemalan

population. It is also worth noting that the median values were quite high. Overadaptation turned out to be the most frequent passive behavior manifested by teachers. It confirms the findings of previous research conducted in Poland (e.g., Pierzchała, 2013) and extends the scope of analysis. Therefore, it shows that over-compliance, compromising personal autonomy, giving up self-determination, and succumbing to environmental influences are common teacher strategies, regardless of where they work. Notably, overadaptation is often convenient for the individual's environment and is therefore socially reinforced.

### 9.3 Agitation

Agitation shows a similar pattern of distribution as doing nothing, although the median values indicate a higher level of identification of respondents with this more destructive strategy. Specific figures are presented in Table 7 and Figure 4.

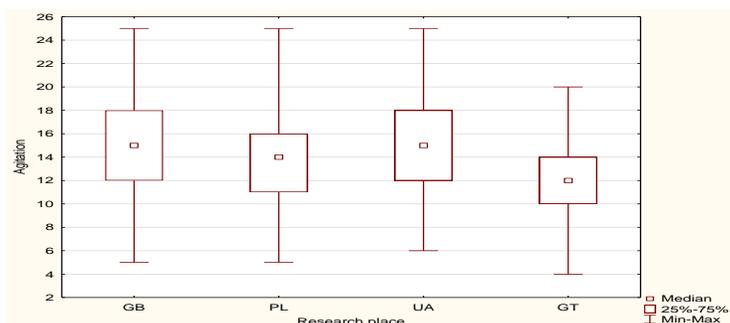
**Table 7.** *Post-hoc tests for agitation*

Variable:	Indicators:	Independent variable (grouping): Study location			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
Agitation		<b>Kruskal–Wallis test: <math>H(3; N = 441) = 47.61; p = 0.0000</math></b>			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
UK	$z$	—	2.08	0.75	6.25
	$p$	—	0.226298	1.000000	0.000000
PL	$z$	2.08	—	1.38	4.38
	$p$	0.226298	—	1.000000	0.000069
UA	$z$	0.75	0.75	—	5.72
	$p$	1.000000	1.000000	—	0.000000
GT	$z$	6.25	4.38	5.72	—
	$p$	0.000000	0.000069	0.000000	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

**Figure 4.** *Distribution of results for agitation in individual populations*



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$

**Source:** Own study.

As indicated by the graph, Guatemalans identified the least with agitation and maintained their lowest scores, similar to doing nothing. Again, respondents from this country more often placed their answers in the “no” and “rather not” ranges than other teachers participating in the survey. The responses are noticeably less dispersed and clustered around the central tendency (median), which is not the case in the other populations. The respondents from the UK, Poland, and Ukraine displayed almost the entire range of the response scale.

Agitation is a strategy that consists of repetitive and unintentional behaviors that avoid problem-solving because the thinking of the person involved becomes chaotic. They are aware of the necessity to take action to resolve the uncomfortable situation, but at the same time, they have a sense of inadequacy and an underlying belief of a diminished sense of self-agency (Schiff *et al.*, 1975). Schiff and Schiff (1971) defined this type of passivity as a transitional form between overadaptation and violence/incapacitation.

Identifying exactly when this passive behavior is employed is crucial to preventing an escalation to more insidious strategies that substantially block autonomy. It is therefore worth noting that all respondents recognized manifestations of agitation in their functioning. Again, respondents from Guatemala identified themselves the least with this passive behavior.

#### 9.4 Violence

Violence, one of the two manifestations of the most destructive passive behaviors (Schiff *et al.*, 1975), showed an interesting pattern, presented in Table 8 and Figure 5.

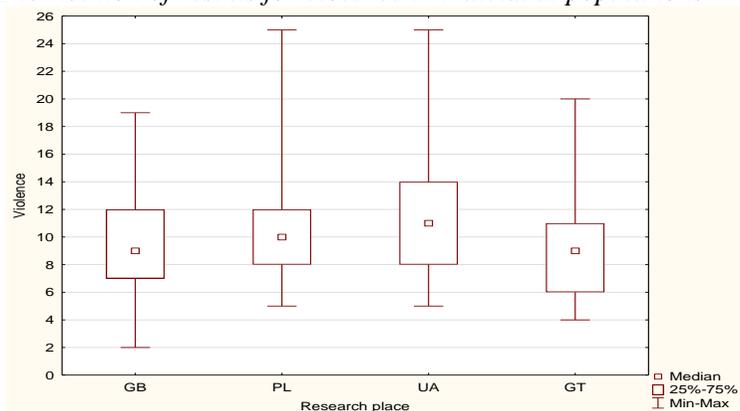
**Table 8.** *Post-hoc tests for violence*

Variable:	Indicators:	Independent variable (grouping): Study location			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
Violence		Kruskal–Wallis test: $H(3; N = 441) = 16.75; p = 0.0008$			
UK	<i>z</i>	—	2.66	2.99	0.12
	<i>p</i>	—	0.046207	0.016923	1.0000
PL	<i>z</i>	2.66	—	0.33	2.76
	<i>p</i>	0.046207	—	1.0000	0.034708
UA	<i>z</i>	2.99	0.33	—	3.08
	<i>p</i>	0.016923	1.0000	—	0.012493
GT	<i>z</i>	0.12	2.76	3.08	—
	<i>p</i>	1.0000	0.034708	0.012493	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

**Figure 5.** Distribution of results for violence in individual populations



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ .

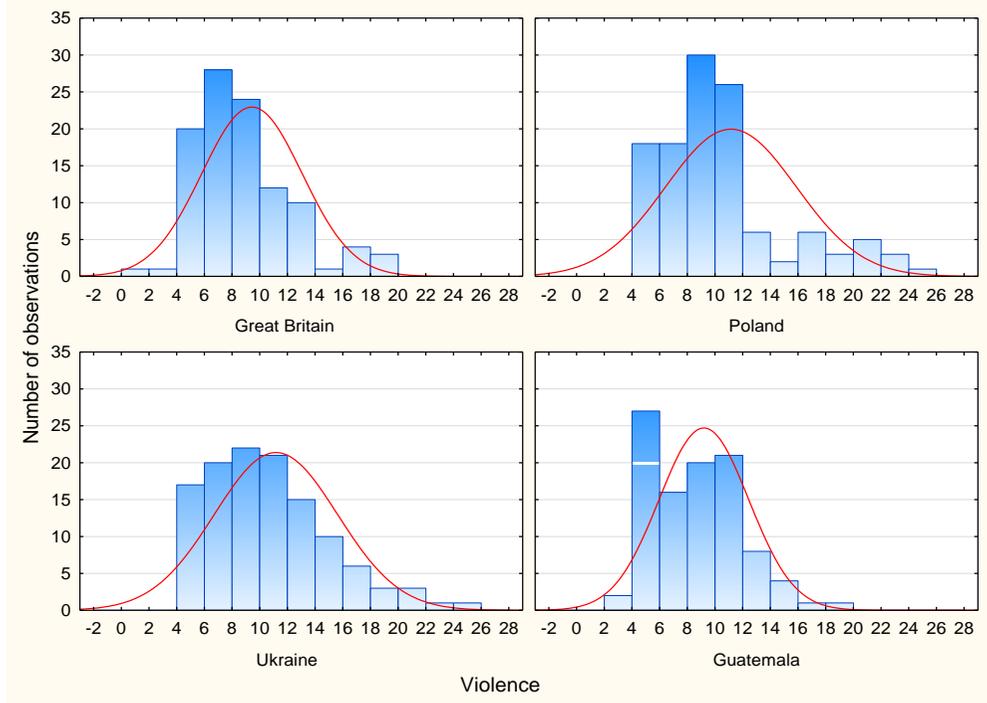
**Source:** Own study.

Violence is a behavior that respondents recognized the least in their functioning. However, each population in the study displayed some of the manifestations thereof. The analysis of Table 8 and Figure 5 suggests grouping the results into two separate categories. The first one respondents from the UK and Guatemala, where there are definitely fewer manifestations of violence than in the second group, which was composed of respondents from Poland and Ukraine.

Notably, these results were mainly differentiated by the values obtained by the respondents above the third quartile (25% of upper values). This means that while the central tendency (the median) is relatively convergent in all research groups and is between 9 (UK and GT) and 11 (UA), there are more people from the Polish and Ukrainian groups who declare a significant degree of violence in their professional functioning. In order to visually show these trends, the results were presented as histograms that accurately illustrate the distribution of responses within individual populations (Figure 6).

The graph clearly shows that the results from Poland and Ukraine were noticeably more dispersed. At the same time, among the respondents from the UK and Guatemala, there were no individuals who scored higher than 20 in the violence section of the questionnaire. However, for all research groups, the distribution charts are considerably left-sided, which shows that respondents strongly preferred answers that negated violent behaviors. It is also interesting to consider the most common value (mode) for individual groups; it was 8 for Great Britain, 10 for Poland, 9 for Ukraine, and 5 for Guatemala. Again, Guatemala was significantly different from the other populations, with educators identifying the least with the passive behavior of violence. It is worth pointing out that violence is the last step on the ladder of passive behaviors. The helplessness displayed by a person unable to constructively deal with a problem becomes dangerous for both the passive person and their environment.

**Figure 6.** Distribution of responses for violence



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$

**Source:** Own study.

### 9.5 Incapacitation

The last manifestation of teacher passivity is incapacitation (i.e., the behavior that directs the energy vector of a passive person inward). It is extremely difficult to identify because it does not have obvious behavioral manifestations. Identifying incapacitation in thinking, feeling, and behavior requires a significant level of self-awareness (in the language of TA, “The Integrated Adult”). The differences in the occurrence of incapacitation in the countries studied are presented in Table 9 and Figure 7.

**Table 9.** Post-hoc tests for incapacitation

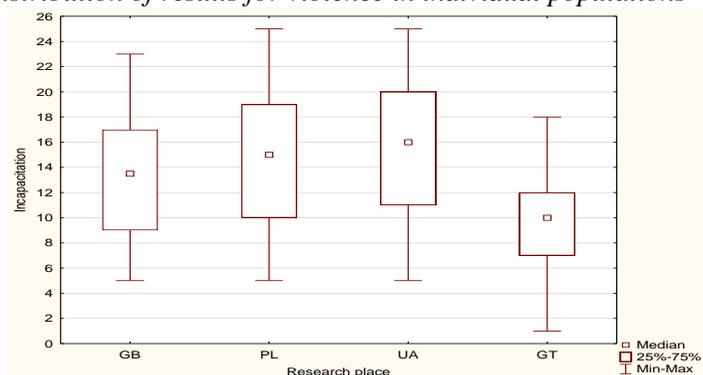
Variable: Incapacitation	Indicators :	Independent variable (grouping): Study location			
		UK	PL	UA	GT
		<b>Kruskal–Wallis test: <math>H(3; N = 441) = 16.75; p = 0.0008</math></b>			
UK	$z$	—	1.52	2.96	5.13
	$p$	—	0.773593	0.018520	0.000002
PL	$z$	1.52	—	1.48	6.79
	$p$	0.773593	—	0.824575	0.000000
UA	$z$	2.96	1.48	—	8.22
	$p$	0.018520	0.824575	—	0.000000

GT	<i>z</i>	5.13	6.79	8.22	—
	<i>p</i>	0.000002	0.000000	0.000000	—

**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ ;  $z$  = indicator value for multiple-comparisons;  $p$  =  $p$ -value for multiple-comparisons, assuming the significance of the results at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Source:** Own study.

**Figure 7.** Distribution of results for violence in individual populations



**Note:** Sample  $n = 441$ .

**Source:** Own study.

Despite the similar mechanism of formation of this type of passive behavior, the pattern of responses for incapacitation, when compared to that of violence, looks quite different. In the case of incapacitation, it can be clearly seen that the subjects eagerly used the entire length of the scale, and at the same time their answers were very diverse—the range between Q1 and Q3 is 8 for the UK, Poland, and Ukraine. The results in Guatemala were more concentrated around the median—their Q3–Q1 was 5. Again, this group was particularly different from others and showed the lowest levels of identification with passivity. Table 9 shows statistically significant differences in the occurrence of incapacitation between Guatemala and other countries, where the figures are higher. Less significant, but statistically significant differences also exist between Ukraine and the UK, with teachers from the first group showing a higher degree of identification with incapacitation.

The heterogeneity of responses from all groups described here may result from the aforementioned difficulties in identifying this behavior by the respondents themselves.

## 10. Conclusion

After reviewing the research results, it is apparent that the lowest levels of passivity occur among educators working in Guatemala. These differences are statistically significant and highlight the importance of the teacher’s social role, defined by Goffman (2008) as a set of individual’s expectations, rights, and obligations in relation to a socially defined task. A social role is placed in a particular cultural

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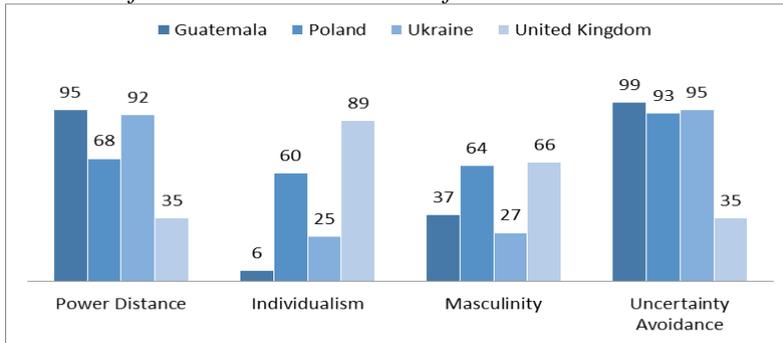
context (the country in which the educator works), which determines the way teachers fulfill socially relevant tasks. The works of Bourdieu and Passeron (2006) underlined the issue of reproduction in the educational system and shed further light on the analyses of cultural differences carried out in this study.

One of the approaches to describing aspects of culture relevant to investigating passivity is a study by Hofstede (2011), which allowed researchers to capture some model differences (i.e., generic tendencies) between individual countries. The author (2011, p. 6) warned against stereotyping and pointed out the confusions that arise in cross-cultural studies: “One of the weaknesses of much cross-cultural research is not recognizing the difference between analysis at the societal level and at the individual level; this amounts to confusing anthropology and psychology.” This study of passivity aims to describe social functioning of teachers and thus represents a bridge between individually reported levels of passivity and cultural determinants.

What sets Guatemala apart from other countries studied is undoubtedly one of the dimensions of culture, namely the level of individualism. Individualism, with its opposite pole being collectivism, determines the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In the case of Guatemala, which is definitely a collectivist country (Figure 8) compared to the other countries studied, the source of identification for individuals stems from belonging to a network of social connections. This provides opportunities to create relationships between teachers and students, while the structures within the education system are perceived in moral terms and resemble family ties. Interpersonal relationships are more important than task-achievement, and group interest takes precedence over individual interest. This constitutes a limitation to the occurrence of passive behaviors that characterize individualistic problem-solving approaches.

This also applies to the lower level of violence displayed by the educators from Guatemala. Collectivistic schools attach great importance to maintaining harmony and “face-saving” (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Triandis, 1995). Conflicts are readily pacified, and if there is an open expression of dissent, it should be done in a manner that does not offend any of the parties (Hofstede, 2011). In this context, it is interesting to point out low levels of violence amongst British educators participating in the study, who represented an individualistic culture. This can be explained by another dimension of culture, which in this case is low power distance. Cultures with low power distance do not support the use of corporal punishment and discourage violence in relationships (Hofstede, 2011), which can be clearly seen in the responses of teachers from this country.

**Figure 8.** Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions for the countries studied



**Source:** <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries>

Additionally, it is also worth pointing out the differences in overadaptation, which was the most frequent passive behavior, regardless of the country studied. A statistically significant difference was noted between the responses of teachers from Poland on the one hand, and from Ukraine and Guatemala on the other. The former is characterized by individualism and masculinity, while the latter group is described by collectivism and femininity, which would explain the increase in overadaptation among teachers from Ukraine and Guatemala. As mentioned before, the main source of social satisfaction in collectivistic cultures comes from relationships and personal connections, which, in combination with femininity, is understood as relationship orientation and care for others (Hofstede, 2011; Shafiro, Himelein, and Best, 2003), which may result in the high prevalence of adaptive behaviors to the real or imaginary expectations of the individuals setting particular standards within the education system.

Another statistically significant difference was noted for incapacitation amongst the respondents from Guatemala, who stood out from the other countries studied in terms of all passive behaviors. Further differences were observed between teachers from the UK and Ukraine. The former represents a culture characterized by low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance, in contrast to Ukraine, which is characterized by high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance. In a hierarchical school structure with a constant focus on reforms, change, and innovation, educators who are able to flatten vertical power structures and are more open to new methodologies will function much more effectively. Hence, the cultural background of the British teachers surveyed appears to be their significant resource limiting the occurrence of incapacitation, representing a behavior that adversely affects teacher wellbeing through its internalized and inwardly directed form of violence.

The education system itself can be another important factor that affects the differences between the countries studied. In countries like the UK, Poland, or Ukraine, the system is highly structured and subjected to constant external control, resulting in a high degree of unification. Similarly, in these countries, the mean years

of schooling received by residents aged 25 years and older (United Kingdom: 13; Poland: 12.3; Ukraine: 11.3) is similar; however in Guatemala this figure is significantly lower at 6.5 years (Human Development Index, 2018). Prior research on teacher passivity (Pierzchała, 2013) indicated that this factor is positively correlated with centralization, bureaucratization, and the rigidity of school structures. This pilot cross-cultural study allows for a preliminary confirmation of this thesis; however, further research is required to extend these views based on findings from other countries. The results obtained in this research also indicate possible approaches that support multicultural diversity.

To sum up, it is worth noting that according to the authors, further research is required to explain the differences in the reported levels of passivity amongst the studied groups, especially taking into account the lower scores obtained in the declarations from Guatemalan respondents. The authors' initial hypothesis suggested that different cultural frames of reference (James, 1994) shape individual perception. Thus, the European and Guatemalan perceptions of reality established under cultural conditioning will impact their interpretation of a given problem situation. This means that people from different cultural backgrounds define a problem situation differently. In other words, what seems a problem in Europe, the identification of which is crucial for the occurrence of passivity according to the definition adopted by the authors of this study, may not be considered as one in Guatemala. Thus, in order interculturally validate the concept of passivity regional studies need to be carefully considered in future research to draw conclusions without the bias of totalizing (Burton, Moore, and Whiting, 1996).

These matters obviously requires further in-depth research. There may be other equally plausible explanations stemming from the areas and levels of discounting displayed by the respondents representing the different cultures. Therefore, this research should be treated as exploratory, indicating certain interculturally declared patterns, but at the same time determining areas for further research.

**Note:** [1] The respondents from Guatemala represented the Tz'utujil community of San Pedro La Laguna, Santiago Atitlan, and San Juan.

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