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# The connection between coping with social conflict and the youth's perception of parental attitudes

## Jak radzenie sobie w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego wiąże się z postrzeganiem postaw rodziców – badania młodzieży

**Abstract**

**Aim.** The goal of the study was to assess the perceived parental attitudes in generating destructive (aggression, avoidance, submission) and constructive (task-oriented) coping strategies in young people in situations of social conflict.

**Materials and methods.** The Parental Attitudes Scale (SPR) by Mieczysław Plopa and the Questionnaire of Coping Strategies in Youth in Situations of Social Conflict (KSMK) by Danuta Borecka-Biernat were used in the study. The empirical study was conducted on a sample of 893 participants (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13 to 15.

**Results.** In the light of the conducted study, it has been concluded that the destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) coping mechanism in adolescents who experience emotional tension in situations of social conflict is shaped by inappropriate parental attitudes, characterized by emotional distance or emotional focus of the parents on the adolescent child, lack of a balanced emotional bond, as well as high expectations combined with excessive discipline and strictness. Moreover, an analysis of the research material has indicated that appropriate parental attitudes, characterized by emotional warmth, acceptance, support, allowing the child to choose the activities they engage in, and respecting their individuality facilitate the development of the constructive (task-oriented) strategy in the adolescent, which allows the young person to overcome social conflicts. It appears that the obtained information constitutes a theoretical basis for guidelines for parental and educational strategies that will allow the shaping of individuals able to cope with conflict in a mature way.

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**Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Celem badań była ocena postrzeganych postaw rodzicielskich w generowaniu destruktywnej (agresja, unik, uległość) i konstruktywnej (zadaniowej) strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego.

**Materiały i metody.** W badaniach posłużono się Skalą Postaw Rodzicielskich (SPR) Mieczysława Plopy i Kwestionariuszem do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego (KSMK) Danuty Boreckiej-Biernat. Badania empiryczne objęły 893 osoby (468 dziewcząt i 425 chłopców) w wieku 13–15 lat.

**Wyniki.** W świetle przeprowadzonych badań stwierdzono, że destruktywny (agresywny, unikowy, uległy) sposób reagowania adolescentów na napięcie emocjonalne w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego kształtują nieprawidłowe postawy rodzicielskie charakteryzujące się uczuciowym dystansem lub uczuciową koncentracją rodziców w stosunku do dorastającego dziecka, brakiem zrównoważonej więzi emocjonalnej i wysoko postawioną poprzeczką wymagań wraz z przesadną dyscypliną i rygorem. Ponadto analiza materiału badawczego wskazała, że prawidłowe postawy rodzicielskie, przepełnione ciepłem uczuciowym, akceptacją i wsparciem, uznaniem swobody do aktywności z jednoczesnym uszanowaniem indywidualności wyposażają dorastające dziecko w strategię konstruktywną (zadaniową), skuteczną w przezwyciężaniu sytuacji konfliktu społecznego. Wydaje się, że uzyskane informacje mogą być wskazówkami teoretycznymi w opracowaniu strategii wychowawczych mających na celu ukształtowanie jednostki radzącej sobie z konfliktem w sposób dojrzały.

*Słowa kluczowe:* młodzież, wychowawcze postawy rodziców, strategie radzenia sobie, sytuacja konfliktu społecznego.

## Coping strategies of young people in situations of social conflict

A situation of conflict with another person is regarded as one of the basic difficult social situations in the life of any individual. The possibility of interpersonal conflict is present wherever there are interactions between people. Interpersonal conflicts affect people of different ages and backgrounds. It is impossible to protect oneself from these situations, if only for the fact that they are caused by the interaction of people, each of whom has different individual character traits, predispositions and skills (Balawajder, 2010). Conflicts are therefore a manifestation of an individual's autonomy, identity, and individuality.

Adults are usually not aware of how many difficult social situations young people have to confront every day. Adolescence is a complex but important period of a young person's life, filled with crises and conflicts. Difficult social interactions often arise in adolescents, containing an element of threat to their sense of security, the realisation of aspirations or the achievement of goals (satisfaction of needs). Young people experience a variety of problems every day regarding school, peers, and the fam-

ily home. Research results obtained, among others, by Brenda Lohman and Patricia Jarvis (2000), Bogdan Stańkowski (2009), Tomasz Garstka (2011), Ewa Gurba (2013, 2020), Joanna Różańska-Kowal (2004), Krzysztof Polak (2010), Romuald Jaworski (2000), Susan Riesch et al. (2000), and Teresa Rostowska (2001) found that youth in adolescence most often considered conflict with the teacher, quarrels with school-mates and friends, and quarrels with parents and other family members as the most important sources of personal threat, unpleasant experiences, and strong feelings of stress. This means that a young person creating and realising certain life plans is exposed to conflict situations that involve school, contacts with peers and relationships within the family. Conflict, that takes place on these three social levels, is an integral part of a young person's life, it is common and cannot be avoided.

Adolescence is a period in which young people experience different, often conflicting aspirations and have to deal with inconsistent expectations directed at themselves. A difficult social situation stimulates young people to become active to regain the balance between demands and opportunities. They also strive to improve their emotional state. The activity that a person undertakes in complex circumstances is referred to in a specific situational context as a coping strategy (Heszen-Niejodek, 2000; Wrześniewski, 1996). Coping skills in the face of social conflict can take two forms of strategy: destructive and constructive (Balawajder, 2010; Borecka-Biernat, 2012; Deutsch, 2005; Donaldson, Prinstein, Danovsky, & Spirito, 2000; Klusek-Wojciszke, 2009).

Destructive strategies are not aimed at resolving and overcoming the conflict situation, they only allow the person to reduce unpleasant emotional tension. On the other hand, the goal they initially set for themselves is replaced by another – the achievement of well-being. This happens through:

–  aggression taking the form of an initiated physical and/or verbal attack directed against specific individuals, causing damage to the physical, psychological and social well-being of others;
–  avoidance of confronting a conflict situation by postponing actions and activities, procrastinating on remedial efforts towards conflict resolution, engaging in additional activities that engage attention and divert it from the conflict situation (surfing the internet, playing on the computer, listening to music), and seeking contact with other people;
–  giving in, which involves abandoning one's own goals in a conflict situation in favour of the partner's interests and needs and adapting to the partner's views, and ways of doing things and maintaining a positive relationship with them.

Constructive coping strategies in conflict situations include all behaviours that are geared towards actively interacting with the conflict situation and aiming at resolving and overcoming it. It includes attempts to make changes within one's actions by

making an effort to communicate with one's partner to find a common solution to contentious issues. A basic feature of a constructive coping strategy is that there is no change in the basic aim of the action, but a change in the organisation of the activities to achieve the aim.

A person's coping strategies are always analysed in a specific difficult situation, as they largely depend on the perception of the situation. It is therefore worth noting how adolescents cope with conflict situations that occur at school, in relationships with peers or in the family home. Numerous studies and even simple observations indicate that adolescents have a considerable repertoire of strategies for dealing with conflict situations. Young people use destructive and constructive strategies (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Donaldson et al., 2000; Gawryś, 2002; Kobus, Reyes, 2000; Krok, 2007; Lachowska, 2010; Miłkowska, 2010; Owens, Daly, & Sle, 2005; Sikora, Pisula, 2002; Williams, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2000). Conflict situations with teachers and schoolmates are a source of strong emotional arousal with negative overtones for adolescents. Coping strategies mentioned by young people in the context of conflicts with teachers and schoolmates include aggressive behaviour towards others (poking, pushing, kicking, nicknames, ridicule, and mocking), attempts to distract oneself from the difficult situation and do something else (listening to music, surfing the Internet), escaping from the difficult situation by physical distance and isolating oneself from it or distancing oneself from difficult relations with others and making concessions (Ciupińska, 2011; Miłkowska-Olejniczak, 2005; Poraj, 2002; Tezer, Demir, 2001; Woźniak-Krakowian, Wieczorek, 2009). In the school situation, in a group of adolescents, within the types of reactions to difficult relationships with others, the need for independent problem-solving is also noted. Young people's intellectual capacities allow them to correctly assess the situation and see the possibility of a solution. Hence, they are willing to compromise or agree in a conflict situation (De Wied, Branje, & Meeus, 2007; Owens et al., 2005; Pisula, Sikora, 2008).

The family home can be both a place where the young person finds support, understanding and a sense of security and an arena for multiple tensions. Conflicts in child-parent relationships are a common phenomenon during adolescence (Gurba, 2013; Jaworski, 2000). The adolescent child wants to free himself from parental guardianship and with all its actions demands to be granted more rights than she or he had before. Obstacles and setbacks encountered, as well as orders and prohibitions imposed by the parents, trigger an angry reaction in the adolescent, expressed in arrogant responses, slamming doors, sometimes crying or direct acts of aggression directed at objects (destroying equipment, hitting the table with the hand, or throwing objects) or persons. In addition to reactions of an aggressive nature, coping with family problems in adolescents consists of avoiding domestic problems, tending to make concessions or mentally distancing oneself from them by seeking interpersonal con-

tacts in non-family structures (Borowiecka, 2005; Filip, 2010; Gurba, 2020; Hibner, 2013; Lachowska, 2010; Rostowska, 2001).

The cited review of research on ways of coping with situations of social conflict indicates that some young people, when faced with a dispute at school, in relationships with peers or at home, adopt a destructive strategy in the form of reacting aggressively to the conflict, avoiding active action by engaging in other stress-free forms of activity or giving in to the conflict. However, there are also those young people who cope well with social conflict, treating it as a challenge to themselves, which prompts them to mobilise their resources to overcome obstacles and fulfil their needs.

## The role of parental attitudes in shaping adolescents' coping strategies in situations of social conflict

Coping with the various difficulties of life is acquired by the child in the process of development within certain upbringing conditions. As far as the family is concerned, these conditions are determined to a large extent by educational attitudes. The system of upbringing approaches between parents and child has a very strong influence on the child's social development, becoming for the child a prototype of social coexistence and the solution of socially difficult situations. In the literature we find data showing that destructive forms of response to difficult social interactions are a consequence of incorrect parental attitudes (Bares, Delva, Grogan-Kaylor, & Andrade, 2011; Batool, 2013; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005; Gurba, 2020; Januszewska, 2001; Kuppens, Grietens, Onghena, & Michiels, 2009; Poraj, 2002; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010; Wolfrand, Hempel, & Miles, 2003). These consist of:

  – an attitude of excessive emotional distance (an attitude of spurning, avoiding the child), manifested in the parents' dislike of the child and disregard for the child's needs. The lack of a satisfactory relationship with the parents induces in the child a state of strong anxiety combined with hostility, reduced by resistance, negativism, quarrelsomeness, aggression or by withdrawal, submissiveness, passivity, and apathy;
  – an excessively demanding attitude, the axial symptom of which is the "bending" of the child to the ideal in the parents' imagination and disregard for the child's developmental capacities. The child is unable to meet the ever-increasing demands of the parents and is consequently subjected to severe punishment, both physical and psychological. The frustrations experienced because of the strict demands made by the parents result in the child developing defensive behaviours in the form of withdrawal, submissiveness, conflictuality, quarrelsomeness, and aggression;

— an overprotective attitude, which manifests itself in surrounding the child with special privileges, incomprehensibly satisfying all needs, and whims, removing every obstacle and isolating from difficulties, often failing to notice his shortcomings and defects, and tolerating inappropriate behaviour. Excessive parental caring results in delayed emotional and social maturity, dependence on others, passivity, escaping from problems, subordination and compliance, or conflictual, demanding, fierce, nervous, and disrespectful behaviour towards others;

— an erratic attitude, in which the parent's attitude towards the child is variable, depending on mood, mood and personal issues related to family and non-family life. An accepting, engaging attitude towards the child is often interspersed with interference, shouting, and declaring various restrictions and punishments. The lack of stability in the parent's behaviour results in a failure to meet the child's significant needs, especially close emotional contact and a sense of security. As a result, the frustration of the child's needs promotes disturbances in emotional and social development, which manifests itself in increased aggression or withdrawal.

The discussion presented so far indicates that the destructive forms of the adolescent child's reaction to socially difficult situations, and especially to conflicts, are a consequence of inappropriate parental attitudes. Negative parental behaviour results in the deprivation of the child's needs, above all his/her need for security, contact with loved ones, love, acceptance and recognition. It is believed that a person with a sense of social insecurity when he or she is in a state of anxiety, helplessness and danger related to interpersonal contacts, activates many reactions of a defensive nature (aggression, avoidance, and submission), aimed at lowering unpleasant emotional tension (Leary, Kowalski, 2001; Tyszkowa, 1986).

A different perspective is presented by the upbringing conditions for the formation of constructive ways of responding to socially difficult situations in an adolescent child, which are intended to ensure the achievement of a goal despite the occurrence of strong emotional tension. The results of research (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Cywińska, 1998; Januszewska, 2001; Plopa, 1983; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010) allow us to state that the development of constructive forms of responding to socially difficult situations, which also include conflict, is fostered by parental attitudes such as:

— accepting children as they are, with their appearance, disposition, and cognitive skills. Positive feelings such as kindness, trust, and affection predominate in the contact between parents and child. Parents take an interest in the child's school progress, plans, and ambitions, allow the child to make decisions together and take into account the child's abilities within the framework of the tasks assigned. In these educational conditions, the child feels secure, has a positive attitude to-

wards people, is not afraid of the difficulties experienced and can deal effectively with the most varied difficult situations;

– interacting with the child in various household chores or leisure activities. This leads to an exchange and discussion with the parents. The child discusses various everyday matters with the parents and expresses his or her opinion, which contributes to a certain decision. This results in the child becoming capable of interacting and making independent commitments;

– giving reasonable freedom to the child, within age-appropriate limits. Parents provide opportunities to satisfy the child's need for activity and independence. Under such conditions, ingenuity, originality, a drive to overcome obstacles and an ease in adapting to different situations develop in the child;

– recognising the child's rights related to his/her developmental needs and granting the child the right to autonomy. The parents show respect for his/her individuality. Such parental behaviour stimulates the child to show their initiative.

These are parental attitudes defined by Maria Ziemska (2009) as correct, as they ensure a good relationship between the parents and the child, and allow the child to gain experience in independent activity without breaking contact with the parents. Furthermore, they enable learning to overcome difficulties, foster the development of habits of constructive behaviour in the face of a socially difficult situation in the adolescent child and increase the chances of achieving the goal of action and overcoming difficulties.

Because of this, it is difficult not to notice that habits of reacting to difficulties, which act as regulators of coping strategies in difficult situations, are formed in children under the influence of specific parental attitudes (Tyszkowa, 1986). The long-term influence of incorrect parental attitudes can form habits of destructive behaviour, manifested by children in situations that provoke such reactions and contain danger signals. Conversely, the development of habits of reacting to difficulties that increase the chances of achieving the goal of action and overcoming difficulties is fostered by parental attitudes described as correct.

## Research question and hypothesis

The research aimed to search for the family aetiology of the destructive (aggression, avoidance, or submission) and constructive (task-based) coping strategies of adolescent youth in a situation of social conflict, an aetiology inherent in parental parenting attitudes. The research took into account the gender of parents and adolescents and aimed to answer the following research question:

Which parental parenting attitudes perceived by adolescents are conducive to the formation of girls' and boys' destructive and constructive coping strategies in situations of social conflict?

The research question formulated in this way allows the following hypothesis to be proposed, which will be verified by analysing the results of the empirical research carried out:

H.1. The destructive (aggressive, evasive, or submissive) coping strategy used by girls and boys in situations of social conflict is more related to the perception of parental parenting attitudes as abnormal, while the constructive (task-based) coping strategy undertaken by girls and boys in situations of social conflict is related to the perception of parental parenting attitudes as normal.

## Research method

### *Study group and research procedure*

A group of 468 girls and 425 boys aged 13–15 years were surveyed. A total of 893 people took part in the study. The respondents were students in the first, second and third classes of junior high schools in Wrocław and surrounding towns. A random selection of schools was used, but not all selected schools agreed to carry out the research in them; therefore, in several cases, non-selected schools with which such cooperation was possible were approached. The research was group-based and participation was voluntary. Pupil surveys were usually conducted during parenting lessons. Pupils signed with pseudonyms or initials. Before the study, participants who had received parental consent to participate in the study were carefully instructed on what to do. The study was conducted following the principles of psychological research.

### *Research tools*

In the study, the Parenting Attitudes Scale (SPR) of Mieczysław Plopa (2015) was used to investigate the perception of parental attitudes and the Questionnaire for the study of coping strategies of adolescents in situations of social conflict (KSMK) of Danuta Borecka-Biernat (2012).

The Parental Attitudes Scale (SPR) (Plopa, 2015) is used to examine parental attitudes as perceived by children and includes 75 statements in a mother's version and a father's version. The respondent responds to each statement and chooses one of five possible responses: "true," "rather true," "difficult for me to assess," "rather not true," and "not true" by assigning them 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 points, respectively. The questionnaire consists of 5 scales, each with 15 statements. They are acceptance-rejection

attitude, autonomy attitude, protective attitude, demanding attitude, and inconsistent attitude. The SPR questionnaire is a standardized tool. Estimation of the internal consistency of the questionnaire's scales was made by calculating Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients. The reliability coefficients range from 0.81 to 0.92 for the "My mother" version and from 0.79 to 0.91 for the "My father" version. The theoretical relevance of this tool was found to be high based on the method of examining the internal structure of the text and the method of examining intergroup differences, as well as criterion relevance. Sten scale norms for girls and boys aged 13-19 are elaborated. The results expressed in sten are interpreted as the degree of intensity of a given attitude in the desirable or undesirable direction.

The Questionnaire for the Study of Youth Coping Strategies in Situations of Social Conflict (KSMK) (Borecka-Biernat, 2012) is designed to study this strategy undertaken by young people in adolescence. It consists of a description of 33 situations of social conflict. Four behaviours expressing social conflict coping are given for each situation: the first refers to aggressive ("A"), the second to avoidant ("U"), the third to submissive ("Ul") and the fourth to task-based ("Z") social conflict coping. Scores are obtained for each scale separately by summing the marked behaviours in the 33 situations belonging to the scale. As the scales consist of 33 items, respondents can score between 0 and 33 points on each scale. The KSMK questionnaire is characterised by favourable psychometric parameters. Scale reliability coefficients determined by the internal consistency method (Cronbach's alpha) range from alpha=0.73 (for the scales "Aggression," "Submission," and "Task") to alpha=0.694 (the "Avoidance" scale). The KSMK questionnaire has a satisfactory level of diagnostic accuracy and the way of answering the questionnaire is not burdened by social approval. Sten scale norms were developed based on a sample of 1,877 students, including 975 girls and 902 boys aged 13–15 from first, second and third grades of junior high schools from all sixteen provinces in Poland.

**Analysis of research results**

To determine what set of parental attitudes may affect the level of destructive (aggressive, evasive, or submissive) and constructive (task-based) coping strategies of adolescents in situations of social conflict, it was decided to apply regression in a hierarchical variant using the backward elimination method (criterion: F-likelihood ≥0.100). This method involves introducing all predictors into the model and then successively removing irrelevant variables, followed by a recalculation of the model until the final form is obtained (Bedyńska, Książek, 2012). The values of the analysed variables assume a normal distribution. Scores on the four scales of the KSMK Ques-

tionnaire were taken as the dependent variable: aggressive coping in social conflict ("A"), avoidant coping in social conflict ("U"), submissive coping in social conflict ("Ul"), and task-based coping in social conflict ("Z"). Scores on the five scales of the SPR Questionnaire in the versions "My mother" and "My father" were treated as a set of independent variables: acceptance-rejection attitude, autonomy attitude, protective attitude, demanding attitude, and inconsistent attitude. The results are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1

*Hierarchical variant regression using the backward elimination method for the aggression ("A") scale score of the KSMK against the scales of the SPR questionnaire: scores for girls (N=468) and boys (N=425)*

| Respondents | Variable | *Beta* | B | Stand-ard error B | t | Level of p< |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | A. A-O  of mother | -0.21 | -0.08 | 0.02 | -4.04 | 0.00006 |
|  | A. inconsistent of the mother | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 2.06 | 0.04 |
|  | A. demanding of the father | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 2.27 | 0.02 |
|  | Free parameter |  | 6.54 | 1.74 | 3.76 | 0.0002 |
|  | Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.32 Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.10 Significance of equation: F(3.464)=17.07; p<0.000001 Estimation std. error: 4.42 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | A. A-O  of mother | -0.24 | -0.10 | 0.02 | -5.02 | 0.000001 |
|  | A. inconsistent of the mother | 0.20 | 0.07 | 0.02 | 4.20 | 0.00003 |
|  | Free parameter |  | 8.58 | 1.62 | 5.30 | 0.000001 |
|  | Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.37 Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.13 Significance of equation: F(2.422)=29.62; p<0.00001 Estimation std. error: 4.31 |  |  |  |  |  |

A. – [parental] attitude

*Source:* Author's own study.

Stepwise regression analysis showed that, of the ten independent variables entered into the regression model, three were significant in explaining the aggressive coping strategies used by girls in situations of social conflict. The remaining variables included in the study proved to be non-significant determinants of aggression strategies in the girls' group. The calculations revealed that the mother's accepting-rejecting attitude (negative coefficient), the mother's inconsistent attitude and the father's demanding attitude played an important determinant role in the girls' aggressive coping strategies. The coefficient of multiple determination is not high R2=0.10, indicating that only 10% of the variability in girls' aggressive coping in social conflict situations

was explained by the effect of the adopted set of independent variables. Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the mother's rejecting attitude, the higher the level of the mother's inconsistent attitude and the higher the level of the father's demanding attitude, the more often girls use an aggressive strategy when they are in a social conflict situation.

It also tested what set of parental attitudes influences the level of boys' aggression strategies in situations of social conflict. Two dependent variables were found to be significant in the regression equation. These are the mother's acceptance-rejection attitude (negative coefficient) and the mother's inconsistent attitude. The multiple determination coefficient $R^2=0.13$ indicates a 13% variance in the dependent variable "aggression strategy" in the boys' group - this was explained by the effect of the adopted set of independent variables. Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the mother's rejecting attitude and the higher the level of the mother's inconsistent attitude, the more often the boys use an aggressive strategy in dealing with situations of social conflict.

The multiple regression model for girls' and boys' avoidant coping in situations of social conflict as an explained variable is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
*Hierarchical variant regression using the backward elimination method for the avoidance ("U") scale score of the KSMK against the scales of the SPR questionnaire: scores for girls (N=468) and boys (N=425)*

| Respondents | Variable | *Beta* | B | Standard error B | T | Level of p< |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | A. demanding of mother | 0.18 | 0.05 | 0.01 | 3.81 | 0.0002 |
| | A. autonomy of father | -0.17 | -0.05 | 0.01 | -3.68 | 0.0003 |
| | A. protective of father | -0.13 | -0.04 | 0.02 | -2.75 | 0.006 |
| | Free parameter | | 6.70 | 1.10 | 6.07 | 0.000001 |
| Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.29 | | | | | | |
| Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.08 | | | | | | |
| Significance of equation: F(3.464)=13.76; p<0.000001 | | | | | | |
| Estimation std. error: 3.28 | | | | | | |
| Boys | A. A-O of mother | -0.22 | -0.07 | 0.02 | -4.31 | 0.00002 |
| | A. protective of mother | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 2.28 | 0.02 |
| | A. autonomy of father | -0.18 | -0.06 | 0.02 | -3.58 | 0.0004 |
| | Free parameter | | 9.66 | 1.28 | 7.53 | 0.000001 |
| Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.32 | | | | | | |
| Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.10 | | | | | | |
| Significance of equation: F(3.421)=15.77; p<0.000001 | | | | | | |
| Estimation std. error: 3.36 | | | | | | |

A. – [parental] attitude
*Source:* Author's own study.

The results indicate that girls' avoidant coping strategy in social conflict situations is significantly influenced by their mother's demanding attitude, their father's autonomy attitude (negative coefficient) and their father's protective attitude (negative coefficient). The explained variance for the avoidant coping strategy used by girls in social conflict situations is 8% ($R^2=0.08$). The other variables included in the study proved to be non-significant determinants of the avoidance strategy in the girls' group. The Beta value indicates that the higher the level of the mother's demanding attitude, the lower the level of the father's autonomy attitude and the lower the level of the father's protective attitude towards desirability, the more often the girls use avoidance strategy when they are in a social conflict situation.

Meanwhile, the parameters of the regression equation, including its significance, demonstrate that the level of scores for the mother's acceptance-rejection attitude (negative coefficient), the mother's protective attitude and the father's autonomy attitude (negative coefficient) have a significant effect on the level of avoidance strategies as a way of coping with social conflict used in the boys' group. The coefficient of multiple determination is not high ($R^2=0.10$), indicating that only 10% of the avoidance strategy variables can be explained based on the mentioned variables. Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the mother's rejecting attitude, the higher the level of the mother's protecting attitude and the lower the level of the father's autonomy attitude, the more often the boys use an avoidance strategy in dealing with conflict situations.

In further analyses, the dependent variable was the submissive coping strategy of girls and boys in situations of social conflict. The results of the multiple regression analysis for the gender-segregated groups are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Hierarchical variant regression using the backward elimination method for the score of the Submissiveness ("Ul") scale of the KSMK against the scales of the SPR questionnaire: scores for girls (N=468) and boys (N=425)*

| Respondents | Variable | *Beta* | B | Standard error B | T | Level of p< |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | A. inconsistent of mother | -0.17 | -0.05 | 0.02 | -3.63 | 0.0003 |
|  | Free parameter |  | 8.84 | 0.63 | 14.07 | 0.000001 |

Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.17
Multiple determination coefficient: $R^2=0.03$
Significance of the equation: $F(1.466)=13.19$; $p<0.0003$
Estimation std. error: 4.37

| Respondents | Variable | *Beta* | B | Standard error B | T | Level of p< |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boys | A. inconsistent of mother | -0.18 | -0.06 | 0.02 | -3.57 | 0.0004 |
| | A. protective of father | 0.22 | 0.10 | 0.02 | 4.42 | 0.00001 |
| | Free parameter | | 5.28 | 1.10 | 4.82 | 0.000002 |

Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.24
Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.06
Significance of the equation: F(2.422)=12.80; p<0.000001
Estimation std. error: 4.37

A. – [parental] attitude

*Source:* Author's own study.

The determinant of the submissiveness strategy as a way of coping with the girls' social conflict situation is the mother's inconsistent attitude (negative coefficient). The multiple determination coefficient R2=0.03 indicates 3% of the variance of the dependent variable "submissiveness strategy" in the group of girls – this was explained by the effect of the adopted independent variable. The Beta value indicates that the lower the level of the mother's inconsistent attitude towards desirability, the more often the girls use a submissive strategy in coping with social conflict.

The level of boys' submissive coping strategies in situations of social conflict is significantly influenced by the mother's inconsistent attitude (negative coefficient) and the father's protective attitude. The explained variance for the submissive strategy is 6% (R2=0.06). The other independent variables in the study were found to be non-significant indicators of submissiveness strategies. This can be interpreted that, apart from several factors that could potentially have a direct impact on the boys' submissive strategy, this strategy is facilitated by: a lower level of inconsistent attitude on the part of the mother towards the son's desirability, and a higher level of over-protective attitude on the part of the father.

The multiple regression model for the task-based coping strategy of girls and boys in situations of social conflict as an explained variable is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Hierarchical variant regression using the backward elimination method for the Task ("Z") scale score of the KSMK against the scales of the SPR questionnaire: scores for girls (N=468) and boys (N=425)*

| Respondents | Variable | *Beta* | B | Standard error B | T | Level of p< |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | A. A-O of mother | 0.14 | 0.08 | 0.03 | 3.06 | 0.002 |
| | A. autonomy of father | 0.16 | 0.09 | 0.03 | 3.43 | 0.0007 |
| | Free parameter | | 8.44 | 1.82 | 4.64 | 0.000005 |
| Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.24 | | | | | | |
| Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.05 | | | | | | |
| Significance of equation: F(2.465)=14.45; p<0.000001 | | | | | | |
| Estimation std. error: 6.16 | | | | | | |
| Boys | A. A-O of mother | 0.23 | 0.14 | 0.03 | 4.62 | 0.000005 |
| | A. protective of mother | -0.18 | -0.11 | 0.03 | -3.83 | 0.0002 |
| | A. autonomy of father | 0.18 | 0.11 | 0.03 | 3.81 | 0.0002 |
| | Free parameter | | 7.29 | 2.34 | 3.12 | 0.002 |
| Multiple correlation coefficient: R=0.35 | | | | | | |
| Multiple determination coefficient: R2=0.12 | | | | | | |
| Significance of equation: F(3.421)=19.69; p<0.000001 | | | | | | |
| Estimation std. error: 6.11 | | | | | | |

A. – [parental] attitude

*Source:* Author's own study.

The results indicate that the mother's attitude of acceptance-rejection and the father's attitude of autonomy has a significant impact on the level of girls' task-based coping strategies in situations of social conflict. The explained variance for the girls' level of task-based coping strategies is 5% (R2=0.05). The other variables included in the study proved to be non-significant determinants of the level of task-based coping strategy in social conflict in the girls' group. The Beta value indicates that the higher the level of the mother's attitude of acceptance and the higher the level of the father's attitude of autonomy, the more often the girls use a task-based strategy in a social conflict situation.

Stepwise regression analysis revealed that, of the independent variables entered into the regression model, the following perceived parental attitudes influence the boys' level of task-based coping strategies in situations of social conflict: the mother's accepting-rejecting attitude, the mother's protective attitude (negative coefficient) and the father's autonomy attitude. The coefficient of multiple determination is not high (R2=0.12), indicating that only 12% of the task strategy variables can be explained based on the mentioned variables. Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the mother's attitude of acceptance, the lower the level of the mother's

protective attitude towards desirability and the higher the level of the father's attitude of autonomy, the more often the boys use a task strategy in dealing with social conflict.

In view of the statistical verification performed, research hypothesis H.1 can be concluded as positively verified. It is worth noting that the extracted parental attitudes are not strong predictors of the coping strategies (aggression, avoidance, submission, or task-based) of girls and boys in situations of social conflict, as evidenced by the result R2=0.03-0.13. This means that there may be relatively many other variables co-determining the level of coping strategies of girls and boys in situations of social conflict.

## Summary and conclusion

The analysis of the results of the research revealed that the mothers of girls and boys who use the strategy of aggression in conflict are, in their perception, emotionally cold, and hostile, do not provide them with emotional warmth, deprive them of emotional needs, do not listen to their needs and desires and do not take them into account when making various parenting decisions. Mothers make their daughters and sons feel that they are unloved, focusing on their faults and weaknesses. This means that the growing child does not feel pleasure, warmth and satisfaction in their relationship with their mother. When brought up in this way, the child does not have the right conditions in the family to satisfy the need for affiliation, recognition and security, which are basic psychological needs. The consequence of their unfulfillment is that the child develops a sense of being rejected and neglected by the mother. As it turns out, the rejection of an adolescent child by his or her parent, manifested in unkind treatment, constant criticism, showing his or her dissatisfaction and even ridicule, mockery, or disrespect, has an impact on the child's aggressive behaviour during conflict situations. The opinion of many researchers emphasising the importance of emotional relations, and the emotional climate of the family (revealed as the emotional aspect of the parental attitude) for its members – the children – is confirmed. The intensity of aggression strategies in girls and boys in situations of social conflict is in a straightforward relationship with the degree of frustration of their emotional needs (love, dependence, security) (Bares et al., 2011; Batool, 2013; Domaradzka, 2002; Farnicka, Liberska, 2014; Januszewska, Jasik, 2018; Pufal-Struzik, 2008; Van Lissa, Hawk, & Meeus, 2017; Wolińska, 2000). It seems, therefore, that girls and boys who do not experience an open, warm relationship with their mothers during their ontogenetic development are unable to function rationally in interpersonal relationships, especially in situations of social conflict.

It is also worth noting the instability in the mother's behaviour towards the growing child when excessive emotional distance and hostility of the mother are interspersed with the establishment of emotional contact towards the daughter and son (inconsistent attitude). This indicates an unbalanced emotional attitude of the parent towards the growing child. It is reasonable to believe that the mother's emotional attitude towards her growing child is volatile, depending on her momentary mood, wellbeing, or other personal issues, not necessarily related to family life. This behaviour of the mother is not conducive to the development of emotional control mechanisms in her daughter and son, so they may spontaneously express emotions and desires in an aggressive form in a conflict situation. It can be hypothesised that the experience of emotional instability in the relationship with the parent is a strong frustration factor that causes girls and boys in situations of social conflict to reveal increased levels of hostility towards the environment, conflictiveness, and aggression in their interactions with others (Juroszek, 2017; Łukaszewicz, 2002).

Interestingly, the fathers of girls who use the strategy of aggression in their activities are characterised, in their perception, by a desire to direct and subordinate their daughter's life to their own patterns or demands. The parent formulates excessive demands on her, imposes a way of behaving, expects significant achievements in school, and interferes in her affairs. By his rigidly adopted model of upbringing, the father strictly enforces the execution of his orders, commands, and prohibitions and does not tolerate criticism or opposition. This means that making excessive demands of the growing child is filled with the parent's unkindness, which is generally accompanied by criticism, ridicule, mockery, disregard for the child's achievements and the use of punishments. Any punishment applied by the father is seen by the daughter as a manifestation of aggression, becoming a kind of behavioural pattern. This becomes entrenched in the daughter in the form of a habit of reacting aggressively to other people, objects from her environment or conflict situations (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2012; Dutkiewicz, 2003; Łukaszewicz, 2002; Pufal-Struzik, 2008; Wolińska, 2000).

Analysis of the gathered research material revealed the role of a rejecting maternal attitude in shaping the boys' mysterious way of coping in situations of social conflict. The mother, due to the open resentment she feels towards her son, brutally repels the desire for closeness on his part and does not take care of him. The boy does not experience maternal care, he feels a lack of sufficient attention and interest in his affairs and actions. The relationship with his mother is accompanied by a sense of isolation and loneliness, resulting in a state of anxiety.

The result of such upbringing is the frustration of important psychological needs of the growing child, disturbances in his emotional and social development, which are manifested in difficulties in establishing and consolidating emotional ties with others (the first emotional relationship is a prototype for future relationships) and in

not responding to attempts to establish social contacts and withdrawing from them (Borecka-Biernat, 2001, 2006; Dzwonkowska, 2009; Jankowska, 2014; Koydemir-Özden, Demir, 2009; Plopa, 2015; Wojciechowska, Jasik, 2016). As can be observed, an adolescent child who does not experience emotional support or a warm relationship with a parent in his or her development is unable to function constructively in inter-personal relationships, particularly in conflictual settings. It is reasonable to believe that the greater the deprivation of the need for emotional-social bonding caused by an abnormal relationship with the mother, the greater the tendency of the son to withdraw from conflictual situations in social relationships.

During the analysis, it was also found that the source of the boys' avoidant coping strategies in situations of social conflict in the family environment is a climate that is not conducive to the exchange of feelings and opinions. The mother of the adolescent son treats him as a person who requires constant care and attention. She does not be-lieve that the boy can function properly without her direct proximity and assistance. She tries to exclude any independence he may have in acquiring and using objects that satisfy his needs. The mother disapproves of her son's attempts to solve his problems independently and imposes her opinion on him. The mother's overprotection of the adolescent child may inhibit the development of independent coping in conflict situ-ations and perpetuate a sense of dependence on the parent. The father also perceives the manifestations of autonomy in his son's and daughter's behaviour with anxiety and fear. He does not leave them room for their initiative and activity and does not develop their originality, creativity, ingenuity, and openness to new experiences. It can be assumed that the father's exaggerated involvement in all of his son's and daugh-ter's affairs, limiting their activity, freedom, and strengthening their sense of depend-ence hinders them from acquiring the ability to deal with conflict independently. This seems to suggest that typical forms of behaviour for boys and girls with a strong need for dependency are conflict avoidance and withdrawal from socially difficult situa-tions (Januszewska, 2001; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010).

Research has also shown that an evasive way of reacting to emotional tension arising in situations of social conflict is shaped by an upbringing situation in which the mother is characterised by domination, a desire to direct and subordinate her daugh-ter's life to her models and demands. According to her rigidly adopted model of up-bringing, the mother treats her daughter ruthlessly. She imposes strict orders and de-mands strict compliance with them. The mother strictly enforces her orders and does not tolerate discrepancies between her daughter's behaviour and achievements and her expectations. This attitude of the parent interferes with the adolescent child's need for affiliation, autonomy, independence, and co-determination. If the daughter is un-able to respond with resistance to the mother, the systematic correction and criticism leads her to a lack of initiative, passivity, and withdrawal from situations requiring

involvement (Januszewska, 2001; Juroszek, 2017; Karavasilis, Doyle, Markiewicz, 2003; Koydemir-Özden, Demir, 2009; Minda, 2019; Plopa, 2015; Wojciechowska, Jasik, 2016; Zabłocka, 2012). An adolescent child's awareness that the scope of activity is small may form the conviction that his or her ability to cope with social demands is limited. An experience of this kind can be the source of the emergence of passivity, withdrawal, and inactivity. It seems, therefore, that if the mother sets a lot of rules and demands that the daughter has to follow with systematic disapproval, and criticism and does not give her the initiative to act, this significantly influences the formation of the avoidance strategy used in situations of social conflict by the adolescent girl.

The analysis of the research material revealed the role of the protective paternal attitude in shaping the submissive way boys cope with social conflict. The father of an adolescent son treats him as a person who requires constant care and attention. He seeks to exclude any independence he may have in acquiring and using objects that condition him to meet his needs. The father disapproves of his son's attempts to solve his problems independently; he imposes his opinion on him. The father's overprotection of the boy may inhibit the development of independence and perpetuate a sense of dependence on the parent. This attitude of the father interferes with the boy's need for independence, with his identification with the cultural stereotype of the male role. It delays the adolescent's emotional maturity, manifesting in infantilism, dependence, passivity, and lack of initiative and compliance (Ziemska, 2009). It can be assumed that the father's exaggerated involvement in all of his son's affairs, limiting his son's activities, reinforcing his sense of dependence and his tendency to seek help or support from other people make it difficult for an adolescent boy to acquire the skills to deal with conflict independently. This would seem to suggest that typical forms of behaviour in boys with a strong need for dependence are a high degree of submissiveness to stronger ones, changing one's mind according to the view of others, and an attitude of submissiveness (Reykowski, Frączek, 1963).

The research findings reveal that conditions conducive to the development of task-based coping strategies for girls and boys in situations of social conflict include acceptance, emotional warmth, the mother showing interest in the adolescent child's problems, assisting in situations that are important to the child and supporting the child in making meaningful decisions. The adolescent child feels pleasure and satisfaction in dealing with his mother. A child brought up in this way has the right conditions to satisfy the need for affiliation, recognition, and security in the family and to develop constructive ways of functioning in social interactions. Again, the opinion of many researchers emphasising the significant importance of emotional relations, the climate of the family (revealed as the emotional aspect of parental attitudes) for its members – children – is confirmed (Ziemska, 2009). As can be seen, positive emotional relations filled with acceptance and openness of the mother to her daughter's

and son's issues equip them with task-oriented coping strategies in situations of social conflict (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Januszewska, 2001; Juroszek, 2017; Klink, Byars-Winston, Bakken, 2008).

The analysis of the research results also revealed that conditions conducive to the development of a task-based coping strategy for girls and boys in situations of social conflict include the father supporting them in making meaningful decisions, while at the same time giving them autonomy, leaving them room for their initiative and activity. From this, it follows that the father sees the growing child as a separate individual, with his own life and his own needs. Without excessive interference, the father encourages his daughter and son to develop independence and take responsibility for their actions. He teaches a task-oriented attitude to difficulties and expresses approval for attempts to solve their problems independently when there are divergent aspirations. It goes without saying that in situations of importance to the growing child, there is the intervention of the parent. On the one hand, he or she is urged to be independent and show initiative, but on the other hand, although exercised with freedom, that child knows that in case of need or actual danger, he or she can count on the parent's help. As can be seen, the father's recognition of the daughter's and son's rights equips them with a task strategy that is effective in overcoming situations of social conflict (Bhattacharyya, Pradhan, 2015; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Januszewska, 2001; Juroszek, 2017; Klink et al., 2008; Smetana, Daddis, 2002). It is important to believe that the parent, by forming support while respecting independence, provides a sense of security that fosters a task-based coping strategy for young people in situations of social conflict.

The research carried out found that the destructive (aggressive, evasive, or submissive) way in which adolescents react to emotional tension arising in situations of social conflict is shaped by incorrect parental attitudes towards the growing child. The affectional distance or emotional focus of the parents on the growing child, the lack of a balanced emotional bond, and the high set bar of demands together with exaggerated discipline and rigour are determinants that seem to create an individual coping in a destructive (aggressive, evasive, or submissive) manner with the situation of social conflict. Positive emotional relations in the family, filled with acceptance, emotional warmth, the parents' openness to the growing child's concerns, the recognition of freedom to be active and the manifestation of respect for the child's individuality equip the growing child with strategies for constructive (task-based) coping in situations of social conflict. Thus, the arrangement of parental attitudes between parents and the growing child has a significant impact on the child's social development and provides a prototype for social coexistence and social conflict resolution.

The research conclusion formulated has theoretical and practical applications. It seems that the information obtained will allow the educator to better understand the

behaviour of the adolescent child in a situation of social conflict and enrich him/her with a view of the causes of this behaviour from the perspective of the young person. They can be a starting point for the development of educational strategies creating an individual who copes with conflict in a mature way.

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