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Cognitive and emotional determinants for destructive coping strategies by junior high school students in a social conflict situation

Streszczenie

Celem badań była ocena znaczenia samooceny, poczucia umiejscowienia kontroli i emocji dla generowania u młodzieży gimnazjalnej destruktywnych strategii radzenia sobie w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego. W badaniach posłużono się autorskim kwestionariuszem do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego (KSMK), Skalą Samooceny (SES) M. Rosenberga, kwestionariuszem do Badania Poczucia Kontroli (KBPK) G. Krasowicz i A. Kurzyp-Wojnarskiej oraz Trójczynnikiem Inwentarzem Stanów i Cech Osobowości (TISCO) C. Spielbergera, K. Wrześniewskiego. Badania empiryczne przeprowadzono w szkołach gimnazjalnych we Wrocławiu i okolicznych miejscowościach. Objęły one 893 adolescentów (468 dziewczynek i 425 chłopców) w wieku 13–15 lat. W świetle przeprowadzonych badań stwierdzono, że niska ocena własnych możliwości przez młodego człowieka, silne przekonanie o wpływie innych na pozytywne lub negatywne skutki zdarzeń i reagowanie lękiem lub gniewem współwystępuje z destruktywnymi strategiami radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego.

Słowa kluczowe

młodzież, samoocena, poczucie umiejscowienia kontroli, reakcje emocjonalne, destruktywne strategie radzenia sobie, sytuacja konfliktu społecznego

Abstract

My research purpose was to evaluate the contribution of self-evaluation, the locus of control and emotions in generating destructive coping strategies by junior high school students in a social conflict situation. I used the proprietary questionnaire to test adolescents' coping strategies (KSMK), Self-evaluation Scale (SES) by M. Rosenberg, the Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK) by G. Krasowicz and A. Kurzyp-Wojnarska, and the Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (TISCO) by C. Spielberger and K. Wrześniewski. Empirical studies were carried out in junior high schools in Wrocław and the surrounding area. They involved 893 adolescents (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13–15. I stated in my research that low self-evaluation of a young man's abilities, a strong con-

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viction about the impact others have on positive or negative consequences of events and reacting with fear and anger co-exists with destructive adolescent coping strategies.

Keywords

adolescent, self-evaluation, locus of control, emotional reactions, destructive coping strategy, a social conflict situation

Introduction

Difficult situations are nothing special in human life. They accompany us from early childhood and thus knowledge about actions undertaken by an individual in order to cope in difficult situations and conditions is not to be taken indifferently.

Difficult situations do not constitute a uniform class, but an internally clearly diversified group. An important group of difficult situations is when, as stated by M. Tyszkowa (1977, p.211), “values and aspirations of an individual are subject to a threat or defeat by other people – by the mere fact of their presence, or as a result of special forms of their contradictory impact, or simply impact not compliant with the individual’s own aspirations (goals)”. A conflict situation with another person constitutes a fundamental difficult social situations in the life experienced by every human being. In interpersonal relationships a conflict presents an interaction between partners in which they become clearly aware of the differences in their interests, needs or endeavours or goals (Balawajder, 2010).

Adolescence is a period during which teenagers experience various, quite often contradictory, aspirations and they must cope with incoherent social expectations they are addressed with. Research reveals that a source of strong emotional negative overtones, as perceived by adolescents, are interpersonal conflicts including teacher conflicts, arguments with school mates and boyfriends/girlfriends, as well as quarrels with one or both parents and other family members (Kobus, Reyes, 2000; Jaworski, 2000; Mikołowska-Olejniczak, 2002). The most conflicting areas in the student-teacher relationship are school grades, tactless teacher behaviour, domineering pressure and inflexible requirements (Miłkowska, 2012). In turn, the main reasons for peer conflicts are provocations and mockery, groundless suspicions, slander, unfulfilled promises, treason, indiscretion, bad manners, popularity among the opposite sex, ruling in the class and sporting prestige (Różańska-Kowal, 2004; Mikołowska, 2012). Families with children growing up inevitably have to deal with conflict. Most problems with mutual understanding between parents and children are due to the adolescents’ changing attitude towards their parents. Young people are less open to their parents and, in turn, the parents often fail to cope with the increasing autonomy of their adolescent children, by trying to limit it (Ornstein, Cartrnsen, 1991).

Numerous conflicts with parents concern everyday situations – differences in tastes, opinions related to outfit, music, watching TV and/or using the computer, leisure activities or coming home late (Jaworski, 2000; Gurba, 2013). In the literature one can distinguish several main conflict-related areas between parents and an adolescent, such as parental control and the adolescent's need for freedom, parental responsibility and sharing it with their adolescent child, as well as parents attributing great significance to schooling versus the teenager devoting time to other activities (Obuchowska, 2010).

A conflict situation is related to problems pertaining to various behaviours defined as coping strategies in a specific social conflict situation, meant to restore the balance between requirements and adaptabilities and/or improve the emotional state (Wrześniewski, 1996). The ability to cope in a social conflict situation quite often becomes a destructive strategy (Heszen-Niejodek, 2000; Terelak, 2001; Borecka-Biernat, 2012). A destructive strategy is solely intended to reduce adverse emotional tension and/or put oneself in a good mood. This happens, starting from *withdrawal* from a social conflict situation, avoiding contact with it, refraining from thinking and experiencing this situation by neglecting and ignoring the problem, being involved in supplementary activities (thinking about pleasurable issues, dreaming, listening to music, sleeping, walking) and establishing contacts with other persons; through *compliance* toward goals execution that the partner imposes and which are detrimental to executing one's own goals, interests and desires; to *aggression* taking the form of an initiated physical act and/or verbal act addressed against specific persons, doing harm to their physical, psychic and social condition.

Numerous research studies and even informal observation show that adolescents have quite a substantial repertoire of strategies to cope with conflict situations that occur at school, in relationships with contemporaries or in their family home (Guszkowska, Gorący, Rychta-Siedlecka, 2001; Sikora, Pisula, 2002; Mikołowska-Olejniczak, 2002). From the coping strategies in conflicts with teachers and schoolmates most often mentioned by young people, one can distinguish aggressive behaviours towards others (buffeting, pushing, kicking, nicknames, mocking and taunts), attempts to derive attention from a difficult situation and deal with something different (reading, listening to music, watching TV), escape through keeping physical distance or isolating oneself (Kossewska, 1995; Mikołowska-Olejniczak, 2002). A. Hibner (2013) noticed that adolescent boys, when facing teacher's demands, choose resisting reactions more often: "claims" and "protest". One might say that these are behaviours controlling emotions.

A. Frączek (2003) conducted an interesting study on coping strategies in a peer group. Adolescent children aged 10, 11 and 15 living in Israel, Finland, Poland and Italy took part in the said research. Results of this research demonstrate that girls handle conflicts better than boys and they strive for agreement more often. An aggressive strategy

is more common among boys than girls. Aggression of boys and girls takes different forms. In the latter, it is more indirect, hidden, and used for defence. It is passive, adopting a form of telling on others, sulking, and emotional rejection. Boys use open, physical, more active and direct aggressive behaviour. This research shows that younger children more often use physical and instrumental aggression, while older ones – verbal and hostile aggression. Gender diversification in manifesting aggression is also evidenced in the research results by M. Guskowska (2004), N. Carda and others (2008), I. Pufal-Struzik, D. Czarnecka (2008) and D. White and others (2010), who stated domination of direct physical aggressiveness among boys, while girls revealed more indirect aggression towards their contemporaries. Behaviours typical for girls are, among others, verbal rejection, backbiting, slander, negative gestures and facial expressions, gossip, plotting and mockery (Dettinger, Hart, 2007). As similarly noticed by D. Niehoff (2001), boys show mostly physical aggression, while, in with girls, it's verbal, which suggests that the form of aggressive behaviours differentiates boys from girls.

Apart from the observed aggressive behaviours in conflicts, research studies conducted by D. Causey, E. Dubowa (1992) and J. Kossewska (1995) revealed that, with peers, adolescent children take advantage of coping strategies based on resignation, failing to commence actions, problem avoidance and distancing oneself. It should be mentioned that the research by A. Hibner (2013) demonstrated a higher level of “conciliation” and “submissiveness” reaction in adolescent boys.

Conflicts in child-parent relationships during adolescence constitute a common phenomenon (Kossewska, 1995; Jaworski, 2000). Adolescent children want to break free from their parents' guardianship and, by their behaviour, demand rights broader than ever before. The obstacles they come across and failures, as well as bans, orders and restrictions imposed by parents cause reactions of anger expressed in arrogant answers, ignoring orders, remaining silent or door slamming. It's worth noticing, as in Cz. Matusiewicz (1997), that misunderstandings and conflicts with mothers and fathers take place in approximately 55–56% of primary school pupils and secondary school students, whereas boys are more prone to conflicts than girls. In conflicts with parents, perceived as a threat to autonomy (restricting freedom, orders, bans) a teenager often shows considerable absoluteness, aggression, brutality, indifference, and even cynicism. In addition, studies by B. Lachowska (2010) reveal that adolescents in conflict with their parents perceive themselves as more aggressive and less compromising towards them, especially with the mother. Apart from aggressive reactions, coping with family problems in adolescents is also related to problem evasion and susceptibility to concessions, or looking for interpersonal contacts. In studies by A. Hibner (2013), significant intersexual differences among adolescents were disclosed, where boys' reaction to requirements specified by parents was, far more frequently,

conformist and reflected in “submissiveness” and “conciliation”. Meanwhile, considering parental pressure, resisting reactions were more often observed in girls, reacting by “counter-pressure”, “resentment” and “protest”.

Considerations so far give evidence that social conflict is related to coping strategy problems in a specific situational context, meant to restore balance between requirements and adaptabilities, evade and/or minimize tension, losses, adverse results. Research results and observations indicate individual diversity of reactions to difficulties and defence against extensive emotional tension among young people (Rostowska, 2001; Sikora, Pisula, 2008). One would have to ask Why do certain people, in difficult social situations, choose these specific destructive strategies, not others? According M. Tyszkowa (1986), psychologically in human behaviour, a special role is attributed to personality cognitive structures, which determine perceiving an external situation and emotionally depicting the situation, its significance and the course of one’s own actions undertaken by the entity.

The set of expressions and opinions about oneself, as well as expectations towards oneself, in other words, the “me” structure, plays a vital part in human behaviour in difficult situations (Tyszkowa, 1986). Information pertaining to oneself, traits constituting the knowledge about oneself, is a factor to evaluate one’s own abilities (Kulas, 1986). As far as we know, self-evaluation constitutes the “me” structure’s assessing and appraising. Its impact is demonstrated in how an individual functions in difficult situations. As it turns out, an unfavourable, insufficiently organised and irrelevant “me” structure, in a difficult situation is threatened and this, according to M. Tyszkowa (1977) causes shifting the activity goal towards defending the “me” of the individual. The result disorganizes the activity directed the goal. Research results obtained, inter alia, by M. Tyszkowa (1997), T. Rostowska (2001), N. Ogińska-Bulik (2001), and D. Borecka-Biernat (2006) signalled that the adverse role in a young man’s behaviour is played by low and high (inadequate) self-evaluations. In low self-evaluation we come across a tendency give up the goal, refraining from activities and withdrawing from social interaction. Apart from that, low self-evaluation, one’s own abilities and effectiveness of activities when facing difficult events, is conducive to aggressive behaviours. Whereas in high self-evaluation (inadequate) we observe mainly a tendency for impulsive aggressive reactions. As we can see, low and high (inadequate) self-evaluation decreases psychic resistance, decreases effective activity and hinders the individual’s adaptation to cope in a difficult situation. Even a small obstacle or insignificant threat may, in a person with low or high (inadequate) self-evaluation, trigger a tendency to give up, withdraw or demonstrate uncontrollable aggression. It’s worth adding that persons least susceptible to disorganization of behaviour in difficult situations were those showing high (adequate) self-evaluation levels.

An individual's subjective conviction concerning their control over the surrounding world are an important variable regulating coping in a difficult situation and influencing the undertaken remedial strategies. M. Tyszkowa (1978) pays attention to the control mechanisms which determine "what changes the human functioning is subject to in cases where they come across a difficult situation" (Reykowski, 1966, p.87). Studies conducted by M. Gacek (2000), N. Ogińska-Bulik (2001), T. Rostowska (2001), P. Kurtek (2005) and D. Borecka-Biernat (2006) demonstrated that the locus of control is the individual determining suitable coping strategies. Feeling in control, that is, the conviction it only depends on the individual's own activity (that something can be done to change it) is the basis for continuing efforts towards overcoming difficulties and intensify activity meant to find a way to overcome difficulties. Whereas assessing a situation to which a young man is not convinced he controls it is related to the destructive coping. Not believing about the possibility to influence life-related events makes it impossible to effectively cope with difficulties; it leads to resignation, withdrawal, giving up efforts meant to solve a problem, or it triggers aggression. It can be said that feeling externally controlled is conducive to applying destructive (aggression, fear, submissiveness) forms of coping with difficulties.

Humans react emotionally to a threat-related situation. Emotional reactions in a threat situation are related to human personality traits, as well as the way the human perceives the situation (Łosiak, 1995). In a difficult situation emotions are intense and are usually negative. Anger, or wrath, is one possible negative emotional reaction, which appears when one experiences stress perceived as a threat or a loss/harm (Wrześniewski, 1991; Lazarus, 2000). Persistent high intensity emotional excitation and along with having a negative character constitute the basis for aggressive behaviour, irritation, anger outbursts and other seemingly unjustified emotional reactions that may be observed in various types of destructive behaviour (Terelak, 2001). Emotions leading to aggressive behaviour are those in line with the sequence: irritation – exasperation – anger. Their intensity defines intensification and the form of aggression. The analyses by Z. Skorny (1987), S. Berkowitz (1992), W. Łosiak (2009) disclose that a young man's inclination to react with anger, that wrath correlates with commencing a fight, not giving up in difficult situations. The general result is that anger and exasperation trigger actions aimed at recovering threatened or lost aims and lead to aggressive behaviour.

Fear also constitutes one possible negative emotional reaction triggered by threat situations, objective or subjective, external or internal, present now or in the future (Doliński, 2000; Łosiak, 2008). It occurs when a human is put in a situation with which he cannot cope, has little control over it, or does not control it at all (1995). Fear is generally unpleasant and therefore the person seeks to get released from this emotion. Re-

search results by M. Eysenck (2001), E. Nitendel-Bujakowa (2001), D. Borecka-Biernat (2006), W. Łosiak (2009) clearly showed that emotions, in anxiety-fright-fear sequence, usually lead to escape. A young man, fighting against fear, takes advantage, more or less consciously, of coping with them, such as withdrawal from a fearful situation, “drowning” fear by constantly looking for various activities (sleep, eating, shopping), looking for other persons’ company, attempts at not thinking about the problem, escape into fantasies and dreams, buying items regarded as bringing luck, for example, charms, or reaching for stimulants and sedatives.

According to considerations taken into account so far, it seems that in natural conditions anger facilitates fighting, while fear facilitates running away. However, observations indicate that fear may be why individuals attack when they have nowhere to run; when they have no other options except for aggression or attack, fear can be the reason for attack. A commonly known statement is that fear constitutes the basis for aggressive behaviour. It is one of the most significant aggressive behaviours. Such opinion is, among others, expressed by A. Kępiński (1992) and J. Ranschburg (1993), according to whom aggression constitutes effectively coping with fear felt in difficult social situations. As it turns out, aggression helps relieve the fear-related tension or hide fear, too.

Undoubtedly fear depends on its intensity. Studies conducted by M. Leary, R. Kowalski (2001), and L. Clark, D. Watson (2002) evidenced that fear, when its intensity is high, makes it impossible to effectively overcome difficulties, blocks spontaneous activity, and decreases motivation for transgressive acts, thus causing the human to lose control over their own aggression, or withdrawal or evasion from a difficult situation, while low and moderate fear intensity more likely drives one to make an effort to solve the problem. In other words, fear of low intensity may stimulate human behaviour but its high intensity disorganises it, as it favours perceiving many situations as threatening, even if objectively they are not.

A few authors express the view that difficult situations perceived as a challenge may evoke positive emotional reactions in a human (Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger, Starr, 1994). It is popularly believed that curiosity is a positive emotion accompanying unexpected events. It stimulates exploratory behaviour that contributes to solving problems (Doliński, 2000; Spielberger, Reheiser, 2003; Łaguna, Bąk, 2007). Generally speaking, humans reacts emotionally to threat situations. They may feel anger, fear, sometimes even satisfaction from the possibility of overcoming a difficulty. This is where opinions by B. Fredrickson (2001) are worth referring to. She claims that negative emotions lead to restricting the field of view and to quickly selecting coping strategies related to direct attack and revealed in evasive and escape behaviours. Meanwhile positive emotions cognitively broaden the field of view and lead to taking advantageous strategies related to looking for solutions in difficult situations.

The problem and research hypothesis

I sought to answer the following research question: What set of personality variables is related to applying destructive strategies (aggression, evasion, submissiveness) by adolescents in a social conflict situation?

Such a formulated research question allows one to propose the following hypothesis: Adolescents with a low self-evaluation level, feeling externally controlled, and experiencing a high level of negative emotions more often apply destructive strategies (aggression, evasion, submissiveness) in a social conflict situation.

Own research methods, examined persons

The Self-evaluation Scale (SES) questionnaire by M. Rosenberg (following: Łaguna, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Dzwonkowska, 2007) was used for the Locus of Control Test (KBPK) by G. Krasowicz and A. Kurzyp-Wojnarska (1990); I also used the Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (TISCO) by C. Spielberger, K. Wrześniewski (1991), and my own questionnaire for examining adolescents coping in a social conflict situation (KSMK) (2012).

Measurement. The Self-evaluation Scale (SES) by M. Rosenberg makes it possible to measure the level of general (global) self-evaluation in adolescents, as well as in adults. SES consists of 10 diagnostic descriptive statements by means of which the examinees self-evaluate their “me”. Each examined person answers using a four-stage scale, from I definitely agree, to I definitely disagree. For each answer the examinee can be awarded 1 to 4 points. The final results vary from 10 to 40 points. High level in the Scale means a high general (global) self-evaluation level. The Polish version of the SES method is a reliable tool, with confirmed theoretical accuracy.

The Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK) is used for measuring the personality variable. It consists of 46 forced-choice questions; 36 are diagnostic positions and the remaining 10 are buffer questions. The diagnostic questions pertain to simple situations from a school teenager’s life and form two scales: successes (Success) and failures (Failure). The questions concerning positive events forms the successes (Success) scale, and those pertaining to failure-like events, form the failures (Failure) scale. The sum obtained from both scales forms the generalized feeling of locus control indicator (Success+Failure). According to G. Krasowicz and A. Kurzyp-Wojnarska (1990), authors of the Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK), it conforms to psychometric requirements.

The Three-Factor Personality States and Traits Inventory TISCO is a Polish version of the American Saint-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI) test developed by C. Spielberger and team. TISCO comprises two independent parts. The first part (SPI) measures

fear, anger and curiosity treated as emotional states felt in a given moment. The second part (TPI) examines the same emotions treated as personality traits. Therefore, this test includes six subscales: fear as a state (Fear – state) and fear as a trait (Fear – trait), anger as a state (Anger – state) and anger as a trait (Anger – trait), curiosity as a state (Curiosity – state) and curiosity as a trait (Curiosity – trait). Each subscale includes 10 short simple statements referring to an individual's subjective feelings. Results concerning reliability and accuracy of TISCO are satisfying and close to the original STPI version.

The proprietary questionnaire KSMK is dedicated to examining the coping strategy in a social conflict situation adopted by adolescents. It includes descriptions of 33 difficult social conflicts. For each situation four behaviours are assigned to express coping – the first one refers to aggressive coping (Ag), the second evasive coping (E), the third submissive coping (S), and the fourth activity-based coping (Ac). Results are obtained separately for each scale through summing up marked behaviours in 33 situations belonging to a given scale. The scales include 33 items; therefore respondents might obtain from 0 to 33 points in each of them. The KSMK questionnaire is characterized by favourable psychometric parameters. Scale reliability quotients, determined by Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) method, are from $\alpha=0.73$ (for "Aggression", "Submissiveness" and "Task" scales) to $\alpha=0.694$ ("Evasion" scale). Scale accuracy was verified in many ways, for instance, convergent validity was confirmed in relation to results evidenced in the A-R questionnaire by K. Ostrowska, the Children's Assertive Behaviour Scale – CABS by L. Michelson and R. Wood adapted by M. Oleś and the conflict resolution style questionnaire by T. Honess and others, in its adapted form by B. Lachowska. The standard ten scales was developed on the sample study of 1877 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.

Sample survey of the individuals covered by the study. The respondent group included 414 girls and 397 boys aged 13–15. In general, 811 persons participated in the conducted research. The respondents were students of the first, second and third grades of gymnasium schools from Wroclaw and neighbouring localities. The research was conducted in groups and took place in schools.

Analysis of the research results

In order to determine which personality traits related to a social conflict and applying destructive strategy increases (aggression, evasion, submissiveness) in adolescents, a stepwise regression analysis was performed with the strategy of aggression, evasion, submissiveness as dependent variables and the following as independent variables: gen-

eral self-evaluation level Self-evaluation), the feeling of locus control for a successful situation (Success), the feeling of locus control for a failure situation (Failure), fear as an emotional state (Fear-state), fear as a personality trait (Fear-trait), anger as an emotional state (Anger-state), anger as a personality trait (Anger-trait), curiosity as an emotional state (Curiosity-state) and curiosity as a personality trait (Curiosity-trait). Analysis was performed on the results for the whole group and separate analyses were also performed for the groups divided according to sex. Results are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. *The stepwise multiple regression for the result in the aggression (Ag) KSMK scale compared to the Self-evaluation Scale (SES), Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK) and TISCO inventory scale: results for the entire group (N=893, for girls [N=468] and boys [N=425]).*

People surveyed	Variable	Beta	B	St. deviation B	t	P level <
Total	Success	-0.20	-0.30	0.05	-5.53	0.000001
	Failure	-0.12	-0.17	0.05	-3.24	0.001
	Anger-state	0.14	0.10	0.02	4.14	0.00004
	Anger-trait	0.25	0.19	0.03	6.63	0.000001
	Fear-trait	-0.11	-0.10	0.03	-2.97	0.003
	Free ind.		6.59	1.00	6.57	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.44						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.20						
Equation significance: F(5,887)=43.43; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.18						
Girls	Success	-0.18	-0.27	0.07	-3.79	0.0002
	Failure	-0.17	-0.25	0.07	-3.44	0.0006
	Anger-state	0.21	0.15	0.04	3.75	0.0002
	Fear-state	-0.15	-0.21	0.07	-2.91	0.004
	Anger-trait	0.25	0.18	0.04	4.65	0.000004
	Fear-trait	-0.12	-0.11	0.05	-2.40	0.02
	Free ind.		10.92	1.71	6.37	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.48						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.23						
Equation significance: F(6,461)=22.79; p<0.0001						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.11						
Boys	Success	-0.24	-0.35	0.07	-5.21	0.000001
	Anger-state	0.14	0.09	0.04	2.68	0.008
	Anger-trait	0.21	0.16	0.04	4.10	0.00005
	Free ind.		4.42	1.25	3.53	0.0005
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.42						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.18						
Equation significance: F(3,421)=30.628; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.20						

The first analysis was based on the whole teenage group, regardless of their sex. As presented in Table 1, five variables had significant impact on adolescent aggression strategy: the feeling of locus of control in success situations, the feeling of locus of control in failure situations, anger as emotional state, anger as a personality trait and fear perceived

as a personality trait. They explained 20% of the results variability on the aggression strategy scale. Other variables proved to be irrelevant aggressive strategy determinants. Beta values indicate that the stronger the conviction about external feelings of control – separately for success and failure –, the higher the level of anger of situational character and the higher the level of acquired disposition to react with anger; and the lower the disposition for fear-like reactions, the higher the level for aggression coping strategies.

Separate analyses were conducted for groups by gender (compare: Table 1). The stepwise regression analysis evidenced that, from among nine independent variables introduced into the regression model, six had significant impact in explaining the aggression coping strategy applied by girls in a social **conflict** situation. Other variables considered in the study proved to be irrelevant determinants of the girls' aggressive coping strategies. From the calculations it results that vital determining roles for the aggression coping strategy applied by girls are the locus control in success situations, the feeling of locus control in a situation of failures, anger as an emotional state and anger as a personality trait, as well as fear as an emotional state and fear as a personality trait. The multiple determination quotient indicates that 23% variance of the dependent variable is explained by these variables. The regressive equation parameters, including their significance, prove, however, that the stronger the conviction is about externally feeling the locus of control – separately for success and failure situations – the higher the level of anger of situational character and higher the level of acquired disposition for reacting with anger, and, similarly, the lower the fear level of diversified genesis (state, trait) is, the higher the aggression coping strategy level is in a social conflict situation in girls.

It was also verified which set of personality variables affected the aggressive strategy level among boys. Three independent variables turned out significant in the regression equation: the locus of control in success situations, anger as an emotional state and anger as a personality trait. The multiple determination coefficient $R^2=0.18$ shows that 18% variance within the boys' aggression strategies scope can be explained by the impact of the adopted independent variables. Other variables considered in the study proved to be irrelevant determinants in the boys' group. Beta values indicate that the stronger the feeling about external control in success situations, the higher the level of anger, and the higher the level of acquired disposition to react with anger is, the higher the level is for boys' aggression coping strategies.

The multiple regression model for the evasive coping strategy in a social conflict situation, as the explained variable, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *The stepwise multiple regression for the Evasion (E) KSMK scale compared to the Self-evaluation Scale (SES), Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK) and TISCO inventory scale: results for the entire group (N=893, for girls [N=468] and boys [N=425]).*

People surveyed	Variable	Beta	B	St. deviation B	t	P level <
Total	Success	-0.20	-0.23	0.04	-5.42	0.000001
	Failure	-0.11	-0.11	0.04	-2.85	0.004
	Anger-state	0.09	0.05	0.02	2.61	0.009
	Anger-trait	0.09	0.005	0.02	2.44	0.02
	Curiosity-trait	-0.11	-0.08	0.02	-3.31	0.001
	Free ind.		8.08	0.86	9.40	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.37						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.14						
Equation significance: F(5,887)=28.53; p<0.0001						
Standard deviation estimation: 3.22						
Girls	Success	-0.23	-0.25	0.05	-5.19	0.000001
	Anger-state	0.15	0.08	0.02	3.25	0.001
	Free ind.		5.54	0.75	7.43	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.29						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.09						
Equation significance: F(2,465)=21.65; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 3.27						
Boys	Success	-0.22	-0.25	0.06	-4.23	0.00003
	Failure	-0.16	-0.17	0.06	-3.01	0.003
	Fear-state	0.14	0.16	0.05	3.09	0.002
	Anger-trait	0.12	0.07	0.03	2.46	0.02
	Curiosity-trait	-0.12	-0.09	0.03	-2.52	0.01
	Free ind.		6.35	1.61	3.95	0.00009
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.45						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.20						
Equation significance: F(5,419)=21.28; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 3.17						

The determinants for the evasive strategy in which adolescents cope in a social conflict situation are: feeling the locus of control in successes, feeling the locus of control in failures, anger as an emotional state, anger as a relatively permanent personality trait, and curiosity expressed as a personality trait. Altogether the variables explain 14% of the variability in the KSMK questionnaire “E” scale. Other independent variables in the study proved to be irrelevant determinants. *Beta* values indicate that the stronger the feeling is about locus of external control – referring separately to positive and negative consequences of events –, the higher the situational anger level is, and the higher the level is to react with anger, as well as the lower the level is to react with curiosity, the more often adolescents take advantage of the evasive strategy when coping with a social conflict situation.

Will the same set of personality traits turn out significantly for girls and boys who, when coping with a social conflict situation, use the evasive strategy more often? This question is answered by yet another regression analysis, as presented in Table 2.

The results establish that the locus of control feeling in successes and anger as the current emotional state vitally impact strategy meant to evade a social conflict situation by girls. The variance is 9% ($R^2=0.09$). Other variables considered in the study proved to be irrelevant. *Beta* value indicates that the stronger the conviction about external control is – referring to positive events – and the stronger the anger level is, the more often girls use the evasion strategy in coping with a social conflict situation.

Meanwhile the regression equation parameters, including its significance, demonstrate that the results within the control locus in successes, the feeling of locus control in failures, fear understood as the current emotional state, anger understood as a relatively constant personality trait and curiosity understood as a personality trait, have a significant impact on the evasion strategy used by boys to cope in a social conflict situation (compare – Table 2). Pursuant to the obtained results one can conclude that the stronger the feeling about locus of external control is, referring separately to positive and negative consequences, the higher the level of anger experienced as an emotional state and the higher the acquired disposition level to react with anger; and the lower the level of acquired disposition to react with curiosity, the more often boys take advantage of the evasion strategy when coping with a social conflict situation. The multiple determination quotient is low ($R^2=0.20$), which means that only 20% variability within the evasion strategy can be explained pursuant to the aforesaid variables.

In further analyses the dependent variable was the submissive coping strategy in a social conflict situation. Multiple regression analysis for the entire examined group and groups divided with regard to sex, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The stepwise multiple regression for the Submissiveness (U1) KSMK scale compared to the Self-evaluation Scale (SES), Locus of Control Questionnaire (KBPK) and TISCO inventory scale: results for the entire group ($N=893$, for girls [$N=468$] and boys [$N=425$]).

People surveyed	Variable	Beta	B	St. deviation B	t	P level <
Total	Success	0.09	0.13	0.05	2.67	0.008
	Anger-state	-0.09	-0.06	0.03	-1.97	0.05
	Fear-state	0.13	0.17	0.05	3.20	0.001
	Anger-trait	-0.22	-0.16	0.03	-6.07	0.000001
	Free ind.		6.18	1.25	4.93	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: $R=0.28$						
Multiple determination quotient: $R^2=0.08$						
Equation significance: $F(4,888)=19.32$; $p<0.00001$						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.30						
Girls	Self-evaluation	-0,10	-0.09	0.04	-2.21	0.03
	Anger-state	-0.17	-0.12	0.04	-2.89	0.004
	Fear-state	0.14	0.18	0.07	2.52	0.01
	Anger-trait	-0.22	-0.16	0.03	-4.69	0.000004
	Free ind.		10.78	2.05	5.25	0.000001

People surveyed	Variable	Beta	B	St. deviation B	t	P level <
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.32						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.10						
Equation significance: F(4,463)=12.71; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.22						
Boys	Success	0.14	0.21	0.07	2.92	0.004
	Anger-trait	-0.19	-0.14	0.04	-3.79	0.0002
	Curiosity-trait	-0.10	-0.10	0.05	-2.06	0.04
	Free ind.		10.55	1.57	6.70	0.000001
Multiple correlation quotient: R=0.28						
Multiple determination quotient: R ² =0.08						
Equation significance: F(3,421)=12.11; p<0.00001						
Standard deviation estimation: 4.32						

The results show that feeling the locus of control in successes, anger as emotional state and anger as a personality trait, as well as fear as a temporary emotional state, has a significant impact on the submissiveness strategy in adolescents in a social conflict situation. The explained variance for the submissiveness strategy is 8% (R²=0.08). Other variables considered in the study proved to be irrelevant submissiveness strategy determinants in the teenage group. *Beta* value indicates that the stronger the conviction is about external locus of control feeling in successes, and the lower the anger levels are and lower levels of acquired disposition to react with anger as well as higher levels of acquired disposition to react with fear, the higher the level of submissiveness strategy is when applied by adolescents in a social conflict situation.

The submissiveness strategy determinant as a way of coping in a social conflict situation in girls are: self-evaluation, anger as an emotional state and anger as a personality trait, as well as fear as an emotional state. Other features considered in the study proved to be irrelevant determinants. The multiple determination coefficient R²=0.10 shows that a 10% variance of the dependant variable “submissiveness strategy” in the girls group was explained by the adopted set of independent variables. *Beta* values show that the lower the level of general self-evaluation and the lower the anger level (state, trait) and the higher the fear level are, the more often girls apply the submissiveness strategy when coping in a social conflict situation.

The submissiveness strategy level in boys is significantly influenced by the locus of control feeling in successes, anger understood as a personality trait and curiosity understood as a personality trait. The explained variance for the submissiveness strategy is 8% (R²=0.08). Other independent variables in the study proved to be irrelevant. Pursuant to the obtained results, one can conclude that the stronger the convictions are about internal control referring to successes and the lower the level of acquired disposition to react with anger, as well as the lower the level of acquired disposition to react with

curiosity, the more often boys take advantage of the submissiveness strategy when coping with a social conflict situation.

The above statistical verifications justify, to some extent, the formulated hypothesis.

Summary of research results

The analyses reveal a correlation between feeling the locus of control and negative emotions with adolescents aggression coping strategies. Thus, conflict situations with others (e.g. mutual aversion, unfriendliness, blaming) appearing in a young person's socially organized activity, are the forms most often co-existing with external control feelings. Therefore it seems probable that lack of faith in obtaining the desired results, or lack of feeling responsible for failures is conducive to adolescents revealing aggression strategies in a social conflict situation. Since they are most often convinced about its being impossible to have an impact on changing a social conflict situation, they do not focus on the problem source, but on themselves, defending the endangered "me". This causes a defensive strategy to be adopted as an aggressive reaction and is further strengthened by its routine application in the situation. The result is identical with studies conducted by I. Pufal-Struzik (1997) and T. Rostowska (2001).

It's worth indicating that adolescents applying the aggression strategy in a social conflict situation anger levels emotional states and higher levels of acquired dispositions to react with anger. This means that the more intensified the adolescents' aggression strategy is, the higher will be the anger level of diversified origin (state, trait). A similar result was obtained by J. Kossewska (2008) and D. Domińska-Werbel (2014) in their studies. It's interesting that high fear levels of diversified origin (state, trait) did not determine the adolescents' aggressive coping strategy. Such a result seems to reflect the conclusion formulated by M. Tyszkowa (1986), that the individual's personality structure and its traits determine whether emotional tension triggered in a difficult situation will be interpreted as informative and compensating in relation to the activity's aim, or as a signal that the adolescent feels personally threatened.

Throughout my analysis I stated that a strong conviction about the impact others have on positive or negative consequences concerning one's activities and the higher the anger level as an emotional state experienced in relation to this situation and the higher the level of acquired disposition to anger-related reactions plus a lower diversified fear level (state, trait), the more often will adolescents apply the aggression strategy when coping in a social conflict situation.

The studies also strongly indicate "shifting" the locus of control, separately for successes and failures, in adolescents who use the evasion strategy, meaning they look for

social contacts or involvement in supplementary activities. They don't believe that the good and desired events they experience are really their contributions. They rather attribute them to a chain of events or a favour from other people. They are convinced the successes they make and prizes they are awarded result from happiness, luck, or favourable coincidences. They believe that positive events are independent from their activities, that involvement in an activity does not make more sense since the final effect does not depend on the activities. Shifting responsibility for one's successes and failures onto coincidence or luck may cause adolescents to be unwilling to manage their fate and therefore remain passive. One may, of course, expect they will be withdrawing from phenomena surrounding the reality. This tendency for feeling external control in adolescents applying the evasion strategy is also displayed in failure situations. Lacking responsibility for failures causes them to not show motivation for attempting to change their fate, because "what will be, will be". The conviction they have no impact on their activities' results causes adolescents to not be motivated to change their behaviours so as to actively interact to change the situation. But that's not the only thing. The disbelief that effort made in an activity is profitable and may bring a change causes them to passively await consequences in a given situation, or remain passive in attempts to change the course of events. In other words, the adolescents do not believe that the situation they find themselves in may be subject to any change, and thus they do not try to influence it. They try to come to terms with what fate brings and, most often, deal with other activities in order to divert attention from the existing problem. These results are compliant with data presented by M. Gacek (2000), I. Heszen-Niejodek (2004). It was also stated that a social conflict situation experienced by adolescents may add to more frequently experienced negative emotions and discomfort caused by difficulties in problem solving. Teenagers applying the evasion strategy display significantly higher temporary fear and anger state levels experienced in relation to the situation they face and a higher level of acquired disposition to react with anger. Thus, an assumption that negative emotions (fear, anger), when achieving a significant intensity level, decrease cognitive curiosity, impede spontaneous activity, decrease motivation to undertake transgressive acts, and trigger behaviours like "escape" (inhibition, withdrawal, evasion) from threat-related situations; these, on the contrary, add to reducing negative emotional excitation, at least for some time. Such an outlined tendency seems to be compliant with the results obtained by M. Leary, R. Kowalski (2001) and I. Heszen-Niejodek (2002).

My study results also reveal that the general self-evaluation level plays a vital part when selecting a coping strategy in a social conflict situation. Adolescents are aware of their abilities and constraints having an impact on their behaviour. It turned out that lowered self-evaluation in assessing one's abilities and effectiveness is conducive to pre-

sending submissive behavioural forms, reducing emotional tension because of conflicting difficulties. A young man behaves submissively in a conflict situation and restricts implementing his own desires, tolerates threats to his own interests, or refrains from defending his own rights and feelings. As one can see, lowered self-evaluation is conducive to submitting to others' initiative and compliance in a conflict situation. It should be noted that general self-evaluation plays a greater role in submissiveness strategies in girls than in boys. My results converge those obtained by M. Oleś (1998) and N. Ogińska-Bulik (2001).

By generalizing the results it can be stated that a young man's low self-evaluation, his strong conviction about the impact others have on positive or negative consequences of events, his "me" feeling threatened by fear and anger, co-exist with his tendency for destructively reacting to a conflict.

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