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Parental influence on Coping Strategies in Youth in Situations of Interpersonal Conflict

Abstract

The goal of the study was to explore ways in which family impacts the etiology of coping strategies in youth in situations of social conflict, with focus on the parental attitudes and their patterns of reacting to situations of social conflict. The Scale of Parental Attitudes (Skala Postaw Rodzicielskich) by M. Plopa, the Questionnaire for Coping Strategies in Parents in Situations of Social Conflict (Kwestionariusz strategii radzenia sobie rodziców w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego) by D. Borecka-Biernat, and the Questionnaire for Coping Strategies in Youth in Situations of Social Conflict (Kwestionariusz do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego) by D. Borecka-Biernat were the tools applied in the study. The empirical study was conducted in middle schools, on a sample of 893 adolescents (468 girls and 425 boys) aged 13 to 15. In the light of the conducted research, it has been concluded that destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) mechanisms of coping with emotional tension in situations of social conflict are shaped by inappropriate parental attitudes characterized by emotional distance or emotional focus of the parents on the adolescent, lack of balanced emotional bond, and high expectations accompanied by excessive discipline and strictness. Among the family-related determinants of destructive coping strategies an important role is played by the patterns of destructive (aggressive, avoidant, and submissive) coping strategies in situation of social conflict presented to the adolescents by the parents. What is more, an analysis of the research material has indicated that appropriate parental attitudes, characterized by support, respect for the adolescent's independence and their individuality equip the young person with a constructive (task-oriented) strategy that is efficient in overcoming situations of social conflict. It has been observed that a high level of the task-oriented strategy in

parents in situations of social conflict causes an increase in the level of the task-oriented strategy in youth in situations of social conflict. It appears that the obtained information can serve as theoretical guidelines in designing parenting strategies that shape individuals capable of coping with conflict in a mature way.

Keywords: youth, parental attitudes, modelling behaviour, coping strategies, situation of social conflict.

Introduction

Difficult social situations are a constant in human life that we encounter at all its stages. One of those situations is the situation of social conflict, in which the individual's aspirations are incompatible and threatened by those of others (Balawajder, 2010, p. 138; Borkowski, 2003, pp. 242–245; Tyszkowa, 1986, p. 12; Wilmot and Hocker, 2011, p. 32). Social conflict is one of the most common difficult social interactions in each person's life. It is an unavoidable element of life. It does not appear erroneous to state that conflict is an inherent part of human nature and existence. It is common and, in the longer perspective, unavoidable.

Interpersonal conflicts are experienced by individuals at different age and in different environments. Young people frequently experience difficult social situations that contain an element that threatens their sense of security, realization of aspirations or goals (and thus, fulfilment of their needs). Every day, young people face various problems connected with their school life, friendships or family life. The results of studies conducted, among others, by B. Ciupińska (2011, pp. 100–118), M. Cywińska (2005, pp. 43–70), D. Domińska-Webel (2010, pp. 13–14), T. Garstka (2011, p.12), E. Gurba (2013, pp. 53–71; 2020, pp. 128–130), R. Jaworski (2000, pp. 27–54), B. Lohman and P. Jarvis (2000, p. 15), J. Mariański (2000, pp. 238–242), K. Polak (2010, pp. 24–30), T. Rostowska (2001, pp. 43–45), J. Różańska-Kowal (2004, pp. 203–214) W. Sikorski (2010, p. 57), B. Stańkowski (2009) have shown that adolescents consider conflicts with teachers, schoolmates, the romantic interest, parents and other family members to be the major source of personal threat, unpleasant experiences, and intense stress. Conflict that occurs in these spheres of social life is, for young people, a daily, unavoidable, even natural occurrence.

1. Coping strategies of adolescents in the context of the situation of social conflict

In difficult situations which pose some type of threat for the individual and hinder the fulfilment of their needs, the individual usually engages in activities that allow them to overcome the difficulties or to improve their situation. Adolescence is a period in which young people manage various, frequently contradictory, aspirations and must cope with the inconsistent social expectations. A difficult situation provokes the young person to initiate activity oriented towards re-establishing the balance between the expectations and their abilities and/or the improvement of their emotional state. The activity that they initiate in complex circumstances is considered, in a specific situational context, as a strategy of coping with the current difficult situation (Heszen-Niejodek, 2000, pp. 480-481; Wrześniewski, 1996, p. 46). As indicated, a "strategy" is any activity that an individual engages in any difficult situations, in response to the changing conditions, in order to cope with a specific situation in a spontaneous way, without previous planning. Thus, a strategy is a way of achieving one's goal in a particular situation.

The ability to cope in social situations interpreted as conflict is manifested through destructive and constructive strategies (Balawajder, 2010, pp. 154–155; Borecka-Biernat, 2012, pp. 87–89; Deutsch, 2005, pp. 22–31; Kłusek-Wojciszke, 2009, pp. 120–122). Destructive coping strategies in situations of social conflict that take the form of defensive behaviour are not oriented towards the resolution of conflict and overcoming the difficulties; from the perspective of conflict resolution, they have a limited value. Their main objective is to allow the individual to lower the unpleasant emotional tension. The individual's original goal is replaced with another-re-establishing good mood. It can be achieved through the following means: aggression that manifests as a verbal or physical attack against specific persons, that causes damage to their physical, mental, and social well-being (that is, it causes pain, destruction, and leads to the loss of the person's values); avoiding confrontation with the situation of conflict. The individual makes special effort to occupy their attention and direct it towards something else than the conflict (watching TV, listening to music, overeating, sleeping, physical activities, playing computer games, surfing the Internet), and to seek contact with others; submission; the individual abandons the defence of their interests and the realization of their goals in the situation of conflict, in order to adapt to the other participant of the conflict and accommodate their views and activities and to preserve their good relationship. Constructive coping strategies in situations of social conflict include all behaviours oriented towards active en-

gagement in the situation of conflict and resolving and overcoming it; they are categorized as adaptive. They include attempts to change one's own behaviour through undertaking the effort of communicating with the other participant of the conflict in order to find a common solution to the problematic issue. The basic characteristic of the constructive coping strategy in situation of conflict is the ability to preserve one's original goal; what is changed, however, is that their situation is improved through altering their problematic behaviour, changing the threatening environment, or regulating their emotions (calming oneself down).

Thus, the problem of coping mechanisms applied by youth in situations of conflict that occur at school, in relationships with peers, or at home is worth analysing. Numerous studies as well as casual observation indicate that adolescent youth has at their disposal a considerable repertoire of coping strategies that they use to cope with difficult social situations, including conflict. These resources include destructive and constructive strategies (Borecka-Biernat, 2006, pp.63–73; Borowiecka, 2005, pp.30–32; De Wied, Branje and Meeus, 2007, pp. 51–52; Filip, 2010, pp. 208–210; Frączek, 2003, pp. 28–30; Gawryś, 2002, pp. 35–39; Krok, 2007, p. 120–125; Lachowska, 2010, pp. 181–183; Miłkowska, 2010, pp. 202–210; Miłkowska-Olejniczak, 2005, pp. 24–29; Owens, Daly and Slee, 2005, p. 1; Poraj, 2002, pp. 51–62; Sikorski, 2015, pp. 130–134; Talik, 2011, pp. 130–135; Tezer and Demir, 2000, p. 525; Trylińska-Tekielska, 2007, pp. 21–33; Tyszkowa, 1986, pp. 29–42; Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2000, pp. 542–544). The school environment – in particular situations of conflict with the teachers and schoolmates - is a source of intense emotional stimulation. The present results of studies indicate that young people adopt various strategies to cope with school problems, including aggressive behaviours towards others (shoving, pushing, kicking, name-calling, mocking), attempts to distract one's attention from the difficult situation and doing something else (listening to music, watching TV, reading), avoiding the difficult situation by changing one's physical location, ignoring it, or submission to the situation and other people. Solving social conflicts at school or with peers independently is also observed among young people. The intellectual capacity of the adolescents allows them to assess the situation appropriately and find solutions. Thus, young people are able to compromise or reach agreement in the situation of social conflict.

The family home may be the environment where the young person finds support, understanding, and a sense of security, as well as the source of various tensions and conflicts. Situations of conflict with the parents are, during adolescence, an increasingly significant cause of tensions. Adolescents wish to

become independent from their parents' control and, through their behaviour, demand more freedom. Young people display aggression because they feel that the control, pressure, and restraints threaten their autonomy. The limitations imposed by their parents provoke anger, expressed through "talking back" to the parents, slamming doors, or, sometimes, crying or direct aggression towards people or objects. Most frequently, adolescents express aggression towards their parents in words, ironic statements, ignoring instructions and restrictions, or silence. Another way in which adolescents cope with family problems is ignoring the issue as well as the tendency to appease the other participants of the conflict or seeking interpersonal contacts outside the family.

The presented review of research on coping with situations of social conflict suggests that, confronted with conflict at school, in relationships with peers, or at home, certain adolescents adopt the destructive strategy and react to conflict with aggression, avoiding the conflict by engaging in alternative, stress-free activities, or surrendering to the conflict. Others, however, are able to cope well in situations of social conflict, treating it as a challenge that motivates them to activate their resources in order to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their needs.

2. Family determiners of coping strategies in youth in situations of social conflict

The family home prepares the child to cope with difficulties, make decisions in difficult circumstances, and control stress. Coping with various obstacles in life is a skill that the child develops in a specific family environment that is, to a large extent, shaped by the attitudes the parents. The parental attitudes and their relationship with the child have major impact on the young person's social development and become the blueprint for their existence in society and their ability to find solutions to difficult social situations. Literature presents data that indicates that destructive mechanisms of reacting to difficult social situations, in particular conflicts, are a result of inappropriate parental attitudes (Bares et al., 2011, p. 227; Batool, 2013, p. 217, Borecka-Biernat, 2006, pp. 126–128; Brown et al., 2007, p. 147; Chang et al., 2003, p. 598 ; Finkenauer, Engels and Baumeister, 2005, pp. 62–65; Gurba, 2020, pp. 133–134; Januszewska, 2001, pp. 334–339; Kuppens et al., 2009, p. 607; Łukaszewicz, 2002, pp. 14–16; Minda, 2019, pp. 310–313; Poraj, 2002, pp. 45–50; Russel et al., 2003, p. 74; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010, pp. 246–247; Ziemska, 2009, pp. 65–69). These inappropriate attitudes include the following:

- *excessive emotional distance* (avoidant attitude, rejecting the child), manifested as the parental disaffection and neglect of the child's needs. The parents treat the child as an obstacle to the realization of their ambitions and avoid interaction with them. Parental rejection results in intense anxiety and hostility in the adolescent, which the young person attempts to reduce through stubbornness, negativity, antagonistic behaviour, aggression or avoidance, passivity, and apathy;
- *excessively demanding attitude*, a symptom which is trying to force the child to be closer to the ideal that the parents imagine, without accepting the child's developmental capacity. The young person is unable to meet the constantly growing requirements of the parents and, in consequence, is subjected to physical or psychological punishment. The frustration experienced due to the excessive requirements set forth by the parents generates defensive behaviour in the child, such as withdrawal, quarrelsomeness, and aggression. The development of traits such as lack of faith in one's own strength, submissiveness, inattention, problems with perseverance, and low resilience to stress;
- *excessively protective attitude*, manifested as the tendency to give the child special privileges, indulging in the child's whims, tolerating inappropriate behaviour, removing all obstacles and difficulties that the child might face. Overprotectiveness results in delays in the child's emotional and social maturity, dependence on others, passivity, a tendency to avoid problems, submissiveness or a tendency to engage in conflicts or terrorize those in their environment, entitlement, a dismissive attitude towards others, and quarrelsomeness;
- *inconsistent attitude*, in which the parents' attitude towards the child is prone to change, dependent on their mood, and personal issues connected with their life inside and outside of the family. They alternate between increased interest in the child and complete indifference to the child's behaviour. The lack of stability in the parents' behaviour leads to the neglect of the child's basic needs, in particular the need for close emotional bonds and the sense of security. The resulting frustration contributes to the disruption of the child's emotional and social development, manifested as increased aggression or withdrawal.

The presented analysis indicates that destructive coping mechanisms (aggression, avoidance, submission) displayed by adolescents in difficult social situations (in particular conflicts) are a consequence of inappropriate parental attitudes.

The adolescent's ability to cope with difficult social situations in a constructive way, which allows them to realize their goals despite the experienced emotional tension, is developed in different conditions. Research (Borecka-Biernat, 2006, p. 126; Januszewska, 2001, pp. 332–334; Minda, 2019, pp. 310–313; Russel et al., 2003, p. 74; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010, pp. 246–247; Wolfrand, Hempel and Miles, 2003, p. 521) suggests that the development of constructive mechanisms of coping with difficult social situations, including conflict, is facilitated by the following parental attitudes:

- *accepting the child* the way they are, including their appearance, personality, and cognitive abilities. The parent-child relationship is dominated by positive emotions, such as kindness, affection, and trust. In this environment, the child feels safe, displays a positive attitude towards other people, is not afraid to face difficulties, and is able to efficiently cope with various difficult situations;
- *mutual participation in activities*, such as various types or housework and entertainment. The child participates in discussions on daily problems, is given permission to voice their opinions, and contributes to the decision-making process, thus learning how to cooperate and independently accept commitments;
- *allowing the child independence*, within limits appropriate to their age. The young person is able to make their own decisions, providing they do not cross the commonly accepted cultural and ethical norms. This kind of environment facilitates the development of creativity, individuality, the motivation to overcome obstacles, and the ability to quickly adapt to various situations;
- *respecting the child's rights* connected with their developmental needs and acknowledging their right to autonomy. The parents display a respectful attitude towards the child's individuality, which encourages the child to show initiative.

M. Ziemska (2009, pp. 54–65) includes these behaviours in the category of appropriate parental attitudes which contribute to the development of constructive mechanisms of coping in difficult social situations in the adolescent child, which, in turn, benefit the child's ability to overcome difficulties and reach their goals.

The process of formation of a particular pattern of behaviour in difficult situations is significantly influenced not only by what creates the conditions in which the individual gathers and organizes their experiences, but also by the available models of coping with obstacles. Numerous social behaviours and cop-

ing mechanisms are acquired by the child in the process of copying the parents' behaviour. The parents are in the majority of cases the original models who help them learn through observation (Bandura, 2007, pp. 37–40). Daily interpersonal exchanges between the adults in the family constitute the child's very first model of social interactions. The parents' behaviour towards each other in various situations, in particular in conflict, is carefully observed and, subsequently, emulated by the child. Young people learn how to solve conflicts by observing their parents. It is worth adding that - due to occurrence early in the child's life and the extended duration of their influence - the behavioural patterns displayed by the parents are the ones that leave the deepest mark on the child's consciousness and behaviour.

The impact of the parents as – in most cases unconscious – role models is not always beneficial for the child. Frequently, it is unfavourable to the child's development and leads to establishing problematic behaviours, such as aggression, submission, or avoidance and withdrawal from the social situation. Numerous experiments on modelling have been conducted in connection with the problem of aggression (Wojciszke, 2007, p. 147). Studies have shown that the majority of aggressive children have one or both parents who display similar behaviours (Bryłka, 2000, pp. 47–50; Cywińska, 2008, pp. 161–170; Lewandowska, 2000, pp. 20–24; Lopez et al., 2006, p. 387; Rostowska, 1996, pp. 177–186). The aggressive patterns of behaviour are mainly observed by the child in the parents' behaviour in situations that threaten the realization of their goals and ambitions. Aggressive coping mechanisms in children's conflicts are a reflection of the negative role of family conflicts. Frequent arguments, aggressive language, name-calling, physical fights, damaging or throwing objects and slamming doors are behaviours that the child adopts and begins to display them not only in conflicts with the parents and siblings, but also at school, in arrogant attitude towards the teachers and aggression towards peers; the young person learns to solve conflicts with violence, especially when they notice that it yields positive results (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2012, p. 510; Schaffer, 2006, pp. 318–319; Zimbardo and Gerrig, 2012, p. 588). There is no doubt that children who observe the parents' aggressive behaviour adopt their model of coping with conflicts.

The outcomes of the process of learning social behaviours and emulating the mechanisms applied by the parents include ways of reacting in difficult situations, focused on resigning from the realization of one's aspirations due to the experienced difficulties and withdrawing from the challenging situation. Abandoning one's goals, lack of assertiveness in defending one's position, withdrawing from interactions with others, and avoiding activities that require those interactions constitute an inertial form of shyness (Tyszkowa, 1986). Modelling

has significant impact on the development of shyness in children. The strongest influence is that of the family – shy children tend to have shy parents (Bandelow, 2011, pp. 42–44). A child copies the behaviour of parents who experience difficulties in social interactions; this is particularly true when the child identifies with the parents. Research (Harwas-Napierała, 1995, pp. 23–29; Zimbardo, 2011, pp. 81–84) shows that adolescents' tendency to withdraw and avoid social interactions, as well as lack of success in those interactions is a learnt behaviour, acquired through observation and frequent contact with individuals from the child's environment who display similar tendencies; in practice, this means that in most cases, the child's parents are the models of this behaviour.

The development of constructive forms of reacting to difficulties is significantly influenced by the patterns of appropriate reactions to obstacles, such as perseverance in overcoming them and enduring emotional tension. In situations which hinder their ability to reach their goals, children behave in ways that they had learnt from their caretakers in similar situations. If the previously observed reactions were constructive, they will be reflected when the child reacts in problematic circumstances. In unfavourable circumstances, these children prefer the rational strategy of analysing the situation again and making another effort oriented towards solving the problem independently. The social activity of the parents and their lack of inhibitions in social situations facilitates the development of appropriate patterns of reacting in difficult situations (Barani and Szmigielska, 2012, pp. 87–92; Borecka-Biernat, 2006, pp. 156–157; Liberska, 2002, pp. 50–52; Rostowska, 1997, pp. 393–396).

To summarize, the family is the sphere which provides the model from which children learn to react to difficult situations containing an element of threat to the realization of their aspirations or goals. It is within the family environment that the behaviour displayed by a significant figure – usually a parent – is easily adopted by the child. There is basis for the conclusion that destructive strategies (aggression, avoidance, and submission) and constructive strategies (task-oriented) in children in situations of social conflict are learnt reactions, acquired through observation and frequent interaction with individuals displaying these behaviours – that is, as a result of the influence of the models, most frequently the parents.

3. Research problem

The aim of the empirical studies was to find the answer to the following research questions:

1. Which collection of family-related variables is connected with the increase of the destructive strategies (aggression, avoidance, submission) in some adolescents in situations of social conflict, while in others, a tendency towards constructive strategies (task-oriented) is observed?

The research question allows to formulate the following hypothesis which will be verified through an analysis of the results of the conducted empirical research:

H.1. Destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) coping strategies in situations of social conflict in youth co-occurs with the perception of the parental attitudes as inappropriate as well as one or both parents' tendency to display destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) coping strategy in situations of social conflict. Constructive (task-oriented) coping strategies in youth in situations of conflict are connected with young people's perception of the parents' attitudes as appropriate and co-occur with the constructive (task-oriented) strategy applied by one or both parents in situations of social conflict.

4. Method

4.1. Participants of the study

The studied sample consisted of 468 girls and 425 boys within the age range of 13 to 15. Overall, the study was conducted on 893 participants who were students of the first, second, and third year of the middle school. The participating schools were selected randomly. Not all schools that were contacted expressed interest in participation; for this reason, several other school, outside of the initially selected pool, were later contacted. The questionnaires were distributed and completed by the students during the form period. The study was collective and the participation was voluntary. The students signed the questionnaires with their initials or nicknames. Detailed instructions were given before the questionnaires were distributed and all participants obtained their parents' permission to participate in the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the current standards of psychological research.

The basic criterion of selection of the participants was age. The impact of age on the choice of the coping strategy in situations of social conflict was analysed in the group of participants aged 13 to 15 (early adolescence). Adolescence is a period of behavioural instability, conflicts with other people in the young person's environment, conflict with oneself, and frequently experienced sense of being misunderstood. Numerous biological, psychological, mental, motiva-

tional, and social changes occur during this time, as a result of which young people frequently find it difficult to adapt to new situations as well as the tasks and social roles which they are given (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2015, pp. 125–127). Young people between the age of 13 and 15 appear to be an appropriate subject for research on destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) and constructive (task-oriented) coping strategies in circumstances of intense emotional distress, such as social conflict.

4.2. Tools

In order to obtain the answer to the formulated research question, the following tools have been applied:

The Parental Attitudes Scale (Skala Postaw Rodzicielskich, SPR) designed by M. Plopa (2015), used to study parental attitudes as perceived by children; it comprises 75 statements, in separate versions for the mother and the father. The participant responds to each statement by choosing one of four possible answers: "true", "mostly true", "difficult to say", "mostly untrue", and "not true" (corresponding to 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 point, respectively). The questionnaire contains 5 scales, each of which consists of 15 statements. These include the following: Acceptance/Rejection Attitude, Autonomy Attitude, Protective Attitude, Demanding Attitude, and Inconsistent Attitude. The Questionnaire is a standardized tool. The internal reliability of the Questionnaire's scales was estimated by calculating the internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha). The reliability coefficient was from 0.81 to 0.92 for "My mother" and between 0.79 and 0.91 for "My father". A high degree of construct validity was confirmed for this tool on the basis of the method of analysis of the internal structure of the test as well as the method of studying the differences between the groups and predictive validity. Standards have been established using sten scores for girls and boys aged 13 to 19. The results expressed in the sten scores are interpreted as the degree in which an individual manifests a given attitude.

The Questionnaire for Coping Strategies in Parents in Situations of Social Conflict (Kwestionariusz strategii radzenia sobie rodziców w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego, KSRwSK) by D. Borecka-Biernat (2013) consists of two versions: "My Mother" and "My Father". It studies coping strategies applied by parents in situations of social conflict as perceived by their adolescent children. The tool contains 16 descriptions of situations of social conflict in both versions ("My Mother" and "My Father"). Each situation presents four types of behaviour expressing the parents' coping strategies in situations of social conflict as perceived by their children, including aggressive strategies ("A"), avoidant

strategies ("AV"), submissive strategies ("S"), and "task-oriented strategies" ("T"). Each of four possible responses has been assigned a figure (0 to 1). The sum of the collected points indicates the frequency with which the particular strategy is applied. The higher the figure, the more the parents are perceived as likely to choose a specific strategy. The Questionnaire is characterized by sufficient reliability (measured by Cronbach's alpha). The coefficient of internal reliability is high both for "My Mother" and "My Father", both for the scale of aggressive coping mechanisms in parents in situations of social conflict as perceived by the child ("A"; 0.71 for "My mother" and 0.71 for "My father") and for the scale of task-oriented coping mechanisms in parents in situations of social conflict as perceived by the child ("T"; 0.71 for "My mother" and 0.71 for "My father"). The reliability of the scale of avoidant coping strategies in parents in situations of social conflict as perceived by the child ("A"; "My mother": 0.66, "My father": 0.66) as well as the scale of submissive coping strategies in parents in situations of social conflict as perceived by the child ("S"; "My mother": 0.65, "My father": 0.65) is slightly below the value of 0.70, but it can be considered sufficient for research purposes. The Questionnaire is characterized by sufficient diagnostic validity.

The questionnaire for coping mechanisms in youth in situations of social conflict (Kwestionariusz do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego, KSMK) designed by D. Borecka-Biernat (2012) has been designed to study coping strategies applied by adolescents in situations of social conflict. It consists of 33 descriptions of situations of social conflict, each of which is accompanied by descriptions of the following coping behaviours: aggressive strategy ("A"), avoidant strategy ("AV"), submissive strategy ("S"), and task-oriented strategy ("T"). The results are obtained separately for each scale after summing the behaviours marked by the participant in the 33 listed situations. Since the scales consist of 33 items, the participants can obtain from 0 to 33 points. The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the scales range from $\alpha = 0.73$ (for "Aggression", "Avoidance", "Task-Oriented") to $\alpha = 0.694$ ("Avoidance"). The questionnaire is characterized by sufficient diagnostic validity; the design of the questionnaire does not facilitate the effect of social desirability bias. The norms were established on the basis of the results obtained from 1877 participants, including 975 girls and 902 boys aged 13 to 15 from the first, second, and third years of the middle school, from all provinces in Poland.

5. Results

In order to determine which collection of variables predicts the level of the destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) and constructive (task-oriented) coping strategies in situations of social conflict in youth, hierarchical regression using the method of backward stepwise regression (criterion: probability of F for removal ≥ 0.100). The method involves introducing all potential predictors into the model and then gradually eliminating the insignificant variables; next, the model is calculated again until the final version of the model is obtained (Bedyńska and Książek, 2012, pp. 49–55). This method allows to determine the size and direction of the influence of particular independent variables on the dependent variable. The following results from the four scales of KSMK were the dependent variable in the present study: aggressive coping in situations of social conflict ("A"), avoidant coping in situations of social conflict ("Av"), submissive coping in situations of social conflict ("S"), and task-oriented coping in situations of social conflict ("T"). The results from the five scales of the SPR questionnaire (versions "My mother" and "My father"; the attitude of acceptance/rejection, autonomy, protective, demanding, and inconsistent) and the results from the four scales of the SRwSK questionnaire (versions "My mother" and "My father": aggressive coping in situations of social conflict ("A"), avoidant coping in situations of social conflict ("Av"), submissive coping in situations of social conflict ("S"), and task-oriented coping in situations of social conflict ("T") were the independent variables. The results were presented in Table 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1. Stepwise multiple regression for the results on scale Aggression ("A") of KSMK in relation to the scales of SPR and SRwSK, versions "My mother" and "My father": results for the entire sample (N = 893)

Studied sample	Variable	Beta	B	Statistical error B	t	Level p<
Overall	Acceptance-rejection attitude in the mother	−.14	−.06	.01	−4.35	.00002
	Inconsistent attitude in the mother	.07	.03	.01	2.32	.02
	"A" mother	.38	.76	.06	11.99	.000000
	"A" father	.16	.31	.06	5.25	.000000
	Constant term		4.74	1.07	4.41	.00001

Coefficient of multiple correlation: R = .54
Coefficient of multiple determination: R^2 = .29
Significance of the equation: $F_{(4,888)}$ = 91.87; p<.0000
Estimation error: 3.92

As can be seen in Table 1, stepwise regression analysis has shown that, out of twelve independent variables introduced into the model, four had significance in explaining the aggressive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict. The remaining variables included in the study were insignificant as determinants of the aggressive strategy in youth. The calculations suggest that an important role determining the aggressive strategy in youth in situations of social conflict is played by the attitude of acceptance-rejection in the mother (β = -.14; p = .00002), inconsistent attitude in the mother (β = .07; p = .02), and the father (β = .16; p = .00001) in situations of social conflict. The coefficient of multiple correlation is R = .54 and indicates that a linear relationship between the aggressive coping strategy in adolescents in situations of social conflict and the overall influence of the included variables is moderate. The coefficient of multiple determination reveals that 29% of the variation of the aggressive coping mechanisms in youth in situations of social conflict have been explained by the influence of the variables included in the calculation [R^2 = .29; $F_{(4,888)}$ = 91.87; p<.0000]. The Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the maternal attitude characterized by emotional coldness, disapproval, hostility, rejection, and of the inconsistent attitude in the mother, as well as of the aggressive strategy in the mother and father in situations of social conflict, the higher the level of aggressive strategy in youth in situations of social conflict.

The model of multiple regression for the avoidant coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict as the dependent variable is presented in Table 2.

Table. 2. Stepwise multiple regression for the results on the scale Avoidance ("Av") KSMK in relation to the scales of SPR and SRwSK, versions "My mother" and "My father". Results for the entire sample (N = 893)

Studied sample	Variable	Beta	B	Statistical error B	t	Level p<
Overall	Demanding attitude in the mother	.15	.04	.009	4.62	.000004
	Autonomy attitude in the father	−.13	−.04	.01	−4.14	.00004
	Protective attitude in the father	−.08	−.03	.01	−2.62	.009
	"Av" mother	.31	.57	.06	9.83	.000000
	Constant term		4.68	.81	5.75	.000000

Coefficient of multiple correlation: R = .41
Coefficient of multiple determination: R^2 = .17
Significance of the equation: $F_{(4,888)}$ = 43.80; p<.0000
Estimation error: 3.17

The results indicate that the following have significant influence on the avoidant strategy in youth in situations of social conflict: the demanding attitude in the mother has (β = .15; p = .000004), the autonomy attitude in the father (β = -.13; p = .00004), protective attitude in the father (β = -.08; p = .009), and the avoidant attitude in the mother (β = .30; p = .000000). The coefficient of multiple correlation is R = .41 and indicates that the linear relationship between the avoidant strategy in youth in situations of social conflict and the overall influence of the variables introduced in the model is moderate. The dependent variable for the avoidant strategy in youth in situations of social conflict is 17% [R^2 = .17; $F_{(4,888)}$ = 43.80; p<.0000]. The remaining independent variables included in the study were insignificant determinants of the avoidant strategy in situations of social conflict in youth. Beta values indicate that the higher the level of the demanding attitude in the mother, the lower the level of the autonomy attitude in the father, and the lower the desired level of the protective attitude in the father, and the higher the level of the avoidant strategy in the mother in situations of social conflict, the higher the level of the strategy of avoidant coping in youth in situations of social conflict.

Further analyses show that the dependent variable was the submissive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict. The model of multiple regression for the submissive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict as the dependent variable is presented in Table 3.

Tab. 3. Stepwise multiple regression for the results on the scale Submission ("S") KSMK in relation to the scales of SPR and SRwSK in versions "My mother" and "My father". Results for the entire sample (N = 893)

Studied sample	Variable	Beta	B	Statistical error B	t	Level p<
Overall	Inconsistent attitude in the mother	−.15	−.05	.01	−4.54	.000006
	Protective attitude in the father	.14	.06	.02	4.27	.00002
	"S" mother	.18	.42	.07	5.64	.000000
	"S" father	.08	.21	.08	2.58	.01
	Constant term		4.19	.84	4.97	.000001
Coefficient of multiple correlation: R = .29 Coefficient of multiple determination: R^2 = .08 Significance of the equation: $F_{(4,888)}$ = 19.68; p<.00000 Estimation error: 4.30						

The results show that the inconsistent attitude in the mother (β = -.15; p = .000006), protective attitude in the father (β = .14; p = .00002), as well as the

submissive attitude in the mother (β = .18; p = .000000) and the father (β = .08; p = .01) in situations of social conflict have significant impact on the development of the submissive strategy in youth in situations of social conflict. The coefficient of multiple correlation is R = .29 and indicates that the linear relationship between the submissive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict and the overall influence of the variables included in the model is low. The explained variance for the submissive strategy in youth in situations of social conflict is 8% [R^2 = .08; F(4,888) = 19.68; p<.00000]. The remaining independent variables included in the study were insignificant indicators of the submissive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict. Beta values indicate that the lower the desired level of the inconsistent attitude in the mother, the higher the level of the protective attitude in the father, and the higher the level of the submissive strategy in the mother and father in situations of social conflict, the higher the level of the submissive coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict.

The model of multiple regression for the task-oriented coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict as the dependent variable is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression for the results on the scale Task-Oriented "T" KSMK in relation to SPR and SRwSK in versions "My mother" and "My father". Results for the whole sample (N = 893).

Studied sample	Variable	Beta	B	Statistical error B	t	Level p<
Overall	Demanding attitude in the mother	−.11	−.06	.02	−3.74	.0002
	Autonomy attitude in the father	.09	.05	.02	3.00	.003
	"T" mother	.35	.69	.06	10.86	
	"T" father	.09	.20	.07	2.83	.005
	Constant term		9.20	1.34	6.89	.000000
Coefficient of multiple correlation: R = .47 Coefficient of multiple determination: R^2 = .22 Significance of the equation: F(4,888) = 62.31; p<.0000 Estimation error: 5.73						

The determinants of the task-oriented strategy in situations of social conflict in youth are the demanding attitude in the mother (β = -.11; p = .0002), the autonomy attitude in the father (β = .09; p = .003), and the task-oriented strategy in the mother (β = .35; p = .000000) and the father (β = .09; p = .005) in situations

of social conflict. The remaining independent variables included in the study were insignificant determinants of the task-oriented coping strategy applied by youth in situations of social conflict. The multiple correlation coefficient is R = .47 and indicates that the linear relationship between the task-oriented coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict and the overall influence of the included variables is moderate. The multiple determination coefficient is R^2 = .22 and indicates that 22% of the dependent variance "task-oriented strategy" in the group of adolescents is explained by the impact of the collection of independent variables included in the study [$F_{(4,888)}$ = 62.31; p<.0000]. Beta values indicate that the lower the desired level of the demanding attitude in the mother, the higher the level of the autonomy attitude in the father, and the higher the level of the task-oriented strategy in the mother and the father in situations of social conflict, the higher the level of task-oriented strategy in youth in situations of social conflict.

In the light of the conducted statistical verification, the hypothesis H.1 may be considered verified. It is worth noting that the selected family variables are not strong predictors of the coping strategy (aggression, avoidance, submission, task-oriented) in youth in situation of social conflict, as suggested by the result R^2 = .08-.29. This means that there might exist a relatively high number of other variables which co-determine the level of destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) and constructive (task-oriented) coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict.

6. Discussion

An analysis of the results of the study has revealed that the mother of an adolescent who applies the aggressive strategy in conflict is, in the adolescent's perception, emotionally cold, hostile, does not provide emotional warmth, does not fulfil the adolescent's emotional needs, is not attuned to her child's needs and aspirations and does not take them into consideration in the process of making parenting-related decisions. This environment does not provide the adolescent with appropriate conditions to meet their need for affiliation, acknowledgment, and security in the family and to develop constructive ways of functioning in social interactions; they may, instead, choose aggression to cope in situations of social conflict. It must be emphasized that the need for love, independence, and security are basic psychological needs. This confirms the conclusion drawn by many researchers who stress the significance of the impact of emotional bonds and the atmosphere in the family (analysed as the emotional aspect of the

parental attitude) on the children. An increased tendency to display the aggressive strategy in adolescents in situations of social conflict is directly related to the degree of frustration of the child's emotional needs (love, independence, security) (Bares et al., 2011, p. 227; Batool, 2013, p. 217; Poraj, 2002, p. 46; Pufal-Struzik, 2008, pp. 141–149; Wolińska, 2000, p. 122). It appears, therefore, that young people who, in their ontogenetic development, do not experience open, warm relationship with their parent, are unable to behave rationally in interpersonal relationships, in particular in situations of social conflict, and prefer aggressive coping mechanisms.

Another aspect worth attention is the lack of stability in the mother's behaviour towards the adolescent child. Excessive emotional distance and hostility are combined with attempts to establish an emotional rapport with the child (inconsistent attitude). This behaviour reveals an imbalance in the emotional relationship of the mother with the child and does not facilitate the development of mechanisms of emotional control in the child, which may result in the child's tendency to express emotions and needs through aggression in situations of social conflict. One may suspect that the experience of emotional instability in the relationship with the parent constitutes a strong frustrating factor which causes an increased level of aggression and hostility in youth in situations of social conflict (Łukaszewicz, 2002, pp. 14–16).

The analysis has also revealed that the parents perceived as prone to choose aggression-based strategies in situations that hinder reaching their goals act as models of aggressive strategy in situations of social conflict. The adolescent learns aggressive patterns of reacting in conflict through the observation of the behaviour of their parents' in situations in which the realization of their aspirations is threatened. This tendency appears consistent with A. Bandura's conclusion (1973) that "aggressive children come from aggressive families". The same author asserts that the susceptibility to the model's behaviour depends on the observed outcomes of that behaviour. If the model's aggression is rewarded, the observer's aggression increases, too. It appears to suggest that adolescents adopt aggressive mechanisms from their family environment and treat them as efficient means of solving problems, reaching goals, or coping with conflict (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2012, p. 510; Rostowska, 1996, pp. 177–186; Wojcieszke, 2007, p. 155).

An analysis of the collected research material has revealed that mothers and fathers of young people who apply the avoidant strategy are perceived by their children as dominating and controlling people who want them to comply with their own expectations and requirements. Their requirements of their children are excessive, they try to change the child's behaviour, expect high educational

achievements, interfere in their problems and other activities. They consider themselves the final authority in all matters. The expect complete obedience and do not tolerate criticism and objection. They only accept the child's achievements if they are consistent with their views and expectations. This attitude is incompatible with the need for affiliation, autonomy, independence, and cooperation. If the adolescent is unable to resist the parental control, then their continuous dissatisfaction and criticism lead to the decrease of the young person's initative and increase their tendency to become passive and withdraw from situation that require engagement (Januszewska, 2001, pp. 337–339). Thus, it does appear that the parental attitude characterized by establishing numerous rules and expectations that the adolescent must follow, accompanied by regular criticism and dissatisfaction and prohibiting the adolescent's own initiative have significant impact on the development of the avoidant coping strategy in situations of social conflict in young people.

The study reveals another observation that is worth attention: the mother is the figure who provides the adolescent with unique coping patterns in situations of conflict. The young person learns these patterns by observing the mother's behaviour in circumstances which threaten the realization of her aspirations. This might suggest that the adolescent's tendency to withdraw from situations of social conflict is a learnt behaviour that emerges as a result of observation and frequent interaction with the mother who displays similar behaviour in conflict – that is, as a result of copying the behaviour of the mother, who acts as the model (Borecka-Biernat, 2006, pp. 290–291; Harwas-Napierała, 1995, pp. 23–29; Zimbardo, 2011, pp. 81–83).

The analysis has revealed that the submissive strategy in youth in situations of social conflict is rooted in protective attitude in the father who treats the adolescent as a person who requires constant care and protection. He tries to stop the child from independently engaging in activities that ensure the fulfilment of their needs and aspirations. The father does not approve of the child's attempts at solving their own problems and tries to impose his own opinions on the child. Being sheltered by the father may result in inhibitions in the development of independence in the adolescent and reinforce their sense of being dependent on the parental care. According to J. Reykowski and A. Frączek (1963, pp. 11–14), behaviours characteristic of individuals with a high sense of dependence include avoiding conflict, withdrawing from difficult situations, submissive attitude towards stronger individuals, adjusting one's opinions to accomodate those of others' and a general submissive attitude. It can be suspected that the father's excessive involvement in all the adolescent's problems, limiting their activities, reinforcing their sense of dependence and the tendency to seek

help or support in others facilitates the development of the submissive coping strategy in situations of conflict (Januszewska, 2001, pp. 336–337; Plopa, 2015, p. 303; Węgłowska-Rzepa, 2010, p. 252).

An analysis of the collected research material has also revealed that the development of the submissive coping strategy in situations where the adolescent's aspirations become incompatible with those of others' is significantly facilitated by the perceived parental strategy of submission in situations of social conflict. As it can be seen, the similarity between strategies applied in situations of social conflict by the parents and the children indicates that the young person's acquisition of the strategy of submission through observation of the mother and father and copying their behaviour. These results are consistent with those obtained by H. Liberska (2002, p. 52), who observed that adolescents who strongly identify with their parents, who function as models, are prone to depreciate the value of their own goals and abandon their realization.

An analysis of the results of the study has revealed that the conditions that facilitate the development of the task-oriented strategy in youth in situations of social conflict include support received by the adolescent from the father when major decisions need to be made, accompanied by autonomy and freedom of initiative and activity. By avoiding excessively interfering with the child's development, the father encourages the young person to become independent, accept responsibility for their own actions, and to learn task-oriented approach to difficulties; he also expresses approval of the child's attempts to independently solve their problems in situations where their aspirations do not match those of others. As can be seen, respecting the child's rights allows them to develop the task-oriented strategy that is an efficient tool in coping with situations of conflict (Bhattacharyya and Pradhan, 2015, pp. 183–189; Borecka-Bienat, 2006, pp. 270–271; Januszewska, 2001, pp. 332–334; Klink, Byars-Winston and Bakken 2008, p. 572; Wolfrand, Hempel and Miles, 2003, p. 521).

The conducted study shows, additionally, that the emergence of the task-oriented strategy in youth is significantly influenced by the task-oriented strategy applied by the parents in situations of social conflict. The similarity between the strategies chosen by the parents and the children in situations of conflict indicates that the task-oriented strategy is acquired by the adolescents through observation and copying the behaviour of the parents. It is evident that young people in situations which hinder their ability to reach their goals display behaviours that they had learnt from their parents in similar situations. If the reactions observed by the adolescents were task-oriented, they will usually apply similar mechanisms (Borecka-Biernat, 2006, pp. 291–292; Liberska, 2002, pp. 52–53; Rostowska, 1997, pp. 396–398).

To conclude, the conducted study has revealed that the family indicators of the destructive (aggressive, avoidant, submissive) and constructive (task-oriented) coping mechanisms in adolescents who experience emotional tension during situations of social conflict are influenced by both appropriate or inappropriate parental attitudes towards the adolescent as well as destructive and constructive coping patterns in situations of social conflict provided to the young person by the parents.

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