

## Pedagogical Appreciation of Juvenile Aggressiveness: Socio-Perceptive Aspects and Readiness of Teachers to Intervene<sup>‡</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** The relevance of this study is rooted in the traditions of studying pedagogical social perception, and to the high degree of attention of the political, professional, and expert community to the problems of education. Research into teachers' ideas about aggression is an important entry point for developing programs to improve the professional competencies of teachers and specialists in the prevention of adolescent and youth deviant behavior.

**Objective.** To find answers to the following research questions: (1) On the basis of what manifestations do teachers understand that adolescents are involved in aggressive behavior? (2) How do teachers understand the various factors that determine adolescent aggression (age, gender, and family factors)? (3) How do teachers react to conflict between students and what feelings do they experience when faced with aggressive behavior among students?

**Design.** The following techniques were used in this research: expert assessment, psychological testing, standardized and semi-standardized questionnaires. More than 13,000 teachers from six federal districts of the Russian Federation took part in the "Teacher as a Subject of Education and Antisocial Behavior Prevention" project. This analysis uses data from 5,086 respondents (95% female).

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**Results.** For the teachers, the most obvious indicators of aggression of others towards a child are the child's depressed state and aggressive behavior. According to the teachers, boys are more prone to external manifestations of aggression, and girls to indirect forms of aggressive behavior. According to the teachers, aggressive behavior is most often characteristic of children from troubled families. The teachers perceive a high risk of aggressive behavior in children from single-parent families. The main parental factors that are related to adolescents' aggressive behavior, from the teachers' point of view, are: indifference towards the child, insufficient attention towards the child, making conflicting demands on the child. The study found that most often teachers experience worry, anxiety, and fear when faced with conflicts between students.

**Conclusion.** Teachers' ideas about various aspects of adolescents' aggressive behavior, such as engagement indicators and risk factors, were evaluated, as were current issues of teachers' readiness to intervene in conflicts between students. The study results are significant both for developing advanced training programs for teachers and psychologists to prevent adolescents' deviant and antisocial behavior, and in the context of educational and youth policy.

**Keywords:** Teacher, teenage aggressiveness, social perception, intervention

#### Highlights:

- For the teachers, the most obvious "indicators" of aggression of others towards a child are the child's depressed state and aggressive behavior.
- In the opinion of the teachers, aggressive behavior is most often characteristic of children from disadvantaged families. There is a high risk of aggressive behavior in children from single-parent families.
- The teachers most often experience anxiety, worry, and fear when faced with conflicts among students.
- The most frequently declared type of behavior by the teachers in situations of confrontation with aggressive behavior in a student environment is an active response (86%). Twenty-five percent of respondents stated that they have an emotional response, and 7% said that they try to ignore the problem, choosing a passive response.

#### АННОТАЦИЯ

**Актуальность.** Актуальность настоящего исследования обусловлена, с одной стороны, традициями научного направления изучения педагогической социальной перцепции, а с другой стороны — крайне высокой степенью внимания политического, профессионального и экспертного сообщества к проблематике воспитания. Изучение представлений педагогов об агрессии является важной точкой в понимании стратегии разработки программ повышения профессиональных компетенций педагогов и специалистов по профилактике девиантного поведения подростков и молодежи.

**Цель.** Настоящая работа посвящена поиску ответов на ряд исследовательских вопросов: на основании каких проявлений педагоги понимают, что подростки вовлечены в ситуации агрессивного поведения; как педагоги понимают различные факторы обусловленности агрессии подростков (в частности, половозрастные и семейные); как педагоги реагируют на ситуации конфликтов между учащимися и какие чувства испытывают при столкновении с ситуациями агрессивного поведения между учащимися

**Методики и выборка.** В рамках настоящего исследования были использованы следующие методы: экспертная оценка, психологическое тестирование, стандартизированное и полустандартизированное анкетирование. В рамках проекта «Педагог как субъект воспитания и профилактики асоциального поведения» при-

няли участие более 13000 педагогов из шести федеральных округов РФ. В настоящем анализе используются данные 5086 респондентов (95 % женского пола).

**Результаты.** Установлено, что для педагогов наиболее явными показателями проявления агрессии по отношению к ребенку являются подавленное состояние и агрессивное поведение самого ребенка. Согласно представлениям педагогов, мальчики больше склонны к проявлениям агрессии вовне, а девочки — к непрямым формам агрессивного поведения. По мнению педагогов, агрессивное поведение чаще всего свойственно детям из неблагополучных семей. Существует высокий риск агрессивного поведения у детей из неполных семей. Основные риски родительского воспитания в контексте агрессивного поведения подростков, с точки зрения педагогов, следующие: проявление безразличия в отношении ребенка, недостаточное внимание по отношению к ребенку, установливание противоречивых требований по отношению к ребенку. В рамках исследования установлено, что наиболее часто педагоги испытывают беспокойство, тревогу и страх при столкновении с конфликтными ситуациями между учениками.

**Выводы.** В рамках исследования проведена оценка представлений педагогов о различных аспектах агрессивного поведения подростков — показателях вовлеченности, факторах риска, а также рассмотрены актуальные вопросы готовности педагогов к вмешательству в конфликтные ситуации между учащимися. Результаты исследования представляют значимость как в контексте задач разработки программ повышения квалификации педагогов и психологов в области профилактики девиантного и асоциального поведения подростков, так и в контексте задач образовательной и молодежной политики.

**Ключевые слова:** Педагог, подростковая агрессивность, социальная перцепция, вмешательство

#### **Ключевые положения:**

- Для учителей наиболее очевидными “индикаторами” агрессии по отношению к ребенку являются подавленное состояние и агрессивное поведение самого ребенка
- По мнению педагогов, агрессивное поведение более характерно для детей из неблагополучных семей. Существует высокий риск агрессивного поведения у детей из неполных семей.
- Учителя чаще всего испытывают тревогу, беспокойство и страх, сталкиваясь с конфликтными ситуациями среди учащихся.
- Наиболее частым заявляемым типом поведения в ситуациях конфронтации с агрессивным поведением учащихся является активное реагирование (86%). 25% респондентов заявили, что выбирают эмоциональный ответ. Тем не менее, 7% опрошенных заявили, что стараются не замечать проблему, выбирая пассивную реакцию.

## **RESUMEN**

**Relevancia.** La relevancia de este estudio se debe, por un lado, a las tradiciones de la dirección científica del estudio de la percepción social pedagógica y, por otro lado, al grado extremadamente alto de atención de la comunidad política, profesional y de expertos a los problemas de la educación. El estudio de las percepciones de los educadores sobre la agresión es un punto importante para comprender la estrategia de desarrollo de programas para mejorar las competencias profesionales de los educadores y especialistas en la prevención del comportamiento desviado de adolescentes y jóvenes.

**El objetivo.** Este trabajo se centra en la búsqueda de respuestas a una serie de preguntas de investigación: sobre la base de qué manifestaciones los educadores entienden que los adolescentes están involucrados en situaciones de comportamiento agresivo; cómo los

educadores entienden los diversos factores condicionantes de la agresión de los adolescentes (en particular, la edad y la familia); cómo responden los educadores a situaciones de conflicto entre estudiantes y qué sentimientos se sienten cuando se enfrentan a situaciones de comportamiento agresivo entre estudiantes.

**Métodos y muestra.** En el presente estudio se utilizaron los siguientes métodos: evaluación por pares, pruebas psicológicas, cuestionarios estandarizados y semiestándar. En el marco del proyecto «El educador como sujeto de la educación y prevención del comportamiento antisocial» participaron más de 13.000 educadores de seis distritos federales de la Federación Rusa. El presente análisis utiliza datos de 5.086 encuestados (95% mujeres).

**Resultados.** Se ha establecido que para los educadores, los indicadores más claros de la agresión hacia el niño son el estado deprimido y el comportamiento agresivo del propio niño. Según los maestros, los niños son más propensos a las manifestaciones de agresión externa, y las niñas a formas indirectas de comportamiento agresivo. Según los educadores, el comportamiento agresivo es más común en niños de familias disfuncionales. Existe un alto riesgo de comportamiento agresivo en niños de familias monoparentales. Los principales riesgos de la crianza de los hijos en el contexto del comportamiento agresivo de los adolescentes, desde el punto de vista de los educadores, son los siguientes: la indiferencia hacia el niño, la falta de atención hacia el niño, el establecimiento de requisitos contradictorios hacia el niño. El estudio encontró que con mayor frecuencia los educadores experimentan intranquilidad, ansiedad y miedo cuando se enfrentan a situaciones de conflicto entre los estudiantes.

**Conclusiones.** El estudio evaluó las percepciones de los educadores sobre varios aspectos del comportamiento agresivo de los adolescentes: indicadores de participación, factores de riesgo, y también examinó los problemas actuales de la preparación de los educadores para intervenir en situaciones de conflicto entre estudiantes. Los resultados del estudio son importantes tanto en el contexto de los objetivos de desarrollo de programas de capacitación para educadores y psicólogos en el campo de la prevención del comportamiento desviado y antisocial de los adolescentes, como en el contexto de los objetivos de las políticas educativas y juveniles.

**Palabras clave:** Educador, agresividad adolescente, percepción social, intervención

#### **Disposiciones clave:**

- Para los maestros, los «indicadores» más obvios de la agresión hacia el niño son el estado deprimido y el comportamiento agresivo del niño.
- Según los educadores, el comportamiento agresivo es más característico de los niños de familias disfuncionales. Existe un alto riesgo de comportamiento agresivo en niños de familias monoparentales.
- Es más probable que los maestros experimenten intranquilidad, ansiedad y miedo al enfrentar situaciones de conflicto entre los estudiantes.
- El tipo de comportamiento declarado más frecuente en situaciones de confrontación con el comportamiento agresivo de los estudiantes es la respuesta activa (86%). El 25% de los encuestados dijo que elige una respuesta emocional. Sin embargo, el 7% de los encuestados dijo que intenta pasar por alto el problema eligiendo una reacción pasiva.

#### **RESUME**

**Origines.** L'importance de cette étude est due, d'une part, aux traditions de la direction scientifique de l'étude de la perception sociale pédagogique, et d'autre part, au degré extrêmement élevé d'attention de la communauté politique, professionnelle et experte aux problèmes de l'éducation. L'étude des idées des enseignants sur l'agression est un point im-

portant pour comprendre la stratégie de développement de programmes visant à améliorer les compétences professionnelles des enseignants et des spécialistes dans la prévention des comportements déviants des adolescents et des jeunes.

**Objectif.** Ce travail est consacré à trouver des réponses à un certain nombre de questions de recherche : à partir de quelles manifestations les enseignants comprennent-ils que les adolescents sont impliqués dans des situations de comportements agressifs ; comment les enseignants appréhendent-ils les différents facteurs qui déterminent l'agressivité des adolescents (notamment le sexe, l'âge et les facteurs familiaux) ; comment les enseignants réagissent aux situations de conflit entre élèves et quels sentiments ils éprouvent face à des situations de comportement agressif entre élèves.

**Méthodes et échantillonnage.** Les méthodes suivantes ont été utilisées dans cette étude : expertise, tests psychologiques, questionnaires standardisés et semi-standardisés. Plus de 13 000 enseignants de six districts fédéraux de la Fédération de Russie ont participé au projet « L'enseignant comme sujet d'éducation et de prévention des comportements antisociaux ». Cette analyse utilise les données de 5 086 répondants (95 % de femmes).

**Résultats.** L'étude a démontré que pour les enseignants, les indicateurs les plus évidents d'agressivité envers un enfant sont un état dépressif et un comportement agressif de l'enfant lui-même. Selon les idées des enseignants, les garçons sont plus sujets aux manifestations externes d'agression et les filles sont plus sujettes aux formes indirectes de comportement agressif. Selon les enseignants, les comportements agressifs sont le plus souvent caractéristiques des enfants issus de familles défavorisées. Il existe un risque élevé de comportement agressif chez les enfants issus de familles monoparentales. Les principaux risques de l'éducation parentale dans le contexte des comportements agressifs des adolescents, du point de vue des enseignants, sont les suivants : indifférence envers l'enfant, attention insuffisante envers l'enfant, imposition d'exigences contradictoires envers l'enfant. L'étude a révélé que les enseignants éprouvent le plus souvent de l'inquiétude, de l'anxiété et de la peur lorsqu'ils sont confrontés à des situations conflictuelles entre élèves.

**Conclusions.** Dans le cadre de l'étude, les points de vue des enseignants sur divers aspects du comportement agressif des adolescents — indicateurs d'implication, facteurs de risque - ont été évalués et les problèmes actuels de préparation des enseignants à intervenir dans des situations de conflit entre élèves ont été pris en compte. Les résultats de l'étude sont significatifs à la fois dans le contexte des tâches de développement de programmes de formation avancée pour les enseignants et les psychologues dans le domaine de la prévention des comportements déviants et antisociaux des adolescents, et dans le contexte des tâches de politique éducative et de jeunesse.

**Mots-clés:** Enseignant, agressivité adolescente, perception sociale, intervention

#### Points principaux:

- Pour les enseignants, les « indicateurs » les plus évidents d'agressivité envers un enfant sont l'état dépressif et le comportement agressif de l'enfant.
- Selon les enseignants, les comportements agressifs sont plus courants chez les enfants issus de familles défavorisées. Il existe un risque élevé de comportement agressif chez les enfants issus de familles monoparentales.
- Les enseignants éprouvent le plus souvent de l'anxiété, de l'inquiétude et de la peur lorsqu'ils sont confrontés à des situations conflictuelles entre élèves.
- Le type de comportement le plus fréquemment rapporté dans les situations de confrontation aux comportements agressifs des élèves est la réponse active (86 %). 25 % des personnes interrogées ont déclaré choisir une réponse émotionnelle. Cependant, 7 % des personnes interrogées ont déclaré qu'elles essayaient de ne pas remarquer le problème, choisissant une réaction passive.

## **Introduction**

Problems of school education are attracting the expert community's attention. Identification of students' aggressive behavior is one of the key components of the teacher's preventive work in the educational context. Prevention of aggressive behavior in the student environment and reducing the risks of school violence are priority tasks within this area. At the same time, the need to create and implement programs to develop competencies for deviant and antisocial behavior prevention for educational psychologists, specialists in centers for working with minors, and teachers has been repeatedly noted (Rean, 2018). The necessary competencies developed within such programs, in particular, are the following: diagnostics of the current emotional state of the child, personal qualities, and students' family and social characteristics that increase the likelihood of antisocial behavior; assessment of the interaction characteristics within a students group in terms of the likelihood of antisocial behavior among its members; and identification of risk factors for aggressive behavior or bullying (Rean, 2018). The formation of these competencies should be based on understanding of teachers' ideas about student involvement in aggressive behavior, teachers' understanding of various risk factors for aggressive behavior (in particular, family ones), as well as assessing readiness to implement measures to intervene in conflicts in the student environment.

All of the above factors determine the relevance and practical significance of the research questions that this study poses. Such questions include: (1) On the basis of what manifestations do teachers understand that adolescents are involved in aggressive behavior? (2) How do teachers understand the various factors that determine adolescent aggression (age, gender, and family factors)? (3) How do teachers react to conflict between students and what feelings do they experience when faced with aggressive behavior among students?

Teachers' ideas about various personal development aspects and individual characteristics of children and adolescents influence teaching activities. Typically, the phenomena of stereotyping, projection, empathy, as well as the teacher's reflexive-perceptual skills are studied by researchers (Rean & Kolominsky, 2000). The problem of a teacher's understanding of teenage aggression is both of independent scientific interest and is a significant element of techniques for the prevention of problems at school, in particular, bullying. For example, many studies note that teachers' positions regarding the inadmissibility of school violence and bullying are a significant factor in the prevention of these phenomena (Baraldsnes, 2020; Salimi et al., 2021; van Verseveld et al., 2021; Varela et al., 2019; Volkova et al., 2017). At the same time, consideration of various aspects of teachers' understanding of child and adolescent aggression is an independent research subject. Thus, Coplan et al. (2015) examined the views, beliefs, and emotional reactions of teachers working with preschoolers regarding children's intra-group behavior. The research participants were 405 women working in preschools in Ontario province (Canada). The participants were asked to express their views on a series of hypothetical situations involving behaviors related to peer group inclusion, such as: physical aggression, relational aggression, shy behavior, unsociability, rough-and-tumble play, extreme initiative in making

social contacts, exuberance and social dominance. In relation to each hypothetical situation, teachers were asked to verbalize their attitudes (in particular, tolerance of various situations or the desire to intervene), beliefs and emotional reactions typical of certain situations. The study found that the teachers significantly more often expressed negative attitudes towards aggressive behavior than towards social isolation. There were two components noted: attitude towards the social phenomenon and readiness to intervene, such that a negative attitude implied a high willingness to intervene. In addition, the tendency towards exuberance and social dominance, and rough-and-tumble play between preschoolers were perceived ambiguously by teachers, having both positive and negative aspects. More often than not, study participants experienced negative emotions, in particular anger, in situations associated with physical aggression, indirect relational aggression, manifestations of social dominance (Coplan et al., 2015).

A number of studies have considered the specifics of certain attitudes towards aggressive behavior. For example, Craig et al. (2000) examined various factors (individual and contextual) associated with attitudes towards bullying among students and teachers. Contextual factors included: aggression type witnessed by the study participant; individual factors including gender, age, empathy, belief in a just world, and femininity/masculinity. The study found that aggressive interactions associated with physical impact were significantly more often identified as bullying than other aggression types, in particular verbal ones. Based on regression analysis, the significance of the following predictors of intolerant attitudes towards school violence was established: the type of aggression witnessed by the study participant, empathy, femininity/masculinity. Situations of physical aggression in an educational environment were significantly more often interpreted by respondents as bullying than other aggressive behavior types. As in many other studies, it was shown that empathy is significantly associated with intolerant attitudes towards school bullying and readiness to intervene.

Nesdale and Pickering (2006) examined various factors associated with negative attitudes towards the acceptability of aggression. The authors, drawing on social schema theory (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) and social identity theory (Turner et al., 1979), observed teachers' responses to children's aggression. They examined the social categorization processes—according to social schema theory, when faced with a particular situation, the schema existing in one's experience allows one to interpret certain social situations, “overlying” on them a pattern existing in the subject's experience. Elementary school teachers ( $n = 90$ ) were asked to read about hypothetical situations describing an aggressive episode committed by a group of boys from one class against one boy from another class. Children varying in popularity among their classmates were represented as aggressors. The authors of the study, within the hypothetical situations, recreated the factor of teachers' identification with the class. The results demonstrated a persistent negative reaction from teachers towards aggressors compared to victims. However, teachers' responses were influenced by the popularity of the bullies, as well as their own degree of identification with the class (Nesdale & Pickering, 2006). In particular, the study revealed that the teachers attributed a higher degree of responsibility for participation in an aggressive episode to popular students,



if the student acted as an aggressor in a hypothetical episode. Identification with the class turned out to be significantly associated with higher assessments of readiness for disciplinary measures: if the aggressor, in a hypothetical situation, studied in a class in relation to which teachers had a high level of identification, teachers reported greater readiness to intervene and take disciplinary measures against the aggressor.

One of the Russian studies demonstrated that teachers take the position of an active observer in relation to bullying and, although aware of how to handle school bullying, prefer not to take action to stop and prevent it (Bochaver et al., 2015). Let us highlight the data obtained regarding the signs by which respondents identified school bullying: for the vast majority of respondents, verbal and physical aggression turned out to be such a sign; a slightly smaller percentage of respondents considered humiliation, ridicule, and provocations as signs of bullying. Gossip and rumors were considered as indicators of bullying by very few respondents (Bochaver et al., 2015).

The problem of which factors determine adolescents' aggressive behavior, in particular, gender, age, and family factors, is considered in many scientific publications. The connection between the family situation and the likelihood of aggressive behavior has been confirmed in many studies (Espelage et al., 2000; Voisin & Hong, 2012). The main form of aggression in the "transition" from the family to the peer environment, including the school environment, is the perception by child of aggressive acts in the family (Baldry, 2003; Espelage et al., 2014). Physical aggression among peers is probably one of the most noticeable manifestations of family dysfunction, but is certainly not the only one. The association of domestic violence with substance abuse (Downs & Harrison, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2009) is also an example of the highly negative consequences of family dysfunction. This necessitates the assessment of teachers' ideas about various risk factors (in particular, family ones) for aggressive behavior in adolescents.

The issue of teachers' understanding of the adolescents' aggressive behavior in the context of age-related characteristics is also considered in a number of Russian studies (Fomichenko, 2013; Fomichenko, 2019). A. Fomichenko (2013) presents the results of a socio-psychological study of teachers' understanding of the causes of students' aggressive behavior in different age groups. The study used a methodology based on the motivational attribution principle. It found a connection between the teacher's understanding of the motivation of students' aggression and the students' age and gender. It was shown that from the second to the fifth grade, teachers note an increase in the importance of the reasons for students' aggressiveness associated with changes in their social status. Throughout middle school (grades 5–9), teachers consider the causes of adolescent aggressiveness in connection with the school community formation. Among fifth- to seventh-grade students, teachers note the emergence of group self-identification—adolescents' orientation towards the importance of the sense of "we". According to the teachers, the period from seventh to ninth grades is characterized by students' focus on self-determination and self-identification, and therefore the reasons for aggressive behavior associated with ideological differences sharply increase. The work showed that during this period, according to the teachers, the importance of the causes of student aggression associated with self-regulation decreases (Fomichenko, 2013).



## Methods

The following techniques were used in this study: expert assessment, psychological testing, standardized and semi-standardized questionnaires. This research paper presents an analysis of respondents' answers to a number of questions, including:

How do you usually understand that aggression is being shown towards a child? (multiple choice)

- Depressed state (the child is withdrawn, tense, passive, sad)
- The child becomes aggressive (verbally or physically)
- The child becomes impulsive (unable to control himself/herself)
- Emotional response (screaming, tears, laughter, embarrassment)
- Social distancing (child avoids interaction with others)
- Social isolation (other children do not want to interact with the child)
- Atypical behavior
- Taking out aggressive feelings on objects and/or animals
- Visible consequences (bruises, abrasions, torn clothes, damaged objects)
- Feedback from the child (requests for help, complaints)
- Other:

Which of the following statements about aggressive behavior depending on the gender of children and adolescents do you agree with? (multiple choice)

- There are no differences in aggressive behavior between genders
- Girls are less likely to show aggression than boys
- Aggression in girls is more "inventive" in nature (plans of revenge, gossip, social aggression) than in boys
- Adults are more tolerant of aggressive behavior in boys than in girls
- Boys show more outward aggression (physical, verbal); girls show more inward aggression (irritation, resentment)
- Other:

In your opinion, children from which families are most likely to exhibit aggressive behavior? (rating on a 7-point scale).

- From two-parent families
- From single-parent families
- From dysfunctional families
- From large families
- From families who took children under guardianship
- From migrant families

In your opinion, the children of which parents are more prone to aggressive behavior? (rating on a 7-point scale).

- Parents who control all areas of the child's life
- Parents who set strict requirements and rules
- Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account
- Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice

- Parents who show indifference towards the child
- Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child
- Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child

What emotions and feelings do conflicts between students evoke in you? (multiple choice)

- I feel surprised, shocked
- I feel anger, irritation
- I feel anxious, afraid
- They don't bother me
- Other:

How do you usually respond to teenagers' aggressive behavior in your class/school? (multiple choice)

- Active response (I strive to intervene in the conflict as quickly as possible, talk with the students and their parents, raise this issue at a school meeting/meeting of teachers, seek help in resolving this issue from a school psychologist, etc.)
- Passive response (I try to ignore the problem, pretend that nothing is happening, hush up the situation, allow aggression towards certain students, etc.)
- Emotional response (I try to find emotional support, I experience this problem as personal, I share it with relatives, I go to a psychologist, I often get nervous, I react emotionally to children, I use sedatives, etc.)
- Other:

These questions from the professional questionnaire and others that were not included in this analysis were developed by the team of the Center for Socialization, Family and Prevention of Antisocial Behavior at Moscow State Pedagogical University. Response categories were identified through expert analysis of interviews with 20 teachers. Some categories were adjusted and supplemented after conducting a pilot study on a sample of 140 people. The study was carried out via an anonymous online survey. Data processing was performed in RStudio (R version 4.0.0; frequency analysis of respondents' answers was carried out, as well as correlation analysis using the Spearman coefficient.

### ***Participants***

More than 13,000 teachers from six federal districts of the Russian Federation took part in the "Teacher as a Subject of Education and Antisocial Behavior Prevention" project. This analysis uses data from 5,086 respondents (95% female). Forty percent of respondents have more than 25 years of experience; 12% of respondents have 21–25 years of work experience; 10% have 16–20 years; 10% have 11–15 years; 13% have 5–10 years; and 15% have less than 5 years. Thirty-nine percent of respondents work in primary school, 66% in middle school, 39% in high school. Forty percent of respondents have the highest qualification grade, 37% have the first qualification grade, 23% have no grade. Twenty-seven percent of teachers from the sample also perform administrative duties.

## Results

The most common answers to the question “How do you usually understand that aggression is being shown towards a child?” (Figure 1) were: “Depressed state (the child is withdrawn, tense, passive, sad)” and “The child becomes aggressive (verbally or physically).” The first of these options was noted by 59% of respondents, the second by 56%.

The third most common option was “Emotional response (screaming, tears, laughter, embarrassment)”; this option was selected by 45% of respondents. About 30% of the sample chose the following options as indicators of aggression towards a child: “The child becomes impulsive (no longer able to control himself/herself)” (33%), “Atypical behavior” (30%), “Displacement (Taking out aggression on objects and/or animals)” (35%), “Visible consequences (bruises, abrasions, torn clothes, damaged objects)” (37%).

Let us also consider the least common options. “Feedback from the child (requests for help, complaints)” was selected by only 29% of teachers. The social distancing and social isolation options were chosen by 28% and 22%, respectively.

A correlation analysis was carried out to assess the relationship between the choices of different answers to a specific question. The association level shows that the choices of different indicators were associated with each other with some probability. Let us analyze the most interesting results: the “Depressed state” indicator is associated with “Social distancing” ( $r = 0.25, p < 0.01$ ) and “Visible consequences” ( $r = 0.25, p < 0.01$ ). The “Social distancing” indicator was associated with such categories as “Visible consequences” ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ), “Feedback from the child” ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ), “Social isolation” ( $r = 0.33, p < 0.01$ ), and “Depressed state” ( $r = 0.25,$

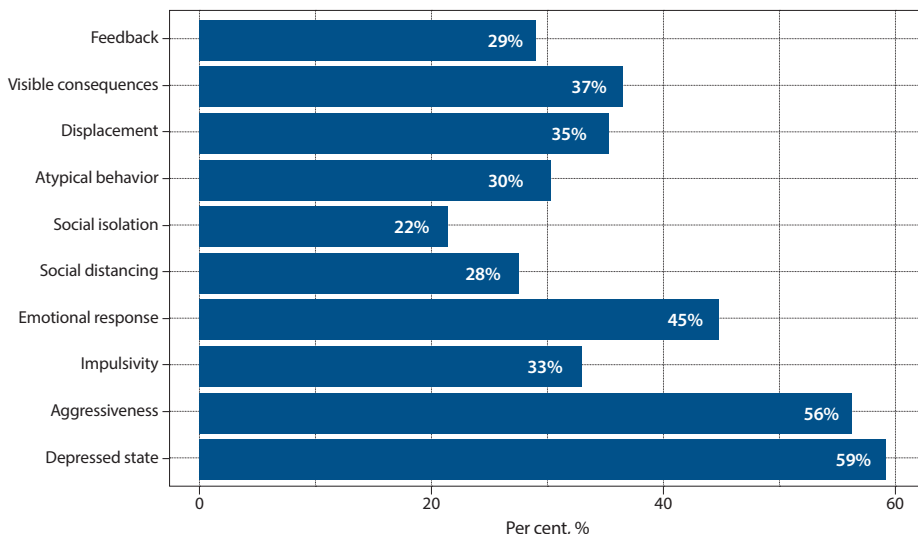


Figure 1. Distribution of answers to the question, “How do you usually understand that aggression is being shown towards a child?”

$p < 0.01$ ). These associations apparently show that aggressive behavior victims are perceived by teachers as more detached from the social life of the class.

The choice of “The child becomes aggressive” is significantly associated with such categories as “Taking out aggression on objects and/or animals” ( $r = 0.3, p < 0.01$ ) and “Visible consequences” ( $r = 0.2, p < 0.01$ ). “Taking out aggression on objects and/or animals” turned out to be significantly associated with “Impulsivity” ( $r = 0.3, p < 0.01$ ), “Visible consequences” ( $r = 0.39, p < 0.01$ ), and “Feedback from the child” ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ). The described connections “cluster” probably demonstrates the specifics of teachers’ representation of aggressors in situations of conflict between students: these students are perceived as impulsive, having a high readiness for indirect aggression, and inclined to show aggression outwardly.

The “Feedback from the child” parameter turned out to be significantly associated with “Social distancing” ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ), “Social isolation” ( $r = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ), “Taking out aggression on objects and/or animals” ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.01$ ), and “Visible consequences” ( $r = 0.44, p < 0.01$ ). The “feedback” indicator turned out to be associated with various parameters included in the assumed “clusters” of both aggressors and victims. It is important to note that this was one of the least common aggressive behavior indicators.

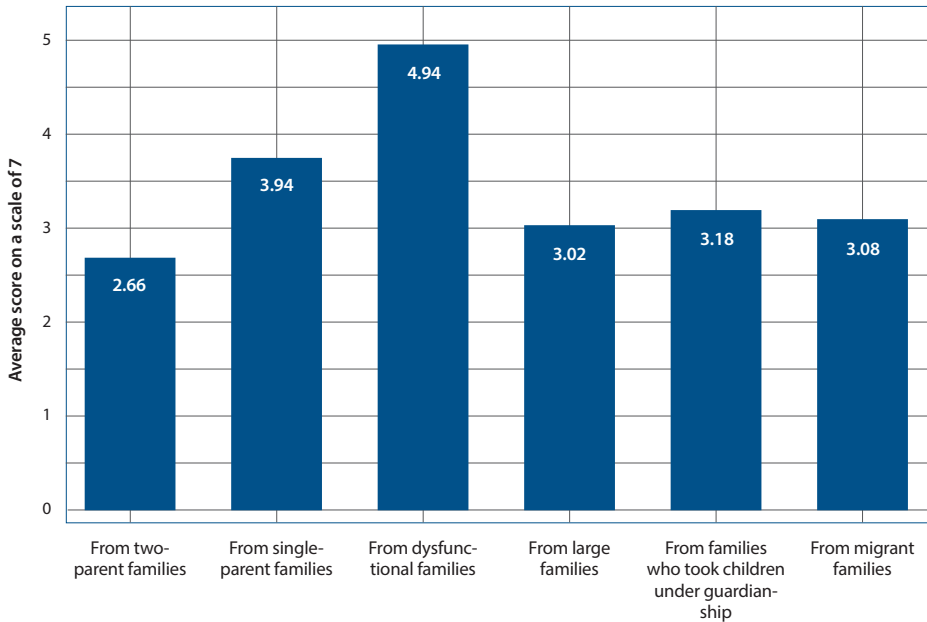
The indicators’ correlations seems to point to their similarity: for example, the child’s aggressiveness correlated with taking out aggression on objects/animals and visible consequences (bruises, abrasions), or the connection between social distancing, social isolation, and depression. It can be assumed that these groups of correlations refer to various aspects of teachers’ perception of aggressive behavior among children and adolescents—in particular, they somewhat clarify the images of victims and aggressors.

The distribution of answers to the question, “Which of the following statements about aggressive behavior depending on the gender of children and adolescents do you agree with?” is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1

*Distribution of Answers to the Question, “Which of the Following Statements About Aggressive Behavior Manifestation Depending on the Gender of Children and Adolescents Do You Agree With?”*

Response option	Respondents’ percentage
There are no differences in aggressive behavior between genders	22%
Girls are less likely to show aggression than boys	32%
Aggression in girls is more “inventive” in nature (plans of revenge, gossip, social aggression) than in boys	75%
Adults are more tolerant of aggressive behavior in boys than in girls	29%
Boys show more outward aggression (physical, verbal); girls show more inward aggression (irritation, resentment)	63%



*Figure 2.* Distribution of answers to the question, “In your opinion, children from which families are most likely to exhibit aggressive behavior?”

The overwhelming majority of respondents are inclined to believe that boys are prone to manifest aggression externally (physically/verbally), while girls’ aggressive behavior is more likely to be indirect. At the same time, a significant part of the sample agrees with the statement that adults are more tolerant of aggressive behavior in boys than in girls. Also, 22% of respondents stated that there are no differences in the manifestation of aggressive behavior between the genders.

The teachers were also asked to evaluate how adolescents’ aggressive behavior is determined by family factors. Figure 2 presents the answers to the question, “Children from which families are most likely to exhibit aggressive behavior?”

The option “from dysfunctional families” received the highest average rating, 4.94 on a 7-point scale. Teachers also highly rated the importance of the single-parent family factor: the average rating was 3.73. Such options as “from large families” (3.02), “from families who took children under guardianship” (3.18), and “from migrant families” (3.08) received about three points on average. Tukey’s test was used to assess the statistical significance of differences in mean values between groups. The results are presented in Appendix 1.

Additionally, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship among different answers to the given question. The results are presented in Figure 3.

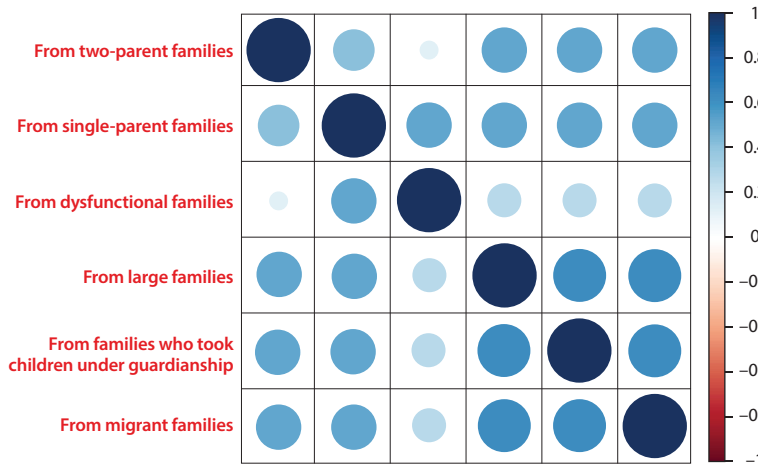


Figure 3. Correlation matrix of answers to the question, “In your opinion, children from which families are most likely to exhibit aggressive behavior?”

The size and color saturation of the circles in the diagram correspond to the magnitude of the correlations. Circles along the main diagonal correspond to 1; medium-sized circles correspond to correlations from 0.4 to 0.6; small circles correspond to correlations of about 0.2-0.3. Our analysis clarifies the characteristics of teachers’ ideas about family factors that determine the adolescents’ aggressive behavior. Thus, assessments given for the “from two-parent families” option correlated with assessments given for “from large families” ( $r = 0.49, p < 0.01$ ), “from families who took children under guardianship” ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.01$ ), and “from migrant families” ( $r = 0.41, p < 0.01$ ). Ratings for the “from single-parent families” option also correlated with “from two-parent families” ( $r = 0.4, p < 0.01$ ).

In general, as Figure 3 demonstrates, the “from dysfunctional families” statement is least related to all other options with the exception of “from single-parent families” ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ). Together with the analysis of the average scores presented in Figure 2, a number of assumptions can be made about teachers’ ideas about family factors in adolescents’ aggressive behavior. The key factor, from the teachers’ point of view, is the dysfunctional nature of intra-family relationships, corresponding to the option “from dysfunctional families”; an important factor, in the teachers’ opinion, is the family’s structural completeness/incompleteness. Such factors as “large families”, “migrant families”, and “families who took children under guardianship” seem to be, according to the teachers, additional factors that have an impact in case of a cumulative effect.

Let us turn to teachers’ ideas about the factors of aggressive behavior associated with a parenting style. The distribution of average scores on a 7-point scale is presented in Figure 4.

Thus, based on the analysis of the distribution of average ratings of answers to the question, “In your opinion, the children of which parents are more prone to aggressive behavior?”, the most significant options were: “Parents who show indifference to-



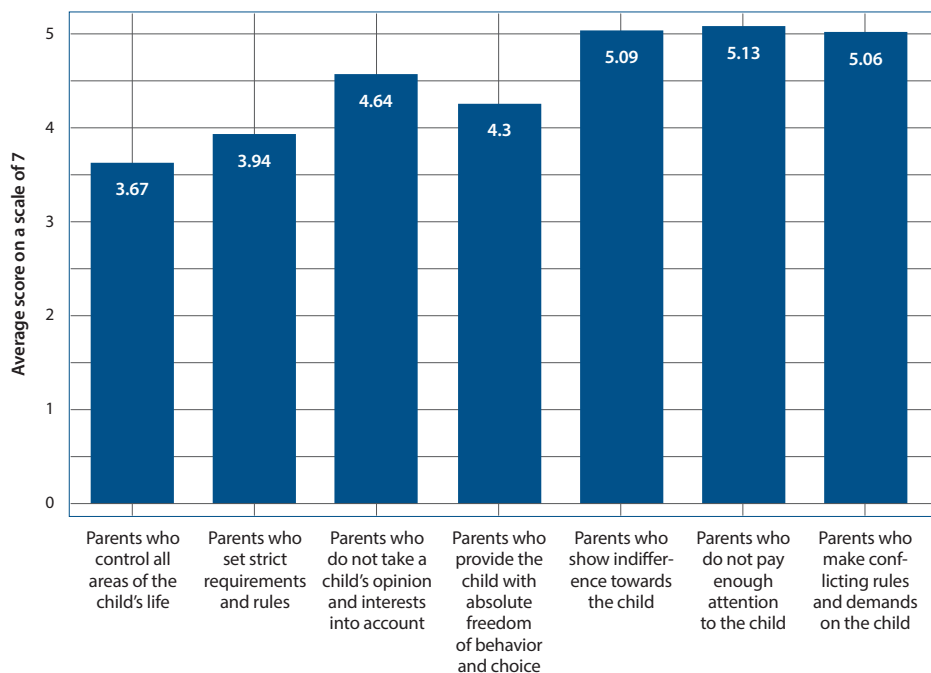


Figure 4. Distribution of answers to the question, “In your opinion, the children of which parents are more prone to aggressive behavior?”

wards the child” (5.09), “Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child” (5.13), and “Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child” (5.06). In other words, we are talking about parents’ lack of emotional availability for their children. The option of “Parents who do not take a child’s opinion and interests into account” also received a high average rating (4.64). This option can also be attributed to the conditional “emotional availability” parameter. To a lesser extent, teachers tended to correlate aggressive behavior with strong control on the part of parents: such options as “Parents who control all areas of the child’s life” (3.67) and “Parents who set strict requirements and rules” (3.94) received slightly lower scores on average. The average rating of the “Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice” option (4.3) is perceived somewhat separately. Tukey’s test was used to assess the statistical significance of differences in mean values between groups. The results are presented in Appendix 2.

Let us review the results of a correlation analysis of the relationship between answers to a question concerning various aspects of parenting style in the context of adolescents’ aggressive behavior. A visualization of the correlation matrix is presented in Figure 5.

In fact, two clusters are identified: control and parents’ emotional availability. As shown in Figure 5, the parameters of emotional availability are significantly related to each other: correlations at the 0.7-0.8 level are observed. The same can be said about the parameters of control: these options are highly correlated with each other.

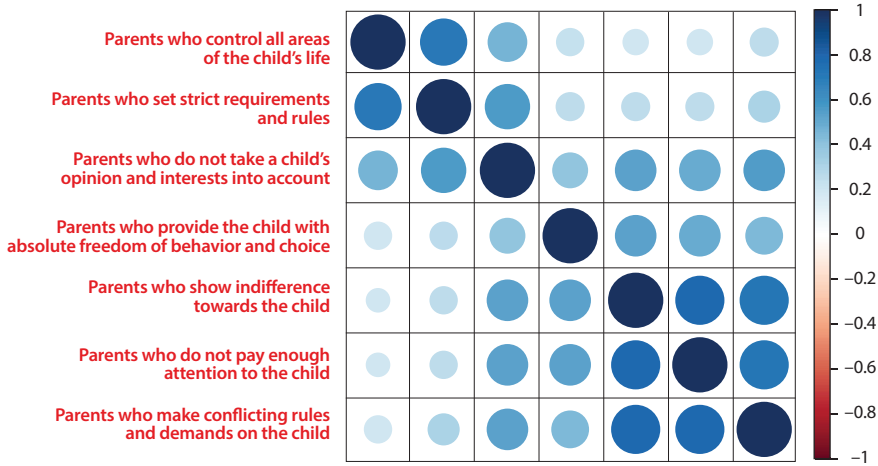


Figure 5. Correlation matrix of answers to the question “In your opinion, the children of which parents are more prone to aggressive behavior?”

At the same time, indicators from different clusters correlate weakly with each other: connections are at the 0.2-0.3 level. Otherwise stated, these clusters, in a sense, represent the conditional “coordinate axes” of the underlying pedagogical ideas about adolescents’ families and corresponding to the attitudes underlying social perception: in one direction, on family emotional life, and in the other, on parental control of adolescent behavior. The “Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice” option is somewhat isolated: the significance of this statement is associated with both conditionally identified clusters; however, the observed correlations are somewhat weaker than the connections between the indicators “within” the conditional clusters.

Respondents were also asked about their behavior and emotional state in situations involving intervention in conflicts between students. The distribution of answers to the question, “How do you usually respond to teenagers’ aggressive behavior in your class/school?” is presented in Figure 6.

The vast majority of teachers (86.8%) chose the option of “Active response (I strive to intervene in the conflict as quickly as possible, talk with students and their parents, raise this issue at a school meeting/meeting of teachers, seek help in resolving this issue from a school psychologist, etc.)”.

A significant number of respondents (24.5%) chose the option of “Emotional response (I try to find emotional support, I experience this problem as personal, I share it with relatives, I go to a psychologist, I often get nervous, I react emotionally to children, I use sedatives, etc.)”.

About 7% of teachers indicated that they tend to react passively in situations of conflicts between students, choosing the option of “Passive response (I try to ignore the problem, pretend that nothing is happening, hush up the situation, allow aggression towards certain students, etc.)”.

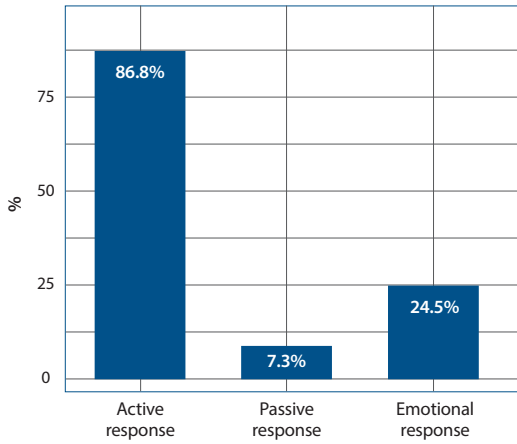


Figure 6. Distribution of answers to the question “How do you usually respond to teenagers’ aggressive behavior in your class/school?”

The distribution of answers to the question, “What emotions do conflicts between students evoke in you?” is presented in Figure 7. The largest number of respondents (64.3%) chose the “I feel anxious, afraid” option; the second most common statement was, “I feel anger, irritation” (22.5%). A slightly smaller percentage agreed with the option, “I feel surprised, shocked” (20.4%). About 17% of respondents chose the option of “They don’t bother me”. We would like to highlight that study participants could choose any number of answers to this question.

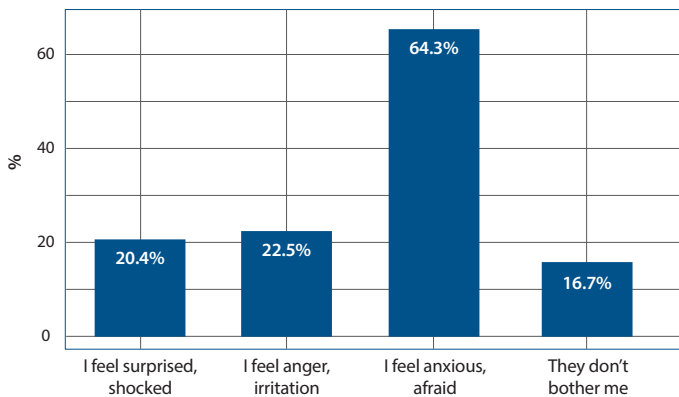


Figure 7. Distribution of answers to the question “What emotions and feelings do conflicts between students evoke in you? ”

## **Discussion**

Our results show that a depressed state and the child's own aggressiveness are clear indicators of adolescents' involvement in aggressive situations. This is partly consistent with research findings that teachers and other education professionals are significantly more likely to notice more explicit indicators of adolescents' involvement in aggressive situations, particularly those indicators that are associated with physical aggression (Hazler et al., 2001). It is also important to mention a number of alarming points: direct feedback from the child (in the form of requests and complaints), social distancing and social isolation, have become the least common "indicators" of adolescents' involvement in aggressive behavior, according to the teachers. A low percentage of teachers preferring the "feedback" option may mean both a low level of students' trust in the teaching community, as well as a lack of desire among teachers to deal with student problems. These two options are, of course, interrelated. Extremely little attention on the part of teachers to such indicators as "social isolation" and "social distancing" could potentially be associated with an extremely dangerous risk of single acts of aggression. According to international studies, in a significant number of cases, school shootings were committed by students with low social status, who were experiencing rejection from their peers. (Larkin, 2013). Data regarding teachers' ideas about the gender and age aspects of adolescents' aggressive behavior in general are consistent with the research results in this area — in particular, with the view that boys are somewhat more likely to be involved in aggressive behavior associated with physical aggression, and girls with social aggression and hostility (Rean & Konovalov, 2019; Rean & Novikova, 2019). Teachers' ideas about family factors that shape the adolescents' aggressive behavior — the greater importance attributed to of the dysfunctional family factor compared to the factor of a family's structural incompleteness corresponds to the paradigm that the key factor of the family's negative influence on personality development is not the structural, but the psychosocial deformation of the family (Rean, 2015). This position is also supported by data regarding teachers' ideas about the main risk factors for aggressive behavior in connection with parenting style: indifference towards the child, insufficient attention towards the child, and making conflicting rules and requirements demands on the child.

Let us turn to data concerning the type of teacher response to conflict between students, as well as the emotions that teachers experience in these situations. The vast majority of the sample demonstrates readiness to actively respond in such situations, yet a significant number of study participants (7%) reported that in some cases they try to avoid intervention, preferring a passive reaction. This result is quite alarming, since some conflicts between students actually remain without pedagogical intervention. It is worthy of special attention that in conflicts between students, teachers most often experience anxiety, worry, and fear, and the second most common emotion is anger. These facts may indicate that, when faced with aggressive behavior, many teachers do not have clear ideas about how to respond and do not know the techniques that help to deal with them.

## Conclusion

Our findings show that for teachers, the most obvious “indicators” of aggression towards a child are a depressed state and aggressive behavior of the child himself/herself. Direct requests for help from students were not often considered by teachers as a way to learn about aggressive behavior. The study also found that, according to the teachers, aggression associated with gender and age characteristics manifests itself as follows: aggression in girls is more “inventive” in nature (plans of revenge, gossip, social aggression); boys show more outward aggression (physical, verbal); and girls show inward aggression (irritation, resentment). Three risk groups were identified depending on the family type. In the opinion of the teachers, aggressive behavior is most often characteristic of children from disadvantaged families. They perceive a high risk of aggressive behavior in children from single-parent families. Teachers rated the risk of aggressive behavior slightly lower in children from migrant families, from families who took children under guardianship, and from large families. Based on the study results, three main risk factors for aggressive behavior were identified in connection with the parenting style: indifference towards the child, insufficient attention towards the child, and making conflicting rules and demands on the child. The study also found that teachers most often experience anxiety, worry, and fear when faced with conflicts among students (64%). At the same time, 23% typically experience indignation, anger, and irritation. It is also shown that the most frequently declared type of teachers’ response in situations of confrontation with aggressive behavior in a student environment is an active response (86%), while 25% of respondents stated that they have an emotional response. That said, 7% of the sample said they try to avoid the problem, choosing a passive response. This study highlights the extremely important issues of preparation and advanced training of teachers in the field of preventing aggression in the educational environment. In particular, the data demonstrate the need to develop and implement techniques and tools for identifying various aspects of adolescents’ aggressive behavior within teaching activities. Another important aspect is the development of algorithms for intervention in school aggression, especially since a large percentage of respondents reported a passive response to conflict in the student environment. It is also impossible to ignore the problem of teachers’ self-efficacy in matters of intervening in situations of aggressive behavior: the vast majority state that they experience anxiety, worry, and fear in situations that call for intervening in aggressive behavior among students. The development and implementation of best practices for teachers’ actions in such situations can help mitigate these feelings and the problematical character of such situations.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## Appendix 1

**Assessment of the statistical significance of the differences in average scores (using the Tukey Test) for different categories when answering a question “In your opinion, children from which families are most likely to exhibit aggressive behavior?”**

(i)-(j)		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound	Sig.
From single-parent families	From two-parent families	1.066	0.974	1.158	< 0.01
From dysfunctional families	From two-parent families	2.280	2.188	2.371	< 0.01
From large families	From two-parent families	0.358	0.267	0.450	< 0.01
From families who took children under guardianship	From two-parent families	0.518	0.426	0.609	< 0.01
From migrant families	From two-parent families	0.425	0.333	0.517	< 0.01
From dysfunctional families	From single-parent families	1.213	1.121	1.305	< 0.01
From large families	From single-parent families	-0.707	-0.799	-0.616	< 0.01
From families who took children under guardianship	From single-parent families	-0.548	-0.640	-0.456	< 0.01
From migrant families	From single-parent families	-0.641	-0.733	-0.549	< 0.01
From large families	From dysfunctional families	-1.921	-2.013	-1.829	< 0.01
From families who took children under guardianship	From dysfunctional families	-1.762	-1.853	-1.670	< 0.01
From migrant families	From dysfunctional families	-1.854	-1.946	-1.763	< 0.01
From families who took children under guardianship	From large families	0.159	0.067	0.251	< 0.01
From migrant families	From large families	0.066	-0.025	0.158	0.307
From migrant families	From families who took children under guardianship	-0.092	-0.184	-0.001	0.045

## Appendix 2

***Assessment of the statistical significance of the differences in average scores (using the Tukey Test) for different categories when answering a question “In your opinion, the children of which parents are more prone to aggressive behavior?”***

(i)-(j)		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound	Sig.
Parents who set strict requirements and rules	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	0.273	0.172	0.373	< 0.01
Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	0.969	0.868	1.070	< 0.01
Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	0.631	0.530	0.732	< 0.01
Parents who show indifference towards the child	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	1.421	1.321	1.522	< 0.01
Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	1.456	1.356	1.557	< 0.01
Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who control all areas of the child's life	1.388	1.287	1.489	< 0.01
Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	Parents who set strict requirements and rules	0.696	0.595	0.796	< 0.01
Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	Parents who set strict requirements and rules	0.358	0.257	0.458	< 0.01
Parents who show indifference towards the child	Parents who set strict requirements and rules	1.148	1.047	1.249	< 0.01
Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	Parents who set strict requirements and rules	1.183	1.082	1.284	< 0.01

Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who set strict requirements and rules	1.115	1.014	1.215	< 0.01
Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	-0.338	-0.438	-0.237	< 0.01
Parents who show indifference towards the child	Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	0.452	0.351	0.552	< 0.01
Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	0.487	0.386	0.587	< 0.01
Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who do not take a child's opinion and interests into account	0.418	0.318	0.519	< 0.01
Parents who show indifference towards the child	Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	0.790	0.689	0.891	< 0.01
Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	0.825	0.724	0.926	< 0.01
Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who provide the child with absolute freedom of behavior and choice	0.756	0.656	0.857	< 0.01
Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	Parents who show indifference towards the child	0.034	-0.065	0.135	0.948
Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who show indifference towards the child	-0.033	-0.134	0.067	0.958
Parents who make conflicting rules and demands on the child	Parents who do not pay enough attention to the child	-0.068	-0.169	0.032	0.412