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**Family-related indicators of avoidant and task-based coping
strategy used by young people in social conflict situations**

Rodzinne wskaźniki prognozy unikowej i zadaniowej strategii radzenia sobie
dorastających się młodzieży w sytuacjach konfliktu społecznego

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Abstract

Aim. Our research was to determine family predictors of avoidant and task-based coping strategies of adolescents in situations of social conflict.

Methods and materials. We used the Parental Attitudes Scale (SPR) by Mieczysław Plopa, the Parental Coping Strategies in Social Conflict Questionnaire (KRSwSK) by Borecka-Biernat and the Adolescents' Coping Strategies in Social Conflict Situations Questionnaire (KSMK) by Borecka-Biernat. The empirical research was conducted in state-run schools and involved 893 participants (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13–15 years.

Results. The results show that the avoidant way in which adolescents react to emotional tension in a situation of social conflict is shaped by incorrect parental attitudes characterized by the parent's emotional distance from the growing child, excessive demands, and the lack of a balanced emotional bond. Furthermore, our analysis of the research

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material indicates that correct parental attitudes that involve emotional warmth, acceptance, and support while respecting independence equip the adolescent child with task-based coping strategies in situations of social conflict. Our research results also suggest that the modelling process plays a key role in the emergence of task-based coping with social conflict, learnt by the adolescent child, among other things, by observing parents who display this way of coping in social conflict situations. Based on these outcomes, people responsible for upbringing may better understand the behaviour of adolescent children in situations of social conflict. Our conclusions can also constitute the starting point for the development of educational strategies that foster active individuals, capable of making efforts to resolve and overcome conflicts.

Keywords: young people, parental attitudes, modelling behaviour, coping strategy, social conflict situation.

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem badań było ustalenie rodzinnych predyktorów unikowej i zadaniowej strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego.

Metody i materiały. W badaniach posłużono się Skalą Postaw Rodzicielskich (SRP) Plopy, Kwestionariuszem do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego (KSMK) Boreckiej-Biernat i Kwestionariuszem do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego (KSMK) Boreckiej-Biernat. Badania empiryczne przeprowadzono w szkołach publicznych. Objęły one 893 osoby (468 dziewcząt i 425 chłopców) w wieku 13–15 lat.

Wyniki. W świetle przeprowadzonych badań stwierdzono, że unikowy sposób reagowania młodzieży na napięcie emocjonalne w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego kształtują nieprawidłowe postawy rodzicielskie charakteryzujące się uczuciowym dystansem rodzica wobec dorastającego dziecka, wysoko postawioną poprzeczką wymagań i brakiem zrównoważonej więzi emocjonalnej. Ponadto analiza materiału badawczego wykazała, że prawidłowe postawy rodzicielskie przepełnione ciepłem uczuciowym, akceptacją i wsparciem z jednoczesnym uszanowaniem niezależności wyposażają dorastające dziecko w strategię zadaniowego radzenia sobie w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego. Przedstawione wyniki badań również sugerują, że proces modelowania odgrywa ważną rolę w genezie zadaniowego sposobu radzenia sobie w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego, które uczy się dorastające dziecko między innymi przez obserwowanie rodziców, którzy przejawiają taki sposób radzenia sobie w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego. Wydaje się, że uzyskane informacje pozwolą wychowawcy na lepsze zrozumienie zachowania dorastającego dziecka w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego i mogą stanowić punkt wyjścia do opracowania strategii wychowawczych, kreujących jednostkę aktywną, zdolną do podejmowania wysiłków zmierzających do rozwiązania i przezwyciężenia konfliktów.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież, postawy rodzicielskie, modelowanie zachowania, strategia radzenia sobie, sytuacja konfliktu społecznego.

Introduction

Conflict with another person is regarded to be a basic social challenge in everyone's life. The possibility of interpersonal conflict arises wherever there are interactions between people. Interpersonal conflicts involve people of various ages and in various environments. It is impossible to protect oneself from them, since they are a phenomenon caused by the mutual interaction of people, who each possesses different, individual character traits, predispositions, and skills. They are a projection of the individuality of particular persons, having diverse views and attitudes (Szczepański, 1972). Each individual has the right to present a different stance on a given issue, and to pursue his or her personal goals, desires, or interests, each has psychological traits that are specific to him or her. Revealing these differences is an expression of individuality, freedom, and authenticity.

Conflict is an ambiguous category. In a colloquial sense, conflict designates situations that involve conflicting views on an issue, a dispute over values, a clash of interests, or a difference over action disputes (Borkowski, 2003). The word "conflict" comes from the Latin *confligere* or *conflictatio*, which mean colliding with each other, a dispute, a discussion, a fight, or a clash of two or more processes, or forces that are inherent in living beings (Plezia, 2007). The expression in Polish means a contradiction of interests, views, collision, disagreement, dispute, altercation (Doroszewski, 1996). Therefore, at the basis of interpersonal conflicts, there is a broadly understood contradiction, incompatibility, or discrepancy concerning goals, views, attitudes, interests, values, tendencies, motives, aspirations, and desires, which may occur between individuals or groups of individuals (Balawajder, 2010; Deutsch, 2005; Wojciszke, 2007). Clearly, the essence of conflict is the clash of opposing needs, views, aspirations, wishes, and expectations.

Avoidant and task-based coping adopted by young people in social conflict situations

Adults tend to underestimate how many difficult situations young people must face every day. Adolescence is an important stage in everyone's life, filled with crisis and conflict (Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziółkowska, 2016; Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2015). During adolescence, a young person is bound to remain in several environments:

school, their school class, peer group, or family. The possibility of conflict exists in all of these social planes. Social contacts may involve conflicts with teachers, arguments with schoolmates, a girlfriend or a boyfriend, as well as quarrels with parents and other family members (Bałon, Lesiuk, 2007; Ciupińska, 2011; Garstka, 2011; Gurba, 2013, 2020; Polak, 2010; Riesch *et al.*, 2000; Rostowska, 2001; Stańkowski, 2009). Conflict played out on these three social planes is an integral part of a young person's life, which is common and cannot be avoided. In the school environment, the young person needs to cope with many challenges inherent in institutionalized schooling. In their peer environment, young people learn how to deal with a mosaic of different personalities. In the family environment, they learn to be socially connected. Playing the social roles of a pupil, a peer, and a child involves meeting expectations. When these expectations are excessive and difficult to fulfil, or contradictory, young people face a challenging situation, an ideal breeding ground for conflict. Harsh discipline meted out by school or parents, too little independence on the part of young people, lack of understanding for their interests, leads to arguments, quarrels, and rebellions. It should also be taken into account that adolescents strive to become adults, to gain more freedom and independence so as to make decisions about different areas of behaviour, they develop new forms of self-expression, which increases the likelihood of conflicts in relationships with teachers, peers, and parents.

Adolescence is a period in which adolescents experience different, often conflicting aspirations and need to cope with inconsistent social expectations towards themselves. Challenging social situations stimulate the young person to become active to achieve balance between demands and opportunities and/or to improve their emotional state. The activities that the person undertakes in complex circumstances is considered in the specific situational context as coping strategies applied to a current difficult situation (Heszen-Niejodek, 2008; Wrześniewski, 2000). As mentioned above, the school environment is particularly stressful for young people, especially when it comes to conflict situations that involve teachers, schoolmates, or romantic partners, or to arguments with one or both parents or other family members. It is thus noteworthy to observe how adolescents deal with conflict situations that occur at school, with peers, or in their family home. Numerous studies and anecdotal evidence indicate that adolescents have a considerable repertoire of coping strategies in challenging social situations, including social conflict. Coping skills in social conflict situations may *e.g.*, manifest as destructive or constructive coping strategies (Borecka-Biernat, 2010; De Wied, Branje, & Meeus, 2007; Donaldson, Prinstein, Danovsky, & Spirito, 2000; Filip, 2010; Gros, 2022; Kobus, Reyes, 2000; Krok, 2007; Lachowska, 2010; Lohman, Jarvis, 2000; Owens, Daly, & Slee, 2005; Pisula, Sikora, 2008; Sikora, Pisula, 2002; Tezer, Demir, 2001; Williams, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999; Van Tilburg, 2021). Destructive coping strategies in a social conflict situation, which take the form of defensive

behaviour are not aimed at solving and overcoming the conflict situation, they do not lead to an agreement but escalate hostile behaviour, and only allow a person to reduce unpleasant emotional tension. The goal “to achieve this and that” is replaced by “to lower unpleasant emotional tension,” *i.e.*, to feel better. This happens, *e.g.*, through the strategy that involves avoidance of confronting the social conflict, escape, withdrawal from the situation, not addressing the situation, avoidance of thinking, and experiencing the situation by ignoring and disregarding the problem, engaging in substitute activities that redirect and divert the individual’s attention from the conflict situation (thinking about pleasant things, daydreaming, listening to music, playing sports, playing computer games, Internet browsing, going for a walk, sleeping), as well as seeking contact with other people.

On the other hand, constructive coping strategies in social conflict include a task-based strategy that involves taking action *vis-a-vis* conflict situations, which is considered to be adaptive. It is based on an effective focus on problem-solving, which may include trying to change one’s action by making an effort to communicate with one’s partner to find a common solution to the contentious issues. A basic feature of a constructive coping strategy in a social conflict situation is that there is no change in the basic aim of the action, but a change in the organization of the activities that lead to its achievement.

In summary, it can be said that conflicts, being an inherent factor of social life, are common and cannot be avoided. Young people, as they create and implement certain life plans, are exposed to conflict situations, which involve school, contacts with peers, and relationships within the family. Conflicts need to be resolved because they generate further conflicts. Long-term conflicts tend to distort interpersonal relationships and lead to deep hurt, if not to tragedy. When faced with a dispute at school, in relationships with peers or in the family home, young people adopt a destructive strategy by avoiding taking action *vis-a-vis* the conflict by engaging in other stress-free forms of activity, and a constructive task-based strategy, which prompts the individual to mobilize his or her resources to overcome obstacles that prevent satisfaction of their needs.

Family-related conditioning of avoidant and task-based coping strategy in young people in social conflict situations

Coping habits are acquired by the child in the process of development under specific upbringing conditions. As far as the family home is concerned, these conditions are determined to a large extent by parental attitudes (Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa, 2011; Tyszkowa, 1986). Children therefore encounter different conditions and opportunities to form both favourable and unfavourable habits of behaviour in the face

of difficulties created by parents with different upbringing attitudes. In the relevant literature, we find data showing that destructive forms of responding to challenging situations in social interaction that involve a strategy of avoiding confrontation with the conflict situation are a consequence of incorrect parental attitudes (Bares, Delva, Grogan-Kaylor, & Andrade, 2011; Borecka-Biernat, 2018; Cywińska, 1998; Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005; Januszewska, 2001; Poraj, 2021; Poraj-Weder, 2022; Szatkowska, 2022; Wolfradt, Hempel, & Miles, 2003). These include:

- “An excessive emotional distance” (avoidant, rejecting attitude towards the child) manifested in the parents’ aversion towards the child, and disregard for the child’s needs. In the course of his or her ontogenetic development, the child does not experience warm, open relationships with significant others. The parents see the child as an obstacle in their life plans and avoid contact with him/her. They do not want to talk to him/her, are not interested in what he/she does, thinks and feels and do not notice his/her individual needs. The child becomes overly sensitive to stimuli that signal rejection and hostility. Rejection by the parents induces a state of intense anxiety in the child, combined with hostility, which is reduced by withdrawal, resignation, passivity, and apathy, or by resistance and a negative attitude. In a challenging situation, the child is less able to make a proper, reflective assessment of the situation and cannot effectively deal with problems.
- “An attitude marked by excessive expectations,” the axial symptom of which is the “bending” of the child to the ideal from the parents’ imagination and disregard for the child’s developmental possibilities. Here, the parents make excessive demands on the child without taking into account the child’s real abilities and talents. Parents limit the child’s independence in many areas of activity: they interfere in the child’s interests, leisure activities, contacts with peers, hobbies, etc. Without taking into account the child’s abilities, interests, or desires, the parents require absolute compliance with their demands. The child is unable to meet the ever-increasing demands made by the parents and is consequently subjected to severe punishment, both physical and psychological. Frustration experienced because of the parents’ strict demands results in the child developing defensive behaviour in the form of withdrawal, submissiveness, or conflictual and argumentative behaviour. In a challenging situation, the child is less able to assess his or her situation properly and uses ineffective ways to cope.
- “An attitude of excessive protectiveness,” which manifests itself as providing the child with special privileges, unreasonable catering to the child’s every need, and whims, tolerating misbehaviour, removing all obstacles, and isolating the child from difficulties. An overly close upbringing enforces the child’s subordination to the parents (fear of anger or rejection leads to the subordi-

nation of individual needs or feelings to others) Protective parents, by rewarding dependent behaviour, make it more difficult for the child to acquire the skills to deal independently with specific problems in different social contexts and to develop the necessary competences to solve them; they also foster low frustration tolerance in the child. In general, parental overprotectiveness most often results in delayed emotional and social maturity, avoidance of challenges, passivity, dependence on others, and compliant, conflictual, or entitled behaviour.

- “An erratic attitude” in which the parents’ attitude towards the child is capricious, depending on their mood, and personal matters related to family and non-family life On the one hand, there is a strong interest in the child, on the other – total indifference to the child’s behaviour. Instability in the parent’s behaviour results in a failure to meet the child’s significant needs, especially of close emotional contact and a sense of security. As a result, frustration of the child’s needs promotes disturbances in the child’s emotional and social development, which is manifested in withdrawal or increased aggression.

From the above discussion, it appears that destructive forms of reacting to socially challenging situations which manifest in avoidance in the adolescent, especially avoiding action *vis-a-vis* conflicts, are a consequence of incorrect parental attitudes. Negative parental behaviour results in the deprivation of the child’s needs, above all his or her need for emotional contact, security, and independence (decision-making). It is believed that a person with a sense of social insecurity, finding himself or herself in a state of anxiety, helplessness, and danger associated with interpersonal contacts, may activate a defensive avoidant reaction aimed at reducing unpleasant emotional tension (Leary, Kowalski, 2002).

The upbringing conditions are seen to be different for the formation of constructive coping with socially challenging situations in an adolescent child, which include task-based strategies intended to ensure that the set goal is achieved despite intense emotional tension. According to research (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Cywińska, 1998; Januszewska, 2001; Minda, 2019; Węglowska-Rzepa, 2010) the development of constructive forms of responding to challenging social situations, which include conflict, is fostered by parental attitudes such as:

- “Accepting the child” as they are, including their appearance, disposition, and cognitive skills. Positive feelings such as kindness, trust, and affection dominate the parent-child relationship. Parents try to help the child in matters that are important to him/her but do not intervene excessively. They let him/her be responsible for his/her own actions and show that they expect mature behaviour from him/her. Under these nurturing conditions, the child feels secure,

has a positive attitude towards people, is not afraid of the difficulties he/she experiences, and can deal effectively with diverse challenging situations.

- “Co-opting the child” into various household chores, leisure activities that lead to an exchange of views, discussions with parents, and specific decisions. This allows the child to develop trust towards the parents and makes the child capable of joint actions and independent commitments.
- “Affording the child reasonable freedom” within the limits of what is possible for their age. Parents create opportunities to enable the child’s activity and independence. Under such conditions, the child develops ingenuity, originality, a desire to overcome obstacles, and an ease in adapting to different situations.
- “Recognition of the child’s rights” related to his or her developmental needs and granting the right to autonomy. The parents show respect for the child’s individuality. Such parental behaviour stimulates the child to show his/her own initiative.

These are parental attitudes defined by Maria Ziemska (2009) as correct, since they ensure a good relationship between the parents and the child while allowing the child to gain experience in independent activity without interrupting contact with the parents and learn to overcome difficulties. They foster habits of constructive (task-oriented) behaviour towards challenging social situations in the adolescent child, which are beneficial in terms of opportunities for achieving the goal and overcoming difficulties.

It should be noted that the impact of the family involves both conscious activity and unconscious family behavioural patterns. The family is the first model of interrelationships and modes of behaviour. It is a rich source of behavioural patterns in diverse situations. Parents are the significant others who play a decisive role in the process of modelling the child’s behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). The child finds the main patterns of responding to difficulties and emotional tension in the behaviour of their parents facing challenging situations and emotional tension (Bandura, 2015; Rostowska, 1993; Tyszkowa, 1986). The child imitates the behaviour of people with whom they have an emotional bond and adopts their style of being. Research by Teresa Rostowska (1997) confirmed the interdependence between parents and children in terms of the most and least preferred ways of coping with challenging situations. In most of the families in the study, there was a complete or partial similarity in coping with difficult situations, which is a sign of intergenerational transmission.

The influence of parent’s role-modelling, mostly unconsciously, is not always positive for the child. It is often undesirable, it interferes with the child’s development and leads to the acquisition of problematic behaviour, such as giving up the pursuit of one’s own goals when faced with challenges and withdrawing from difficult situations. Giving up one’s desires, lack of determination in defending one’s own interests, or withdrawal from contacts with other people and failure to undertake activ-

ities that would require such contacts, constitute an inert form of shyness (Pilkonis, 1977; Tyszkowa, 1986). Modelling plays a significant role in the genesis of shyness in children. Family role models tend to be the most influential – shy children have shy parents (Bandelow, 2011). A child who observes parents having difficulties in social interactions, especially when the child identifies with the parent, begins to follow their model. Research (Harwas-Napierała, 1995; Zimbardo, 2012) indicates that the tendency to withdraw and avoid social interactions and to failure in participating in such interactions in adolescent children is a learned form of behaviour, acquired in the course of observation and during frequent contacts with people in the immediate environment who display such behaviour, *i.e.*, as a result of role-modelling, most often by parents.

Patterns of appropriate ways of responding to challenges, *i.e.*, perseverance in overcoming them and enduring emotional strain, are important for the development of constructive forms of coping in an individual. In situations where they cannot pursue their goals, children behave as they have previously learned to behave from their parents in similar situations. If children have previously perceived constructive reactions, then their actions in problem situations will generally be similar. When confronted with difficulties, among rational strategies they opt for re-examination of the situation and renew their efforts to solve the task on their own. The social activity of parents and their lack of inhibitions in situations of social interaction is conducive to the formation of appropriate habits of responding to challenging situations in their children (Barani, Szmigielska, 2012; Liberska, 2002; Rostowska, 1997).

Generally speaking, the process of social learning by modelling is an important source of different forms of coping with challenging situations. The child finds the main patterns of responding to difficulties in the behaviour of their parents in situations that involve an element of potential frustration of aspirations or achievement of a goal. Thus, the transmission of avoidance and task-based forms of coping with social conflict situations takes place when the child adopts such forms of behaviour from the family environment and treats them as effective ways of solving problems, achieving goals, or coping with conflict.

Research problem

Our empirical research focused on the role of family-related factors in shaping the avoidant and task-based coping strategies adopted by adolescents in situations of social conflict, *i.e.*, the role of parental attitudes and the modelling influence of parents.

Within the framework of the research problem, we formulated the following basic research question:

1. What set of family variables differentiates adolescents' avoidant and task-based coping strategies in situations of social conflict?

The above review of the relevant literature allowed us to put forward the following hypothesis, to be verified through the analysis of empirical research results.

H1. Since adolescents adopt different coping strategies in situations of social conflict, a set of family variables will be of differential value for avoidant and task-based coping strategies. Juxtaposition: parental attitudes and parental coping strategy in social conflict situations are a differentiating factor between avoidant and task-based coping strategies adopted by adolescents in social conflict situations.

Method

Tools

The following methods were used in the research:

"The Parental Attitudes Scale" (*Skala Postaw Rodzicielskich, SPR*; Plopa, 2015) was used to examine parental attitudes as perceived by children. It includes 75 statements in a mother's version and a father's version. About each statement, the respondent chooses one of five possible answers: "true," "rather true," "difficult to say," "rather not true," and "not true," by assigning points: 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The questionnaire consists of 5 scales, each containing 15 statements. These are: Acceptance-Rejection Attitude (I), Autonomy Attitude (II), Overly Protective Attitude (III), Overly Demanding Attitude (IV), and Erratic Attitude (V). The SPR questionnaire is a standardized tool. Estimation of the internal consistency of the questionnaire 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 the tool was found to be high, based on the internal test structure method and the intergroup difference method, as well as criterion validity.

"The Parental Coping Strategies in Social Conflict Questionnaire" (*Kwestionariusz Strategii Radzenia Sobie Rodziców w Sytuacji Konfliktu Społecznego, KRSwSK*; Borecka-Biernat, 2013) consists of two versions: "My mother" and "My father." It has been designed to explore parents' coping strategies in situations of social conflict, with these behaviours explored as perceived by their adolescent children. The tool includes descriptions of 16 social conflict situations in the "My mother" version and the same number of descriptions in the "My father" version. In each situation four behaviours are expressing parental coping strategy in social conflict situations as perceived by their child: the first refers to aggressive coping ("AG"), the second to avoidant coping ("AV"), the third to submissive coping ("S") and the fourth to task-

based coping in social conflict situations (“T”). Scores are obtained for each scale separately by totalling the marked behaviours in the 16 situations within a given scale. For the present study, we used the Scale (“AV”) of Avoidant Mother/Father Coping in Situations of Social Conflict and the Scale (“T”) of Task-based Mother/Father Coping in Situations of Social Conflict. The questionnaire versions “My mother” and “My father” display both good reliability (Cronbach’s internal consistency coefficient α is around or above 0.70), and diagnostic accuracy.

“The Adolescents’ Coping Strategies in Social Conflict Situations Questionnaire” (*Kwestionariusz do Badania Strategii Radzenia Sobie Młodzieży w Sytuacji Konfliktu Społecznego*, KSMK; Borecka-Biernat, 2012) has been designed to study coping strategies in social conflict situations adopted by adolescents. It includes descriptions of 33 social conflict situations. For each, 4 behaviours are expressing coping with the social conflict situation; the first refers to aggressive coping (“AG”), the second to avoidant coping (“AV”), the third to submissive coping (“S”) and the fourth to task-based coping in the social conflict situation (“T”). Scores are obtained for each scale separately by totalling the marked behaviours in the 33 situations within a given scale. For the purposes of the present research, we used the Avoidant Coping Scale (“AV”) for adolescents in social conflict situations and the Task-based Coping Scale (“T”) for adolescents in social conflict situations. The questionnaire displays both good reliability (Cronbach’s internal consistency coefficient α is around or above 0.70), and diagnostic accuracy.

Research participants

The research participants included a group of 468 girls and 425 boys aged 13–15. A total of 893 people took part in the study. The respondents were students at state-run schools in Wrocław and the surrounding areas. A random selection of schools was used, but not all selected schools agreed to take part in the study, which is why in several cases we also approached non-randomly selected schools with which such cooperation was possible. The study was carried out mostly during homeroom periods in school.

The research was group-based, and participation was voluntary. Pupils used pseudonyms or initials to sign their questionnaires. Prior to the study, participants who had parental consent to participate in the study were carefully instructed on what to do. The study was conducted in line with the principles of psychological scientific research.

The primary criterion for the selection of pupils was their age. The influence of age on the selection of coping strategies in social conflict situations was analysed in the group of 13–15-year-olds (adolescents). Adolescence is a period of instability in a teenagers’ behaviour, a period of conflicts with the environment, and within oneself, often accom-

panied by a sense of being misunderstood (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2015). Therefore, adolescents aged 13–15 seem to be favourable research subjects to examine coping strategies in situations of strong emotional tension, which involves social conflict.

Results

To determine family predictors of avoidant and task-based coping strategies adopted by adolescents in social conflict situations, taking into account scores on the five Scales of Parental Attitudes (SPR) in the mother's version and the father's version: Acceptance-Rejection Attitude, Autonomy Attitude, Protective Attitude, Demanding Attitude, Erratic Attitude and the two scales of the Questionnaire for the Study of Parental Coping Strategies in Social Conflict (SRwSK) in the mother's version and the father's version: Social Conflict Avoidant Coping Scale and Social Conflict Task-based Coping Scale, we applied discriminant analysis, which captures family discriminants of the subjects in terms of their coping strategies in social conflict situations. Family discriminants as prognostic indicators, determined from among fourteen family variables, provide the basis (in a certain percentage) for accurately predicting the respondents' membership in one of two separate groups (Brzeziński, 1984). In the present study, these were groups of adolescents displaying a high level of avoidant coping strategy and a high level of task-based coping strategy, by gender. The groups displaying a high level of avoidant coping in social conflict and a high level of task-based coping were distinguished by their high scores on the scales: 'Avoidance' (363 total, 185 girls, 178 boys) and "Task" (255 total, 130 girls, 125 boys) of the *KSMK* questionnaire.

We present data on adolescents (total respondents) who use avoidant coping strategies in social conflict situations and adolescents (total respondents) who use task-based coping strategies in social conflict situations (see Table 1).

Table 1

Family variables identified as discriminants differentiating adolescents using avoidant (AV) and task-based (T) coping strategies in social conflict situations, by gender

Respondents	Discriminants	Wilks' lambda	<i>F</i> remov.	<i>p</i> <	1-Toler. (R squar.)
Total	Demanding Att.	0.80	16.84	0.00005	0.02
	mother	0.79	9.30	0.002	0.07
	Acceptance-Rejection Att.	0.86	65.69	0.000000	0.12
	father	0.78	7.39	0.007	0.15
	"T" mother				
	"T" father				

Respondents	Discriminants	Wilks' lambda	F remov.	p<	1-Toler. (R squar.)
Wilks' lambda: 0.77; approx. F (4.613)=44.93; $p<0.0000$					
Girls	Demanding Att.	0.77	10.03	0.002	0.02
	mother	0.77	9.36	0.002	0.02
	Acceptance-Rejection Att.	0.88	56.15	0.000000	0.02
	father				
	"T" mother				
Wilks' lambda: 0.74; approx. F(3.311)=35.83; $p<0.0000$					
Boys	Autonomy Att.	0.80	4.14	0.04	0.10
	mother	0.80	4.71	0.03	0.06
	Erratic Att.	0.83	18.62	0.00002	0.17
	mother	0.81	10.70	0.001	0.13
	"T" mother				
	"T" father				
Wilks' lambda: 0.78; approx. F(4.298)=20.49; $p<0.0000$					

Note: Att. – Parental attitude, "T" – task-based coping in a social conflict situation.

Source: Author's own study.

Four family variables (out of fourteen) were included in the discriminant equation, differentiating in the combined effect between adolescents displaying an avoidant coping strategy and adolescents displaying a task-based coping strategy. These are the following discriminants: the mother's demanding attitude, the father's accepting-rejecting attitude and the task-based coping strategy of the mother and father as perceived by the adolescent. The configuration of the mean scores: a higher level of the mother's demanding attitude ($M=45.04$), a lower level of the father's acceptance-rejection attitude ($M=44.89$), a lower level of the mother's task-based coping strategy in social conflict situations ($M=7.56$), and a lower level of the father's task-based coping strategy social conflict situations ($M=5.24$) significantly determine the group membership of the adolescents using the avoidant coping in social conflict situations. In contrast, a lower level of the mother's demanding attitude ($M=39.14$), a higher level of the father's accepting-rejecting attitude ($M=61.03$), a higher level of the mother's task-based coping strategy in social conflict situations ($M=10.49$), and a higher level of the father's task-based coping strategy in social conflict situations ($M=7.02$) determine the group membership of the adolescents who use task-based coping in social conflict situations.

The four family variables in Table 1 together explain 23% of the variance. The accuracy of assigning individuals to the group using avoidant coping and the group using task-based coping on the basis of these four discriminants is 71.04%, with higher accuracy of categorizing adolescents using avoidant coping in social conflict situations (78.24%) than adolescents using task-based coping in social conflict situations (60.78%). Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of predicted accurate classification of surveyed adolescents into an avoidant (AV) and task-based (T) coping in social conflict situations on the basis of a discriminant function on family variables

Research participants	Actual group	Predicted group		Total
		AV	T	
Total	AV	284 78.24%	79 21.76%	363 100%
	T	100 39.22%	155 60.78%	255 100%
Girls	AV	144 77.84%	41 22.16%	185 100%
	T	41 31.54%	89 68.46%	130 100%
Boys	AV	140 78.65%	38 21.35%	178 100%
	T	53 42.40%	72 57.60%	125 100%

Source: Author's own study.

This begs the following question: which combinations of family variables are characteristic of girls and boys using avoidant coping and task-based coping in social conflict situations? In each case, the aim was to identify the set of family variables whose selection differentiates the groups of adolescents using avoidant coping and task-based coping in social conflict situations compared within each gender.

A discriminant analysis of all fourteen family variables, taking into account the division of the girls into two groups, allowed us to identify three discriminants: the mother's demanding attitude, the father's acceptance-rejection attitude and the task-based coping strategy used by the mother in social conflict situations as perceived by the daughter (see Table 1). It turned out that a higher level of the mother's demanding attitude ($M=44.32$), a lower level of the father's acceptance-rejection attitude ($M=53.31$), and a lower level of the mother's task-based coping in social conflict situations ($M=7.67$) significantly determines membership of the group of those adolescent girls who use avoidant coping in social conflict situations. On the other hand, a lower level of the mother's demanding attitude ($M=37.10$), a higher level of the father's accepting-rejecting attitude ($M=60.88$), and a higher level of the mother's task-based coping in social conflict situations ($M=10.75$) mainly determined whether the girls will display task-based coping in social conflict situations.

The three variables in Table 1 together explain 26 % of the variation. The accuracy of assigning individual girls to groups using avoidant coping and task-based coping

in social conflict situations on the basis of the three discriminants taken together reaches 73.97 %. The accuracy of assigning girls to group using the avoidant coping is 77.84 % and to the group using task-based coping is 68.46 % (see Table 2).

Let us now proceed to the variables that enter the equation differentiating boys who use avoidant coping in social conflict situations and boys who use task-based coping. The data in Table provide an answer. Of the fourteen family variables under consideration, four entered the discriminant equation: the mother's autonomy attitude, the mother's erratic attitude and the task-based coping by the mother and the father in social conflict situations as perceived by the son.

The following constellation of family discriminants: a lower level of the mother's autonomy attitude ($M=56.65$), a higher level of the mother's erratic attitude ($M=43.80$), a lower level of the mother's task-based coping in social conflict situations ($M=7.44$), and a lower level of the father's task-based coping in social conflict situations ($M=5.35$) determined whether an avoidant strategy will be present in the boys' coping in social conflict situations. On the other hand, for results obtained for the variables mentioned above: a higher level of the mother's autonomy attitude ($M=61.56$), a lower level of the mother's erratic attitude ($M=38.29$), a higher level of the mother's task-based coping social conflict situations ($M=10.22$), and a higher level of the father's task-based coping social conflict situations ($M=7.57$) determines to a significant degree whether the boys belong to the group using task-based coping social conflict situations.

The four variables that entered the discriminant equation explain a total of 22% of the variability. The accuracy of assigning individual boys to the group using avoidant coping and task-based coping in social conflict situations on the basis of the discriminant function, and therefore after taking into account the three discriminants, is 69.97%, with the higher accuracy of assigning boys to the group using avoidant coping (78.65%) than to the group using task-based coping (57.60%) in social conflict situations. Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Based on the above results, we note a higher intensity of unfavourable parenting attitudes (demanding attitude, erratic attitudes) in mothers, a lower intensity of favourable parenting attitudes (acceptance-rejection attitude, autonomy attitude) in mothers and fathers and a lower intensity of parental task-based coping in social conflict situations in adolescents (total, including gender) using avoidant coping in social conflict situations compared to adolescents (total, including gender) using task-based coping in social conflict situations. The analysis of the results for adolescents (in total, including gender) using task-based coping in social conflict situations compared to adolescents (in total, including gender) using avoidant coping in social conflict situations revealed a lower intensity of unfavourable parenting attitudes (demanding attitude, erratic attitude) in mothers, a higher intensity of favourable parenting attitudes (acceptance-

rejection attitude, autonomy attitude) in mothers and fathers, and a higher intensity of parental task-based coping in social conflict situations.

Summing up, in the light of the statistical verification performed, we determined that a set of specific family variables play the role of discriminants, based on which it is possible to predict, to a low degree (22%–26%), avoidant coping and task-based coping in adolescents (in general, by gender) in social conflict situations – parental attitudes as perceived by adolescents: mother's demanding attitude, mother's erratic attitude, father's acceptance-rejection attitude and mother's autonomy attitude, and parental task-based coping in social conflict situations as perceived by the adolescents. Our analysis of the empirical material partially confirmed the validity of the hypothesis H.1.

Conclusion

The analysis of the collected research material revealed the role of the rejecting paternal attitude in the formation of the girls' avoidant coping in social conflict situations. The parent, due to the open resentment felt towards his adolescent child, brutally rejects the child's attempts at achieving closeness and does not take care of the child. The daughter does not experience paternal care, she feels insufficient attention and interest in her affairs and actions. Her relationship with her parent is marked by a sense of isolation and loneliness, leading to anxiety. The effect of such upbringing is the frustration of important psychological needs of the adolescent, and disturbed emotional and social development, which manifest in difficulties in establishing and consolidating emotional bonds with others (the first emotional relationship is the prototype of future relationships) and in not responding to attempts to establish contact with others and withdrawing from social contacts (Borecka-Biernat, 2001; Siegelman, 1966; Weryszko, Kogut, 2023). As a result, a daughter who does not experience emotional support or warm relationships with her father is not able to function constructively in interpersonal relationships, particularly under conflict conditions. It is reasonable to believe that the greater the deprivation of emotional-social bonding caused by an incorrect relationship with the parent, the greater the tendency in an adolescent child to withdraw from conflictual social relationship situations (Borecka-Biernat, 2010).

Research has also shown that the avoidant reactions to emotional tension arising in situations of social conflict is shaped in an upbringing situation in which the mother displays domination, a desire to direct and subordinate her daughter's life to her patterns and expectations. She imposes strict control and demands absolute compliance. She is a perfectionist in her assessment of her adolescent child's duties and tasks, with no regard for the child's abilities and individuality. She strictly enforces her orders and does not tolerate deviations of the adolescent child's behaviour and achievements from her

expectations. She accepts only those actions on the part of the adolescent that are in line with her expectations. Such an attitude in the mother conflicts with her daughter's needs for affiliation, autonomy, independence, and cooperation. Restricting her ability to make her own decisions intensifies the adolescent child's sense of insecurity as her integrity is compromised. She learns that her decisions are "inferior" to those of the parent and that she does not have the strength needed to defend her own decision against one that is imposed. If the adolescent child is unable to respond by resisting the parents' decisions, systematic corrections, and criticism lead to a lack of initiative, passivity, and withdrawal from situations that require involvement (Bares *et al.*, 2011; Borecka-Biernat, 2018; Januszewska, 2001; Plopa, 2015). Thus, it seems that the mother setting a lot of rules, and requirements that the adolescent daughter must follow, along with systematic disapproval and criticism, and not leaving the initiative to take action, have a significant impact on the formation of the avoidant coping in social conflict situations by teenage girls.

It should be noted that our research revealed the fact that mothers' attitudes towards their adolescent sons as perceived by adolescent boys using avoidance coping in conflict situations is changeable. It depends on the mood, and how the mother feels at any given time, and on other personal issues. The mother transfers her emotional state onto her relationship with her son. An attitude of involvement in the adolescent's affairs is interspersed with periods of ignoring them, nervousness, shouting, declaring restrictions, and punishments. Lack of stability in the parent's behaviour results in the adolescent child becoming emotionally unstable, feeling insecure, hiding his own problems, distrusting, and not willing to share his concerns. By withdrawing from the relationship with the mother, the adolescent boy focuses on fighting negative emotions or distancing himself from the psychological discomfort he is experiencing (Kozłowska, 1996; Minda, 2019; Plopa, 2015; Radziwiłłowicz *et al.*, 2005; Wolfradt, Hempel, & Miles, 2003). It can be hypothesised that the instability caused by the presence of an erratic attitude in the mother causes insecurity in the son, which results in experiencing negative emotions in a situation that may potentially frustrate his personal intentions. As a defence against negative emotions, the adolescent uses withdrawal from situations in which his emotional tension would have to be confronted with a real or anticipated threat (Lemerise, Dodge, 2005).

The analysis of our research results indicates that conditions conducive to the development of task-based coping used by adolescents in social conflict situations include a perceived paternal attitude saturated with acceptance, emotional warmth, loving openness to the adolescent's affairs, and support by the mother in making significant decisions, autonomy, leaving the child room to take own initiative and act. It follows, that the parent then sees the adolescent child as a separate individual with their own life and needs. By avoiding excessive interference, the mother encourages

the child to develop self-reliance, to take responsibility for his or her actions, to learn a task-oriented approach to difficulties, and she approves of his or her attempts to solve situations that involve divergent aspirations. There is no doubt that the parent shall intervene in situations that are important to the adolescent. The parent tries to help their child in matters that are important to the child, but does not forcefully impose their opinion, offers kind advice when expected, and shows respect for their individuality. Thus, on the one hand, adolescents are encouraged to be independent and to show initiative, but on the other hand, in exercising their freedom, they know that in case of need or actual danger, they can count on their parent's help. As we see, positive emotional relations within the family, displaying warmth, acceptance, and recognition of rights equip the adolescent with a task-based strategy that is effective in overcoming social conflict (Bhattacharyya, Pradhan, 2015; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Hardy, Power, & Jaedicke, 1993; Januszewska, 2001; Klink, Byars-Winston, & Bakken, 2008; McCarthy, Lambert, & Seraphine, 2004). In general, it can be said that a parent who is able to provide their adolescent child with a sense of security, and satisfy their need for independence, makes the child more resilient to potential and actual threats and enables the formation of habits that involve responding to social conflict situations by actively seeking solutions to divergent aspirations.

Our research also shows that for task-based coping to develop in a young person, it is important for the mother and the father to use task-based coping in social conflict situations. The emergence of task-based coping in girls and boys is influenced by both the mother and the father. The similarity of coping strategies in social conflict situations in parents and in their adolescent children indicates the emergence of girls'/boys' task-based coping through social learning by observation and modelling by the mother/father. Thus, the data presented above demonstrate that for the development of task-based coping in young people, the parents' patterns of task-based ways of responding to conflict are of great importance. If adolescents have previously perceived task-based responses in their parents, their own coping with problems will most often be similar (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Liberska, 2002; Rostowska, 1997).

In summary, the avoidant way in which adolescents respond to emotional tension arising in a social conflict situation is shaped by incorrect parental attitudes towards their child. Emotional distance of the parent *vis-a-vis* their adolescent child, excessive expectations and lack of a balanced emotional bond are determinants that seem to lead to an individual using avoidant coping in social conflict situations. In contrast, positive family relationships marked by acceptance, parents' openness to the adolescent child's concerns, recognition of the child's freedom to be active, and manifestation of respect for the child's individuality equip the adolescent with a capacity for task-oriented coping in social conflict situations. This means that the combination of parenting attitudes *vis-a-vis* the adolescent has a significant impact on the child's social development, provides

a prototype for social coexistence and the ways to resolve social conflict situations. Furthermore, the research results presented here suggest that the modelling process may play an important role in the genesis of the task-oriented coping in social conflict situations, which the adolescent learns, among other things, by observing parents who manifest this way of coping in social conflict situations and by frequent contact with their parents, *i.e.*, through social learning. Adolescents adopt these forms of behaviour from their environment and treat them as effective ways of coping with conflict situations.

The research results reported above partially confirmed our hypothesis. The conclusions based on these results have theoretical and practical applications. It seems that they will allow those responsible for upbringing to better understand the behaviour of adolescent children in social conflict situations and to look at the causes of such behaviour from the adolescent's perspective. They can be a starting point for the development of upbringing strategies that would foster individuals who are active, able to make efforts to resolve and overcome conflicts, and who can rationally cope with problems related to school, peers, and the family home. In the course of educating young people, the aim should be to shape their ability to develop a joint position in dispute situations. This is an important goal of upbringing, necessary to raise a generation of people that are cooperative and not conflict-averse in the school, peer, and family environments.

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