

# Identity, social support and attitudes towards health with adolescents

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## 1. Introduction

One of the most important and at the same time significant developmental stage from the ontogenetic point of view is considered the period of adolescence that can be characterised as a temporary stage between childhood and adulthood. The period brings significant physiological changes, as well as changes in mental and social developments of personality. Accelerating trend appearing in this developmental stage has already been documented for several decades and that is why we consider important to pay appropriate attention to those areas that are most attacked by the influence of socialization of a society, fast lifestyle, stronger pressure, and experienced stress. In the following chapter we will have a look at selected aspects of development of adolescents with the stress on identity, social support, and attitudes to health of adolescents. At the same time we will introduce research studies that observe selected areas, and that form not only theoretically known picture of what an adolescent look like, but also they point at new progress of experiencing, attitudes and behaviour of adolescents. Here we notice the influence of changes in the whole society, pressure of marketing strategies focused on adolescents, specifically in the areas that have profound effect on lifestyle of adolescents with the use of new information technologies.

## 2. Adolescence

Adolescent developmental stage is the era where an individual prepares for his future role of an adult individual. It is a developmental period between childhood and adulthood. Also, it is the period of profound changes of organism (increase in height, weight, maturing of genital organs) that go hand in hand with development of the psychic of an adolescent. Increasing requirements of society, informatization process of society, fast lifestyle, stronger pressure and experienced stress affects mental and social developments of adolescents. Accelerating trend in developed countries is more evident. On one hand, due to information accessibility adolescents are more skilful, more experienced in IT technologies, however on the other hand, they are more uncertain about their future role as adults, mainly regarding their profession. Lately, we have been witnesses of selecting the institutional education according to attractiveness in financial evaluation of a graduate in certain major, not

according to abilities, personal traits. This results in disappointment, bigger uncertainty, less ambitions. Entrance into adolescent stage is shifted to lower age; however, it only deepens difference between biological and personal maturity (secular acceleration). At the same time we are witnesses of later entering the stage of adolescence connected to prolonged gradual preparation for working activity (secular deceleration). Adolescents are more interested in their body. They observe changes in physiognomy. If they find disproportion in the development of individual parts of the body (for example left breast is smaller than the right one, etc.), they tend to search and study it all the time. The desire for perfection is also strengthened by mass media (advertisements, films, articles about celebrities, etc.) that force the importance of physical perfection for a happy and successful life (Šramová, 2007a). Despite awareness and knowledge about danger of such attitude, we still encounter this phenomenon that badly affects the health of adolescents. Experiments with various diets can lead towards mental anorexia or bulimia, which both attack metabolism in organism of young girls, however, later they can bring about serious physical and mental dysfunctions of personality. Adolescent youth have individualised more recently, mainly in developed countries, and at the same time they have been forming their norms, rules by which a separated group tries to detach itself. On one hand there is awareness of being unique and on the other hand, an individual belongs to a group that helps the individual to get orientated in social environment. Marketing and mass media experts react to these requirements and thus we meet a suggested trend in fashion, fun, music, interests and the way of spending the free time, where they define what is „cool“ or „in“ for subculture young people in certain era. Adolescents with their hairstyle, the way they dress, with music preference belong to each other. It is usually atypical style, different from conventional one that is accepted and used by an adult population. We can observe interactive and reciprocal relations between society and adolescents. On one hand, society gives adolescents social norms, values by means of institutions (school, important authorities), mass media and, at the same time society reacts to initiative changes that are realised by adolescents in social environment. Process of socialization is thus influenced institutionally, as well as contemporary relations that play an important role in forming values, ambitions, attitudes of adolescents. This does not exclude the influence of parents who still hold important social certainty of an adolescent. Adolescence thus has its economic, social, educational and cultural aspects.

### 3. Identity in Adolescence

Adolescence is a sensitive period of time for forming the personal identity, which means personal uniqueness. In a given evolutionary stage an adolescent tries to find answers to questions: Who am I? Where do I belong? What is my role in society? What is the meaning of life? By this an adolescent clarifies the attitude towards himself, towards environment. Self-concept which is the set of information and feelings about oneself and it is being created throughout the whole ontogenetic development of personality, while in adolescence the self-concept tends to increase, by which it serves a regulatory role of own behaviour and experience. According to Erikson (1968) forming own ego-identity is basic developmental role of given period, where performing the previous developmental roles are included, where the influence of biological, psychological social and cultural natures of development are met. Previous developmental eras are shown in adolescence as its derivatives and they are

covered explicitly: perspective versus confusion in early childhood, self-confidence versus high self-awareness in early childhood, role experimenting versus role fixation in preschool period, learning versus inability to learn at young school age (Erikson, 1968, Macek, 2003). The following phases are contained implicitly, such as sexual polarisation versus bisexuality in early adulthood, leadership and management versus confusion in middle and late adulthood, ideological obligation versus confusion in senior age (Erikson, 1968, Macek, 2003). Thus it is evident that the development of personality is the lifelong process, however, it is adolescence that is a key developmental era. Identity is awareness of uniqueness, awareness of one self as a subject with own opinion, where parental values, attitudes, and also own experience of an adolescent are included. In case those individual components that create the identity do not unify into a compact whole in developmental stage of adolescence, we speak about diffuse identity, where an adolescent is not interested, or refuses the framing of his own identity, uniqueness, subjectivity that is different from others. According to Marcia (1980) it is important to view identity as a dynamic structure, where dynamic organisation of drives goes hand in hand with abilities, beliefs, as well as previous personality development. In the process of forming the identity is important to watch existence or absence of identity *crisis* (doubts about values, aims, that was implemented to a child by parents), and the presence, or absence of *commitment* (stability in the selection of values, life goals of an individual) and to define accordingly which out of the four identity conditions is reached by an adolescent. We can speak about *identity diffusion*, which is a condition an individual did not go through the identity crisis, he does not have a firm commitment. It is a condition, when active need of self-definition is missing. Other persons influence an adolescent; his opinions are complied with norms and expectations of the group to which he belongs. His self-evaluation is not autonomous, it is dependant on perception and reactions of other persons towards him, and while in an interpersonal encounters an adolescent has problems with diffuse identity. *Foreclosure identity* is a condition, where an adolescent has a stabilized, firm commitment that he reached without analysing, without selecting values, aims, without self-analysis. An adolescent usually uncritically picks up values that were chosen by parents, or another authorities, or friends. However, he is more or less satisfied with himself, even problematic relations with others prevail. *Moratorium* is a condition, where an individual undergoing the identity crisis reaches, which mean that he searches, looks for, forms his goals, but still he does not have a stabilized commitment, he postpones decision. It is a condition that can be accompanied by doubts, anxiety and is connected with changing of roles. *Identity achievement* is a condition, where an adolescent underwent the identity crisis based on his experience he is able to take his position, decision in various psychosocial areas. The past, presence and future perspectives are integrated here into a consistent whole that contributes to self-esteem of a personality. Identity achievement is considered the most adaptable, firm, self-regulatory personality identity. From the ontogenetic point of view is according Marcia (1980) important that moratorium precedes the condition of identity achievement, even of it is possible in a certain period that various conditions of identity appear in an adolescent (for example in the are of politics it is a moratorium condition, in the area of partnership it is a identity diffusion, and so on). This condition is typical from the developmental point of view. The problem might be, says Marcia (1980) when process of creating the identity is not completed before reaching adulthood. According to Berzonsky (2003), who was inspired by Marcia's conception of identity, social-cognitive processes take part in forming the

personality identity. We speak about cognitive strategies that are used by an adolescent personality with self-definition, self-constructing, while the given process is long-term and conditioned by adaptation processes (assimilation and accommodation). According to Berzonsky's concept, one of the three personality identity styles prevails, which he assigned to three variables that exist in a correlation relations with certain personality traits: 1/ *Informative identity style* is typical for individuals actively searching their personalities, who are open to experience, who are oriented to seek information, who have an active approach to problem solving (Berzonsky, 1992, Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992, Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996, Dollinger, 1995). Given style corresponds with achieving the moratorium condition and condition of identity achievement, as described by Marcia (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994). 2/ *Normative identity style* is typical for an individual who passively overtakes patterns while self-definition, who is conscientious, focused on goal. His behaviour is adapted to norms and expectations of others, and thus he is conformably oriented. He is not comfortable with ambiguity, he reaches foreclosure identity (Berzonsky, 1992, Dollinger, 1995, Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994). 3/ *Diffuse identity style* is bound to maladaptive strategies, neuroticism, depressing. We speak about the style where an individual puts off defining of his personality, he has a low self-esteem, his behaviour is conditioned to situational factors, he avoids personal conflicts, insecurities, he reaches diffuse identity style (Berzonsky, 1992, Berzonsky 2003, Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996, Dollinger, 1995).

#### 4. Parental style and adolescents identity style

Since the family environment is key socializing space, where a child is developing, on which the child's self-evaluation, perception of social relations, as well as orientation within them are dependant, it is important to find out what parental style is supporting in idea forming process. Berzonsky (2003), as well as Marcia (1980) pointed out on close interconnection of identity style with parental model of behaviour, and this connection was confirmed by several researches (Berzonsky, 2004, Campel et al., 1984, Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). It was found out that normative identity style is typical for individuals being brought up in a family with supportive atmosphere, while diffuse identity style is bound to parental authoritarian parental style that is based on punishment and strong control. Family environment based on trust and autonomy supports prevailing informative identity style. Authoritative parental style, as well as liberal parental style may delay self-identification process of a child. Assuming the mentioned we set up the following problems among Slovak participants: 1. To characterize mutual relations among age, gender, identity style, commitment with adolescents and parental style; 2. To find out whether gender of adolescents differentiates observed identity style, commitment, parental style (Šramová, 2006). We have used *Identity style inventory* (ISI-3, Berzonsky, 2002) for observation of presence of social-cognitive identity style. The inventory consists of 40 items; adolescents expressed the level of agreement with the range 1 to 5 points. For analysis we have used addition score of social-cognitive identity styles, that are focused on solution, handling personal problems, creating final personal identity: informative identity style, diffuse identity style, normative identity style. At the same time, we have been watching the stability of decisions of personality that Berzonsky calls commitment identity. For finding the prevailing parental style in an adolescent family we have used *Questionnaire for findings the way of upbringing in a family* (Čáp & Boschek, 1999) that consists of 40 items. Each 10 items

are devoted to observed components of upbringing: component of positive emotions, negative emotions, requirements and freedom. The following parents' attitudes constitute with it: positive, hostile, directive, and autonomous. Research file was created by 468 adolescents (228 boys, 240 girls) in the age of 16 to 19 (average age was 17.5 years). Final findings showed correlative relations among gender, forming social-cognitive identity styles, commitment and adolescents of prevailing perceived parental styles. The age of adolescents in a research file is not related with their self-definition, nor with perceptive parental style, whereas according to many authors in early adolescence foreclosures and identity diffusions prevail, and identity achievement with older adolescents (Marcia, 2004, Stark & Traxler, 1974). Gender affiliation influences the forming social-cognitive identity styles of adolescents. A positive correlation was found between gender and informative identity style ( $r=0.31, p<0.01$ ), as well as between gender and normative identity style ( $r=0.16, p<0.05$ ), and a negative one was found between gender and diffuse identity style ( $r=-0.15, p<0.05$ ). While girls have a higher need for searching self-relevant information (informative identity style) and have higher acceptance of social norms (normative identity style), observed adolescent boys tend to postpone self-definition. Informative ( $r=0.18, p<0.05$ ) and normative ( $r=0.47, p<0.01$ ) identity styles correlate positively, while diffuse identity style ( $r=-0.15, p<0.05$ ) negatively with positive parental style. It appears that a positive attitude to a child from parents' side has influence on forming the whole, structured identity in the sense of created commitment ( $r=0.20, p<0.01$ ), together with directive parental style ( $r=0.27, p<0.01$ ). Findings regarding a positive correlation of forming normative, informative social-cognitive identity style and commitment correspond with conclusions of Berzonsky (1992, 2004). A personality that forms his identity by an active search for information that confirm his self, as well as a personality with a passive overtaking of behavioural patterns, both support by their approach forming the whole identity in the sense of created commitment, which means they support the stability of an individual with selection of values, life goals, his responsibility. Our findings show that adolescent youth has mostly active attitude to self-exploration, to solution of life problems, they are autonomous, accepting the social norms. Autonomous upbringing in the sense of freedom influences negatively the stability of value selection, life goals, commitment of adolescents ( $r=-0.13, p<0.05$ ) and positively the forming diffuse identity style ( $r=0.14, p<0.05$ ). The preference of experiencing the freedom in upbringing postpones fulfilment of identity in an adolescent period. Results of research show also mutual weak interconnection of positive parental style and a directive ( $r=0.15, p<0.05$ ), as well as autonomy ( $r=0.13, p<0.05$ ). However, positive parental style excludes itself with hostile parental style ( $r=-0.17, p<0.05$ ). Directive parental style in the sense of controlling, authority, requirements placed on a child supports forming the informative ( $r=0.26, p<0.01$ ) and normative ( $r=0.54, p<0.01$ ) identity styles; it reduces the existence of hostile behaviour towards a child ( $r=-0.14, p<0.05$ ), and also forming the diffuse identity style ( $r=-0.13, p<0.05$ ). While positive as well as directive parental style support forming the informative and normative identity styles of adolescent youth, what corresponds also with findings of Berzonsky (2004), liberal parental style supports forming the diffuse social-cognitive identity style of adolescents. If we look closer at presence of identity styles in adolescents depending on gender, it is obvious that informative ( $t=-5.4, p=0.000$ ), as well as normative identity styles ( $t=2.231, p=0.023$ ) are present in a higher degree with girls than with boys. On the contrary, diffuse identity style prevails with adolescent boys comparing to girls ( $t=2.904, p=0.013$ ). Significantly higher degree of the

presence of diffuse identity style with boys in comparison to girls is in accordance with our previous findings regarding lower self-evaluation with adolescent boys (Šramová, 2004a) and it is contrary to findings regarding higher degree of the presence of diffuse identity style with women comparing to men (Rothman, 1978). Berzonsky (2004) found out higher degree of diffuse identity style with adolescent boys compared to adolescent girls, while diffuse identity style is bound to procrastination, to lower personality self-control (Berzonsky, 2003, Fandelová, 1999). In other words, in the observed file adolescent girls are in comparison to boys more active, but also conservative in the process of self-definition, while boys are more insecure, passive and indecisive, delaying the fulfilment of identity. Significant statistical difference between boys and girls in representation of perceived parental style was present only with autonomous parental style ( $t=2.451, p=0.011$ ), even if only at 5% level of significance towards higher representation with boys than with girls.

Thus it was found out in the observed file that positive emotional relation with children, placing requirements on children, support an active strategy of self-definition of adolescents. An individual is active when looking for information broadening his self-definition, he has an active attitude to problem solving. Family environment based on trust, support is important for development of autonomous, free personality. Forming the normative identity style that is typical for individuals who follow requirements of social environment and who accommodate their self-definition to the views of other people around them, is supported in a family environment, where here is a positive atmosphere of a child, but also in environment with prevailing requirements on a child. Since prevailing positive parental style and also directive parental style support forming the informative, as well as normative identity styles, we suppose that in a family with clear rules (authoritarian parental style) there are set limits that help an adolescent in self-definition development. Freedom in upbringing perceived by adolescents (autonomous parental style) that is present with parents, postpones forming the identity. An adolescent actively refuses clear limitation of his own self. This is also the reason why a diffuse identity style has a higher degree of presence with boys who at the same time perceived higher autonomy in parental upbringing than girls did. Freedom in children upbringing are often experienced as refusal, disinterest of their parents, while parental style based on trust, love, leading, rules is felt as an expression of care, interest of parents in children. With identity problem solving it is important to have in mind that family environment must support development of self-control, certain self-discipline of a child, it must not suppress personal individuality of a child, it must not be indifferent to other problems of a child. Demonstrated results of the research show an important influence of parental style with self-definition of adolescents. That is why forming the social-cognitive identity styles in an adolescent period is dependant on behaviour of parents to adolescents, as well as gender affiliation, there is an evident effect of prevailing gender stereotypes. Positive, together with directive parental style has a supporting effect on forming the whole, structured identity in the sense of formed commitment, while autonomous parental style postpones the process of self-definition of an adolescent. Understanding the process of forming and identity reconstruction are important for gaining relevant information that may serve for targeted effecting the process of identity formation not only in a family environment, but as well in institutional educational environment.



## 5. Forming the semantic space of notions MEN, WOMEN depending on gender and the level of formed identity of adolescents

Adolescence, as stated above, is a period of forming the identity, while we can view identity as multiple structured entities. Identity of personality is not considered one-dimensional category, it is a structured and multilayer category, it is not considered closed, however it is process able and it has an experience quality. In this sense, the experience of identity is a mental representation of experiencing individual's self-image that effects social and cultural environments. A concept of mental representations and frame of semantic space are part of a research of personal and social identities, since it is subjective meaning assigned to certain objects creates image that an observed person creates about given object. Accordingly, semantic space is formed individually, in accordance with social-cultural context and individual history a personality. The form of semantic space is significant for adolescents in relation to their ontogenetic period and it covers notions and meanings that are bound to personal and social identities. Forming the semantic space of gender represented by notions MEN, WOMEN is important in the time of building inter-sexual relations from the point of view of creating attitudes to objective life roles.

Our goal was to find out to what extent the viewing concepts MEN and WOMEN is dependable on gender, to what extent the gender stereotype prevailing in a society is reflected in a connotative meaning assigned to observed notion. From this aspect we were interested in the problem of forming the meanings of relevant notions (MEN, WOMEN) in relation to gender and level of formed identity. We have observed what optic adolescents with high degree of formed identity (adolescents who are stable in selection of values, life goals) use when they look at their gender and opposite gender; and what is the optics of adolescents with low degree of formed identity (adolescents who are not stable in value orientation, life aspirations). We have used a method *Semantic differential* to characterise notions MEN, WOMEN, with 17 bipolar adjectives with possibility to select within a seven-grade scale, considering three dimensionality of semantic space according to Osgood et al. (1957). We spoke about the following adjectives: *personal-impersonal, understandable-unclear, strong-weak, correct-incorrect, own-strange, fast-slow, friendly-unfriendly, clean-dirty, powerful-powerless, good-bad, close-distant, liberal-conservative, nice-ugly, public-private, valuable-worthless, active-passive, and useful-useless*. To search identity styles we used *Identity style inventory* (ISI-3, Berzonsky, 2002), which is described in detail in the previous subchapter. For analysis we used coordinate score of commitment scale that informs us about formed final personal identity. For research goal we divided recipients according to status of achieved identity into two groups: with formed identity (N=67) and without formed identity (N=68). Criterion for division was  $MR \pm 1SD$ . A research file was created 463 adolescents (219 boys, 244 girls), in the age from 16 to 19 years (average age was 17.7 years) and statistical utilization has been realised with the help of SPSS 8.0 programme.

Final findings showed different formation of mental picture of the notion WOMEN depending on gender and degree of formed identity (Šramová & Fandelová, 2006). Another subjective meaning of the notion WOMEN is assigned by boys, another by girls. The notion adolescents with formed identity perceive WOMEN differently in contrast to adolescents who do not have formed identity. Differences in perception, in mental organisation of notions WOMEN are thus statistically significant as for gender ( $z = -3.479, p = 0.001$ ), as well as for identity ( $z = -3.621, p = 0.000$ ). Quality analysis also indicates certain differences in organising the cognitive structure that allow in the same way as with the notion MEN to probable trends and mild

inter-gender differences. Quality analysis thus enables to describe some differences in organising mental representations, but also the while process of connotative expressions that for boys and girls, as well as according to degree of achieved identity, show certain differences. Connotative meaning of the notion WOMEN is described by adolescent boys differently as in comparison to girls who identify themselves with a woman role and who trust in its abilities. Different perception of the notion between genders was found in eight dimensions. Girls see WOMEN as *personal, clear, strong, correct, own, fast, powerful and active*. Boys, as well as girls see WOMEN as persons who are *friendly, good, nice, less public, valuable and useful*. Boys perceive WOMEN differently as girls do and with girls it is possible to identify more positive connotation of the notion. Boys see the whole profile of an assessed notion positively, even more reserved. According boys, WOMEN are less *clear, slower, more useless and conservative*. Finding of different perception of the notion WOMEN according to degree of achieved identity showed that adolescents with formed identity (it means adolescents with stability in selection of values, life goals) and adolescents who do not have formed identity (it means adolescents with insecure selection of values, life goals, responsibility) form the observed notion differently. Adolescents with formed identity have more positive optic for WOMEN who are in their opinion *strong, close, more personal, correct, friendly, clean, good, nice, valuable, active, useful, less public, in average clear, powerful and liberal*. Adolescents who do not have formed identity form the notion in a more reserved way, less expressively and perceive WOMEN as more *private, in average clearer, strong, own, fast, bad and close*. We have not found statistically significant differences in assessing the notion MEN by boys and girls. Similarly, also differences in perception of the notion MEN according to degree of formed identity are not statistically significant. We can thus note that perception of the notion MEN did not differentiate adolescent boys and girls, nor individuals with formed or without formed identities. Results show that view on gender is conditioned not only by gender affiliation (where there is a noticeable influence of prevailing gender stereotypes in a society), but also by a degree of formed identity. We often meet with presentation of gender stereotypes where a woman is presented as a person taking care about household, about herself, husband and children. A man is showed as self-asserted, independent successful individual, despite the fact that for last decades the role of a woman and the role of a man have been significantly shifted. While we can observe significant emancipatory process in holding important positions in a working, social and public sectors with women, with men it is possible to observe significant participation on household activities, caring for children. As results of our findings show, the influence of gender stereotypes with our adolescents is fairly present. More positive connotation of the notion MEN has appeared in a frame of semantic space with boys and participants with formed identity, as well as the notion WOMEN with girls and adolescents with closed identity. Since these differences performed statistically significant only with assessment of female gender, it confirms that social perception of women and their expected roles – in contrast to social perception of men – is more complicated, more controversial and thus also a potential source of bigger interpersonal or social conflicts. Boys and girls have had clear gender identification and at the same time it appears what Berzonsky (2003) pointed out that a personality with closed, overall identity in the sense of formed commitment has stability in a value selection, life goals. It was showed that Slovak adolescents who have a stable system of values and life goals assess women (and to a certain extent also men) more positively than adolescents without a stable value orientation and life aspirations. Thus it is evident that a positive self-



acceptance, perceived stability reflects into more positive optic not only on person itself but also on others in a social environment and frame of social reality hides inside differences dependent on various mutually interconnected factors.

## 6. Forming the semantic space of notions related to identity of adolescents

Observing the connotative, which means subjective meaning of a notion assigned by an individual, is considered important specifically in a research of finding out the psychological meanings of observed notions. At denotative level that is objectively given and generally acknowledged quality of a notion, a connotative expression is often connected with associations, past experience of personality. And since it is also a connotative meaning from which an attitude of an individual is unfolded, it presents an important essence worth a scientific research. As it was already mentioned in the subchapter Identity in adolescence, it is adolescence developmental stage that is a stage where not only the identity is formed, but at the same time also the perception of affiliation to certain social categories is an important part of formed self-image of a personality, as well as the source of his identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, Bačová, 1996, Bianchi et al., 2007). As the bounds are anchored in important social categories belonging to a place, persons (important for an adolescent, as well as to those who are discriminated in a society) it is one of areas that create an image of personal and social identities of an adolescent. Social identity is important aspect of self-concept that is formed during socialization process based on knowing one's membership in a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), knowing and acquiring norms, values, and requirements of a society. An individual belongs to a certain social space with which he usually identifies (inclusive categories), or he understands them as abstract forms (Turner et al., 1987). Self-perception bound to a place where an individual lives is an important category to which a fair attention is given by a social psychology, specifically by an environmental psychology. Some research findings indicate that although people identify themselves with quite broadly defined categories (continent, nation) in a relevant reference frame, also affiliation to narrower defined categories (region), which is a specific frame for them and which may provide more significant social identities (Simon et al., 1995). The aim of our findings was how a connection to place is presented in the semantic space of Slovak adolescents who were born into a democratic society and were witnesses of entering the European economic space. In other words, we have observed what is a semantic placement of macro social categories and a notion *I* in a broader semantic context of adolescents that we observed. Considering globalization trend we were interested what subjective meaning is assigned by adolescents to notions connected to personal and social identities that were presented by macro social categories (*Europeans, Slovaks, People of my region*), by notions expressing emotional experience (*pain, sadness, joy, fear, happiness, unhappiness*), by values (*health, disease*), by identity-forming social categories rendered by in-group and out-group (*we, they, friends, enemy, citizens, Roma people, EU*), as well as significantly others (*mother, father, siblings, partner*) and also by the notion *I*. These notions relate to various „levels“ of identification. For finding out the targeted goal we have used a psycho semantic *Method of semantic selection* of Doležal (In: Smékal, 1990), its picture version, labelled also as *Test of semantic selection* (Urbánek, 2003). The basic principle of the method is based in the fact that an observed person assigns pictures (symbols) to given notions – objects. We used an original version consisting of 16 archetypal symbols. Out of these the observed person must select always by

8 according to what pictures he finds suitable to characterize assessed notions. By means of two-dimensional projection of results of factor correspondence analysis (procedure of optimal scaling) of data from *Test of semantic selection* we obtained plots that enable lexical interpretation of semantic relations of assessed notions for 463 adolescents (219 boys, 244 girls) in the age from 16 to 19 years (average age was 17.7 years). Statistical utilization has been realised with the help of SPSS 11.0 programme. According to semantic vicinity of notions that form a certain cluster as well as with analysis of the placement of notions with affinity to identity, we have identified by means of a correspondence analysis two dimensions with adolescents (Figure 1) that organize verbal impulses from *Test of semantic selection*. Test Chi-square for this solution is statistically significant ( $X^2= 23785.674$ ,  $p=0.000$  with 465 degrees of freedom), although there is an important difference between identified dimensions in their force (94% or 2.1% inertia). The first dimension is defined by polarities positive/pleasant vs. negative/unpleasant and the second places individual/intimate vs. social polarities. These two dimensions create four quadrants that were named (1) **refused objects** – combination of negative/unpleasant and social contents (they are created mainly by notions: *Roma people and fear*); (2) **reference objects** – combination of positive/pleasant and social contents (for example *health, joy, Slovaks, Europeans*); (3) **objects of social satisfaction** – combination of positive/pleasant and individual/intimate contents (for example *love, desire, partner, mother*) and (4) **statuses of internal discomfort** – combination of negative/unpleasant and individual/intimate contents, especially emotions and stages (for example *sadness, pain*). Macro social notions *Europeans, Slovaks, People of my region* placed themselves in this two-dimensional semantic system: *Europeans* and *Slovaks* are in close vicinity in a quadrant of *reference objects*: although their coordinate score in first dimension is accordingly only 0,21 in polarity positive/pleasant and in second dimension only 0.23 or 0.29 in social polarity, the level of the saturation of their coordinate placement by first and second dimensions is relatively high (inertia 0.68 and 0.12 for category *Slovaks* and 0.62 or 0.17 for category *Europeans* (note: the whole inertia in second dimension is low, maximum value reaches 0.268). Category *People of my region* is placed on the border of quadrants **reference objects** and **refused objects**. Coordinate score of this verbal impulse is 0.02 in the direction of polarity negative/unpleasant and 0.14 in the direction of polarity social. A very low level of saturation of this verbal impulse stresses ambivalence of semantic placement, mainly by first dimension (inertia only 0.02).

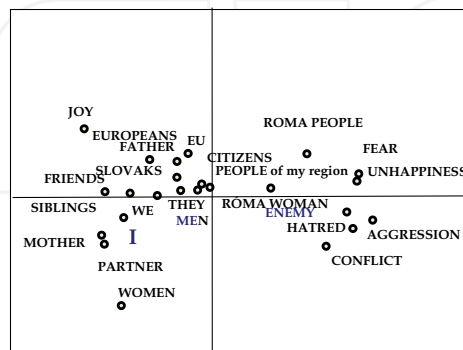


Fig. 1. A semantic space created by impulses of Test of semantic selection (symmetric normalization). Optimal scaling for a group of adolescents

Opposite to that, a verbal impulse *I* was placed completely differently, in quadrant **objects of social satisfaction**, while its coordinate score in first dimension was 0.58 in polarity positive/pleasant and in second dimension 0.15 in polarity individual/intimate. The level of saturation of this notion by first dimension is 0.97 and by second dimension 0.10. Considering the assumption that affiliation to macro social categories is a significant aspect of self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we considered interesting to look at macro social categories together with semantic meanings of the notion *I*. Adolescents in a semantic space placed the notion *I* in „positive“ quadrant of objects of social satisfaction. Between it and macro social formations thus differed only the dimension of individual/intimate vs. social, not positive/pleasant vs. negative/unpleasant. However, in general the dimension of positive vs. negative was deterring for placing the notions, not dimension macro vs. micro social, let us say individual.

According to our findings were *People of my region* placed at the level of the notion *they* (on contrary to the notion *Slovaks* that was placed at the level of the notion *we*). It seems that with evaluating macro social categories geographical vicinity, or the level of inclusiveness is not crucial, however, the meaning that is assigned to it by participants has a core role (Routland & Cinnirella, 2000). Even if *Europeans* are accepted positively and belong to a reference frame, their semantic distance from the notion *I* is evident, what can be connected with the fact that *Europeans* are a distant, unknown social category with which adolescents identify themselves less than with national and regional categories. Even if macro social categories are less relevant for the development of self-definition on contrary to contemporary groups, family and alike, they are important from the view of clarification of socialization process. They clarify a certain frame to us that is more easily to seize with analysis of regional in-group as well as with establishing specific interventional hits in the direction of positive influence, mainly social identity of adolescents.

## 7. Social support perceived by adolescents

Social support is one of important social frames that are in the front of interest of psychological society. Although single determination of definition of the notion social support cannot be found in literature, as social support presents multidimensional frame (Streeter & Franklin, 1992), most authors agree in opinion that perception of social support has a positive influence on handling the burden of a personality. Social support can be studied from the sociological, psychological and also medical views. According to Ptacek (1996) besides cognitive, emotional, behavioural variables, attachment effects handling the burden and perception of social support. Hupcey (1998) after analysis of social studies focused on theoretical grasping of the notion social support defines social support as an activity, which is provided willingly and with good intentions by a person with who the participant has good relations. Given activity has a positive effect on participant of social support, who gets better. Many studies stress that social support is dependent on personal traits of both donor and participant, on qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions, on age, life experience. Protective influence of social support is supported by various research findings, although negative effects of social support have also been documented (Krause, 1997, Mareš, 2003). Subjects of the next research are also questions related to structure and mechanism of the effect of social support itself. With observing the source of social support, also its type, attention of researches is focused on emotional, instrumental and informative

social support, while a quantitative indicator is a dimension of social net, and a qualitative indicator is satisfaction perceived by participant (Koubeková, 2001). One of interests of psychologists was to find out what personal features influence social support, it means what features facilitate, or complicate the perception of provided social support. According to Reis & Collins (2000) we speak about three big groups of disposition variables. The first one is sensitivity of partners subjectively perceived, where personal attachment is observed and it is based on creating mental models of I and other people from an early age of a child. In a given concept the stress is placed on attachment to mother, from which later relations to other people arise. Another group is created by variables of emotional attraction, where empathy has an important role, it means ability of a person to empathize feelings, experiencing of another person, which results in pro-social behaviour of an individual to a person that needs social support. The third group consists of variables marked social, or interpersonal competence, which means ability to deal with people, ability to manage them with fair, non-manipulating manner.

Gender is understood as a set of characteristics and behaviour of an individual that are linked with picture of a man and women in a certain society. It means that connotation of the notion gender is highly dependent on social-cultural aspect. An individual learns his gender role with influence of socialization process, mainly in the era of early childhood. In late adolescent age we suppose that the identification regarding gender has already been formed. Adolescent developmental stage is a stage where we can look closer at different perception of social support in relation to gender differences. According to Gecková et al. (2000), lack of social support threatens more to boys than girls, while girls are more sensitive to lack of social support. Bačová & Matějovská (2003) note that a lower degree of perceived and accepted emotional social support with men can be caused by so called masculine norm of firmness that orders not to show emotions with men except for anger that is socially accepted emotion. Traditional viewing the role of a man as a breadwinner, a protector and the main authority in a family, viewing a woman as the one who creates cosy family atmosphere, emotional support is a limiting factor today due to education opportunities for women and due to broadening possibilities of career growth. A man role turns to different level, it is as if looking for itself. To a certain extent, even if with minor turbulence, the same situation is with definition, looking for identity of a woman, as broadening possibilities of career and social application permanently shift the meaning of a woman role. Goleman (1997) stresses the meaning of emotional intelligence, which is ability of an individual to manage successfully human relations, what presupposes his good self-control. Emotional intelligence thus includes a cognitive part (perception and understanding of emotions), as well as behavioural part (expressing and regulation of emotions). According to Neubauer & Freudenthaler (2007) emotionally intelligent persons are able to perceive correctly and judge correctly their own emotions, to express themselves and communicate with others, to recognise correctly emotions with other people and to react to it in an adequate manner, to regulate efficiently their own emotions and emotions of other people with the intention to reach specific goals, to take advantage of own emotions for problem solving by motivation of adaptive behaviour. At the same time we speak about ability of emotional support of thinking, understanding to emotions and their analyses, thoughtful regulation of emotions. Ability to adapt oneself in interpersonal relations of people marked as social skills is connected with emotional area. Correct orientation in emotions connected with people, situations are one of important areas of social competence. It is important to adapt oneself in

emotions of another person, as well as to be able to react adequately. In this area individual's empathy is significant.

Our aim was to find out how emotionality, social skills are bound to gender with social support with 215 adolescents (95 boys, 120 girls) in the age from 16 to 19 years (average age was 17.4 years). For measuring social support we used *Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale* (CASSS, Malecki & Demaray 2002, CASSS-CZ, Mareš & Ježek, 2005). The Scale consists of 60 items and we can find out four types of social support (emotional, evaluating, informative and material). Internal consistency of individual scales measured by Cronbach alpha in our research was in the range from 0.85 to 0.91. For the whole questionnaire Cronbach alpha=0.93. The Scale focused on emotions was created by adding 12 items of *Schutte scale of emotional intelligence* (SEIS, Schutte et al., 1998) to the scale regarding expressing emotions for adolescents (Bronstein et al., 1996). Cronbach alpha for the scale as a whole was 0.80. The scale of social competency was adapted by Dalley et al. (1994), for the use for adolescent research file from original Lewinsohn version that was consequently modified for our research purposed. Cronbach alpha for the scale as a whole was 0.78. A statistical programme SPSS 11.0 evaluated outcomes.

Final findings refer relations among emotionality, social skills, and social support of observed adolescents in relation to dependence on gender. Reis and Collins (2000), Engelberg & Sjöberg (2007), Bursik (1995) and Reevy & Maslach (2001) came to similar findings. The importance of individual types of social support (emotional, evaluating, informative, material), as well as overall social support was higher with girls than with boys. Girls showed a higher degree of emotion range with self-appraisal what indicates socially formed gender categories. While according to girls schoolmates provide social support, boys perceive social support from parents and that corresponds with findings of Koukola & Ondřejová (2003). In the area of importance of providing social support are both for boys and girls at first place parents, who present important and essential pillar on which they can lean in times of anxiety or burden. Correlation relations between femininity and social support, and also between masculinity and social support show that the more feminine and more masculine an individual is, what corresponds with marking androgynous individual, more often an individual perceives social support, and that corresponds with findings of Reevy & Maslach (2001) and Koubeková (2001). Interconnection among emotions, social skills and social support present the fact that the more effectively an individual is able to work with his emotions and the more he is able to orientate within it, the more socially able and sensitive for providing social support an individual is. An empathic individual expresses his emotions more often and more adequately, it is easier for him to adapt to emotions of other people, as well as to social competence and he experiences more social support. According to Koubeková (2001) social support is positively connected to masculinity, what agrees with our findings, even the bond of social support and femininity is a bit closer. There was an evident aim with our adolescents to search for help, to accept social support during personal stressful events and that is in accordance with the concept of Butler et al. (1985). By a regress analysis we found out to what extent individual components predict the perception of social support. It appeared in the first step that age, masculinity, femininity, social skills significantly do not explain the perception of social support. Frequency of emotion, their expressing and empathy checked in the second step predict perception of social support ( $R^2=0.281, p<0.01$ ). Given predictors explain social support at 28.1%. Expressing emotion ( $\beta=0.282, p<0.01$ ) and



empathy ( $\beta=0.271$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) positively influences the perception of social support and frequency of occurrence of emotion negatively influences the perception of social support ( $\beta=-0.400$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The tested model is illustrated as the results of regression analyses (Figure 2). The variables as age, femininity, masculinity, social skills were not included into the testing.

Final findings show that the more empathic an adolescent is and the more often he expresses his emotions, the more sensitive he is in relation to social support. With frequency of emotion we speak about negative relation to perceived social support. Thus the more often a person experiences various emotions; the less sensitive he is in relation to social support. This can be explained by the fact that an individual often experiences certain emotions and during this time he is focused on himself. We can find some lack of sensitivity there, an individual is sensitive to offered social support in a lower degree. We consider these findings important for a family, for education of adolescents at schools, as well as in gradual and post gradual preparations of teachers.

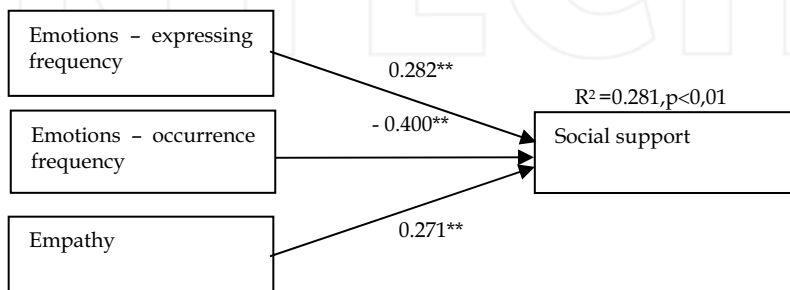


Fig. 2. Path model for illustration of the results of regression analyses

Knowledge can be used also in the area of mass media education, mainly in the problems focused on elimination and removal of gender stereotypes that are a limiting component in sensitivity of provided social support and that are widely spread in a society. Unfortunately, as we have found out in a research aimed to contents analysis of media that form opinion in Slovakia are also supported (Šramová,2007b). Raising social capabilities and correct orientation in emotional area are important predictors of social support that is highly actual in the period of adolescence.

## 8. Attitudes of adolescents to health

Health is according to WHO (2008, p.10) defined as “a status of physical, mental and social comfort and it is not only the absence of an illness or handicap”. There exist more concepts in attitude to health, which can be divided into three basic groups: medical attitude focused on an illness, bio psychosocial attitude stressing the interconnection of physical, mental and social components, attitude focused on quality of health and illness from the point of view of everyday experience of a person. Matarazzo (1984) in relation with health behaviours distinguishes behavioural pathogens, which means behaviour with a negative effect on health (smoking, drinking alcohol) and behavioural immunogens, which means behaviour useful to health, and thus with a positive effect (cleaning teeth, sufficient sleep). Holistic attitude to health presents a model that was introduced by Engel (1980) and which presents

an effort to integrate biological, psychological and social determinants of health and illness. We speak about bio psychosocial model of health and illness and it includes bio factor (for example viruses, genetics, bacteria), psychological factor (behaviour, beliefs, coping) and social factors (social norm, social class, ethnicity). According to McKeown (1979) health behaviours includes focus on health as well as on illness and it is determined by various attributes, specifically by individual determinants of own behaviour (smoking, lifestyle, exercising and alike), which modify significantly our habits focused on health. She documents her claims with observation of relation between mortality and health behaviours, which we can find with many authors. For example Belloc & Breslow (1972, Breslow & Enstrom (1980), Poliaková (2004), Ogdan (1996). The most important factors supporting health are considered 7-8 hours of sleep a day, regular breakfasts, rare eating between main meals, no smoking, rare or no alcohol drinking maintaining suggested weight, exercising. Leventhal et al. (1985) concentrated factors supporting health into the following categories: social factors, genetics, emotional factors, the beliefs of the patient, and the beliefs of health professionals, perceived symptoms. He also emphasized that for predication and support health-related behaviour it is important to observe in what combinations individual factors occur. We can find many theoretical concepts that explain prediction of health behaviour. It is for example attribution theory, which also pointed out that if a patient considered his illness as external, but controlled by himself, then he behaved more responsibly (King, 1982). Dynamics of the process of a change of behaviour Dynamics of process of a change of behaviour is according to Prochazska & DiClemente (1982) based on stages (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance), which have their accessibility, however, they are not static, an individual can reach a higher stage and then after some time he can return to a lower stage. Another significant contribution in the area of health behaviours is cognition models, which explain predictors as well as precursors to health behaviours. According to cognitive models behaviour is the result of rational information process, which is based on an individual cognitive experience of a person (Ogdan, 1996). Protection motivation theory is one of conceptions that we rank to cognitive models and that claims that health-relation behaviour is a result of four factors: severity, vulnerability, response effectiveness, self-efficacy (Rogers, 1975,1983,1985), while two kinds of source of information exist and they are environmental (verbal persuasion, learning by observing) and interpersonal kind (initial experience). The theory of planned behaviour concentrates on relation between attitude and behaviour, as attitudes significantly predefine health behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), considering individual and also social cognitions of an individual. According to Ajzen and Madden (1986) attitudes towards the behaviour includes beliefs about outcomes and evaluations of these outcomes. Another important factor is a subjective norm, which contains beliefs about important attitudes of others to behaviour and motivation to comply with others. The third factor is a behavioural control, which contain internal and external control factors. These three factors predicate behavioural intentions, which lead to behaviour. Authors also emphasize that behavioural control can directly influence behaviour of personality without behavioural intention. By generalizing knowledge we can say in accordance with Ogdan (1996), Poliaková (2004), those health behaviours agrees with status of health of each personality. Health presents a basic determining phenomenon for an adolescent for fulfilling his life aspirations and expectations; it brings him a feeling of comfort. Theoretical concepts agree in the fact that parents, as well as friends influence on risk behaviour connected with health

(smoking, drug abuse, alcohol, self-destruction), which deeply affects health of an adolescent. Besides social support, another crucial factors influencing health are social-economic background and gender (Gecková, 2002). According to Poliaková (2004) a subjective feeling of health is important intervening factor of adolescents' attitude to health. Her research findings indicate that almost a half of observed adolescents (47.6%) admitted more expressive subjective perceived health problems during the last month. There was mainly physical pain (headaches, pain in back, stomach ache). Psychosomatic disorders were also highly present (56%) (anxiety, tiredness, sleeping disorder, concentration problems). Health is usually perceived by adolescents as target and functional category, which means to be in physical and mental comfort, not to have health troubles, to be satisfied with one's body, to be independent personality.

In our approach to health we came up with holistic attitude that is related to the whole person, not only to a body. Health is understood as means serving a person to reach his goals, wishes, desires, not only as a goal of his effort. We are aware of the fact that human potential can only be develop when an individual is healthy and thus has bigger ability to handle negative life events, and is able to approach problem solving rationally, in a positive way. Though adolescents declare that health is one of key values, in a given period it is usually taken for granted as an area, which they do not have to take care yet. Behavioural component of attitude to health (activity supporting health) is therefore behind the cognitive component of attitude (awareness of the importance of health, factors supporting and threatening health). One of possibilities is to find out connotative (subjectively attributed) meaning of marked areas related to health, and this is hardly accessible with the help of standard diagnostic methods and therefore psycho semantic methods seem to be highly possible options focused on mental presentations of experiencing the image of own personality with confrontation with other categories. In a given relation frame it is essential to grasp salutary factors, which are factors, which strengthen adolescents' health. Connotative meaning of notion related to health can show us important subjectively experienced objects, we can identify factors, where there is possible to build theoretical and practical form of health education of youth, which is often build on simplified premise „health is avoiding the illness“. The aim of a research was to map selected notions related to health with adolescents. The aim was aptness of subjective experiencing the notions with affinity to health with boys (N=162) and with girls (N=188), as well as in the whole file (N=350). Average age of adolescents was 17.6 years. To watch targeted aim we used psycho semantic method, picture version of semantic selection of the author Doležal (In: Smékal, 1990), with which we have been observing subjective evaluation of the notions related to health (see subchapter *Forming the semantic space of notions related to identity of adolescents*). There were 18 studied notions, which were selected in relation to health. We were interested what was the positioning of a person itself expressing the notion *I*. We speak about the following notions: *aggression, selfishness, sadness, conflict, stress, pain, hatred, drugs, friendship, relax, sport, work, happiness, success, love, support, I, family*. With the use of a given method we are able to do quantification and at the same time qualitative analysis of gained data. To extract facts we have used a factor analysis (the method of main components with rotation Varimax), number of factors was determined according to screen test (eigen value more than one) (Šramová, 2004b). By the factor analysis we extracted factors grasping the notions related to health for the research file, as well as particularly for adolescent boys and girls with the use of statistical programme SPSS-8.

Final findings showed the following: **in the whole research** file 6 factors were selected which cover 69% of dispersion. We named given factors as follows: social support, affliction, family relation, burden, tension, and life experience. With the analysis of selected factors we realised that factor 1, **social support** (28% dispersion), is related to notions containing pro-social feature (*support, friendship, family*), activity (*work, sport*), mental comfort (*happiness, success, love, I, relax*). Factor 2, **affliction** (13% dispersion), is covered with notions *pain, hatred, drugs*. Factor 3, **family relation** (9% dispersion), is related to notions *I* and *family*. Factor 4, **burden** (7% dispersion) is included in the notions *selfishness, stress, conflict*. The notions *aggression* and *sadness* satiate the fifth factor, **tension** (6% dispersion). The sixth factor, **life troubles** (6% dispersion), is related to the notions *stress* and *aggression*.

During observation of subjective experiencing the notions related to health we realised gender differences in the amount of selected factors, as well as in a different variable. We separated 5 factors **with boys**: affliction, social support, comfort, tension, and burden, which exhaust in total 71% dispersion. Factor 1, **affliction** (21% dispersion) is related to notions containing suffering (*stress, pain, hatred, drugs*) and activity (*work*). Factor 2, **social support** (20% dispersion) is related to the notions expressing pro-social feature (*friendship, I, family*) and activity (*sport*). The third factor, **comfort** (13% dispersion), is related to the notions expressing mental comfort (*happiness, love, relax*). The fourth factor, **tension** (11% dispersion), is related to notions having a negative feature (*aggression, sadness, conflict*) as well as a positive feature (*success*). Factor 5, **burden** (6% dispersion), is related to the notions *selfishness* and *support*. Six factors were selected **with girls**: controversy, social support, diversity, tension, affliction, burden and they cover 73% of total dispersion. The first factor, **controversy** (17% dispersion), is related to negative emotions (*stress, sadness*), with mental comfort (*love, happiness*), activity (*work*). Factor 2, **social support** (16% dispersion) is related to the notions having a pro-social feature (*friendship, love, support, I, family*). Factor 3, **diversity** (13% dispersion), is related to notions *sadness, hatred, work and success*. The fourth factor, **tension** (9% dispersion), is related to the notions of tension (*aggression, selfishness*), and also to the notion of an activity (*sport*). The fifth factor, **affliction** (9% dispersion), is related to the notions expressing suffering (*pain, drugs*). The sixth factor, **burden** (8% dispersion), is related to the notions *selfishness, conflict, success*. From identified factors we can see the superiority of negative aspects related to health with girls as well as with boys, while with girls, controversy and diversity are classic. These findings correspond with gender stereotypes in Slovakia, and also with higher anxiety and distrust in own decisions with adolescent girls. Controversy among presented attitudes to health and real behaviour of adolescents related to health, among really satiated knowledge and skills with strengthening and protection of health were found by Poliaková (2004). The author found out highly risky behaviour in relation to health, especially in the area of smoking, alcohol, eating habits, exercise and stress, while more risky behaviour was found with girls in comparison to boys. At the same time the author points out the importance of interconnection of knowing connections, preference of awareness sources, understanding own responsibility for health into intervention precautions realised in educational process referring also to finding that in a group of adolescents preferred health the most, a higher level of worries and hopelessness was found. However, adolescents expressed the level of adolescents health threat by a perception of the following risk factors (indifference to own health, heart illnesses, terrorism, AIDS, drugs, genetic impairments, improper nutrition, traffic accidents, risky sexual behaviour, insufficient physical activity) and two controversial factors were seen in this relational: strongly satiated

risk of own indifference and slightly satiated risk of risky sexual behaviour. Subjective feeling of health as an intervention factor of attitude to health in an observed group of adolescents showed unsatisfactory findings. As far as 45.6% observed adolescents stated that they have felt mild physical pain for last month, while as far as 3% of them have marked pain as strong. Headaches were at the first place (36.8%), followed by stomach-ache (31.5%), pain in back 24.6%. The biggest group was created by psychosomatic disorders connected with the feeling of tiredness (67%), sleeping disorder (54%), anxiety (47%) and concentration problems (35%). However, in a direct subjective evaluation of health not even a half of adolescents have claimed good health (48%), 35% marked health as quite good and only 17% of adolescents marked their health as very good, what corresponds with findings of Poliaková (2004).

Psychology of health, according to our findings, should be a firm part of educational process of adolescents. To support evaluation, to teach how to manage burden, provide and accept social support is possible in educational environment by means of training activities with experience form focused on development of self-recognition, knowing others, by working with distress, with burden, strengthening self-confidence and alike. Considering the analysis of environmental background that affects health of citizens in Slovakia, priority has been accepted (relating to for example healthy lifestyle, injury prevention, healthy living, physical activity), considering risk factors of health related to children and youth (WHO, 2008). Our findings pointed out that it is important for adolescents not only to be aware of positive and negative factors, which influence our behaviour, but also it is essential to know the ways of influencing them, which is unfortunately neglected.

## 9. Media in life of adolescents

Since media, especially mass media, has become a part of everyday life, their influence on forming the opinion, as well as influence on culture has an increasing tendency. One of important media is a television screen in front of which children and adolescents spend a lot of time. Its negative, as well as positive impacts on forming personality are well known. Especially the influence of television on ethics of viewers is documented (Huston & Wright, 1998, Wildavsky, 1996). If we look in psychology at watching ethical aspects of a personality, we realize that ethical is often connected with the notion „good“, „right“, „fair“ and that for observing the ethics it is important to look at the system of personal values, aspirations of a personality, as well as at lifestyle of personality. Perhaps the most popular model in the area of study of ethical development is Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach (1976) that stresses ethical development connected to ontogenesis of a man, during which cognitive abilities are being developed (Šramová, 2007a). Rules, norms, values create the contents of cognitive structures that direct ethical judgement of a personality. During the development of cognitive structures a personality influenced by socialization acquires his values of culture where he grows and learns to differentiate the correct from the incorrect. The hierarchy of values is according to authors emphasising ontogenetic aspect changing under the influence of acquiring experience, cognitive structures. Personality learns to differentiate between good and bad. Due to influence of age, cognitive structures differentiate and crystallize in a higher degree, while they are always dependant on interactive relation of a personality and social environment. Thus a personality in a given process is not a passive recipient of norms that are transformed by society, but an active subject that forms ethical judgements and norms that are regulators of social interactions. According to Kohlberg (1984) ethical dilemmas enables an acceleration of ethical stages with an individual. At the



same the author indicates that an ethically mature personality is not only able to accept and express ethical judgements, but also is able to act in accordance with ethical principles. According to Berzonsky (1994) an ethical development is a process during which an individual adopts rules of a society and integrates them into his behaviour. It is mass media that should be a mediator of norms of a society. From ontogenetic point of view it is important to consider in this area the age of a viewer, as Šramová (2007a), Hamranová (2007), but age is unfortunately under-evaluated with programme producers, which is a shame, as if even the best project is realised without taking into account basic ontogenetic aspects of a child viewer, it may not achieve an required effect. Only optics of an adult individual is not sufficient. Popular television programme is according to many researches a part of child's lifestyle. If a child regularly watches his favourite programme, then character roles become due to identification process an integral part of his real life. This leads to an illusion that he can exchange the identity with a television character, what is marked as para-social interaction. A child accepts the programme as real (Duck, in Rosenkoetter, 2001). However, it is evident that the image of life aspirations by media is often unrealistic, supporting risk behaviour, of which the result is escaping to daydreaming, growth of fiction concepts, receding the adolescent from real life. Commercialism by which commercial channels feed viewers in the form of presenting expensive clothes brands, cars, luxurious houses and apartments, expensive restaurants lead to a hypothesis about favouring material values with viewers (Cheung & Chan, 1996). Possessing is considered reached status worth admiration of others and therefore inability to reach a desired status of expensive brands by others evokes anxiety. According to Škodáček (2006) 16% of Europeans during their life have evoked anxious defect, while approximately 23% of them have never been treated at all, to which media contribute, mainly television. Many experts for children development have been pointing at negative impact on children who spend a lot of time in front of television for a long time. Particularly dangerous is when children are exposed to violence on television screen, which may lead to social anxiety (Drtilková, 2001).

New technologies, especially the Internet, are extremely important for fast development of mass media. Digital technologies provide us with higher quality of a picture, sound, and more information, possibility to watch several programmes simultaneously and alike. Rosenkoetter (2001), among others, shows opportunities to learn to select from offered programmes, as well as decreasing influence of commercialised televisions with the use of DVD recorder. On one hand, the media provide entertainment, relax, information, on the other hand they lead to passive communication and to a threat of possible non-substance dependence on certain medium. Expansion of Internet possibilities caused a movement of adolescents from television screens to spending main part of their free time using the Internet, and the reason is to gain information needed to fulfil school task, as well as to communicate with friends and to make new friends. However, time spent with electronic media must be controlled due to health both physical and mental. We are aware of results of findings that document the occurrence of symptoms with non-substance dependence, that we can see in gamblers, alcoholics and alike, we speak mainly about violated relations, feeling anxiety (for example if a subject is not online), reducing self-control and so on (Young & Rogers, 1998). Marketing of many companies focused on existence of teenage and adolescent segments react to behaviour of given targeted groups by developing and by offering better and better computer games, notebooks to school instead of exercise books, gaining personal data via the internet, and marketing based on the Internet and alike.

The aim of our research was to find out to what extent adolescents use new information technologies and for what purpose. Also we were interested how these findings agree with awareness of parents regarding the way and contents of utilization of new information technologies with their children. In other words, whether parents of observed adolescents know how much time and in what way their children spend using new information technologies. We focused on the following areas: Watching television (time and contents); Watching films on DVD (frequency and contents); Identification with well-known celebrity; Using computer (time and purpose); Using the Internet (time and contents); Using another media for listening to music. Also we have been searching what associations are bound to notions media, television, DVD, Internet, mobile phone with adolescents. To find out targeted aims we used a questionnaire created by us, with open questions and association projective method, of which the principle is the following: a participant (adolescent) had to react to an initiative word (media, television, DVD, internet, mobile phone) with a very first word (limited to three) that came into his mind. Results of associations were evaluated by a statistical analysis with the help of SPSS 8.0 programme. A research file consisted of 104 adolescents (64 women, 40 men), the average age 18.6 years (in the range from 16 to 21 years) and 95 their parents who filled the questionnaire related to utilization of selected media by their children. A research was realised in April 2009.

Final findings showed that according to adolescents the time spent in front of television is in average 1.5 hours (working day) and 2 hours during the weekend. Parents claim almost double the time spent in front of television during the weekend in comparison to what adolescents say. Only two programmes out of 15 were broadcasted by a public television, the rest were broadcasted by commercial televisions. The genre of programmes watched by adolescents are of the following structure: family series of a domestic and foreign productions prevail (31%), followed by situational comedies (16,5%), soup operas (11%), crime series (11%), programmes presenting lifestyle (11%), programmes of yellow character (11%), news-service (11%), entertainment (11%), life stories (11%), documentary of „city soap“ format (11%) and music videos (11%). If we compare information from parents we find out that parents have an overview about what programmes their children watch on television. Identification with a favourite actor was one of the areas that we focused our research on. Results of observed adolescents showed that the most popular characters are those of animated programmes: *Homer Simpson*, where they admire humour that she uses to solve life problems with. *Jack* from an animated film *Pre-Christmas nightmare*, as well as *Zoro*, both was character roles where adolescents positively evaluated their ethical qualities and self-sacrifice. Favourite actors are those who act in their favourite series (*Mieźga*), films (*Will Smith*), and also those who are famous not only due to character roles but also for their high frequency of occurrence in magazines (*Brad Pitt*, *Angelina Jolie*). Parents were not able to state favourite television film heroes of their children; they only knew actors, while their selection was in accordance with the one of adolescents. According to these findings we can be satisfied with the fact that adolescents mentioned ethical imperatives with their heroes. However, names of programmes that adolescents prefer inform us not only about late time (after 10pm.), but also some of them are not adequate to given age cohort (for example *Desperate Wives*), and also ethical aspects presented in popular series are quite dubious, often having the level of soap operas. Final findings mapping the frequency of DVD watching, where we suppose own selection of genre and time showed that observed adolescents choose two films in a week in average, while parents think it is only one film

they watch. Our goal was to watch the genre of own selection. We realised that comedies prevail (56%), followed by drama (23%) and historical films (23%). Adolescents choose also fairy-tales (15%), adventure films (11%), sci-fi (11%), romantic (11%) and action films (11%). Parents think that their children prefer comedies (16%), adventure films (14%), horrors (12%), romantic films (12%), sci-fi (11%), action films (11%). Approximately 24% of parents could not tell what genre their children watch when they can choose themselves. Results showing the frequency of time spent with computer, as well as its utilization inform us that adolescents spend with computer 1.5 hours in a working week in average and 2 hours at the weekend. According parents it is more (an hour more during a working week and twice as much during the weekend) than their children state. The most frequent usage of computer by adolescents can be seen in relation to the Internet (85%), work for school (38%), music playback (34%), playing games (28%) and watching movies (28%). Parents say that their children use computer mostly for school preparation (73%), for Internet connection (61%), for playing games (25%) and watching movies (13%). After analysis of Internet communication we focused on finding the time, as well as its contents that are devoted by adolescents. Results show that according to adolescents they devote 1.5 hours daily in average to the Internet, while their parents state 3 hours. The range of time spent by the Internet communication was from no usage of the Internet (1 participant) up to 6 hours per day (according to parents 7 hours a day), which already shows non-substance dependence. The most frequently visited web pages are internet search engine *Google* (94%), page offering entertainment: *YouTube* (54%), pages offering fun, communication, information: *Boom*-46%, *pokec*-41, *facebook*-24%, *blog*-11%, *online*-11%, *hry*-11%, *fanradio*-11%, *topky*-11%, *moje video*-11%, *atlas*-11%, *superhry*-11%, online encyclopaedia: *Wikipedia* (9%). While searching awareness of parents regarding Internet pages their children visit we realised that in a given area parents have no awareness. Parents stated as the most frequently visited pages: search engine *Google* (96%), online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* (94%), offering fun *YouTube* (93%), offering fun, communication, information (*gmail*- 47%, *azet*- 36%). When we were searching what media are used by adolescents for listening to music except for CD player we realised that in the first place it is the computer (86%), the mobile phone (72%), the MP3 player (56%). Parents elided the utilization of personal computer, they considered first place the MP3 player (91%), followed by the mobile phone (88%).

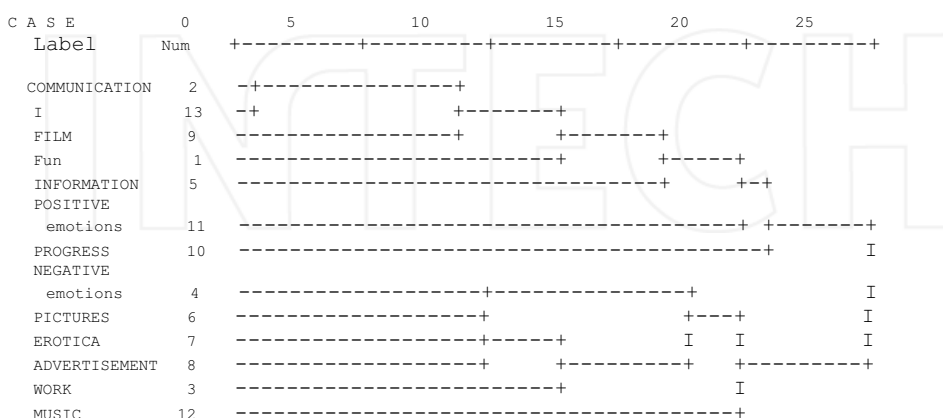


Fig. 3. Klaster's analysis of observed notions related to media for a group of adolescents

The next part of our research was to find out what associations are connected with selected notions representing individual media (media, television, DVD, PC, internet). Individual associations were exposed to coding, the result of which was classed into the following groups: communication, I, film, fun, information, positive emotions, progress, negative emotions, pictures, erotica, advertisement, work, music. To express the coherence among observed notions we used an explorative technique of cluster analysis, Ward's method, result of which is a dendrogram (Figure 3). With the help of the dendrogram we can visually show the interconnection as well as the distance of observed notions. Results show that observed adolescents in relation to mass media select four groups that are concentrated into two basic areas. The first group is formed by notions presenting personality itself (notion I), which are linked to communication, film and fun. The second group is formed by information, positive emotions and progress. The third group is created with negative emotions connected to pictures and advertisement connected to erotica. A work that includes advertisement and erotica is in the vicinity of a given group. It seems that with analysis of mutual distance, as well as in connectivity of individual notions adolescents connect their personality with communication, film and fun. Information, positive emotions, as well as progress, are more distant to the notion I. Negative emotions are linked with pictures, while erotica and advertisement are in close vicinity. A universal culture is being spread to young people by means of mass media and they identify with it. Our findings show preference of watching these programmes that enable to search for an escape from difficult life situations, however, with a small amount of presenting ethical messages that would have an effect on value system of adolescents. The Internet seemed to be the most preferable media used by adolescents, where they can find mainly entertainment and information. It is necessary to point out here that frequent time spent with the Internet is connected with the feeling of sadness and loneliness. There is a reciprocal positive correlation relation between anxiety and search for fun. The result of the overload of information that are spread via the Internet is the status of satiety that expresses itself in no sensitivity of a user, in a feeling of apathy, disinterest. It is not unusual to replace real life and virtual life, which is easier, simpler, clearer; thus the user is passive, he feels hopelessness, he orientates in interpersonal relations with difficulties, he is not able to solve conflicts in an adequate manner, he is not able to work with emotions in his real life. In this connection parents should hold the role of a regulator, to teach their children to adapt to flood of information, to cope with the pressure of mass media without a loss, or confusion in value orientation with maintaining individual uniqueness of a personality. An alarming factor is considered the fact that in our file we realised that parents are less informed about the contents of web pages visited by their children, although they are sufficiently informed about its threats.

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