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School Education and Public-Awareness Campaigns in the Sphere of Counteracting Cyberviolence

Abstract

This paper focuses on an important element of human safety, as it describes cyberspace as an environment in which information is exchanged via the web and computer systems. In addition to its positive aspects, cyberspace also generates a variety of threats, such as cyber crises and cyber conflicts, cyberviolence, cyber protests, and cyber demonstrations, also including the risk of causing a cyber war – hence the counteracting of cyberviolence, through, inter alia, school education and public-awareness campaigns. This paper discusses the significance of educational capabilities in the sphere of counteracting cyberviolence, and the characteristics of selected campaigns addressing the issue of violence.

Key words: threats, school education, public-awareness campaigns, cyberviolence

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Introduction

The concepts of „safety"[1] and cyberviolence[2] are categorised as terms of great significance in the sphere of human functioning, and frequently appear in both theoretical considerations and everyday speech. „Safety" entails the state of the „absence" of threats, but the notion is also used in relation to the „presence" of threats, and the process of shaping and fostering the former state. It is also a process which engenders a sense of confidence, and guarantees opportunities for unrestrained development. Cyberviolence, also referred to as Internet violence, or electronic violence, is often defined as social terror with the use of technology. Technological diversity facilitates cyberviolence through a variety of communication channels: online communication tools, e-mail, text messaging, social media, chat rooms, blogs, websites, dashboards (online notice boards), or simply online games.

Web technologies have been transforming the image of contemporary society. Some of the changes have affected the family structure, human relations, and value hierarchies. Peer violence with the use of electronic media has become a major social issue in recent years. The expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has resulted in the transformation of the Industrial Society into the Information Society, so leading to the emergence of new means of human communication, and, as a result, new social-behaviour patterns. There is research to show that over half of Polish children have experienced violence online. Research on cyberviolence has demonstrated that it is a global phenomenon, and occurs in any place with unrestricted access to mobile telephones and the Internet. Cyberviolence is certainly an issue in

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1   For more details, refer to: M. Czuryk, K. Drabik, A. Pieczywok, *Bezpieczeństwo człowieka w procesie zmian społecznych, kulturowych i edukacyjnych*, Olsztyn 2018, s. 7; J. Gierszewski, A. Pieczywok, *Społeczny wymiar bezpieczeństwa człowieka*, Warszawa 2018; M. Karpiuk, *Ograniczenie wolności uzewnętrzniania wyznania ze względu na bezpieczeństwo państwa i porządek publiczny*, „Przegląd Prawa Wyznaniowego" 2017, t. 9, s. 10–17; A. Pieczywok, *Działania społeczne w sferze bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, Lublin 2018, s. 13; A. Pieczywok, *Idee bezpieczeństwa człowieka w teoriach i badaniach naukowych*, Bydgoszcz 2021, s. 20–21; M. Karpiuk, *Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej jako organ stojący na straży bezpieczeństwa państwa*, „Zeszyty Naukowe AON" 2009, nr 3, s. 389–390; M. Karpiuk, *Ubezpieczenie społeczne rolników jako element bezpieczeństwa społecznego. Aspekty prawne*, „Międzynarodowe Studia Społeczno-Humanistyczne. Humanum" 2018, nr 2, s. 67.
2   See: M. Górka, *Cyberbezpieczeństwo dzieci i młodzieży. Realny i wirtualny problem polityki bezpieczeństwa*, Warszawa 2017, s. 20; A. Pieczywok, *The use of selected social concepts and educational programmes in counteracting cyberspace threats*, „Cybersecurity and Law" 2019, nr 2, s. 62.

the school environment. Moreover, „traditional" peer conflicts taking place in schools are increasingly moving online. These technologies mainly involve the Internet and mobile phones. The growing role of the Internet in the lives of young people (and not only young people) should encourage reflection on the needs they wish to fulfil in the virtual world, and the threats they are exposed to in the online realm.

It is also worth exploring negative phenomena, such as hate, hate speech, and hate crimes. All actions which can be classified as cyberviolence are mostly based on the use of electronic mail, chats, communication tools, websites, blogs, social media, and discussion groups, as well as SMS and MMS services[3].

Cyberviolence is an extremely common problem, mostly affecting children and teenagers. The victims of such forms of violence often attempt suicide, and some of them manage to kill themselves.

Educational capabilities in the sphere of counteracting cyberviolence

The term „education" derives from the Latin word „educatio" which means upbringing or education; alternatively, it is from „e" (from, out of), and „ducare" (to lead, or bring, thus „bring out the student's potential", rather than put in knowledge. It includes universal techniques, formats, methods, and measures aimed at transforming and educating people, mostly children and young people, in line with the educational objectives set within a given societal and temporal framework[4]. The process of school education remains a subject of ongoing concern for parents, guardians, and the young people themselves. There is a great deal of concern and controversy about it, often even among people responsible for providing education.

Technological progress and civilisational development bring forth a new society, and with it come new problems. Hence, education should also change to address the needs and problems of the information-era society. In addition to strict adherence to the core curriculum (mainly with a view to ensuring good performance in final examinations), it is necessary to also provide instruction on the negative aspects

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3 R.M. Kowalski, P.P. Limber, P.W. Agatson, *Cyberprzemoc wśród dzieci i młodzieży*, Kraków 2010, s. 59–65.

4 D. Choroś, *Edukacja medialna a cyberprzestrzeń* [w:] *Cyberświat – możliwości i zagrożenia*, red. A. Andrzejewska, J. Bednarek, Warszawa 2009, s. 56.

of using digital technologies, as increasingly it leads to tragic consequences. For instance, according to the core curriculum for general secondary education, being able to navigate the cyberspace safely is seen as one of the essential skills[5]. Moreover, emphasis is being placed on the importance of contemporary mass media. Therefore, we should focus on effective media education, and the general preparation of students for life in the information society. Media education has two principal tasks[6]: 1) to prepare for the appropriate reception of media content (the critical approach), and 2) to prepare for the use of the media. However, it is a much more complex and comprehensive process than that, as it involves the education process in general – media education should enable people to make their own choices, give their own assessments and judgments, express their own views, and have their own perception of the surrounding reality[7].

First, schools should contribute to expanding students' knowledge and improving their skills, and teach them how best to use computers and other devices, but they should also protect them against, and raise awareness of, threats in the cyberspace. Clearly, it is one of the most formidable challenges teachers and schools have to face. In order to provide good models of behaviour, teachers themselves need to have sufficient knowledge of the threats and coping techniques, which is not always the case. Another obstacle in achieving this goal is that students develop bad habits at home, or witness negative patterns in their peers or other persons functioning in this global, „unlimited" cyberspace reality. Nonetheless, the preparation of the students for such threats is a statutory obligation of every teacher. Second, despite the fact that the Ministry of National Education has prepared various guidelines for education related to, i.a., the protection of information privacy, data protection, copyright, communication etiquette, and technological threats, it largely depends on a given educational establishment and its teachers as to which issues will be discussed (if any), and what methods will be used.

As regards safety in cyberspace and education, it is vital to educate and raise children to act responsibly – first within the family setting, and then in schools, care and education establishments, universities, through mass media,

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5 *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła ponadpodstawowa: liceum ogólnokształcące, technikum oraz branżowa szkoła I i II stopnia*, https://www.ore.edu.pl/2018/03/podstawa-programowa-ksztalcenia-ogolnego-dla-liceum-technikum-i-branzowej-szkoly-ii-stopnia/ [dostęp: 3.09.2021].
6 H. Budzeń, *Media jako czynnik kształtowania osobowości* [w:] *Komunikacja w cyberświecie*, red. P. Bębas, J. Plis, J. Bednarek, Radom 2012, s. 90.
7 Ibidem, s. 91.

political efforts, culture, etc. It is necessary to note here that, in addition to teaching based on providing established knowledge, opportunities can and should be afforded for learning through experience. And these two learning approaches should be skilfully integrated. Similarly, we should strive towards expanding the curriculum of traditional teaching, cognitive, and knowledge-transfer models, by adding paradigms which consist of independent and critical enquiries, interaction-based teaching and learning, teaching methods aimed at personal development, and hands-on education models.

Public-awareness campaigns as a form of counteracting cyberviolence

The prevention of cyberviolence can include measures entailing, inter alia, legal- education sessions in schools and educational establishments, with such topics as the legal consequences of violent behaviour and cyberviolence; education and counselling programmes implemented by schools and educational establishments; the training of teachers and educators in counteracting cyberviolence and solving conflicts; preventive interventions and response in crisis situations; and the introduction of regular meetings for parents with a view to expanding their knowledge of the law.

Education to counteract cyberviolence should include any preventive and awareness-raising measures, and the appropriate response procedures to be applied in the event of threats. Such should be addressed not only to students, but also to all school personnel, teachers, and parents. Numerous guidebooks and educational materials can be found on the Internet intended for any of these groups. Most educational projects and guidebooks are addressed to parents, teachers, educational counsellors, and tutors, as they are considered obliged to follow current trends and keep pace with young people who live in the digital world on a daily basis. They must expand their knowledge, so that they are able to pass information to the learners under their care, and to influence their decisions and conduct. They can help minimise risks, or forestall undesirable incidents altogether.

The website of the Centre for Education Development has a wide selection of guidebooks on various topics, addressed to a range of audiences. For instance, the project called „Klikam z głową" (Use your head before you click) includes a guidebook which the Office of Electronic Communications developed with parents and teachers in mind. It compiles essential information

to help work with children and young people on a daily basis, and to ingrain in adults the belief that they are responsible for the online safety of children and young people. Moreover, as part of preventing and counteracting cyberviolence, schools have the facility to organise classes with members of various services and agencies, primarily Police officers. Staff shortages and weak communication and collaboration between schools and the Police can pose a problem, however, making it difficult to organise such educational classes.

According to the report by the Supreme Audit Office on the inspection of schools in respect of preventing and counteracting cyberviolence among children and teenagers, it was found that educational institutions did implement measures in this sphere, but they were not effective. The authors of the report pointed to the lack of proper guidance for such measures, coordination, and specific defined objectives, and insufficient information on the scale of the threats[8]. Schools' response to notifications of this type of incidents was, however, assessed positively. School education should focus on joint activities and close cooperation between institutions, schools, and the Police, efforts to encourage students and parents to share information on cyberviolence incidents, the creation of the appropriate conditions and a sense of understanding, and the provision of support in difficult circumstances, as well as an ongoing monitoring and identification of the scale of cyberviolence among young people under the care of a given institution. It can be said that such programmes as Safe School I (Bezpieczna Szkoła I), Safe School II and Safe+ (Bezpieczna+), which tackled the issues surrounding cyberviolence, were implemented with varying success.

The activities entailing preventive media measures are conducted by two entities – the Modern Poland Foundation in Warsaw (the „Cybernauts" [Cybernauci] project), and the Cities on the Internet Association (the „Digitally Safe" [Cyfrowo Bezpieczni] project). These projects differ in terms of the operational methodology applied, despite the common goals of developing digital security in the school setting and outside schools, and fostering digital skills among the stakeholders from the educational institutions addressed by the said actions.

Non-Governmental organisations (e.g. associations) have considerable potential in the sphere of preventive activities and crime prevention, so-called „soft preventive measures"[9].

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8   *Zapobieganie i przeciwdziałanie cyberprzemocy wśród dzieci i młodzieży*, Kielce 2017, s. 11.
9   Ustawa z dnia 7 kwietnia 1989 r. – Prawo o stowarzyszeniach, Dz.U. 1989, nr 20, poz. 104, z późn. zm.

People working for such organisations are specialists in the field of safety, and have knowledge of the types of threat which might occur. Devoting their free time to volunteer work[10], they prepare, develop, and implement various prevention programmes at schools, community centres, fairs, panel meetings, conferences, etc., and use other occasions for meetings with children and teenagers, focusing on the issue of safety in the context of „cybercrime" and „cyber threats".

The main objectives of the programmes include preventive measures in the ambit of threats arising from the improper use of digital media, with special emphasis placed on cybercrime, and threats in cyberspace.

The main task of prevention specialists is to educate schoolchildren and their parents about the principles of safe computer network use.

In the era of the current multitude of values manifested by various sectors of society, it is necessary to support families in their efforts to foster the proper development and moulding of young personalities.

The main tasks of parents, guardians, and teachers should be to promote healthy lifestyles, build positive relationships with their children, create opportunities for activities reducing the time spent in front of computers, demonstrate to young people the negative consequences of the excessive use of digital media, and to control children's access to computers.

Various associations extensively collaborate with the Police when conducting awareness-raising activities addressed to young people in relation to cybercrime and cyber threats[11].

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be stated that the safe use of new media is part of our digital skills. Unfortunately, this aspect tends to be overlooked, or insufficiently discussed, in numerous publications dealing with the skills involved in the use of electronic devices or software. Therefore, broader educational measures and targeted public-awareness campaigns are needed to counteract threats in cyberspace. Preventive and educational measures should be implemented on a regular and recurring basis. Conducive to raising the awareness of the specific nature and

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10 Ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003 r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i wolontariacie, ibidem 2013, nr 96, poz. 873, z późn. zm.
11 Ustawa z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990 r. o Policji, ibidem 1990, nr 30, poz. 179, z późn. zm.

seriousness of cyberviolence are also media campaigns and informative media communications. In recent years this issue has been addressed as part of several nationwide public-awareness campaigns, and numerous local undertakings.

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Edukacja szkolna i kampanie społeczne w zakresie przeciwdziałania cyberprzemocy

Streszczenie

Teść artykułu wskazuje na istotny obszar bezpieczeństwa człowieka, ponieważ dotyczy cyberprzestrzeni jako środowiska wymiany informacji za pomocą sieci i systemów komputerowych. Cyberprzestrzeń oprócz pozytywnych akcentów powoduje też powstawanie różnych zagrożeń, jak: cyberkryzysy i cyberkonflikty, cyberprzemoc, cyberprotesty czy cyberdemonstracje, w tym także groźba wywołania cyberwojny. Dlatego też jedną z form przeciwdziałania cyberprzemocy jest edukacja szkolna i kampanie społeczne. Artykuł przedstawia znaczenie edukacyjnych możliwości w zakresie przeciwdziałania cyberprzemocy oraz charakterystykę wybranych kampanii dotyczących przemocy.

Słowa kluczowe: zagrożenia, edukacja szkolna, kampanie społeczne, cyberprzemoc