AGGRESSION IN OPINION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:
Aggression among children and adolescents is not a new phenomenon. Recently conducted research and observations suggest that the manifestations of aggression take more drastic forms, while at the same time, the age of the perpetrators of aggressive behavior decreases. There are many causes of aggression, you can find them in the family, peer environment and in the media. This article is an attempt to present the opinion of primary school students on the phenomenon of violence in their schools. For this purpose, diagnostic survey method was used (technique surveys), the study was conducted in a group of 120 primary school students (classes IV - VI). The results that were obtained allowed to answer the research questions posed earlier, which included, inter alia: a subjective sense of safety among the surveyed students, the types of aggression first noticed at school, their response in dangerous situations and pedagogical staff reaction to the aggressive behavior of students.

Key words:
Aggression, violence, safety

Introduction
The increasingly aggressive behaviour of students is a subject of empirical research and theoretical considerations of psychologists, sociologists and educators. The purpose of these actions is to seek effective programme solutions that could be implemented in the projects of prevention and intervention.
Defining the term "aggression" is a fairly complex task. Such terms as hostility, aggressiveness, violence and destructiveness are identified with this concept. All these concepts are used to identify trends or tendencies to active or verbal behaviour directed against someone or something. Some people think that the term aggression can be used only if such tendency is endowed with the intention of damaging someone or something. Others view aggression regardless of whether a given person aims to harm or hurt anyone or their purpose is to cause damage; finally, if their aggressive behaviour serves as a tool to achieve other aims. (J. Grochulska 1993 p. 8)
Nowadays there are a lot of definitions and all of them assume that aggression is to be understood as any intentional action which seeks to inflict harm to someone, cause physical pain and moral suffering; in other words, aggression is a deliberate action with a view to causing someone harm, which cannot be justified.
An example of such an approach is the definition by W. Szewczuk, who recognizes aggression as "any action (physical or verbal), whose goal is to inflict psychological or physical harm, real or symbolic to a person or something that replaces it (W. Szewczuk in: M Libiszewska, Żółkowska, 2008 p.7 )
On the grounds of psychology, "aggression or interpersonal violence is defined as actions taken intentionally by humans (e.g. specific behaviour, arranging certain situations, etc.), posing a threat or causing harm to the physical, mental and social
well-being of other persons, i.e. causing pain, suffering, destruction, leading to the loss of cherished values." (A. Frączek, I. Pufal 1996 p.28)

Differentiating between the notions of aggression and violence among adolescents, A. Brzezińska claims that "... aggression in children and adolescents will be encountered when they express their anger, rebellion, hostility, frustration or the desire to destroy, thus inflicting harm (loss, pain) to persons or objects, and behaving in a manner that does not fit the rules and social norms. Violence, on the other hand, will address such situations in which a child or young person uses their advantage - strength, speed, agility or even age or sex - in order to obtain certain benefits. Colloquially, violence is associated with extreme cruelty and usually awakens disgust, revulsion, fear and even terror in observers." (A. Brzezińska, 2007 p. 108)

**Types of aggression**

The diversity of definitions of the notion of "aggression" is the cause of the diversity of its classification. Thus, J. Ranschburg considers aggression in three dimensions: according to the moral content of behaviour, according to the aggression inflicted, according to its character.

1. Aggression can be divided according to the moral content of behaviour:
   A. Social aggression – destructive, acting against the community
   B. Prosocial aggression - serves the interests of an individual and society

2. According to the aggression inflicted:
   A. Instrumental aggression – aggression is only a means to satisfy some other purpose, carry out some plans, intentions – an individual is aggressive when in this way their plans, intentions, goals can be carried out
   B. Affective aggression – has nothing to do with satisfying any needs; its sole purpose is aggressive behavior, infliction of harm or injury to someone - an individual is aggressive for internal motives, aggressive behavior is not related to any other benefits

3. According to its character:
   A. Offensive:
      - intraspecific aggression – such as the struggle between males of the same species - this type of aggression includes offensive aggression
      - interspecific aggression - otherwise known as plundering e.g. hunting to get food or attack in order to defend the young - it is a defensive aggression
   B. Defensive:
      - a male’s aggression on its territory
      - a female’s aggression in defence of its youth
      - aggression in self-defence (J. Ranschburg, 1996, pp. 95 – 96)

Z. Skorny, in turn, distinguishes two types of aggression:

1. Physical aggression - manifested in hitting or beating someone, in damage or destruction done to public or private property
2. Verbal aggression - manifested in nicknames, insults, insinuations, allegations of unjustified suspicions or accusations, humiliating a given person and evoking the feeling of injury and/or wrong in them.

The author also distinguishes forms likely to be taken by aggression:

1. Direct aggression, which can be directed at persons who are the cause of the frustration experienced
2. Displaced aggression - aimed at people who have had nothing to do with the frustration suffered by an individual (Z. Skorny, 1987, p.92)
The quoted author also presents a division of aggression adopted in the psychological sciences; thus there are to be distinguished frustration, imitative, instrumental and pathological aggressions.

1. Frustration aggression sometimes results from a lock imposed on the affiliation need, which is a consequence of parents’ emotional coldness, their excessive severity as well as the use of corporal punishment; a lock imposed on the need for social recognition due to too frequent admonition, pointing out deficiencies, etc.; a lock imposed on the need of self-reliance which results from too many prohibitions and injunctions from adults, excessive restriction of independence of children and adolescents. The frustration aggression hypothesis put forward by J. Dollard asserts that “every frustration always leads to some form of aggression”.

2. Imitative aggression - a result of an involuntary imitation of models of aggressive behaviour, which a person comes into contact with in their surroundings; the role-model is sometimes the behaviour of parents, colleagues, neighbours, but it may also be films, computer games, etc.

3. Instrumental aggression - its motif can be found in specified objectives of an action - aggression plays the role of an instrument to achieve the objective; its cause may be found in an incorrectly configured hierarchy of values or in a belief in one’s superiority or special privileges (e.g. a boy extracting money from other children by force, threatening them with beating-up, and, in the event of finding his command unfulfilled, realizing his threats. If this action succeeds several times, it will become fixed).

4. Pathological aggression - according to K. Dabrowski, the pathology undertow of aggression can be detected in:
   - children with psychomotor hyperactivity (neurotic children)
   - epileptics – before seizure some children exhibit increased emotional excitability, may be malicious and vexatious
   - schizophrenics – there are uncontrollable fits, such people attack others in their vicinity or destroying various objects
   - oligophrenics - increased psychomotor hyperactivity can be seen in them
   - psychopaths – who are unable to experience feelings of kindness and sympathy towards other people. (Z. Skorny 1987 pp.210 – 220)

Causes of aggression
There are many theoretical solutions related to the origin and mechanism of the course of aggressive behavior. Biological factors can be indicated among the causes contributing to the occurrence of aggression. These mostly include the neurological and chemical imbalance of the body. An important role can be played by a factor associated with the temperament of the child. Overactive children are fidgety, react quickly, are more likely to produce and perpetuate aggressive reaction patterns than children of low level of reactivity. It should be noted, however, that factors related to the temperament of the child are of secondary importance for the occurrence of aggressive behavior patterns. (J. Kołodziejczyk, 2004, p.10)

Family is a key area wherein the process of socialization of children takes place. It is a fundamental cell of life in society (Alejziak 2008, p.55). It has a profound effect on a child from the moment of birth, therefore, it is a specific place to gain experience before the actual entry into social life. Thus (Alejziak 2008, p. 99) in the opinion of many scholars, it is often parents who are to blame for their children's negative behavior. The absence of the father, marital discord, depressive mother, annoying parents,
unfavorable economic conditions of the family, numerous family are among the factors responsible for children's aggressive behavior (Wolf in: Kołodziejczyk, 2004, p.11). An interesting perspective on problems concerning communication in the family between adolescents and their parents is shown by Ocetkiewicz on the basis of the Dutch research (Ocetkiewicz, 1999, p.91). As a result of data analysis, Ocetkiewicz cites the conclusions of scientists from the Netherlands which pertain to the fact that parents' professional job-related experience penetrate into and affect the family environment. Some of the factors that may contribute to the aggressive behavior of children may also be a result of their aggression. Having an aggressive, difficult child may be a sufficient reason for the parents to grow irritable. (Kołodziejczyk, 2004, p.11).

In poorly functioning families there may be a tendency for children to be neglected by parents. This can cause feelings of inferiority and a lower self-esteem. In order to compensate for the unpleasant emotions, a child seeks respect for him/herself by dominating mostly younger and weaker children.

According to Danilewska J. (2002, pp.38, 39), the reasons for the aggression inherent in the family include parental punishment, i.e. prohibitions, orders, use of threats and shouting, as well as corporal punishment, which includes abuse and beatings.

Another reason is indicated by J.M. Wolińska (2004, p.58) - it is disruption of the parent-child interaction. The sooner such interference takes place, the more traumatic they will be, and in this manner the principle of the general negativity is introduced in their mutual relations. Such disturbances include: lack of eye contact, touch, little sensitivity to the needs of the child, low tolerance for their child crying, and strict discipline. Yet another reason is the fear and the feeling of abandonment, which causes a sense of emotional rejection and violates the child's sense of security. In order to reduce it, the child behaves in such a way as to focus the attention of a parent on him/herself.

Attention is in fact synonymous with the love of the people that we love. (J. Danilewska 1992, p.31). An important factor causing aggression in children is the school environment, and in it - factors associated with the school as an institution (the number of students in the classroom, the organizational structure of the school, inadequate control of the students, and others), psychological factors (lack of clear rules of school life, inability to cope with stress and conflict situations), "bad relationships, teacher-student, student-student."

School violence and uncontrolled aggression among students in schools is widely dwelt upon by Ocetkiewicz (Ocetkiewicz, 2008, p.18), who points at the difficult stage of education which is middle school. According to the author, attention must be paid to the number of students in middle school classrooms. Violence in the media is another cause of aggressive behavior in children and adolescents, indicated by psychologists. Children who are not able to relate themselves critically to the content shown in the media, may be particularly vulnerable to manipulation from unscrupulous developers. Violence in the media affects the aggressive tendencies of young viewers, especially if the violence appears as something that ensures the success or does not lead to punishment, or does not cause pain or injury. B. Krahe (2005, pp. 114 - 115) concludes that exposure to violence in the media can lead to long-term aggressive tendencies.

With reference to the research by M. Olejniczak and J. Danilewska (2002, p 52) it can be stated that in the Polish primary schools the most frequently observed manifestations of aggression among students include: beatings and fights, daunting, extracting by force, destruction others things, the destruction of school equipment, encouraging the beatings, extortion, beatings younger colleagues. Verbal aggression, in turn, expressed in threatening beating, harassing statements, verbal assault,
intimidation, stripping, threats, calling names, cursing, vulgar taunts, ridicule is arguing, complaint threats.

In Polish schools more and more disturbing behavior can be observed which would have been unimaginable even a few years ago. Many teachers feel helpless in such situations and the parents of these children often suffer from a profound crisis.

Tackling violence in school requires a large commitment on the part of teachers, students and parents, a proper flow of information, cooperation with the police and other institutions supporting school as well as designing and implementation of precautionary programmes that would prevent aggression and violence in school.

The method and results of the research
In carrying out the intended purpose – to get to know the opinion of primary school pupils about aggression - the following research questions were formulated:

- Do the pupils surveyed feel safe at school?
- Have the respondents witnessed or fallen victim to violence?
- In what areas at school do violence occurrences take place?
- Whom, of the teaching staff and other persons, do pupils endow with the greatest trust in an aggression menace situation?
- How do the pupils surveyed most frequently react to aggression menace situations?
- According to the pupils surveyed, what factors most often affect manifestations of aggressive behaviour?
- What ways to prevent violence in schools do the pupils surveyed offer?

For this purpose, the method of diagnostic survey (questionnaire) was used. The study was conducted in a group comprising 120 primary school pupils (forms IV – VI) from the urban environment (60 pupils; 30 girls and 30 boys) and from the rural environment (60 pupils; 30 girls and 30 boys). The group was selected in a targeted manner. The variables that were taken into consideration in the analysis of the test results were the sex of the pupils and the social environment in which they live.

Conclusions
Research and reflections presented in the article do not exhaust the whole issue concerning aggression in primary school pupils in urban and rural environments. An analysis of the results of the study allows the following conclusions to be drawn.

The social milieu of the pupils surveyed hardly differentiates their views on aggression at school:

- Aggression is quite a frequent phenomenon in primary schools – regardless of the social environment where the schools are located (75%)
- The most frequently encountered forms of aggression in both urban and rural milieus is verbal aggression (60%), which is expressed by means of insults, gossip (32%) and teasing (39%)
- Places where the aggressive behavior of children can be observed at its most frequent, are: among the students from the urban environment - the school building (62%); while among the group of students from the rural environment - the school sports field as well (47%).
- The school building - the most commonly observed aggressive behavior of pupils is in the school hallway (64%), where aggression is usually encountered during breaks between classes (91%).
School bullies are feared in the group of pupils both in the rural (20%) and urban areas (41%).

In a menacing situation, or when aggressive behavior has been observed, students from urban schools most frequently inform their parents (50%), whereas students from rural areas first discuss this phenomenon in a group of peers (50%), and only later with parents (45%).

Knowledge of institutions or organizations providing assistance to victims is not sufficient among students from urban and rural environments. It can, however, be noted that students from the city have more knowledge about aggression than their counterparts from the village. The institutions of trust most frequently mentioned in an emergency situation are: the police, the school counselor, the blue emergency line.

Reaction to the suffering of others is manifested in that students from the urban environment ask adults (42%) for help whereas pupils from the rural environment try to defend the wronged or the abused (53%).

The reason that is indicated by respondents from both communities is watching violence-packed movies (88%) and observing aggressive behavior in their peers (42%)

According to the respondents, for school to become a safer place, conversations with naughty pupils should be more frequent, aggressive behavior should be punished by more frequent lowering conduct grades, publicly condemning their behavior in front of the entire school (e.g. during an assembly).

The sex is a factor differentiating the views of the respondents on aggression at school:

- Both girls and boys are perpetrators and victims of violence, but it is boys who are more likely to admit to such behavior (36%)
- In urban schools girls feel safer (43%), while in rural areas it is boys who feel secure (68%)
- The most common form of aggression among boys is name-calling (50%), while with girls aggression is manifested in gossiping (school girls in town – 53%) or teasing (pupils in rural areas – 33%)
- All the pupil respondents note that aggressive behaviors in school are most common during breaks (80%) - usually in the school corridors (57%)
- It is more often boys than girls that perform the role of aggressors, which statement is shared by both schoolboys (54%) and schoolgirls (64%)
- The surveyed girls from urban schools (36%) have a greater knowledge than their friends from the village (4%) of the institutions and organizations where aggression menace can be reported. The boys' replies show a comparable knowledge on the subject (34%)

In the light of the case analysis conclusions can be drawn that can be included in educational practice:

1. It is very important that even the slightest manifestations of aggression among pupils in schools be observed and meticulously resolved by a teacher, a class master or another person from the teaching staff
2. Pedagogues, teachers, educators should build their authority and positive relationships with students so that the latter can report to them for help in case they encounter problems with aggression
3. Prevention of aggression in school should be intensified by the implementation of precautionary programs (talks, discussions on violence and aggression, its causes, effects as well as ways to solve problem situations - how to defend
oneself against aggression). It is also important, as B. Aleziak (2008, p. 33) suggests, the take full advantage of extracurricular activities such as school trips of interest, where in natural surroundings it is easier to shape appropriate attitudes and behaviors of young people by offering them exciting activities and ways of spending free time.

4. It can also be suggested that teachers and educators should deepen their knowledge on aggression as well as closely observe the behavior of pupils during breaks in the school corridors.

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