



Task-oriented coping strategy in youth in situations of social conflict: an attempt to determine the personality predictors

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Summary: The goal of the study was to identify the personality predictors of the task-oriented coping strategy in adolescent youth in situations of social conflict. The study was conducted on a sample of 468 girls and 425 boys aged 13 to 15. The tools applied to conduct the study included the Self-Esteem Scale (SES), developed by M. Rosenberg and adapted by M. Łaguna, K. Lachowicz-Tabaczek, and I. Dzwonkowska, the Stress-Assessment Questionnaire (Kwestionariusz Oceny Stresu, KOS) designed by D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski, the Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits (Trójczynnikowy Inwentarz Stanów i Cech Osobowości, TISCO), designed by C. Spielberg, as well as the Questionnaire for Studying the Coping Strategies in Youth in Situations of Social Conflict (Kwestionariusz do badania strategii radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego, KSMK), created by D. Borecka-Biernat. The conducted analysis of the research material suggests that young people who are confident in their ability to control the negative and the positive outcomes of events choose, in situations of social conflict, the task-oriented coping strategy. The subjective conviction that one has control over the occurring events or phenomena is crucial to one's sense of security. Young people who apply the task-oriented strategy in situations of social conflict display lower levels of fear and anxiety and a higher level of curiosity. A lower level of emotional tension and anxiety in situations of social conflict, as well as the ability to react to it with curiosity, encourages adolescents to actively seek and apply the task-oriented solutions. The results of this study constitute theoretical guidelines applicable in designing prevention programs and therapies that support the development of those traits that might be significant for the task-oriented strategy, that attends to the needs of all participants of the relationship or the conflict.

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Zadaniowa strategia radzenia sobie młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego: próba określenia predyktorów osobowości

Streszczenie: Celem badań było poszukiwanie osobowościowych predyktorów strategii zadaniowego radzenia sobie dorastającej młodzieży w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego. Badania przeprowadzono wśród 468 dziewczynek i 425 chłopców w wieku 13–15 lat. W badaniach posłużono się *Skalą Samooceny* (SES) M. Rosenberga w adaptacji I. Dzwonkowskiej, K. Lachowicz-Tabaczek, M. Łaguny, *Kwestionariuszem do Badania Poczucia Kontroli* (KBPK) G. Krasowicz i A. Kurzyp-Wojnarskiej, *Kwestionariuszem Oceny Stresu* (KOS) D. Włodarczyk, K. Wrześniewskiego, *Trójczynnikiem Inwentarzem Stanów i Cech Osobowości* (TISCO) C. Spielbergera, *Kwestionariuszem strategii radzenia sobie rodziców w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego* (KSRwSK) D. Boreckiej-Biernat. Analiza materiału badawczego wskazuje, że młodzież silnie przekonana o własnych możliwościach kontrolowania pozytywnych i negatywnych następstw zdarzeń sięga w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego po zadaniową strategię radzenia sobie. Subiektywne przekonanie o własnej kontroli nad ciągiem zdarzeń czy zjawisk decyduje o poczuciu bezpieczeństwa. Dorastający, którzy w sposób zadaniowy „sterują” swoim zachowaniem w sytuacji konfliktu społecznego, charakteryzują się niższym poziomem emocji gniewu i lęku zaś wyższym poziomem emocji ciekawości. Obniżony stan napięcia emocjonalnego i niepokoju towarzyszący sytuacji konfliktu społecznego i reagowanie na nią ciekawością, pobudza młodzież do aktywnego poszukiwania i stosowania zadaniowych sposobów działania. Rezultaty tych badań stanowią wskazówki teoretyczne w opracowaniu programów profilaktycznych i terapeutycznych wspierających rozwój tych właściwości człowieka, które są istotne dla strategii zadaniowej dbającej o wszystkich uczestników relacji i sporu.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież, osobowość, strategia zadaniowego radzenia sobie, sytuacja konfliktu społecznego

Introduction

Conflict with another person is one of the fundamental social situations in every person's life. The word "conflict" comes from the Latin words *confligere*, *conflictatio*, denoting a clash, dispute, argument, fight, or "collision of two or more processes or forces inherent in living beings. In Polish, the term *konflikt* can refer to a conflict of interests, views, a clash, disagreement, dispute, or feud (Doroszewski, 1981). A significant proportion of conflicts between individuals or between an individual and a group result from contradictions, incompatibilities, or discrepancies in views, interests, and values or motives, aspirations, expectations, desires, and goals pursued by the parties to the conflict (Balawajder, 2010; Wojciszke, 2007). As can be seen, the essence of conflict is a clash of opposing needs, views, aspirations, wishes, and expectations.

Adolescence is a difficult yet important period in a young person's life, filled with crises and conflicts. Young people are involved in several environments: school, class, youth groups, and family. The possibility of conflict can arise at each level. In social interactions, conflicts with teachers, arguments with schoolmates and girlfriends or boyfriends, and disagreements with parents and other family members emerge (Ciupińska, 2011; Gurba, 2020; Polak, 2010; Riesch et al., 2000). In the school environment, young people face many challenges posed by the school institution. In turn, in the peer environment, they learn to find their place in a mosaic of different personalities. In the family environment, they learn to be in social contact. Playing social roles: student, friend, and child is associated with meeting expectations. When these expectations are contradictory, young people find themselves in a difficult situation, which is a perfect breeding ground for conflict. Conflict on these three social levels is an integral part of young people's lives; it is common and cannot be avoided.

Even though conflict cannot be eliminated, it is possible, and even necessary, to seek a solution as soon as it arises. Therefore, everyone must learn to deal with social conflicts. It follows that in the conflict process, it is not so much the occurrence of the conflict itself that is important, but rather learning how to resolve conflicts with less harm to oneself and others, and, in addition, with benefit to the cause that divides the opposing parties. The coping behaviors adopted by a person in a situation of social conflict are among the most important predictors of protecting them from the negative effects of everyday life problems. It is therefore worth paying attention to how adolescents deal with conflicts related to relationships at school, with peers, and within the family. Many studies indicate that young people have a rich set of strategies for coping with difficult social situations, including social conflict (Balawajder, 2012; Talik, 2011; Williams, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2000). These include strategies for constructive coping in situations of social conflict. They include a task-oriented strategy in the form of actively influencing conflict situations, which is aimed at resolving and overcoming the situation and is assessed as adaptive. Its essence is effective focus on solving the problem. This includes attempts to make changes within one's own actions by reaching an agreement with a partner in order to find a common solution to contentious issues. It assumes assertive consideration of the goals and needs of the parties, where nothing is done at the expense of the other party or at the expense of one's own goals and interests (Kłusek-Wojciszke, 2009). Thus, a situation of social conflict is treated as a problem to be solved, requiring the individual to increase their efforts, change the details of their tactics, use their physical and intellectual abilities, and come up with a new idea to achieve the goal of resolving the conflict. A task-oriented solution to the conflict ends the dispute or minimizes the likelihood of its recurrence.

In summary, conflicts, as an inherent factor of social life; they are common and cannot be avoided. Young people who create and implement specific life plans are exposed to conflict situations related to school, contact with peers, and family

relationships. Conflicts must be resolved because left unaddressed, they can be conflict-generating. When faced with a dispute at school, in relationships with peers, or at home, some young people adopt a constructive strategy based on independent problem-solving.

Task-oriented strategy of coping with social conflict among young people – personality implications

Finding oneself in a difficult social situation, including social conflict, is part of everyday life for young people, but the way they cope with it can influence whether they successfully overcome everyday difficulties or not. The question should be asked: why do some people in adolescence decide to use a task-oriented strategy in situations of social conflict? In answering this question, the concept of the psychological mechanism of human behavior in difficult situations developed by M. Tyszkowa (1986) proves helpful. In Tyszkowa's theory, the basic cognitive structures of personality – i.e., the image of oneself (the "self" structure) and the image of the world (the "world" structure) – play an important role in the selection of coping strategies by young people. How a person perceives the world, what their attitudes and expectations are toward themselves, other people, tasks, and the results of their own activities, determines the way they cognitively and emotionally perceive and interpret a difficult situation, which in turn influences their behavior in it.

The set of concepts and ideas about oneself and expectations towards oneself, which is the "self" structure, plays a significant role in human behavior in difficult situations (Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Śniecińska, 2013). Information about oneself, the characteristics that make up one's knowledge of oneself, are the basis for assessing one's own capabilities in difficult situations (Tyszkowa, 1986). Self-esteem is inextricably linked to the concept of oneself; it is the evaluative and value-judging component of a person's knowledge of their own "self". According to Rosenberg (1965), high self-esteem is synonymous with the belief that one is a sufficiently good and valuable person, while low self-esteem is equated with dissatisfaction with oneself or rejection of one's own "self". The influence of self-esteem is evident in how individuals cope with difficult situations. Research results obtained by R. Baumeister et al. (2003), D. Borecka-Biernat (2006), C. Boucet (1998), K. Kobosko (2013), M. Korczyński (2002), and P. Kurtka (2012) and others have shown that people with high self-esteem are the least susceptible to behavioral disorganization in difficult situations. Such self-esteem promotes greater psychological resilience in difficult situations and allows for constructive behavior in the face of various stressful events. A person with high self-esteem does not consider themselves to be better or more perfect, but is convinced of their own worth, has confidence in themselves, and is satisfied with their achievements. They prefer ways of coping with difficult situations that involve planning, seeking emotional support, avoiding competitive

actions, positive revaluation, and active coping. They make more effort to directly solve the problems they face, are more focused on efforts to overcome adversity, and more persistent in their actions. They are also aware of their mistakes and limitations, but take action to overcome conflict (Rostowska, 2001). High regard for one's own abilities promotes effective coping in difficult situations.

Control mechanisms play an important role in the psychological mechanism of behavior in difficult situations, particularly concerning one's perceived control over the situation (Tyszkowa, 1986). People act in situations where they treat their successes and failures as the result of forces beyond their personal control – we then speak of a “sense of external locus of control”. If the outcome of actions depends on one's own behavior and skills, then this is referred to as a “sense of internal control” (Drwal, 1978; Oleś, 2003; Rotter, 1966). The belief in the possibility of influencing (or not influencing) the course of events significantly modifies the efforts made by an individual to cope with a difficult social interaction or determines the methods used to deal with it (Adesina, 2012; Hisli Sahin et al., 2009; Kocur, 2009; Kurttek, 2005; Opuchlik, Wiatrowska, 2017; Wrzesińska, Talik, 2010). A sense of internal control over the situation, i.e., the belief that it depends on the subject's own activity (that something can be done to change it), is the basis for continuing efforts to overcome difficulties and intensify the search for a way out of the difficulties. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of achieving the desired result, as it creates an opportunity to overcome the difficulty (Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Endler et al., 2000; Juczyński, 2000). People cope with difficulties more effectively, plan solutions to problems, and attempt to solve and overcome them when they feel in control of the situation. Belief in one's own ability to control and influence events, freedom of choice and effective influence on reality, without succumbing to pressure from others, promotes a creative style of behavior in problematic situations. A sense of internal control supports the use of adaptive, task-oriented forms of coping with difficulties. This means that people cope more effectively with difficulties and attempt to solve and overcome them when they feel in control of the situation. Assessing a given situation as one over which a person believes they have control is associated with active forms of coping in situations involving difficult social interactions.

A person's activity in a difficult situation depends largely on their assessment of the situation in which they find themselves (Scherer et al., 1994). Cognitive assessment of a situation involves categorizing events in terms of their significance for the well-being of the individual (Włodarczyk 1999). Elements of the individual's environment that are important for their well-being are assessed as favorable/positive, insignificant, or stressful. The special role of cognitive assessment is particularly evident in difficult situations that disrupt the current course of activities, threaten the individual, and hinder or prevent them from fulfilling their needs. A stressful event can be assessed as harm/loss (relating to damage and loss suffered in relation to important objects and items), a threat (relating to similar damage that has not

yet occurred but is anticipated) or a challenge (indicating the possibility of mastering a difficult situation and gaining something) (Włodarczyk, Wrześniewski 2005). Therefore, in order to find out whether a given situation is harmful, threatening, or liberating for an individual, it is necessary to assess it cognitively. Cognitive assessment concerns subjective and individual experiences, which is why there may be differences in the assessment of the same difficult situation by different people (situational assessment), as well as different assessments of individual situations by the same person (dispositional assessment) (Włodarczyk, Wrześniewski 2010). An individual's assessment of an event influences their decisions regarding the possibility of taking action to remove the causes of a difficult situation or at least mitigate its effects, referred to as a remedial strategy (Heszen-Niejodek 2000). Thus, the factor determining the choice of a strategy for coping with difficult social situations is the interpretation of the situation, i.e., the cognitive assessment made by the individual. The results of studies cited by S. Abdullah et al. (2018), J. Bjorck and L. Cohen (1993), D. Domińska-Werbel (2014), I. Heszen-Niejodek (2002), K. Kowalski et al. (2005), M. Mikulincer and F. Victor (1995), and D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski (2005) show that assessing a situation as a challenge is associated with adopting constructive strategies aimed at coping with the problem. People motivate themselves to take action to cope with a difficult situation because they are inclined to assess the situation as a challenge, which implies hope and optimism in achieving goals and objectives, especially since the skills to achieve these goals are based on a realistic strategy. Essentially, assessing a situation as a challenge activates the search for support, cooperation, and the pursuit of a solution to the problem.

People react emotionally to threatening situations. Emotional reactions in threatening situations are related to a person's personality traits and the way they perceive the situation (Łosiak, 2009). Difficult situations perceived as challenges can cause positive emotional reactions and satisfaction with the possibility of overcoming difficulties (Jelonkiewicz, Kosińska-Dec, 2008; Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger, Starr, 1994). Unexpected events, certain contradictions, novelties, or the desire to learn about the characteristics of a situation evoke emotional reactions of curiosity. Curiosity reflects the desire to discover, learn about, and understand new, ambiguous, or uncertain characteristics of the environment (Doliński, 2000; Spielberger, Reheiser, 2009; Voss, Keller, 1983). Greater curiosity promotes a stronger belief in the ability to find ways to achieve goals and mobilize oneself to make an effort, and thus a belief in the ability to cope with difficulties (Łaguna, Bąk, 2007; Włodarczyk, 2017). It stimulates search and exploration behaviors that contribute to problem solving (Fredrickson, 2001; Frijda, 2002). Curiosity is therefore the desire to acquire new knowledge and experience that motivates exploratory behavior. Cognitively, it broadens one's field of vision (thoughts and plans for action arise in the mind), increases the flexibility of responses, and promotes creativity, experimentation, the discovery of new phenomena, and the search for

new solutions. It follows that difficult situations perceived as challenges generate positive emotions, in particular curiosity, which triggers strategies for actively coping with difficulties and obstacles.

The research method

The research question and hypothesis

The empirical research focused on the personality determinants of young people's task-oriented coping strategies in situations of social conflict, with particular attention paid to the role of self-esteem, sense of locus of control, type of cognitive assessment of social conflict, and level and type of emotions. The research aimed to answer the following research question.

What set of personality variables is related to the fact that during social conflict, young people's task-oriented coping strategies in situations of social conflict intensify?

This research question allows us to formulate the following hypothesis, which will be verified by analyzing the results of the empirical research.

H1: Young people with high self-esteem, an internal locus of control, an assessment of the conflict situation as a challenge, and a high level of positive emotions (curiosity) are more likely to activate task-oriented coping strategies in situations of social conflict.

Measuring tools

The following research tools were used:

The *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (SES), adapted by I. Dzwonkowska, K. Lachowicz-Tabaczek, and M. Łaguna (2007), allows for the calculation of the level of general (global) self-esteem in both young people and adults. The SES consists of ten diagnostic descriptive statements about oneself, which the respondent uses to describe their self-esteem. The respondent answers using a four-point Likert scale. Each answer is worth between one and four points. The final results range from 10 to 40 points. A high score indicates a high level of overall (global) self-esteem. The Polish version of the SES method is a reliable tool (Cronbach's α coefficient in various studies ranges from .81 to .83) with proven theoretical validity.

The *Sense of Control Questionnaire* (*Kwestionariusz do Badania Poczucia Kontroli – KBPK*) by G. Krasowicz and A. Kurzyp-Wojnarska (1990) is used to measure a personality variable called the sense of locus of control. It consists of 46 forced-choice questions: 36 are diagnostic items, and the remaining ten are buffer questions. Diagnostic questions concerning simple situations in the lives of schoolchildren form two scales: the Success scale (S) and the Failure scale (P). Questions about

successful events form the success scale (S), and questions about unsuccessful events form the failure scale (P). The sum of the scores obtained on the success and failure scales forms an indicator of the generalized sense of locus of control (S+P). High scores on the KBPK questionnaire indicate internal control of the consequences of events, while low scores indicate external control of the consequences of events. According to the authors of the questionnaire, it meets psychometric requirements. The reliability coefficients of the scales, determined among others by the internal consistency method according to the Kuder-Richardson formula, are .54 for the S scale and .69 for the P scale. The KBPK is a tool with proven criterion validity.

The Stress Assessment Questionnaire (*Kwestionariusz Oceny Stresu – KOS*) developed by D. Włodarczyk and K. Wrześniewski (2010) contains 35 adjectival descriptions (including 23 diagnostic ones) assessing stressful situations. It consists of two versions, which include the same sets of adjectival descriptions, but differ in the instructions given to the respondents. Version A (measurement of situational stress assessment), asks respondents to indicate a specific difficult situation that occurred during the past week (in the study described, it was a situation of social conflict). Version B (measurement of dispositional stress assessment) contains instructions asking respondents to indicate the extent to which the given adjectives correspond to what they most often experience in difficult situations (in the present study, these were situations of social conflict). The KOS consists of six subscales, which are indicators of specific types of stress assessment. These are: threat-state, threat-trait, harm/loss-state, harm/loss-trait, challenge-state, and challenge-trait. The “threat” subscales contain ten items, the “challenge” subscales have six items, and “harm/loss” have four items. The questionnaire is characterized by satisfactory reliability (Cronbach’s α internal consistency coefficient for version A is .76-.90, and for version B is .79-.90) and factorial and criterion validity.

The *Three-Factor Inventory of Personality States and Traits* (*Trójczynnikowy Inwentarz Stanów i Cech Osobowości – TISCO*) is a Polish adaptation of the American State-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI) developed by C. Spielberger’s team (Wrześniewski, 1991). TISCO consists of two independent parts. The first part (SPI) is designed to measure anxiety, anger, and curiosity, treated as an emotional state felt at a given moment. The second part (TPI) is used to study the same emotions, treated as a personality trait. Thus, the test contains six subscales: anxiety as a state and anxiety as a trait, anger as a state and anger as a trait, and curiosity as a state and curiosity as a trait. Each subscale consists of ten short, simple statements referring to the subjective feelings of the individual. The reliability of the Polish version of the TISCO Inventory is similar to that of the original STPI version, and Cronbach’s α internal consistency coefficients range from .82 to .92 for the first part (SPI) and from .68 to .88 for the second part (TPI), depending on the sample. The validity of TISCO was tested in two areas: theoretical validity and diagnostic validity. The results

regarding the validity of TISCO are satisfactory and similar to those of the original STPI version.

The *KSMK Questionnaire* developed by D. Borecka-Biernat (2012) is designed to study the coping strategies used by adolescents in situations of social conflict. It consists of a description of 33 situations of social conflict. For each situation, four behaviors expressing coping with social conflict are given—the first refers to aggressive coping ("A"), the second to avoidant coping ("U"), the third to submissive coping ("UI"), and the fourth to task-oriented (constructive) coping with social conflict ("Z"). The results are obtained separately for each scale by summing up the selected behaviors in 33 situations belonging to a given scale. For the purposes of our own research, we used the "Z" Scale of Task-Oriented Coping of Youth in Social Conflict Situations. The questionnaire is characterized by good reliability (Cronbach's α internal consistency coefficient is at or above .70), and good diagnostic accuracy.

Research subjects and research procedure

A group of 468 girls and 425 boys aged 13–15 were surveyed. A total of 893 people participated in the study. The subjects were students of public schools in Wrocław and the surrounding area. Schools were selected at random, but not all of the schools selected agreed to participate, so in several cases, schools that were not selected but were willing to cooperate were approached. The research was most often conducted during homeroom/form teacher classes. The research was group-based, and participation was voluntary. Students signed the forms with their pseudonyms or initials. Before starting the study, participants who had obtained parental consent to participate were thoroughly instructed on the procedure. The students responded positively to the study, showing interest in it and willingly answering the questions in the questionnaires. The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of psychological research.

The basic criterion for selecting the students was their age. The influence of age on the selection of task-oriented strategies for coping with social conflict was analyzed in the 13–15 age group (adolescents). Adolescence is a period of instability in the behavior of teenagers, a period of conflict with their environment and themselves, often accompanied by a sense of misunderstanding (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2015).

Results

In order to determine which set of personality variables predicts the level of task-oriented coping strategies in social conflict situations among young people, it was decided to use hierarchical regression with the backward elimination method (criterion: probability of F-removal $\geq .100$). The method involves introducing all predictors into the model and then successively removing irrelevant variables, followed

by recalculating the model until the final form is obtained (Bedyńska, Książek, 2012). The values of the analyzed variables were found to follow a normal distribution. The dependent variable was the score on the “Z” scale (task coping in a situation of social conflict) of the KSMK questionnaire. The results on one scale of the SES questionnaire: Self-Esteem, on two scales of the KBPK questionnaire: Success scale, Failure scale, on six scales of the KOS questionnaire: Threat-State, Threat-Trait, Harm/Loss-State, Harm/Loss-Trait, Challenge-State, Challenge-Trait, and in six scales of the TISCO questionnaire: Anger-State, Anxiety-State, Curiosity-State, Anger-Trait, Anxiety-Trait, and Curiosity-Trait. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Stepwise multiple regression for Task (Z) score on the KSMK scale in relation to the scales of questionnaires SES, KBPK, KOS, and TISCO: results for the entire group (N = 893), for girls (N = 468) and for boys (N = 425)

Overall					
Variable	Beta	B	SE B	t	p
Success	.20	.42	.08	5.50	< .001
Failure	.11	.27	.07	3.09	.002
Anger-state	-.16	-.16	.03	-4.95	< .001
Curiosity-trait	.11	.14	.04	3.39	< .001
Constant		8.37	1.56	5.37	< .001

Note.
Multiple correlation coefficient: R = .40
Multiple determination coefficient: R ²= .14
Equation significance: F(4.888) = 37.41; p < .001
Standard error of the estimate: 6.00

Girls					
Variable	Beta	B	SE B	t	p
Success	.21	.42	.10	4.01	< .001
Failure	.13	.25	.10	2.39	.02
Anger-state	-.09	-.09	.05	-2.05	.04
Curiosity-trait	.10	.12	.05	2.28	.02
Constant		8.44	2.14	3.95	< .001

Note.
Multiple correlation coefficient: R = .35
Multiple determination coefficient: R² = .12
Equation significance: F(4.463) = 16.51; p < .001
Standard error of the estimate: 5.95

Boys

Variable	Beta	B	SE B	t	p
Success	.18	.38	.11	3.41	< .001
Failure	.14	.28	.10	2.71	.007
Anxiety-state	-.18	-.38	.10	-3.90	< .001
Anger-trait	-.11	-.12	.05	-2.30	.02
Curiosity-trait	.16	.21	.06	3.49	< .001
Constant		13.06	2.97	4.40	< .001

Note.

Multiple correlation coefficient: R = .44

Multiple determination coefficient: R² = .20

Equation significance: F(5.419) = 20.28; p < .001

Standard error of the estimate: 5.80

The determinants of the task-oriented strategy as a way of coping with social conflict among young people (all respondents) include a sense of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, anger understood as an emotional state, and curiosity understood as a personality trait. The other independent variables included in the study proved to be insignificant determinants of the task strategy used by young people in situations of social conflict. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .40$, indicating that the linear relationship between young people's task-oriented coping strategy in situations of social conflict and the combined influence of the above-mentioned variables is moderate. The multiple determination coefficient is $R^2 = .14$, indicating that 14.0% of the variance in the dependent variable „task strategy“ in the youth group was explained by the influence of the adopted set of independent variables ($F[4.448] = 37.41; p < .001$). The *Beta* values indicate that the stronger the belief in internal locus of control relating to situations of success and failure, the lower the level of anger understood as a temporary emotional state experienced in connection with a situation of social conflict, and the higher the level of learned behavioral disposition to respond with curiosity, the higher the level of task-oriented coping strategies of adolescents in situations of social conflict.

Will the same characteristics prove to be significant for girls? To this end, separate analyses were conducted for groups separated by gender (Table 1). Only four personality variables proved to be significant in the regression equation. The level of task-oriented coping strategies in girls is influenced by: a sense of locus of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, anger understood as an emotional state, and curiosity understood as a personality trait. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .35$, indicating that the linear relationship between girls' task coping strategy in conflict situations and the combined influence of the above variables is low. The coefficient of determination is low ($R^2 = .12$), which means that only 12% of the variance in girls' task-oriented coping in social conflict situations

was explained by the influence of the adopted set of independent variables ($F[4.488] = 37.41; p < .001$). The other independent variables included in the study proved to be insignificant determinants of task-oriented strategies in the group of girls. The *Beta* values indicate that the stronger the belief in internal locus of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, the lower the level of anger understood as a temporary emotional state experienced in connection with a social conflict situation, and the higher the level of learned behavioral disposition to respond with curiosity, the more often girls use a task-oriented strategy in coping with a situation of social conflict.

Which set of personality variables will prove to be significant for boys? The answer to this question is provided by the results of yet another regression analysis presented in Table 1. Of the fifteen variables, only five proved to be significant in the regression equation. These include the sense of locus of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, anxiety understood as an emotional state, anger understood as a personality trait, and curiosity understood as a personality trait. The *Beta* values indicate that the stronger the belief in internal locus of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, the lower the level of anxiety understood as a temporary emotional state experienced in connection with a situation of social conflict, the lower the level of learned behavioral disposition to respond with anger and the higher the level of learned behavioral disposition to respond with curiosity, the more often boys use task-oriented strategies in coping with situations of social conflict. The multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .44$ and indicates that the linear relationship between boys' task-oriented coping strategy in a social conflict situation and the combined effect of the variables mentioned is moderate. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = .20$ indicates that 20% of the dependent variable, which is boys' task-oriented coping strategy, is explained by these variables ($F[5.419] = 20.29; p < .001$).

In summary, in light of the statistical verification, it should be concluded that the role of predictors that allow for 12.0-20.0 percent accuracy in predicting the task-oriented coping strategies of adolescents (overall, by gender) in situations of social conflict is played by a set of specific personality variables: a sense of locus of control relating separately to situations of success and failure, anger and fear as an emotional state, and anger and curiosity as a personality trait. Hypothesis H.1 is thus partially confirmed. The results of the study confirm the directional assumption regarding the influence of the sense of locus of control and emotions on the task-oriented coping strategy of young people in situations of social conflict. However, self-assessment and cognitive assessment of the situation are not statistically significant predictors of the task-oriented strategy used by young people in situations of social conflict. Therefore, the directional assumptions concerning the impact of self-assessment and cognitive assessment on the task-oriented coping strategy of young people in situations of social conflict were not confirmed by the research results.

Discussion

The sense of locus of control is an important variable modifying the functioning of young people in difficult social situations, i.e., conflict. The analysis of the results indicates that the tendency to attribute responsibility for the consequences of one's own actions to internal factors gives young people the opportunity to actively influence a situation of social conflict with the aim of changing it or their position in it. Adolescents who display a sense of internal task-oriented control deal with the problem and attempt to overcome the difficulties that arise (Kościelak, 2010). Aware of their own initiative in resolving conflicts, they act constructively and strive for a peaceful resolution of disputes. They have a positive attitude toward people and are willing to cooperate with them. The belief in an internal sense of control over positive consequences enables young people to effectively manipulate their environment, as they have reason to believe that their actions will bring the expected results. They perceive their successes and rewards as the result of their own abilities, skills, and persistent efforts. It is worth noting that young people who cope with social conflict in a task-oriented manner are able to take responsibility not only for their successes but also for their failures. They perceive their failures as a lack of ability, the result of insufficient effort or too little commitment on their part. In general, the causal relationship perceived by young people between "what they do and how they do it" and the results of their own behavior influences their decision to adopt a task-oriented strategy aimed at resolving the conflict (Adesina, 2012; Borecka-Biernat, 2006; Cook, Sloane, 2001; Dijkstra et al., 2011; Taylor, 2010).

Adolescents involved in conflict situations undoubtedly experience a range of emotions. Negative emotions predominate, such as anger, rage, anxiety, fear, sadness, and regret. There are also positive emotions, such as hope, joy, satisfaction, relief, interest, and curiosity (Lazarus, 1999). These are associated with the possibility of overcoming difficulties. Positive emotions influence the tendency to act in various situations, including situations of conflict. Based on the analysis of the collected research material, significant negative correlations are found between the task-oriented coping strategy and negative emotions (anger, fear) experienced situationally and dispositionally in connection with a situation of social conflict. This means that the more intense the task-oriented coping strategy of young people in a situation of social conflict, the lower the level of negative emotions (anger, fear) of a situational nature and the lower the disposition to react with negative emotions (anger). Adolescents who "control" their behavior in situations of social conflict in a task-oriented manner are characterized by lower levels of anger and fear. This suggests that negative emotions have an adaptive function when they are less intense (depending on the situation), as they trigger thought processes that promote concentration on the problem, mobilize the individual to make an effort, or enable the effective overcoming of difficulties (Pincus, Frieman, 2004; Sikorski, 2015; Wrześniewski et al., 2011). It follows that effective action, the right

choice of arguments, or an unconventional solution to a problem do not cause difficulties for a person with a low level of negative emotions. Young people who use a task-oriented strategy in conflict situations show a higher level of learned behavioral disposition to respond with curiosity. Curiosity, as a positive emotion, acts as a motivating factor to take action aimed at coping with the events that triggered it (Frijda, 2002). It promotes thinking, creativity, and increases the flexibility of responses, which encourages experimentation, discovery of new phenomena, and the search for new solutions (Fredrickson, 2001). This result seems to correspond to the conclusion formulated by D. Doliński (2000, pp. 446): "curiosity from a situational perspective manifests as a reaction to change (novelty), and dispositionally as a certain readiness (low threshold) to respond to all changes and innovations, while the common measure of dispositional and situational curiosity is a preference for novelty, and thus the search for solutions in difficult and new situations". As it turns out, curiosity leads to the belief in the ability to find a way to achieve a goal, motivates the individual to make an effort, and promotes the belief in the ability to overcome difficulties (Łaguna, Bąk, 2007). The analysis of the results confirmed that the higher the level of curiosity as a disposition to respond to all changes and innovations, the stronger the desire among young people to communicate with their partner in order to find a mutually beneficial solution to a problem that has manifested itself in the form of a conflict. The literature contains studies that have confirmed the observed relationship, for example by such authors as D. De Catanzaro (2003), D. Doliński (2000), D. Domińska-Werbel (2014), B. Fredrickson (2001), and I. Jelonkiewicz and K. Kosińska-Dec (2008).

In summary, hypothesis H.1 has been partially confirmed. The assumptions regarding the impact of the sense of locus of control and emotions on the task-oriented strategy of coping with social conflict among young people have been confirmed by the research results. However, self-assessment and cognitive assessment of the situation did not prove to be a statistically significant feature of young people's task-oriented strategy for resolving social conflict. Therefore, the directional relationship between self-assessment and cognitive assessment of the situation and young people's task-oriented coping strategy in situations of social conflict was not confirmed. This may be due to the fact that the study was self-descriptive in nature and the respondents subjectively assessed their answers. The use of the *self-report method* carries the risk that the results obtained may not accurately reflect reality, especially since the study was conducted in a school setting and young people may have been influenced by the need to gain social approval. Generalizing these results, it can be concluded that young people who are strongly convinced of their own ability to control the positive and negative consequences of events resort to a task-oriented coping strategy in situations of social conflict. It can be assumed that individuals who believe in their own ability to control events generally treat the difficulties they encounter as challenges and consistently strive to resolve them (Heszen-Niejodek, 2000). The subjective belief in one's own control over a sequence

of events or phenomena determines the sense of security (Borecka-Biernat, 2006). The reduced emotional tension and anxiety accompanying a situation of social conflict and responding to it with curiosity encourages young people to actively seek and apply task-oriented ways of acting. It seems that the results of this study provide theoretical guidelines for the development of preventive and therapeutic programs that support the development of those human qualities that are essential for a task-oriented strategy that cares for all participants in a relationship or dispute. The search for common ground in conflicts through special training in the cognitive-behavioral convention takes on particular significance during adolescence, when rapid changes occur in the area of emotional and social functioning. Teaching young people a task-oriented way of dealing with conflict situations is an important part of preparing them for life in society.

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