

Coping strategies and social problem solving in adolescence

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The aim of our research was to explore the functioning of coping strategies (CS) and social-problem solving (SPS) ability at the ages of 8, 12, 15 and 18 and to reveal associations between these social forms and some background factors, such as age, gender, school success (grade average) and family background (mothers' and fathers' educational level, family type, family size). The participants were 888 students and their teachers and mothers. Two questionnaires were adapted (SPS for children, parents, teachers – *D'Zurilla, Nezu and Maydeu-Olivares*, 2002; CS for children and teacher – *Tremblay*, 1992). These instruments proved to be highly reliable (Cronbach α : .83 – .92).

Our data show that the relationship between the values of SPS-factors of children and mothers is the strongest in all age groups. Based on the total values, three factors (negative problem orientation, rational problem solving, avoidance) show increasing tendency with age, contrary to positive problem orientation and impulsivity. Gender differences can be found especially among children between 15 and 18.

The relationship between the values of CS of children and teachers is similar in the age groups. Based on the total values the results show that overt aggression as coping strategy was used by the oldest children (15, 18) in a significantly higher proportion than by the younger children ($p < .05$). In the oldest age group, boys were rated significantly ($p < .05$) more aggressive than girls.

The SPS-factors and CS are influenced the most by family type and family size, and less by mothers' educational level. In the youngest group, school success (grade average) already shows high positive correlation with SPS-factors and CS, and these values increase with age. In the older groups, the highest values can be found between rational problem solving and mathematics and biology, between impulsivity and history and literature.