

## **VERBAL AGGRESSION AS A PRODUCT OF THE MINIMIZED OR MISSING FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**

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**Abstract.** This article aims to present conclusions from an analysis of issues surrounding verbal aggression, particularly in cases where social intelligence is lacking among young individuals. The counterproductiveness of an expanding verbal field saturated with verbal aggression undermines the socio-legal framework of society, negatively impacting not only educational attainment but also the lexical background. Verbal aggression fosters interpersonal conflicts, prompting the authors to conduct a survey to investigate this phenomenon. An anonymous survey was conducted among 100 young people aged 15 to 29 regarding their views on verbal aggression. One of the main conclusions drawn from the conducted survey is the necessity for Bulgaria's educational model and broader social environment to activate new approaches and teaching methods aimed at enhancing social intelligence, thus mitigating verbal aggression.

*Keywords:* aggressive behaviour; social intelligence; verbal aggression

### **Introduction**

The analysis of the speech relations in the social space, which are constantly changing, shows that recently in the social spectrum there is an extreme, sharp, harsh and very often aggressive language. The authors' approach to choosing the topic was dictated by the fact that verbal aggression needs to be studied in order to be analysed. Addressing the topic of verbal aggression is focused and adapted to the studies of our students as future social workers. The authors' arguments for such an approach are provoked by the fact that in the social sphere and in social institutions, the presence of verbal aggression should be minimized, and in time it should not occur.

### **Theoretical review of the concept of verbal aggression**

The contemporary national legal framework gives no legal definition of the term verbal aggression. Our judicial system accepts it with its characteristics and features known from psychology in order to analyse and use it.

The topic of verbal aggression is taking over the scientific space, which is

supported by other researchers who claim that „in the last decade, the study of aggressive behavior in adolescents has increasingly focused on the fact that aggression is not only physical in nature, but can take a wide variety of forms” (Björkqvist, Österman, Kaukiainen 2000).

The lack of a definition riskily expands the boundaries of the concept, and sometimes depersonalizes perceptions of it, allowing numerous interpretations beyond its legal and moral characteristics. We can also consider verbal aggression as interpersonal, i.e. as a social conflict. Scientific circles, lawyers and professional educators, as Vlah (2010) claim “need an understanding of social conflict, as the effectiveness of social conflict management is a predictor of good interpersonal relationships”. In search of the genesis of the phenomenon of verbal aggression we can accept the opinion of Zerkina, Lomakina, Chusavitina, (2017), that: “Verbal aggression is caused by several reasons: reduced speech, lexical, ethical control norms and standards”.

The present analysis presents the concept and results related to verbal aggression used in their psychological nature. The authors accept aggressive verbal behavior in its multifaceted nature, charged with social and emotional content of hostility, often accompanied by hatred, cynic and destructive behavior, and sometimes leading to physical violence, and consider social intelligence as a necessary stability, supported by Onufriieva, Chaikovska, Kobets, Pavelkiv and Melnychuk (2020), who see it as: “a relatively stable system of intellectual abilities, which are expressed in human social behavior”.

The article comprehends the philosophy and form of the phenomenon, as related to threats or actions infringing on the interests and rights of others, to achieve influence and is defined as behavior that expresses and demonstrates hostility. An analysis of data from a survey on the manifestations of verbal aggression is presented, i.e. about the influence of verbal insult, in which sense the thesis is supported by Stalyanova (2021), who claims that insulting speech is “a component of aggressive human behavior”.

Verbal aggression is perceived as a destructive force for moral and ethical personality traits in violation of accepted and existing legal, moral and ethical norms, as well as a negative orientation against the individual, leading too often to mental tension, depression, fear and depression in those affected. In this way, it is perceived by young people and as Winiewski, Budziszewska, Świder (2019) state: “much of the literature shows that boys and girls experience different types of aggression”. We can define verbal aggression as a special kind of violence against the person, against his human rights and behavior, and if this aggression occurs at school we can accept it as a “global problem”, as Fuenmayor (2016) claims.

Aggression hurts a person and can cause psychological pain (Dewi, Kyranides 2021). Undoubtedly, verbal aggression is a type of conflicting behavior, and according to Dorado-Barbé, Hernández-Martín and Lorente-Moreno (2015)

“conflict is part of people’s lives”, in this sense, the question that arises from this circumstance is whether and to what extent such behavior is surmountable. We can accept verbal aggression both as psychological abuse and as “an important factor in behavioral problems in children” (Moore, Pepler 2006). In this aspect, we accept the opinion of Balakhonskaya and Bykov (2018), that “active direct verbal aggression can include verbal abuse, humiliation, accusation, reproach of the interlocutor, making threats or negative messages to him, rude attitude”. Analyzing verbal aggression Poling, Smith, Taylor and Worth (2019) consider that: “verbal aggression transmitted directly is the most common form”.

The data from the survey presented and analysed by the students present the opinion of young people about the impact of verbal aggression in the family, in the educational environment (school or university), as well as among family and friends. They are the result of the efforts of students majoring in Social Activities.

### **Research aim**

The aim is to study verbal aggression in support of the statement that the consequences for verbal aggression are less known and less studied. This article presents the meaningful results of the survey to be used for discussion analysis by students and to evaluate such interpersonal behaviour, finalized with specific conclusions imposed by the discussion analysis.

The study does not aim and does not prioritize, but only ascertains the gender division of respondents in compliance with decision No.13 dated 27 July 2018 of the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria. When dividing the respondents into men and women, their number was deliberately sought in order to have equality among the respondents, and they define themselves as a group of “young people”.

### **Research method**

The survey is anonymous. It was conducted online. The respondents in it are a total of 100 persons – 50 females and 50 males. The age of the respondents is between 15 and 29. Preliminary answers to chose from have not been provided. The answers in the survey were presented and analysed by students in classes relating to interpersonal behaviour in social environment. The survey period is January – March 2021.

### **Research material and discussion**

#### **Results from the survey**

Question one: Do you notice any verbal aggression in your environment?

Answer: 54 – rarely; 46 – often.

Questions to be discussed: What is your opinion about verbal aggression? Are respondents able to detect and define the behaviour of people around them? Do you think that respondents with answer “rarely” accept such behaviour as normal and

almost as socially accepted? What is your opinion about the sensitivity of young people to aggression? How would you comment on the high number of respondents who answered “often”? If young people have a higher level of education and upbringing, culture and knowledge of moral and legal norms, will the process of verbal aggression be minimized?

Question two: Do you have any acquaintances (next of kin or relatives), who had been the object of verbal aggression?

Answer: 81 – yes; 19 – no.

Questions to be discussed: How do you accept the number of young people who have acquaintances, friends, next of kin or relatives that had been an object of aggressive behaviour? Focus on and discuss the frustration thresholds and the options for coping in the sphere of emotional relations?

Question three: Do you use verbal aggression with the ideas to achieve your goals?

Answer: 92 – no; 8 – yes.

Questions to be discussed: Do you assume the great number of negative answers to be an opportunity to control anger? Can you assume that there is a tendency of social intelligence and increased control of feelings and emotions in the first answer? Those who say they use aggression to achieve their goals do you think they have a tendency to be bossy and dominant in the relationships with others, or have acted impulsively? To what extent will the current social and ethical model of our society help you, if we exclude the judicial system for such cases?

Question four: How do you react when you are verbally attacked?

Answer: 65 I seek an option to cope with the problem; 18 I retaliate with an aggressive behaviour; 17 I try to avoid the situation.

Questions to be discussed: How do you estimate the number of people who seek to solve the problem as good or unsatisfactory? Do you accept the experience in communication as an important factor in overcoming aggressive behaviour? Do you seek help from parents or friends to deal with verbal aggression towards you? Analyse the superiority of retaliators with aggressive behaviour over those trying to avoid the situation? Whose problem is solved by avoiding the situation?

Question five: Do your friends communicate in an aggressive verbal way among themselves?

Answer: 83 – no; 17 – yes.

Questions to be discussed: Is there a communicative generally accepted model of communication among young people, dictated by the psycho-climate in the established youth societies? Analyze the value system in these societies. How would you view the origin of this system, as created in the youth society or as influenced by the existing one in the society? Is this verbal behaviour of theirs conscious or not? How do you perceive the number of communicators in an aggressive way? Do you think verbal aggression is a mass phenomenon?

Question six: Have you sensed verbal aggression towards you?

Answer: 52 – no; 48 – yes.

Questions to be discussed: Where do you think is the genesis of such behaviour? Do you seek the cause of aggressive behaviour towards you within yourself? How do you assess this behaviour, as a response to your statements and actions or as a result of someone else's ungrounded aggression? Do you think that those who show aggression towards you are aware of their actions or do they do it unconsciously and naturally, as part of their normal daily behaviour?

Question seven: Do you forget the verbal insult towards you quickly?

Answer: 57 – yes; 43 – no.

Questions to be discussed: In case it is possible to be in each group, how do you assess the answers? As a result of your personal social and intellectual growth or a result of your home upbringing? Have you considered your special behaviour to oppose verbal aggression towards you? If you are considering behaviour to express your opinion, as an affected party, when do you want this to happen - as quickly as possible or when you consider that there are appropriate conditions?

Question eight: Do you rely on protection by relatives or friends when verbal aggression has been shown towards you?

Answer: 55 – no; 45 – yes.

Questions to be discussed: What are the reasons not to seek protection when you belong to the first group? Can you justify your behaviour if you belong to the second group? Which group would you turn to if you seek protection? What would be your behaviour of you protect yourself?

Question nine: Do your parents show verbally aggressive behaviour towards you?

Answer: 88 – no; 12 – yes.

Questions to be discussed: How do you assess their behaviour as a result of their education, life and social experience or as a result of their initial family upbringing? How does their behaviour affect you in general? How would their behaviour affect you if you were in the "yes" group? What would be your reaction if you were in the "yes" group? If you were affected by your parents' aggressive behaviour, who would you share it with? If at all possible, what are the circumstances in which to forgive your parents?

Question eleven: Would you help a relative or friend if you understood that there was verbal aggression towards them?

Answer: 99 – yes; 1 – no.

Questions to be discussed: How do you assess the number of "yes" answers, as emotional support and reaction or as a thought-over and measured behaviour? Can you accept the behaviour of those who answered "yes" as their instinctive rather than thought-over reaction? What will you do if you accept a "no" answer?

Question twelve: How do you perceive verbal aggression?

Answer: 60 – as a result of lack of upbringing; 20 – as a result of the influence of the family environment; 20 – as a result of the influence of the street, the media and the friend circle.

Questions to be discussed: What do you think are the main moral characteristics in the process of education? If you accept that verbal aggression can be analysed as a product of lack of social intelligence, what would your answer be? Do you think that the lack of emotional intelligence affects those who show verbal aggression, and if your answer is “yes”, how does the influence happen?

Free analysis

We called the analysis “free” due to the fact that our students will burden their answers with more sincerity and openness. Realizing the fact that the issues for discussion can be infinitely many, we presented only those of them that we accepted as guidelines in the debate on the topic and as key ones in formulating opinions and statements.

Standpoints expressed in the analysis

Some of the expressed standpoints, opinions and statements were often accompanied by final opinions related to:

- Lack of a clear definition of the term “verbal aggression” in the legal space;
- Need for analytical opinions from psychologists, social mediators and consultants in educational institutions, in state and municipal institutions, as well as in companies registered under the Commercial Act and the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities;
- Disintegration (disposition) of the moral, ethical and cultural-educational values originating from the family environment, which are the basis of the initial impetus in the personal social development.

The first conclusion made can be related to the need for development of the social resource for establishment and evolution of social intelligence in the corresponding social environment because verbal aggression can be regarded and accepted as lacking characteristics of social intelligence.

Attempts to define social intelligence have led to the conclusion that it is possible to consider it as a model of cognitive abilities or as a personal model of behaviour.

Lorinczova and Tomsik (2017) express a similar view, presenting social intelligence as a “multidimensional construct that people use to cope with everyday situations”. The social, political and economic realities of our time provide us with a wide range of possibilities for defining this type of intelligence outlined through the views and theses of scientists and analysts in the field of philosophy, sociology, psychology and pedagogy.

With regard to the nature of social intelligence, the authors support the thesis of Yahodnikova, Racu and Mykolaiets (2018), that “social intelligence is... an ability that ensures the success of social adaptation... includes the ability to recognize and predict the behavior of participants in the educational process, understanding and

managing their own emotions and the emotions of others.” with the conclusion that its absence or minimized nature does not have a positive effect on human behavior and in practice is in the genesis of verbal aggression, in this sense we accept the opinion of Silvera, Martinussen and Dahl (2001), that: “social intelligence is a construction that not only appeals to laymen as a relevant individual difference, but also shows promising practical applications”. It is difficult to determine the origin of social intelligence, but it is necessary for the positive development of people. According to Bucur (2015) “social intelligence begins in school and “falls” on people in terms of success” which the authors see as a significant factor in terms of verbal aggression. The meaning and definition of social intelligence according to Orosova, Sarkova, Geckova, and Katreniakova (2004) is reduced to the statement that: “In defining social intelligence, a distinction is made between how the individual understands and interprets his own behavior, the behavior of other people and how he manages to behave effectively depending on this (socially intelligent behavior)”.

In search of the nature and characteristics of the so-called “public resource” the analysis of the survey results has led to the conclusion that social intelligence is a permanent and temporal process, and the comprehensiveness in its genesis represents the public resource related to:

- Family and family environment as key factors modelling early childhood upbringing;
- Education (formal and non-formal) and the existing current educational model;
- Professional environment and professional relations in the work process;
- The influence of the street and the “friendly” circles on the behaviour of young people;
- The negative impact of the Internet space, digital technologies and electronic media.

In this chronological sequence, the model of the origin, preservation and development of social intelligence emerged as a need for young people to become positively engaged moderators and active participants in solving the emerging and existing social problems and preceding disputes and discussions.

In the analysis, the conclusion was formed that the so-called “public resource” outlined by the role of the family, educational institutions and the media, security, judicial and legislative authorities will be an effective part that forms and affects positively the social intelligence of young people only if directly related to the active moral, ethical and legal regulations. Society accepts verbal aggression in a negative aspect, such state Atkin, Smith, Roberto, Fediuk and Wagner (2002), that if verbal aggression is reduced “the lives of adolescents will improve significantly”.

The second conclusion is related to the understanding and acceptance of social intelligence as a possible corrective for positive influence and potential management of the elements of verbal aggression.

The discussion in the analysis of the test results outlined the breadth of the

meaning of the concept of social intelligence, which allows us to accept it as part of the existing spectrum of intelligence related to human behaviour. In this sense, the position of Albrecht (2006) who has accepted several possible models of intelligence, among which is: “social intelligence, as a way to communicate and understand each other, to attract them to causes, ideas and cooperation; practical, as a skill to perform a particular job; the emotional, as accepting self-awareness”, was confirmed.

Analyzing social intelligence, his efforts were aimed at positively influencing people’s thinking, concluding that it should be perceived as mutual for the parties in interpersonal relationships.

In the discussion, the characteristics of social intelligence directed the analytical thinking of students to implement the opportunities to get along with others, to be polite and good-mannered to be understood, to be patient so that our partners can make sense of everything we tell them, to bring positivism in our interpersonal relationship in order to expect the same from them and to be sure and calm that we have been understood.

In search of roots and in an attempt to formulate intelligence Gardner (2008) writes: Intelligence is the ability to solve problems and create products that are prices for a given cultural environment or society”. These conclusions mean that intelligence is a way to achieve goals that harmonize interpersonal relationships.

### **Some conclusions about the students’ skills to analyse the survey results**

The statements presented in the discussion showed the students’ skills to analyse the results in a scientific style, and their focus outlined the following conclusions:

- The minimized or missing functions of social intelligence can be considered as a condition for the presence of aggression and in particular of verbal aggression;
- The minimized or missing functions of the social intelligence have a destructive effect in managing the behaviour of the teams in the entire social sphere;
- The minimized or missing functions of social intelligence largely deprive the mission of team management;
- The minimized or missing functions of social intelligence deprive individuals of calm thought-over behaviour related to their functional characteristics in the workplace.

### **Conclusion**

The discussed results of the survey and the characteristics of social intelligence were analyzed and presented as a product of personal behavior, beliefs, moral and ethical values built in the family, developed and upgraded in the educational environment.

The thesis was that the society, the family, the educational model operating in Bulgaria

and the overall social environment need to activate their approaches and teaching methods in order to increase the level of social intelligence as an obstacle to verbal aggression.

Unfortunately, verbal aggression is an acute and negative social phenomenon that has a negative impact on public life, but it has not yet grown into a social and societal crisis. Such a thesis is expressed by Wieviorka (2013) “Whatever the type of analysis, the very concept of conflict must be clearly distinguished from that of crisis, even if the two coexist materially in social reality”.

In the context of the analysis of the answers to the survey, the social environment containing all the characteristics of interpersonal relationships and the characteristics of human-environment relations was defined as a dynamic space in need of much greater human well-being. The thesis was accepted with certainty in the analysis of the answers from the survey that the lack of connection between the structural elements of the many intelligences advertised by scientists, specialists and analysts will lead to possible personal aggression, which is most easily exposed verbally.

Finally, it was necessary to accept the conclusion that knowledge and application of moral and legal norms in social cohesion, as well as their multiplication in the social environment is a useful necessity to restore its minimized or impaired characteristics, allowing verbal aggression. The results obtained confirm the study of (Kaukiainen, Björkqvist 1999), that: “Physical and verbal forms of aggression have little to do with social intelligence”.

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