

Krystyna Teresa Panas

Wyższa Szkoła Menedżerska w Warszawie

The level of emotional intelligence and the faces of emotional blackmail of girls at the Youth Detention Centre and the Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica

Key words: *Emotional intelligence, emotional blackmail, girls in the Young Offenders' Institution, social work*

Introduction

Contemporary psychology in the description of the *self* is starting to depart from the description of the *self* as a static or unchanging structure. There appear reports about presenting the *self* from the point of view of phenomenology, that is taking into consideration the perspective of the subject through self-description, their narration in the context of functioning in social relations and inner experience. Revealing of the *self* in self-description is determined to a large extent by the surrounding reality. It can be especially significant in young people in the period of adolescence. Their self-esteem is a personality trait for which social relations are responsible. Adolescents build their self-esteem on the basis of personal experiences and emotional relations with their families or friends (the community surrounding them).

Appropriate functioning of young people can be ensured by high self-esteem formed by satisfying psychological needs such as acceptance, security, autonomy, belonging, as well as the appropriate level of emotional intelligence. Self-esteem formed on negative family and social role models can lead to the formation of negative identity [Ziółkowska, 2005: 404-407].

The presented research refers to girls who are staying at the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica according to the ruling of Family Division and Juvenile Court. The area of scientific interest referred to the level of emotional intelligence of girls in the understanding of Salovey and Mayer and susceptibility to emotional blackmail (according to the theory of S. Forward, D. Frazier).

The presented research is a pilot study. It charts a new scope of research. It can also be used in the work of tutors, social therapists and social workers taking care of juveniles both during and after their stay at the Young Offenders' Institution.

Emotional Intelligence in the conception of Salovey and Mayer

The conception of defining the structure of emotional intelligence was put forward by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. They outlined three groups of components. The first one refers to the abilities connected with identification and expression of one's own emotions, verbalised and nonverbalised and those connected with identification of other people's emotions, also interpreted on a verbal and nonverbal level (empathy).

The second group of components is the ability to manage emotions in both ourselves and other people. The third group of components of emotional intelligence includes the abilities to use emotions for our own motivation to act; they are also essential in flexible and creative thinking as well as in thinking skills. In 1997 the authors widened their conception, taking into account its developmental aspect, and therefore proposing degrees of maturity of emotional intelligence [Mayer, Salovey, 1999: 23-69].

The new approach includes:

1. the abilities to perceive and express emotions,
2. the abilities to emotionally support thinking in cognitive processes,
3. the abilities to comprehend and analyse emotions as well as using emotion knowledge in everyday life,
4. the abilities to control and regulate one's own emotions as well as other people's.

The notions close in meaning to that of emotional intelligence which exist in the scientific sphere are:

1. emotional competencies, that is learned capabilities, which help in various life situations and are of practical nature,
2. emotional knowledge, which is acquired and shaped from the earliest stages of human development,
3. social intelligence
4. personal intelligence [Jaworska, Matczak, 2008: 13-16].

On the basis of the above theory a questionnaire was designed by Schutte and associates, which is known under several different names: *Emotional Intelligence Scale, Assessing Emotions Scale, Schutte Self-Report Inventory for Emotional Intelligence Scale* [Jaworska, Matczak, 2008: 31-34]. In Poland adaptational work of the above quoted questionnaire was led by Anna Ciechanowicz, Aleksandra Jaworowska and Anna Matczak.

Emotional blackmail in the conception of Forward and Frazier

The authors think that emotional blackmail is a strong form of manipulation, in which "blackmailers who are close to the victim threaten – either directly or indirectly – that they will punish them if they do not do what they want" [Forward, Frazier, 2007: 12]. Emotional blackmail is a common form of manipulation of another person. Threatening is fundamental in every act of blackmail, it can be expressed in a variety of forms. It is

a method which strikes at us personally because the blackmailer knows how valuable this relationship is for us.

The blackmailers may threaten to use information concerning the past of the person being subjected to blackmail and to ruin this person's reputation. They usually demand money in return for keeping a secret. They know our vulnerabilities and deepest secrets. And even if they really care about us, when they are afraid that they will not get what they want they will use their knowledge about us to formulate threats, which will bring them what they want – our submissiveness.

An important element of emotional blackmail is the very understanding of how our relationship with the blackmailer works. It is a very important step in the process of eliminating blackmail from our relationship. Blackmailers can very skilfully conceal the pressure they are exerting on us and that is why we are so often not sure what we are really experiencing.

The world of emotional blackmail is extremely complex. Some emotional blackmailers openly express their threats while others send ambiguous signals to their victims. It all makes it very difficult to recognise when in our relationship manipulation patterns start developing. Obviously, there are unequivocally declared blackmailers who always openly say what will happen if we do not submit and they set out consequences of our disobedience in a way that does not leave a shadow of a doubt. However, more often than not emotional blackmail is much more subtle and it happens in a relationship in which a lot of positive features also become apparent. Memories of nice, good events have an influence on it and we are not able to accept our partner as a blackmailer.

Forward and Frazier identify four types of blackmailers. Each of them reflects a different type of blackmail: „punisher”, “self-punisher”, “sufferer” or “tantaliser”. Each of the type makes use of different vocabulary and each imparts a different nature to their demands, threats or negative judgement that they give to other people as an element of blackmail. Those differ-

ences often make it difficult to recognise blackmail, though most people think that they can discern it.

„Punishers” are the easiest to recognise. They are people who accurately define what they want and what consequences there will be if people do not give in to them. They may display aggressive behaviour, or the opposite – they may remain stubbornly silent. Regardless of the behaviour they display, their anger, which they feel when they come across opposition, is directly aimed at the other person. The „punishers” do not have to say a lot in order to inform us about their stand. The most terrible threats turn into emotional abuse when they change into intimidation and one person takes total control over the relationship. In the heat of emotional blackmail, blinded by the intensity of their own needs, „punishers” appear to be indifferent to our feelings and not too critical of themselves. They truly believe they are right in what are doing and that they are entitled to fulfil their desires.

The second group of blackmailers are „self-punishers” who emphasise what they are going to do to themselves if they do not get their own way. Dramatic words, hysterics and the atmosphere of crisis surround „self-punishers”, who are people of great needs. They tend to create tangled relationships with people close to them and they often find it very difficult to take responsibility for their own life. If they resort to blackmail, they justify their demands blaming the partner for all the difficulties in their life, either real or imaginary.

„Self-punishers” are talented prosecutors, they like to burden others with a sense of guilt and they often force others to guess what their desires are, claiming that someone else should fulfil them. „Self-punishers” are totally preoccupied by how they feel and they think that other people’s inability to read their mind is evidence that they are not given enough attention. Depressed, silent, often with tears in their eyes, „self-punishers” retreat when their partner does not fulfil their desires.

The last type of blackmailers are the so called "tantalisers". They are the most subtle of the blackmailers. Such people subject others to a series of tests, at the same time promising wonderful rewards, which others will get if only they are compliant with them. Sometimes the rewards offered by "tantalisers" are less measurable than material ones. The desire to receive what was promised can be so strong that those repeatedly blackmailed have to suffer a disappointment before they realise that they are emotionally blackmailed [Forward, Frazier, 2007: 58-77].

The psychological situation of an adolescent

The purpose of emotional blackmail, as the above considerations indicate, is to satisfy the needs of the perpetrator at the victim's expense. Children and adolescents appear to be the least resistant and unprepared for manipulation. They get entangled in many difficult situations, which they are unable to handle. Communication problems in the family, with peers or at school do not make it easier for the youth to adapt and to develop their own personalities, including emotional intelligence.

Crises, in other words specific changes which occur in confrontation with oneself and the world, are typical for adolescence. Adolescents are to perceive themselves as social persons, functioning and cooperating with other people, respecting norms, principles and values. The discrepancy between self-expectations of adolescents and public opinion's expectations and requirements of them can lead to experiencing tension within the somatic, psychological and social spheres. In the search for ways of reducing the tension and of personality reorganisation they expect adults to help them. The result of risk factors at work in the situation of shortage of resources can be a lack of social adaptation, manifesting itself in actions which are a manifestation of opposition to adult authorities; actions reducing the level of anxiety, frustration connected with school failures; actions leading to belonging or identification with peer groups; actions whose aim is to demonstrate the attributes of one's own identity; actions, which seem-

ingly help to achieve a higher level of development [Ziółkowska, 2005: 388-399]. Finding out about young people's resources and shortages is therefore a priority for tutors.

The purpose of the above considerations is to pinpoint the scientific problem which the author of the article engaged in, that is to look for relationships between emotional intelligence and emotional blackmail in adolescent girls staying in a Young Offenders' Institution.

The research question and the aim of research

The aim of the presented research was to look for relationships between the level of neuroticism, emotional intelligence and emotional blackmail in peer relationships. On the basis of the subject literature the research question can be formulated as follows:

Is there a relationship between the level of neuroticism, emotional intelligence and the type of emotional blackmail in adolescent girls staying in the Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica?

The hypotheses resulting from the problem formulated thereby:

1. The level of emotional intelligence of the girls who took part in the research is lower.
2. The girls take on the roles of victims and perpetrators in social situations.
3. The level of neuroticism of the underage girls is high.

The research is a pilot study and will be continued.

The applied research methods and the research procedure

In the research there were used the following: Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej INTE (INTE Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire) adopted by Aleksandra Jaworowska and Anna Matczak [Jaworowska, Matczak, 2008: 31-34], an experimental version of „Moi rówieśnicy i ja” (“My peers and I”) questionnaire designed by Marta Pawelec and Jacek Łukasiewicz [Pawelec, Łukasiewicz, 2012: 299-312] and Skala Jawnego

Niepokoju Jaki jesteś? (the Scale of Open Anxiety What Are You Like?) designed by Elżbieta Skrzypek and Mieczysław Chojnowski.

Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej INTE consists of 33 items, most of which are phrased in the first person. The statements were rated on a scale from 1 to 5 degrees depending on the extent to which the participants agree that particular sentences refer to them (from "I completely disagree" to "I completely agree"). 24 statements refer to abilities or skills – the participant having a given ability or skill – or they are evidence of difficulty in coping in different situations. Other statements reveal possessed skills.

„Moi rówieśnicy i ja” questionnaire consists of 36 questions (earlier version). The participant underlines one answer on the scale from 0 to 4. The questions were grouped under three categories. Each category constitutes a separate part of the questionnaire. The first one contains questions, which help diagnose whether the participant is a victim of emotional blackmail, or whether the participant is experiencing peer pressure. The second category contains questions which help to determine the type of the participant's reaction to peer pressure. Whether he or she adopts a compliant attitude towards the person who is exerting pressure. The open questions contained in the third part enable us to diagnose whether the participants are perpetrators of emotional blackmail, whether they themselves are putting pressure on their peers. The diagnostic answers in each of the category are evidence of the participant's adopting a definite role. The average of the sum total of the answers in each distinct category is the indication.

„Moi rówieśnicy i ja” questionnaire

based on the conception of Susan Forward, questionnaire adopted by Marta Pawelec, Jacek Łukasiewicz.

The purpose of the questionnaire below is to learn about selected aspects of peer relationships. It is anonymous. It means that nobody will

know how you answered individual questions. I believe that therefore your answers will be truthful. Your honesty is really important to me.

Read the questions carefully and mark the answers by putting a cross **X** in the appropriate space.

The numbers mean: 0 - never, 1 - rarely, 2 - it's hard to say, 3 - often, 4 - always.

Lp.	A. Does any of your friends:	0	1	2	3	4
1.	Threaten that they will make your life difficult if you don't do what they want?					
2.	Threaten that they break up with you if you don't do what they want?					
3.	Say or insinuate that they will hurt themselves or will be overcome with great sadness if you don't do what they want?					
4.	Want more, no matter how much you give them (e.g. time, things)?					
5.	Feel convinced that you will always give in to them?					
6.	Ignore or hurt your feelings or desires?					
7.	Promise you a lot but on condition that you fulfil their wishes?					
8.	Shower you with words of admiration, friendliness and praise when you give in to them and dislike or anger when you don't want to give in?					
9.	Use bribery in order to get their own way?					
10.	Try to control you e.g. keeps asking you who you spend your time with and feels jealous of the time spent with another person?					

Lp.	A. Does any of your friends:	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Ignore your protests when you don't want to agree to their suggestions, ideas?					
12.	Say it is entirely your fault in case of misunderstandings?					
Lp.	B. When you come across pressure from your peers do you:	0	1	2	3	4
1.	excuse yourself					
2.	argue					
3.	cry in secret					
4.	change or cancel your plans					
5.	give in and hope this is the last time					
6.	get into a fight with them					
0 - never, 1 - rarely, 2 - it's hard to say, 3 - often, 4 - always.		0	1	2	3	4
7.	say that such behaviour is unacceptable					
8.	call them names and swear					
9.	tell your parents or a teacher about it					
10.	not protest in front of them but you will „take it out” on another friend					

Lp.	A. Does any of your friends:	0	1	2	3	4
11.	think badly of them but you don't say it aloud					
12.	imagine you "take them apart"					
Lp.	C. Do you happen to behave in the following ways towards any of your friends:	0	1	2	3	4
1.	Threaten that you will make their life difficult if they don't do what you want?					
2.	Threaten that you will break up with them if they don't do what you want?					
3.	Say or insinuate that you will hurt yourself or will be overcome with great sadness if they don't do what you want?					
4.	Want more, no matter how much they give you (e.g. time, things)?					
5.	Assume that they will give in?					
6.	Ignore or hurt their feelings or desires?					
7.	Promise them a lot but on condition that they fulfil your wishes?					
8.	Show them with words of admiration, friendliness and praise when they give in to you and dislike or anger when they don't want to give in?					
9.	Use bribery in order to get your own way?					
10.	Try to control them e.g. keep asking them who they spend their time with and feel jealous of the time spent with another person?					

Lp.	A. Does any of your friends:	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Ignore their protests when they don't want to agree to your suggestions, ideas?					
12.	Say it is entirely their fault in case of misunderstandings?					

The purpose of *Skala Jawnego Niepokoju Jaki jesteś?* is to study the level of anxiety considered equivalent with neuroticism in school age children and young people – 40 questions, it also has a scale of lying interpreted as a susceptibility to social approval – 10 questions. The participant chooses the answer YES or NO in accordance with their self-knowledge. Answering time is unlimited.

The test was of mixed character: group and individual. The girls were informed about the scientific purpose of the test and about the fact that the answers were anonymous. They were asked to carefully read each questionnaire and give answers in accordance with the first idea they had. Additional information or explanation was not needed during the test. The time of test was unlimited.

Description of the participants

The research was conducted from September to December 2012 at the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica. 30 girls participated.

Table 1. The age of the participants

Age	N	%
14 years old	3	10
15 years old	7	23,33
16 years old	7	23,33
17 years old	6	20
18 years old	4	13,33
19 years old	2	6,67
20 years old	1	3

Source: based on author's own research

The biggest group of participants was girls at the age of 15-17, that is in the period of escalation of developmental crises (unstable self-esteem, strong need for acceptance, fear of humiliation, searching for a close person, somebody important to them, sexual initiation, change of school).

Table 2. Number of participants with regard to their participation in compulsory education

Type of school	N	%
Primary School	3	10
Gymnasium/ Junior High School	25	83,33
Vocational school	2	6,67

Source: based on author's own research

Analysis and interpretation of results

Based on the analysis of the research results the following were established: the level of emotional intelligence of the participants, the adopted roles in the victim – perpetrator relationships in emotional blackmail and

the level of neuroticism. The act of presenting oneself in a favourable light with the aim of gaining public approval was also verified – a lie.

Table 3. The participants' results in the Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej INTE

	Average raw scores (M)	Standard error of measurement	Confidence intervals	The limits of raw scores intervals	Sten scores
Factor I	57	+/- 7	95%	50-64	2-6
Factor II	41	+/- 6	95%	35-47	2-7
General factor	115	+/- 10	95%	105-125	2-5

Source: based on author's own research

The analysis of mean scores obtained in the Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej INTE (95% confidence intervals) indicates a tendency to a low level of social competencies – managing in social life and effective functioning in the society. The described behaviour and competencies are signs of a lower level of empathy of the participants – empathising with other people's experiences (emotional empathy) as well as understanding and accurately predicting their feelings (cognitive empathy). The dispersion of scores in factor I – from low to elevated may suggest a variability of emotional regulation and use of emotions. The scores obtained in factor II are contained in the interval from low to elevated, which may mean that the participants' ability to recognise emotions in themselves and other people is the best developed (The obtained results – in the author's opinion – may be the result of therapeutic work in the Young Offenders' Institution).

Table 4. Mean scores (M) in the „Moi rówieśnicy i ja” questionnaire

Scales	M	Range of scores
Victims	8,1	0 – 23
Perpetrators	5,2	0 – 16
Submissiveness	10,7	0 – 16

Source: based on author's own research

Based on the analysis of the data, the roles most frequently adopted by the girls were established. Mean scores in the scales of victims, perpetrators and submissiveness are an indication of an increase in the studied phenomenon of emotional blackmail. The lowest score was achieved by the participant in the role of the perpetrator (M=5,2), and elevated ones in the role of the victim (M=8,1). The highest one was in submissiveness (M=10,7). It can therefore be concluded that this behaviour is typical of the participant. Nonetheless, during result interpretation the context of the research has to be taken into consideration despite anonymity of the answers.

Table 5. The roles adopted by the participants

Role	N	%	M Perpetrator	M Victim
Victim	6	20	0	7,5
Perpetrator	3	10	5	0
Victim and Perpetrator	18	60	8,16	10,8
Neither of the roles	3	10	0	0
Total	30	100		
Submissiveness	21	70		

Source: based on author's own research

The results presented above indicate that 80% of the participants may be described as victims of peer blackmail as compared to 10% that of perpetrators. In the perception of 20% of girls they are victims of peer blackmail, however they have never experienced a situation in which they would become perpetrators. The participants who declare themselves as perpetrators are a small group – 10%. They make use of blackmail towards peers but they themselves do not experience it. 10% of the participants think that neither of the suggested roles refer to them. Such an answer may suggest a defensive attitude or a poor insight into one's own behaviour. The combination of the roles of the victim and the perpetrator, however, looks really interesting. As many as 60% of the participants notices such combination in themselves. It might be well to consider in which situations the same person is once the victim and another time the perpetrator. What conditions have to occur, what personal characteristics predispose them to the above relationships in social contacts.

Emotional blackmail may appear within a group or towards one, yet submissive person. In the presented research 21 people (70%) revealed that they are also submissive. They may, therefore, adopt the role of the victim.

Table 7. Mean scores obtained in Skala Jawnego Niepokoju Jaki jesteś?

Scale	Raw score	Confidence interval	SEM	The limits of confidence interval	Sten scores
Neuroticism	22	80%	+/-3	19-25	6-8
Lie	4	x	x	X	6

Source: based on author's own research

Mean scores on the Neuroticism scale indicate that the participants are characterised by a high level of Neuroticism, and so they can be less moti-

vated to study and are less socialised. The results on the Lie scale let us draw a conclusion with regard to an average tendency to present oneself in a more favourable light. The analysis of the data contained in the Skala Jawnego Niepokoju Jaki jesteś? provides us with a basis to analyse the remaining questionnaires due to the average scores on the Lie scale.

Discussion of results and practical conclusions

As it was indicated in the introduction the presented research is a pilot study. The proposed thesis was proved.

The participating girls staying in the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica have a lower level of emotional intelligence, a low level of social competencies. They have difficulty in managing in social life and effective functioning in the society. Their low competencies are a sign of a lower level of emotional and cognitive empathy.

The research results presented in this work indicate that 80% of the participants are both victims and perpetrators of blackmail at the same time. This group of participants shows a necessity for further research into the relationship between emotional blackmail in connection with personality studies, system of norms, principles and values, family relationships, peer relationships. In the perception of 20% of the girls they are victims of peer blackmail, however they have never experienced a situation in which they would become perpetrators. Only 10% of the participants mentioned the role of the perpetrator, never having been the victim. They make use of blackmail towards peers but they themselves do not experience it. 10 % of respondents could not find themselves in either of the roles. Their attitude can be interpreted in terms of psychological resistance and/or low self-awareness or self-esteem.

The whole of the verified hypotheses are completed by the statement about a high level of neuroticism of the participants, which is conducive to lower emotional competencies and entering the role of the perpetrator, victim or both at the same time. The obtained results confirm reports from

the research conducted by Pawelec and Łukasiewicz about universality of the phenomenon of emotional blackmail among young people [Pawelec, Łukasiewicz, 2012: 310].

Observational data gathered by the author and the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution tutors indicate that the participants use socially disapproved behaviour because they are not familiar with strategies to deal with difficult situations. Negatively valenced solutions are the only means of adaptation, gratification of needs, solving intrapsychic or interpersonal problems that are accessible to them, they also serve to build one's own self-image.

In a further stage of the research it is essential to establish whether the role of the victim-perpetrator in one person depends on the social situation and the peer, or whether the roles are fluid, that is one time victim behaviour predominates, and another perpetrator towards the same person but in different situations. Emotional or social intelligence of the participants might play an important role in understanding the adoption of the role of the victim or perpetrator and entering into violence relationships. This is also the direction that should be pursued in further research, expanding onto a larger test group.

The development of appropriate self-esteem in adolescent girls, appropriate shaping of personality structure, searching for identity and building one's own self-image is a challenge for tutors, therapists and social workers working with juveniles at the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution. The ongoing psychoprevention and minimising of violence phenomena is very important, in which the above research results can be extremely helpful.

Summary

Contemporary psychology in the description of the self is beginning to take into consideration – apart from the self described as a static, unchanging structure – the point of view of phenomenology, the perspective of the sub-

jects through self-description, their narration in the context of functioning in social relations and inner experience. Revealing of self in self-description is determined to a large extent by the surrounding reality. It can be especially significant in young people in the period of adolescence. Their self-esteem is a personality trait for which social relations are responsible to a great extent. Adolescents build their self-esteem on the basis of personal experiences and emotional relationships with their families or friends (the community surrounding them).

The appropriate functioning of young people can be ensured by high self-esteem formed by satisfying psychological needs such as acceptance, security, autonomy, belonging as well as the appropriate level of emotional intelligence. Self-esteem formed on negative family and social role models can, on the other hand, lead to the formation of negative identity, and thereby inappropriate peer relationships.

The presented research refers to girls who are staying at the Youth Detention Centre and Young Offenders' Institution in Warsaw Falenica according to the ruling of Family Division and Juvenile Court.

The presented research is a pilot study. It charts a new scope of research. It can also be used in the work of tutors, social therapists and social workers taking care of juveniles both during and after their stay at the Young Offenders' Institution.

References

- [1] Bąk, W. 2009. *Wielość Ja w ujęciu poznawczym i dialogowym. Próba integracji podejść. Przegląd Psychologiczny*, 52,
- [2] Forward, S., Frazier, D. 2007. *Szantaż emocjonalny*, Gdańsk: GWP.
- [3] Jaworowska, A., Matczak, A. 2008. *Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej INTE*. Handbook. Warszawa: Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych.
- [4] Mayer, J.D., Salovey, P. 1999. *Rozwój emocjonalny a inteligencja emocjonalna*. Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.
- [5] Pawelec, M., Łukasiewicz, J. 2012. *Szantaż emocjonalny w relacjach rówieśniczych. Roczniki Nauk o Rodzinie i Pracy Socjalnej*. 4(59).

- [6] Salovey, P., Mayer, J.D. 1990. *Emotional intelligence. Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 9.
- [7] Ziółkowska, B. 2005. *Okres dorastania. Jak rozpoznać ryzyko i jak pomagać*, [in:] A. I. Brzezińska (ed. by) *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka. Praktyczna psychologia rozwojowa*. Gdańsk: GWP.