Aggression as a Challenge


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ISBN 978 3 631 65688 4
Format (B x L): 14,8 x 21 cm
Gewicht: 450 g

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Introduction

We live in a world of phenomena created by the human mind and experience. Some of these phenomena are conflict, aggression, aggressiveness and violence. They are seen as constructs of the mind, types of behaviour, particular experiences and emotional states, specific social interactions or even historical and political categories regarded as non-standard events (social movements, wars, angry social protests, etc.). Their ambiguity and complexity was not unnoticed by Camilla Pagani (2014, p. 100). Such a broad, imprecise understanding of these notions partly explains their overuse in the analysis and elucidation of social life. The alleged commonness and surface knowledge of the issues stem from the insufficient diversification of these terms, their improper understanding and, consequently, the often inadequate reactions to their symptoms. Despite the existence of the Seville Statements, recognised by UNESCO in 1986 as our heritage, there exist many areas of social life where the knowledge of the conditions and prophylactics of aggression, as well as good practice in this field, are ignored and omitted. These findings have been recently confirmed by the participants of the XXXVII CICA International Conference, Conflict and Aggression: Developmental and Social Conditions, held in Poland on the initiative of CICA, Kazimierz Wielki University and the University of Zielona Góra (June 21–25, 2014). During a debate entitled Aggression as a challenge for researchers, Lidia Cierpiałkowska, Hanna Liberska, Beata Pastwa-Wojciechowska, Zbigniew Izdebski and Marzanna Farnicka pointed out the difficulties in various spheres of science and social practice (education, medicine, administration, social service, social order, etc.) regarding the rudimentary issues, such as understanding accounts of aggression, aggression’s genesis and mechanisms, prophylactics and aggressors’ possibilities of resocialization. They also indicated the difficulties an aggression researcher has to face in the initial stages of forming the issue, such as a lack of social consent to explore some contents tackling violence and aggression in various environments. Further difficulties are connected with the creation of research procedures or therapeutic programmes or repair programmes. Their causes may be traced to ethical and ideological concerns as well as ignorance (insufficient knowledge among the so-called “general public” and/or “decision-makers” disregard of scientific knowledge), economic and political motives, or to their alleged low usefulness and lack of benefit (both financial and social).

From one perspective, we are surrounded by “common knowledge” about the nature of aggression, the origins of conflicts and methods of their solving. There
are numerous tokens of interest and understanding as well as social support for the significance of research on aggression and violence. There are a lot of renowned scientific and social organizations in the world such as CICA (Colloquio Internationale Cobre a Agresion), ISRA (International Society for Research on Aggression), STR (Society about Terrorism Research), Pro Ecpat (Society about Fighting Aggression Against Children), FNP (Nobody’s Children Fund). Groundbreaking findings of the scientists connected with CICA about the nature of aggression and violence have been recorded in the Seville Statement (as mentioned earlier). However, from another perspective, we often witness aggressive behaviour in interpersonal, even intimate, relations. They are based on certain patterns of solving conflicts handed down to the younger generation at home, at school, in the media and eventually often reinforced in adult life. Also advertising campaigns and public or political events indicate that knowledge of the conditions of aggression and the methods of limiting violence in social life are ignored or used in the interest of certain groups (e.g., terrorists).

The ways of forming the media transfer were pointed out by a famous researcher on terrorism – Alice Cicero. She indicated the characteristic features of a successful transfer aimed at adolescents by terrorist organizations (2014). The means they incorporate suggest their good orientation in the notions of aggression and violence. Their objective is to arouse feelings of helplessness in their audience. Specialists who understand the effectiveness of the media can only call for better education and more responsible global media and social policies. Many countries carry out research on the influence of media and their content on the shaping of social behaviour, including violence. They also run prophylactic programmes (often with the participation of media) intended to make the recipients sensitive to the conventionality of such content. Nevertheless, the speed of information spread throughout the web is so far unattainable. Therefore, chances are that the media transfer of aggression is soon going to define new “aggression” standards that regulate social life. There is much evidence of this fact, the harshest being the suicides committed by adolescents – the victims of peer violence in the form of publishing scenes of the rape of the victim on the Internet.

This publication aims to present the concepts of aggression, violence, their conditions in various periods of life and various environments. It is an attempt to join the global discussion on creating conditions and key points connected with the risk of pathologization of the personality and behaviour from an individual and social perspective.

The book has been divided into three sections. The first is introductory and contains the basic concepts connected with research on aggression and aggressiveness.
It provides the reader with a starting point for further analysis of the theoretical-empirical content of the following parts of the book. The second section embraces the issues of shaping aggression and aggressiveness in children and adolescents in their primary developmental environments, i.e., at school and in the family. The third part is devoted to the problems of aggression in the adult world. It includes the issues of aggressive behaviour disorders in people with borderline personality, aversive parenting and mobbing. This part also contains descriptions of the conditions of aggression in people in institutions. It also outlines the opportunities of institutional support for victims of violence.

The first part of the monograph contains two chapters. The authors of the first chapter entitled “Stages and Paths of Aggression Development – Knowledge that Awaits being Uncovered” are Hanna Liberska and Marzanna Farnicka. The authors undertake to explain the complexity of the issues and research on aggression with respect to renown and acknowledged scientific theories, as well as the latest findings of contemporary researchers. They outline the challenges every researcher faces to make the results of their studies answer the key questions concerning the paths of aggression development in a multidimensional world. The authors also present their own model of studying aggression from a developmental perspective, which may be interesting for other researchers, even outside of this field.

In the second chapter, “Patterns of Readiness for Interpersonal Aggression. A Cross-national Study on Sex Difference,” Adam Frączek, an eminent researcher of aggression, presents his own theory concerning the readiness for interpersonal aggression. This theory is grounded in the outcome of research he describes together with his associates Karolina Konopka and Monika Dominiak-Kochanek.

The second part of the monograph, Aggression: The World of Children and Adolescents, consists of nine chapters, each devoted to the forming of aggression and aggressiveness in the early stages of human life.

The opening chapter of this section, entitled “Students’ Aggressive Behavior at High School: A Comparison of Czech and Polish Samples” was co-authored by Simona Musilova and Janusz Trempała. The authors indicate the relationship between the content of particular prophylactic programmes in various educational systems and the understanding of aggression among adolescents and teachers. The researchers have observed their diversification in various cultural contexts.

In the fourth chapter entitled “Assuming the Roles of Aggressor and Victim by Lower Secondary School Youth. Research Report,” Hanna Liberska, Klaudia Boniecka and Tumendemberel Purev analyze the results of research on chosen conditions of assuming the roles of a victim or aggressor by middle school students.
The fifth chapter of this section, “Peer Sexual Abuse. Diagnosis of the Phenomenon, Perpetrators and their Therapy,” was written by Zbigniew Izdebski and Krzysztof Wąż. The authors analyze empirical data concerning sexual violence among teenagers. They point out the ethical difficulties related to studying this area.

The following chapter (Chapter 6), “Cyberbullying – The Need for Prevention in Schools,” written by Bassam Aouil, Maria Kajdasz-Aouil and Małgorzata Suprynowicz, deals with the global contact network, namely the Internet. The authors indicate the poor state of the research on the curricula and insufficient preventive actions within this area.

In chapter seven, “Family Correlates of Adolescents' Readiness to Assume the Role of Aggressor or Victim,” the authors, Marzanna Farnicka and Iwona Grzegorzewska, describe the family conditions of girls and boys choosing to be an aggressor or a victim in interpersonal relationships.

The authors of chapter eight, entitled “Anger and Attachment of Growing up Children in Kinship-based Foster Families,” are Kinga Mickiewicz and Karolina Głogowska. This chapter contains an analysis of the outcome of research on the differences in coping with stress and manifestations of aggressive behaviour of children raised by kinship-based foster parents.

Agata Kozłowska points out in chapter nine entitled “Aggression and Coping with Stress. Which Aspects of Aggression Appear Due to Coping with Stress?” the problem of aggression and its connections with adolescents’ unsuccessful processes of coping with stress.

The differences in the role of religious strategies in coping with stress in adolescents using psychoactive substances are described by Natalia Mataczyńska and Małwina Tudorowska in the tenth chapter of this monograph.

In chapter eleven, “Family Dysfunctionality as a Risk Factor for Mood Disorders in Adolescents,” Elżbieta Turska presents the outcome of the research on the conditions of mood disorders in adolescence being the result of inadequate parenting.

The third section of the monograph, *Aggression: The World of Adults*, consists of six chapters which undertake the hallmarks of aggression connected with transferring aggression and its symptoms from one environment to another as well as their biological and personality correlates.

In chapter twelve, “Emotional Dysregulation and Aggression in People with Borderline Personality Disorder,” Lidia Cierpiałkowska outlines the course and development of aggression problems in people with recognised borderline syndrome. The research referred to by this renowned scientist indicates the role of
disadaptive patterns of experiencing and problems with mentalization as mediators of manifesting aggressive behaviour.

The thirteenth chapter, “Aversive Parenting. An Attempt of Conceptualization,” has been prepared by Lucyna Bakiera. The author shows the way parental influences are formed with particular respect to aversive parenting. The researcher brings the reader closer to the consequences of such a parenting style for the development of aggression in children.

In chapter fourteen, entitled “Family Determinants and Susceptibility of an Individual to Mobbing at the Workplace,” Karolina Walczak and Katarzyna Wałęcka-Matyja point out the relationship between family relations and influences and later, adult susceptibility to assuming the role of a victim by way of the example of the work environment.

Hanna Liberska presents the outcome of research on personality and family correlates of the level of aggression among prison inmates in chapter fifteen, “Manifestations of Aggression in Prisoners and their Selected Determinants.”

Chapter sixteen, “The Emotional Intelligence of Male Polish Prisoners in Comparison to Men with no Criminal Record,” also looks at the issues of aggression and aggressiveness among inmates. Its author, Dagmara Boruc, draws attention to the subject of conditions of aggressive behaviour, with particular attention on deficits of emotional intelligence which could constitute a resource for minimizing the risk of behaviour pathologization.

The last, seventeenth, chapter of the monograph, “Professional Approach and the First Line of Institutional Response to Domestic Violence: A Hungarian Overview,” addresses the problems and challenges workers of social institutions face. Its authors, Lajos Huse, Nora Barnucz and Mihail Fonay, describe the Hungarian model of the functioning of aid institutions as well as point out the deficiencies that are revealed through work with the victims of family violence.

All of the presented texts, both theoretical and empirical, present a diverse approach to studying aggression and its symptoms. Furthermore, they outline the difficulties contemporary researchers must contend with and the social needs within this area.

The editors of the book would like to express their gratitude to all the authors who agreed to share their considerations and research results on the phenomenon of aggression and violence. We would also like to thank the reviewer for appreciation of the significance of the issues undertaken in this monograph as well as for all her valuable remarks that helped to create the final version which we are handing over to the reader.
Everyday life abounds with acts of aggression and violence, despite the numerous arrangements deriving from research that should successfully minimize them. Therefore, it is worthwhile not only to explore the constantly appearing, new sources of aggression at a deeper level, but also to carry out a valid and reliable evaluation of earlier prophylactic and therapeutic programmes. More adequate systemic solutions are necessary to respond to the challenges faced by humans in the 21st century. Among them are threats deriving from the number and complexity of contexts contemporary people live in, unclear rules in social life, difficulties in understating this complexity, relativity, changeability as well as a terminated continuity of culture and, finally, the necessity to cope with these, still not fully explored, phenomena.

_Hanna Liberska and Marzanna Franicka_  
_Bydgoszcz – Zielona Góra, summer 2015_

**References**


Seville Statement (1986).