

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54937/ssf.2022.21.2.52-59>

## **Preventívne stratégie a programy ako spôsob eliminácie sociálnej agresie v predškolskom veku**

### **Preventive Strategies and Programs as a Way to Eliminate Social Aggression of Preschool Children**

Monika Homolová

#### **Abstract**

One of the first steps in supporting healthy social relationships in groups of early aged children of is the prevention in the form of specific programs and strategies. The specific work with groups of children in model situations to reach healthy social relationships is a common part of kindergarten school programs abroad. In our conditions, the implementation of preventive strategies to support the social relationships of preschool children is significantly understated in comparison with the surrounding countries. The main purpose of this article is the theoretical analysis of selected existing prevention programmes and strategies focused on reducing social aggression in groups of preschoolers. It is a proposal to eliminate social aggression in Slovak kindergarten by the form of prevention strategies and programmes.

**Keywords:** Aggression. Aggressive behavior. Child. Preschool age. Prevention program.

#### **Introduction**

Preschool age is the period during which a child becomes a member of a social group and increases his or her interaction with peers. Friendship plays an important role in children's lives. At an early age, these friendships are made between members of the same sex. We see the reason in the fact that boys and girls prefer different types of activities that are different from each other (Kassin, 2007). By creating relationships, children develop assertiveness, leadership, dominance, altruistic behavior, group dynamics, etc. (Kováčová, 2019). In the behavior of children may be hidden the beginnings of aggression. Conflicts, misinformation, deception or slander suggest that a preschooler is already using covert aggression to consolidate his or her position and may later use covert aggression to isolate an unwanted peer (Dunn, 1997). There are only a few scientific studies that describe the mechanism of the emergence and subsequent development of social aggression of preschool children as

well as possible solutions, e.g. effective and feasible prevention strategies and programs (Chanasová, Libertini, 2019). In the given article we focus on presentation of research findings of occurrence of social aggression with the children at preschool age in the kindergartens in Slovak Republic and in the world. We describe actually accessible research findings confirming the aggression threatening the social relationships in Slovak kindergarten. Subsequently we deal with possibilities of aggression decrease in social groups of children at preschool age through preventive programs and strategies.

### **Social aggression at preschool age**

Fundamental thoughts on aggressive behaviour of children within social development were described by Rousseau (Emil or on upbringing, 2002) and gradually there started researches to be done on this issue. From this period the most significant were probably Bandura (1973), Tremplay (2000) claiming that the aggressive behaviour is typical for development and maturing of children since early age. Alink (2006 In: Raaijmakers, 2008) specifies that the climax of their level of aggression the children demonstrate at the age of 2 or 3. Campell (2006) clarifies this fact in such a way that children have the lack of verbal abilities in concrete period of development, on the contrary they have increased motoric ability. This enables them to use physical aggression as potential tool of communication. In the development period there is a decrease of the level of physical aggression from which we conclude that the child starts controlling itself and reaching the desirable result deliberately in a different way. (Tremplay, 2004) or on the contrary shows further an increased aggressive behaviour posing a risk (Broiday, 2003 In: Raaijmakers, 2008).

In social relationships between a group and an individual there can also be a hidden social aggression. Such aggression interferes into social relations, dynamics and reciprocal interaction. Social aggression is characterised by an inadequate behaviour to the person in a group with a negative impact on her position in the collective which gradually becomes aggressive. A predominant element of social aggression is latention or implicitness which is sometimes very hard to recognize and determine (Kováčová 2019). The authors Galen and Underwood (1997) claim that social aggression includes defamation, spreading untruth about the child, non-verbal communication, mainly mimicry, gesticulation proving the contempt and ignoration. They also define social aggression as activity aimed at damaging the friendships, self-esteem or social status of others. Morine et al. (2011) include into social aggression all expressions of an indirect and relation - based forms of aggression. So from the point of relation-based aggression it is an end-point which is manipulation and distorting relationships in front of the victim (Archer, Coyne, 2005) and from the point of an indirect aggression it is a behaviour being hidden, secret.

It can also be secret considering the participation of the aggressor in the action by using the mediation form for damaging the victim (Hudecová, Kováčová, 2020). On the basis of research Monks et al. (2005) conclusions were made according to research findings that the preschool age period is ideal for making a latent aggression. Similarly Verlaan and Turnel (2010) agree on the point that latent aggression at early age is not exceptional because it comes up in every collective. At the beginning it is demonstrated as usual behaviour, later this behaviour takes on such a form which the social group is able to tolerate the damaging actions. The group of authors under direction Little et al. (2003) confirmed the conclusions on the basis of research that latent aggression is specific even in general context of bullying and has a relative and instrumental form.

### **Research finding confirming the aggression threatening social relationships in Slovak kindergarden**

Hudecová, Kováčová (2020) describe a research investigation based on the analysis of situations from the point of view of relative and instrumental form of latent aggression in kindergarden. It is typical of the aggressor's behavior to have his actions planned and thought out in advance. The aggressor uses stimulating and manipulative strategies that are aimed at unjustifiably achieving or gaining something, for example, in a school environment, the aggressor's intention may be to make as many friends as possible and to have dominance over a certain peer group. The authors (2020) concluded from the research of specific examples that latent aggressive behavior is present in both younger and preschool age. It is difficult to identify and therefore not easy to predict, expect and identify. For this reason, the behavioral identification factor may go unnoticed because, e.g. the child goes to another kindergarden and in the social group there is a (re) definition of mutual relations. This form of aggressive behavior occurs regardless of age, gender, religion, health or social disadvantages.

### **Prevention of aggressive behaviour in kindergarden**

We understand prevention generally as measures helping to decrease the risks of devaluation behaviour of individuals and group and elimination of negative impact in certain everyday situations, psychic conditions and processes. Additionally we understand it as health protection as well. Orosová, (2003, p. 11) claims prevention is "*the way of strengthening the health or the way of prevention of various forms of risky behaviour of individuals at various stages of their life journey*". As an effective primary prevention longterm and complex preventive programs for pupils with the aim of creating positive and secure climate in the class and group can be taken. Stress is laid on programmes

helping to eliminate risky behaviour of children. They also teach to handle conflicts and stressing situations. Lastly they focus on development of socialisation, emotional side of child personality, enhancement of self-confidence, strengthening the courage. In Slovakia, the prevention is done through more types of preventive programs, which we present in the following Table 1.

Tab. 1: Specific prevention programs

<b>The name of the program</b>	<b>Target group</b>	<b>The aim of the program</b>
Kozmo and his adventures	Kindergarten - preschoolers	prevention of violence, aggression, bullying, intolerance
Philip's adventures	Kindergarten - preschoolers 1st year elementary school kids	taking care of the health, healthy lifestyle, prevention of substance addictions.
The naughty monkey Kika is learning to be better	Kindergarten - preschoolers	rules of behavior, name feelings, listen, control anger, joy, happiness
Zippy's Friends	children aged 5 - 7 years, Kindergarten - preschoolers	development of social and communication skills, socio-emotional development, cooperation, solidarity, compassion, dedication, tolerance and empathy for the needs of others and oneself, support of emotional well-being and relationships
We communicate nonviolently	Kindergarten - preschoolers	developing emotional intelligence, managing emotions and their non-violent expression, developing empathy, active listening, non-violent expression of needs
My dog Azor	Kindergarten - preschoolers	improve concentration, increase self-regulation and self-control, strengthen responsibility and autonomy, resilience to stress [2]
So that we can understand each other	Kindergarten - preschoolers (teachers, parents)	to improve relations between children and teachers as well as among children, to create and adopt rules of behavior and communication, to develop empathy, mutual acceptance, responsibility, independence, to prevent aggressive behavior [3]
The second step (originally Heart on the palm)	Kindergarten, Primary school	develop empathy, reduce aggression, increase tolerance for diversity, improve cooperation between school and family, prevention [4]

*Source: own procesing*

These programs are implemented by employees of pedagogical-psychological counseling and prevention centers in the kindergarten environment. In Slovakia there are no proved effective and preventive programmes which a common teacher could apply in kindergarden or a facility where the children are educated up to the commencement of primary school.

## **Research design**

The intention is to focus theoretically and by research on social aggression in groups of preschool children within implemented prevention strategies. The aim of the research is to analyze, implement and verify preventive options in the solution of social aggression in kindergartens in the Slovak Republic.

Partial aims:

- Analyze existing prevention programs and strategies aimed at reducing aggression in social groups of preschool children in the world and in Slovakia.
- Realize monitoring on tools used by kindergarten teachers to capture and identify social aggression in groups.
- Design and implement a program as a preventive in specific kindergartens (in the form of an experiment). Subsequently, apply it to a selected sample of kindergartens and verify its effectiveness and evaluate. (The prevention program will focus on using of strategies by which the kindergarten teacher clarifies the facts so that children understand it. These can be strategies such as pantomic-movement methods, play, dramatization, audio-verbal methods, fairy tale work, morning circle, situational methods. and other).
- Create a methodological manual for the prevention of social aggression (Methodical manual focused on games and activities to support acceptance, adaptation, tolerance, understanding the differences of the child in the peer group).

Research environment and research sample: The research sample will consist of children aged 4 to 6 years, who are institutionalized in Slovak kindergartens in cities and in the countryside. Subsequently, a research sample of kindergartens will be created, in which a preventive program will be applied, and a comparative research sample, where the program will not be implemented. The research will take place in selected kindergarten facilities throughout Slovakia.

Research methods: To determine the manifestations of aggressive behavior of children in Slovak kindergartens from the perspective of teachers, we will use a questionnaire survey, which will include an assessment scale that will help us to more accurately evaluate. We also want to find out what

prevention programs kindergarten teachers use another questionnaire with open-ended questions for teachers about they use in kindergarten.

In assessing the situation in the group in terms of latent aggressive behavior, we will use sociometric indices, which will provide us with information about behavior. Furthermore, we will use sociometry in assessing individual relationships in the social group of preschool children. We will also use the observation method, which we will supplement with individual interviews with children. We will use an experimental method to verify the effectiveness of the prevention program, which will include other methods such as sociometry, observation, interview, picture questionnaire.

On the basis of all collected data and information, we will finally summarize and evaluate the achieved results - interpretation of data. The research will be of a quantitative-qualitative nature.

## **Conclusion**

In our article we endeavoured to point at the fact that latent aggressive behaviour is present at younger and preschool age as well. Because it is hidden is not easy to identify, foresee or anticipate it. From the research of concrete examples of preventive programs we proved that their realisation in kindergardens is an effective solution to primary prevention of latent aggressive behaviour and also a possibility of minimalization of children's risky behaviour. The research also demonstrated that one preventive program being applied in various countries can have different results regarding its effectiveness. For this reason we plan to keep our work on this issue in our dissertation thesis where at the beginning of our research following tasks are defined:

- analyze the existing preventive programs in our country and in the world,
- start cooperation with kindergardens,
- realise monitoring with focus on latent aggressive behaviour in kindergardens in Slovakia,
- create author preventive program and verify it in Slovak kindergardens,
- check the effectiveness of author preventive program and evaluate it,
- make methodical guide focused on acceptance and adaptation of the child in peer group.

The mentioned tasks will be elaborated into research. We create and verify the author preventive program and methodical guide which will be sent into the teachers' hands of Slovak kindergardens. We believe that our endeavour will contribute to creation of positive social relations because their violation or jeopardy in childhood can cause big problems at later age in regard to social relations and functioning of individuals in social groups.

## Bibliography

- ARCHER, J., COYNE, S. M. 2005. An Integrated Review of Indirect, Relational, and Social Aggression. In: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9 (3), pp. 212 - 230.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0903\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0903_2)
- BANDURA, A. 1973. *Aggression. A social learning analysis*. Englewood Cliffs New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- CAMPBELL, S. B. 2006. *Behavior problems in preschool children: Clinical and developmental issues*. New York: Guilford Press.
- DUNN, J. 1993. *Young children's close relationships Beyond attachment (Vol. 4)*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- FITE, P. J. et al. 2008. Replication and extension of Little et al.'s (2003) forms and functions of aggression measure. In: *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 32 (3), 238-242.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025408089273>
- GALEN, B. R., & UNDERWOOD, M. K. 1997. A developmental investigation of social aggression among children. In: *Developmental Psychology*, 33 (4), 589-600. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.33.4.589>
- HUDECOVÁ, A., KOVÁČOVÁ, B. 2020. Teoretické východiská k agresii ohrozujúcej sociálne vzťahy v predškolskom veku. In: HUDECOVÁ, A. et al. 2020. *Nástroje na posudzovanie agresie ohrozujúcej sociálne vzťahy v predškolskom veku*. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo KU.
- CHANASOVÁ, Z., LIBERTINI, R. 2019. *Expresivita a agresivita v literárnom diele Pinocchio pre deti predškolského veku. In: Expresivita v (art)terapii 2*. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo KU. ISBN 978-80-561-0690-7, p. 80-88.
- KASSIN, S. 2007. *Psychologie*. 1. vyd. Brno: Computer Press, a.s., 771 p.
- KOVÁČOVÁ, B. 2019. *Agresia ohrozujúca sociálne vzťahy v predškolskom veku*. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo KU.
- MONKS, C. P., SMITH, P. K., SWETTENHAM, J. 2005. Psychological correlates of peer victimisation in preschool: social cognitive skills, executive function and attachment profiles. In: *Aggressive Behavior*, 31 (6), p. 571 – 588. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20099>
- MORINE, K. A. et al. 2011. Relational Aggression in Preschool Students: An Exploration of the Variables of Sex, Age, and Siblings. In: *Child Development Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2011/931720>
- OROSOVÁ, O. 2003. *Prevenia – pomoc – rovesníci alebo „Preventívne nie nepoškodí“ (Inovatívne metódy pomoci v prevencii drogových závislostí v školskej praxi)*. Univerzita P. J. Šafárika v Košiciach.
- RAAJIMAKERS, A. M. 2008. *Aggressive behaviour in preschool children: Neuropsychological correlates, costs of service use, and preventive efforts*. University Medical Center Utrecht.

- ROUSSEAU, J. J. 2002. *Emil alebo O výchove*. Slovenský spisovateľ 2002.
- TREMBLAY, R. E. 2000. The development of aggressive behaviour during childhood: What have we learned in the past century? In: *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 24 (2), 129-141.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/016502500383232>
- TREMBLAY, R. E. et al. 2004. Physical aggression during early childhood: Trajectories and predictors. In: *Pediatrics*, 114 (1), e43-e50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.114.1.e43>
- VERLAAN, P., TURMEL, F. 2010. Development process and outcome evaluation of a program for raising awareness of indirect and relational aggression in elementary schools: A preliminary study. In: *School Psychology Review*, 39 (4), p. 552-568.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2010.12087741>
- [1] Preventívne skupinové aktivity a preventívne programy pre MŠ, CPPP a P Ružomberok, 2022 [cit. 17.1.2022].  
<http://www.ppprk.sk/ponuka/preventivne-aktivity-ms/>
- [2] Preventívne aktivity pre MŠ, CPPP a P Martin, 2022 [cit. 17.1.2022].  
<https://www.cpppamartin.sk/ponuka-aktivit-pre-ms.html>
- [3] Preventívny program Aby sme si rozumeli pre deti v materských školách. 2022 [cit. 17.1.2022]. <http://pointre.sk/trening/deti-v-materskych-skolach/>
- [4] Preventívny program Druhý krok: 2022 [cit. 17.1.2022].  
<https://druhykrok.sk/o-programe/>

**Mgr. Bc. Monika Homolová**

Department of Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy  
Catholic University in Ruzomberok, Faculty of Education  
Hrabovská cesta 1, 034 01, Ruzomberok  
[monika.homolova312@edu.ku.sk](mailto:monika.homolova312@edu.ku.sk)