

## **Aggression Among Pupils With Intellectual Disability**

Due to the scale and drastic phenomena of the violence and aggression, more attention is given to them in the mass media as well as in scientific papers and in “social problems project solution”. Aggressive behaviours are no longer just extreme situations as wars, disasters, terrorism. They are not also the domain of common criminality and destructive youth or prison subcultures. They are not only connected with the word of adult people. They have penetrated to the everyday life. They are present in the family environment, work places, educational child care centres, and schools. The diminishing age of persons showing aggression in interpersonal contacts caused is affecting now practically younger children at school age and even at the kindergarten age. But in most cases the aggression intensifies at the age of children’s adolescence (numerous research accounts point to this fact).

In the context of the reflection made, it may be interesting to establish, whether the event of aggression takes also place among pupils with intellectual disability (especially at the time of adolescence). Since these pupils find themselves in a specific developmental situation; on the one hand they experience the adolescence stage with all the consequences connected with it, but on the other hand – being intellectually disabled they demonstrate specific developmental features among which one should name: the predominance of sexual drive behaviours, emotional lability, psychophysical infantilism, often lack or disabled ability to recognize good and evil, disorder in cause – effect thinking, disabled ability to predict the consequences of one’s own deeds, underdevelopment of motivation functioning or functioning in a way not always socially accepted (for example: sexual behaviours) and the inability to express one’s higher feelings (K. Pospiszyl 1970, A, Maciarz 1989). If one adds to that the increased succumbing to the influences, enormous hunger for social contacts, the desire to belong to a group and to be by it fully and at all costs accepted – then we can see a vision of a person repeatedly bound to clash with the generally accepted norms, experiencing frustration states, and as a result retreating or being aggressive, which happens more often.

### *Subject, target, method and field of research*

The presented research results constitute only a certain aspect of the research interest in the function of children and youth affected by disability (of various kind and level). This time the interest refers to hazardous behaviour of gimnazjum youths.

The research was conducted among other in special schools for mild retarded children in lubuskie voivodeship. Altogether 87 persons were included in the research: 49 girls and 38 boys. The pupils in the research suffered from – 64% of cases – also with additional disability. In most cases that were: sights and hearing defects and chronic diseases (epilepsy, bronchial asthma). Among the researched were also present pupils with cerebral palsy, Down’s syndrome, movement organ’s dysfunction.

The aim of the conducted research was the diagnosis of aggressive behaviours among pupils with intellectual disability; especially the attempt was made to answer the questions concerning the very fact of these behaviours occurrence their scale and characteristic, namely the types and forms of the existing aggression,

reaction to aggression, the fact of being an aggressor, a witness or the victim of aggression, places especially dangerous.

In the conducted diagnosis the diagnostic poll method was implemented by the use of questionnaire technique. In the case of the pupils from special schools the questionnaire was modified due to the specific development of the researched subjects: in most cases (93% of cases) the pupil filled in the questionnaire by the presence of a teacher and with his or class tutor help.

### *Generalised researched results*

The researched confirmed the presence of the phenomenon of aggression and violence in the special schools. The forms and frequency of aggression acts occurrence allow to claim that this phenomenon has features of a pathology. The repertoire of aggression types and forms is very wide, properly used one can find reflection in the results of the carried research each criterion of aggression classification type. In the school environment one can find both, the direct and indirect aggression, both physical as well as verbal aggression, open and hidden aggression, spontaneous (hot) and instrumental aggression (cold). Among the most often named forms of aggression named by the pupils that they have witnessed in the school environment were: ridiculing (93% indication by children), pushing and pulling (88% indication), hitting (65% indication), verbal aggression (64% indication). A sign of aggression often pointed out by the research (in 49% cases) was also excluding the child from the participation in group activities.

Pupils – witnesses to the aggressive behaviours of their peer – in most cases react to such situation by attempting to moderate them (65%) or by taking one of the sides (10%). On the other hand 25% of the researched claims not to react to aggressive behaviours of others, although 9% of them confess to reporting such an event to other people – parents (infrequent to the teachers). It is worth noticing at this point that pupils' "intervening" in conflict situations of others poses a risk of "being pulled into the conflict".

Other pupil's accounts point that the researched were also the subjects of aggression, being the victim (54%): 29% states that it happened once, 16% - two, three times, and 9% claim that they are often the subject of aggression. Among the most often experienced forms aggression the pupils name: pulling and malicious pushing (27%), calling names and swearing (22%), hitting, kicking, biting (11%), humiliation and ridiculing (10%). When asked what pupils are the most often the victims of aggression in the school claim that these are various pupils and that it is dependant for the situation at that time (74% of answers), but they also indicate the existence of the so called "scapegoats", who are persons "different" in any way ("fat", "goggles", "twisted", "bigger morons") (26%).

At the question who are the aggressors – the researched pupils most often (52%) answer that usually they same pupils all the time, although there are events when various pupils are aggressors and that this is mostly dependant from the situation at that time; 3% of the research points to existence of "aggressor gangs" in the school. The research also revealed that pupils with intellectual disability eagerly (more often than pupils in the intellectual norm) confess to being the aggressor claiming (in 39,5% of cases), that it is good to resolve conflicts with friends by the use of force ("to show who is stronger", "so they know who rules here"). 49% of those who claim the above executes their policy in practice – taking part in fights out of which 13,5% of pupils triggers them consciously, 11% is being pulled into them, 20% participates in them "by accident". The disturbing fact is that 28% of the researched

experiences pleasure in “being the aggressor” and 17% thinks that aggression is “nothing bad” and simply boasts about “their achievements” on that ground.

The conducted research indicated that also the least safe places in the school, that are the following: school hallways and the playground especially when there is no teacher’s duty supervision.

### *Conclusions and end reflections*

The conducted research become the source of new experiences, aroused certain reflections and allowed for formulation of the following conclusions:

1. Special school is just another area where the phenomenon of pupils aggression assumes the features of pathology;
2. One undertakes actions with the aim to prevent and to handle with the signs of aggression among students in the special school. Conducting these actions is of a specific manner due to the developmental abilities of the pupils. There are not however significant differences when it comes down to the teachers’ opinion and behaviour in the event of pupils aggression (comparing the teachers from the special school with the general one). Teachers are aware of the problem of aggression in the school environment, however more often they do not see the aggression acts of their pupils, and also more often justify the pupils’ behaviour due to their specific developmental features, claiming that in such situation not much can be done.
3. The results of the conducted research correspond with the research results conducted in the years 1995 – 1996 among 117 pupils from classes VII and VIII of primary school and in the years 1997 – 1998 among 172 pupils from classes I – III of secondary schools, so called mass schools (Lipińska 1997, 1999).
4. If the victims of aggression often are the persons different in some manner from the whole, than isn’t the idea of social integration of disabled children in jeopardy – especially that numerous studies indicated the unfavourable psychosocial situation in which found themselves the disabled children in the groups of integration classes dwelling on the margin of these groups? In especially unfavourable situation are the intellectually disabled children with deeper levels of disability and with combined disability.