

**Law Psychology**

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**STUDYING YOUNG CRIMINALS' AGGRESSION WITH THE HELP OF VARIOUS METHODS**Zuiev I. O.  
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In this work, the differences in expression of young offenders and their age-mates (high school schoolchildren) aggression were studied. It was found that hand projective test was more effective in finding aggressiveness of young offenders as compared to the survey. Young convicts had the following characteristics especially marked: aggressiveness, affectation, dependency. Their aggressive behavior is much more vivid than that of their age-mates; however, at the same time, they feel much more profound need in affection and close and friendly relations. In addition, their dependency from other people is much stronger.

Key words: aggression, projective test, questionnaire, young criminals, high school students.

В роботі досліджено відмінності в агресії між молодими злочинцями та їхніми однолітками-школярами старших класів. Встановлено, що проєктивний тест краще проявив здатність виділяти агресивність молодих засуджених – в порівнянні з опитувальником. Виявлено, що в молодих злочинців значно вища агресія за всіма діагностичними показниками проєктивного тесту, особливо: агресивність, афектація, залежність. Вони значно сильніше, ніж їхні однолітки, здатні переживати агресивні почуття до інших людей, але разом із тим відчують потребу в спілкуванні з іншими людьми, в близьких і дружніх відносинах з оточуючими. Також вони значно гостріше переживають почуття залежності від інших людей.

Ключові слова: агресія, проєктивний тест, опитувальник, молоді злочинці, старшокласники.

В работе исследованы различия в агрессии между молодыми преступниками и их ровесниками-школьниками старших классов. Выявлено, что проєктивный тест руки лучше проявил способность выделять агрессивность молодых преступников по сравнению с опросником. У молодых осужденных особенно выше выражены показатели: агрессивность, аффектация, зависимость. Они значительно сильнее, чем их сверстники, способны переживать агрессивные чувства к другим людям, но вместе с тем испытывают значительно более глубокую потребность в привязанности, близких, дружественных отношениях. Также они значительно острее переживают чувство зависимости от других людей.

Ключевые слова: агрессия, проєктивный тест, опросник, молодые преступники, старшекласники.

Problem definition. In modern conditions, aggression is unfortunately one of the typical characteristics of social intercommunication and psychological attribute that occupies more and more space in individuals' personal structure. Thus, no wonder that aggressive behavior and aggressiveness as a character trait attract more attention of research psychologists.

The questions of detection, assessment and monitoring of aggression in individuals are closely connected with the problem of truthfulness of the results of its study. Many researches doubt that application of surveys and questionnaires is a valid and reliable diagnostic tool for detection of inclination to aggression.

In this work, the possibilities of two diagnostic methods in studying young men's aggression are examined. Buss - Durkee Hostility Inventory and projective hand test by E. Wagner were used, which served for detecting differences and for differentiation of individuals with aggressive behavior. In order to detect the peculiarities of application of various types of diagnostic methods depending on a cohort of the test persons, we have selected convicted young men and senior teenagers as compared to their age-mates (high-school children).

Theoretical overview. The Scientific study of aggression has been conducted for a long time, and it has become productive. In psychology, by aggression we mean actions that cause any damage to another person, be it moral, material or physical damage. At the same time, the term "aggression" combines various behavior, down to full-fledged banditism [4].

Aggression is one of the regulators of human behavior. Some scientists consider tendency to aggressive behavior to be mostly congenital; however, at the same time, they admit gradual development of ability to control one's emotions in the process of socialization, which would be repression of aggression [1,2].

Psychologists suppose that aggression is one of the defense mechanisms, with the help of which the person tries to throw off negative emotions and adapt to the environment. In society, aggressive actions and attitudes are those, which are of hostile character, but which at the same time they are not caused by objective reasons, and which can't be justified by the conditions of moral and legal character, in particular – the need for self-protection of protection of other people [1].

Psychologists underline the aggressiveness, which is defined as a specific character trait that is expressed in person's hostile attitude to other people, animals, and outward things.

It should be noted that investigation of aggressive behavior in teenagers and young people becomes especially topical. Early aggression becomes more and more acute social problem. The young age is the time when negativism becomes the most significant, also verbal and physical aggression grow. Gradually, aggressive behavior forms the aggressiveness as a character trait.

In domestic psychology, a close attention is paid to the social developmental situation, which defines the conditions for the formation of this or that trait in a child, including aggressiveness. The purposefulness of upbringing and educations define adoption of some aggressive behavior patterns in teenage and adolescence [3, 7].

Aggressive actions may be conditioned by various factors and form part of the structure of various types of deviant behavior. In researches, the following factors are usually marked: family education, frustration, aggressive behavior patterns of peers, movie heroes, computer games etc. Development of aggressiveness is defined by some character traits like irritation, short temper, anxiety, and others.

Various researchers claim that aggressive behavior is more often observed in boys than in girls. It is known that boys are more perceptive to the explosion to both physical and psychological factors. That is why they demonstrate deviant behavior and mental disorders more often [1].

Buss and Durkee [1, 2] differentiate between aggressiveness and hostility and define the following manifestations of aggression and hostility: physical aggression, indirect aggression, irritation, negativism, offense, suspicion, verbal aggression and sense of guilt.

It is known that during early adulthood (14-16 years old) we may observe teenagers comparing their own personal peculiarities and behavior patterns with certain norms that are recognized in relational tribes. At the same time, they often demonstrate verbal aggression in the first turn, while physical and indirect aggression are increased insignificantly, as well as the level of negativism [2].

In the research of Semeniuk L.M., it was found out that during teenage the following indicators of aggressiveness become the most evident: verbal, physical and indirect aggression. Teenagers often express aggression because of application of physical power against other person or group of persons. A high indicator of verbal aggression gives evidence of the attempts to express aggression while showing negative feelings through verbal reactions. At the same time, such indicators of aggressiveness as negativism, suspiciousness and offense are less expressed [6].

In compliance with his approach to studying of aggression, E. Wagner offered projective method – Hand test, which is a well-known diagnostic instrument. The idea of the test is based on the assumption that human hand, its image, serves as a motorial base, particularly – aggressive one. The level of individual’s aggression is detected, while the following items serve as indicators of aggression: aggressive actions, directivity, fear, emotionality, communication, dependency, ostentation and others [1, 5].

Thematic justification lies in the fact that nowadays the problem of teenage aggressiveness’ growth becomes especially topical, which leads to negative social consequences. In addition, one should consider that attempt of explanation of young men’s aggressive actions is complicated by the fact that many theoretical concepts give a controversial interpretation of aggression. Besides, psychologists still lack evidence of the levels of correspondence of projective methods to studying young men’s tendencies to aggression and aggressiveness.

The object of the article: to study peculiarities of application of diagnostic methods of studying of aggression depending on a cohort of the test persons. It is expected that there are certain differences between questionnaire test and projective test in the possibility to detect aggression in early adults and teenagers.

Statement of the basic material. In this research projective hand test by E. Wagner (domestic modification of Maksimenko S.D. and others) and Buss – Durkee questionnaire were used [5]. A sampling of the tested persons was comprised of two groups of age-mates (senior teenagers and young men at the ages from 14 to 18). The first group was formed by juvenile offenders (convicted) of Kuryazhskaya correctional facility to the number of 214 persons. The second group was comprised of senior schoolchildren 9(the 8<sup>th</sup>- the 11<sup>th</sup> grades) of Kharkiv and Pervomaisk (Kharkiv region) schools to the number of 205 persons. All test persons were male.

All young convicts were confined for the commission of serious crimes, which means that aggression is very typical for their behavior, which constitutes a threat to health and safety of other people in the society. Two groups of the test persons were differentiated according to the level of antisocial behavior, accompanied by the aggression. In the research, we studied the possibility of aggression’s detection according to some indicators (test scales) by two various means of extracting information.

In order to compare the results of aggression’s diagnostics according to test scales between the groups of tested persons, obtained data was expressed in average grades – for 8 diagnostic indices of Buss – Durkee questionnaire and 6 of the first and foremost test scales of Hand test projective method. This data is contained in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Comparison of aggressiveness of two groups according to results of Buss – Durkee questionnaire

Tested persons	Scales							
	Physical aggression	Indirect aggression	Irritation	Negativism	Offence	Suspiciousness	Verbal aggression	Sense of guilt
The convicts	5,82	4,16	5,27	3,41	4,22	7,97	6,3	7,35
The schoolchildren	5,33	4,5	4,55	2,68	3,77	7,52	5,45	5,4

According to the results of the questionnaire, the young convicts demonstrate higher indices (7 out of 8) of aggression as compared to their age-mates’ results. Schoolchildren demonstrated higher results only in one

index – indirect aggression. Young convicts had higher indices of physical aggression, irritation, negativism, offense, suspiciousness and verbal aggression. The sense of guilt was especially expressed in this cohort.

In general, it is obvious that aggression is more manifested in the convicts who are completing their sentences in the penal colony. However, the level of differences between these groups is different in some scales, that's why for assessment of these differences we needed to apply some statistical methods.

Table 2  
Comparison of aggressiveness in two groups according to results of Wagner's Hand projective test

Tested persons	Scales					
	Aggression	Directivity	Fear	Affectation	Communication	Dependency
The convicts	2,06	1,71	1,93	2,00	2,03	1,01
The schoolchildren	0,99	1,1	1,2	0,92	1,33	0,59

According to the results of the projective test, all indices were much higher in the convicts (in some scales the difference was 2 times and more).

Thus, young convicts are much more aggressive than their age-mates; they are demonstrating hostility to the others, and they are inclined to destructive behavior. Conflict situations cause more intense negative emotions, which may obtain an affective character. Young convicts are inclined to the directive, authoritative behavior styles, as well as intensive fears on various occasions. Also, they are more dependent on other people, which is often one of the reasons for their aggression. At the same time, it is more typical for them to experience overwrought angst in connection with communication and the system of relations with the others obtains a special meaning for them.

The results of detecting statistical significance according to Student's t criterion are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3  
Statistical significance between the groups of the tested persons according to the results of Buss – Durkee questionnaire

No.	Diagnostic scales	t
1.	Physical aggression	1,13
2.	Indirect aggression	0,85
3.	Irritation	1,84
4.	Negativism	2,17*
5.	Offence	1,59
6.	Suspiciousness	0,97
7.	Verbal aggression	1,78
8.	Sense of guilt	2,42*

- the differences are significant at  $p \leq 0,05$ .

Significant differences between the groups of tested persons have been detected only according to two indicators out of 8: negativism and sense of guilt. This means that the young convicts have formed a stable negative attitude to the other people, events, as well as antagonism against occurring events and disobedience patterns. Also, it is typical for them to suffer a strong sense of guilt, which is probably connected with the estimation of the crimes they committed. At the same time, according to other six aggression indices from Buss – Durkee questionnaire, the differences appeared to be statistically insignificant.

Table 4  
Significance of differences between the groups of tested persons according to the results of projective hand test

No.	Diagnostic scales	t
1.	Aggression	5,89**
2.	Directivity	2,93*
3.	Fear	2,78*
4.	Affectation	5,34**
5.	Communication	3,07*
6.	Dependency	5,63**

- the differences are significant at  $p \leq 0,05$ ; \*\* - at  $p \leq 0,01$ .

Statistically significant differences between the groups of the tested persons were detected at each of six indices. Young convicts demonstrated much higher rates of aggression, affectation, and dependency. Their aggressive behavior is much more vivid than that of their age-mates; however, at the same time, they feel much more profound need for affection and close and friendly relations. Also, their dependency from other people is much stronger.

Young convicts demonstrated statistically higher levels of directivity, fear, and communication. They manifest more vivid need in domination over other people and putting pressure on others. Comparing with

their age-mates, they experience higher levels of fear of others and the urge to protect themselves from the other people. At the same time, it is typical for them to seek contacts with the others and establish more equitable relationships than they have in reality.

Thus, projective test method allowed more vividly separate young convicts from their age-mates (senior schoolchildren) according to indices of aggression's intensity. We see the reason for this phenomenon in the fact that projective methods give the possibility to detect unconscious tendencies (motives, needs, strivings, wishes) in the mentality of the subjects. This allows predicting their behavior and their actions, particularly, aggressive ones.

In our opinion, projective Hand test (its domestic modification) showed sufficient diagnostic possibilities for detection of aggression in young males.

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