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Adolescents in the Face of a Social Conflict Situation. The Analysis of Determinants of Destructive Coping Strategies

Abstract

The purpose of the research was to determine personality and family destructive conditions (aggression, avoidance, submission) present in strategies used by adolescents for coping with a social conflict situation. The Questionnaire to study the strategies for coping with a social conflict situation (KSMK) by D. Borecka-Biernat, the Stress Assessment Questionnaire (KOS) by D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski, Three-Factor State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (TISCO) by C. Spielberger and K. Wrześniewski as well as Parental Attitudes Scale (SPR) by M. Plopa and the Questionnaire to study the parents' strategies for coping with a social conflict situation in the perception of a child (SRwSK) by D. Borecka-Biernat were applied in the research. The empirical research was carried out in junior high schools in Wroclaw and neighbouring towns. It involved 893 adolescents (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13–15. In the light of the research, it was found that assessing of a conflict situation as a threat and harm/loss, and experiencing negative emotions (anger, apprehension) in a situation which threatens the realisation of personal intentions co-exists with a destructive way of reacting to emotional tension by adolescents in a social conflict situation. Moreover, the analysis of the research results indicated that the destructive way of reacting to emotional tension by adolescents in a social conflict situation is shaped by inappropriate upbringing attitudes which are characterised by the parents' emotional distance towards an adolescent child, putting forward excessive demands on a child and exaggerated involvement in all matters related to the child, as well as a destructive model of parents' reaction to the conflict.

Key words: junior high school adolescents, personality, family, destructive conditions, social conflict situation.

Introduction

The period of adolescence is an important stage in the life of every human being because it is considered to be a transitional moment between childhood and adulthood. This is the time of numerous developmental transformations which begin with changes in the external appearance due to puberty that occurs in young people at the age of 13–15 (Harwas-Napierała, Trempała, 2000). During this period, a gradual 'growth' of youth into the adult society, as well as changes in social relations with adults and peers (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2003) begin. Young people expand their social world and gain more freedom and independence when making decisions in different areas of behaviour, which increases the probability of conflicts. Aspects of social relations begin to shape then, such as conflicts with teachers, quarrels with school friends, boyfriends or girlfriends, as well as arguments with one or both parents, and also with other members of the family (Lohman, Jarvis, 2000; Jaworski, 2000; Guszkowska et al., 2001; Smetana, Daddis, 2002; Różańska-Kowal, 2004; Gurba, 2006; Trylińska-Tekielska, 2007; Polak, 2010; Miłkowska, 2012).

The situation of conflict with another person is one of the basic social situations in the life of every human being. The word 'conflict' derives from the Latin *confligere*, *conflictatio*, which means falling into each other, a dispute, a discussion, a struggle or a clash of two or more processes, namely forces characteristic of living beings. In the context of interpersonal relations, a conflict situation presents a kind of interactions between partners in which they clearly realise their differences of interests, needs or aspirations for goals (Balawajder, 2010). A social conflict situation, which falls into the category of difficult situations of social interactions accompanies people in all periods of their lives. From the moment of birth, each person must learn how to deal with difficulties and challenges that they will have to face in the future. A difficult situation stimulates human beings to perform activities which are aimed at regaining balance between the requirements and implementation capabilities of the subject and/or improvement of the emotional condition. The activity a human being undertakes in a difficult situation is considered in a specific situational context as a strategy for coping with the current difficult situation (Wrześniewski, 1996; Heszen-Niejodek, 2000). An individual's ability to cope with a social conflict situation can take the form of a destructive action strategy (Balawajder, 2010;

Borecka-Biernat, 2012). The destructive strategy is aimed only at reducing unpleasant emotional tension and/or achieving well-being. It starts with the *withdrawal* from the social conflict situation, not approaching it, avoiding thinking and experiencing this situation by disregarding and ignoring the problem, as well as by engaging in substitute activities (thinking about pleasant matters, day-dreaming, listening to music, sleeping, walking) and establishing contacts with other people by *submission* to the achievement of goals which a partner imposes to the detriment of his/her own goals, interests and desires up to *aggression* which takes the form of an initiated physical and/or verbal attack directed against specific persons, causing damage to their physical, mental and social well-being.

It is worth paying attention to the methods that young people use to deal with conflict situations which take place at school, in relationships with peers or at home. Previous research results indicate that school environment is particularly stressful for adolescents. Young people concluded that among the coping strategies in the context of conflicts with school teachers and schoolmates, the most common were aggressive behaviours towards others (poking, pushing, kicking, calling names, ridiculing, mocking), attempts to divert attention from a difficult situation and getting busy with something else (reading, listening to music, watching TV), and escaping from a difficult situation by physical leaving or isolating from it (Różańska-Kowal, 2004; Miłkowska, 2012). A. Hibner (2013) noted that in the adolescence period boys show resistance reactions towards the requirements of a teacher, i.e. 'pretensions' and 'protest' more often. As it can be seen, these are behaviours which control emotions.

Interesting research on strategies for coping with a social conflict situation in relations with peers was conducted by A. Frączek (2003). 10-year-old children, 11-year-old and 15-year-old teenagers living in Israel, Finland, Poland and Italy took part in the research. The results of these studies prove that girls deal with conflicts better than boys and seek to achieve agreement more often. Boys are more likely to use an aggressive strategy than girls. Aggression of boys and girls takes different forms. In the latter, it is more indirect, it is hidden and used for defence. It has a passive character, takes the form of a complaint, sulking and emotional rejection. Boys use explicit, physical, more active and direct forms of aggressive behaviour. Apart from observing the manifestation of aggressive behaviours in the process of dealing with conflict, the research which was conducted by D. Borecka-Biernat and G. Ciuladiene (2015) showed that in the case of conflict with peers, adolescents used coping strategies which were based on resignation, failure to take actions, avoidance of the problem and

distancing from it. On the other hand, in the research by A. Hibner (2013), in this situation a higher level of 'consent' reaction and 'subordination' was obtained in adolescent boys.

Conflicts in child-parent relationships constitute a common phenomenon in the adolescent period (Jackson et al., 1989; Jaworski, 2000; Obuchowska, 2010). An adolescent child wishes to be freed from the guardianship of his/her parents and with all his/her behaviour demands more rights than ever. Obstacles and failures s/he meets as well as parental orders and prohibitions cause reactions of anger which is expressed by arrogant answers, ignoring commands, being silent or slamming doors. In conflicts with parents, a teenager often shows a lot of ruthlessness, aggressiveness, brutality, indifference and even cynicism. Research by B. Lachowska (2010) shows that in a conflict situation with parents, adolescents perceive themselves as more aggressive and less compromising towards their parents, especially in relation to their mothers. Moreover, apart from aggressive reactions, dealing with family problems by adolescent children also involves avoiding the problem and a tendency to make concessions or to seek interpersonal contacts. According to A. Hibner's studies (2013), there are significant gender differences among the examined adolescents, where boys react by means of 'subordination' and 'consent' to the requirements of their parents in a more conformist way definitely more often. However, in the face of parents' pressure, resistance reactions are more often manifested by girls reacting with 'counter-attack', 'pretension' and 'protest'.

On the basis of previous considerations, we can conclude that a social conflict situation is related to the problem of the coping strategy chosen for the specific situational context, which is aimed at restoring balance between requirements and adaptation possibilities, avoiding and/or minimizing tensions, losses, or adverse effects. Research results and observations indicate individual differences in responses to difficulties and defence against excessive emotional tension among young people (Rostowska, 2001; Sikora, Pisula, 2008). The question should be asked about the reason why some people choose destructive strategies (aggression, avoidance, submission) in difficult social situations. According to M. Tyszkowa (1986), cognitive patterns play a crucial role in the psychological mechanism of human behaviour in difficult situations. They determine the processes of perceiving the external situation, the emotional reflection of the external situation's significance and the course of one's own actions, as well as a set of responses to the emotional tension which arises in a given situation and which was shaped in particular upbringing conditions.

Human activity in a difficult situation depends to a large extent on the assessment of the situation the person is in. A difficult situation which disrupts the current course of activities, hinders, threatens or prevents people from fulfilling their needs is a situation that can be assessed as harm/loss, threat and challenge (Włodarczyk, 1999; Włodarczyk, Wrześniewski, 2005). Personal assessment of an event influences the individual's decisions regarding the possibilities of taking action which can remove reasons for a difficult situation or at least mitigate its effects, which is referred to as a remedial strategy (Scherer et al., 1994; Włodarczyk, 1999; Heszen-Niejodek, 2000; Winstok, 2007). Data obtained by L. Chandler (1986) and D. Domińska-Werbel (2014) show that adolescents who use aggressive coping strategies in difficult social situations are characterised by a higher level of situational and dispositional cognitive assessment of a difficult situation as harm/loss. However, people who represent higher intensity of the cognitive assessment of a difficult situation as a threat, avoid confrontation with a difficult situation, engage in stress-free forms of activity, mainly in order to be able to reduce the unpleasant state of tension. This result was confirmed in the studies by G. Bouchard (2003), who claimed that the assessment of the situation as a threat initiated coping with it by focusing on emotions, and initiated avoidance/distancing strategies. E. Pawłów (1997) concluded that people who assessed a difficult situation as a threat, in the context of the problem, used emotional mechanisms of coping with it to a large extent. All their efforts were directed towards reducing the unpleasant tension which resulted from the rapid outburst and/or activation of defence mechanisms, but not towards a real solution to the problem. Similar results were obtained by D. Pruitt et al. (1994) and D. Bar-Tal (1999) who stated that conflict, which is interpreted in the categories of threat and exclusion, implies the necessity of fight and rivalry.

A human being reacts to difficult situations emotionally (Tyszkowa, 1986; Frijda, 2002). In a difficult situation, emotional reactions are connected with human personality traits as well as with the way of perceiving the situation by the individual (Łosiak, 2009). In a difficult situation emotions are intensive and are usually negative in character. Anger and exasperation constitute one of the possible emotional reactions with a negative sign, which appears when experiencing a stressful situation and is perceived as a threat or loss/harm (Wrześniewski, 1991; Lazarus, 2000). Persistent emotional excitation of high intensification and negative character is the basis for aggressive behaviours, irritation, outbursts of rage and other seemingly unjustified emotional reactions that can be observed in various types of destructive behaviours (Terelak, 2001; Gross et al., 2013). The kind of emotions that lead to aggressive behaviours are those in line

with the sequence: irritation – exasperation – anger. The analysis of the research material of Z. Skorny (1987), S. Berkowitz (1992), J. Deffenbacher (1992); J. Różańska-Kowal, 2004, W. Łosiak (2009) and D. Domińska-Werbel shows that the young person's tendency to react with anger and exasperation is connected with taking up a fight and not giving up in difficult situations.

Also, fear is one of the possible emotional reactions with a negative sign, which is caused by a situation of an objective or subjective, external or internal threat, acting at present or in the future (Doliński, 2000). It appears as the result of putting a human being in a situation s/he cannot cope with and has little control over, or does not control (Łosiak, 1995). Apprehension is generally an unpleasant state for an individual, and therefore s/he seeks to be freed from this emotion. The results of the research which was conducted by M. Leary, R. Kowalski (2001), M. Eysenck (2001), E. Nitendel-Bujakowa (2001), D. Borecka-Biernat (2006) and W. Łosiak (2009) showed that emotions in the sequence: anxiety – apprehension – fear usually lead to an escape. An adolescent, when defending against apprehension, uses – more or less consciously – ways for coping with it, such as withdrawing from the apprehension situation, 'drowning' apprehension by constantly inventing various activities (sleeping, eating, shopping), searching for the company of other people, attempts at not thinking about the problem, escaping into the world of fantasy and day-dreams, getting items that bring happiness, e.g. talismans or reaching for drugs and sedatives.

On the basis of previous considerations, it seems that in natural conditions anger is an emotion that facilitates fighting activities, whereas fear facilitates the act of escape. However, observations indicate that when a person has nowhere to run and when there is no other possibility but aggression or attack, then apprehension can give rise for an attack. It is well-known that apprehension is at the root of aggressive behaviours. It constitutes one of their most important determinants. D. Kubacka-Jasiecka (1986), A. Kępiński (1992), J. Ranschburg (1993), B. Marcinkowska (1994), M. Eysenck (2001), E. Nitendel-Bujakowa (2001) and I. Jelonkiewicz, K. Kosińska-Dec (2008) represent this approach. According to them, aggression is an effective form of coping with apprehension which is experienced in social situations. As it turns out, also aggression helps relieve apprehension tension or hide apprehension.

Strategies for coping with a social conflict situation are forms of behaviour which are acquired in accordance with general principles of learning. The types of behaviour in difficult social situations, which include conflict, depend to a large extent on the habits related to responding to difficulties, which are shaped in the upbringing process. Children have different conditions and op-

portunities to shape specific forms of responding to difficult social situations, which are created by parents with different upbringing attitudes (Tyszkowa, 1986). The relation of upbringing attitudes between parents and their child has a significant impact on his/her social development; it becomes a prototype of social coexistence and it is used when solving difficult social situations. In source literature (Wolińska, 2000; Januszewska, 2001; Poraj, 2002; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010; Bares et al., 2011; Batool, 2013; Liberska et al., 2013) we can find evidence that the destructive forms of the child's reaction to difficult social situations result from incorrect parental attitudes which boil down to: 1. *attitudes of excessive emotional distance*, 2. *attitudes of excessive demands*, 3. *attitudes of excessive protection*, and 4. *attitudes of inconsistency*. Incorrect behaviour of parents causes deprivation of the child's needs, primarily affiliation and the need for security. It is believed that a person with a sense of insecurity, being in the state of danger and anxiety connected with the sphere of interpersonal contacts, launches many irrational forms of responding to difficult situations of social interactions, which are aimed at protecting the overloaded regulatory system.

In many difficult situations, the human behaviour depends not only on the characteristics of the very situation to which s/he is to respond, but also on the behaviour of other people who are in the same situation. The environment which provides natural conditions conducive to learning how to respond to difficult situations is the family and, for a child, parents are often the first models of specific strategies for coping with difficulties (Tyszkowa, 1986; Rostowska, 1996).

The influence of people who are role models is often undesirable and distorts the child's development, leading to the acquisition of undesirable behaviours, such as aggression, escape, withdrawal from a social situation or submission. Numerous experiments on modelling were carried out in connection with the problems of aggression (Wojciszke, 2007). The reason for aggression inherent in the family environment is the presence of an aggressive person in the family. Manifested aggressive behaviours, if reinforced positively, can become stronger and turn into the habit of attacking. A child, when observing parents' unfailing effects of acts of aggression, assumes that aggression is a way of solving problems, an available means of achieving goals or a method of coping with a difficult situation and includes this opinion into the context of social interactions, which is manifested by his/her own aggressive behaviours (Patterson, 1986; Obuchowska, 2001; Urban, 2005; Wolińska, 2013; Narayan et al., 2015; Zimbardo, Gerrig, 2018).

The result of the process of social learning and modelling on parents also includes forms of responding to difficult situations which are focused on not pursuing one's own goals under the influence of difficulties in acting and withdrawing from a difficult situation. Giving up on fulfilling one's desires, the lack of assertiveness to defend one's own affairs or withdrawal from contacts with other people as well as failure in taking up such forms of activity which would require these contacts constitute an inertial form of shyness (Tyszkowa, 1997). Depending on role models plays a significant role in the genesis of shyness in children. Family patterns are the strongest – *shy children have shy parents* (Borecka-Biernat, 2001; Bandelow, 2011). Children, when observing parents having difficulties in social interactions, especially when they are the subject of identification, begin to model them. Research by B. Harwas-Napierała (1995) and P. Zimbardo (2011) indicates that in the case of adolescents the tendency to avoid and withdraw from social interactions, as well as failures in proper participation in these interactions, is a learned form of behaviour resulting from observation and frequent contact with people from the immediate surroundings, who behave in the same way, namely as a consequence of the models' influence – most often parents.

Summing up, we can conclude that in the concept of the psychological mechanism of human behaviour in difficult situations, which was presented by M. Tyszkowa (1986), a general system of control, which is personality and specific upbringing conditions, performs a special role in the occurrence of destructive forms of the youth's reaction to a social conflict situation.

Research problem

Our empirical research was focused on personality and family conditions of destructive strategies (aggression, avoidance, submission) for coping with a social conflict situation by young people. A particular emphasis was put on the role of the cognitive assessment of a social conflict situation, the level and content of emotions as well as parental upbringing attitudes and models of parent's reactions to a social conflict situation. The study was aimed at answering the following research question:

What group of personality and family variables is related to the fact that during a social conflict situation the use of a particular strategy (aggression, avoidance, submission) for destructive coping with a social conflict situation intensifies among young people?

Research method

The subjects and the course of research. A group of 468 girls and 425 boys aged 13–15 was examined. In total, 893 people participated in the study. The respondents were first-, second- and third-grade junior high school students from Wroclaw and neighbouring towns. A random selection of schools was used, however, not all of the schools agreed to take part in the research, therefore a few schools, which were not randomly selected, were asked for this kind of cooperation. The research was of a group character and participation in it was voluntary. Students' examinations were carried out most often during educational classes. Students signed their statements with pseudonyms or initials. Before the examination, the respondents were instructed exactly what to do. Young people had the opportunity to ask questions in unclear situations.

Research tools. The following instruments were used: Stress Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) by D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski (2010), Three-Factor State-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI) by C. Spielberger and K. Wrześniewski (Wrześniewski, 1991), Parental Attitude Scale (PAS) by M. Plopa (2015), Questionnaire on studying parents' coping strategies in a social conflict situation in the perception of a child (SRwSK) by D. Borecka-Biernat (2013) and Questionnaire on studying strategies for coping with a social conflict situation by young people (KSMK) by D. Borecka- Biernat (2012).

Stress Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), which was developed by D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski (2010), contains 35 adjectives assessing stress situations. It consists of two versions, which include the same sets of adjective expressions, but differ in the instructions given to the subjects. In version A (measurement of the situational stress assessment), the subjects are asked to indicate a specific difficult situation that took place within the last week (in the described research it was a social conflict situation) and to mark the extent to which each term refers to the specified event on a 4-point scale. Version B (measurement of the dispositional stress assessment) contains an instruction in which the subjects are asked to indicate to what extent the given adjectives are consistent with what they most often experience in difficult situations (in the described study it was a social conflict situation). SAQ consists of six scales, which are indicators of particular types of stress assessment. These are: threat-state, threat-trait, damage/loss-state, harm/loss-trait, challenge-state and challenge-trait.

Trójczynnikowy Inwentarz Stanów i Cech Osobowości (TISCO) is a Polish adaptation of the American *Three-Factor State-Trait Personality Inventory*

(STPI) which was developed by C. Spielberger's team (Wrześniewski, 1991). TISCO consists of two independent parts. The first part (SPI) is designed to measure apprehension, anger and curiosity, which are treated as emotional states experienced in a given moment. The second part (TPI) is used to study the same emotions but in terms of personality traits. Thus, the test contains six scales, i.e. apprehension as a state and apprehension as a trait, anger as a state and anger as a trait as well as curiosity as a state and curiosity as a trait. Each scale consists of 10 short and simple statements referring to the subjective feelings of an individual. The respondents give answers on a four-point frequency scale, namely 1. At all/almost never, 2. Rather not/sometimes, 3. Frequently/moderately and 4. Almost always/very much. The results are calculated separately for each of the subscales.

Parental Attitude Scale (PAS) by M. Plopa (2015) is used to study parental attitudes in the perception of children. It includes 75 statements in the version for the mother and in the version for the father. The subject, by responding to each statement, chooses one of five possible answers, i.e. 'true', 'rather true', 'difficult to assess', 'rather not real' and 'untrue', assigning the following points to them: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. The questionnaire consists of five scales, and each of them contains 15 statements. These are: Acceptance-Rejection Attitude (I), Autonomy Attitude (II), Over-Protective Attitude (III), Over-Demanding Attitude (IV), Inconsequent Attitude (V).

Questionnaire SRwSK by D. Borecka-Biernat (2013) consists of two versions, i.e. 'My mother' and 'My father'. It is intended for studying parents' strategies for coping with a social conflict situation, and these behaviours are recognised in the perception of their adolescent children. The tool has descriptions of 16 social conflict situations in 'My mother' version and the same number of descriptions in 'My father' version. Each situation includes four behaviours expressing parents' coping strategies with a social conflict situation in the perception of their child; the first refers to aggressive coping ('A'), the second to avoiding coping ('U'), the third to submissive coping ('Ul'), and the fourth to task-oriented coping with a social conflict situation. Each of the four possible answers is accompanied with a numeric value from 0 to 1. The sum of points constitutes a numerical indicator which specifies the intensity degree of each of these strategies. For the needs of our own research, the following Scale was used: aggressive coping ('A'), avoiding coping ('U') and submissive coping ('Ul') with a social conflict situation by the mother/father.

Questionnaire KSMK, which was developed by D. Borecka-Biernat (2012), is designed to study coping strategies in the context of a social conflict situation

taken up by young people in their puberty. It consists of a description of 33 situations of social conflict. Each situation is given four behaviours which express coping with a social conflict situation – the first one refers to aggressive coping ('A'), the second to avoiding coping ('U'), the third to submissive coping ('Ul'), and the fourth to task-oriented coping with a social conflict situation ('Z'). The results are obtained for each scale separately by summing the selected behaviours in 33 situations which belong to a given scale. Since the scales consist of 33 items, the subjects can obtain from 0 to 33 points in each of them. For the needs of our own research, the following Scale was used: aggressive coping ('A'), avoiding coping ('U') and submissive coping ('Ul') with a social conflict situation by adolescents.

Analysis of the research results

In order to determine what group of personality and family variables is related to the fact that during a social conflict situation the use of destructive strategies by adolescents increases (aggression, avoidance, submission), a step multiple regression analysis was carried out. A dependent variable constituted the results on three scales (Aggressive coping with a social conflict situation ('A'), Avoiding coping with a social conflict situation ('U')) and Submissive coping with a social conflict situation ('UI') of questionnaire KSMK; a group of independent variables constituted the results on six scales (Threat-state and Threat-trait, Harm/Loss-state and Harm/Loss-trait, Challenge-state and Challenge-trait) of SAQ questionnaire; on six scales (Anger-state and Anger-trait, Apprehension-state and Apprehension-trait as well as Curiosity-state and Curiosity-trait) of STPI Inventory, on five scales (Attitude of Acceptance-Rejection, Autonomy Attitude, Over-Protective Attitude, Over-Demanding Attitude, Inconsistency Attitude) of SPR questionnaire in the versions 'My mother' and 'My father' as well as on three scales (Aggressive coping with a social conflict situation ('A'), Avoiding coping with a social conflict situation ('U') and Submissive coping with a social conflict situation ('Ul')) of KSRwSK questionnaire in the versions 'My mother' and 'My father'. The results are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Multiple step regression for the result of Aggression scale ('A') of KSMK in relation to questionnaire scales of KOS, Inventory scales STPI, scales of SPR and SRwSK in the versions 'My Mother' and 'My Father': results for girls (N = 468) and boys (N = 425)

Respon-dents	Variable	Beta	B	St. Error B	t	Level p<
Girls	Threat-state	0.11	0.07	0.03	2.88	0.004
	Anger-state	0.17	0.13	0.04	3.58	0. 004
	Apprehen-sion-state	-0.15	-0.20	0.06	-3.22	0.001
	Anger-trait	0.15	0.11	0.04	3.06	0.002
	Apprehen-sion-trait	-0.09	-0.09	0.04	-1,99	0.05
	A-O mother	-0.08	-0.03	0.02	-2.12	0.04
	'A' mother	0.44	0.26	0.08	3,39	0.0008
	'A' father	0.13	0.85	0.08	11,01	0.0000001
	Free Ind.		4.80	1.62	2.97	0.003

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.64
Multiple determination coefficient: R^2 = 0.41
Relevance of the equation: $F_{(8.459)}$ = 39.12; p <0.00001
Std. Error of Estimation: 3.61

Respon-dents	Variable	Beta	B	St. Error B	t	Level p<
Boys	Anger-trait	0.21	0.16	0.03	4.79	0.000002
	A-O mother	-0.19	-0.08	0.02	-4.44	0.00001
	'A' mother	0.13	0.26	0.09	2.90	0.004
	'A' father	0.27	0.58	0.10	5.85	0.0000001
	Free Ind.		4.90	1.42	3.45	0.0006

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.53
Multiple determination coefficient: R^2 = 0.28
Relevance of the equation: $F_{(4.420)}$ = 40.09; p <0.00001
Std. Error of Estimation: 3.95

Legend: A-O – attitude of acceptance-rejection, 'A' – aggressive coping with a social conflict situation

The step regression analysis showed that out of twenty-two independent variables, which were introduced into the regression model, eight were significant in explaining the strategy of aggression for coping with a social conflict situation by girls. Other variables included in the research turned out to be non-significant determinants of the strategy of aggression in the group of girls. The calculations show that an important determining role for the coping strategy of aggression used by girls is played by the assessment of the situation related to conflict as a threat, anger as an emotional state experienced in a given moment, anger as a personality trait, apprehension as a current emotional state and apprehension as a personality trait as well as the attitude of the mother's acceptance-rejection and the strategy of the mother's and the father's aggression. A multiple determination coefficient shows that in girls 41% of the variability of the aggressive way for coping with a social conflict situation was explained

by the impact of the assumed group of independent variables. Parameters of the regression equation, including its significance, indicate, however, that a higher level of the situational conflict assessment as a threat, a higher level of situational anger, a higher level of the learned disposition to respond with anger, a lower level of apprehension state experienced due to conflict and a lower level of disposition for apprehension reactions and a higher level of attitude of the mother full of emotional coldness, disapproval, hostility, rejection of a child and a higher level of the aggression strategy of the mother and the father in a social conflict situation have a significant influence on the strategy of aggression for coping with a social conflict situation by girls.

It was also checked which group of personality and family variables influences the level of the boys' strategy of aggression in a social conflict situation. Four independent variables were found to be significant in the regression equation. They are: anger as a personality trait, the attitude of the mother's acceptance-rejection, the strategy of the mother's and the father's aggression. A multiple determination coefficient is not high ($R^2 = 0.28$), which proves that only 28% of variability in the scope of the boys' strategy of aggression can be explained by the influence of the assumed group of independent variables. Other variables included in the research turned out to be non-significant determinants of the strategy of aggression in the group of boys. *Beta* values indicate that the higher the level of the learned disposition to respond with anger, the higher the level of the mother's attitude full of emotional coolness, disapproval, hostility, rejection of the son and the higher the level of the mother's and the father's strategy of aggression in a social conflict situation, the higher the level of the strategy of aggression for coping with a situation of social conflict by boys.

The multiple regression model for the strategy of avoidance for coping with a social conflict situation as an explainable variable is presented in Table 2.

The results show that anger as a relatively permanent personality trait, curiosity as a personality trait, the over-demanding attitude of the mother and the attitude of excessive protection of the father as well as the strategy of avoidance of the mother have a significant influence on the strategy of avoiding the conflict situation by girls. The explained variance for the strategy of avoidance is 19% ($R^2 = 0.19$). Other variables included in the research turned out to be insignificant determinants of the strategy of avoidance in the group of girls. The value of *Beta* indicates that the higher the level of learned disposition to respond with anger, the lower the level of disposition to react with curiosity, the higher the level of the over-demanding mother's attitude, the lower the level of the over protecting father's attitude (correct attitude) and the higher the level of the

strategy of avoidance of the mother in a social conflict situation, the more common the strategy of avoidance for coping with a social conflict situation in girls.

Table 2. Multiple step regression for the result of Avoidance scale ('U') of KSMK in relation to questionnaire scales of KOS, Inventory scales STPI, scales of SPR and SRwSK in the versions 'My Mother' and 'My Father': results for girls (N = 468) and boys (N = 425)

Respon-dents	Variable	Beta	B	St. Error B	t	Level p<
Girls	Anger-trait	0.14	0.08	0.03	2.97	0.003
	Curiosity-trait	-0.11	-0.07	0.03	-2.35	0.02
	Demanding mother	0.13	0.03	0.01	2.87	0.005
	Protective father	-0.12	-0.04	0.02	-2.84	0.005
	'U' mother	0.33	0.65	0.08	7.84	0.0000001
	Free Ind.		3.37	1.13	2.98	0.003

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.43
Multiple determination coefficient: R2 = 0.19
Relevance of the equation: F(5.462) = 20.91; p <0.00001
Std. Error of Estimation: 3.09

Respon-dents	Variable	Beta	B	St. Error B	t	Level p<
Boys	Harm/loss-trait	0.10	0.09	0.04	2.22	0.03
	Apprehension--state	0.11	0.13	0.05	2.41	0.02
	Anger-trait	0.15	0.09	0.03	3.22	0.001
	Curiosity-trait	-0.15	-0.11	0.03	-3.25	0.001
	A-O mother	-0.14	-0.04	0.02	-3.07	0.002
	'U' mother	0.30	0.53	0.08	6.81	0.0000001
	Free Ind.		3.36	1.77	1.90	0.06

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.47
Multiple determination coefficient: R2 = 0.22
Relevance of the equation: F(6.418) = 19.96; p <0.00001
Std. Error of Estimation: 3.13

Legend: A-O – attitude of acceptance-rejection, 'U' – avoiding coping with a social conflict situation

In turn, the parameters of the regression equation, including its significance, indicate that the level of results in the scope of harm/loss as a personality trait, apprehension as a current emotional state, anger as a personality trait, curiosity as a personality trait, attitudes of the mother's acceptance-rejection and the strategy of the mother's avoidance have a significant influence on the level of the strategy of avoidance as a method for coping with a social conflict situation in the group of boys (cf. Table 2). This can be interpreted by concluding that the higher the level of disposition assessment of conflict as harm/loss, the higher the level of apprehension experienced as an emotional state in

a given moment, the higher the level of learned disposition to react with anger, the lower the level of learned disposition to react with curiosity and the higher the level of the mother's attitude full of emotional coldness, disapproval, hostility, rejection of the son as well as the higher the level of the mother's strategy of avoidance, the more common the strategy of avoidance for coping with a social conflict situation in boys. A multiple determination coefficient is not high ($R^2 =$ 0.22), which proves that only 22% of the variables in the scope of the strategy of avoidance can be explained on the basis of the above-mentioned variables.

In further analyses, a dependent variable was the strategy of avoidance for coping with a social conflict situation. The results of the multiple regression analysis for groups which were selected according to gender are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple step regression for the result of Submission scale ('Ul') of KSMK in relation to questionnaire scales of KOS, Inventory scales STPI, scales of SPR and SRwSK in the versions 'My Mother' and 'My Father': results for girls (N = 468) and boys (N = 425)

Respon-dents	Variable	Beta	B	St. Error B	t	Level p<
Girls	Anger-state Appre-hension-state	-0.17	-0.12	0.04	-2.87	0.004
		0.17	0.22	0.07	3.12	0.002
	Anger-trait	-0.21	-0.15	0.03	-4.48	0.00001
	'Ul' mother	0.15	0.36	0.10	3.47	0.0006
	Free Ind.		6.08	1.45	4.18	0.00004
Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.34 Multiple determination coefficient: R2 = 0.11 Relevance of the equation: F(4,463) = 14.68; p <0.0000 Std. Error of Estimation: 4.19						
Boys	Challenge-trait	-0.10	-0.12	0.05	-2,24	0.03
	Anger-trait	-0.21	-0.16	0.03	-4,50	0.000009
	Inconsistent mother	-0.10	-0.03	0.02	-2,03	0.04
	Protective father	0.22	0.10	0.02	4,63	0.00005
	'Ul' mother	0.19	0.43	0.10	4,24	0.00003
	'Ul' father	0.11	0.28	0.11	2,54	0.01
	Free Ind.		6.25	1.27	4,93	0.000001
Multiple correlation coefficient: R = 0.41 Multiple determination coefficient: R2 = 0.17 Relevance of the equation: F(6,418) = 14.32; p <0.0000 Std. Error of Estimation:4.12						

Legend: 'Ul' – submissive coping with a social conflict situation

The determinant of the strategy of submission as a method of coping with a social conflict situation by girls includes anger as a current emotional state and anger as a personality trait, apprehension as an emotional state experienced at

a given moment and the strategy of the mother's submission. The multiple determination factor is $R^2 = 0.11$ and indicates that 11% of the dependent variable variance, 'the strategy of submission' was explained by the influence of the assumed group of independent variables. *Beta* values show that the lower the level of anger as a temporary emotional state and experienced in relation to a social conflict situation and the lower the level of learned disposition to respond with anger, the higher the level of apprehension experienced as an emotional state in a given moment as well as the higher the level of the mother's strategy of submission in a social conflict situation, the more common the strategy of submission for coping with a social conflict situation in girls.

For boys, the level of the strategy of submission for coping with a social conflict situation is influenced significantly by the dispositional assessment of conflict as a challenge, anger as a personality trait, the mother's inconsistent attitude and the father's over-protecting attitude as well as the strategy of the mother's and the father's submission. The explained variance for the strategy of submission is 17% ($R^2 = 0.17$). In our research, other independent variables turned out to be insignificant indicators of the strategy of submission. This can be interpreted by concluding that, apart from many factors which can potentially have a direct impact on boys' strategy of submission, this strategy is facilitated by the following: a lower level of the conflict situation assessment as a challenge, a lower level of learned disposition to respond with anger and a lower level of an inconsistent attitude (proper attitude) of the mother and a higher level of an over-protecting attitude of the father as well as a higher level of strategy of the mother's and the father's strategy of submission in a social conflict situation.

Summarising, we can state that the selected personality and family variables are not high predictors of destructive (aggression, avoidance, submission) strategies for coping with a social conflict situation by young people, however, they are quite a significant category of variables which co-determinate the strategy of destructive coping with a social conflict situation by the youth.

Summary of the research results

The research proved that the situational assessment defining conflict as a threat is connected with the strategy of aggressive coping used by young people, especially by girls in a social conflict situation. It can be assumed that the situational assessment of conflict as a threat intensifies the strategy of aggressive coping with a social conflict situation by a young individual. It should be concluded

that a teenager who finds him/herself in a social conflict situation and defines it as a threat will take advantage of the aggression strategy to cope with this situation (Domińska-Werbel, 2014; Borecka-Biernat, Ciuladiene, 2015). This tendency seems to be consistent with L. Berkowitz's statement (1992) that aggression arises in a human being as a result of a perceived threat or as a result of the conviction that s/he is the object of intentional and improper treatment and violation of her/his self-esteem. It is worth noticing that young people who use the strategy of aggression to cope with a social conflict situation show a higher level of anger as an emotional state which is experienced in connection with this situation and a higher level of learned disposition to respond with anger. This means that the greater the aggression strategy for coping with a social conflict situation by the youth, the higher the level of anger with a differentiated origin (state, trait) (Deffenbacher, 1992; Kossewska, 2008; Łosiak, 2009; Domińska-Werbel, 2014). Therefore, it seems probable that when a conflict situation is assessed as a threat, it triggers anger in a young person, which consequently causes aggression. It is interesting that a high level of apprehension with a differentiated origin (state, trait) did not turn out to be a determinant of the aggression strategy for coping with a social conflict situation by adolescents. This result seems to correspond to the conclusion which was formulated by M. Tyszkowa (1986), namely, that the personality structure of an individual and his/her traits determines whether the emotional tension, which is induced in a difficult situation, will be understood in an informative and compensating way in relation to the purpose of the activity or as a signal of a personal threat.

We cannot fail to notice the role of the mother's rejection attitude in shaping the strategy of aggression for coping with a social conflict situation by adolescent girls and boys. The mother, due to the open aversion towards her child, brutally rejects attempts of emotional rapprochement on her child's part, avoids contact with her child and disregards his/her emotional needs. A mother's rejection evokes the state of intense apprehension along with anxiety combined with hostility in a child. Anxiety and hostility are reduced by aggression, resistance, and negativity. Moreover, in the absence of a satisfying relationship with the mother, the child defines the world and environment as unfriendly, threatening, and untrustworthy, which makes the child concentrate on him/herself, ready to defend him/herself in the form of impulsive and often aggressive behaviours (Wolińska, 2000, 2013; Poraj, 2002; Pufal-Struzik, 2008; Bares et al., 2011; Batool, 2013; Liberska et al., 2013). It should also be noticed that the modelling process plays a role in the origin of the aggressive habit of reacting to negative emotions resulting from a conflict situation. It turned out that in situations

which hinder the pursuit of the goal, the mother and the father are perceived as those who use a strategy based on aggression. They also contribute to the modelling of the strategy consisting in aggressive behaviours, which is used in a social conflict situation (Rostowska, 1996; Wojciszke, 2007; Aronson et al., 2012; Wolińska, 2013). Parents give adolescent children aggressive models of responding to conflict. Daughters and sons learn these models by observing the behaviour of their mothers and fathers in conditions of a threat to pursue their own aspirations. Young people adopt aggressive forms of behaviour from their family environment and treat them as effective ways of solving problems, achieving goals or coping with a conflict situation (Patterson, 1986; Obuchowska, 2001; Urban, 2005).

Young people, who use the strategy of avoidance when coping with a social conflict situation, are characterised by a higher tendency to make dispositional assessment of conflict in the category of harm/loss. It can be presumed that along with the increase in the level of the dispositional assessment of conflict as harm/loss, the value of the coping strategy of avoidance will increase taking the form of engaging in substitute activities and/or looking for social contacts. The obtained results indicate that the effect of harm and loss connected with important objects and things in a social conflict situation might result in a tendency to avoid active action in the face of conflict by engaging in other, stress-free forms of activities aimed at reducing the unpleasant emotional tension. When a young person notices that the partner's interaction activity has already caused some harm related to, for example, the sense of self-esteem, s/he is willing to withdraw from the conflict situation (Włodarczyk, Wrześniewski, 2010; Domińska-Werbel, 2014). At the same time, we can notice that young people, who undertake strategies of avoidance in a social conflict situation, manifest a significantly higher level of the temporary apprehension state and a higher level of learned disposition to respond with anger, and a lower level of learned disposition to react with curiosity. This allows us to suppose that negative emotions (apprehension, anger) when reaching a significant level of intensity reduce cognitive curiosity, inhibit spontaneous activity, reduce motivation to perform transgressive acts, trigger 'escape' behaviours (withdrawal, avoidance) from harm and loss situations, and these serve to lower the negative emotional arousal, at least for a certain time (Leary, Kowalski, 2001).

Moreover, the upbringing situation in which the mother is characterised by domination, a desire to guide and subordinate the life of adolescent children, especially daughters, according to her own patterns and requirements turned out to be a determinant of the unique method of responding to emotional ten-

sion, arising in a social conflict situation. The mother strictly enforces execution of her orders and prohibitions as well as she does not tolerate criticism or objections. This attitude of the mother collides with the need for autonomy, independence and co-deciding of the daughter. It can be assumed that if a teenage girl is unable to react with resistance towards her mother, then systematic correction and criticism makes her feel the lack of initiative, passivity and withdrawal from situations requiring involvement (Januszewska, 2001; Brendgen et al., 2002; Borecka-Biernat, 2010). It also turned out that the boy's tendency to withdraw from a social conflict situation is caused by an incorrect relationship with his mother. A boy does not feel warmth or satisfaction in dealing with his mother. He perceives her as a person who does not notice his problems and needs. In the relationship with his mother, he is accompanied by a sense of loneliness, he is self-oriented and distances himself from problems (Zaborowski, 1979; Borecka-Biernat, 2001, 2006). Withdrawing from a relationship with his mother, an adolescent is aiming at combating unpleasant emotions or distancing himself from the experienced psychological discomfort (Radziłłowicz et al., 2005). It should be also noticed that the adolescents' coping strategy of avoidance is significantly shaped by the observed inability to handle problems by the mother, her inefficiency in searching for solutions combined with parallel dodging problems by getting involved in substitute activities or looking for contacts with other people. This proves that the withdrawal from social contacts by an adolescent is a learned form of behaviour resulting from observation and frequent contacts with a person in the immediate environment who shows this kind of behaviour (Harwas-Napierała, 1995; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Zimbardo, 2011). It is worth paying attention to a different gender parent's preference of influences conducive to the use of a coping strategy of avoidance by adolescent boys. This proves that the avoiding type of coping with a conflict situation by a boy is influenced above all by personal qualities of this parent with whom a child identifies, not the compatibility of the model's gender and the person identifying with this model (Rychlak, Legerski, 1967).

The analysis of the presented research results also showed that the lower disposition assessment of conflict as a challenge is conducive to the strategy of avoidance for coping with a social conflict situation by young people. To the best of our knowledge, the observation of a given situation as a challenge is connected with a focus on a potential profit and mobilisation, which consequently results in an attitude towards fighting and achieving goals, which is contrary to submission (Włodarczyk, Wrześniewski, 2010). Thus, an adolescent who assesses conflict as a challenge will not give way to disputes, will not yield,

and vice versa. The observed relationship indicates that the more the teenager is willing to submissively cope with a problem, the less s/he is inclined to assess conflict situations in terms of a challenge, whereas a lower tendency for submissive coping with a problem is connected with a greater tendency to perceive a conflict situation as a challenge. It can be assumed that an adolescent notices that if there is no chance of gaining benefits, then perhaps a better coping strategy will be submission to the partner of the conflict than engaging in an action directed against the partner and taking up a fight as well as risking greater harm, especially when this adolescent thinks that the goal he aims at is not that important (Balawajder, 2010). It is easy to notice that adolescents who 'control' their behaviour in a submissive way in a social conflict situation are characterised by a lower level of the momentary state of anger experienced in relation to the situation in which they found themselves and a lower level of learned disposition to respond with anger as well as a higher level of the temporary state of apprehension. As we can see, an increased level of apprehension is conducive to the appearance of submissive forms of behaviour, subordination to the initiative of others, and compliance in a conflict situation.

We should also note that the fact that the adolescents' submissive way of reacting to emotional tension resulting from a social conflict situation is shaped by the observed father's protecting attitude. The father treats, especially his adolescent son, as a person requiring constant care and concern. He does not believe that his son can function properly without his immediate closeness, help and support. The father does not approve of attempts to solve his son's problems on his own and he imposes his opinion on his son. He observes manifestations of autonomy in the boy's behaviour with anxiety and apprehension. As we can see, this attitude interferes with the boy's need for independence and with his identification with the cultural stereotype of the male role. It can be presumed that the father's excessive involvement in all of his son's affairs makes it difficult for him to acquire the ability to cope with problems independently in conflict conditions (Januszewska, 2001; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010). We should also emphasise the fact that for the strategy of submission occurring in adolescents' behaviour, the mother's and the father's strategy of submission which is observed during the time of struggling with a conflict situation is of great significance (Liberska, 2002). Young people in situations frustrating their pursuit of a goal behave in the way they previously learned from their parents in similar situations. It is worth emphasising that in modelling conditions in a conflict situation, an important role is played by the model's adequacy which facilitates identification with the model. The mother's attitude influences the develop-

ment of a submissive strategy in girls. It is girls who identify themselves with their mothers and most often copy their models of behaviour. A determinant for the boys' coping strategy of submission turned out to be the mother's and the father's strategy of submission for coping with a social conflict situation. This means that a boy learns a coping strategy of submission by observing his mother and father and by treating them as role models.

Generalising the research results reported, it can be stated that the cognitive attitude of a young person towards a social conflict situation may influence the choice of a remedial strategy. Adolescents who find themselves in a conflict situation and assess this situation in the category of a threat and harm/loss will use a destructive strategy (aggression, avoidance, submission) to cope with this situation. A male teenager who uses destructive strategies in a social conflict situation is susceptible to experiencing negative emotions (anger, apprehension) in a situation that poses a threat to the realisation of personal intentions. Moreover, a teenager's destructive way of reacting to emotional tension in a social conflict situation is shaped by inappropriate upbringing attitudes of the parents. The lack of emotional bond with a parent, deprivation of the need for love, security and emotional belonging, or making excessive demands on the child, not caring about the child's developmental capabilities, 'pushing' the child by disapproval and criticism in relation to the ideal functioning in the parent's imagination as well as disapproval of freedom, activity and not showing respect for the individuality of the adolescent child by the parents constitute determinants that seem to create an individual who copes with social conflict situations destructively. We should also remember that the process of modelling plays a significant part in the origin of the destructive habit of responding to negative emotions which result from a social conflict situation. An adolescent learns the destructive way of coping with a social conflict situation by observing parents who show this way of coping with social conflict situations and by frequent contacts with them. We cannot fail to note that it is the family home that teaches young people the destructive form of coping with negative emotions which are experienced in social conflict situations.

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