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CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH REGARDING SUSCEPTIBILITY TO PEER PRESSURE¹

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SUMMARY

Peer pressure, the “nightmare” of many parents, is the question of parental (in)ability in clash with peer influence in different periods of life and growing up phases. It is often seen as a threat, along with search for peer responsibility for the inefficiency in achieving desired educational goals. Most often is associated with risky, i.e. problematic behaviors, but what we have to keep in mind is unbreakable bond between peer influence and development of their own identity. The purpose of this article was to gain insight into the characteristics of young people with regard to their susceptibility to peer pressure, and the definition of those characteristics that contribute the most to explain susceptibility to peer pressure. The study involved the application of seven questionnaires, which examined: susceptibility to peer pressure, perception of peer pressure, the self perception, depression, anxiety, parental behavior and relationships with friends. The sample consisted of 938 scholars in seventh and eighth grade, in addition to first, second and third year of high school students in Rijeka, Osijek, Split and Zagreb, age 12-18. It was conducted a stepwise regression analysis with the susceptibility to peer pressure as criterion variable and other variables were the predictors.

The results showed that almost 40% of the variance explained by susceptibility to peer pressure specified blocks of predictor variables (range of 1.2% - 12.7%). The most important predictors of peer pressure were perception of pressure and sex. If the experience of pressure (subjective feelings about the expectations of peers) is higher, the susceptibility to peer pressure is also higher. Male gender is an important predictor of increased susceptibility to peer pressure. The second group of significant predictors is related to the relationship with the parents, and especially applies to the relationship with the mother. Psychological control and permissiveness of mothers was positively associated with susceptibility to pressure, and monitoring was negative associated. A third set of significant predictors that explain susceptibility to peer pressure talks about anxious attachment to friends. Young people who see themselves as less susceptible to peer pressure achieve higher scores on measures of general perception of self-worth. Increase in age increases the susceptibility to peer pressure.

Key words: peer pressure, adolescent, susceptibility

INTRODUCTION

The influence of other people throughout a person's life is an unbroken process that forms part of individual's socialization in all stages of life. Adolescence is one of the most important periods of a person's life in which he or she is most susceptible to change. The concept of peer influence in this period is associated with the process of interaction between peers, in which children and young people accept characteristics of those peers for whom they feel sympathy (Dishon and Dodge, 2005).

There are different mechanisms through which peers influence each other, but one of the most frequently cited mechanisms in literature is peer pressure. It transfers group norms and maintains loyalty among group members (Vander Zanden, 2000).

Contemporary literature differs concepts of *peer influence* and *peer pressure*. Kiran-Esen (2003), Sim and Koh (2003) state that every kind of peer influence is actually peer pressure, and they define it as persuading and encouraging a person to undertake certain actions, noting that pressure may be direct and

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indirect, where in case of indirect pressure the person is not aware that he or she is under the influence of peers. Lashbrook (2000) focuses on the effects of peer pressure, i.e. conforming, and defines peer pressure as a specific form of peer influence that causes conformism of thought or behaviour. Berndt and Ladd (1989) define peer pressure as influence of a group on individuals through positive reinforcement for those who conform to group norms and/or sanctions for those who resist the conforming. It can be concluded that the concept of peer pressure is a narrower construct than the concept of peer influence, and that it concerns the expectations peers have from an individual to behave in a certain way, regardless of his or her own wishes.

Peer pressure is a multidimensional construct (Brown, 1982; Brown, Clasen, 1985), because adolescents perceive it in different areas of their life: participation in family activities, school activities, in activities with peers, conforming to peer norms (conforming in dressing, listening to music, etc) and risk behaviours.

Despite all the knowledge about peer pressure, we still know extremely little about which characteristics of adolescents make them more susceptible to peer pressure (Allen, Porter and McFarland, 2006).

Early adolescence is the time when peer pressure is the strongest. In this period a young person is torn between dependence on parents and greater independence, search for the self and building of self-esteem. The wish to be accepted in a group very often involves conforming, even when it means giving up one's desires and attitudes.

However, adolescents are not passive persons whose behaviour is simply a response to peer influence. It is therefore necessary to view the behaviour of adolescents in a group of peers as a process which combines the characteristics of adolescents, their attitudes, values and beliefs that they bring from their primary sources of socialization (family, school, neighbourhood), factors that contribute to the choice of company of peers and directly to peer behaviour in the context of a certain situation (Lebedina-Manzoni, Lotar and Ricijaš, 2008).

Both researchers and practitioners are largely focused on negative aspects of peer pressure and accordingly on manifestation of socially unacceptable behaviour. However, the role of peer relations can also be seen in a positive light and not only as encouragement for risk behaviour, weak working habits, neglect of school obligations and behaviour that neither parents nor the public deem acceptable. The positive aspects help young people in their transition from almost complete dependence on parents

to independence of thought and actions. Peers help a young person to adapt to individuals or other groups, share success and failure, learn communication and empathy, assess oneself and others, and through criticism and judgement peers face the individual with his or her own behaviour. Peers support each other in periods when they are faced with a multitude of new experiences and when they struggle for independence.

The studies conducted so far have mostly investigated correlation between susceptibility to peer pressure and adolescent risk behaviour (Morgan and Grube, 1991; Reed and Wilcox Roundtree, 1997; Kiran-Esen, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2003; Urberg et al., 2003), parental behaviour such as disciplining or parental support (Snyder, Dishion and Patterson, 1986; Laible and Thompson, 2002), age differences in susceptibility to peer pressure (Brown et al., 1986; Chassin et al., 1986; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986), gender (Davies and Kendel, 1981; Billy and Udry, 1985; Brown et al., 1986), global self-esteem and personality traits (Ginsburg, La Greca and Silverman, 1998) and quality of relationships with friends (Urberg et al., 2003).

AIM OF STUDY

Considering the complexity and intercorrelation of a large number of factors of peer pressure, the aim of this paper was to explain susceptibility to peer pressure by determining the predictive value of gender, age, personal perception of peer pressure, self-concept, depression, anxiety, perceived parental behaviour and satisfaction, i.e. attachment to peers.

METHODS

Sample

Given that studies have shown that susceptibility to peer pressure is changing during adolescence and according to some authors reaches its climax in early adolescence (Berndt and Ladd, 1989; Tolan and Cohler, 1993) and is subsequently reduced to the level characteristic of early childhood (Berndt and Ladd, 1989), the adolescent sample that was involved in this study consisted of pupils in seventh and eighth grade of primary school and students in first, second and third grade of high school (age range from 12-18; $M=14,82$; $SD=1,48$). Students from grammar schools and different vocational schools were chosen as high school respondents.

For this study, we used a convenience sample of 938 respondents from four cities in the Republic of Croatia with population of over 100.000 inhabit-

ants, which are at the same time administrative and economic centres of their regions (Cities of Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek). In each city one school outside the city centre and one in the city centre was included into the sample, and in case of high schools it was one grammar school and one vocational school. The schools were selected randomly and from every school category an approximately equal number of pupils was involved.

Table 1. Number of respondents according to school

	N	%
Primary school	359	38,3
Grammar school	291	31
Vocational school	288	30,7
Total	938	100

The sample included 418 boys (44,6%) and 520 girls (55,4%).

Instruments and methods of data analysis

This study involved seven questionnaires that measured: susceptibility to peer pressure, personal experience of peer pressure, self-perception, depression, anxiety, assessment of parental behaviour and satisfaction i.e. attachment in relationships with friends.

Table 3. Overview of applied questionnaires

Author	Instrument
1.Harter (1985)	Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA)
2.Vulić-Prtorić (2007)	Scale of Fears and Anxiety (SKAD- 62)
3.Vulić-Prtorić (2003)	Scale of Depression for Children and Adolescents (SDD)
4.Kamenov and Jelić (2003)	Inventory of Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR)
5.Keresteš, Kuterovac-Jagodić, and Brković (2009); Brković (2010)	Assessment of Parental Behaviour (PBQ)

Apart from the mentioned questionnaires, two questionnaires were constructed specifically for the purpose of this research: SPPV – Susceptibility to Peer

Pressure Scale and PPPS – Perception of Peer Pressure Scale (Lebedina Manzoni, Lotar and Ricijaš, 2011).

SPPV was constructed in a way that areas of peer pressure were defined through focus groups. After the qualitative analysis of data collected in focus groups had been carried out, the existence of five areas of peer pressure which partly agree with the areas defined by Brown and Clasen was established (1985): 1. peer relationships, 2. physical appearance, 3. relationship to parents, 4. risk behaviours and 5. behaviour at school. For each area eight to ten items were developed, in total 44 items. All items were formulated in terms of behaviour, i.e. would the respondents do what the peers ask or expect from them to do in order to avoid negative consequences or win positive reinforcement from peers. On a five-point scale they assessed to which extent certain statement is true for them, where 1 meant “not true at all”, and 5 meant “completely true”. All statements were formulated in the same direction – higher result meant higher susceptibility to peer pressure. On the basis of pilot study results items were reduced according to distribution of respondents’ answers for every item, inter-item correlation and item-total correlation on each factor. The final version of the Susceptibility to Peer Pressure Scale consists of 22 items which were formulated as hypothetical statements in terms of behaviour the respondent is ready to undertake when persuaded by peers. The internal consistence of SPPS expressed in Cronbach’s alfa coefficient is $\alpha = .87$.

PPPS – Perception of Peer Pressure Scale examines to what extent adolescents perceive that their friends expect them to act in a certain way. The mentioned scale was constructed on the basis of the items from the Susceptibility to Peer Pressure Scale (it’s parallel form). On a five-point scale the respondents assess to what extent it is true that their friends expect them to act in a certain way, where 1 means “this is not at all true”, and 5 means “completely true”. Although the items in the Scale cover the same contents (just like with the SPPV), we are talking about different constructs, which is supported by the fact that their correlation is $r = ,55$. The internal consistence of the Scale is satisfactory ($\alpha = ,90$).

Table 2. Number of pupils regarding gender and grade

	Primary school		High school		
	7 th grade	8 th grade	1 st grade	2 nd grade	3 rd grade
Boys	91	75	101	73	78
Girls	91	102	113	107	107
Total	182	177	214	180	185
Average age	$M=12,8$ ($SD=0,54$)	$M=13,8$ ($SD=0,48$)	$M=14,8$ ($SD=0,47$)	$M=15,8$ ($SD=0,51$)	$M=16,8$ ($SD=0,47$)

In order to examine the relative contribution of gender, age, attachment to peers, general experience of self-worth, some personality traits, perceived parental behaviour, perception of peer pressure (predictor variable) in explanation of peer pressure (criterion variable), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted.

Procedure

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical requirements and with the written approval of relevant institutions. All participants were informed about the purpose and main objectives of the study, but only after the instruments were applied, so that the knowledge about the study would not influence participants' own assessment. The consent for participation of children and youth in the study was prepared in accordance with the principles of the Code of Ethics in research involving children. Participation in the was anonymous.

Research was conducted during 2009/2010 school year, during classes, in groups, and lasted for about 45 minutes. The respondents were informed that they could quit the testing at any given moment. They were also told that it was not a test of their knowledge, that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that the anonymity of respondents was guaranteed.

Since the study involved a larger number of questionnaires the testing lasted for the duration of the entire class; the questionnaires were rotated according to the principle of Latin square, in order to control the influence of fatigue on performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hierarchical regression analysis defined which predictor variables (7 blocks of predictors) are significant for the explanation of susceptibility to peer pressure (criterion).

Table 4. Results of hierarchical regression analysis for prediction of susceptibility to peer pressure

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4		Step 5		Step 6		Step 7	
	β	t												
Gender	-,244	-7,36**	-,272	-8,09**	-,287	-8,60**	-,323	-9,23**	-,283	-8,14**	-,312	-8,69**	-,245	-7,40**
Age	,081	2,45**	,072	2,25*	,062	1,97*	,057	1,82	,032	1,01	,022	0,71	,001	0,04
Anxiety			,285	8,64**	,243	7,20**	,203	5,30**	,186	4,98**	,185	4,96**	,091	2,62**
Avoidance			,062	1,82	,036	1,05	,013	0,38	-,019	-0,56	-,023	-0,68	-,018	-0,59
General assessment of self-worth					-,155	-4,64**	-,103	-2,72**	-,060	-1,60	-,058	-1,55	-,083	-2,43*
Social anxiety							,066	1,55	,104	2,49*	,112	2,68**	,096	2,52*
Worry							-,039	-0,85	-,007	-0,17	-,002	-0,05	-,030	-0,74
Depression							,121	2,85**	,063	1,51	,058	1,39	,020	0,52
Acceptance									,002	0,05	,023	0,45	,016	0,34
Autonomy									-,030	-0,65	-,008	-0,15	,013	0,27
Psychological control									,133	3,80**	,100	2,31*	,048	1,21
Supervision									-,161	-4,40**	-,156	-3,20**	-,116	-2,61**
Permissiveness									,117	3,70**	,083	2,46*	,050	1,63
Positive discipline									-,080	-2,05*	-,060	-1,27	-,052	-1,20
Negative discipline									-,004	-0,13	,005	0,12	,027	0,65
Acceptance											-,048	-0,90	-,004	-0,09
Autonomy											-,034	-0,63	-,025	-0,49
Psychological control											,035	0,77	,032	0,78
Supervision											-,004	-0,07	,021	0,45
Permissiveness											,123	3,51**	,091	2,84**
Positive discipline											-,039	-0,75	-,069	-1,46
Negative discipline											-,003	-0,06	-,001	-0,02
Perception of peer pressure													,403	13,05**
Overall model														
R	,254		,394		,420		,432		,502		,516		,625	
Corrected R ²	,062		,151		,171		,179		,239		,247		,374	
ΔR^2	,065**		,091**		,021**		,010*		,066**		,014*		,125**	

It is evident from Table 4 that each block of predictor variables considerably contributes to explanations of susceptibility to peer pressure. Almost 40% of susceptibility to peer pressure variance (criterion variable) is explained by the mentioned blocks of predictor variables (range of 1,0% - 12,5%).

In the first step of the regression analysis it is evident how gender and age explain the 6,5% of susceptibility to pressure variance, where male adolescents and older ones are connected with greater susceptibility to pressure.

In the second step, a block of variables was included which refers to attachment to friends and explains the 9,1% of variance, where anxious attachment to friends is an important predictor of susceptibility.

The third block of variables includes the general experience of own worth and explains the 2,1% variance in criteria, where a higher experience of own worth is connected to lower susceptibility to pressure.

The fourth step includes personality traits of respondents and explains 1% of additional variance, where only depression is an important predictor of susceptibility to pressure; higher level of depression is connected to higher susceptibility.

The fifth and sixth step include the assessment of mother and father. The dimensions of mother assessment account for the 6,6% of susceptibility to pressure results variance, and father assessment for only 1,4%.

The seventh step includes the perception of peer pressure and explains the biggest part of variance in pressure susceptibility (12,5%).

It is interesting how with the introduction of every new block of predictor variables, the blocks maintain their predictive value in relation to the criterion variable of susceptibility to peer pressure, apart from the predictor variable of the adolescent's age. When including predictor variables related to personality traits, assessment of parents and experience of pressure, the age of respondents loses its predictive value.

The first block of variables refers to gender and age of respondents, where male and older adolescents are more inclined for susceptibility to peer pressure. Gender as predictive factor constantly remains an important predictor in every procedure of introduction of new blocks of predictor variables. The effect of gender, which shows that boys are more susceptible to peer pressure, has proven to be important probably because boys in general show

greater susceptibility to peer pressure in the area of risk behaviours (Brown et al., 1986; Labedina Manzoni et al., 2008). Since the Susceptibility to Peer Pressure Scale in its larger part concerns behaviours that can be characterized as risky if they occur in early or middle adolescence (e.g. smoking, alcohol use, thefts etc.), this result is not unusual. However, the question that still remains is are boys really more inclined to conform to the expectations of peers, or are mentioned behaviours in general more acceptable to them. It is possible that the pressure among boys is more direct and that they tend to persuade their peers more to act in a certain way, and the refusal to conform to the requirements of the group can be very risky for their status in the group. It is especially important if we consider that boys in adolescence are more directed to the group of peers, while girls are more directed to individual relationships with girlfriends (Vasta et al., 2004). In case of girls the whole process could be more subtle. Girls are less involved in persuading their peers, but certain things are still expected. This is, however, most certainly not the only explanation of these differences. It is possible that, from objective point of view, the pressure among boys is higher.

The finding that the older the adolescents, the greater the susceptibility to peer pressure is in accordance with the findings that show that the greatest peer influence occurs in the age of early adolescence (Berndt and Ladd, 1989; Tolan and Cohler, 1993), which forms the largest part of the sample in this study. With transition from childhood to adolescence there is a shift in hierarchy of attachment objects and young people are more directed to their peers, while parents become "reserve objects of attachment" (Allen and Land, 1999).

On the basis of the standardized regression coefficients (table 4) in the seventh step it is evident how the perception of pressure intensity best explains the criterion of susceptibility to peer pressure and explains the 12,5 % of result's variance. The perception of pressure shall depend on a number of subjective factors and interpretations of the adolescents themselves. It is assumed that the higher the perception of intensity, the higher the susceptibility to pressure will be. But, as it has been mentioned so far, we are talking about different constructs because in case of susceptibility, it is about behaviour that the adolescent is willing to undertake despite his or her own disagreeing, and in case of pressure perception, it is about the experience of expectations which does not have to be expressed in behaviour.

It is important to emphasise that here we are not talking about an objective measure of pressure intensity that peers put upon an individual, but about the experience of the adolescents which will influence their concrete behaviour differently. Adolescents who are more exposed to peer pressure are often more inclined to yield to it. The perception of pressure intensity directs the behaviour of adolescents. Lotar and Lebedina Manzoni (2011) state that pressure perception is an important predictor of susceptibility to pressure which depending on gender accounts for 25-32% of variance in results.

Anxious attachment to peers also maintains its predictive value in relation to the criterion variable of susceptibility to pressure with the introduction of every new block of predictor variables. If we bear in mind that anxious attachment is characterized by fear of rejection and abandoning, its relation to susceptibility to peer pressure seems clearer.

Anxious attachment to peers, which occurs out of fear of loss of relationship, can greatly encourage the adolescents to change their own behaviour and adapt it to what the peers expect from them or to what the adolescents believe is expected from them.

The need to belong is the basic human motive and is a foundation for a number of different behaviours. Due to the fear of loss of belonging and satisfactory relationship with peers, a need to adjust to the expectations of peers regardless of one's own choices may arise.

Armsden and Greenberg (1987) state that well-adapted adolescents have a tendency for high-quality relationships with their peers. Considering the results from this research, it seems that anxiety in relationships with friends is a key factor in differentiation between those who are susceptible and those who are not susceptible to peer pressure. Maybe a secure attachment type could be a defence tool from peer pressure and an expression of autonomy for adolescents. It is beyond doubt that the quality of loyalty to peers in this period of life is crucial for a number of processes in experiential and behavioural aspects of adaptation, as well as well-being of an individual.

Allen and Land (1999) find that adolescents who do not put friends on top of hierarchy of attachment objects show smaller inclination to susceptibility to peer pressure. With adolescents whose peers undertake the role of parents and they become their most important object of attachment, they obey in the same way they would obey parents.

Lotar (2012) states that it seems that adolescents who have not developed a secure attachment with

their parents have a greater need for finding new objects of attachment and are trying to find them among their peers.

With the introduction of the block of variables of perceived parental behaviour as predictors, it became evident that the influence of the mother has a greater influence on the criteria variable of susceptibility. The greater the mother's supervision and positive disciplining, the lower the susceptibility to pressure, and the greater her psychological control and permissiveness, the higher the susceptibility to pressure. As far as the father's role is concerned, his greater permissiveness is a predictor for higher susceptibility to peer pressure.

Regarding the variance explained, it is evident that the predictive importance of the mother is higher. We can assume that it is so because of mother's objective greater presence in children's lives and that the relationship with the mother is more indicative and to some extent more complex in comparison to the relationship with the fathers. Our results point to some emotional and social-cultural processes in this relationship, which can affect the scope of the influence of peers on each other.

Wood and associates (2004) conclude that parents' permissiveness can encourage the development of stronger peer influence with emphasis on alcohol consumption. A permissive parenting style as a risk factor for problem behaviour, especially externalized, is mentioned also by Keresteš (1999). Dishion and McMahan (1998) mention that ineffective parenting methods include harsh disciplining through punishments and a weak, inconsistent permissive approach.

Also, adolescents who report about the experience of closeness with parents, achieve higher results in measuring behavioural competences and dependence on own resources, and express lower levels of psychological and social problems (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Stenberg, 1990). Hayes (2004) mentions good relationship between parents and adolescents as a necessary precondition for supervising adolescents' behaviour. A number of longitudinal studies (Ary et al., 1999; Barnes et al., 2000; Brody and Ge, 2001) state that the quality of relationship between parents and adolescents is connected to parental control, but also to socializing with deviant peers.

De Kemp and associates (2006) mention that intensification of delinquent behaviour in early adolescence depends largely on parents' attitude. They conclude that by ensuring a high level of support and supervision, and a minimal level of psycho-

logical control, parents can prevent the development of delinquency in their children. It seems that at this age the quality of relationship with parents is complementary to the relationship with peers, i.e. that the lack of positive relationship to parents is compensated by adolescents through peer influence.

Parental supervision and sharing of the same values and norms are essential for the existence of good-quality relationships between parents and adolescents (Hayes et al., 2004). Research show (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987) that improvements in quality of relationships between parents and adolescents lead to positive outcomes in different fields of life (reduction in drug use, better academic achievements, higher level of reliance on own resources, lower level of social and psychological problems). Tolan and Cohler (1993) state that the parents of adolescents who are susceptible to negative influence of their peers are permissive, inconsistent in disciplining and do not control their children's behaviour enough, which is completely in accordance with the obtained results.

A block of predictor variables which refer to personality traits of respondents introduce the variable of depression as an important predictor of susceptibility to pressure; the higher the depression, the higher the susceptibility to peer pressure. The depression could be a consequence of experience of pressure and social anxiety, i.e. a result of accumulated stress triggered by interaction of social anxiety and inadequate relationships (Rudolph et al., 2000). However, through the introduction of the block of variables for assessment of parental behaviour as predictor, the importance of depression is lost and social anxiety becomes an important predictor of susceptibility to peer pressure. If we consider the fact that the main symptoms of social anxiety are withdrawal from social contacts and intensive fear of negative evaluation, experience of insecurity in own competency in relationship with peers, and distorted interpersonal perception – the belief that others would assess them in a negative way and notice their insecurity, it seems understandable that social anxiety would have predictive value for susceptibility to peers.

It is possible that social anxiety makes adolescents more directed towards tracking of their peers' signals and more sensitive to their reactions. In this case these adolescents would interpret even subtle signals of their peers as clear signs of pressure. It is also possible that a group of adolescents exerts greater pressure on adolescents who show signs of anxiety, because they might seem as persons who are easily persuaded.

Persons with more pronounced social anxiety often doubt in their own capability of creating a desired impression on other people and believe they can not meet the expectations other people have from them (Wallace and Alden, 1995).

Leary and Kowalski (1995) state that the adolescent's desire to be liked and accepted by his peers (friends) while doubting in own capability of realizing these aspirations is correlated with the concept of social anxiety. At the same time, we can also assume that these circumstances form good grounds for susceptibility to peer pressure. Cohen and Prinstein (2006) showed in their study that adolescents with more social anxiety are more inclined to conforming to peers regardless of the social status of peers who exert pressure. As opposed to them, with adolescents with a lower level of social anxiety the susceptibility to peer pressure changes depending on the social status of peers who exert the pressure.

This finding definitely leads to conclusion that in case of any kind of interventions targeting at skills of resisting peer pressure, special attention should be drawn to the vulnerable group of young people with emotional difficulties. It is beyond doubt that emotional problems (worry, depression, anxiety) form a basis for greater peer influence and conformity regardless of own wishes and choices. The assumption is that adolescents who worry more about the impressions they will make on others and they fear negative evaluation will be more inclined to do what their peers ask from them in order to avoid negative reactions from the group they belong to (or would like to belong to).

The last block of predictor variables refers to the general impression of own worth. The greater it is, the lower the susceptibility to peer pressure. It is interesting how in the fifth and sixth step of regression analysis through entering perceived parental behaviour variables as predictors, the general impression of self-worth loses the importance of a prediction.

Studies often mention correlation between high self-esteem and positive self-concept with high level of resilience to peer pressure (Bamace, Umana-Taylor, 2006; Baumeister, 1991; Rhodes and Wood, 1992; Kaplan, 2004), which is in accordance with results gained in this research. Adolescents with a higher level of self-esteem feel more satisfied with themselves which can give them the sense of security, and they put less effort into meeting the expectations of their peers.

More recent studies show that susceptibility to peer pressure is higher among young people that are insecure about themselves and their social identity which is manifested through higher social anxiety or lower self-esteem (Cohen and Prinstern, 2006; Prinstein, 2007).

Bukowski, Velasquez and Brendgen (2008) emphasise the lack of friends and low self-esteem as crucial in the process of deciding to be more similar to peers. The characteristics of adolescents that different research most often relates to peer pressure are those associated to self-concept through a lower global self-esteem (Ginsburg, La Greca and Silverman, 1998).

Young people who perceive themselves as less susceptible to peer pressure achieve higher results in the measure of general experience of self-worth. However, they also perceive their parents to be more positive in their parenting methods. It would be interesting to study the relationship between these variables – to what extent does positive parenting influence the development of a more positive self-concept, and therefore also greater resilience in peer relationships, i.e. to what extent does a more self-confident personality of a child contribute to a more positive perception of the parents and their behaviour. This relationship is probably reciprocal and mutual, if we consider the simultaneous influence of biological, psychological and social factors of development of every personality.

CONCLUSION

Although in this study we can not talk about cause and effect relations and reasons why certain level of susceptibility to peer pressure occurs, the results clearly show that peer pressure is a result of multiple influences, a process that is associated to a number of different aspects, where the relation between the components of this process is of crucial importance.

In explanation of adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure when all predictor variables blocks are included, significant predictors are male gender and older age, high experience of pressure, higher level of emotional difficulties in the area of anxiety and depression, difficulties in entering safe relationships with others, which is why anxious attachment in relations with friends, assessment of parents as

permissive, and a low general impressions of self-worth are present.

Special attention in susceptibility to peer pressure should be paid to their experience of pressure (subjective feeling due to expectations of peers) because it has the highest predictive value. Other blocks of predictor variables have almost the same importance and they relate to anxious attachment with peers, relationship with parents (especially mothers), general personality traits and general experience of self-worth.

If we exclude the influence of gender on susceptibility to pressure, it seems that social relationships and relations to great extent define the susceptibility to peer pressure in relation to the personality traits that had been studied.

However, considering the comprehensiveness of the instruments applied, the amount of unexplained susceptibility to peer pressure results variance is high (60%), so we can assume that there are many elements and situational factors that had not been included in this study, that influence susceptibility to peer pressure.

In regard to the obtained results, the key segments in prevention of negative aspects of peer pressure should relate to the development of *secure attachment* which can be a defence tool in case of peer pressure and a reflection of adolescent's autonomy, *positive parenting*, especially the relationship with the mother and presence of control and *strengthening of positive aspects of personality*.

Positive relationships, positive self-concept, resilient personality, fewer negative influences from the environment – which precedes and which follows is impossible to answer. It is only certain that all the mentioned factors participate in creation of the final goal, which is a satisfied and responsible young person.

Since the influence of peers forms an important part in the process of growing up and many outcomes in young person's life depend on it, the mentioned guidelines can be seen as starting points in creation of optimal conditions for the development involving a smaller number of risks of peer influence and more resilience and positive effects resulting from this interconnected relationship.

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