



AGGRESSION IN SCHOOLS FROM THE STUDENTS POINT OF VIEW

M. Pehlivanova*

Technical College – Jambol, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to show the manifestations of aggression in the “teacher-student” relations and those between students of same age, as well as to pinpoint the methods to reduce them. The present research is a continuation of another one concerning the aggression manifestations among puberty and teenage students. The research was carried out with the help of a questionnaire; the data processing indicates the aggression manifestations in the “teacher-student” relations, the abilities to resolve conflicts and the ways to exclude the acts of aggression.

Key words: relationships, conflict resolution, dialogue, overcome the aggression

INTRODUCTION

In the continuous and contradictory contemporary society development process a change of the social development ethos is observed, that brought a variety of viewpoints, ideas and values.

The researches of sociological agencies, specialists and our researches show that the teachers and the students are concerned about the distribution of aggression and violence in school. The students worry that they might not be able to hold back their irritation and anger that the teachers might fail to understand them, that the adults attitude towards them is either disparagement or low respect, that they would lack sufficient knowledge and experience to react in an adequate manner in various conflicts with their teachers and school mates. The young people are worried and frustrated that they would not be able to reach their goals and to meet the expectations of the adults for them as future citizens and specialists.

THEORETICAL TREATMENT AND SURVEY RESULTS

The present research is a continuation of another one concerning the aggression manifestations among puberty and teenage students, which was carried out in the period

2006-2009. This research covers the period 2009-2010, whereas it includes students and teachers of different geographical locations and settlements of different sizes, a part of these including representatives of different ethnical communities (Sofia, Yambol, Straldzha and Sungurlare). The research covers students of the general secondary schools and a professional high school. The age groups cover 11 to 18 years. The aim is to show the manifestations of aggression in the “teacher-student” relations and those between students of same age, as well as to pinpoint the methods to reduce them.

The questionnaire includes 21 questions on relationships, communication and punishment in the families; the aggression acts and the cases when the participants in the research have been either the aggressor or the victim; contradictions in the relationships with the other s of their age and with the teachers, as well as the ability to make dialogue and to resolve conflicts; the places where they have seen acts of aggression and whether they believe that the aggressive behavior facilitates an easier achievement of goals; whether they assume that the teachers have right to insult and physically punish them.

Although there are various approaches and theories of defining the aggression, in most cases it is defined as a harmful behaviour. The notion includes behaviour acts of different form and results. Other bibliographical sources link this notion to authority and domination, to

*Correspondence to: Margarita Pehlivanova,
Technical College – Jambol, Trakia University –
Stara Zagora, “Graf Ignatiev” street №38, Jambol
8600; e-mail: margopehlivanova@abv.bg

the attempts to cause physical or psychological injuries to the others; to the resources of people

or to the limited ability to control in order to dominate the others. (1)

Table 1. Research contingent

Location	Number	Men	Women	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Yambol	96	33	63	-	-	-	-	-	54	42	-	-
Sungurlare	144	81	63	11	28	34	31	15	14	11	-	-
Straldja	86	52	34	-	-	-	13	20	18	20	12	3
Sofia	100	4	96	-	-	-	12	6	14	28	31	9
Total	426	170	256	11	28	34	56	41	100	101	43	12

I use in my research the definition of aggression proposed by Erich Fromm, which includes “all the actions causing or meant to cause damage to another person, animal or object, the most essential difference between all the types of impulses included in the aggression category is the one between the biologically adapting life serving justified aggression and the biologically non-adapting malicious aggression.” (2)

From psychological point of view the violence is one of the main ways of resolving problems relating to preserving the individuality and the identity, to the defense of the growth of the self-esteem, self-assessment, the level of devotion, as well as a way to keep and enhance the control over any environment which is essential for the subject. Violence may be showed as: a way to achieve any important goal; means for psychological relief; a way to satisfy the need of self-realization and recognition.

For the purpose of researching the aggression, in the process of relationships and interactions between the students and the teachers we can consider certain acts of aggression as winning or enemy destroying tactics in a social conflict. We assume that the three key elements of aggression are: the form of behaviour aimed at harming or injuring another creature; the victim is motivated to avoid such an attitude, as well as that the behaviour is taken into consideration, and not the negative emotions, such as anger and rage, or motives. We assume that the social learning theory is leading in the relationships and interactions in school, whereas Bandura defines the aggression as behaviour performed beyond the socially approved role. (3) Often the children and the young people who disobey the school and social rules and standards, who cause physical

damage or evoke negative emotions in the others, status of tension, fear, depression, they are qualified as aggressive by the people around them. The aggressive behavior shows up and incorporates senseless obstinacy, threats, loud performance, bad attitude towards the others of their age and the adults, rudeness, insubordination, arguing, boasting, etc. The aggressive conduct of some of the adolescents incorporates also lies, negative attitude, and bias to destruction. Violence among the adolescents in the majority of cases is a cry for help from the adults. Violent reactions result from the failure of children to correctly assess the relations and the situation, when they feel threatened and when they want to be accepted or to become leaders in a group of their age.

Although the research on students is targeted on the relationships and interactions in school, we have provided a section with questions viewing the relationships with the family members, especially in what concerns the inefficient communication and the use of punishment and praise and the influence of these in support or refrain of aggressive and in acceptable behaviour. In this aspect the results and the opinions are not clear. If the students understand that certain aggressive acts and actions are not favoured among the adults and the others of their own age, that any act of aggression would be sanctioned, they might refrain from breaking the rules. (4)

The contemporary science promotes the idea that the punishing parents (teachers) play the role of a kind of behaviour pattern to the children, especially in what concerns the physical punishment. Only moderate doses of punishment favour the forming of behaviour models alternative to the aggression.

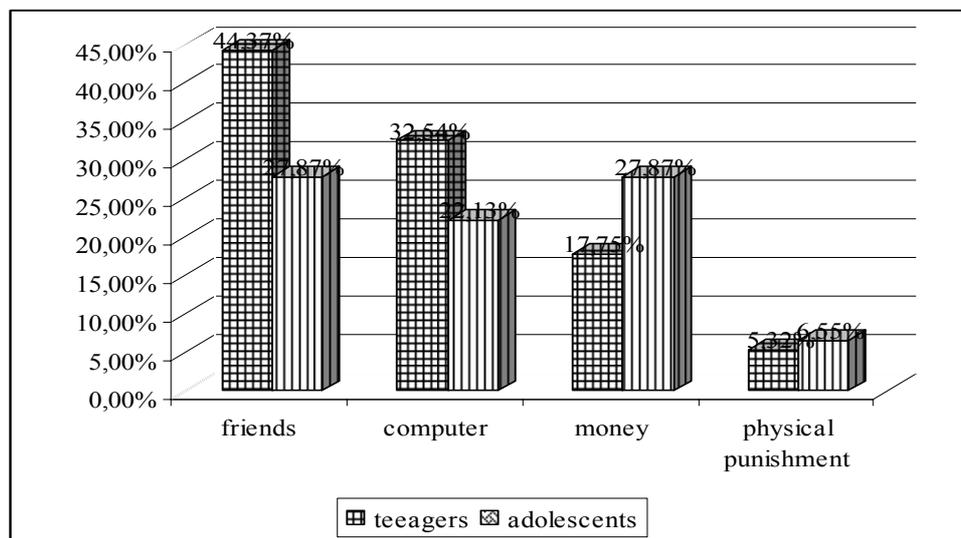


Fig. 1. Types of punishments

This calls for a high psychological and pedagogical ethos of the parents-children and teachers-students communication, because an unjust punishment would not only fail to reduce the aggression, it could turn into a behaviour model which might reproduce in the relationships of the young person in his future adult life. The recapitulation shows that 50,81% of the 16-18 age group have not been victims of violence, 42,62% have occasionally been victims, and only 5,74% have often been victims of violence. The answers to the same question in the age group 11-15 are: never - 55,62 %, occasionally - 33,73% and often - 10,65%. No essential differences are observed between the results of the students coming from different places of residence. When the students contradict their teachers or classmates, and especially when their dignity and their pride have been harmed they recur to force, threats and insults, they tend to belittle the arguments of their opponent or ignore him, as well as to draw into the conflict higher ranking participants or such holding legitimate power. 26,23% of the high school students and 29,58% of the junior high-school students have been victims of battery, pushing, 69,67% and 62,13% have been insulted and cursed, 9,02 and 20,7% have been victims of acts derogatory to their prestige. There is some discrepancy in the answers to the question whether they have suffered from aggression and what forms of it. Half all the students have given positive answers to the first question, while 60% have affirmed that they had been victims of verbal aggression. This controversy could be due either to insufficient honesty in the answers to the first question or to the fact

that the rudeness and the verbal aggression initially were not qualified as a form of violence. When the students contradict their teachers or classmates, when their dignity and their pride have been harmed they recur to force, threats and insults, they tend to belittle the arguments of their opponent or ignore him, as well as to draw into the conflict higher ranking participants or such holding legitimate power (teacher or leader). The picture of verbal aggression and communication ethos is completed by the data regarding the use of insults and curses towards others of the same age and older. In both age groups 57% of the participants sometimes curse and insult the others in case of a conflict in communication with other students of the same age. A little bit higher is the ratio of the teenagers who very often use curses in conflict situation and their resolving.

The general psycho-physical condition of the puberty age students and their social orientation towards the ideal and justice in life make this age the most emotionally sensitive one. Because of the higher emotionality they go through any success with positive emotions, but the failure or injustice may stir a strong affect in them. The learning process failures may lead to rude attitude and aggressiveness in their relations with the schoolmates and the teachers, or even to physical aggression as an option of proving oneself.

39,64% of the puberty age group students have applied physical violence on their schoolmates, 43,19% have insulted, and 20,11% have applied an indirect form of aggression on others of the same age. 31% of the teenagers

have applied physical aggression on other people. This group reports higher use of verbal aggression (62,29%), and the indirect one is lower. The comparison between the two age groups shows, that in the teenage group the verbal aggression is more prominent, and the use of physical force is close to the one at the younger students who more often use defamation, gossips and intrigues.

The probability of aggressive behavior grows when the student has been a victim of aggression or has witnessed support to aggressive reactions and actions of other schoolmates who willingly or not were supported by the adults (parents, teachers).

In the relationships and interactions in school when there are no common objective criteria (as in values hierarchy in different social groups) the students verify their views and

convictions by comparing them with those of the other people. A special place is occupied by the images and patterns of aggressive behaviour broadcasted in the media or witnessed in the out-of-school places that the young people visit. The results show that at the young teenagers most often the place where they face aggression is the school, followed by the TV shows and in the third place – the street. The older teenagers mainly witness aggressive acts in the street, the second place with the same percentage ration as at the younger ones occupies the school followed by the aggression in discos and TV shows. In spite of the expectations, at both age groups the percentage of those who have watched violence scenes on the internet is under 20%. Only 3,28% of the older teenagers have witnessed home violence, while at the puberty age students this ratio is 10%.

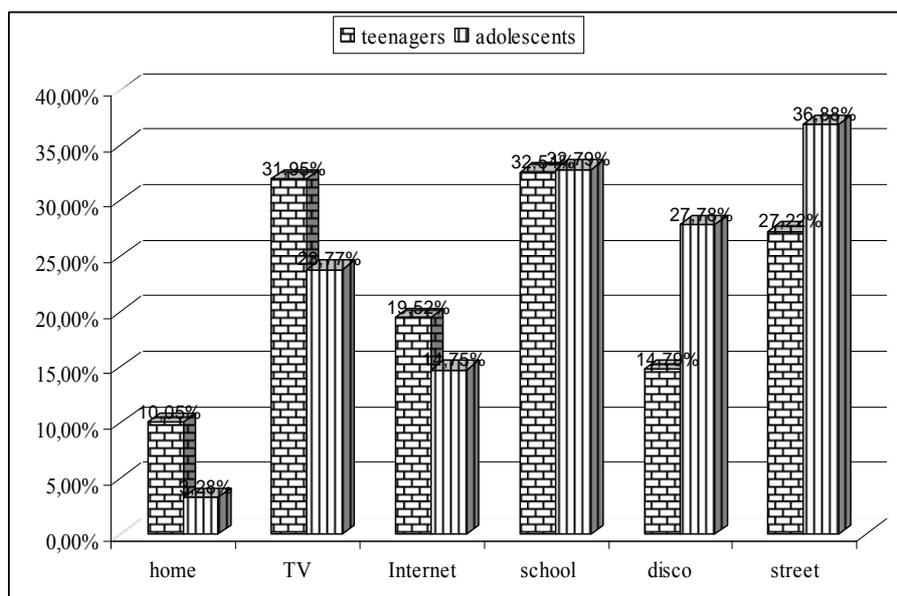


Fig. 2. Locations observed aggression by students

The answers to the question regarding the punishments their parents give them when they have done wrong, show that 5,32% of the 11-15 years old students have been physically punished, where among the older teenagers this ratio is slightly higher (6,55%).

In the process of working and interpersonal communication in school contradictions and conflicts emerge both with the teachers and with the schoolmates. We observed that the representatives of both age groups in the case of a conflict try to resolve the problems peacefully (40-42%) or take the situations calmly. When the problems and confrontation

occur between a student and a teacher, the students indicate that they remain calm and seek dialogue to resolve the conflict.

34,32% of the junior high-school students studied and 36% of the high-school teenagers in the cases of conflict situations with others of their age become aggressive and they are ready to respond with aggressive actions, and in the cases of contradictions with the teachers the ratio is considerably lower (5,32% and 10,65%). The results confirm that the students respect the social role of the teacher and his authority in the educational process and they reduce the probability of aggressive reaction.

In their attitude towards the teacher the students also have their emotional and psychological moments in demonstrating disrespect towards the teacher in front of the others or in reducing the collaboration and the communication with him by not attending the classes.

When a certain teacher wants to enforce his opinion 70% of the older teenagers studied who already have their own position and are able to make a decision of their own, seek a way to present and defend their own view, while at the young teenagers this ratio is only 39%. The questionnaire results showing that 15,6% of the first group and 13,6% of the second group are not capable to hold back their emotions and they erupt, are close.

The results showing how the students react in conflicts with the others of their age and with adults, as well as in cases of an attempted enforcing of the other person's opinion, are confirmed also by the fact that approximately 40% think that they are able to carry out a dialogue. In the teenage group, however, 31% have indicated that they cannot pronounce their necessities and carry out an adequate dialogue to end the conflict. The research results show that the studied teenagers definitely know their rights, they are aware of their own dignity as individuals and majority of them think that the teachers have no right to insult them or to punish them physically.

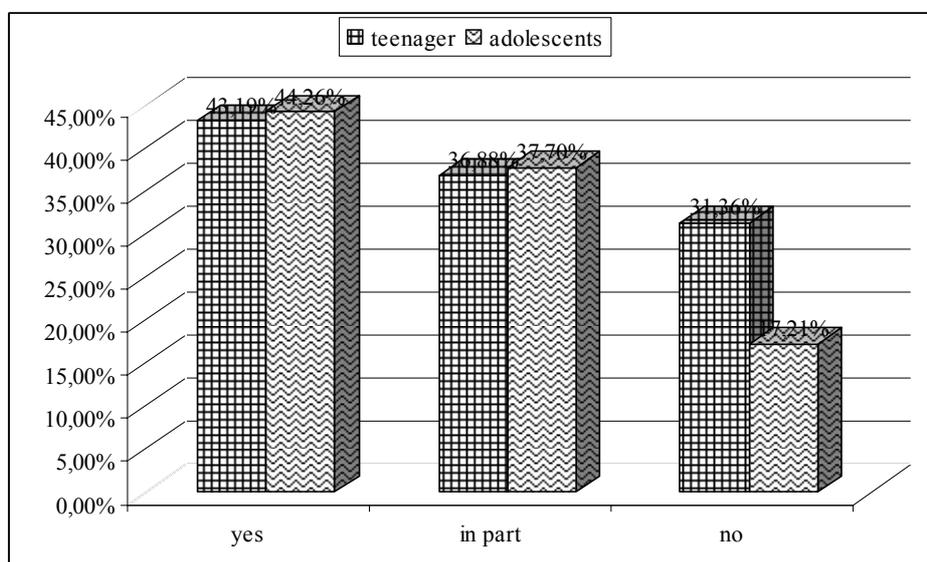


Fig. 3. Skills for Dialogue

And yet 5,7% of each group accept that the teachers are allowed as a whole or occasionally only to insult them. Less than one percent accept as allowable in all cases, and 3,28% - sometimes to be even physically punished by the teachers. At the younger age group 9,46% assume that the adults are allowed to insult them, 6,5% assume they are allowed to hit them when they have done wrong. 17% of the children assume that only occasionally it is admissible to the teachers to insult or hit them. These results show that a part of the children and young people have witnessed and they accept such punishment as admissible and they probably assume that they deserved it. It is a favourable result that half of the studied have not been victims of aggression. The fact

that more than 16% are often victims of violent acts is highly worrying.

It is necessary to work for prevention of the physical aggression in both groups, because it is more than 30% higher at the younger ones.

CONCLUSIONS

The communication skills and the communication ethos should develop in order to reduce the verbal aggression. The activity aimed at acquiring of communication skills and techniques to make dialogue with the students, the teachers and the parents.

The efforts towards management of the conflicts and aggression in school should continue, so that the school environment could assist the adaptability of the young people to

the real social problems and become a preferred place for action and communication. The teachers should collaborate with parents, they knowingly or not could form aggressive patterns of behaviour.

REFERENCES

1. Beron, R., Deborah Richardson: Aggressiion,

PEHLIVANOVA M.

http://www.krotov.info/libr_min/b/bahtin/baron02.html

2. Fromm, Erich, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, Sofia, 2003.
3. Bandura, Albert. Social learning theory, Eurasia Publishing House, St. Petersburg, 2000.
4. H.Heckhausen: Aggression. Motivation and Action. Moscow, 1986, part 1, www.krotov.info/libr.../b/.../baron00.html