

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DECLARED AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract. *Aggression is a behaviour seeking to defuse anger or displeasure on people or things. It is an offensive, enemy, and aggressive attitude toward someone.*

The purpose of the study is to analyse the relationship between perceived social support and aggressive behaviour of students of secondary schools. Field (quantitative) research was conducted among students of third and fourth grades of secondary schools. To collect the data the following research tools were used: Aggression Questionnaire by A. Buss and M. Perry (Amity version), Interpersonal Social Support Scale (Scale ISEL College 48 Version), Author's questionnaire.

The study showed statistically significant correlation for belonging to clusters and sex of respondents, their place of residence and membership in organized social groups.

High social support affects low aggressiveness of youth in all subscales: (A- anger, PA- physical aggression, VA- verbal aggression, H - hostility)

The highest aggressiveness in the form of A- anger, PA- physical aggression and VA - verbal aggression - is characteristic of people with an average level of social support.

The highest-H hostility is characteristic of responders with the lowest social support.

Keywords: *aggression, social support, young people.*

Introduction

Social support consists of the external environment features, which can prevent the occurrence of stress, reduce the frequency of transformation of distress into chronic stress and encourage more efficient dealing with stressful situations. Support can come from “natural” social ties, that is, the family environment or the communities created by a man, establishing relationships with others in his or her environment (Jelonkiewicz & Kosińska-Dec, 2007, 171-193). There are studies showing relationships existing between support perceived and received from various groups and behaviours conducive to health (Zadworna-Cieślak & Ogińska-Bulik, 2011, 73).

Małkowska and Woynarowska postulate that children and young people of school age should be provided with support by parents, teachers and peers. Students aware of social support learn more efficiently, have the pleasure of going to school, more joy of life, and are also less likely to put their health at risk (Małkowska & Woynarowska, 2004, 36-47).

The phenomenon of aggression, although known and studied for a long time, is still pervaded with the lack of a clear definition. This may be indicated by the fact that the concept of aggression is very complex (Wilczek-Różycka, Perek, & Pełatko, 2007; Hemphill, Kotevski, & Herrenkohl 2010; Strykowska, 2012; Vetulani, 2013; Jianghong, 2004; Adamowski, 2009). The Polish Language Dictionary defines “aggression” as “behaviour aimed at defusing dissatisfaction or anger on people or things; enemy, aggressive, malicious attitude toward someone“(Szymczak, 1993, 17). In the Pedagogical Dictionary “aggression” is defined as “action against people or objects causing human dissatisfaction or anger. The aim of aggression is causing damage to the subject of aggression“(Okoń, 2001, 15).

The problem of aggressive behaviour of children and young people of school age is illustrated by studies conducted in primary schools, junior high schools and high schools. The results showed that the expression of aggression and violence was experienced by 26 638 people, which accounted for 44.8 % of all respondents. The most common acts of aggression were threats (25.4 %), thefts (17.8 %) and beatings (11.5 %), the least common form was extortion. Analysing aggressive behaviour in correlation with the age of respondents it was found that the most frequent group which experienced acts of aggression were high school students, while the aggressor was most often a stranger, older than the victim (Hornowska, 2007, 147-163).

The presented study implies that social support (or lack thereof) - as one of the environmental resources - can be associated with aggressive behaviour of young people (Pospiszyl, 2008, s. 110-111).

Literature review

Past research results show that students who receive social support achieve better results at school, are more satisfied with going to school and with life, and are less likely to be exposed to risky behaviours, including aggressive behaviours (Małkowska & Woynarowska, 2004, 36-47).

The research results presented by *Hunter* showed that girls more willingly and easily than boys asked for help. In addition, girls perceived support as a chance to stop aggression and violence, and also the examined women receiving social support felt better than their male friends. The surveyed students were more willing to ask for help when they knew that their request would not remain

indifferent and they could achieve something in this way (Hunter, James, & Boyl, 2004, 375-390).

In relation to the aggression of men and women, significant differences were also confirmed by the research conducted by *Buss and Perry*. In studies carried out on a group of 641 women and 612 men aged 18-20 years, the authors confirmed that aggression was greater among males, but, for the overall level of aggression the effect achieved by sex was moderate. Significant differences were perceived in the case of verbal and physical aggression, as well as in the case of hostile behaviours (Buss, & Perry, 1992, 452-459). Comparable results were obtained by other authors who with their research confirmed the existence of significant differences in the level of aggressiveness conditioned by the sex of responders. The authors demonstrated that the most significant differences occurred, similarly to the results obtained by *Buss and Perry* as well as in own study presented (Moffitt, Caspi, & Rutter, 2001; Williams, Conger, & Blozis, 2007, 1526-1542), in the case of physical aggression. *Grażyna Poraj*, comparing aggressive behaviour among high school students from the city and young people from rural areas, has proven that young people living in the city were more aggressive in terms of latent aggression, hostility, indirect and verbal aggression in comparison to young people from rural areas. It was also found that the male part of the study group frequently manifested undesirable behaviours. Similar results were obtained when comparing boys living in urban and rural areas, and there was no difference between the overall syndrome of aggression. One can talk about the difference in the case of specific scales, i.e. hostility, indirect and verbal aggression, also to the disadvantage of boys living in the city. An interesting finding was that the examined people from rural areas showed a significantly greater control of aggressive behaviour (Poraj, 2009, 251-274). In the case of our own research a statistically significant difference ($p=0.0359$) between belonging to clusters and the place of residence of respondents was reported. It was observed that in the third cluster there were nearly two times more people living in rural areas compared to those living in the city, which means that respondents coming from rural areas perceived the received social support on a lower level than their peers from the city.

As evidenced in the research by *Thuczek-Tadla* there were forgotten and unused ways of preventing violence among young people. These included social involvement of young people, which could take place not only at school but also outside of it. Participation in such ventures created the opportunity to shape the competences necessary for constructive actions at the occurrence of aggression and violence. The skills acquired in the course of social activity, i.e. negotiation, cooperation with others, compromise, became a guarantee that conflicts would not be resolved by a means of aggression or violence but for the benefit of all

parties they would be resolved through dialogue and understanding (Tłuczek-Tadla, 2013, 193-209).

Methodology

The aim of the study is to analyse the relationship between perceived social support and aggressive behaviour of students of secondary schools.

Field (quantitative) studies were conducted among students of third and fourth grades of secondary schools from the Biała Podlaska County, the Lublin voivodeship. The study was conducted with the use of the audit questionnaire supervised by the researcher. Students were tested during educational lessons. Research has been carried out from September 2012 to May 2013. The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

- consent of the school headmaster to carry out research,
- obtaining the consent of students to participate in the study and,
- age of respondents, over 18 years of age.

Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary.

The implementation of the study was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the Medical University of Białystok (Resolution No: R-I-002/244/2012).

To collect the data used were the following research tools:

Aggression Questionnaire by A. Buss and M. Perry (Amity version);

Interpersonal Social Support Scale (Scale ISEL College Version 48);

Author's questionnaire consists of questions about the family situation and the data about the respondent.

Survey data were coded and analysed in statistical package STATISTICA v. 10. In the statistical analysis χ^2 Pearson independence test was used to evaluate the relationship between the variables of a qualitative and ordinal nature. Values <0.05 were considered statistically significant. In order to assess the relationship between different categories of support and levels of aggression, the agglomeration method was used to determine the similarity of ratings of this scale.

Research results

The statistical analysis includes 417 correctly completed questionnaires (rates of return of 95.8 %). Among them, more than a half were women (54.7%) and rural residents (56.8 %). Most people (86.1 %) did not belong to any organized group and at their home there were not any addictions (78.4 %) (Table 1).

Table 1 Traits of surveyed students

Variable	n	%
<u>Sex:</u>		
Women	189	45.3
Men	228	54.7
<u>Place of residence:</u>		
Rural areas	237	56.8
City	180	43.2
<u>Addictions at home:</u>		
No	327	78.4
Yes	90	21.6
<u>Membership in groups:</u>		
No	359	86.1
Yes	58	13.9

In order to isolate the three homogeneous groups the cluster analysis with the use of the k-average method was conducted. Four subscales of aggressiveness were defined as grouping variables (A - anger, PA - physical aggression, VA - verbal aggression, H - hostility) and four subscales of social support (T - material support, B - membership support, A - cognitive support, and S - appreciation support). All variables were found to have a statistically significant influence on the analysis of grouping (Table 2).

Table 2 Analysis of variance of grouping variables

Variable	Analysis of variance					
	Among SS	df	Int. SS	df	F	Rel. p
A	5184.21	2	8873.20	414	120.94	0.000000*
PA	9542.43	2	15727.22	414	125.59	0.000000*
VA	1060.44	2	4229.31	414	51.90	0.000000*
H	4234.44	2	10940.85	414	80.11	0.000000*
T-ISEL	4593.35	2	6817.55	414	139.46	0.000000*
B-ISEL	10179.21	2	8238.15	414	255.77	0.000000*
A-ISEL	5774.38	2	13090.48	414	91.31	0.000000*
S-ISEL	2832.80	2	9520.66	414	61.59	0.000000*

* - Significant variation at $p < 0.05$

The first cluster was formed by 163 (39.1 %) of respondents characterized by the lowest coefficient of aggression in each of the scales: namely, A - anger (15.8), PA - physical aggression (17.7), VA - verbal aggression (14.9) and H - hostility (20.7) as well as the highest social support, including T - material

support (30.6 %), B - membership support (27.9), and - cognitive support (26.9), and S - appreciation support (22.6).

The second cluster consisted of 152 (36.5 %) people having a high coefficient of aggression in three of the four analysed scales: namely, A - anger (23.9), PA - physical aggression (28.7) and VA - verbal aggression (18.5) and average H - hostility (26.8 %) and average social support, including T - material support (39.2), B - membership support (27.2), and A - cognitive support (26.0), and S - appreciation support (21.8).

In the third cluster there were 102 (24.5 %) cases with the lowest social support, including T - material support (22.4), B - membership support (16.1), and - cognitive support (17.9) and S - appreciation support (16.2) and average aggression in three of the four scales: namely, A - anger (20.1), PA - physical aggression (23.0) and VA - verbal aggression (16.2) and the highest H - hostility (27.6).

The study shows statistically significant influence of sex of responders on belonging to individual clusters ($p = 0.0024$) in favour of women. Namely, almost half of women (48.2 %) was in the first cluster characterized by high social support and low aggressiveness. In the case of men, belonging to the first cluster was determined by only 31.6 % of respondents (Figure 1).

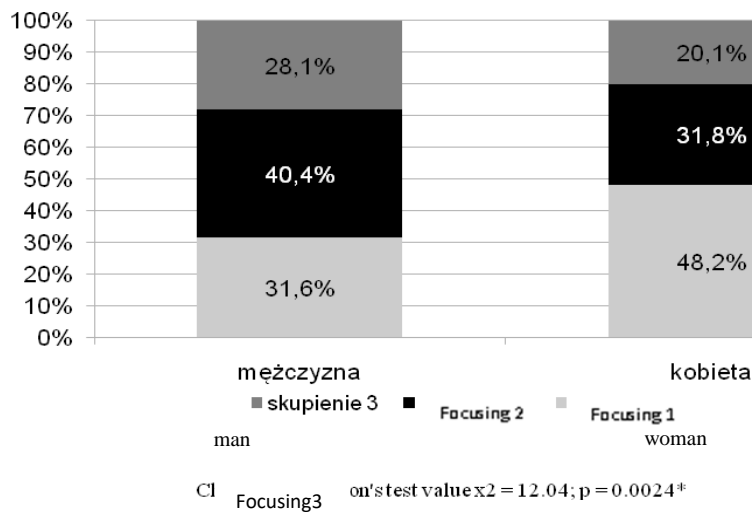
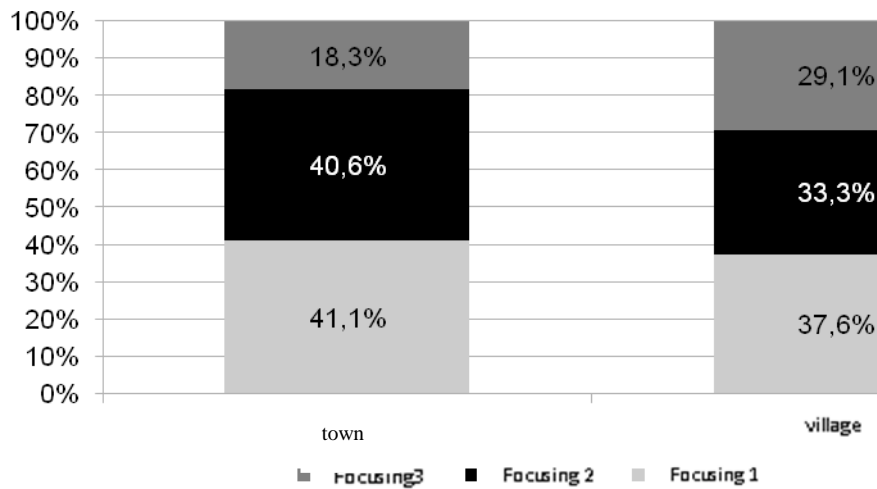


Figure 1 Belonging to clusters taking into account the sex of respondents

* - Significant variation at $p < 0.05$

A statistically significant correlation in belonging to clusters and place of residence of respondents ($p = 0.0359$). Namely, among people living in rural areas it was almost twice as many people in cluster three than among the people living in the city (Figure 2).



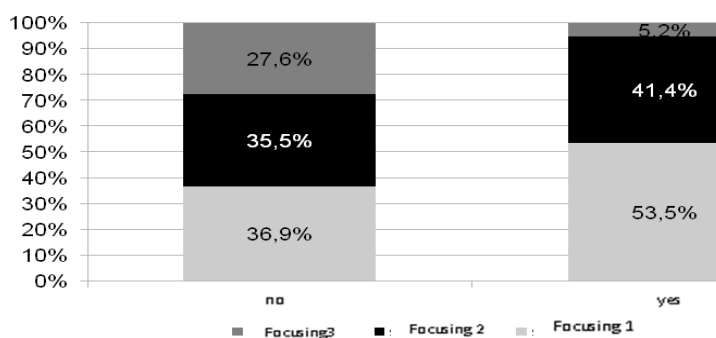
Chi Pearson square test value: $\chi^2 = 6.66$; * $p = 0.0359$

Figure 2 *Belonging to groups taking into account the place of residence of responders*

* - Significant variation at $p < 0.05$

There was no statistically significant effect of the occurrence of bad habits at home on membership in various groups ($p = 0.1040$).

The statistical analysis showed a significant influence of belonging to organized groups on belonging to individual clusters ($p = 0.0008$). Persons belonging to groups in the majority (53.5 %) belong to the first group (Figure 3).



Chi Pearson square test value: $\chi^2 = 14.21$; * $p = 0.0008$

Figure 3 *Belonging to clusters taking into account belonging to groups*

* - Significant variation at $p < 0.05$

Our own research results showed that almost half of women (48.2 %) demonstrated high social support and at the same low level of aggressiveness. Different test results were obtained by *Kurpas* claiming that lower levels of

social support in women may be due to a greater demand for support of women or objectively higher level of support given to men (Kurpas, Piotrowski, & Marciniak, 2014, 941-960).

Conclusions

- High social support affects low aggressiveness of youth in all subscales: (A- anger, PA- physical aggression, VA- verbal aggression, H - hostility)
- The highest level of aggressiveness in the form of A- anger, PA- physical aggression and VA - verbal aggression - is characteristic of people with an average level of social support.
- The highest-H hostility is characteristic of responders with the lowest social support
- The cluster with the highest social support and lowest aggressiveness has the greatest number of women, city residents, people at whose home there are no addictions and who belong to organized groups.

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