COGNITIVE EVALUATION
OF CONFLICT AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSION
OF ADOLESCENTS' STRATEGIES
FOR COPING WITH SOCIAL CONFLICT

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The aim of the research was to cognitively appraise conflict and provide an emotional reflection on the significance of the situation in triggering destructive and constructive coping strategies used by adolescents in a social conflict situation. The study used the Stress Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) by Włodarczyk and Wrześniewski, the Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (TIPST) by Spielberger and Wrześniewski and the Questionnaire to study adolescents' strategies of coping in a situation of social conflict (KSMK) by Borecka-Biernat. Empirical research was conducted in secondary schools and included 893 adolescents (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13–15 years. Analysis of the research results shows that the situational appraisal of a conflict as a threat or the dispositional appraisal of a conflict as a harm/loss, as well as reacting to it with anger or fear, perceived as a temporary emotional state and as a learnt behavioural disposition, co-occurs with the tendency to react destructively to a conflict in adolescents. The research has also shown that an adolescent facing a conflict situation—but not appraising the situation dispositionally as a threat/loss and reacting to it with a learnt behavioural disposition to react with curiosity—will apply a constructive strategy to cope with the situation.

Keywords: adolescents; cognitive evaluation; emotional reactions; coping strategy; social conflict situation.

A conflict situation with another person is seen as one of the basic difficult social situations, in which the pursuits of an individual are contradictory to, or different from, the pursuits of other people, and the realisation of one's pursuits is threatened (Tyszkowa, 1986). It is widespread and unavoidable in the long term. It seems right to say that conflict is inscribed in human existence and nature (Olearczyk, 2009). The word conflict originates from the Latin noun *confligere, conflicatio*, meaning a bump into each other, a dispute, discussion, struggle or clash of two or more processes, forces inherent in living beings (Doroszewski, 1981). "You're gonna bump into each other" could start a fight. Many people associate conflict unjustly only with direct physical and/or verbal aggression and accompanying hostility, which increases the existence of contradictions. This type of conflict is imbued with negative emotions. Most phenomena that can be described as conflicts take relatively mild forms, e.g. short arguments, discussions or debates (Olubiński, 1992; Printz et al., 1979).

In adolescents' lives there are often difficult situations of social interaction with an element of threat to safety/feeling safe, realization of aspirations or achieving a goal (meeting needs). Every day, young people experience a variety of problems concerning school, colleagues and the family home. Research results obtained by Gurba (2020), Polak (2010), Riesch et al. (2000) demonstrated that during the adolescence period, adolescents most often considered conflict with the teacher, arguments with their schoolmates, sweetheart, as well as arguments with parents and other family members as the most important source of personal threat, unpleasant experiences and strong sensation of stress.

Conflict situations between a teacher and a student are the reality of many schools. The most controversial areas in the student–teacher relationship are school grades, tactless behaviour of a teacher, as well as the commanding pressure and the inflexibility of requirements (Stańkowski, 2009). Apart from that, adolescents experience conflict situations connected with their peer relationships. The main reasons for these are: provocation, derision, undeserved imputing, aspersion, betrayal, indiscretion, lack of manners as well as competition with regard to school grades, popularity among the opposite sex, ruling in the class and sport prestige (Różańska-Kowal, 2004). Conflicts are the inevitable element of every community, including the family. Conflicts with parents are an important source of tensions during adolescence. A great number of such conflicts concern everyday situations: differences in tastes, opinions, for instance, about clothes, music, using the computer, school performance, homework, peer contacts, spending free time (Garstka, 2011).

Adolescence is a period in which young people experience different, often contradictory, aspirations and have to cope with incoherent social expectations. The difficult situation stimulates young person to be active in order to regain the balance between demands and possibilities and/or to improve the emotional state. The activi-

ty he undertakes in the face of a difficult situation is considered in a specific context as a strategy for dealing with the current difficult situation (Heszen-Niejodek, 2002). Numerous studies and even casual observations indicate that adolescent youth have a considerable repertoire of strategies for coping with difficult social situations, including situations of social conflict (Balawajder, 2010; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Krok, 2007; Pisula & Sikora, 2008; Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). They include a strategy of destructive and constructive coping with social conflict. A destructive strategy in a situation of social conflict in the form of defensive behaviours is not aimed at solving and overcoming the conflict situation, it has a limited value from the point of view of solving the conflict—it allows a person only to reduce unpleasant emotional tension. In turn, the goal which this person initially set for herself is replaced with another goal—feeling good. This is achieved through:

– *aggression*, taking the form of an initiated verbal and/or physical attack, directed against specific people, causing damages to the physical, mental, and social well-being of other people;

– *avoiding* confrontation with the conflict situation by postponing actions and activities, procrasting and undertaking remedial efforts to solve the conflict, undertaking additional activities involving attention and distracting it from the conflict situation, as well as seeking contact with other people;

– *submitting*, consisting in giving up one's own good, defending one's own interests or failing to achieve one's own goals, intentions in a conflict situation in favour of interests of a partner, his needs and adapting to his views, ways of acting and maintaining positive relationship with him.

A constructive strategy in the form of task-oriented social conflict resolution aims at resolving and overcoming conflict. This includes attempts to make changes in one's own actions by making an effort to reach an agreement with a partner to find a common solution to contentious issues. It assumes an assertive approach to the aims and needs of the participant in dispute, where nothing happens at the expense of the other party, nor at the expense of one's own goals and interests. The basic feature of a constructive strategy for dealing with social conflict is that the structure of the goal is maintained, but the organisation of activities to achieve it changes. A strategy for dealing constructively with conflict situations is therefore characterized by flexibility, since one and the same objective can be achieved by different methods of dealing with it. Evidently, the basic feature of this strategy is its high effectiveness, due to the achievement of its intended or equivalent objectives, despite the conflict situation.

The results of studies to date show that young people in adolescence struggle for adult status, gain more freedom and independence in their decisions about different areas of behaviour, develop new forms of self-expression, which increases the like-

lihood of conflicts in relations with teachers, peers and parents (Czerwińska-Jasie-wicz, 2015). Some adolescents, when faced with a social conflict experienced at school, in a peer group or at home, apply a destructive strategy in the form of an aggressive reaction to a conflict. They avoid active effort in a conflict and engage in other, stressless forms of activities, or they simply surrender to the conflict (Don-aldson et al., 2000; Kuśpit, 2015; Miłkowska, 2010). However, there are also young people who cope well in situations of social conflict, treat conflict as a challenge to themselves, which leads them to mobilize their resources in order to overcome obstacles that prevent them from meeting their needs (De Wied et al., 2007; Filip, 2010; Tezer & Demir, 2001).

Research results and various observations show the individual variety of reac-tions to difficulties and defence mechanisms against excessive emotional tensions in young people (Pisula & Sikora, 2008). In Tyszkowa's view (1986), in the psy-chological mechanism of a human behaviour in a difficult situation, a particular role is played by cognitive schemes (structures) of personality specifying the pro-cesses of perception of a difficult situation, as well as emotional reflection on the significance of the situation and the course of one's activities in this situation. The cognitive scheme is the representation of some piece of reality, reflecting, in an active (processed) way, the properties of an object, one's emotions connected with it, as well as programmes of activities launched towards it. According to Lazarus (1986), each individual has their own, specific way of appraising a situation and one's own individual way of coping with a threat, on the understanding that the process of appraisal influences emotions. Emotions, evoked by a specific kind of a cognitive appraisal, change the way a situation is perceived and further influence the choice of a coping strategy. Therefore, emotions are processes which are the re-sult of the specific relationship between an individual and the environment (Lazarus, 1991). Undoubtedly, no regulative act may occur, if it is not based concurrently on recognition of what is currently happening and evaluation of a particular event. The combined result of both processes leads to shaping or choosing an appropriate form of behaviour (Reykowski, 1988).

The functioning of a person in a difficult situation depends, to a large extent, on her assessment of her position (Lazarus, 1986). Cognitive evaluation of the situa-tion is a process of categorizing events from the point of view of their significance for the well-being of an individual. A stress event can be assessed as a harm/loss (concerning damage suffered and losses related to important objects and items), a threat (concerning similar damage that has not yet occurred and is anticipated), and a challenge (indicates the possibility of mastering a difficult situation and gain-ing something) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Włodarczyk & Wrześniewski, 2005). The individual evaluation of a given difficult situation influences an individual's

decisions concerning the possibility of taking action to eliminate the causes of a difficult situation or at least mitigate its effects, referred to as a remedial strategy (Heszen-Niejodek, 2002). Many studies indicate that an important factor determining the choice of conflict management is the way it is perceived. Studies by Abdullah et al. (2018), Anshel and Wells (2000), Bouchard (2003), Didymus and Fletcher (2014), Domińska-Werbel (2014) demonstrated that evaluating a situation in terms of threat or harm/loss induces an individual to use destructive strategies aimed at reducing annoying tension and mitigating negative emotional states resulting from a difficult situation, while assesses a situation as a challenge involves undertaking constructive strategies aimed at coping with difficulties.

In general, it is believed that the outcome of a cognitive evaluation in terms of risk, harm/loss or challenge will determine how the adolescent will manage the social conflict he or she is experiencing in school environment, peer group and in family home.

An individual responds emotionally to a threatening situation. Emotional reactions in a threatening situation are related to the personality traits of the person and the way she perceives the situation (Humphrey, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A conflict situation, which is an immanent element of social interaction, causes a strong negative emotional tension. A person may experience feelings of ire and anger in the face of provoking factors (e.g. conflict) (Deffenbacher, 1992; Łosiak, 2009). Ire, anger are among the possible negative emotional reactions that occur when experiencing a stressful situation, perceived as a threat or loss/hurt (Lazarus, 2000). Persistent emotional stimulation of high intensity and negative colouration is the basis for aggressive behaviours, irritation, outbursts of rage and other seemingly unjustified emotional reactions that can be observed in various types of destructive behaviours (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Analysis of research material (Kenrick et al., 2005) demonstrates that the adolescent's tendency to react with ire and anger is connected with taking up a fight, not giving up in difficult situations.

Another possible emotional reaction with a negative sign, caused by situations of objective or subjective threat, external or internal, acting now or in the future, is anxiety (Doliński, 2000; Łosiak, 2009; Sikorski, 2015). It is usually a disagreeable state for a person and that is why she strives to free herself from this emotion. Research results (Larsson et al., 2000) have demonstrated that emotions in the sequence: anxiety—scare—anxiety usually lead to escaping and distancing oneself from the object releasing a given emotion or submitting to the initiative of others and compliance.

It is a well-known fact that anxiety, despite its characteristics associated with distancing from potential threat, underlies aggressive behavior (Halevy, 2017). The correlation of anxiety and aggression is supported by the findings of Nowosad

(2002), Simunovic et al. (2013). Research carried out by Sikorski (2015) also confirmed a correlation between a high communication fear and, preferred by students, aggressive style of coping in a social conflict situation. It turned out that when facing conflict with their peers, students tackled the problem head-on, did not seek to solve or alleviate it, used physical force against persons, objects and/or manifested their adverse attitude towards others in the form of humiliating, hurtful and accusing statements.

However, there are studies that propose the view that difficult situations perceived as a challenge may result in positive emotional reactions and satisfaction with the possibility of overcoming difficulties (Włodarczyk, 2017). As it turns out, curiosity is the positive emotion that accompanies unexpected events. It motivates people to seek new information and encourage them to extend experiences. Greater curiosity fosters a stronger belief in the ability to find ways to reach one's destination and mobilise for effort, and thus, in the ability to cope with difficulties (Łaguna & Bąk, 2007). Hence, it stimulates searching and exploratory behaviours that contribute to solving problems (Fredrickson, 2001; Spielberger & Reheiser, 2009).

To sum up the abovementioned considerations, it may be stated that the appraisal of difficult situations as a threat or as a loss/ harm triggers negative emotions (fear, anger). These are generally unpleasant states for a person, so she seeks to free herself from such a state. To defend herself against these emotions, a person utilizes aggression, which entails the necessity to approach the object of threat in order to destroy or damage it enabling the reduction of emotional tension; alternatively, the person withdraws from or surrenders to the situation in which she would have to confront her emotional tension with the real, or foreseen threat. Difficult situations seen as a challenge, in turn, may cause the occurrence of positive emotional reactions, especially curiosity, which triggers strategies of an active coping with difficulties.

Research Problem and Hypothesis

Empirical research was focused on the personal conditions of destructive (aggression, evasion, submission) and constructive (task) strategy of coping with social conflict, with particular attention paid to the role of cognitive evaluation of the situation of social conflict and the level and content of emotions. They were aimed at answering the following research question:

1. What set of variables referring to cognitive appraisal of a conflict and emotions is connected with the fact that in adolescents in a social conflict situation the use of destructive and constructive coping strategy is intensified?

A research question formulated in this way allows us to make the following hypothesis, which will be verified by the analysis of empirical research results:

H.1. Adolescents evaluating conflict situations as a threat or loss/harm and with a high level of negative emotions (anger, anxiety) more often undertake destructive strategies of coping with social conflict, and adolescents evaluating conflict situations as a challenge and with a high level of positive emotions (curiosity) more often activate constructive strategy of coping with social conflict.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

468 girls and 425 boys aged 13–15 years were examined. The respondents were secondary school students of the first, second and third grades. A random selection of schools was used, but not all of the selected schools agreed to carry out research within them, so in a few cases the arbitrarily selected schools with which such cooperation was possible were approached. The research involved groups of students and it was conducted in schools. All surveyed students were granted voluntary participation in the research and anonymity, and the research was conducted in accordance with the principles of psychological research.

Measures

Stress Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)

The SAQ by Włodarczyk and Wrześniewski (2010) contains 35 (including 23 diagnostic) adjective statements assessing stressful situations. It consists of two versions, which include the same sets of adjective terms, and differ in the instructions given to the subjects. In version A (measurement of situational stress assessment), the respondents are asked to indicate a specific difficult situation that has occurred during the last week (in this study it was a situation of social conflict). Version B (measurement of dispositional stress assessment) contains an instruction in which the respondents are asked to indicate to what extent the supplied adjectives are consistent with what they most often experience in difficult situations (in the described study these were situations of social conflict). The *SAQ* consists of 6 sub-scales,

which are indicators of particular types of stress assessment. These are: threat-state, threat-trait, harm/loss-state, harm/loss-trait, challenge-state and challenge-trait. The sub-scale "Threats" contains 10 items, the sub-scale "Challenges" has 6 items, and "Harm/Loss" includes 4 items. The questionnaire is characterized by satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for version A is 0.76–0.90, and for version B it is 0.79–0.90), as well as by factorial accuracy and criteria accuracy.

Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (TIPST)

The TIPST is a Polish adaptation of the American State-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI) developed by Spielberger's team (Wrześniewski, 1991). The measure consists of two independent parts. The first one (SPI) is designed to measure anxiety, anger and curiosity, treated as an emotional state, felt at a given moment. The second part (TPI) is used to study the same emotions, treated as a trait of personality. Thus, the test contains 6 subscales: anxiety as state and anxiety as trait, anger as state and anger as trait and curiosity as state and curiosity as trait. Each subscale consists of 10 short, simple statements referring to the subjective feelings of the individual. The reliability of the Polish version of the TIPST inventory is similar to the original version of the STPI, and Cronbach's α reliability coefficients range from 0.82 to 0.92 for the first part (SPI), and for the second part (TPI) from 0.68 to 0.88, depending on the sample. The accuracy of the TIPST was checked in two ranges: theoretical accuracy and diagnostic accuracy. The results concerning its accuracy are satisfactory and close to the original STPI version.

KSMK Questionnaire

The KSMK developed by Borecka-Biernat (2012) is designed to study adolescents' strategies of coping with social conflict. It consists of a description of 33 situations of social conflict. For each situation there are 4 behaviours for dealing with social conflict situations: the first refers to aggressive coping (A), the second to evasive coping (E), the third to submissive coping (S) and the fourth to task-oriented (constructive) coping in social conflict situations (T). The results are obtained for each scale separately, by summing up the marked behaviours in 33 situations belonging to a given scale. The questionnaire is characterized by good reliability (Cronbach's α coefficient is about or above 0.70) and diagnostic accuracy.

RESULTS

The IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0.0.2 was used in calculations. In order to verify the formulated hypothesis, it was decided to use regression in hierarchical mode with the use of backward elimination method (criterion: likelihood of F-deletion ≥ 0.100). The method consists in introducing all potential predictors into the model and then successively removing irrelevant variables, followed by a recalculation of the model until the final form is obtained. The results in four scales of the KSMK questionnaire were used as a dependent variable: aggressive coping with social conflict (A), evasive coping with social conflict (E), submissive coping with social conflict (S), and task-oriented coping with social conflict (T). The results in six scales (threat-state and threat-trait, harm/loss-state and harm/loss-trait and challenge-state and challenge-trait) of the SAQ questionnaire and in six scales (anger-state and anger-trait, anxiety-state and anxiety-trait and curiosity-state and curiosity-trait) of the Tri-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (TIPST) were treated as a set of independent variables. The results are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1

Stepwise Multiple Regression for Aggression (A) Score of KSMK With Respect to Questionnaire Scales: SAQ and TIPST—Results for Whole Group (N = 893)

Variable	β	b	SE	t	p <
Threat-state	.08	.06	.02	2.58	.01
Anger-state	.19	.13	.03	4.44	.001
Anxiety-state	−.08	−.12	.06	−2.08	.04
Anger-trait	.31	.23	.03	7.34	.001
Anxiety-trait	−.09	−.08	.04	−2.29	.02
Curiosity-trait	−.09	−.09	.043	−2.74	.006
Constant term		3.64	1.39	2.63	.009

Multiple correlation coefficient: $R = .38$

Multiple determination coefficient: $R^2 = .14$

Equation significance: $F(6, 886) = 24.59$; $p < .00001$

Standard error of estimate: 4.32

As can be seen in Table 1, the six variables had a significant impact on the strategy of aggressive coping with social conflict: situational evaluation of conflict as a threat, anger as an emotional state and anger as a personality trait, anxiety as an emotional state and anxiety as a personality trait and curiosity as a personality trait. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .38$ and indicates that the linear relationship between the strategy of aggressive coping with social conflict among adolescents and the total impact of mentioned variables is low. These variables explain the 14% variance of the dependent variable ($R^2 = .14$, $F[6, 886] = 24.59$, $p < .00001$). Beta values indicate that the higher the level of situational appraisal of a conflict as a threat, the higher the level of anger both as an emotional state and personality trait, the lower the level of fear both as an emotional state and personality trait and the lower the level of curiosity as a personality trait, then the higher the level of aggressive coping strategies in adolescents in a social conflict situation.

The analysis of empirical material conducted so far has focused on the strategy of aggressive coping with social conflict among adolescents. The question arises which set of variables related to the cognitive assessment of conflict and emotions will be relevant for the whole group of adolescents that use in their activity a form of avoidance coping. This question is answered by the results of another regression analysis, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Stepwise Multiple Regression for Evasion (E) Scale Result of KSMK With Respect to Questionnaire Scales: SAQ and TIPST—Results for Whole Group (N = 893)

Variable	β	b	SE	t	p <
Harm/loss-trait	.11	.12	.04	3.27	.001
Anger-state	.12	.06	.02	3.25	.001
Anger-trait	.14	.08	.02	3.81	.001
Curiosity-trait	−.16	−.11	.02	−4.72	.001
Constant term		3.53	.77	4.60	.001

Multiple correlation coefficient: $R = .29$

Multiple determination coefficient: $R^2 = .08$

Equation significance: $F(4, 888) = 19.75$; $p < .000001$

Standard error of estimate: 3.33

Among the twelve variables related to the cognitive assessment of conflict and emotions in the regression equation, the following have a significant impact on adolescents' strategies of avoidance in coping with social conflict: dispositional

evaluation of conflict as a harm/loss, anger as an emotional state, anger as a personality trait and curiosity as a personality trait. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .29$ and indicates that the linear relationship between the strategy of evasion while coping with social conflict and the total impact of the mentioned variables is low. The coefficient of multiple determination is 8% and indicates that the set of independent variables taken into account explains only a part of this dependent variable ($R^2 = .08$, $F[4, 888] = 19.75$, $p < .000001$). Beta values indicate that the higher the level of dispositional appraisal of a conflict as a loss/harm, the higher the level of anger as an emotional state and personality trait and the lower the level of curiosity as a personality trait, then the higher the level of avoidance coping strategies in adolescents in a social conflict situation.

The multiple regression model for the strategy of submissive coping with social conflict as explained variable is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Stepwise Multiple Regression for Scale Result Submissiveness (S) of KSMK Against Scales of Questionnaires: SAQ and TIPST: Results for Whole Group (N = 893)

Variable	β	b	SE	t	p <
Anger-state	−.09	−.06	.03	−2.15	.03
Anxiety-state	.13	.18	.05	3.26	.001
Anger-trait	−.23	−.17	.023	−6.49	.001
Constant term		7.88	1.08	7.28	.001

Multiple correlation coefficient: $R = .27$

Multiple determination coefficient: $R^2 = .07$

Equation significance: $F(3, 889) = 23.23$; $p < .001$

Standard error of estimate: 4.31

The results indicate that anger as an emotional state, anger as a personality trait and anxiety as an emotional state have a significant influence on the strategy of submissiveness of adolescents in a situation of social conflict. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .27$ and indicates that the linear relationship between the strategy of submissive coping with social conflict and the total impact of the mentioned variables is low. The explained variance for the strategy of submissiveness of adolescents is 7% ($R^2 = .07$, $F[3, 88] = 23.23$, $p < .00001$). Beta values indicate that the lower the level of anger both as an emotional state and a personality trait and the higher the level of fear as an emotional state, then the higher the level of submissive coping strategies in adolescents in a social conflict situation.

In the last analysis, a dependent variable was the task-oriented strategy of coping with social conflict among adolescents. The results of multiple regression analysis for the whole study group are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Stepwise Multiple Regression for Result of Scale Task (T) of KSMK Against Questionnaire Scales: SAQ and TIPST—Results for Whole Group (N = 893)

Variable	β	b	SE	t	p <
Harm/loss-trait	−.07	−.16	.08	−2.15	.03
Anger-state	−.15	−.15	.04	−4.03	.001
Anger-trait	.12	−.12	.04	−3.10	.002
Curiosity-trait	−.18	−.23	.05	5.12	.0000001
Constant term		16.76	1.42	11.78	.0000001

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = .29

Multiple determination coefficient: R^2 = .09

Equation significance: $F(4, 888) = 20.83$; $p < .000001$

Standard error of estimate: 6.20

The determinants of the task-oriented strategy as a way of coping with social conflict among adolescents are: dispositional evaluation of the conflict as a harm/loss, anger as an emotional state, anger as a personality trait, and curiosity as a personality trait. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .29$ and indicates that the linear relationship between the task-oriented strategy of coping with social conflict and the total impact of the variables mentioned is low. The coefficient of multiple determinations $R^2 = .09$ indicates that 9% of the variance of the dependent variable "task strategy" in the group of adolescents was explained by the influence of the adopted set of independent variables ($F[4, 488] = 20.83$, $p < .000001$). Beta values indicate that the lower the level of dispositional appraisal of a conflict as a harm/loss, the lower the level of anger both as an emotional state and a personality trait and the higher the level of curiosity as a personality trait, then the higher the level of task-oriented coping strategy in adolescents in a social conflict situation.

In the light of statistical verification, it will be useful to observe that variables related to the cognitive assessment of conflict and emotions, are not strong predictors of destructive (aggression, evasion, submission) and constructive (task-oriented) strategy of coping with social conflict, as evidenced by the result $R^2 = 0.07–0.14$.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained allowed to partially verify the validity of the H.1 hypothesis presented in the methodological part of the paper. It is worth noting that the cognitive attitude of a young person to a situation of social conflict may influence the choice of a remedial strategy. The analysis of the research results revealed that a situational evaluation of conflict as a threat is connected with the strategy of aggressive coping by adolescents in a social conflict situation. It should be believed that feeling threatened is conducive to generating reluctance and aggressive attitudes towards others. This trend seems to be in line with Berkowitz's (1992) assertion that aggression occurs in man as a result of perceived threat or as a result of the belief that one is the object of intentional, improper treatment and violation of one's own values. Similar results were obtained by Anshel and Wells (2000), Kowalski et al. (2005), Włodarczyk and Wrześniewski (2010), which revealed that an individual evaluating a difficult situation in terms of risk, benefits from countermeasures that will free him (albeit for a short period of time) from the sense of risk from this unpleasant situation. In his repertoire of strategies, there are strategies focused on reducing unpleasant emotions and not on solving a problem. Aggression as a strategy is a form of irrational (emotional) behaviour and lack of ability to cope with difficult situations, which are often encountered by a young person (Kossewska, 2008). Therefore, it can be assumed that adolescents representing higher intensity of conflict evaluation in the school and out-of-school environment in the category of threat in their behaviour reveal aggression in the form of physical and/or verbal attack directed against people.

Interpersonal conflicts are considered by adolescents as a threat creating a high level of stress (Guszkowska et al., 2001).Therefore, it should be assumed that when a conflict situation is assessed as a threat, it triggers negative emotions in an individual, which in turn triggers aggression strategies (Fung et al., 2015; Sikorski, 2015). An aggressive behavioural pattern helps to relieve the adolescent youth from negative emotions that appear in a situation that poses a threat to the realization of their own aspirations. On the basis of the analysis of the collected research material, it is concluded that anger as an emotional state felt in relation to conflict and a learned behavioural disposition to react with anger have an impact on the strategies of aggressive coping in a situation of social conflict. It can be assumed that with the increase in the level of anger of various origins (state, trait) the intensification of the strategy of aggressive coping with social conflict among adolescents will increase. Such a result seems to correspond to the conclusion formulated by Rubinsztejn

(1964, p. 612) that "in connection with the emergence of social contradictions, as real emotional facts, human indignation, depravity, hostility, hatred is born".

The results of this study revealed that adolescents using strategies of evasion in a situation of social conflict are characterized by a higher dispositional evaluation of conflict in the category of harm/loss. This allows us to assume that this strategy is actually a decision on whether to engage in conflict or not, in which the potential profits and losses are assessed (Antonioni, 1998). It is preferred when the costs or risks of engaging in a conflict are high and the possible profits are insufficient. When a young person notices that a partner's actions have already led caused some damage, such as self-esteem, she is willing to withdraw from the conflict situation. This explains, in a way, the obtained links of this strategy with the evaluation of the conflict as harm/loss, when the individual has nothing to gain and is convinced of the irreversibility of this situation. This trend seems to be in line with the results of Bouchard (2003).

The study findings demonstrate that social conflict situation experienced by adolescents may contribute to the experience of negative emotions (especially anger). It was found that adolescents undertaking evasion strategies in a situation of social conflict manifest a significantly higher level of anger emotion of different origins (state, trait) and a lower level of learned disposition to react with curiosity. This allows an assumption that by reaching a significant level of intensity, negative emotions (especially anger) reduce cognitive curiosity, inhibit spontaneous activity, trigger escape type behaviours (withdrawal, evasion) from a situation of damage and loss, which are aimed at reducing negative emotional stimulation, at least for a certain period of time (Sandy et al., 2014).

The presented research results indicate that the increased level of anxiety in adolescent youth is conducive to the emergence of submissive forms of behaviour, submission to the initiative of others and compliance in conflict situations. This result is consistent with findings from other studies that indicate that the strategy of submission describes an increased level of anxiety that leads to a desire to make complete concessions to the dispute partner (Zimmerman et al., 2015). This means that anxiety of rejection and the need to remain in good relationships at the cost of abandoning one's own interests in a dispute leads to excessive submission to the initiative of others. The resignation of the individual from the realization of their own goals in order to submit to the goals of the interaction partner, gives them a certain guarantee of increasing the sense of security.

In the light of the statistical verification performed, it may be noted that a lower tendency to a dispositional evaluation of conflict in the category of harm/loss is conducive to intensifying the task-oriented strategy of coping with social conflict in adolescents. It appears that adolescents who are able to cope in a task-oriented

ways do not perceive these strategies as a loss of personal values, social position or close person. Various authors (Abdullah et al. 2018; Bjorck & Cohen, 1993; Didymus & Fletcher, 2014; Domińska-Werbel, 2014; Mikulincer & Victor, 1995) have repeatedly pointed out that perceiving a particular situation in terms of harm/loss encourages individuals to engage in behaviours that reduce negative emotions rather than solve the problem. When a person states that she has the possibility to influence the course of a stressful event, she is more likely to choose a problem-oriented task strategy. Despite theoretical and empirical premises, the relations between situational and dispositional cognitive evaluation of conflict as a challenge and task strategy were not confirmed. Perhaps the lack of expected links is due to the fact that this is a difficult and rare strategy to achieve (Wojciszke, 2011).

Adolescents who use task-oriented strategies in situations of social conflict manifest a higher the level of learned disposition to react with curiosity. Curiosity as a positive emotion is a motivating factor for them to take actions aimed at coping with events that caused them (Frijda, 2002). It promotes thinking, creativity and responsiveness, all enhancing experimentation, discovery of new phenomena, and the search for new solutions. As it turns out, curiosity leads to belief in the ability to find one's way towards the goal, mobilizes the individual to make efforts, and promotes belief in one's ability to overcome difficulties (Łaguna & Bąk, 2007). It is worth noting that from an evolutionary perspective, openness to gathering information (curiosity) means being prepared for better and more accurate coping with difficult situations, also in the future (De Catanzaro, 2003). The analysis of results confirmed that the higher the level of curiosity as a disposition to react to any changes and innovations, the stronger the adolescents' desire to communicate with their partner in order to find a mutually beneficial solution to the problem that emerged in the form of conflict. In literature, we can point to studies that have confirmed the observed dependence, for example, by such authors as Heszen and Sęk (2010), Jelonkiewicz and Kosińska-Dec (2008), Spielberger and Starr (1994), and Włodarczyk (2017).

CONCLUSION

It appears that evaluating a conflict situation in terms of a threat or harm/loss and responding to it with anger or anxiety, generally co-exists with a tendency to react destructively to conflict, while not perceiving conflict as a harm/loss and reacting with curiosity creates greater opportunities to deal constructively with a social conflict situation. Finally, the identified variables related to the cognitive assessment of conflict and emotions, are not strong predictors determining the coping

strategies used by adolescents in social conflict situations, which means there may be a relatively large number of other variables that could help understand adolescents' strategies of coping with conflict. Furthermore, the formulated research problem might be resolved in a more effective way, e.g. by attempting to apply the model matching method. Such an analysis could reveal mutual directional connections in the whole field of variables, concurrently between all researched variables (including the effects of indirect influence). Adopting such a strategy of analysis would provide a more complete insight into the network of researched variables and would facilitate the discussion over a more coherent model of conditioning of coping strategies in adolescents in a social conflict situation. However, it cannot be ruled out that the formulated research conclusions will have a theoretical application. It seems that the obtained information will allow the form tutor to better both understand the behaviour of an adolescent in a social conflict situation, and view the causes of such a behaviour from an adolescent's point of view.

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