



---

## DYNAMICS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN 14 TO 18 –YEAR-OLDS

V. Shosheva, K. Benkova, S. Evtimov, Zh. Paunkov

Department of Social Affairs, Medical Faculty, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

### ABSTRACT

This article is a part of the research process of a project activity and presents results from an empirical study of aggression and aggressive behavior in the age of 14 to 18 years. The contingent of the study are students from four secondary schools in the town of Stara Zagora. The main research objective of the project is to establish the dependencies between the types of aggressive behavior.

The theories of aggression as an instinct (S. Freud, 1933, L. Zegan, 1970, as a social study, A. Bandura, 1977, as an interpersonal phenomenon, G. Leyens, 1990, etc.), actually outline biogenetic, psychoanalytic, frustration and social trends of aggressiveness. We can accept the argument, expressed in the sociology of Wilson (1950), according to which the behavior of individuals in society is genetically determined, as well as the theories, examining the social environment as a crucial factor for the development, to the extent to which even the best genetic predetermination remains just an option, if it is not combined with the appropriate environmental determinants. Therefore, the emotional experiences, associated with the satisfaction of biological needs, are conditioned by the socially determined mental processes. According to A. Shishkov, aggression can be considered as a sociobiological component, involved in the adaptation complex of the mental system, where the social reasoning appears to be essential and phylogenetically related to the biological precondition. (A. Shishkov, 2000, 48).

In aggression and aggressive behavior, empathy plays an essential role for the manifestation of aggressive psychiatric conditions. According to A. Bandura, the environment forms behavior, but it is also the other way round - behavior forms the environment.

Thus the idea of reciprocal determinism was born, i.e. the behavior of the world towards man and the behavior of man towards the world are mutually generated. Going deep into the studied phenomenon, A. Bandura argues that personality is an interaction among three things – environment, behavior, psychological processes.

"These psychological processes are contained in our ability to build and use images in our mind and tongue." By its nature, this is actually *learning through observation* – a theory, supported by A. Bandura, S. Feshbah, Ross and others. Learning through observation involves three types of modeling influence: family, subcultural and symbolic.

Between the age of 14 to 18 years learning through observation takes an important part in the motivation and behavioural sphere. Each one of the three types of modelling influences acts independently or in combination, depending on the personality of the individual and the conditions, determined by the socium. Conflicts that can occur between moral restrictions (imposed by society) and the personality, suffering the various modelling influences, in this age range, are often resolved within an immediate aggressive response. This period is interesting also with the fact that this is the time when adolescents give a final shape to their self-awareness and self-esteem, they differentiate the roles of different sexes and the generalized attitude of the individual toward himself.

The subject of our research procedure is aggression and aggressive behavior in the age of 14 to 18 years. The contingent of the study are students from four secondary schools in the town of Stara Zagora – Vocational School of Electrical Engineering "Georgi Sava Rakovski", Vocational School of Construction, Architecture and Geodesy "Lubor Bayer", Secondary School "Maxim Gorki", High School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences "Geo Milev". From a total of 176 students, this article examines the results from a representative sample of 86 students, grade VIII, of the above mentioned schools. The study uses a Buss-Durkee test and a questionnaire.

The types of aggression and their distribution among girls and boys showed significant dynamics, associated with the sexual difference.

The boys and girls, put to the test of Buss-Durkee, showed the following results: 51% of the boys are prone to a body aggression, whereas this percentage for the girls is 23%. In "verbal aggression" the percentage of the boys is maintained with a minimum difference of 1%, while with the girls it is almost double, compared to the body aggression, so here it becomes already 47%. It is an interesting fact that the study of indirect aggression shows 48% for the boys and 45% for the girls. It can be assumed that in both sexes, due to frustrating circumstances, both girls and boys tend to act aggressively, but probably use more subtle forms and do not show aggressive behavior, which will directly present them to the others as individuals, manifesting aggression. In oppositional behavior girls show 51%, while boys – 33%. This data gives us the right to assume that boys at this age are more conformists than girls. This conclusion is also justified by the results of another type of aggression "aggressive irritability", where, again, girls give a higher score of 52%, compared to 45% for boys. Girls are more aggressively distrustful than boys – the percentage here is 45% for the boys, compared to 54% for the girls. Girls show significantly higher rate for "jealousy and hatred". For boys the percentage is 29%, the lowest of the entire study, and for the girls it is 37%. This percentage is even higher than that of the body aggression.

Both sexes, however, have a high percentage in the results for "guilt following aggression". Here, the percentage for the girls is 55% against 48% for the boys. It can be assumed that in this age

period both boys and girls are well aware that such jet conditions, directed against others, are reproachable, but emotionally they are not yet able to control the emotion, raging in them. On the other hand, through aggression they feel a sense of self-affirmation, conquering of a certain position, or defending – maybe in some circumstances – the "area of their privacy". If we go deeper into the analysis by examining the individual in terms of motives, style of behavior, social experience, etc., we are likely to reveal other motives, related to the manifestation of aggression. An interesting issue to explore here would be the study of the phenomenon *addictive behavior-aggression*.

Of all studied types of aggression, girls show lower percentages than boys in "body aggression", "verbal aggression" and "indirect aggression". For all other types of aggression girls show higher percentage than boys. Parallel to this, it should be noted that girls feel significantly much more guilt about their aggressive behavior, but both boys and girls clearly feel guilt as a result of manifested aggressive behavior, the difference being only within 7% in favor of the girls.

Both sexes tend to show verbal and indirect aggression.

Summarized for all types of aggression, measured by means of a Buss-Durkee test, the confirmed propositions about aggressive behavior are within 50% for both boys and girls. Similar results justify the conclusion according to which this age is defined as susceptible to more extreme events. Whether these features of behavior will be developed into a clearly distinct aggressive behavior or will be overgrown, overcome and/or positively changed as a result of the maturation of mental processes that regulate behavioral sphere, is a matter of proper monitoring and reporting. A study will be carried out of the older age periods. The comparison of the results of that study will determine the trends of aggression development and aggressive behavior.

The research procedure included a "Questionnaire", respectively for boys and girls. The contents includes 11 questions with closed and open answers. The purpose of the questionnaire is to determine the awareness of students about what aggression is, and which are the factors that trigger such behavior, according to the students.

The results of the questionnaire showed the following:

Over 50% of the boys cannot define what aggression is, while at the same time, they claim to have witnessed aggression. 44% of the girls say that they have seen aggression in school, as opposed to 48% for the boys. For both sexes the place, chosen for manifestation of aggressive behavior, is school. As a second place where aggression is shown, both boys and girls indicate the street. This tendency is similar for both girls (38%) and boys (40%). Only 8% of the girls point out that they have observed violence in the family. The percentage of those who have not witnessed an act of violence coincides for both sexes and is in the range of 11-12%.

An interesting fact is the one, related to question number 3 of the questionnaire: "Do you think that offense is an act of aggression?". The result here is very high for both sexes – 83% of the girls and 77% of the boys answered affirmatively. The comparative analyses between

these answers and the answers of the Buss-Durkee test about "indirect aggression" show that the hidden manifestation of indirect aggression by using offense, is a commonly used way to cover aggressive behavior. Relatively high percentage is obtained for question 4 "Which factors provoke aggression among youths?". The answers seem to be scattered and random. This is a result of the fact that they are open, but a large part of them contain uniting components. This gives a reason to conclude that, according to young people, the media provide role models of violence, the lack of attention and the problems in the family provoke violence, alcohol and drugs are another provocative factor, as well as selfishness and misunderstandings.

The presented study is only a part of the research procedure on the problems of aggression and aggressive behavior in the period of the age from 14 to 18 years.