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ПСИХОЛОГІЇ**

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ОДЕСЬКЕ ТОВАРИСТВО ПСИХОЛОГІВ

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LINKS BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS' MENTAL HEALTH, FEELINGS OF SAFETY AT SCHOOL AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

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In times of major global challenges, such as pandemics and ongoing war in Ukraine and other countries, adolescents face major mental health challenges. It has been estimated that 1 in 7 adolescents in the world is affected by a mental health disorder. According to the Official Statistics Portal, in 2022 there were 5343 adolescents in Lithuania with a mental and behavioural disorder. Given the relevance of mental health difficulties, this study aims to investigate how adolescents' mental health difficulties (anxiety, stress and depression) and perceived safety of the environment are related to adolescents' aggressive behaviours. Thus, the study aimed to determine whether the intensity of aggressive behaviour can be related to the characteristics of the immediate environment of the growing person and the mental health difficulties experienced.

The current study analysed the data from 91 adolescents selected from the first measurement of a longitudinal study meant to investigate the effectiveness of the "We are Safe" programme for violence prevention in Lithuanian schools. The sample consists of 48 (52.7%) girls, 39 (42.9%) boys and 4 (4.4%) individuals who marked their gender as "other". The age of the participants was 14-17 years ($M=15.38$). The data were collected using online questionnaires. The researchers were present in the room with the adolescents while collecting the survey data. The 21-item Depression, Anxiety and Stress Symptoms Scale (Szabo, 2022) was used to assess mental health, and the 11-item Aggression Scale (Orpinas et al., 2001) was used to identify aggressive behaviours. Information on adolescents' perceived sense of safety in school was obtained using Awareness/Reporting subscale of Classroom Climate Scale - (Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004). The results showed no statistically significant difference in the estimates of aggressive behaviour frequency between genders. However, when comparing mental health estimates, the overall mental health of girls in this sample was statistically worse than that of boys. Correlation analysis revealed that the frequency of aggressive behaviour among adolescents was statistically significantly positively correlated with both stress, anxiety and depression. Also, with a lower sense of security at school was associated with higher estimates of aggressive behaviour. These findings have contribute to a better understanding of the environment in which today's children are growing up and the factors that may be involved in their aggressive behaviour. The results of the study showed that promoting mental health and creating safety at school can contribute to reducing aggressive behaviour in adolescence.

Keywords: adolescents, mental health, aggression, safety

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