

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE RESEARCH OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNICATION STYLE AND THE DEGREE OF CONFLICTUALITY AT THE YOUNG AGE

Abstract

The article highlights the relationship between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age. There are presented the experimental data regarding the communication style, the degree of conflictuality expressed by young people, the results obtained regarding the relationship between the degree of conflictuality and the communication style of the young people. The experimental approach and the results of the research showed that there is an interdependence relation between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age, and the high level of the assertive communication interrelates with the low level of conflictuality manifested by the young people, while the aggressive communication style relates at the level of strong and medium intensity with the high level of conflictuality.

Keywords: young age, communication style, conflictuality, diagnosis of communication style, diagnosis of the degree of conflictuality, correlation of communication style – degree of conflictuality.

Introduction

Establishing effective interpersonal relationships with those around depends to a large extent on the way we communicate, that is, on the communication style we adopt, which refers to the set of manifestation particularities characteristic of

a person in the communicative act and highlights personal manners of receiving, processing and producing messages.

As Pînișoară (2008, p. 155) points out, the communication is a process we face every day, but the conflict is an everyday “ingredient” of our life experience. At the same time, a communication totally lacking the potentials of the conflict is inauthentic, so it does not fulfill the expected attributes, those of efficiency. A possible answer to the question how we could practically solve this dilemma would be emphasized by the following directions: the necessity of knowing the characteristics of the conflicts; developing links, relations between conflicts and the defining aspects of the communication through conflict management containing polar elements, stimulating and extinguishing them.

Regardless of the conflict type, identifying the true sources that led to its emergence and then to its development and escalation is an extremely important operation when the group of youngsters want to solve the conflict and, at the same time, restructure and stabilize the efficiency of the communication.

The effective interrelation in the communication process is the basic premise in the complete development of each subject. In this context, as the subject interacts with the world around, there takes place the outline of his own communication style, which will determine his success in the future. The transformations that the young person goes through, if not sufficiently managed and understood by himself and others, can cause problems that, not being solved at the right time, can aggravate and create major difficulties for the future adult regarding his eloquent insertion in various social contexts.

The presence of the assertive communication style, the possession of the high level of communicative competence highlight a complex of individual-psychological traits, which assure the young person to identify the optimal solution in solving conflicts and establishing constructive interpersonal relationships.

Conceptual benchmarks

According to Mayer (2000), the conflict is a three-dimensional psychosocial phenomenon, which involves a cognitive component: thinking, perception of the conflict situation; an affective component: emotions and feelings and a behavioural component: action, including communication. The three components of the conflict clarify each other and have joint contributions in identifying and understanding the conflict (Stoica-Constantin, 2004, p. 20).

Popescu-Neveanu (1978, p. 133) defines the conflict as a “clash and struggle between motives, tendencies, interests, opposite attitudes of relatively equal force, hard to be reconciled or irreconcilable, which occurs at a certain time or even permanently”.

For the authors Marcus & Catina (1980) the style expresses the uniqueness of the personality referring to the individual or typological invoice (common to several individuals) to perform different activities, representing an operational functional quality, the active posture of the experience and the structure of the personality. Realizing itself in specific ways of receiving and processing information, it implies in all its forms the identity assertions that should be specific, unmistakable and building a regulatory and control system that intervenes in the mediation of reactions (Marcus, Catina, 1980, apud Saucan, 2003, p. 146).

The communication style designates: the specific ways of receiving/decoding the message; the personal ways of processing/interpreting messages; the specific ways of expressing the answer, the personal particularities of feed-back. All of this are due to the uniqueness and individuality of the humans, being the expression of authentic personality.

Experimental design

The research problem: identification of the interdependence relationship between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age.

The object of the research is the interrelation of the communication style with the degree of conflictuality at the young age.

The aim of the research aims at the theoretical foundation and the experimental verification of the correlation between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age.

Research objectives:

- ✓ to determine the theoretical basis of the communication style and the degree of conflictuality specific to the age of youth;
- ✓ to select the methods and tools for researching the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age;
- ✓ to identify the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at the young age;
- ✓ to determine the correlation between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality of the young people;
- ✓ to deduce general conclusions;
- ✓ to elaborate recommendations.

Investigation hypotheses:

1. There is a reciprocal relationship between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality expressed at the age of youth.

2. The assertive communication style of young people relates at the level of strong and medium intensity with the low level of conflictuality.
3. The aggressive communication style of young people relates at the level of strong and medium intensity with the high level of conflictuality.

The research methodology aimed at applying the *theoretical methods*: analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, systematization; *experimental methods*: the psychopedagogical experiment; *empirical methods*: conversation, questioning, testing; *data interpretation methods*: mathematical, graphical and statistical processing of experimental results.

The experimental actions were carried out on a sample of 101 subjects with the age of 25-35 years.

Criteria for diagnosing theadolescents' communication style:

- Presence of assertiveness in the interpersonal communication;
- Use of manipulation in the communication process;
- Manifestation of the non-assertive style in communication;
- Manifestation of blame in the context of interpersonal communication;
- Ability to solve problems in communication;
- Presence of aggression in interrelation.

In order to diagnose the youngsters' communication style there were applied the following instruments: The questionnaire „Analysis of the communication style” by Marcus, the Diagnostic Test of Evaluation of the Personal Style of Oral Communication by O'Connell.

The application of the Questionnaire „Analysis of the communication style” by Marcus allowed the identification of four fundamental communication styles: non-assertive, aggressive, manipulative, aggressive, which refer to the set of particularities characteristic of a person in the communicative process.

The purpose of implementing the Diagnostic Test for the Evaluation of the Personal Style of Oral Communication by O'Connell was to identify at young people the tendency towards the two extreme communication styles: „blaming” and „problem solving”.

Criteria for diagnosing the degree of conflictuality expressed by young people:

- verbal manifestation of conflictuality;
- manifesting the ability to accommodate in conflict situations;
- manifesting confrontation in the communication process;
- presence of compromise in interrelation;
- presence of the ability to collaborate in the communication process;
- avoiding conflict situations.

The instruments used to identify the degree of conflictuality of the young people aimed: The Questionnaire for the Assessment of the Degree of Conflictuality

by Thomas & Kilmann; The Questionnaire for Evaluation of the Conflictuality Degree by Rogov.

By applying the Questionnaire developed by Thomas & Kilmann, there was the tendency to identify the ways of approaching and solving by young people various problematic situations that may arise in the context of interpersonal relations and which aim at five specific ways of approaching a conflict situation: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, accommodation.

The Questionnaire for the evaluation of the degree of conflictuality by Rogov offered the young people the possibility to identify their degree of conflictuality and to establish for themselves how this can be kept under control.

Research results

The processing and interpretation of the experimental data obtained from the implementation of the Questionnaire “Analysis of the communication style” by Marcus allowed the possibility to state that the non-assertive style is expressed by 30.69% of young people, of which 17.82% are men and 12.87% are women. These young people have difficulties in expressing easily their point of view and interests, without anxiety and without denying the others. The non-assertive style can be manifested by an excess of kindness and reconciliation, by the tendency of the subject to postpone taking decisions and often by the impossibility of making them, giving the others the right to decide. At the basis of these manifestations there is the youngster’s fear of being judged by others, as well as the intense anger felt in case of a failure – to avoid them he prefers to oppose the judgment of the others.

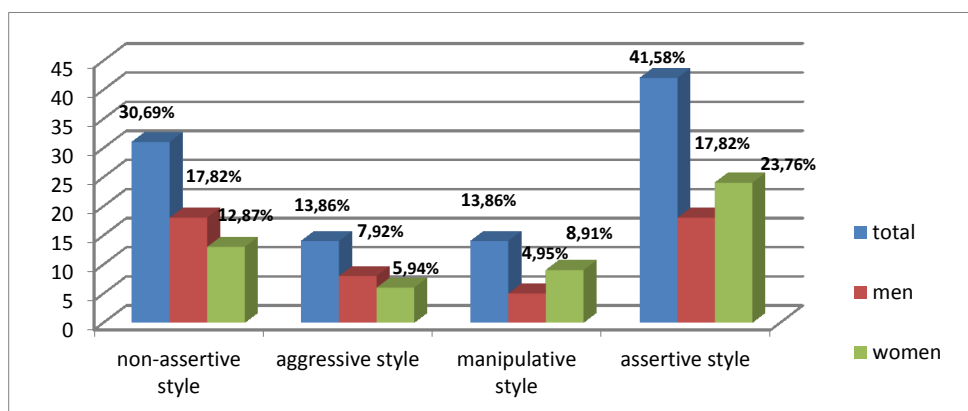


Figure no. 1. Manifestation of communication styles among young people (according to the Questionnaire of Analysis of Communication Style by Marcus)

The aggressive style adopted in communication was identified in 13.86% of young people, of which 7.92% are men and 5.94% are women. This style is characterized by the tendency of the subject to always be in front, to have the last word, to impose himself at any price, even with the price of harming and annoying other people. To dominate, any means seems to be usable to the youngster – frightening, contradicting, humiliating, compromising others, shocking attitudes and behaviors, revenge, taking risks.

The manifestation of the manipulative style in the communication process was identified in 13.86% young people: 4.95% – men; 8.91% – women. The manipulative style highlights the youngster’s preference for a backstage role, the tendency to wait for the right moment to come to light, the tendency to seek intentions hidden behind any other’s statements. The person avoids to say openly what he thinks, changes his opinions according to those of the interlocutor, likes to be around the big and powerful people hoping to reap benefits from their neighborhood. The persons from this category aim to do what others would like, but this does not involve open confrontations – be they rational, constructive – assertive or conflicting – aggressive; it is rather to wait for the situation to turn in their favor.

The processing and interpretation of the experimental data allowed the identification of 41.58% of young people who have an assertive communication style, of which 17.82% are men and 23.76% are women, characterized by the ability to self-affirm, to express honestly, directly and clearly their own opinions and rights without aggression and without harming others, the ability to pursue their own interests without violating the needs of others.

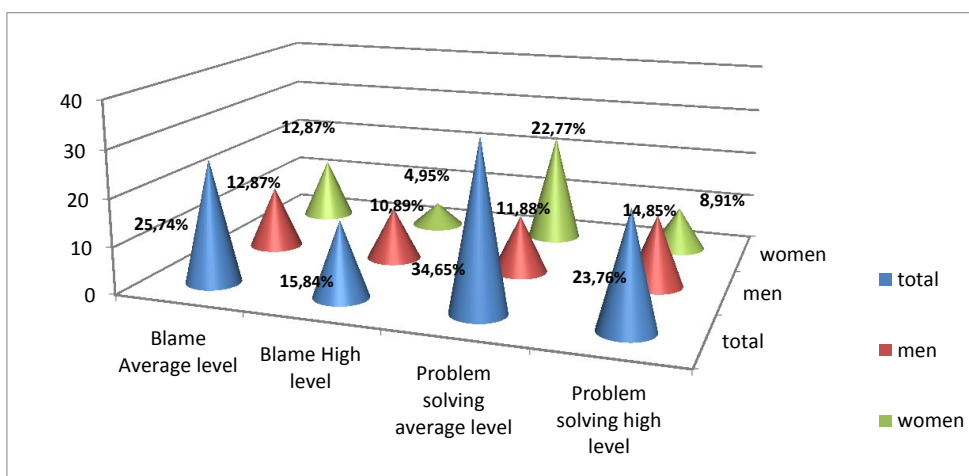


Figure no. 2. Styles adopted in oral communication by young people (according to the Diagnostic Test of Evaluation of the Personal Style of Oral Communication by O’Connell)

After processing and interpreting the experimental data obtained from the implementation of the Diagnostic Test of Evaluation of the Personal Style of Oral Communication by O'Connell, it is stated that 25.74% of young people manifest in communication an average level of blame towards the interlocutor, present at 13 men (12.87%) and 13 women (12.87%). There are also 16 youngsters (15.84%) with a high level of blaming communication style, present at 5 women (4.95%) and 11 men (10.89%).

The problem solving at high-level was identified in 23.76% of young people, corresponding to 14.85% of men and 8.91% of women.

The manifestation of the communication style "problem solving at medium level" was identified in 34.65% of young people: men – 11.88%; women – 22.77%.

The processing of the results obtained from the implementation of the Questionnaire "Identifying the degree of conflictuality" by Thomas & Kilmann allowed to state that 18.81% of young people show confrontation in solving a conflict situation, of which 8.91% are men and 9.90% are women. Such a youngster tries to dominate his opponents by making them accept his solution in case of a conflict. His personal goals are dominant in relation to interpersonal relationships, which he sacrifices very easily. He tries to achieve his goals at any cost. He is not interested in the needs of others. He doesn't care if others like him or accept him. The subject believes that a conflict is won when one side wins, and the other is defeated. He wants to be the winner. "The victory" gives the youngster a sense of pride and personal achievement. The defeat, however, makes him feel weakness, maladaptation, failure. He tries to win by attack, overwhelm or intimidation.

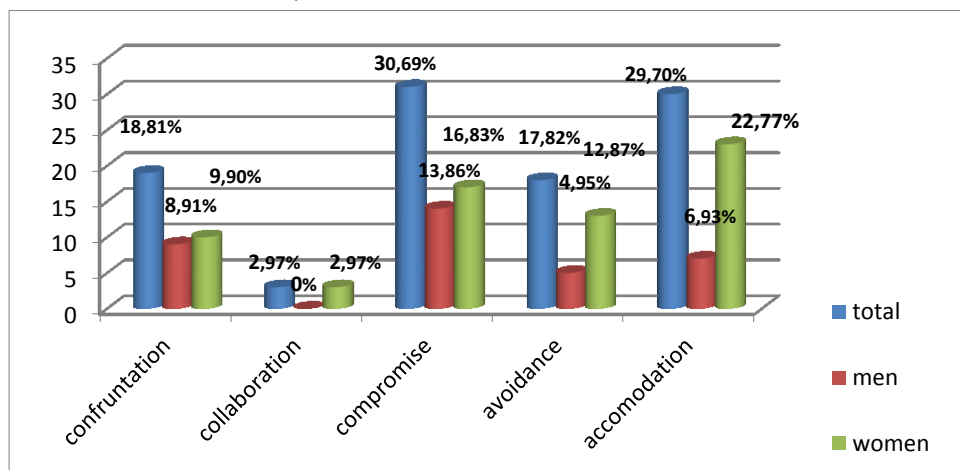


Figure no. 3. Reactions manifested by young people in conflict situations (according to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire of the Conflictuality Degree by Thomas & Kilmann)

The youngster who adopts the collaboration values equally his personal goals as well as the relationships with the others; he sees conflicts as a problem to be solved and seeks solutions that satisfy both personal and other interests; he sees the conflict as a way to improve the relationships by reducing tension between two people or groups; he is not satisfied until he finds a solution that satisfies both sides. The obtained results demonstrate an insignificant number of 3 young people (2.97%) who attest this way of solving a conflict situation, being present only among the women who were part of our research sample.

The young people who accept the compromise were identified in proportion of 30.69%, of which the women constitute 16.83% and the men 13.86%, to whom there was attested the interest to both the personal goals and relationships with the others, but also the tendency to partially give up personal goals, persuading the other side to do the same. In a conflict situation, the solution of the respective subject is that each side involved should lose and gain something, being able to temporarily give up their personal goals for overcoming the crisis situation.

The way of avoiding conflict situations was identified in 17.82% of young people, of which 12.87% are women, and 4.95% are men. Such a youngster gives up personal goals and relationships, stays away from conflict areas and avoids people who create or maintain conflicts; he/she considers that it is better to withdraw than to conflict.

For 29.70% of the young people who have been identified as adopting the “accommodation” mode (men – 6.93%, women – 22.77%), the interpersonal relationships are very important, while their own goals have a lower importance. Such subjects want to be sympathetic and accepted by the others, they consider conflicts as something to be avoided in the favor of harmony and are convinced that people cannot argue in contradiction without affecting the relations between them, they are afraid that if the conflict continues, someone will suffer and that would compromise the relationships with that person. That is why he tries at any cost, even giving up his personal goals, to solve the conflict, for fear of not endangering interpersonal relationships.

The processing and interpretation of the experimental data obtained from the application of the Questionnaire “Assessment of the conflictuality degree” by Rogov allowed the placement of young people on levels of manifesting the conflict. In this regard, we identified that 20.79% of young people have a high level of conflictuality, of which 11.88% are women and 8.91% are men. Conflicts and quarrels persist in the lives of these subjects very often, and they, consciously or not, live in conflicts. They like to criticize the others, but if they hear a simple remark about them, they become aggressive and demand accountability immediately. Sometimes they criticize just for the sake of criticism and not constructively. The impulsiveness

and sometimes the rudeness keep them away from the others, making it difficult for them to have real friends.

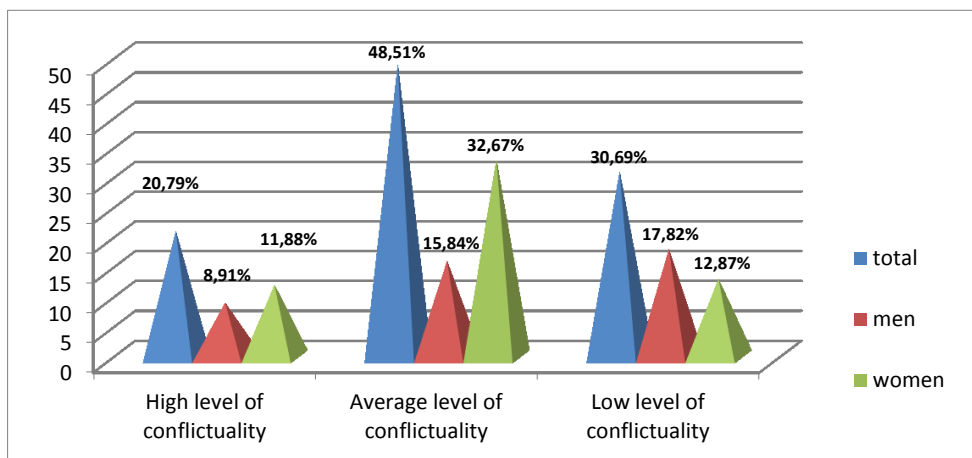


Figure no. 4. Level of conflict manifested at young people (according to the Questionnaire of the Evaluation of the Conflictuality Degree by Rogov)

The average level of conflictuality was identified in 48.51% of young people, of which 32.67% are women and 15.84% are men. The young people in this category have the reputation of a conflicting person, but in reality they enter a conflict only if there is no other way out, and the known modalities of response are exhausted. They firmly defend their own opinion, without thinking about how this will be reflected on them or on their personal relationships. However, the limits of fairness, which are respected by those around them, are not exceeded. Their problem is that they are seen as conflicting people, even though this perception is not always objective. Their exposure and the way they defend their beliefs need to be more flexible.

The low level of conflict was designated to 30.69% of young people, being present in 17.82% of men and 12.87% of women. These young people show diplomacy and positive attitudes towards the surrounding world. They can skillfully bypass controversies and conflicts, avoiding critical situations on a personal and professional level. They have the ability not to get caught up in conflicts and to please everyone, which is why some consider them opportunistic. They should be firmer in those situations and circumstances that require an attitude of principle, no matter who they have to deal with. The tendency to do anything to avoid conflicts can be counter-productive.

In order to demonstrate the relationship of interdependence between the degree of conflictuality and the communication style at a young age, the primary research data, obtained after diagnosing the communication style and the level of

youngsters' conflict, were analyzed statistically. For this purpose, there was used the Bravais-Pearson Coefficient of Correlation (r), and to facilitate the data processing there was used the SPSS 22 Statistics Program.

Table no. 1. Correlation coefficient between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality at a young age (according to Bravais-Pearson, based on SPSS-22.0)

Degree of conflictuality / Communication Style	High level of conflictuality	Average level of conflictuality	Low level of conflictuality	Confrontation	Collaboration	Compromise	Avoidance	Accommodation
Non assertive style		$r = -0.420^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$		$r = -0.229^*$ $p \leq 0,05$		$r = -0.365^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = 0.598^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	
Aggressive style	$r = 0.494^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$		$r = -0.283^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = 0.599^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$			$r = -0.394^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	
Manipulative style		$r = 0.258^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.264^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$			$r = 0.455^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.216^*$ $p \leq 0,05$	
Assertive style		$r = 0.394^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = 0.595^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$			$r = 0.278^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.500^{**}$ $p \leq 0,05$	$r = 0.508^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$
Blame Average level		$r = 0.285^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.311^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$				$r = -0.325^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	
Blame High level	$r = 0.452^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$		$r = -0.298^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = 0.343^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$				
Problem solving Average level	$r = -0.129$ $p \leq 0,01$							$r = -0.212^*$ $p \leq 0,01$
Problem solving High level	$r = -0.284^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.346^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = 0.630^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	$r = -0.339^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$			$r = 0.459^{**}$ $p \leq 0,01$	

The analysis of the statistical data allowed us to state:

- The significant positive correlation of strong intensity between the low degree of conflictuality and the assertive communication style, $r = 0.595$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant positive correlation of strong intensity between the aggressive style and the high level of conflictuality, $r = 0.494$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant positive correlation of medium intensity between the high level of conflictuality and the high level of blaming, $r = 0.452$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant inverse correlation between the high level of problem solving and the high level of conflictuality, $r = -0.284$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant positive correlation of strong intensity between the low level of conflictuality and the high level of problem solving, $r = 0.630$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant positive correlation of strong intensity between avoidance and non-assertiveness, $r = 0.598$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant positive correlation of strong intensity between manipulation and compromise, $r = 0.455$, $p \leq 0.01$;
- The significant inverse correlation of strong intensity between avoidance and assertiveness, $r = -0.500$, $p \leq 0.01$.

Conclusions

1. The experimental approach proved that there is a reciprocal relationship between the communication style and the degree of conflictuality manifested at the age of youth.
2. The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis according to which the youngsters' communication style relates to the level of strong and medium intensity with the low level of conflictuality.
3. The results of the investigation allow the confirmation of the hypothesis that the aggressive communication style relates to the level of strong and medium intensity with the high level of conflictuality.

Recommendations

Recommendations for young people:

1. In order to reduce the degree of conflictuality, focus on developing an assertive communication style that will warn and remedy conflict situations!
2. Develop the assertive communication style focused on the honest, direct and

clear expression of opinions; defend your own rights without aggression; form the ability to say „No” etc., a fact which will optimize the process of psychoprophylaxis and the remediation of interpersonal conflicts!

Recommendations for educational agents (psychologists, teachers, parents):

1. In order to diminish the conflicting behavior of young people, create optimal psycho-pedagogical conditions for adopting the assertive communication style!
2. Focus in the context of personal development on having assertive communication skills!
3. Explain to young people the value of assertive communication style in warning and mitigating interpersonal conflicts!
4. Pay attention to the remediation of non-constructive communication styles, especially aggressive, non-assertive, manipulative ones!
5. Be for youngsters eloquent examples of constructive, coherent, assertive communication in various social contexts!

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Rozważania dotyczące badania związków między stylem komunikacji a stopniem konfliktowości w młodym wieku

Streszczenie

W artykule podkreślono związek między stylem komunikowania się a stopniem konfliktowości w młodym wieku. Przedstawiono dane eksperymentalne dotyczące stylu komunikowania się, stopnia konfliktowości wyrażanej przez młodzież, przedstawiono uzyskane wyniki dotyczące relacji między stopniem konfliktowości a stylem komunikowania się młodych ludzi. Podejście eksperymentalne i wyniki badań wykazały, że istnieje współzależność między stylem komunikowania się a stopniem konfliktowości w młodym wieku – wysoki

poziom asertywnej komunikacji wiąże się z niskim poziomem konfliktowości przejawianym przez młodych ludzi. Z kolei agresywny styl komunikacji wiąże się z wysokim poziomem konfliktowości.

Słowa kluczowe: młody wiek, styl komunikacji, konfliktowość, diagnoza stylu komunikowania się, diagnoza stopnia konfliktowości, stopień konfliktowości.