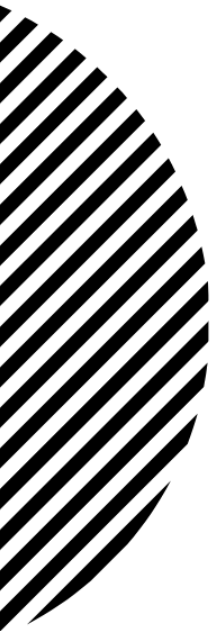


UNIVERSITY OF HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ
FACULTY OF EDUCATION



WIUNERWTFDPOUJMAHFU
RELECIK**ACTAL**PQWCTQIU
ARZXP**MCN**BYPERUEVFSQV
MSOCIOIAJIP**ATHOLOGICAP**
FEY**MVN**BYZWIRKJHJNCVE
HFJRKEFKJ**VIII**WOFWPQPY



GAUDEAMUS



2025





University of Hradec Králové
Faculty of Education

ACTA SOCIOPATHOLOGICA VIII

The Contemporary Topics in Social Pathology and Social Pedagogy

Proceedings of the Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education,
University of Hradec Králové

Hradec Králové

2025

Editor:

PaedDr. Bc. Martin Knytl, Ph.D., MBA, MCS
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

Reviewers:

Mgr. Dagmar El-Hmoudová, Ph.D.
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology

Mgr. Jakub Helvich
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature

The proceedings has not undergone language editing. The authors of the individual contributions are responsible for the correctness of the content and language.

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

DOI: 10.36689/uhk/978-80-7435-942-2.000

e-ISBN 978-80-7435-942-2



This proceedings is licensed under a Creative Commons license 4.0 CC-BY-SA 4.0 – Attribution – Share Alike <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

Content

Introduction	5
Section 1: Theory and Practice (not only) of Social Pedagogy	7
Inspiration for Czech Social Pedagogy – The Legacy of Ryszard Wroczyński	8
Václav Bělík	
New Themes in Educational Work with Teenagers	15
Alena Knotková	
Social Pedagogy and Inclusive Education in an International Context	21
Milada Kovalíková	
The Use of Art Therapy Techniques in the Centres of Educational Care – Results of Preliminary Research	38
Lucie Škodáková	
Needs of Users of the Emergency Care Social Service	47
Jaroslava Hanušová	
Aaron Antonovsky’s Concept of Salutogenesis is 45 Years Old	56
Jiří Kučírek	
Section II: The Contemporary Themes in Pupils and the School Environment	64
Possibilities of Adaptation of Ukrainian Children to Czech Schools	65
Kateřina Krupková, Adéla Kučerová, Aneta Víznerová	
Social-educational Work with a Problem Pupil in a Czech Primary School	75
Stanislava Svoboda Hoferková, Tereza Matoušková	
Bullying in Upper Secondary Schools from the Perspective of Beginning Guidance Counsellors	88
Karel Hromadko, Martin Knytl	
The Correlation Between Suicidal and Self-harm Tendencies in Grammar Schools Students and Their Level of Resilience	96
Jana Stehlíková	
Section III: Risk and Social Pathological Phenomena in Selected Contexts	105
Prevention of Drug Addiction Among Children and Youth	106
Adéla Marešová, Nikol Vavříková	
Sociocultural Aspects of Sexualized Violence Against Women	116
Magdaléna Hrdinová	
Selected Theoretical Foundations of the Current Form of Homonegativity and Transnegativity	123
Martina Pacltová	
Life of Convicted Men in a Late-modern Prison	131
Jan Drahoňovský	
Section IV: The Role of Cyberspace and Digital Technologies	144
Digital Technology: Threat or Opportunity for Slovak Libraries?	145
Iveta Babjaková	
Prevalence of Engagement in Online Challenges Among Children and Youth in Institutional Care Settings	154
Miriam Niklová, Helena Slaziníková	
Motivation to Engage in Online Challenges Among Cyberbullying Actors in Primary School Settings and Their Risks	162
Mário Dulovics, Michaela Riapošová	

Activating Methods in Prevention of Online Risky Behaviour	171
Zuzana Hrabovská	
Attitudes of High School and University Students Towards AI	180
Eva Hašek Dóšová, Ondrej Gergely	
Subjective Attitudes of Student Teachers Towards Undergraduate Training in the Issue of Risk Phenomena in Cyberspace	190
Martin Knytl	
Selected Determinants of the Digital Divide Among Seniors	197
Eva Janouchová	

Introduction

The collection of scientific research and review papers is a publication, whose history dates back to 2014. In the previous seven publications, topics focused on the prevention and intervention of risky behaviour were addressed, as well as topics were aimed at different groups of people in society, their lifestyle problems and the reflection of those problems into the possible occurrence of socially pathological phenomena. In the past, the majority of authors came from the Department of Social Pathology and Sociology at the Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Kralove, and from 2021 onwards from the Institute of Social Studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Kralove. This institute was created by merging the Department of Social Pathology and Sociology and Department of Social Pedagogy. Further authors who contributed to this collection were colleagues from departments close to the profile issue.

The current collection is a combination of contributions from authors from the Institute of Social Studies, as well as from current and past students and colleagues from departments across the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Among the Slovak partners are mainly papers by Professor Miriam Niklová and associate professor Mário Dulovics.

This year's proceedings bring together a whole spectrum of works that fall very broadly into the field of social pathology and prevention. Social pathology is not perceived here as a sociological discipline, but as a practically grasped topic in the field of social pedagogy. Therefore, the authors try not only to define the defined problem, but also to find ways for its prevention, intervention, or counselling.

The text includes topics focused on bullying, cyberbullying, suicidality, lifestyle in prisons, behavioural and lifestyle problems in children and youth, prevention, counselling, besides educational opportunities in socially focused topics and other essential areas of social pedagogy and social pathology.

The spectrum of topics is really wide. In the past years, we have specified the proceedings several times with a subtitle that was intended to narrow the breadth of the topics. This year we have not taken this step. However, a strong emphasis on a social pedagogical approach to grasping the problems of social pathology is evident from the contributions. It is this insight that may be very important in the future development of social pedagogy in different settings. At present, social pedagogy in school settings is developing very strongly in the Czech environment. In the long term, the topic of social pedagogy is work with the family, leisure, peer groups, as well as the areas of prevention and therapy, counselling and education and other topics. In the context of the development of restorative justice, it can be expected that the social pedagogical approach to the resocialisation and re-education of the individual, including the whole field of post-penitentiary pedagogy, will become increasingly important. In addition, new themes are emerging, which may include the whole area of cyber-threats, AI and others, in which risk phenomena may emerge and social pedagogy will be faced with new challenges to operate in these environments.

As a result, we view this range of topics as essential. Positive approach to pedagogy, including problem prevention and problem solving, is important for social pedagogy in this context. We do not see positivity from a methodological perspective, but from the perspective of orienting the thinking of education actors towards a belief in good

problem-solving pathways, learning competencies that will help clients to fail less in society, accompanied by practices towards a safer environment, improving lifestyle and other key aspects.

Václav Bělík
Director of the Institute of Social Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of Hradec Králové

Section 1:
Theory and Practice (not only)
of Social Pedagogy

Inspiration for Czech Social Pedagogy – The Legacy of Ryszard Wroczyński

Inspirace pro českou sociální pedagogiku – odkaz Ryszarda Wroczyńskiego

Václav Bělík¹

Abstract:

This paper focuses on current topics in social pedagogy. It focuses on three areas of social pedagogy that reflect the work of Polish social pedagogue R. Wroczyński. His work is extensive and covers the whole spectrum of social pedagogy topics. These include research on socially urgent topics essential for the development of society, then an orientation towards research, characterisation and analysis of the topic of the social environment, and then a strong orientation towards positive values and their development. All of these themes are relevant in contemporary social pedagogy and challenge further research.

Keywords:

Social pedagogy; social environment; current topics; positive values

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek se zaměřuje na aktuální témata sociální pedagogiky. Soustředí se na tři oblasti sociální pedagogiky, které reflektují dílo polského sociálního pedagoga R. Wroczyńskiego. Jeho dílo je obsáhlé a zahrnuje celé spektrum témat sociální pedagogiky. Jedná se o výzkum sociálně naléhavých a pro rozvoj společnosti podstatných témat, dále pak orientace na výzkum, charakteristiku a analýzu tématu sociálního prostředí a následně silná orientace na pozitivní hodnoty a jejich rozvoj. Všechna tato témata jsou aktuální i v současné sociální pedagogice a jsou výzvou pro další zkoumání.

Klíčová slova:

Sociální pedagogika; sociální prostředí; aktuální témata; pozitivní hodnoty

On the legacy of Ryszard Wroczyński

Contemporary Czech social pedagogy is undergoing many changes. There is a plethora of problems that occur in society, their number is increasing, but also their intensity. New threats are emerging for all age groups and not only individuals but also entire social groups are finding themselves in challenging situations. In this situation, it seems more

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, vaclav.belik@uhk.cz, ORCID 

than necessary to have suitably educated, personally mature and professionally oriented social educators who act both preventively and prophylactically in various settings.

At present, we find a number of themes, which we will discuss further in the text. Traditionally, social pedagogy has been regarded as a multiparadigmatic science in terms of the spectrum of its different focuses. Increasingly, the paradigm of helping those in need from the perspective of prevention and therapy is emerging as a unifying paradigm.

In the development of Czech social pedagogy, it is necessary to look for inspiration from important authors who have contributed significantly to the development of the field in the past. One of them is the Polish pedagogue Richard Wroczyński (1909–1987). In the following article, among other sources, we draw on the author's monograph *Social Pedagogy* (1968), as well as the essay *Wroczyński (1909–1987) - życie i dzieło* by T. Pilch and W. Theiss published in 2019 in the scientific journal *Pedagogika Społeczna*, and other sources.

R. Wroczyński was a fundamental figure in the formation of Polish social pedagogy and indirectly contributed to the development of Czech social pedagogy. He worked at the University of Warsaw and helped to build up the University in the field of pedagogical sciences - in didactics, practices, curricula, as well as in the organisation of the University itself.

In 1953 Ryszard Wroczyński as an associate professor actively participated in the organisation of the Faculty of Education. His initiatives shaped the faculty's activities so that not only teachers were educated, but above all people with a strong humanistic outlook who wanted to work in the field of foster care, social rehabilitation, leisure, and with specialists in adult education and animators of social life.

Thanks to this, the Faculty of Education became a model of modern teacher education and was soon followed by other faculties preparing teachers at universities in Poland. Professor Wroczyński was the founder of the Department of Social Pedagogy in 1957; after the department founded by Helena Radlińska in 1949 at the University of Lodz, which was closed in 1953 only to be reopened in 1962, it was the second department in this field in the history of Polish pedagogy. For five years, therefore, the Warsaw department was the only one to bravely defend the discipline in Poland against the predators who sought its liquidation as a discipline with bourgeois-Christian roots. Wroczyński belonged to the group of the three main creators of social pedagogy in Poland. This group consisted of Professor Helena Radlińska and two of her students: Alexander Kamiński and Ryszard Wroczyński himself. Professor Wroczyński, despite his numerous historical works, of which *History of Physical Culture* is the first and only monograph in Polish literature of such a scale, was primarily concerned with issues of social pedagogy. We consider Professor Wroczyński's work in this field to be the fulfilment of the work of Helena Radlińska and Aleksander Kaminski and the completion of the transformation of social pedagogy into an independent scientific discipline. Symbolic is the collective work, which was created on his initiative and under the editorship and editorship of T. Pilch under the title *Methodology of Social Pedagogy* (1974). The basic characteristic of Wroczyński's social pedagogy was its integrative way of understanding. The professor did not divide the discipline into departments or sub-disciplines. The very diverse subject matter of social pedagogy was subordinated to a primary goal – a social environment shaped by man's own efforts and in the name of man's humanistic ideals. Four editions of the textbook *Social Pedagogy* (1974, 1976, 1979, 1985) follow this principle and develop the idea of a parallel theory of education in *Education Outside the School* (1968). It is about

developing and strengthening the heroic aspect of social pedagogy, in which the conditions and way of life of the individual depend on his own commitment and effort (Pilch, Theiss, 2019).

The first inspiration we see in Ryszard Wroczyński's work is a strong orientation towards socially urgent topics that affect the lifestyle of broad groups of the population.

The research topics were clearly focused on socially important issues that affected the life of the whole country. The research was also characterised by a robust practical methodology. It was not about conforming to a top-down scientific policy, as recommended by the People's Republic of Poland (PRL), nor was it about moving according to the narrow rules of scientism, which had a monopoly on science and ruled contemporary pedagogy at the time. It was a kind of pedagogical "logical positivism", a change of practice from the roots, resulting from sound and pragmatic actions. (Pilch, Theiss, 2019)

This outline on socially exposed topics is also based on the ideas of Helena Radlińska, who emphasizes the social commitment of social educators to have the courage to change reality.

Radlińska shows the need to mobilise and use all social forces and attaches great importance to after-school education, cultural assistance and all social services. Finding out the causes of the situation under study in cases requiring social assistance and searching for mobilisable forces, factors that can be used to compensate for deficiencies, satisfy unmet needs, prevent imminent danger - this is what Radlińska sees as the essence of social service, which includes pedagogy and social policy.

Just as intellectual education cannot stop at the passive acquisition of knowledge, but must lead to independent thinking and stimulate creativity, so spiritual education should contribute to the harmony of knowledge and life, to the expressive assimilation of "invisible" goods, linking them to the whole content of spiritual experiences (Radlińska, 1935).

Wroczyński adds: Education in today's world of enormous development of a broadly conceived culture is a much more complex process than in previous historical periods. In addition to the organized education and training in school, a wide range of developmental stimuli outside school influence children and youth. Nowadays, out-of-school influences do not rely on patterns and norms transmitted by the basic social groups (family, peer groups, local environment) in which the young generation lives, but are more associated with cultural influences (Wroczyński, 1968, p. 278).

The second inspiration is the focus on research, analysis and positive development of the social environment. Here, too, we can see the inspiration of the work and ideas of H. Radlińska.

H. Radlińska defines the environment as a set of conditions in which an individual exists and the factors that shape his/her personality and which act permanently or for a longer period of time. (Radlińska, 1935)

In his work, R. Wroczyński deals in detail with the issue of the environment and its cognition, defines the environment and presents variously classified typologies of the environment, the role of man in individual environments. He devotes a special chapter to the importance of environmental science for the theory and practice of education. Various methods and techniques for investigating and measuring the environment are presented

as inspiring for the present. Special consideration is given to out-of-school educational environments, including the family, the local environment, and peer groups.

In addition to various typologies, Wroczyński also defines two concepts of environment and surroundings. The environment is thus a set of relatively stable conditions and stimuli that are influenced by various factors. The environment is much more changeable, unstable, fragile, and subject to fluctuating influences. The environment is also a broader term encompassing the external structure of life, regardless of whether it is stable or changeable and whether it is the source of developmental stimuli (Wroczyński, 1968, pp. 71–73).

This inspiration is very important for the Czech environment. Research on the social environment in terms of screening, analysis and interpretation of results to find ways for positive influence.

Positive development of the social environment is crucial in areas that have a direct impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities:

Areas for positive development of the social environment

1. **Education and awareness:** improving access to quality education for all age groups, promoting lifelong learning and developing the skills needed for the modern labour market. The role of the social educator in the school environment could help in this area.
2. **Health education, prevention and support for the social environment for health care:** ensuring access to and quality of health care, promoting prevention programmes and improving mental health.
3. **Social inclusion:** promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups, combating discrimination and promoting equality. This includes initiatives to promote employment, access to housing and social services.
4. **Community Development:** strengthening positive community links, supporting local projects and improving infrastructure. The goal is to create cohesive and active communities that work together to solve local problems.
5. **Sustainable development of the environment and the development of the human role in nature:** Protecting the environment, promoting sustainable development and raising awareness of environmental issues. This includes projects to reduce emissions, recycle and protect natural resources. All this is reflected in the field of education not only in the school environment but also in out-of-school settings.
6. **Inequality-enhancing economic development:** promoting economic growth, creating jobs and improving living conditions. At the same time, education, support, counselling and possible interventions for disadvantaged individuals, families and entire localities are important in this area.
7. **Safety and Crime Prevention:** improving community safety, promoting prevention programs and effectively addressing crime. This includes supporting victims of crime and reintegrating offenders into society. The issue of safety is also important for education as it is one of the themes of health promotion.
8. **Promoting meaningful leisure:** Promoting cultural activities, sports and leisure activities that contribute to the overall development of individuals and communities. This includes preserving cultural heritage and promoting creativity.

Another area that is inspiring for contemporary Czech social pedagogy is the **orientation towards positive values**. It is not only about education towards positive values, but also about a strong and unquestionable value anchoring of social educators themselves.

This was an attempt to remove values from social pedagogy that always end tragically, while the escape into the world of generalizations without individual solutions makes such pedagogy only partially successful. This methodological and pragmatic stance is confirmed today by one of the common methods in research, namely research through action. In the social sciences and the humanities, no other way has yet been found to arrive at objective and reliable knowledge that is at the same time free from an axiological context (Pilch, Theiss, 2019).

If we were to define the current themes of social pedagogy, we would in a general way agree in many ways with the typology of R. Wroczyński:

- a) ideological foundations of education and (social) pedagogical thinking in Poland and abroad;
- b) promoting physical education and sport;
- c) methodology of social pedagogy;
- d) theoretical basis and practice of environmental education;
- e) theory and practice of care pedagogy;
- f) continuing education, concurrent training and adult education;
- g) developing the role of the teacher and educator in the school and community;
- h) exploring education and its social conditioning;
- i) tasks for the development of social pedagogy;
- j) the environment and its definition, including research and measurement techniques;
- k) the role of the out-of-school environment in education, including leisure time issues;
- l) the demands of a changing society on education;
- m) requirement for social engagement of the public sector and social educators.

The ideological anchoring of Wroczyński's social pedagogy is impressively illustrated in the above quotation: from its beginning, social pedagogy has sought ways to alleviate the conflicts and threats that occur in the field of interpersonal relations. It was born out of a resistance to the evil and misery that plagued European communities in the second half of the nineteenth century. The pathology of interpersonal relations now seems to have become such a prominent feature of our times that the search for means to overcome it has become a critical need. The world is such that there is an increasing amount of danger, powerlessness and loneliness. Professor Wroczyński was aware of this, and in his own specific and pragmatic way understood the role of his discipline in the system of repairing human relations throughout the world and in providing social safeguards. After all, it must be remembered that this was a time of hostile division of the world, when feelings of fear, threat and insecurity were common, and constraints, both material and political, were part of everyday life. (Pilch, Theiss, 2019)

If we talk about the current challenges for social pedagogues in the Czech environment, the current topics include, among others, the school environment and from it comes a wide range of areas of positive influence on lifestyle. Thus, in the school environment, the position of the social educator has appeared more frequently in recent years, addressing topics that are inherent to it. Modern social pedagogy topics include those

listed below. It is clear that a number of new topics are emerging nowadays (Daněk et al., 2024; Šmída, Čech, 2024; Lorenzová, 2023; Bendl, 2016; Kraus, 2014):

1. working with pupils with social disadvantages;
2. working with the family environment and problems stemming from the family environment;
3. provision of social counselling;
4. prevention and intervention for a diverse range of pupil problems;
5. working with school failure;
6. mental health support;
7. crisis intervention;
8. organisation of leisure activities;
9. working with new technologies and trends;
10. sustainability and environmental education.

In the above text we have focused on three areas of social pedagogy that reflect the work of R. Wroczyński. His work is extensive and covers the whole spectrum of social pedagogy topics. These include research on socially urgent topics essential for the development of society, then an orientation towards research, characterisation and analysis of the topic of the social environment, and then a strong orientation towards positive values and their development. All these topics are relevant in contemporary social pedagogy and challenge further research.

References

- Bendl, S. (2016). *Základy sociální pedagogiky*. Univerzita Karlova, Pedagogická fakulta.
- Daněk, J., Šmída, J., Blábolilová, N., Charvátová Kohoutová, D., Cejpek Blašítková, L., Čech, T., Hladík, J., Öbrink Hobzová, M., Lorenzová, J., Kubzová, L., & Procházka, M. (2024). *Metodika práce pro sociální pedagogiky*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Kraus, B. (2014). *Základy sociální pedagogiky* (2. vyd.). Portál.
- Lorenzová, J. (2023). *Sociální pedagogika: věda, praxe a profese v souvislostech*. Vysoká škola chemicko-technologická v Praze.
- Pilch, T., & Theiss, W. (2014). Ryszard Wroczyński (1909–1987) - życie i dzieło. *Pedagogika społeczna, 2014(4)*, 63–76.
- Radlińska, H. (1935). *Výchovný postoj k sociálnímu prostředí. Náčrtky sociální pedagogiky*.
- Šmída, J., Čech, T., Hormandlová, T., & Jůvová, A. (2024). *Sociální pedagog a jeho role v kontextu potřeb základních škol*. Vydavatelství Univerzity Palackého.
- Wroczyński, R. (1968). *Socialna pedagogika*. SPN.
- Wroczyński, R. (1973). *Permanenční vzdělávání: Problémy – perspektiva*. Státy, Vydavatel Nauk.
- Wroczyński, R. (1979). *Pedagogika społeczna* (Wydanie III rozszerzone, zmienione). Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Wroczyński, R. (1985). *Obecné dějiny tělesné výchovy a sportu* (2., prodloužené vyd.). Ossoliński National Institute.

Author:

dr hab. doc. PhDr. Václav Bělík, Ph.D.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

vaclav.belik@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6717-0213>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

New Themes in Educational Work with Teenagers

Nová témata při výchovné práci s dospívajícími

Alena Knotková¹

Abstract:

The paper deals with partial results of the research, which was carried out within the framework of a dissertation focused on work with adolescents in the environment of youth homes. The intention of the paper is to present selected themes that are emerging in educational work with adolescents in the last five years in the context of changes in society. The research on which the data is based was conducted using a qualitative strategy in 2023–2024, using a semi-structured interview technique with youth home educators, and grounded theory was used to analyse the data. A sub-section of the research focusing on new themes is briefly presented in the paper. The results of that investigation were summarized in four areas, which were adolescent gender transition as a residential problem, the conflict of demands that come with the transition to high school, the reduction in psychological resilience, and new types of risk behaviours in the context of educator preparedness.

Keywords:


Adolescents; youth home; gender transition; conflict of demands; psychological resilience

Abstrakt:

Příspěvek se zabývá dílčími výsledky výzkumu, který byl realizován v rámci disertační práce zaměřené na práci s dospívajícími v prostředí domovů mládeže. Záměrem příspěvku je představení vybraných témat, která se nově objevují ve výchovné práci s dospívajícími v posledních pěti letech v kontextu změn ve společnosti. Výzkum, ze kterého data vycházejí, byl realizován kvalitativní strategií v roce 2023–2024, technikou polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s vychovateli domovů mládeže a k analýze dat byla využita zakotvená teorie. Dílčí část výzkumu zaměřená na nová témata je stručně představena v příspěvku. Výsledky daného šetření byly shrnuty do čtyř oblastí, kterými se staly změna pohlaví dospívajících jako problém ubytovacích zařízení, konflikt nároků přicházející s přestupem na střední školu, snížení psychické odolnosti a nové druhy rizikového chování v kontextu připravenosti pedagogů.

Klíčová slova:

Dospívající; domov mládeže; změna pohlaví; konflikt nároků; psychická odolnost

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, alena.knotkova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

The paper is devoted to a partial result of the dissertation thesis focused on the educational activity of an educator in a youth home. The author was led to reflect on the results related to the question of new topics in direct work in the youth home environment. The educational profession has always been in the background compared to the teaching profession, even though during adolescence, youth home educators are the ones who spend more than 70% of the time of a normal week with adolescents. They can become role models or confidants for many pupils and students. Changes in society place high demands, among other things, on the profession of educator. The educator should be aware of new trends in educational work with adolescents and should be knowledgeable about the emergence of new topics in the context of adolescents. Arif et al. (2012) describe the so-called "Big Five" personality traits of educators for effective work. They include conscientiousness, which consists of reliability, diligence, perseverance, and responsibility, and emotional stability, which is associated with a calm, secure, happy, and non-anxious personality. Third, he cites agreeableness as manifested by cooperativeness, caring, good-naturedness, courtesy, and trustworthiness. The fourth is extraversion, which is linked not only to the ability to be sociable, but also to be friendly, polite in demeanor, and prompt and flexible. The last he names as openness to experience, which is linked to curiosity, creativity, openness to new experiences and a certain sensitivity and flexibility.

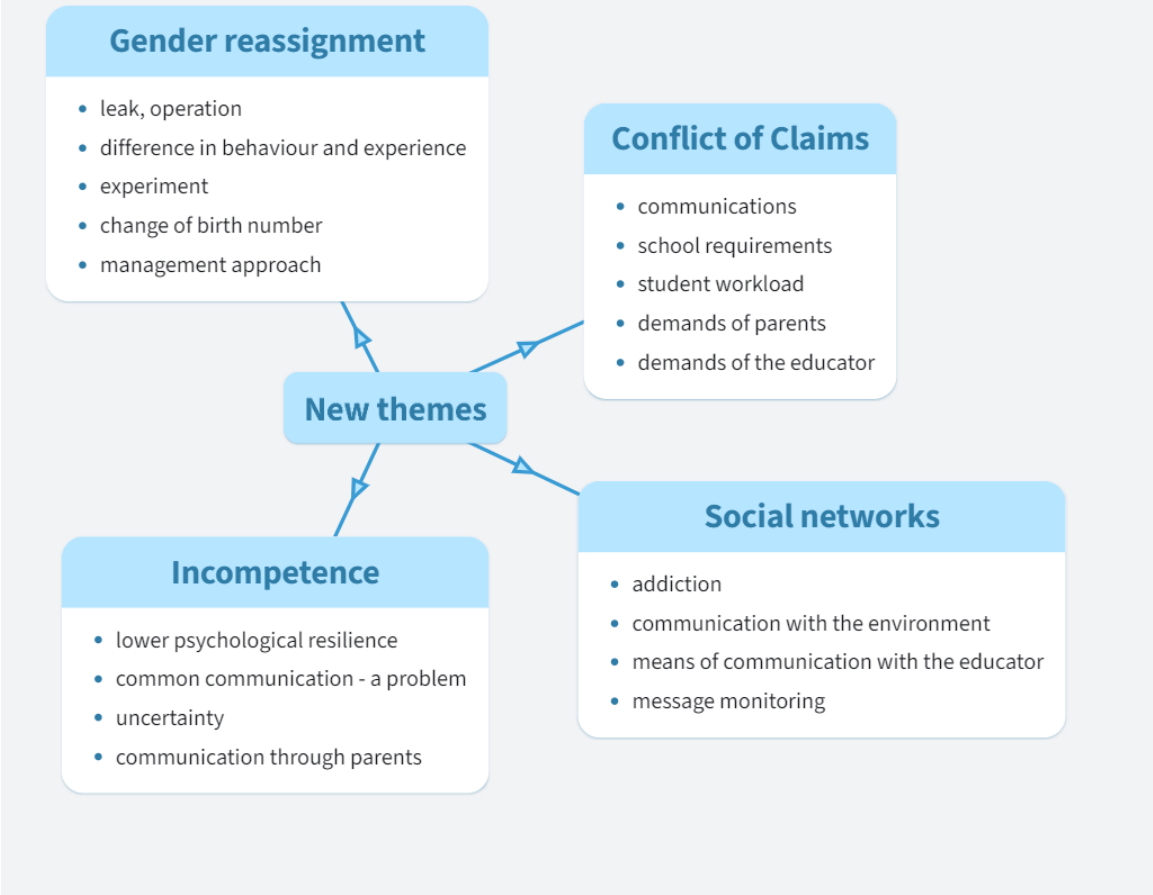
Youth homes in the Czech Republic are defined as educational and accommodation facilities. The activities of youth homes are enshrined in Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education, and in Decree No. 108/2005 Coll. The educational unit is an educational group of twenty, maximum thirty pupils. Světlík (2009) approaches schools and educational establishments through the lens of management and marketing. He states that even organizations that do not have profit as their main goal are entering competition. In conjunction with this statement, it is important to note that the client of the facility is not only the student, but also their legal guardians. When profiling individual establishments, it is necessary to take this into account and adapt the services and activities offered to their clients. In the school year 2023/24, 368 youth homes with a bed capacity of 50 627 places were registered in the Czech Republic. Last year, 2 052 educators worked in these establishments, of whom approximately 73 % were women. In 2023/24, 41 155 pupils and students of secondary and higher vocational schools used the services of a youth home (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Bendl (2015) characterizes youth homes as an environment that offers pupils and students accommodation, meals and educational activities in connection with school education. It also provides adolescents with conditions for studying, preparing for classes, which are mainly implemented by providing quiet time during so-called study time, access to the Internet and sometimes the provision of counselling. An equally important mission of the youth home is linked to the management of adolescents to make full and rational use of their free time. Youth homes offer a wide variety of leisure activities, regular interest groups and spontaneous one-off activities. This offer respects the voluntary element. Recently, there has been a decline in the interest of pupils and students in organised activities. For this reason, educators are looking for new ways to involve pupils in leisure activities, both in terms of motivation and in terms of finding new forms, methods and focus.

Pupils arrive at the youth home during a difficult period of adolescence, characterised by challenging processes of adaptation. These include adaptation to a new school environment, new demands and attitudes of teachers, as well as a new class composition. The second area is the change of location. Many adolescents are away from home on their own for the first time during this period, placed in situations where they have to fend for themselves. Last but not least, adaptation affects the accommodation in the youth home. Many residents come from an environment where they had their own room and suddenly have to get along with others, be considerate of each other and tolerate the needs of others. This is compounded by the requirements of the youth home to follow the rules.

Research

Knotková (2024) focused her dissertation research on the implementation of the curriculum in a youth home from the perspective of the educator. The research was conducted using a qualitative strategy using the grounded theory method. This paper focuses on the sub-research question and the sub-research aim. The aim is to find out what new themes emerge in direct work with pupils in a youth home. The respondents were 10 male and female tutors with more than 3 years of experience. Data collection was stopped when the data was no longer repeated and no new information was emerging. Figure 1 presents the treatment of the area under open coding. Four categories were created from the codes.



Picture 1 Categories and codes (author)

The first category arose from codes that appeared in almost all interviews. It is the issue of the youth home in the context of gender reassignment among students. One

interviewee states that they have pupils of different spectrum at the youth home and the educators do not have much information on how to deal with them. Another respondent describes the current situation at the youth home where they have a girl who is becoming a boy. She is currently undergoing hormone treatment and changes in behaviour and experience can be observed. Other respondents describe that they work closely with the guardians and follow the directives of the management, which has clearly defined the situation where the individual is still considered a girl and when she becomes a boy and vice versa. They associate the whole process with the overall biological transformation and the change of birth number. All respondents agree that they accommodate requests as much as possible and mostly accommodate individuals undergoing gender reassignment in separate rooms.

The second category was associated with demands on the individual. Conflict of entitlement arise between the demands by the school. Their number and demandingness significantly affects the leisure time of pupils and students in the youth home. On the other side are the legal guardians who naturally want their child to have the best possible academic results. Third, the educator enters into this conflict, trying to perceive the needs of the pupil for relaxation, compensation and regeneration. Last enters the pupil himself and his competence not only to learn. Parental pressure is coupled with curfews or bans on participation in extracurricular activities. School pressure is linked to the benefits and grades. Educators are spurred to action by management. Thus, the adolescent finds himself between millstones looking for a way out.

Another area that educators see as a hot topic is social networking. One respondent describes his experience of demanding a ban on mobile phones at organisational meetings as an element that was perceived by pupils almost as a "threat" leading to panicky behaviour. Another respondent states that in daily contact with pupils neither do not look at the educators when talking because they are constantly „watching the news." One educator, due to the proximity in age, chooses to communicate with students via social media and is satisfied with this choice.

The last theme that emerged more in the respondents' statements was the theme of not being self-sufficient. Most of the respondents had experience with parents who solved everything for the children. This included trivial things like changing the duvet at the beginning of the school year, to accommodation changes, to routine decisions and arrangements such as bus passes, finding the best route to school. The problem arises, for example, when a pupil's health deteriorates and instead of going to the teacher, he or she has to deal with the parents. on the phone.

The next phase of the research investigation was axial coding. Thus, among the new themes, besides gender changes and conflict of demands, the personality of the pupil and its changes (lack of independence, reduced psychological resilience) as well as risk behaviour were included. The new themes are reflected in the educator's choice of educational goals, and they significantly influence the educator in terms of motivation, choice of methods and forms. New themes arise mainly from daily contact with the pupil and are influenced by the educator's experience and personality, but also by the possibilities and limits of the institution.

The paradigmatic model according to Strauss and Corbin was used to consider the context. The reasoning is illustrated using the following diagram: causal conditions - phenomenon - context - intervening conditions - strategies and actions - consequences.

Examples of reasoning:

- ✓ covid, demands of school, demands of guardians, adolescence – panic attacks, not coping with the situation - lower level of psychological resilience, lack of independence - personality of the educator, counselling centre, sharing of experiences, influence of the group - new forms and methods - individual interviews, changes in the approach to the pupil - changes in the curriculum, changes in the environment - relaxation zones, playground,
- ✓ adolescence, maladaptation, changes in society – risky behaviour - change in behaviour, withdrawing into oneself, violation of internal rules - self-education of educators, counselling centre, inspiration - acting according to internal rules, new methods and forms in the implementation of the prevention programme - changes in the School Education Programme, focus of educators' training, modifications of internal rules,
- ✓ demands of the school, demands of the youth home on the implementation of the the School Education Programme - conflict of demands - implementation of the the School Education Programme, pupil's free time, personality of the educator - environment of the youth home, educator-pupil relationship - order, rules, regularity - readability, trust, fair play, positive climate of the educational groups,
- ✓ mismatch between psychological and anatomical sex, adolescence - sex change - implementation of the SSP, youth home environment, climate of educational groups - possibilities and limits of the youth home - adjustment of conditions, new methods and forms, rules - change of the SSP, internal rules, new requirements for adjustment.

Conclusion

In today's world, new themes are emerging that also touch on the field of education and adolescents. These include the issues of adolescents' lower psychological resilience and lack of independence, gender reassignment, new forms of risky behaviour and the conflicts that affect adolescents as they move from primary to secondary school. Youth homes have a great advantage in having a relatively large degree of freedom in developing the School Curriculum, which is then transposed into educational programmes for the educational work of the educator with the group. The question remains to what extent the educators are trained not only in terms of information, but above all in terms of experience and the use of methods and forms. The research carried out in Knotková's dissertation (2024) revealed modest knowledge on the part of educators regarding the possibilities in the choice of forms and methods, new topics of the possibility of further self-education. Thus, there is room for the development of further education of educators in the field of direct work of educators in the context of the use of forms and methods with a focus on experiential learning in the form of an experiential course in conjunction with new topics.

References

- Arif, M. I., Rashid, A., Tahira, S. S., & Akhter, M. (2012). Personality and teaching: An investigation into prospective teachers' personality. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(17), 161–171.
- Bendl, S. (2015). *Vychovatelství: učebnice teoretických základů oboru*. Grada.

Knotková, A. (2024). *Realizace kurikula v domovech mládeže v kontextu edukační práce vychovatele* [Disertační práce. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci]. Theses.cz. <https://theses.cz/id/qqe0j3/>.

Kraus, B. (2014). *Základy sociální pedagogiky*. Portál.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1999). *Základy kvalitativního výzkumu: postupy a techniky metody zakotvené teorie*. SCAN.

Světlík, J. (2009). *Marketingové řízení školy*. Wolters Kluwer.

MŠMT. (2024). *Statistická ročenka školství – výkonové ukazatele školního roku 2023/2024*. <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>.

Vyhláška č. 108/2005 Sb., o školských výchovných a ubytovacích zařízeních a školských účelových zařízeních. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-108>.

Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb., o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon). (2004). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-561>.

Author:

Mgr. Alena Knotková, Ph.D.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

alena.knotkova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7178-6405>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Social Pedagogy and Inclusive Education in an International Context

Sociálna pedagogika a inkluzívne vzdelávanie v medzinárodnom kontexte

Milada Kovalíková¹

Abstract:

In this review study, we emphasize the importance of the role of social pedagogues in schools across various countries, including Slovakia. The aim of the review is to use a comparative approach to highlight the potential utilization of social pedagogues' work in schools. The study indicates that social pedagogical activities are common in many countries and emerging in others. It maps significant regional differences in the goals, status, and functions of social pedagogues. The primary mission of social pedagogy is seen in the inclusion of individuals or groups of intact students or students with special educational needs (SEN). Preventive social pedagogical activities are focused on combating social exclusion, guiding students, raising awareness, and promoting democratic education. The study demonstrates the significant importance of social pedagogy in schools, particularly in preventing segregation and exclusion of students.

Keywords:


Social pedagogy; inclusion; primary and secondary schools; Anglophone and Nordic countries

Abstrakt:

V prehľadovej štúdiu uvádzame dôležitosť pôsobenia sociálnych pedagógov na školách v rôznych krajinách vrátane Slovenska. Cieľom prehľadovej štúdie je prostredníctvom komparatívneho prístupu poukázať na možnosti využitia práce sociálnych pedagógov na školách. Prehľadová štúdia poukazuje, že sociálno-pedagogická činnosť je v mnohých krajinách bežne zaužívaná a v iných krajinách sa začína objavovať. Štúdia mapuje veľké regionálne rozdiely v rámci cieľov, postavenia a funkcií sociálnych pedagógov. Primárne poslanie sociálnej pedagogiky je vnímané v rámci inklúzie jednotlivcov alebo skupín intaktných žiakov alebo žiakov so ŠVVP. Preventívna sociálno-pedagogická činnosť je zameraná proti sociálnemu vylúčeniu, na usmernenie žiakov, na zvyšovanie povedomia a demokratickú výchovu. Zo štúdie rezultuje veľký význam sociálnej pedagogiky na školách so špecifikom na predchádzanie segregácie a vylúčenie žiakov.

Kľúčové slová:

Sociálna pedagogika; inklúzia; základné a stredné školy; anglofónne a severské krajiny

¹ Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, milada.kovalikova@student.umb.sk, ORCID 

Introduction

Anderger (2020) reports that over the past decade, social pedagogy has seen a rise in profile globally, with the emergence of new university programs, publications, professional journals, and associations. Interest is also increasing in England, where this tradition was previously absent (Kyriacou, 2015). According to Anderger, schools are a domain where social pedagogy plays an irreplaceable role, likely due to the growing number of students at risk of marginalization, thus increasing interest in inclusive educational systems. The diversity of educational systems varies regionally, and the study examines the functions, roles, and missions of social pedagogues. This type of review study is scarce, thus we analysed professional texts on the activities of social pedagogues in schools both domestically and internationally. We rely on Anderger and Határ's assumption that society can be changed through knowledge, and the mission of social pedagogues is to create conditions for learning and participation in society. It is the holistic approach of social pedagogy, where care, education, socialization, and learning merge, representing a collective responsibility for parents, schools, and society (Anderger, 2020). According to Hämäläinen (2019), there are two theoretical directions in social pedagogy. The first is focused on social aspects of learning, promoting civic participation. The second involves interventions aimed at preventing and improving the conditions of socially disadvantaged and excluded individuals.

Erikson (2010, 2014) outlines social pedagogical activities in three models: adaptive, mobilization, and demographic. The adaptive model focuses on individual and relational perspectives, using social intervention to encourage marginalized groups to participate and adapt to norms. The mobilization model aims for social change through active participation in the education of social groups. The democratic model includes general education on humanism, democracy, and justice. We will attempt to answer how these theoretical approaches are implemented in practice, so that social pedagogues can prevent segregation and support inclusion in primary and secondary schools in various countries. We will define the relationship of social pedagogy to students and groups and examine the functions, roles, and goals they fulfil in the school environment. The review addresses the relevance and applicability of social pedagogical strategies and approaches in schools.

1 Methodology

1.1 Research Design

This study employs a theoretical research design, utilizing a comparative approach to examine the role and functions of social pedagogues in schools across various countries, including Slovakia. The primary aim is to highlight the potential utilization of social pedagogues' work in schools by mapping regional differences in their goals, status, and functions. The study emphasizes the importance of social pedagogy in the inclusion of individuals or groups of students with special educational needs (SEN) and intact students, focusing on preventive measures to combat social exclusion and promote democratic education.

1.2 Data Collection

Data was collected through a comprehensive review of existing literature from domestic and international sources. The study primarily relied on professional texts, including

monographs, yearbooks, scientific studies, professional articles, and other relevant works. Key databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceOpen, and ResearchGate were utilized to gather relevant texts published between 2000 and 2023 in English, Slovak, or Nordic languages.

1.2.1 Procedure for Article Selection

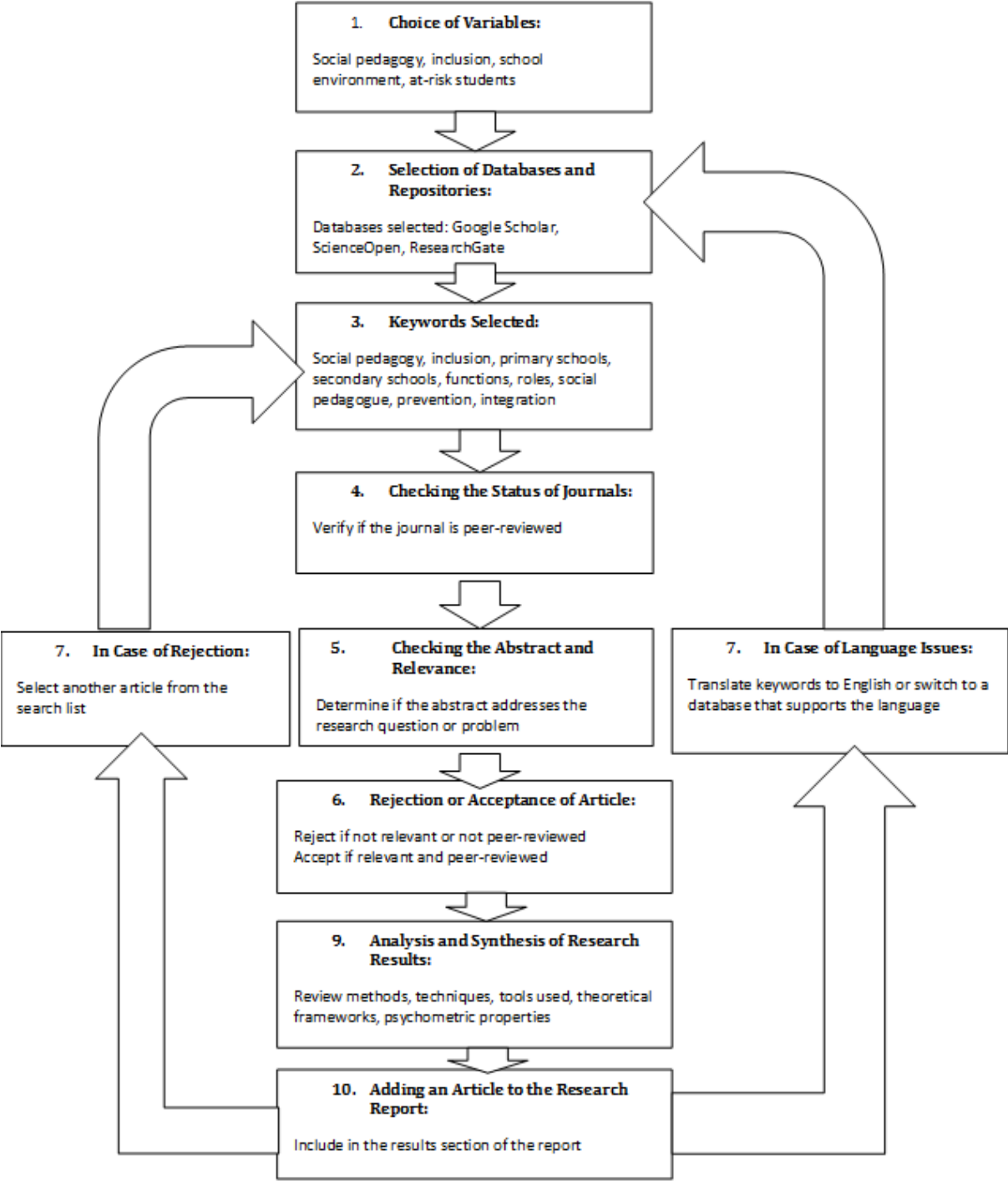


Figure 1 *Scheme of the Procedure*

1.2.2 Volume of Texts and Selection Method

The study reviewed approximately 150 publications, selected based on their relevance to the research questions. These publications were sourced from a combination of international and domestic journals, monographs, yearbooks, and other academic texts. The selection criteria ensured the inclusion of peer-reviewed articles and professional texts, prioritizing works published between 2000 and 2020. The publications originated from various countries, providing a comprehensive perspective on the role of social pedagogues in different educational contexts. The total volume of reviewed texts is approximately 5,000 pages.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

The collected texts were highlighted, coded, and structured into sections relevant to the research question. The analysis was conducted using qualitative methods, including:

- **Content Analysis**, examining the content of the selected texts to identify common themes and patterns.
- **Comparative Analysis**, comparing social pedagogical activities and their implementation across different countries.
- **Synthesis**, integrated findings from various sources to provide a comprehensive overview of social pedagogy's role in inclusive education.
- **Induction and Deduction**, using to draw general conclusions from specific observations and apply general principles to specific cases.

The analysis focused on identifying the goals, tasks, functions, and activities of social pedagogues, particularly in supporting the inclusion of students with SEN and those at risk of marginalization. The study also examined the theoretical approaches to social pedagogy, including adaptive, mobilization, and democratic models, and their practical applications in primary and secondary school settings.

1.2.4 Validity and Reliability

The validity of the study was ensured by selecting texts from reputable sources and authors with extensive experience in social pedagogy. Reliability was maintained by focusing on peer-reviewed articles and professional texts published within the specified timeframe. The comparative nature of the study allowed for the identification of regional differences and commonalities in social pedagogical practices, enhancing the robustness of the findings.

1.2.5 Limitations

The study acknowledges limitations, including the reliance on older publications and the scarcity of texts from some countries where social pedagogy is well-developed. Future research should focus on addressing these gaps and exploring collaborative and transformative approaches to social-pedagogical inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups such as Roma communities in Slovakia.

Based on the procedure outlined for the text selection within the scheme above, summaries of individual topics with research texts were linked with citations used in the study, structured under various headings. Limitations of the study include older

publications. The texts highlight current social pedagogical activities or how they might appear in primary and secondary schools.

The reliability and credibility of the review were ensured by focusing on texts containing social pedagogical approaches in the school environment, published between 2000 and 2020 in English, Slovak, or Nordic languages. Validity is ensured by selecting authors who have long been involved in social pedagogy and work at reputable European, Northern European, or English universities. The review includes Anderberg's study for the Nordic countries titled "In Search of a Social Pedagogical Profession in Schools: Missions and Roles Under Reconsideration," which compares social pedagogy in various countries (2020). Erikson's article "Popular Education for Adults as a Social-Pedagogical Activity: Learning to Fly" (2010) and "Understanding Social Pedagogy: Northern European Perspectives" (2014) offer insights into Swedish citizenship education. Langanger et al. (2013) clarify social pedagogy as a social profession in "Socialpædagogik – En grundbog." Hämäläinen developed a concept of social pedagogy in social work (2003), detailing Finnish social pedagogy (2012), and published "Social Pedagogy as a Scientific Discipline: A Field of Academic Study and Professional Practice" (2019).

Sting (2013) provides an Austrian perspective on the emergence of school pedagogy in "From Project to Routine Offer," and explores social services and school climate in "Social Work & Society" (2007, 5(3), 242-250). Kreuzer (2009) discusses German social-pedagogical work with juvenile offenders in "The Diversity of Social Pedagogy in Europe." Madsen offers a French perspective in "Socialpädagogik: Integration and Inclusion in the Modern System" (2005) and "Social Pedagogy: Helping People in Vulnerable Situations" (2013).

For Slovakia, Hroncová, et al. in "Sociology of Education and Social Pathology for Teachers" (2020) detail social-pedagogical activities and functions in Slovak schools. Emmerová outlines school preventive social-educational work of social pedagogues in the V4 countries in "New Educational Review" (2016, 46(4), 95-103). Selická (2006) emphasizes the importance of social pedagogical work with Roma communities in "Methods and Forms of Social Pedagogue's Work with Roma Settlements." Határ (2007) highlights functions and roles of social pedagogy in "Student Aggression Through the Eyes of a Social Pedagogue" and "The Social Pedagogue in the System of Social-Educational Counselling, Prevention, and Prophylaxis" (2010).

Lorenzová discusses the implementation of school social pedagogy in the Czech Republic in "International Journal of Teaching and Education" (2018, 6(1), 21-35). Zemančíková (2010) addresses factors hindering the profession in "Current Challenges in Social Pedagogy." Kornbeck and colleagues summarize the Polish perspective on international social-pedagogical activities in "The Diversity of Social Pedagogy in Europe" (2009). Kornbeck (2012) discusses the exportability and potential limits of social pedagogy in "Social Work in Europe." In "Social Pedagogy for Life" (2011), Kornbeck and Radermaeker highlight school social pedagogy in Francophone Belgium.

English authors Eichsteller and Holthoff define social pedagogy as an ethical orientation to work with people (2011, 36(4), 176-186) and describe European social pedagogical practices through the ThemPra platform (2022). Cameron and Moss in "Social Pedagogy and Work with Children and Youth: Where Care and Education Meet" emphasize the need for democratic education (2011). Moss and Petrie (2019, 17(3), 393-405) and Petrie (2005a, 20(4), 176-180; 2005b, 31(4), 293-296) explore the relationships of social pedagogy. Kyriacou identifies five dimensions of social pedagogy in schools in

"Pastoral Care in Education" (2009, 27(2), 101-108), and discusses social pedagogy and mentoring for at-risk students (2013, 24-25, 78-85), social pedagogy and pastoral care in schools (2015, 43(4), 429-437). Kyriacou and colleagues compare social pedagogy in England, Greece, and Norway in "Teacher Education Students' Views" (2013, 17(2), 192-204), and with Stephenson examine social pedagogical activities in addressing bullying in "Student Teachers' Attitudes in England and Norway" (2016, 42(4), 631-645).

The international perspective on social pedagogy is presented by Spanish authors Janer and Úcar in "European Journal of Social Work" (2017, 20). The research corpus includes verbal texts such as monographs, yearbooks, scientific studies, professional articles, and other works. Texts were retrieved from Scholar Google, Scienceopen, and Researgate databases using key terms (social pedagogy, inclusion, functions, roles, social pedagogue) and references to primary and secondary schools, excluding kindergartens.

Qualitative methods such as analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction were used to process the materials. Texts were highlighted, coded, and structured into sections relevant to the research question. Summaries of individual topics with research texts were linked with citations used in the study, structured under various headings. Limitations include older publications and a lack of texts from Germany, where school social pedagogy is well-developed. The texts reflect current social-pedagogical activities or envision potential practices in primary and secondary schools.

2 Results

This section summarizes the goals, tasks, functions, and activities of social pedagogues working in school environments across various countries. It highlights the presence of social pedagogues in primary and secondary schools in different European countries, including Slovakia. Social pedagogues support the interaction of intact students with students with SEN for academic progress and integration. In secondary vocational schools, efforts are made to motivate and implement preventive measures to prevent student exclusion. According to Cameron (2011) and Leganger (2009), social pedagogues commonly work with excluded students in programs aimed at "correcting" negative experiences and supporting students' return to schools. According to Slovak expert Határ (2007, 2009, 2010), the essence of social-pedagogical prevention lies in stimulating positive social and educational influences and eliminating negative ones.

2.1 Functions of a Social Pedagogue in a School Setting in the Context of Inclusion

Based on the analysed texts, it is evident that social pedagogues have a broad and complex mission, particularly focusing on socially disadvantaged students (Anderberg, 2020). The various activities of social pedagogues intersect and complement each other to prevent the stigmatization of students (Eriksson, 2014, and others). Supported by several authors, such as Ezechil (2015), Lorenzová (2018), and Anderberg (2020), inclusion of socially disadvantaged or marginalized students is considered the primary mission or goal of social pedagogues in schools. Multiple interventions are implemented to develop social capacity and integration.

Preventive Function

According to Niklová (2020), social-pedagogical prevention addresses deviant behaviours such as truancy, criminality, bullying, and other delinquent behaviours. Social pedagogues' work in schools often has a preventive, proactive character aimed at improving conditions for all children. Various authors, including Petrie (2005) and Paterson (2019), view the role of social pedagogues as creating opportunities for the education of all children, removing barriers to prevent school exclusion. Despite efforts at primary prevention, social-pedagogical activities in Slovak schools are mostly recorded at the secondary level of prevention (Hroncová, 2020).

Prophylactic and Modificatory Function

Petrie calls for English schools to adopt a social-pedagogical perspective to prevent school failure, thus reducing the risk of student exclusion. Holistic models of prevention and victimization have been developed in English and Greek schools to prevent negative phenomena in schools through values, principles, and beliefs. The social-pedagogical model reflects on behaviour and leads to a systemic "transformation of ethos" and culture in schools, families, and communities (Anderger, 2020). Niklová (2021) considers the most urgent task of social pedagogues to be preventing social-pathological phenomena in children and youth and providing support for the education of students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those from marginalized communities.

Educational Function

Social pedagogy in Slovakia is defined as positive pedagogy (Bakošová, 2008), aiming to transform individuals and society through education. It involves a process of educational care leading to integration and societal stabilization. According to Anderger, social pedagogy advances the concept of democratic education by offering space for critical reflections on the role and function of schools. Sting (2007) adds that students should be equipped with tools to manage and overcome challenging situations, fostering critical perspectives and knowledge to enact change. Open dialogue in schools about discrimination, segregation, and stigmatization increases interest in social issues. All students can benefit from social pedagogy; however, in practice, social pedagogues focus on students with SEN and disadvantaged individuals. According to many authors, including Emmerová (2016), at-risk groups include students with high school absenteeism, health-disadvantaged students, those with behavioural problems, immigrants, refugees, or those discriminated against due to ethnicity, gender, or social class.

2.2 Roles of Social Pedagogues in Schools in the Context of Inclusion

Multiple authors, including Zemančíková (2010) and Sting (2013), argue that social pedagogy encompasses several roles. The objectives of their work are often vaguely defined, complicating their role relative to other school staff, and frequently attributing them a lower position.

Erudite Specialist

Various authors in different countries, including Emmerová (2016) in Slovakia and Lorenzová (2018) in the Czech Republic, define social pedagogues as "explicit specialists." In Swedish schools, they are assigned an "expert" role in close collaboration with teachers, special educators, parents, and social workers (Bolin, 2010). Petrie (2015) adds that

although social pedagogues have a specialist role, their mission differs from that of psychologists or therapists, despite therapeutic underpinnings.

Coordinator

Anderger views collaboration between social pedagogues and other professionals in schools as crucial, contributing to improved academic and social outcomes and serving as mediators (Kornbeck and Radermaecker, 2011; Kraus and Hoferková, 2016). Berling notes that during the pandemic, there was a noticeable positive shift in relationships between teachers and social pedagogues and their professional roles. Various authors, including Emmerová (2016), Kraus and Hoferková (2016), Niklová (2022) agree that managing classroom conflicts or behavioural issues are tasks often delegated to social pedagogues by teachers. Sting (2007) adds that even in German schools, unpopular tasks are passed on to social pedagogues. In a Swedish study, Thornberg (2009) reported that social pedagogues are sometimes seen as teaching assistants.

Adult Friend

Alongside teachers, social pedagogues have a clearly socially oriented and pedagogically supportive role. This view is supported by several authors, including Petrie (2005), Madsen (2005), and Ezechil (2015), who note that social pedagogues are seen as stable and caring figures whom students can rely on in times of need. According to Smith (2013) and Stephens (2013), this relationship becomes horizontal, not hierarchical and controlling. School "neutrality," according to Heimgartner and Sting (2013), allows social pedagogues to build trust that some students do not even have within their families. New technologies have enabled innovative ways to develop relationships and "increase empathy between parents and schools" (Breslin, 2021, p. 28).

2.3 Tasks of Social Pedagogues in Supporting Inclusion in School Environments

Anderger (2020) presents the overlaps of various authors in defining the tasks and functions of social pedagogues. The variety of tasks and the depth of their content are extensively described. Kyriacou's understanding of the role of social pedagogues in schools includes five general missions: care and well-being, inclusion, socialization, academic support, and social education, linked to specific tasks that may overlap. Madsen (2005) observes the variability of social pedagogues' work in French schools, working closely with teachers to fulfil various social-pedagogical tasks. In Swedish schools, students engage in individual counselling at the suggestion of health teams, and social pedagogues engage in preventive efforts against bullying. Kornbeck notes that in Belgium, social pedagogues work closely with teachers to help students at risk of exclusion. Kornbeck and Radermaecker (2011) add that social pedagogues' tasks range from actual education to "supervisory" roles, acting as advisors for the education of students with SEN, analysing school needs, examining classroom dynamics, or managing behaviour during breaks, lunch, or class time. Social pedagogues are part of classification meetings, manage parent contacts, and oversee documentation processes in schools (Kornbeck and Radermaecker).

Kornbeck notes that in Belgium, social pedagogues work closely with teachers to help students at risk of school exclusion. Kornbeck and Radermaecker (2011) add that the roles of social pedagogues range from actual education to "supervisory" roles. They function as advisors for the education of children with special educational needs (SEN),

analyse the needs of the school situation, examine classroom dynamics, and manage behaviour during breaks, lunch, or lessons. Social pedagogues are part of classification meetings, manage parent contacts, and oversee documentation processes in schools (Kornbeck and Radermaecker, 2011).

Individual Work

Several authors, including Emmerová (2016), Kraus and Hoferková (2016), and Madsen (2007), state that social pedagogy is predominantly personal in many countries, with the primary task of social pedagogues being to help individual students cope with challenging or risky situations in school, support learning, and prevent exclusion. According to Petrie (2005), individual analysis is based on observation and discussions with others, followed by individualized solutions within academic, emotional, or social support. Petrie notes that social pedagogues have a good theoretical grasp of social-pathological phenomena and can apply this understanding to problem-solving interventions. Counselling or motivational dialogues aim to strengthen relationships, develop coping skills, and manage stress. Madsen (2005) adds that students develop interpersonal skills through participation in group activities and by taking personal responsibility for their behaviour and education. Bakošová (2008) defines a new paradigm of social pedagogy as a progression from the need for external help to the ability to help oneself, educate oneself, and develop socially, personally, and prosocially, ultimately leading to the ability to guide others to success in life.

Langager (2013) and other authors mention the mentoring role in Danish schools, where social pedagogues create positive relationships, model positive behaviours, and motivate students in academic and social activities. Kyriacou (2013) summarizes that social pedagogues support socially accepted thinking, provide emotional and practical support, and enhance students' self-esteem to take control of challenging situations. Despite the individual approach, according to Paterson et al. (2019), social pedagogues work within the whole context, including parents, doctors, social services, the community, and other professionals. Hroncová (2020) states that social-educational forms of work with families overlap with social work because they are related disciplines that historically complement each other. Forms of individual work in schools stem from family and school support, thus transforming individual work into group work with families and teachers.

Group Work

Emmerová (2016), Zemančíková (2010), Kraus and Hoferková (2016), Niklová (2022) and other authors note that while the primary task of social pedagogues is to support individual students, their responsibilities also extend to group work or working with entire classes. According to Heimgartner and Sting (2013), social learning occurs in school situations, through discussions about values and attitudes. Social pedagogues use group dynamics to improve cohesion within classes. Danish schools, according to Langager and Vonsild (2007), under the abbreviation BRW (behaviour, relations, and well-being), offer special social-pedagogical interventions to improve school well-being, provide counselling, assist with social interactions in classes, and help teachers differentiate teaching for students with behavioural difficulties. Kyriacou (2016) adds that the focus is not on the role of the aggressor and victim but on changing the context, reinforcing prosocial thinking and empathetic perceptions towards victims. In Greece, social-pedagogical programs are used to prevent and intervene against bullying in schools and on social networks. Kreuzer (2009) notes that German programs focus on violence

prevention, developing teachers' skills in preventive measures against social-pathological phenomena. Kraus and Hoferková (2016) and Madsen (2005) with other authors note that social pedagogues have the task of contributing to greater safety in classrooms and other school spaces during breaks and lessons.

The Table 1 below encapsulates a comprehensive summary of the results from a literature analysis on the functions of social pedagogues in the context of inclusion. It delineates key authors, the year of their studies, the geographical survey areas, the research tools employed, and the psychometric properties of the studies. Additionally, it highlights the theoretical frameworks utilized and the specific applications of social pedagogical practices within inclusive educational settings. The table underscores the diverse methodologies and findings across various regions, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the role of social pedagogues in fostering inclusion for socially disadvantaged and marginalized students.

Table 1 Summary of Results from Literature Analysis

Authors (year of Publication)	Survey Areas	Research Tools, Psychometric Properties, Areas of Measurement and Theoretical Frameworks	Results and Applications within Social Pedagogical Inclusion
Anderger (2020)	Nordic countries	Theoretical research, comparative analysis. N/A. Functions, roles, missions. Social pedagogy in schools.	Emphasizes the role of social pedagogues in school inclusion and transforming society through education. Application: Promotes inclusive practices in schools, focusing on the integration of at-risk and marginalized students.
Erikson (2010, 2014)	Sweden	Literature review. N/A. Citizenship education models. Adaptive, mobilization, democratic models of social pedagogy.	Discusses various models of social pedagogy and their application in educational settings to support marginalized groups and promote inclusion. Application: Supports civic participation and social change through educational models that encourage inclusion.
Hämäläinen (2019)	Finland	Conceptual analysis, literature review. N/A. Social pedagogy as a discipline. Social pedagogy as a scientific discipline.	Develops a comprehensive framework for understanding social pedagogy in social work and education. Application: Provides a scientific basis for implementing social pedagogical practices in educational and social work settings to support inclusive education.
Kyriacou (2009, 2013, 2015)	England, Greece, Norway	Empirical studies, field studies, surveys. Reliability and validity reported. Social pedagogy dimensions, mentoring. Various questionnaires and scales. Dimensions of social pedagogy in schools.	Analyses the rise of social pedagogy in England, its implementation in schools, and its impact on mentoring, pastoral care, and addressing bullying. Application: Enhances inclusive educational practices through mentoring and support for at-risk students.
Cameron and Moss (2011)	UK	Case studies, interviews, observations. N/A. Democratic education. Role of social pedagogy where care and education meet.	Highlights the need for social pedagogy to bridge the gap between educational care and democratic education in schools. Application: Implements inclusive educational practices that integrate care and democratic principles, fostering a supportive learning environment.

Authors (year of Publication)	Survey Areas	Research Tools, Psychometric Properties, Areas of Measurement and Theoretical Frameworks	Results and Applications within Social Pedagogical Inclusion
Hroncová, et al. (2020)	Slovakia	Literature review. N/A. Social-pedagogical activities. Social pedagogical functions in Slovak schools.	Details the specific roles and functions of social pedagogues in Slovak schools, focusing on preventive and educational functions to combat exclusion. Application: Utilizes preventive measures to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN).
Zemančíková (2010)	Czech Republic	Field study, interviews. N/A. Professional challenges. Challenges in social pedagogy.	Addresses the hindrances in the social pedagogy profession, particularly in school settings. Application: Identifies and addresses challenges faced by social pedagogues to enhance their effectiveness in promoting inclusive education.
Emmerová (2016)	V4 countries	Comparative study, surveys. Reliability and validity reported. Preventive education. Various questionnaires and scales. Preventive social education.	Outlines the preventive role of social pedagogues in schools, particularly focusing on inclusive education practices in V4 countries. Application: Implements preventive strategies to reduce social exclusion and support at-risk students in schools.
Kornbeck and Radermaecker (2009, 2011)	Belgium, Europe	Observational study, literature review, surveys. Reliability and validity reported. Social-pedagogical roles. Various questionnaires and scales. Social pedagogy in educational contexts.	Discusses the integration of social pedagogy in Belgian and European schools, emphasizing the supervisory and advisory roles of social pedagogues. Application: Enhances collaborative efforts among educators and social pedagogues to foster inclusive education.
Madsen (2005, 2013)	France	Theoretical and empirical studies, case studies. N/A. Integration and inclusion. Social pedagogy and integration.	Examines the role of social pedagogy in French schools, focusing on inclusion and support for students in vulnerable situations. Application: Provides targeted support to vulnerable students to promote their integration and success within the educational system.
Poláková at al. (2018)	Slovakia	Case studies, literature review, field observations. N/A. Social and educational inclusion, attitudes toward marginalized students, human rights education. Social inclusion theory, educational inclusion theory, human rights education framework.	Identification of persistent prejudices against students stigmatized by social deprivation, disabilities, or ethnic background. Examination of the impact of social exclusion on educational access and quality. Discussion on enhancing the quality of education for marginalized children. Applications: Promotion of inclusive educational practices for Roma children. Development of strategies to combat social exclusion within the educational system. Implementation of human rights education to foster inclusive attitudes among educators and students.
Sting (2007, 2011, 2013)	Austria	Observational study, field study, interviews. N/A. School climate, social services. Social services and school climate.	Investigates the emergence of school pedagogy and the impact of social pedagogical activities on school climate and student integration in Austria. Application: Implements social-pedagogical interventions to improve school climate and foster inclusion.

Authors (year of Publication)	Survey Areas	Research Tools, Psychometric Properties, Areas of Measurement and Theoretical Frameworks	Results and Applications within Social Pedagogical Inclusion
Lorenzová (2018)	Czech Republic	Empirical study, surveys, interviews. N/A. School social pedagogy implementation. School social pedagogy implementation.	Analyses the implementation of social pedagogy in Czech schools, focusing on the factors hindering its development. Application: Addresses barriers to the effective implementation of social pedagogy to enhance inclusive practices in schools.
Selická (2006)	Slovakia	Case studies, literature review, field observations. N/A. Roma community work. Social pedagogy with Roma communities.	Highlights the importance of social pedagogical work with Roma communities to enhance inclusion and educational outcomes. Application: Develops specific social-pedagogical approaches to support the inclusion and education of Roma students.
Kreuzer (2009)	Germany, Europe	Comparative analysis, field studies. N/A. Social-pedagogical work. Diversity of social pedagogy.	Explores social-pedagogical work with juvenile offenders in Germany and the diversity of social pedagogy practices across Europe. Application: Applies diverse social-pedagogical practices to support the reintegration of juvenile offenders and promote their inclusion.
Janer and Úcar (2017)	Spain, Europe	Literature review, comparative studies. N/A. International perspectives. International perspectives on social pedagogy.	Presents an international perspective on social pedagogy, comparing practices across various European countries. Application: Adopts best practices from various countries to enhance the inclusivity of educational systems through social pedagogy.
Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011, 2022)	Europe	Empirical studies, case studies, surveys. Reliability and validity reported. Ethical orientation. Various questionnaires and scales. Ethical orientation in social pedagogy.	Defines social pedagogy as an ethical approach to working with people, and explores European practices through the ThemPra platform. Application: Implements ethical social-pedagogical practices to support the inclusion and well-being of students.
Petrie (2005, 2019)	UK	Empirical studies, literature review, case studies. Reliability and validity reported. Social pedagogy in education. Various questionnaires and scales. Social pedagogy in education.	Explores the relationships and roles of social pedagogy in UK schools, highlighting its importance in supporting at-risk students and promoting inclusion. Application: Enhances support systems for at-risk students through social-pedagogical interventions to promote their inclusion.
Határ (2007, 2009, 2010)	Slovakia	Literature review, case studies, field observations. N/A. Student aggression, social counselling. Functions and roles of social pedagogy.	Discusses the preventive and supportive functions of social pedagogues in Slovak schools, emphasizing their role in addressing student aggression and social-educational counselling. Application: Utilizes social-pedagogical counselling to prevent student aggression and support inclusion.

Conclusion

The texts reveal that social-pedagogical activities in schools are common in many countries and are beginning to be in demand in others. This trend relates to the increase in social-pathological phenomena and marginalized students. The review study highlights

significant differences in the mission, goals, status, roles, and functions of social pedagogues in schools. Regional differences were mapped by Freidson as early as 1989, stating that the more detailed the description of social-pedagogical activities, the more other roles, previously unnoticed, become apparent. According to Anderberg and other authors, the primary mission of social pedagogy in most countries is the integration or inclusion of students. According to Hroncová Niklová et al. (2020) and other authors, prevention is aimed against social isolation, bullying, or the use of alcohol or drugs. Less frequently mentioned is the mission of social pedagogues in raising awareness and mobilization aimed at creating social change. Cameron (2011), Úcar (2011) together with other authors explain differences in mission by varied interpretations, where historical, political, economic, and cultural diversities of countries play an important role, influencing practice. The role of social pedagogues is sometimes overlapping with that of teachers. Teachers often delegate undesirable tasks to social pedagogues, and Hattie (2019) emphasizes that relational aspects in teaching form a particularly meaningful factor in the Nordic tradition. Niklová (2021) adds that social pedagogues seek optimal ways to help people in different environments, creating educationally valuable stimuli in the social environment and compensating for deficiencies in various settings.

Anderberg (2020) perceives the wide variability of individual students, groups, and classes with which social pedagogues work. From the review study, it is evident that social pedagogues utilize multifaceted special skills and knowledge to create positive relationships and construct solutions when students experience problematic situations. The mission of a social pedagogue includes not only focusing on students with problems but also taking steps to bring about change in unjust conditions, thus preventing segregation or school exclusion. Creating trustful relationships with students through positive role models enables students to integrate into the school collective, which according to several authors (Anderberg, 2020; Eichsteller and Holthoff, 2011) is a social-pedagogical ideal. The goal is to remove or anticipate barriers to learning, contribute to the democratic education of students, and support cooperation.

Anderberg (2020) points out that social-pedagogical use is not only in schools but also in society. Schools are criticized for not fulfilling their goal of lifelong social inclusion, thereby deepening segregation and exclusion. According to Madsen (2013), social-pedagogical approaches offer opportunities for participation in learning, analysing social positions in the classroom, and approaching inclusion criteria. Carter (2008) together with Hroncová et al. (2020) state that the school should play a protective role in preventing social-pedagogical problems, requiring collaboration among various professions, including social pedagogues. Anderberg notes that a variety of problems such as bullying, absenteeism, and exclusion can lead to potential unemployment, mental illness, drug problems, or criminality. The philosophy and theoretical concepts of social pedagogy can contribute to a deeper understanding and offer solutions with the potential to restore socially oriented education (Anderberg, 2020). Schools, according to Silver (2013) and Kyriacou (2009), are focused on student performance and employment. Cameron and Moss (2011) together with other authors state that social pedagogy supports different ways of thinking, using strategies and activities that help manage problems, corresponding to "education in the narrowest sense." Anderberg reminds that achieving "just" good results in school is not the goal of a humanistic and democratic society. Segregation and xenophobia dominate, thus alongside knowledge objectives, there should also be a focus on democratic education and active social participation. Counsell and Body (2013) propose that "schools should take greater responsibility for

a socially sustainable society." Schools should admit students regardless of ethnicity, social background, or school results. Shugurensky (2014) adds that knowledge and social development are intertwined, dependent on each other, and cannot be separated, thus society needs critically thinking and socially engaged citizens.

Jensen (2013) states that despite the intervention efforts of social pedagogues, school and institutional conditions continuously deepen marginalization. From her perspective, "only symptoms are treated," but the actual causes are not addressed. She suggests establishing educational policy strategies alongside preventive activities and effective interventions against exclusion. The founder of the Slovak Association of Social Pedagogy, Hroncová (2014), emphasizes the importance of continuing the established trends in social pedagogy, as social pedagogy gives hope to society.

The study indicates the importance of the independent status of social pedagogues in schools. Sting urges that social pedagogues should not be used solely for crisis problem-solving. Sting (2011) and other authors call for organizational reform in the context of competencies. Sting (2007), Borg et al. (2014), and others state that "clarifying the mission and focus of various professions in schools allows for constructive collaboration and more positive forecasts in social-pedagogical interventions."

The study highlights deficiencies in social-pedagogical processes in addressing the marginalization and exclusion of students from schools. Anderberg (2020) calls for future research to focus on the causes of emergence as well as the actors and factors that limit or support inclusion. Most studies address specific groups, and only limited research examines collaborative and transformative approaches to social-pedagogical inclusion, despite the principles of inclusive education focusing on all students and multidisciplinary collaboration. An interesting topic could be exploring the significance of social-pedagogical activities in schools for students and families from marginalized groups in Slovakia, with a focus on Roma communities.

References

- Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. University of Chicago Press.
- Academia Istropolitana. (2007). *Creation, development, and implementation of an open lifelong learning system in Slovakia for labor market needs*. Academia Istropolitana. http://efelse.ku.sk/download/nazorovy_prieskumCZV2007.pdf.
- Anderberg, M. (2020). In search of a social pedagogical profession in schools. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 9(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2020.v9.x.001>.
- Bakošová, Z. (2008). *Sociálna pedagogika ako životná pomoc* (3. vyd.). Publik promotion.
- Bjork, M. (2016). *International models of education systems, special support, and early interventions: Scotland*. Department of Special Education, Stockholm University.
- Cameron, C. (2011). Social pedagogy: What questions can we ask about its value and effectiveness?. *Children Australia*, 36(4), 187-198.
- Cameron, C., & Moss, P. (2011). *Social pedagogy: Current understandings and opportunities. Social pedagogy and working with children and youth: Where care and education meet*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Carter, M., McGee, R., Taylor, B., & Williams, S. (2008). Health outcomes in adolescence: Associations with family, friends, and school engagement. *Journal of Adolescence*, 30(1), 51-62.
- Eichsteller, G., & Holthoff, S. (2011). Social pedagogy as an ethical orientation to working with people – Historical perspectives. *Children Australia*, 36(4), 176-186.
- Emmerová, I. (2011). *Aktuálne otázky prevencie problémového správania u žiakov v školskom prostredí*. Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici.
- Emmerová, I. (2009). Súčasný stav v uplatnení sociálnych pedagógov na základných a stredných školách. *Pedagogické rozhľady*, 18(2).
- Emmerová, I. (2016). Školská preventívna sociálno-výchovná práca sociálnych pedagógov v SR a náčrt ich činnosti v ostatných krajinách V4. *Nový vzdelávací prehľad*, 46(4), 95-103.
- Eriksson, L. (2010). *Swedish way of teaching citizenship to immigrants – Popular adult education as a social pedagogical activity. Learning to fly. Social pedagogy in contemporary society*. Daidalos AB.
- Eriksson, L. (2014). Understandings of social pedagogy from Northern European perspectives. *Journal of Social Work*, 14(2), 165-85.
- Ezechil, L. (2015). Social pedagogy – New perspectives. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 13–18.
- Freidson, E. (1989). Theory and professions. *Indiana Law Journal*, 64(3), 423-432.
- Grace, A. P. (2007). Imagining critical social pedagogy of learning and work in contemporary lifelong learning culture. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 29(1), 85-103.
- Hanesová, D., & Niklová, M. (2022). The role of social pedagogy in Slovakia during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 11(1), 5. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2022.v11.x.005>.
- Határ, C., Szíjjártóová, K., & Hupková, M. (2007). *Základy sociálnej pedagogiky pre pomáhajúce profesie*. FF UKF.
- Hattie, J. A. C. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Hämäläinen, J. (2019). Social pedagogy as a scientific discipline – Field of academic study and professional practice. *Eccos*, 48, 17–34.
- Heimgartner, A., & Sting, S. (2013). The emergence of school social work in Austria – From project to regular offer. *Journal CEPS*, 3(2), 119-34.
- Hroncová, J., Niklová, M., Dulovics, M., Hronec, M., & Sámelová, S. (2015). *Sociálny pedagóg v škole v teoretickej reflexii a v praxi*. BELIANUM.
- Hroncová, J., Niklová, M., Dulovics, M., Hronec, M., & Sámelová, S. (2020). *Sociológia výchovy a sociálna patológia pre pedagógov*. Inštitút priemyselnej výchovy.
- Klein, V., & Sobinkovičová, E. (2013). *Podpora inkluzívneho modelu vzdelávania pre potreby predprimárneho stupňa školskej sústavy*. Metodické centrum.
- Kornbeck, J., & Radermaecker, G. (2011). School social pedagogue in francophone Belgium: An emerging profession? *Social Pedagogy for a Lifetime*. Europäischer Hochschuleverlag.

- Kraus, B., & Hoferková, S. (2016). Relationship between social pedagogy and social work. *Social Education*, 4(1), 57-71.
- Kyriacou, C. (2009). Five dimensions of social pedagogy in schools. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 27(2), 101-108.
- Kyriacou, C. (2013). Social pedagogy and mentoring of problematic students. *European Journal of Social Education*, 24-25, 78-85.
- Kyriacou, C. (2015). Social pedagogy and pastoral care in schools. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, 43(4), 429-437.
- Kyriacou, C., Tollisen Ellingsen, I., Stephens, P., & Sundaram, V. (2009). Social pedagogy and the teacher: England and Norway compared. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 17(1), 75-87.
- Langager, S. (2009). Social pedagogy and "at-risk" youth: Societal changes and new challenges in youth social work. *Diversity of Social Pedagogy in Europe*. Europäischer Hochschuleverlag.
- Lorenzová, J. (2018). School social pedagogy and its implementation in Czech education. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 6(1), 21-35.
- Madsen, B. (2005). *Social pedagogy: Integration and inclusion in modern society*. Student Literature.
- Murphy, D., & Joseph, S. (2019). Contributions of the person-centered experiential approach to social pedagogy. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49(2), 181-196.
- Moss, P., & Petrie, P. (2019). Education and social pedagogy: What relationship? *London Review of Education*, 17(3), 393-405.
- Niklová, M. (2009). *Prevenca drogových závislostí v školskom prostredí*. Univerzita Mateja Bela.
- Niklová, M. (2009). Aktuálne problémy sociálnej pedagogiky v Slovenskej republike. *Pedagogická orientace*, 19(1).
- Niklová, M. (2021). Understanding social assistance in the context of the historical development of social pedagogy and nowadays. In *Socialia 2020: Multidisciplinárny súvislosti pomáhání: sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní vědecké konference SOCIALIA 2020* (pp. 179-185). Gaudeamus.
- Niklová, M. (2023). *Sociálny pedagóg v školách a školských zariadeniach* (2., aktualiz. a rozš. vyd.). Wolters Kluwer SR.
- Poláková, E., Niklová, M., Stehlíková, J., & Šajgalová, M. (2018). *Inkluzívne vzdelávanie žiakov z vylúčených komunit*. Belianum, Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela.
- Petrie, P. (2005a). Schools and support staff: Applying the European pedagogic model. *Support for Learning*, 20(4), 176-180.
- Petrie, P. (2005b). Extending 'pedagogy'. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 31(4), 293-296.
- Petrie, P. (2015). Social justice and social pedagogy. In *Socially Just, Radical Alternatives for Education and Youth Work Practice. Rethinking Ways of Working with Young People*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Selická, D. (2006). Metódy a formy práce sociálneho pedagóga pri práci s rómskou osadou. In *Sociálny pedagóg. Zborník referátov z vedeckej konferencie s medzinárodnou účasťou*. Univerzita Komenského.
- Selická, D. (2009). Sociálna práca s rómskou rodinou. *Vychovávateľ*, 57(6), 23-26.
- Stanek, V. et al. (2011). *Sociálna politika. Teória a prax*. Spint dva.
- Sting, S. (2004). *Dum eller klok? Sociala bildningsperspektiv a kunskapsamhället. Socialpedagogik och samhällsförståelse. Teórie a praktiky a sociálne pedagogické forskning*. Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposium.
- Sting, S. (2007). Social services, school, and the climate of civil society. *Social Work & Society International Online Journal*, 5(3), 242-250.
- Úcar, X. (2013). Exploring different perspectives of social pedagogy: Towards a complex and integrated approach. *Archive of Educational Policy Analysis*, 21(36), 1-14.
- Zemancíková, V. (2010). Sociálny pedagóg v škole – Faktory brániace výkonu povolania na školách. *Súčasný výzvy v sociálnej pedagogike*. Inštitút interdisciplinárnych štúdií.

Author:

Mgr. Milada Kovalíková

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

milada.kovalikova@student.umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5954-8545>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

The Use of Art Therapy Techniques in the Centres of Educational Care – Results of Preliminary Research

Využití arteterapeutických technik ve střediscích výchovné péče – výsledky úvodního výzkumu

Lucie Škodáková¹

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to present the preliminary findings on the application of art therapy techniques in centres of educational care (CEC). The present study is an initial phase of a larger research project focused on analysing the implementation of art therapy within CECs. We explored how individual CECs inform their clients about available services, with a specific emphasis on art therapy. The subsequent research phase will be conducted in selected CECs, involving both clients and art therapists. A mixed-method research design will be used, incorporating interviews with art therapists and questionnaire surveys with clients. This study seeks to determine the extent to which art therapy techniques are utilised in CECs. The article will also outline future research procedures, methodologies, and the intended applications of the findings.

Keywords:

Art therapy; art therapist; art therapy techniques; the centre of educational care

Abstrakt:

Cílem příspěvku je prezentace dosavadních výsledků využívání arteterapeutických technik ve střediscích výchovné péče (SVP). Jde o předvýzkum výzkumného šetření, které se týká analýzy SVP z hlediska využívání arteterapie. Zajímalo nás, jak jednotlivá SVP informují svoji klientelu o nabízených službách, výhradně pak o arteterapii. Další část výzkumu bude realizována již ve vybraných SVP, jak s klienty, tak s arteterapeuty. Aplikován bude smíšený výzkumný design, kdy proběhnou rozhovory s arteterapeuty a dotazníkové šetření s klienty. Mimo jiné, je cílem našeho šetření zjistit, v jaké míře jsou arteterapeutické techniky využívány ve SVP. V příspěvku budou nastíněny další postupy, metodologie výzkumu a také jeho plánované využití.

Klíčová slova:

Arteterapeut; arteterapeutické techniky; středisko výchovné péče

¹ Institute of Special Education Studies, Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc, The Czech Republic, lucie.skodakova01@upol.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

Hauschková (2020) describes art therapy as a journey through an individual's soul and self. Thus, we should reflect on different approaches offered to children who find themselves in a life situation that is challenging, unpleasant, or risky. We will build on this idea with another idea mentioned by Polínek (2015), namely that the fundamental pedagogical error is to address the outward manifestations of risky behaviour. This implies that we should address the underlying issues of the problem. Therefore, we want to explore the experiences of clients of educational care centres with art therapy. The planned research project deals with the use of art therapy techniques in the centres of educational care (CEC). Clients are referred to CEC primarily due to the risk or presence of behavioural disorders. The CEC offers counselling or diagnostic activities, but also special educational and psychological activities, which include, among other things, therapeutic programmes. Among the therapeutic programmes mentioned, we can also include art therapy. We believe that expressive therapy, and art therapy in particular, have significant potential for working with this clientele. Therefore, we would like to make this issue more widely known to the facilities' staff where clients with behavioural disorders (hereafter referred to as BD) are treated.

In this paper, we focus primarily on the initial stages of research. We will define key terminology, including "centres of educational care" and "art therapy," and introduce other essential topics. The discussion will cover the research objectives and the approaches to achieving them, detailing the methodology and intended research methods. As part of the research that has already been conducted, we present preliminary results, specifically an analysis of CECs with a focus on how these centres raise awareness among their clientele via their websites. We will also outline the future methods and goals for the ongoing research.

1 Definition of basic terminology

Art therapy serves as the foundational concept that frames our exploration of the research problem. As such, art therapy can be classified as an expressive therapy. Therefore, it is about working with the client using visual art forms (Potměšilová & Sobková, 2012). Slavík (2000) defines art therapy as a psychotherapeutic and psychodiagnostic discipline, using forms and means adequate to art forms (in a narrower sense, forms of visual art, in a broader sense, forms of other artistic disciplines) for therapeutic purposes. Art therapy involves both therapeutic and diagnostic elements, which are distinct, yet often intertwined in practice. The point is that art therapy, as a psychotherapeutic discipline, focusses mainly on the process of making, which is self-healing for the client, and the creation is not further interpreted. Art therapy as a psychological discipline works with the creation and the process of creation itself (Potměšilová & Sobková, 2012).

Defining who an **art therapist** is not as easy as it may seem. Currently, the profession of art therapist is not anchored in legislation in the Czech Republic. However, if we think about who an art therapist is, we can define a few basic personality traits: empathy, communication, and the ability to establish, maintain, and end the client-therapist relationship. Communicativeness is then a very important personality trait for a therapist. However, the therapist should realise that communication is verbal and non-verbal, and there should be harmony between these two components. He or she should create an environment for the client so that he or she feels safe in it and can solve his or her

problems (Potměšilová, 2013). According to Hauschková (2020), the therapist must experience the difference between art and healing art. The artist is interested in the artwork, whereas the therapist focuses on the client.

The education of the art therapist should be in the field of psychology or special education because of the knowledge of the functioning of the human psyche. Graduates of these fields are also familiar with the different types of potential clients, as they are exposed to information about different types of disabilities during their studies and are thus equipped with the knowledge and skills to work with these clients. It is also good if the art therapist is educated in fine arts or art history. They can take advantage of this in their work and work with different art techniques and styles and concepts that have emerged in art over the years (Potměšilová, 2013). However, studying the abovementioned areas does not make one an art therapist. Art therapy training is also necessary, during which the future therapist himself becomes familiar with various art therapy techniques.

The research will take place in CEC regulated by Act No. 109/2002 Coll., on the Provision of Institutional Education or Protective Education at School Facilities and on Preventative Educational Care at School Facilities and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts. Since 1991, they have been part of the network of preventive educational care facilities. Their aim is to prevent the emergence and development of negative manifestations in children or to mitigate or eliminate the causes and consequences of BD and negative phenomena in social development. Among other goals, we can also include contributing to the healthy personal development of the child (National Institute for Education). CEC is one of the institutions that specialise in educational problems of children and youth. It primarily accepts clients who show signs of BD but have not yet been ordered to institutional or protective education (Hutyrová, 2020). They focus on preventive educational, counselling, and therapeutic care for clients. Clients of the CEC can be children aged 3 years up to the end of vocational education (no older than 26 years old). Centres provide information and assistance to clients with BD, but also with negative manifestations in social development, and help them integrate into society (National Institute for Education).

The basic symptoms of **behavioural disorders** can be found in ICD-10 (-11) or DSM-5. A behaviour disorder can be observed in early childhood and may or may not persist into adulthood. It manifests itself in antisocial and aggressive behaviour (Paclt, 2007). The term BD should be defined by uniform criteria. Under this term, we usually imagine negative behaviour that deviates from the norm (Hutyrová, 2019). An individual with a behavioural disorder is defined as someone unable to respect the norms given at a level appropriate to his or her age or intellectual abilities and deviates in the area of socialisation. It is a condition that lasts for at least six months (Vágnerová, 2012).

Furthermore, it is necessary to define **problem behaviour** as an individual who behaves in a risky way. It is the sum of **risky behaviours** that together constitute problem behaviour. The consequences of problem behaviour can be of a health, social, psychological or educational nature and threaten the individual and society (Širůčková, 2015 in Miovský, 2015).

We might ask where the line is when a child is behaving at risk or showing BD. The boundary is somewhat ambiguous. Every child occasionally behaves disobediently, but it is the duration and intensity that matter for us to label such behaviour as problematic.

2 Research plan

As the title suggests, we would like to find out how and if CEC in the Czech Republic uses art therapy techniques and how these techniques affect their clients. We assume that not all CEC will offer expressive therapies, and it does not always have to be art therapy in the strict sense of the word. Therefore, the first thing we will do is to find out what services the CEC offers. We have begun by examining how CEC presents their services on their websites. After that, we will contact the CEC themselves and ask for more information about the activities they implement. We will find out if the CEC are already using art therapy techniques and how this is reflected in the attitudes and status of the CEC clients. If they are not using these techniques, we would like to find out if there are differences after their inclusion and what the benefits are.

The main aim of this research is to find out to what extent art therapy techniques are used in the CEC in the Czech Republic and to give specific examples of the techniques used. Furthermore, we will focus on the experience of art therapists with the use of art therapy techniques in CEC. We will also be interested in the self-experience of CEC clients with art therapy. We will focus on their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes in relation to the use of art therapy techniques.

3 Research methods and design

For a more holistic insight into the issue, a mixed research design is chosen, i.e., using qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously (Dures, 2011). In the initial phase, we will analyse CEC across the Czech Republic. We will identify in which CEC art therapy is used. In the next phase we will contact specific CEC with which we would like to establish cooperation. The qualitative part of the research will consist of interviews with professional staff of the CEC, art therapists. The quantitative part will be carried out with CEC clients in cooperation with art therapists, when self-assessment questionnaires will be presented to the participants, which will allow us to self-assess feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

In the first phase, which has already been partly carried out, we analysed the CEC across the Czech Republic. We were interested in what their services offer, mainly whether they offer art therapy. In the next phase, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with art therapists working in the selected CEC. We will be interested in their motivation for this work and their personal attitudes toward the issue. Also, their subjective opinions on whether they think art therapy intervention differs between clients with BD and other clients. For example, if they also work with other clientele, whether and what differences they see. Furthermore, how art therapy is used in the CEC (length of sessions, frequency, number of clients, etc.). An important part of the interview will be about the methods and techniques used that have been successful in their art therapy practice with this clientele.

This will be followed by a questionnaire survey with the CEC clients. Clients will be given a self-assessment questionnaire, specifically the ABI, see below. We would like to compare these results with those from Israeli research in 2022 (Snir, 2022). After the questionnaire survey, focus groups will be held with the CEC clients, which can shed more light on the information we have collected in the questionnaire survey. Through interaction and group dynamics, interesting topics can be discussed that could bring new insight.

The research population will consist of art therapists and CEC clients in the Czech Republic. The selection of the research population depends on the willingness to cooperate. We would like to continue until the research sample is saturated. As for clients, we will be interested in the age group corresponding to the second grade of primary school (11-16 years old). We anticipate at least fifty participants.

4 Description of methods

Semi-structured interviews are a combination of unstructured and structured interviews. We will create a schema, types of questions and headings to stick to and participants (in this case, art therapists) will be able to develop and move the topics further. Another advantage is that the questions do not have to be in order, but the interviewer can adjust the order and the time focused on the question as needed. The interview usually lasts until the interviewee has exhausted their responses. At the beginning, we define the core, which is the minimum of questions to be asked. This will ensure that the topics are covered, even if the order or terminology differs. The analysis works with this information. However, if some information seems irrelevant in this type of interview, we can omit it (Miovský, 2006).

Self-report questionnaires are one of the most common procedures for assessing one's own experience and collecting data about individuals in psychology, as well as other human-related sciences (Fernandez-Ballesteros, 2003). Self-report questionnaires document the client's perceptions and direct experiences, which can illuminate important issues and confirm or refute theoretical aspects believed to be effective in art therapy. They allow researchers to ask individuals about their perceptions, thoughts, preferences, desires, beliefs, habits, and behaviours. Furthermore, we can purposively explore theoretical questions by analysing correlations or making comparisons (Snir, 2014). For our investigation, then, we specifically chose the Art Based Intervention Questionnaire (ABI). This questionnaire explores individuals' creative work experiences with art therapy. Respondents indicate on a Likert-type scale (1-7) the extent to which they identify with the statements and what corresponds to their just-lived experience of art therapy. The questionnaire has a total of 41 items in 4 categories:

1. Feeling and thoughts preceding the artistic process.
2. Feelings and thoughts during the artistic process.
3. Attitudes towards the artistic product.
4. Attitudes towards the material.

5 Analysis of the centres of educational care

In order to carry out the research, we had to carry out a pre-survey, which involved an analysis of CEC across the Czech Republic. We were interested in what their service offerings were, specifically whether they offered art therapy specifically. Databases of centres already exist, but we believe they are often not up-to-date and comprehensive. Also, some centres do not have all the information on their websites about exactly what services they offer, so we would like to contact them and find out information that might be desirable for our research.

According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports database on institutional care, there are 32 CEC in the Czech Republic. According to the database of the National Institute for Education, there are 37 CEC. We have to take into account that CEC are

usually established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, at diagnostic institutes, schools or educational establishments, and many of them have additional detached workplaces. In our research, we counted the detached CEC as separate because the services offered in one facility are often not identical to those offered in the other. We also take into account the fact that CEC, even if they have one director, have different staff and, most importantly, clients.

The research was carried out by finding out how many CEC were located in each region and then browsing their websites to find information about the services offered. The largest number of CEC is located in the Moravian-Silesian region, that is 12. Most of the CEC are under the administration of the Ostrava CEC, but they still have their own websites. On the other hand, the Olomouc Region has the fewest CEC, with only one. There are 4 CEC in the capital city of Prague. The South Bohemia, Pardubice, Central Bohemia and Karlovy Vary regions have 3 CEC each. The South Moravian Region has 8 CEC. The Liberec, Ústí nad Labem and Vysočina Regions have 4. The Zlín and Hradec Králové Regions have 5. The Pilsen Region has 2. In total, there should be 61 CEC in the Czech Republic. We assume that this number is much higher than the numbers given by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute of Education because we have included detached workplaces in the list.

We were also interested in whether CEC included art therapy among the services offered on its websites. Their number is very low, only 4 CEC out of all the above-mentioned. The Klíčov centre in Prague offers group programmes and mentions art therapy. In Český Krumlov, the Spirála centre (South Bohemia Region) also offers art therapy in its range-of therapeutic activities. In the Hradec Králové Region, art therapy is provided in two CEC, in Náchod and Trutnov. On the other hand, we were interested that the centre in Hodonín does not explicitly offer art therapy on its website. However, the small number of CECs offering art therapy does not necessarily reflect the full extent of its availability or usage. For most of the CEC, the website mentions therapies in general. However, they usually mention therapeutic work in groups, family, or individual therapy. Our attention was also drawn to the centre Čtyřlístek in Buškovice (Ústí nad Labem region), which uses the therapeutic method of EEG Biofeedback. This is a non-invasive therapy that focuses on biofeedback, using computer games. On the contrary, 13 CEC do not mention the therapy on their websites.

We expect that after contacting the CEC themselves we will learn more about the services offered and their use, and then we will be able to carry out the next part of the research. A purposive sample will be used to contact the facilities where art therapy is provided.

6 Conclusion and discussion

Below, we present several researches concerning the use of art therapy for people with different types of disabilities, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. For example, we can mention a study from 2004 that used drawing to identify thought disorder in children with emotional and behavioural disorders. It confirmed that children's drawings can be an important tool for diagnosis (White et al., 2004). Another example is a quantitative longitudinal study in Israel in 2022, in which primary school students underwent a year-long art therapy intervention and completed the ABI Questionnaire. We plan to adapt this questionnaire for use in our research. The purpose of this study was to understand better the associations between art-making experience and emotional state and treatment

success. The results of this study revealed changes in the participants' experiences before and after undergoing therapy during the first month. There was found to be a link between the experience of art making and the improvement of psychological state (Snir, 2022).

We found several theses on art therapy interventions for people with specific behavioural disorders, implemented in institutional and preventive care facilities in the Czech Republic. Smolenová (2009) focused on non-traditional programmes in working with children at risk in CEC. Specifically, it was the use of drama therapy, projective techniques, non-traditional sports, as well as art therapy. During the research, it was found that these non-traditional techniques when working with clients, contribute to the overall development of the client, but also to improve communication with the environment. Furthermore, we will mention a thesis that dealt with special education intervention with individuals with specific BD in the CEC. Specifically, it focuses on art therapy intervention in these individuals. The author indicates that she finds using art therapy with these individuals beneficial. She also mentions specific cases where she observes the benefits of art therapy in better coping with a challenging life situation, understanding oneself or improving communication with the environment. She points out the possibilities of wider use of art therapy in individuals with specific BD (Pohořská, 2018). We also searched for other theses that deal with similar issues. Often, these are implementations of certain therapeutic techniques in a specific setting or some form of overview. We find these to be a good bridge for our study, but we also see that there is only a small amount of research on this topic.

A possible outcome of this research investigation could be the creation of a therapeutic methodological manual for staff working with clients at risk or diagnosed with BD. Therefore, we will mention some publications that are already available. There are several art therapy manuals with specific techniques that an art therapist can use. For example, the authors Lhotová and Perout have published a book *Praktická arteterapie - Metody a aktivity (Practical Art Therapy - Methods and Activities)*, which offers both insight into the theoretical foundations of art therapy and specific ways of working with expressive expression. Author D'Amico Dawn has published *101 mindful arts-based activities to get children and adolescents talking* to help therapists working with children who have suffered serious trauma. In addition, we also find the existing methodological manuals to be very useful. *Metodika expresivních přístupů u žáků se specifickými vzdělávacími potřebami v inkluzivním vzdělávání (The methodology of expressive approaches for pupils with special educational needs in inclusive education)* by Müller and his colleagues offers a possible use of art in the educational process. The chapter entitled *Methodology of expressive art approaches* also includes a subchapter entitled *Methodology of expressive art approaches for pupils with behavioural disorders*. It recommends creating a calm and safe environment to work with these children, as calming them down and making them feel safe is often a long-term process. Potměšilová (in Müller, 2023) also gives importance to patience at work, motivating children, but also to the establishment of healthy social relationships because of possible mistrust or, in contrast, too much trust in other people. She also gives some possible art therapy techniques for children with BD. Finally, we would like to mention the methodological manual written by Valenta, *Metodika práce asistenta pedagoga – Artbrut a artefiletika (Methodology of the work of the teaching assistant - Artbrut and artephiletics)*, where artephiletics is considered in a broader concept. It deals with the application of art and dramatic practices.

The literature indicates that art therapy is a valuable approach for working with diverse clientele. Many professional publications and research investigations have been and are still being produced on this topic. We can come across several theses or methodologies in the Czech Republic. We believe that this research, while similar to existing studies, could advance the field of art therapy, especially in its application for clients with BD. We see the contribution mainly in the consolidation of the framework and experience of art therapists who work with this clientele, and subsequently the development of methodological recommendations for further practice.

The paper presented a research plan to find out how and whether CEC in the Czech Republic uses art therapy techniques. We will also find the qualitative part of the research useful when working with clients. By working directly with them, we will be able to see how the techniques affect individual clients. However, we are aware that not all techniques are applicable to everyone. However, we will try to work with a wide range of options so that as many professionals as possible can use it. Another limitation of the research we see is the availability of information, and we may not be able to work with all sites to provide all the data. However, research will benefit from the methodological guide that might be produced. There are already publications that describe methods and techniques of art therapy, but we would like to take into account the mentioned clientele of the CEC.

References

- Dures, E., Rumsey, N., Morris, M., & Gleeson, K. (2011). Mixed methods in health psychology: Theoretical and practical considerations of the third paradigm. *Journal of health psychology, 16*(2), 332-341.
- Ferjenčík, J. (2010). *Introduction to psychological research methodology: how to study the human soul* (2nd ed.). (P. Bakalář, Trans.). Portál.
- Hauschka, M. (2020). *Art therapy: the nature and tasks of therapeutic painting*. (P. Lomička, Trans.). Franesa.
- Hutyrová, M. (2019). *Děti a problémy v chování: Etopedie v praxi*. Portál.
- Lhotová, M., & Perout, E. (2018). *Arteterapie v souvislostech*. Portál.
- Miovský, M. et al. (2015). *Prevence rizikového chování ve školství*. Klinika adiktologie.
- Müller, O. (2020). *Metodika expresivních přístupů u žáků se specifickými vzdělávacími potřebami v inkluzivním vzdělávání*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- National Institute for Education. (2023, August 25). *Střediska výchovné péče (SVP)*. <http://archiv-nuv.npi.cz/t/pedagogicko-psychologicke-poradenstvi/strediska-vychovne-pece.html>.
- Paclt, I. (2017). *Hyperkinetic disorder and behavioural disorders*. Grada Publishing.
- Polínek, M. D. (2015). *Creativity (not only) as prevention of risky behaviour: expressive-formative potential of basic art education*. Palacký University in Olomouc.
- Potměšilová, P., & Sobková, P. (2012). *Art therapy and art therapy not only for social pedagogues*. Palacký University in Olomouc.
- Potměšilová, P. (2013). *Art therapy and artephletics*. Palacký University in Olomouc.

- Slavík, J. (2000). *Contemporary art therapy in the Czech Republic and abroad*. Charles University.
- Snir, S. (2022). Artmaking in Elementary School Art Therapy: Associations with Pre-Treatment Behavioral Problems and Therapy Outcomes. *Children*, 9(9), 1277.
- Vágnerová, M. (2012). *Psychopathology for helping professions* (5th edition). Portál.
- White, C. R., Wallace, J., & Huffman, L. C. (2004). Use of drawings to identify thought impairment among students with emotional and behavioral disorders: An exploratory study. *Art Therapy*, 21(4), 210-218.
- World Health Organization. (2023). *Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (10th edition)*. <https://mkn10.uzis.cz/>.

Project affiliation

The funding for the present publication was provided by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for specific research (IGA_PdF_2024_015).

Author:

Mgr. Lucie Škodáková

Palacký University in Olomouc,

Faculty of Education, Department of Special Education Studies

The Czech Republic

lucie.skodakova01@upol.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2333-3687>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Needs of Users of the Emergency Care Social Service

Potřeby uživatelů sociální služby tísňové péče

Jaroslava Hanušová¹

Abstract:

Users of the “emergency care” social service have many needs. This led the author of the study to carry out a qualitative research among the emergency care social service users. Individual semi-structured interviews aimed to find out all aspects affecting due provision of emergency care within the concept of biological, mental, social and spiritual health model. Interim results show that the most frequent reason for requesting the emergency care service is deteriorating health (45.3%) or reduced autonomy (30%). The elderly most often state that they expect the emergency care service to improve arranging for health and social care availability (38.7%) and boost their sense of safety and security (43.3%). The elderly rate their health at 3.3, the part of their health rated the highest being their spiritual health and the lowest being their social health.

Keywords:


Social services; emergency care; user; senior

Abstrakt:

Sociální služba „Tísňová péče“ se specializuje na potřeby zachování samostatnosti a bezpečí. To vedlo autorku studie k provedení kvalitativního výzkumu mezi uživateli sociální služby tísňové péče. Cílem individuálních polostrukturovaných rozhovorů bylo zjistit všechny okolnosti, které ovlivňují řádné poskytování tísňové péče, a to v konceptu bio-psycho-sociálního a spirituálního modelu zdraví. Prozatímní zjištěné výsledky ukazují, že nejčastějším důvodem, proč bylo o službu tísňové péče žádáno, bylo zhoršení zdravotního stavu (45,3 %) či snížení soběstačnosti (30 %). Nejčastěji senioři uváděli, že od služby tísňové péče očekávají zlepšení zprostředkování dostupnosti zdravotní a sociální péče (38,7 %) a zvýšení pocitu bezpečí a jistoty (43,3 %). Senioři své zdraví ohodnotili známkou 3,3, přičemž nejlépe ohodnotili své spirituální zdraví, nejhůře sociální složku svého zdraví.

Klíčová slova:

Sociální služby; tísňová péče; uživatel; senior

¹ Department of Education, Faculty of Education, Charles University, The Czech Republic, jaroslava.hanusova@pedf.cuni.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

Meeting needs and care is needed to varying degrees by everyone, including social service users and their families. Every social service user whose life has changed as a consequence of an illness or accident starts to look for a new meaning of life. An unexpected situation can bring insecurity, anxiety, fear, loneliness, estrangement, etc. to their lives and they often perceive the change as well as their future prospects negatively.

In the Czech Republic social services are predominantly used by the elderly. Care for the elderly must be based on a holistic understanding of their needs. It is the elderly who more often ponder the meaning of their existence, take stock of their life and have questions they cannot answer (Křivohlavý, 2011).

The purpose of social services is to support users in their own homes and try to restore or maintain their original lifestyle. And this is also the aim of emergency care which forms part of social services. It is a field service providing a 24/7 voice and electronic communication with individuals whose health or lives are constantly at high risk in case of a sudden deterioration in their state of health or abilities (Hanušová, 2021; Hanuš & Kolářová, 2007).

Correct identification and understanding of needs of a social service user requires enough time and excellent communication (verbal as well as non-verbal) and observation skills. A frequently discussed question is who should provide such care?

All of the above led the author of the report to carry out her own qualitative research.

Methods

The author of the report carried out qualitative research among emergency care recipients using individual semi-structured interviews aimed to find out all aspects affecting due provision of emergency care within the concept of biological, mental, social and spiritual health model.

Selected interview results

So far, 150 elderly people have taken part in the research. The respondents are emergency care users who were divided by gender (Table 1), age (Table 2) and place of residence (Table 3).

Table 1 Respondents by sex

Sex	Number of respondents
Female	109 (72,7 %)
Male	41 (27,3 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 2 Respondents by age

Age	Number of respondents
65-70	9 (6,0 %)
71-75	17 (11,3 %)
76-80	43 (28,6 %)
81-85	40 (26,7 %)
85-90	32 (21,3 %)

Age	Number of respondents
≥ 90	9 (6,0 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 3 *Size residence*

Size residence	Number of respondents
Village	47 (31,3 %)
City to 20 000 inhabitants	14 (9,3 %)
City from 20,001 to 50,000 inhabitants	25 (16,7 %)
City from 50,001 to 10,000 inhabitants	23 (15,3 %)
City from 100,001 inhabitants	41 (27,3 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 4 *Religious affiliation*

Religious affiliation	Number of respondents
Religious	42 (28,0 %)
Not religious nor atheist	40 (26,7 %)
Atheist	68 (45,3 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 4 shows religious affiliation. 42 (28.0 %) respondents state they are religious. 40 elderly respondents choose the “intermediate” group, i.e. „not religious nor atheist”. 68 respondents state they are atheists.

Table 5 *Nature of housing*

Nature of housing	Number of respondents
Live with their family in a flat	31 (20,7 %)
Live with their family in a house	33 (22,0 %)
Live alone in a flat	71 (47,3 %)
Live alone in a house	15 (10,0 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

64 respondents live with their family or another closely related person (31 in a flat and 33 in a house). 86 respondents live alone (71 in a flat and 15 in a house) (Table 5).

Table 6 *Reasons for requesting the emergency care service*

Reasons for requesting the emergency care service	Number of responses
Loss of social contacts	20 (9,3 %)
Deterioration in state of health	97 (45,3 %)
Reduced autonomy	64 (30,0 %)
Old age itself	33 (15,4 %)
Total	214 (100 %)

Table 6 shows the reasons for requesting the emergency care service. The respondents gave multiple answers. The most frequent reason was deterioration in their state of health (97 times), reduced autonomy (64 times) and the old age itself (33 times). Only 20 times respondents stated loss of social contacts.

Table 7 *What the user expects from the emergency care service*

Expectations from the emergency care service	Number of responses
Boost sense of safety and security	113 (43,3 %)
Counselling	19 (7,3 %)
Provide or facilitate social contact	28 (10,3 %)
Improve arranging for health and social care availability	101 (38,7 %)
Total	261 (100 %)

The elderly most often state that they expect the emergency care service to improve arranging for health and social care availability (101 times), boost their sense of safety and security (113 times) and provide or facilitate social contact (28 times). The least frequent option was counselling (19 times) (Table 7).

Table 8 *Subjective evaluation of individual aspects of health*

Rate	Biological (physical) health	Mental health	Social health	Spiritual health
1	12 (8,0 %)	8 (5,3 %)	8 (5,3 %)	8 (5,3 %)
2	18 (12,0 %)	14 (9,3 %)	10 (6,7 %)	20 (13,3 %)
3	62 (41,3 %)	91 (60,7 %)	49 (32,7 %)	100 (66,7 %)
4	11 (7,3 %)	22 (14,7 %)	68 (45,3 %)	10 (6,7 %)
5	47 (31,4 %)	15 (10,0 %)	15 (10,0 %)	12 (18,0 %)
Total	150 (100 %)	150 (100 %)	150 (100 %)	150 (100 %)
Average	3,4	3,1	3,5	3,0

The respondents were required to subjectively evaluate individual aspects of their health on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the best and 5 being the worst). Their self-evaluation is presented in Table 8. On average, the respondents rate their health at 3.3. The elderly rate their spiritual health (3.0 on average) the highest and their social health the lowest (3.5 on average). Younger elderly people (aged 65–75) feel subjectively worse than people over 75.

Table 9 *Presence of chronic disease*

Chronic disease	Number of respondents
Yes	98 (65,3 %)
No	52 (34,7 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

98 out of 150 respondents state they have a chronic disease (Table 9).

Table 10 *Regular use of medication*

Number of respondents	Number of respondents
Yes	101 (67,3 %)
No	49 (32,7 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

49 (32.7%) out of 150 emergency care users do not take any medication regularly (Table 10). A detailed analysis revealed that the majority (68) of users of emergency care take 4 medications per day. On average, it is 5 medications per day per respondent. Most commonly, users take medications for hypertension, heart disease and blood thinning.

The author tried to find out whether there was any correlation between age and regular use of medication. She discovered that people over 76 reported taking fewer medications per day than people aged 65-75. Actually, 29 out of the 49 respondents who did not take any medication (59.2%) were in the 76+ age group.

Table 11 *Interests and hobbies*

Interests and hobbies	Number of responses
Reading	69 (28,3 %)
Watching TV – travel and nature programs	22 (9,0 %)
Watching TV – soap operas	38 (15,6 %)
Watching TV – crime series	36 (14,8 %)
Watching TV – music programs	11 (4,6 %)
Crosswords, sudoku or quizzes	41 (16,8 %)
Handmade	10 (4,1 %)
Travelling	17 (7,0 %)
Total	244 (100 %)

Table 11 shows the respondents' interests and hobbies. The respondents most frequently state reading (69 times), watching TV 107 times (22 times travel and nature programs, soap operas 38 times, crime series 36 times, music programmes 11 times). The elderly also like crosswords, sudoku or quizzes (41 times). Traveling was surprisingly stated as a hobby 17 times and out of that 7 times by respondents aged 80 or over.

Table 12 *Using a mobile phone*

Using a mobile phone	Number of respondents
Yes	148 (98,7 %)
No	2 (1,3 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 12 shows that 148 out of 150 respondents use a mobile phone. 101 out of 148 respondents (68.2%) use a smart phone for communication.

Table 13 *Using a PC, laptop or tablet*

Using a PC, laptop or tablet	Number of respondents
Yes	122 (81,3 %)
No	28 (18,7 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

122 out of 150 respondents use a PC, laptop or tablet for communication (Table 13). 94 out of the 122 respondents use a smart phone. One person who does not use a mobile phone uses a laptop.

Table 14 *Using social media for communication (social contact)*

Communication via social networks	Number of respondents
Yes	62 (41,3 %)
No	88 (58,7 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 14 shows that 62 out of 150 respondents use social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for communication (social contact facilitation). The analysis found

out that the 62 respondents included 18 persons aged 81 or older (13 respondents in the 81-85 age group, 4 in the 86-90 age group and one in the 90+ age group).

Some elderly persons stated during individual interviews that they got acquainted with modern technologies for example within the university of the third age or the “Experimental University for Grandparents and Grandchildren” project where grandparents study with their grandchildren aged 6–11 for two semesters.

Table 15 *Identifying spiritual needs in the provision of emergency care*

Identification of spiritual needs	Number of respondents
Yes	97 (64,7 %)
No	32 (21,3 %)
No remember	21 (14,0 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 15 shows whether the emergency care provider tried to find out about spiritual needs when doing the social survey. 21 respondents do not remember that. According to the respondents this need was not ascertained in 32 out of 150 respondents.

Table 16 *Seniors interest in spiritual care within the emergency care provision*

Interest in spiritual care	Number of respondents
Yes	47 (31,3 %)
No	103 (68,7 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

47 out of 150 respondents expressed interest in spiritual care within the emergency care provision (Table 16). 103 respondents stated they refused such care (as it did not seem necessary to them) because they were atheists, did not go to church regularly or were not in the terminal phase of their life. When carrying out the analysis the author did not find any correlation with age or size of the residence.

Table 17 *The most missed care within the provided emergency care*

Lack of care	Number of respondents
Tell your problems at any time as needed	33 (22,0 %)
Make personal contact with friends	22 (14,7 %)
Satisfied with the care provided, do not change anything	95 (63,3 %)
Total	150 (100 %)

95 emergency care users are satisfied with this social service and would not change anything. 33 respondents would welcome a possibility to be able to talk to somebody about their problems any time they need, regardless of a time of day and duration of the talk (this option was chosen by 6 respondents who believe in God, 12 atheists and 15 respondents from the “not religious nor atheist” group). 22 respondents stated that they would welcome it if it were possible to ensure personal contact with friends (Table 17). When carrying out the analysis the author did not find any correlation with age or size of dwelling.

Table 18 *The most missed care within the provided emergency care*

Rate	Number of responses
1	110 (77,3 %)
2	34 (22,7 %)

Rate	Number of responses
3	6 (4,0 %)
4	0 (0 %)
5	0 (0 %)
Average	1,3
Total	150 (100 %)

Table 18 shows current user satisfaction with the functioning of their communication device on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 for very satisfied and 5 for very dissatisfied). 73.3% of users are very satisfied with the current functioning of their device. 40 out of 150 users rated their current satisfaction at 2 or 3 (34 users rated their satisfaction at 2 and 6 users at 3). The most common reasons for ratings 2 or 3 were: frequent charging of the communication device, bad signal at the cottage (outside their place of residence) or reduced volume of the communication device. Thus, the current user satisfaction with the functioning of communication devices reached an average rating of 1.3. When carrying out the analysis the author did not find any correlation with age or size of dwelling. So far, no correlation has been sought between the question of satisfaction with the functioning of the communication device and the type of communication device the user uses or the use of a smart phone or tablet.

Table 19 *Current satisfaction with the individual emergency care plan settings*

Rate	Number of responses
1	129 (86,0 %)
2	21 (14,0 %)
3	0 (0 %)
4	0 (0 %)
5	0 (0 %)
Average	1,1
Total	150 (100 %)

Another selected question measured current satisfaction with the individual emergency care plan settings on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 for very satisfied and 5 for very dissatisfied). 86% (129 out of 150) of users are currently very satisfied with the settings of their individual emergency care plan. 21 out of 150 users rated their current satisfaction at 2. The most common reason for users to use rating 2 was: unnecessary regular re-evaluation of individual plan settings. The respondents' satisfaction with the settings of their individual plan reached an average rating of 1.1 (Table 19). When carrying out the analysis the author did not find any correlation with age or user's expectation of the emergency care service.

Table 20 *Current satisfaction with the provision of emergency care*

Rate	Number of responses
1	120 (80, %)
2	22 (14,7 %)
3	8 (5,3 %)
4	0 (0 %)
5	0 (0 %)
Average	1,3
Total	150 (100 %)

The research also included a question that measured current satisfaction with the provision of emergency care on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 for very satisfied and 5 for very dissatisfied). On average, this question was rated at 1.3. Table 20 shows that 80% (120 out of 150) of users are currently very satisfied with the provision of emergency care. 30 out of 150 users rated their current satisfaction at 2 or 3 (rating 2 was given by 22 respondents and rating 3 by 8 respondents). The most common reasons for rating 2 or 3 were: unnecessary contacting users' contact persons in case of minor (health or technical) difficulties, problems with the volume of the communication device or the size and weight of the communication device. When carrying out the analysis the author did not find any correlation with age, size of dwelling, satisfaction with the individual plan settings or the functioning of the communication device.

Conclusion

The aim of the study is to evaluate information obtained from clients (users) in the long term and use it for correct setting of the given social service. Therefore, in that regard it can only be concluded that there are only partial data available at the moment and that we will have to wait several years for a thorough analysis of collected data. It is clear that the "emergency care" social service is due to its focus provided mainly to people who are dependent to varying degrees on the help of others and the non-stop support provided by emergency care represents a significant benefit for their independent life. The support provided covers the entire spectrum of life necessities which means that no dimension of the users' needs can be overlooked. On the contrary, increasing dependence often reduces the range of needs and emergency care thus, together with, for example, nursing services or other social services, becomes an important tool for maintaining the richness of life in old age or in a period of increased dependence on others. Emergency care providers must be fully aware of the context of needs in a person's life. It is important to identify these needs properly as early as during entering into a contract on social services provision and creating initial individual plans. The service must be able to adequately incorporate all needs in individual plans. However, this process starts with an initial social survey when a social worker has to find out all relevant needs.

Interim results show that the most frequent reason for requesting the emergency care service is deteriorating health (45.3%) or reduced autonomy (30.0%). The elderly most often indicated that they expected the emergency care service to improve their access to health and social care (38.7%) and to increase their sense of safety and security (43.3%). The users rated their current satisfaction with the provision of emergency care at 1.3. The elderly rated their health at 3.3, the part of their health rated the highest being their spiritual health and the lowest being their social health. 36.7% of the elderly expressed interest in spiritual care within the emergency care provision. In the presented research the elderly users (62.0%) incorrectly assumed that spiritual care provision is related to faith in God or terminal phase of life. According to the author, this narrow perception of spiritual needs is a result of a reduction of needs due to increasing dependence on external help. A person, forced by circumstances, sorts out their needs to those necessary and unnecessary and in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs the needs on the higher levels of the Maslow's pyramid of needs are suppressed. One of the tasks of social services, which include emergency care, is finding such suppressed needs, rehabilitating them in the client's perception and helping to get the client to a state where these needs are appropriately met. Reflecting on the meaning of one's existence and taking stock of one's own life is common for a person at any age, and it becomes more important in old age.

And so, in conclusion, we return to the importance of a well-prepared interview a social worker conducts with a social services user. Only correctly conducted interview can help the social worker gain the client's trust and collect information on all needs, including those the client has long given up and forgotten. It is also important to accept that in order to meet the needs it is not necessary to search for "specialists" at all costs. However, as in other areas concerning social services users, there is a general rule that the users are entitled to choose their "guide" themselves.

References

- Hanuš, P., & Kolářová, I. (2007). *Sociální služby v novém*. Vzdělávací institut ochrany dětí.
- Hanušová, J. (2021). Spiritual needs within the concept of emergency care provision. In P. Maturkanič & I. Tomanová Čerget'ová (Eds.). *SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM. Interdisciplinary Reading of the Phenomen* (pp. 234-244). Lulu Publishing Company.
- Křivohlavý, J. (2011). *Stárnutí z pohledu pozitivní psychologie: možnosti, které čekají*. Grada.

Author:

PhDr. Jaroslava Hanušová, Ph.D.

Charles University,

Faculty of Education, Department of Education

The Czech Republic

jaroslava.hanusova@pedf.cuni.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0101-911X>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Aaron Antonovsky's Concept of Salutogenesis is 45 Years Old

Koncepce salutogeneze Aarona Antonovského má 45 let

Jiří Kučírek¹

Abstract:


The article presents a genealogy of the origin of the SOC concept and a brief reappraisal to the present. In the late 1970s, the health sciences adopted Antonovsky's model of salutogenesis and shifted to a positive, resource-based view of health. This paradigm shift, which enabled a shift from preventive medicine focused on pathogenic risk factors to protective factors, was also of great importance for the development and implementation of health promotion that continues to this day. The article presents the genealogy of the origin of the SOC concept (lecture and meeting with the staff of counseling centers for family and interpersonal relations) and his personal conversation, for which we were grateful to the chief physician Petr Boš in Prague on 7 August 1991 on the occasion of the European Congress "Mental Health in European Families"). Antonovsky, while walking through Prague, then recalled K. Čapek and his RUR, Golem, Universal Robots and commented on the recurring analogies to this day. Thus, the concept of salutogenesis has its "ideological" birth in Prague. Indeed, the concept of health promotion was fundamentally influenced by the salutogenic model of health. Today, the practice of addiction prevention is also based on strengthening protective factors at the biological, psychological and environmental levels. To date, however, Antonovsky's legacy in health promotion has still not been fully realized. Either because of lack of time, because it is difficult to overturn the dominant scientific paradigm within a generation, or because research funding is still, unfortunately, attributed to "pathogenesis" rather than "salutogenesis". The article also reports on the themes of the last SALUTOGENESIS conference on 3-5 May 2024 in Passau dedicated to practical topics such as salutogenic communication in schools salutogenic intervention etc.

Keywords:

Salutogenesis; pathogenesis; communication; family; values; health; illness

Abstrakt:

Článek představuje genealogii vzniku konceptu SOC a jeho stručné přehodnocení do současnosti. Koncem 70. let 20. století zdravotnické vědy přijaly Antonovského model salutogeneze a přešly na pozitivní, na zdrojích založený pohled na zdraví. Tato změna paradigmatu, která umožnila posun od preventivní medicíny zaměřené na patogenní rizikové faktory k ochranným faktorům, měla velký význam i pro rozvoj a realizaci podpory zdraví, která pokračuje dodnes. V článku je uvedena genealogie vzniku konceptu SOC (přednáška a setkání s pracovníky poraden pro rodinu a mezilidské vztahy) a jeho osobní rozhovor,

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, jiri.kucirek@uhk.cz, ORCID 

za který jsme vděční vedoucímu lékaři Petru Bošovi v Praze 7. srpna 1991 u příležitosti evropského kongresu „Duševní zdraví v evropských rodinách“). Antonovský pak při procházce Prahou vzpomínal na K. Čapka a jeho RUR, Golema, Univerzální roboty a komentoval dodnes se opakující analogie. Koncept salutogeneze se tedy „ideologicky“ zrodil v Praze. Koncept podpory zdraví byl totiž zásadně ovlivněn salutogenním modelem zdraví. Dnes je praxe prevence závislostí založena také na posilování ochranných faktorů na úrovni biologické, psychologické a environmentální. Dodnes však Antonovského odkaz v oblasti podpory zdraví nebyl plně realizován. Buď z důvodu nedostatku času, nebo proto, že je obtížné převrátit dominantní vědecké paradigma během jedné generace, nebo proto, že financování výzkumu je bohužel stále přisuzováno spíše „patogenezi“ než „salutogenezi“. Článek rovněž informuje o tématech poslední konference SALUTOGENESIS ve dnech 3.–5. května 2024 v Pasově věnované praktickým tématům, jako je salutogenní komunikace ve školách salutogenní intervence atd.

Klíčová slova:

Salutogeneze; patologie; komunikace; rodina; hodnoty; zdraví; nemoc

About Concept of Salutogenesis

When A. Antonovsky walked in the summer of 1991 in the old Prague, to which he had a special relationship, strengthened by his origins, around the New Town Hall, he wondered that it was certainly not by mistake or ignorance of the person whose statue stands in the portal of the entrance, destroyed by the Nazis. It is a statue of Rabbi Yehuda Loew ben Bezalel Maharal, chief rabbi more than 400 years ago. Antonovsky recalled that the film about the Rebbe was a powerful emotional experience during his adolescence that stuck with him permanently. The word Golem appeared there, a figure, an undeveloped mass, or more accurately a formless mass. Rabbi Loew carved on his forehead the three Hebrew letters Aleph - Mem - Tav, expressing the word Truth. After the failure of the Golem, the rabbi realized that he had made a mistake and erased the letter Aleph and left Mem Tav, which means Death in Hebrew. His next inspiration was Capek's play "R.U.R", where mankind was to be freed from a biblical curse by the products of Rossum's Universal Robot Factory.

For Antonovsky the Golem and the R.U.R became two parallel tracks in his thinking: salutogenesis and systems theory towards the understanding that "... there are many cultural pathways to a strong sense of coherence" (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 94), according to Antonovsky this is the basic idea of what he called the salutogenetic model.

When he began to analyze the frequency of the occurrence of non-power, pathology in the singular, he realized that much more prevails than one might think. Antonovsky put it this way, "At any one time at least one-third and quite possibly a majority of the population in any modern industrial society is characterized by some morbid condition in any sense" (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 15).

His second knowledge came from a philosophical or historically conditioned area of thought. Looking at the physical microbiological and psychosocial world in terms of the ubiquitous pathogens with which human beings are confronted, the epidemiological data began to make sense.

The pathogenetic orientation is based on the axiom that homeostasis of non-illness is the normal state, deviation from such in quotes normality is what must be explained. Antonovsky realized that such deviations are almost self-evident given the nature of the world of the inevitability of death. Can we not then ask in his field: if the world is as it is, how come everyone has not gone mad, or if you have a philosophical mindset, how come everyone has not committed suicide? This question led Antonovsky to understand the rare, or even miraculous, phenomenon that there are people who do not collapse. This question was so extraordinary that there was no name for it at all. This led Antonovsky to coin the new concept of salutogenesis = the origin of health. This led to many consequences of adopting a salutogenetic orientation. Two of them are the most significant:

First, **when we think pathogenetically, we tend to dichotomize people: someone either has a disease or they don't.** But salutogenesis leads us to see health - disease - as a continuum. At any given moment, a person is situated in terms of their overall state of health, at a particular point on the continuum. Salutogenesis focuses on moving towards the pole of health.

Second - **pathogenesis examines "risk factors"**, a concept that is well known to all. We are even paying more and more attention to them, not only in psychology or pedagogy. But what does salutogenesis investigate? We don't even have a name, a term for the factors that promote movement toward health.

The human organism must be understood as a system that is constantly bombarded, both from the subsystem and from the suprasystem, by noise, entropic pressures. The general problem that stands at the heart of contemporary sciences is the problem that has been called Order originating from Chaos. Thus, for the first time, Antonovsky embodied the SOC formulation of the nuclear construct of the sense of coherence (SOC) model. As a generalized view of the world ranging from seeing the world as completely ordered to completely chaotic. The more one believes the world is orderly, the stronger one's SOC, the more adequately one can cope with even life's stressors, and thus should be healthier.

Antonovsky first defined them as a generalized worldview and related them to the belief that the world is organizable. However, in order to be able to manage well, one also needs to believe that the necessary resources are attainable. This component is called manageability. Finally, and most importantly, the motivational component of meaningfulness, the desire to get things done, gives motivation its power. This led Antonovsky to formulate the general hypothesis that the stronger a SOC is, the more able it will be to mobilize sources of negative entropy and deal successfully with all of life's stressors (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 23).

It is possible to distinguish three overlapping but distinguishable components.

The first is **intelligibility**, related to the belief that the world is **organizable**. One also needs to believe that the necessary resources are attainable for oneself. This component is called manageability. Finally, the third most pervasive component is the motivational component of **meaningfulness**, the desire to get things done, which provides motivational power.

But what are the implications of the salutogenetic construct and orientation for the health of the family system and for mental health? **We must not forget that the salutogenetic orientation originated in systems theory terms.**

The order and chaos of negentropy and entropy, information and noise, sub and sub-systems are key concepts. The focal point has always been the individual. But the literature on family systems shows that it is legitimate to think of the family as a system in which the sum of interacting parts forms a whole with its own energetic characteristics. Antonovsky recommended that it would be useful to apply salutogenetic, rather than traditional pathogenetic, thinking to family systems, and to individuals, in practice. **Suppose we stop classifying families as pathogenetic and healthy.** Instead, we should look at them as if they were at any point on a continuum between complete non-existent health and complete and non-existent pathology. **We should also look for and emphasize the strengths of the healthy elements that can be found in every family, rather than the weaknesses and pathological elements.**

But Antonovsky admitted that in his enthusiasm for the salutogenetic model, he never paid enough attention to the potential pitfalls. So Antonovsky began to look at the SOC of the individual and the health of the family system as well as mental health. **It is at this point that the Golem and the RUR return to the scene as inspiration.** The pathogenetic orientation of modern medicine has remained with the somatic diseases of the individual. Biological psychiatry fits into this scheme. Even the tradition of psychosomatic medicine, which makes room for psychological pathogens, does not create problems.

However, one value judgment and only one is pronounced: a judgment with which few would disagree: non-violence is desirable. Antonovsky was operating with a **Golem**, a shapeless, spiritless mass; the RUR (Rossom's Universal Robot), with adequate link capacity, would be able to contain even somatic diseases that would interfere with its physical functions. **The golem could also be programmed to reproduce itself. So when supplies are completely depleted, the next generation of Golems can be the continuation of the species. He's programmed to survive.** The energy supply for his survival has its source outside the Golem. So it requires an ecological niche. **From a pathogenetic point of view, the concept of a human being as a Golem promises a highly effective solution to the problem of disease - a frightening notion.**

It shows up in full horror when we consider mental health and the family system. We feel keenly how antithetical the Golem is to these concepts. **The Golem is a system whose relationship to other systems is technical - machine-like.** It seems to make no more sense, then, to talk about the mental health, or family, of the Golem than it does to talk about the mental health of a thermostat, or a family consisting of a boiler thermostat and a room temperature.

In other words: What is the core of the human being? What is at the core of the family system, as opposed to the Golem?

Antonovsky argues that at the deepest level, this means having the ability to ask moral questions. To make value judgments. Therefore, the pathogenetic orientation comfortably comes out with an engineering-mechanistic view of the human being as a Golem. Moral and philosophical problems are not inherent in this area of interest. But does the salutogenetic orientation force us to confront these questions? I am afraid not, Antonovsky argues. Therein lies its danger. **The salutogenetic orientation, like the pathogenetic orientation, defines health and disease in terms of functioning and survival.**

First, it's hard to compare: being a Golem is one way to a strong SOC. We can be evolutionarily programmed to consider health and survival as the highest values. Moral

and philosophical questions are meaningless. Relationships with other humans are technical. Antonovsky thus brilliantly anticipated current experiments with the technician perspective of transhumanism.

The cultural path to a strong SOC is to internalize the answers that God or tradition or community gives to moral philosophical questions, Antonovsky argues (Antonovsky, 1987).

If we are to ask who is likely to have the stronger SOC, Antonovsky fears that the answer will be in favour of the closed, stable world of his ancestors. Such a stable world in which everyone has and knows their place, where there are clear rules and traditions.

Antonovsky gives one clear strong example of a social structure that can form the basis of a strong SOC in society: the world of the Nazis. All Germans - men, women and children - had a clear place in this world: the family was firmly integrated into the Party community. And lives were given meaning by the ideals proclaimed by the leader. The threat to this integrated world was posed by many enemies, and above all by the Jews.

We can also find another path to a strong SOC - one that is based on overt or covert power: control, manipulation, exploitation and oppression from the level of the individual family to the level of the whole society. Rulers in families, groups, institutions and societies will often have a strong SOC because they are the ones who set the rules for everyone, control resources and accumulate wealth. **Their health is at the expense of the oppressed, but they themselves are healthy.**

He fears that, if we are honest, we must acknowledge that both the pathogenetic and salutogenetic orientations in their focus on biological health, and on functioning and survival, on homeostasis and incorporation into the ecological niche, **both must acknowledge the power of the Golem**, of fundamentalist religion, of patriarchy, of the ruling class, and of the Nazis to secure the basis of a strong SOC for some, not all. The health of the patriarch at the expense of women and children, the believer at the expense of the non-believer, the Nazi at the expense of those labeled subhuman. But they themselves are healthy.

To this Antonovsky adds **that our position must look at two problems which must be distinguished from each other. The first is the question of health, the second is the question of values - moral philosophical issues.**

Antonovsky recommends that we examine these two areas separately and suggests that SOC is a key answer to this question. And he advised all professionals who work with families to make a significant distinction in setting their goals between what might be good for the emotional health of the family and what you as human beings think is good. More importantly, all who work with families need to clarify what the family as a system thinks is good and what its individual subsystems think is good. The two are often at odds.

Salutogenetic orientation has one advantage over pathogenetic orientation. Because it goes beyond non-illness and leads us to focus on the positive pole of health and allows us to question which of our values are happily coincidentally good for the mental health of the family.

Antonovsky clearly lists RESPONSIBILITY as such a value, second SOLIDARITY and third DEVOTION.

Other areas that are increasingly popular, unfortunately, tend to favor values such as creativity, individual autonomy, narcissism, self-development or experimentation that

are good for health. It is necessary to decide! A. Antonovsky pointed out that we should not forget what he has always maintained, that **HEALTH IS NOT THE HIGHEST VALUE**.

Paradoxically, it is common even in professional publications dealing with concepts of health, salutogenesis, to distort Antonovsky's position, to pass in the sense of preferring concepts of health and to fundamentally neglect his fundamental opinion that the priority is not health, but the highest value for us must be the mentioned responsibility - solidarity and devotion. **It is therefore the ability to ask moral questions and form value judgements.**

Despite the time that has passed since the death of A. Antonovsky, meetings dedicated to this concept of health are still regularly held around the world. The last conference *SALUTOGENESIS* was held on May 3-5, 2024 in Passau and the theme of the meeting and the number of workshops presented different ways of applied theory of salutogenesis in the field of psychology, pedagogy, theology, sociology or medicine.

Focusing on methods that strengthen our sense of coherence can act as an anchor when we face the unexpected challenges of our time, because they make us stronger in a meaningful and natural way. Some workshops have focused on meditation (direct breathing / training the inner observer), relaxation with singing bowls in nature (regeneration / visioning), creative impulses (projects up to questions of how to "live your dreams"), principles of organization (daily structure and prioritization while maintaining flexibility), networking (counseling, self-help, specialists, circle of friends), reflection (training sensitivity / current position).

The topics discussed, "**Strengthening Immune System Resilience**" and "**Stress - My Cooperative Partner**" are topics of interest to corporate health management and are requested for keynote lectures or Health Day launches. It is an opportunity to approach salutogenesis, coherence and stress regulation with strong neuro-motivational systems and to clarify the links with resilience and stress regulation. Using "experiential lectures" must make the audience feel and act, thus opening new levels alongside thinking and making salutogenesis "tangible".

A new way of being together - How can we achieve salutogenic communication without fear? Children's talks - salutogenic support in school. Attentive educators sometimes notice children in everyday school life who show signs of psychological or somatic irritation. How can you help such a child? What measures are recommended and in what order? How can you find adequate support? The child discussion method provides an approach.

Another theme was the **integrative model of health care**. The health system needs a fundamentally salutogenic orientation in order to sustainably fulfil its diverse social tasks of health promotion, from primary to tertiary prevention, therapy and end-of-life care. Previous models such as the biopsychosocial model or the SAR system demand-resource model bring important aspects but do not fulfil these tasks. The integrative health model is consistently salutogenic. That is, it assumes that at the core of their lives, as well as in their healthy self-regulation, people strive for coherence within and in their external relationships. For healthy development, they should not only be responsive and resilient to stressful conditions, but most importantly, help shape their multidimensional environment in a "co-creative" way in order to lead a good life.

The core components of this integrative model of healthcare are:

A) a systems model of life dimensions in interactions with people,

B) a communicative self-regulatory model with central attractive information about coherence as an attractor and three basic skills for continuous recursive access to internal and external coherence; and

C) three basic motivations with neuro-motivational systems for a cooperative approach to coherence and wholeness.

The integrative model of health has practical implications for stimulating healthy and cooperative self-regulation in a variety of environments across the dimensions of life, for example, strengthening basic skills such as perception, action and learning, successful and mindful communication of needs, and co-creative, cooperative communication that is appropriate to the environment.

Salutogenic communication is recommended as part of teacher training.

Salutogenic approach and communication are very important in an educational context. Perspective teachers are obliged to accompany the children entrusted to them in their development so that they can develop a healthy life orientation and coherence.

Salutogenic interventions, (self-)hypnotic procedures to support healing processes. Internal or external conflicts, fears and massive constant stress, lack of exercise and poor nutrition - these are some of the factors that promote illness and hinder healing processes. If we want to create favourable conditions for healing processes, the first step is to replace such impairments with positive elements. The second step is then to carefully and respectfully influence the reactions of the body and the immune system, for example, in order to promote healing and increase the chances of recovery.

This workshop also gave a brief introduction to the language patterns of hypnosis and showed examples of how we can change emotions, behaviour and bodily reactions using hypnotic techniques (e.g. light trance exercises, fantasy journeys, metaphors).

References

Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, stress, and coping*. Josey.

Antonovsky, A., & Franke, A. (1997). Salutogenesis. *Zur Entmystifizierung der Gesundheit*. Tübingen, 119.

Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco.

Salutogenese-Symposium am 03.-05. Weiterentwicklung der Salutogenese?! - Wo stehen wir?

Author:

PhDr. Jiří Kučírek, Ph.D.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

jiri.kucirek@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4976-2105>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Section II:
The Contemporary Themes in
Pupils and the School
Environment

Possibilities of Adaptation of Ukrainian Children to Czech Schools

Možnosti adaptace ukrajinských dětí do českých škol

Kateřina Krupková¹, Adéla Kučerová², Aneta Víznerová³

Abstract:


The adaptation of Ukrainian children to Czech schools represents a significant challenge for the Czech education system and a topical social issue. The key aspects of this adaptation are language integration, social inclusion and academic support. Linguistic integration is the basis for successful adaptation, and schools often organise courses in Czech as a foreign language and use various methodological materials. Social inclusion includes the creation of adaptation groups and the provision of psychological support to help children better integrate into their new environment. Academic support focuses on adapting the curriculum and individualised approaches to teaching to enable children to participate in the learning process as much as possible. Despite these efforts, the level of inclusion of Ukrainian children in Czech schools often remains low, mainly due to language barriers and cultural differences. This article highlights the importance of developing support mechanisms and methodological support for teachers in order to increase the effectiveness of the adaptation of these children.


Keywords:


Adaptation; Ukrainians; school; integration; social exclusion

Abstrakt:

Adaptace ukrajinských dětí do českých škol představuje významnou výzvu pro český vzdělávací systém a aktuální celospolečenské téma. Klíčovými aspekty této adaptace jsou jazyková integrace, sociální začlenění i akademická podpora. Jazyková integrace je základem úspěšné adaptace, přičemž školy často organizují kurzy češtiny jako cizího jazyka a využívají různé metodické materiály. Sociální začlenění zahrnuje vytváření adaptačních skupin a poskytování psychologické podpory, což pomáhá dětem lépe se začlenit do nového prostředí. Akademická podpora se zaměřuje na úpravu kurikula a individualizované přístupy k výuce, aby se děti mohly co nejlépe zapojit do vzdělávacího procesu. Navzdory těmto snahám zůstává míra začlenění ukrajinských dětí v českých školách často nízká, a to zejména kvůli jazykovým bariérám a kulturním rozdílům. Tento článek upozorňuje na důležitost rozvoje podpůrných mechanismů a metodické podpory pro učitele, aby se zvýšila efektivita adaptace těchto dětí.

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, katerina.krupkova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

² Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, adela.kucerova.2@uhk.cz, ORCID 

³ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, aneta.viznerova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

Klíčová slova:

Adaptace; Ukrajinci; škola; integrace; sociální exkluze

Introduction

In the 2022/2023 school year, 50,849 Ukrainian children attended Czech primary schools – for perspective, this figure is five times higher than in the previous school year (Czech Statistical Office, 2023). Although the war conflict in Ukraine is now in its third year, its consequences are becoming more and more apparent. Not only the initial data shows that the Ukrainian minority living in the Czech Republic cannot be thought of as under-represented, as the Ministry of the Interior states on its website that as of 01.04.2023 there were 325,742 persons residing in the Czech Republic with temporary protection, under which access to education is also granted, and the proportion of children was 28% (Ministry of the Interior, 2024). Thus, the adaptation of Ukrainian children to primary schools is one of the key topics in the Czech educational process. Due attention should be paid to the most isolated children in order to facilitate the adaptation process, but also to teachers. It is the teaching staff who suddenly find themselves in a new situation in which they have to perform the "normal" tasks of classroom management, teaching, information and knowledge transfer, but often also the care and education of the pupils themselves, care for pupils from Ukraine, and with this not only the breaking down of the language barrier, but also the aforementioned crucial adaptation of children with migration (often traumatic) experience into classroom collectives, and consequently into Czech society.

There are now a number of methodological guidelines governing the process of adapting Ukrainian pupils to primary school, and academic support for teachers has become more accessible. However, these documents are mostly oriented towards overcoming the language barrier and teaching the Czech language. Although this aspect is crucial in adaptation as it is a precondition for the provision of education and the transmission of educational content, it is far from being the only one. Adaptation is also a social phenomenon, which is often neglected in these documents. More emphasis needs to be placed on the actual integration of pupils into classroom collectives, which involves creating a safe environment, providing psychological support for pupils, but also emphasising the theme of education for multiculturalism. However, achieving such goals can be challenging for everyone involved, i.e. pupils with a different mother tongue, their parents, teachers, classroom teams and school management.

Therefore, in this article we would like to focus not only on the topic of language integration, but also on the social inclusion of Ukrainian children and the possibilities of academic support. Although the article is imaginatively divided according to the respective topics, the different strands are intertwined, since, as will become clear later, adaptation is a process that needs to be thought about in a broader context. The personal experience of one of the authors with children from Ukraine in Czech classrooms also contributed to the choice of the topic. Last but not least, we look at the topic through the lens of social pedagogy, especially in the field of prevention of social exclusion and equalisation of opportunities, which may also represent one of the ways for social pedagogues to apply in primary schools.

Language integration

Language integration is a primary issue in the integration of Ukrainian children into the Czech education system. Most of these children come to the Czech Republic with minimal or no knowledge of the Czech language, which can be an obstacle to their entry into Czech schools. Language barriers and cultural differences can cause anxiety and fear for both children and their parents, so it is essential to facilitate these children's entry into and learning in school.

Radostný et al. (2011) state that students who do not understand Czech cannot master the same level of learning required by the school curriculum for their grade. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare an individual education plan for them that is adapted to their current learning needs. This plan needs to be differentiated to meet the needs of children with different mother tongues and is usually called a balancing plan. This helps to realise the aims of inclusive education (ibid.).

A compensatory plan can effectively support the inclusion of pupils with a different mother tongue because it allows the pupil to work according to his/her current ability and pace, the teacher can adapt the teaching to the pupil's level without fear of not meeting the curriculum, parents are actively involved in their child's education, the pupil is involved in the planning and takes responsibility for his/her results (Zelinková, 2007).

The National Pedagogical Institute (hereinafter NPI) states that primary school pupils with insufficient knowledge of Czech may, under certain conditions (they have been attending a Czech school for less than 12 months), receive 100-200 hours of free language training at an authorized school. This preparation will help them acquire basic language skills and facilitate their integration into the mainstream classroom (NPI, 2024a). Teachers can use the *Curriculum of Czech as a Second Language for Primary Education*, which contains detailed educational content divided into ten thematic units and two language levels (MoEYS, 2021). Free language preparation is usually taught by a Czech as a second language teacher. Czech language courses for children, as well as adults, are usually offered free of charge by centres supporting the integration of foreigners and many other non-governmental non-profit organisations.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports mentions that an adaptation coordinator, usually a member of the school staff, can provide support and assistance to pupils with a different mother tongue when they arrive in a Czech school. This coordinator helps pupils to find their way around the school and adjust to their new environment, usually during the first four weeks (MoEYS, 2022a). He or she also provides them with language support, which includes not only imparting basic Czech language skills but also helping them communicate with teachers and classmates.

For the linguistic integration of children with a different mother tongue in Czech schools, the teacher's approach to these children is very crucial. The National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic provides ten practical tips for a language-sensitive approach of the teacher in the classroom, which includes pupils with a different mother tongue, as follows:

1. Involve all pupils (including those with different mother tongues) in all activities, giving them space to excel and integrate, and using simple language when communicating with them.
2. Use different means of communication (translator, pantomime).
3. Monitor the language level of the pupils and adapt teaching, tasks and assessment to this level.

4. Teach clearly and clearly using diagrams, pictures, graphs and experiments.
5. Structure the teaching with simply formulated minimum objectives and gradually expand them.
6. Respect students' individual pace and provide reduced materials.
7. Explain everything and actively ask questions to avoid misunderstandings caused by symbols, abbreviations and other culturally and linguistically conditioned elements.
8. Ensure that all students understand the language.
9. To promote the use of the mother tongue by pupils as an aid to learning.
10. Draw on and share the experiences of colleagues (NPI, 2023).

Communication cards can help teachers to communicate with pupils with different mother tongues. These cards serve to facilitate communication between the child and the teacher, between children and with each other, and also to express the child's basic needs and feelings (NPI, 2024b). Teaching staff can use the following methodological materials to help and support the language integration of Ukrainian pupils: the publications *Cesta: Ukrainian Children in Czech Schools, Pupils with a Different Mother Tongue in Czech Schools, Box of First Rescue for Teachers: the First Days and Weeks with a Pupil Without Czech in the Classroom*, the teaching materials entitled *Supporting the Acquisition of Czech by Children and Pupils of Foreigners - Methodological and Working Materials for 1.-2. year of primary schools, Methodological and teaching materials for 3rd-9th year of primary schools, How to work with free pexes* and methodological material *Educating Ukrainian children in the Czech Republic*.

Šafářová et al. report that in November 2023, PAQ Research conducted the seventh wave of research entitled *The Voice of Ukrainians: children's education*, which found that 64% of Ukrainian children aged 6-14 currently speak Czech in everyday situations, compared to 72% of children aged 15-17. It also found that 53% of Ukrainian children aged 6-17 do not learn Czech either at school or in Czech language courses. The increase in the number of children without organized Czech language instruction is mainly due to the reduction in the number of Czech as a second language classes in schools (Šafářová et al., 2023).

Social inclusion

The successful social integration of the child into the classroom collectives, and consequently into society as a whole, is conditioned by the child's psychological well-being. This process begins with the arrival of children in the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of Education) sets out a number of recommendations that should be followed before a child enters primary school. First and foremost, the best interests of the child must be taken into account, which is the priority in any situation. Once the child and his/her family arrive in the Czech Republic, it is essential to give them some time and allow the family the opportunity to "be together". It is necessary to realise that the child is leaving his or her current security and entering a new environment that is still unfamiliar to him or her. Often they leave behind family members, friends and hobbies. The family therefore needs time to acclimatise by providing suitable conditions for everyday life and for the child's psychological well-being, which can also be ensured by professional help (MoEYS, 2022a). This step is also kept in mind by the current legislation, as it stands from 01.01.2024 to

31.08.2024, which allows parents to postpone the start of compulsory schooling for up to 90 days (Act No. 67/2022).

Before starting school, it is recommended that the child adapt in adaptation groups, which can be run by school facilities, but also by a number of non-profit organisations, family centres and volunteer groups (Ministry of Education, 2022a). The child's participation in these groups allows not only contact with peers, but also the acquisition of Czech language appropriate to the child's age. These groups represent an important socialisation factor, as they enable the child to spend his or her free time in a meaningful way, e.g. in the form of leisure activities in the form of sports, being outdoors, or creative activities, thus contributing to the aforementioned psychological well-being, which is a determinant for children's entry into school (MoEYS, 2022a).

Act No. 561/2004 Coll., imposes the obligation to fulfill school attendance not only on citizens of the Czech Republic, but also applies to foreigners who are entitled to reside permanently or temporarily in the territory of the Czech Republic for a period exceeding 90 days and to participants in proceedings for international protection.

In addition to attendance at Czech primary schools, this law allows for other forms of education. However, the 2022 opinion of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, resulting from a meeting with representatives of the Embassy of Ukraine, recommends full-time education of Ukrainian children in Czech primary schools in order to promote the best interests of the child (Ministry of Education, 2022b).

In March 2023, a study by the National Institute for Research on the Socioeconomic Impact of Diseases and Systemic Risks (SYRI) was published, which focused on the course of adaptation of Ukrainian pupils to Czech schools. The results show further room for improvement and the search for additional ways to make the social integration of Ukrainian children into classroom collectives more effective. Selected findings of the survey show that the focus of adaptation was mainly on the acquisition of the Czech language, but the level of teaching varied from school to school and schools also approached teaching in different ways. The results also show that schools prioritised social adaptation over academic adaptation of pupils, but despite this, the level of integration of Ukrainian pupils into classroom collectives is still low and classroom relationships are ethnically differentiated. The results also highlighted teachers' uncertainty about the education of Ukrainian pupils. These doubts stemmed mainly from the level of involvement of Ukrainian pupils in the classroom and the issue of making reasonable demands on Ukrainian pupils (Hlad'o et al., 2023).

Approaches vary from school to school. Some schools directly employ Ukrainian teachers and fill positions in the school counselling centre with Ukrainian staff who are available to help children integrate into the classroom. They also provide a support mechanism for teachers. In practice, it also happens that children from Ukraine are concentrated in one class. This has certain advantages, as children can communicate in Ukrainian, help each other, express support and do not feel so alone in the classroom. On the other hand, however, the integration process can be disrupted, isolation from other classmates, avoidance of speaking in Czech, which ultimately can pose a risk of social exclusion.

Thus, based on the findings of the survey, the study published several recommendations to improve the socialization of pupils from Ukraine, which can be summarized as follows:

1. To promote social integration of children by organizing joint events for Czech and Ukrainian pupils.
2. Distribute Ukrainian pupils so that their share in the class does not exceed 20%.
3. Pay more attention to the academic adaptation of Ukrainian pupils and define appropriate educational goals.
4. To prepare Ukrainian pupils for the secondary school entrance exams.
5. Focus on identifying the specific educational needs of Ukrainian pupils.
6. Respect individual differences between Ukrainian pupils, who have different levels of knowledge and skills.
7. To implement activities in heterogeneous groups within the classroom to promote academic and social adaptation.
8. Provide teachers specialized in teaching Czech as a foreign language (Hlad'o et al., 2023).

The conclusions of the study therefore show the interdependence of the different components of adaptation and clearly demonstrate that the process cannot focus on just one selected topic. It is a complex and holistic process that needs to be looked at comprehensively. All of the recommendations mentioned above are directly relevant to Ukrainian children and how to facilitate their stay in Czech schools. However, we must not forget to mention the academic support and assistance also towards teaching staff.

Academic support

Academic support is a set of support mechanisms that facilitate Ukrainian children's adaptation to the school environment. Within this support, we can distinguish the aforementioned academic adaptation, which takes place through language integration, individual approach of teachers, adjustments in teaching and appropriately defined educational goals. However, academic support also includes social adaptation, which includes all leisure activities, psychological care for pupils and the aforementioned adaptation groups, which facilitate Ukrainian pupils' adaptation not only in the school environment but also in the social environment, which is a preventive tool for social exclusion.

The research findings of *Voice of Ukrainians: children's education* show that children who attend group clubs as part of their leisure activities achieve up to twice as good social integration into collectives as children who do not attend groups at all. However, one third of children do not attend after-school clubs even though they would like to, but they are financially unaffordable for them (Šafářová et al., 2023). Thus, for low-income families, the Centres for Supporting the Integration of Foreigners, which are established by the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior, offer a possible solution. These are operated in ten regions. In the remaining four regions, the centres are run by other organisations. They thus cover the entire territory of the Czech Republic and represent a comprehensive network of assistance. In the year 2023 alone, the staff of the Centres for Supporting the Integration of Foreigners provided 152,815 interventions in assistance to Ukraine (CPIC, 2023). In the network of services provided, clients can then benefit not only from social and legal counselling and interpreting services, but also from adaptation and integration courses, socio-cultural courses and attend cultural events organised by the Centre for the Integration of Foreigners. Towards children and youth from Ukrainian refugee families, the Centre's staff facilitated contact with the UNICEF Children's Fund, implementing integration activities provided through other NGOs in

a joint project to create a friendly environment for children and youth from Ukraine (CPIC, 2023).

One example of good practice is the Kalyna Community Refugee Centre in Pardubice. The centre offers orientation assistance in a new environment, answers to individual questions, language courses for children and adults, assistance in finding housing and employment and psychological help. As part of its services, it also thinks about meaningful leisure time and organises interactive and creative workshops for children and youth, educational, art and movement activities, with services provided free of charge or for a symbolic amount, thus making meaningful leisure time more accessible (Kalyna, 2024).

Although the best interests of the child come first, we must not neglect the wellbeing of teachers who suddenly find themselves faced with a new challenge. All the materials governing the process of language integration, be it the aforementioned guidelines, communication cards or teaching materials, provide some academic support. The involvement of Ukrainian teaching assistants seems to be an appropriate way to contribute to the adaptation of pupils to the classroom collectives and to help teachers at the same time. However, this is no longer relevant, as the Ministry of Education does not envisage any financial support for their involvement in the educational process from September 2024 (Prokopova, 2024). A suitable alternative appears to be the already mentioned adaptation coordinator, for whose involvement, on the contrary, funds are made available for disbursement from April 2024. The latter assists not only the child but also his/her parents. He or she familiarises the child with his or her rights and obligations, the way of teaching, the school regime, participates in his or her integration into the team and also participates partly or fully in the teaching of the Czech language (NPI, 2024c). Another positive development is the wide availability of webinars, methodological videos and courses aimed directly at teachers. These materials cover a wide range of topics related to supporting the adaptation of Ukrainian pupils to Czech schools. Authors include, for example, META o.p.s. and the National Pedagogical Institute (NPI, 2024e; META, 2024).

Although some other sources of support for teachers, such as the school counselling centre or the still not so widespread supervision for teaching staff, are not detailed here, these mechanisms may not be sufficient for teachers. This again raises the question of whether working in education with children with a different mother tongue is a potential field of application for social pedagogues in schools. Although the position of a social pedagogue is not yet anchored in Czech legislation as a position of a pedagogical worker, it is the social pedagogue who is professionally prepared to work with minorities and can implement education for multiculturalism, is oriented in the field of prevention of risky behaviour, and his/her wide field of competence also covers the field of leisure time. In doing so, he or she can actively prevent social exclusion and contribute to equalising opportunities for all children, regardless of their background.

Conclusion

Our intention was to highlight the complexity of the process of adaptation of Ukrainian children to Czech schools and the related need to develop support mechanisms, as the education of this target group is a topical issue in Czech education, social pedagogy and other social science disciplines that ask the question of social integration of foreigners into the receiving society. The article focused on three key areas, namely language integration, social inclusion and academic support. These aspects are the conditions for

successful adaptation of Ukrainian children not only into classroom collectives but also into Czech society. Although the current situation in many respects cannot be compared to the time when the conflict in Ukraine broke out and assistance to foreigners has become more coordinated, there is still much room for improvement and it is essential to address this issue.

Project affiliation

This paper was written on the basis of the three-year project ID 2/II_24 "Social Pedagogical Aspects in Work with Ethnic Minorities" 2102/01260/1210.

References

- Centra na podporu integrace cizinců. (2023). *Zpráva o činnosti 2023. Správa uprchlických zařízení Ministerstva vnitra*. https://www.integracnicentra.cz/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CPIC_vyrocní_zprava_2023.pdf.
- Český statistický úřad. (2023). *Ve školství se projevil příliv dětí z Ukrajiny*. Český statistický úřad. <https://csu.gov.cz/produkty/ve-skolstvi-se-projevil-priliv-deti-z-ukrajiny>.
- Hlad'o et al. (2023). *Adaptace ukrajinských žáků na vzdělávání v českých základních školách. Syri*. <https://www.syri.cz/data/uploadHTML/files/PUBLIKACE/adaptace-ukrajinskych-zaku-na-vzdelavani-v-ceskych-zakladnich-skolach-syri.pdf>.
- Kalyna. (2024). *Kalyna*. <https://www.kalyna.cz/home>.
- META. (2024). *Metodická videa*. META. <https://inkluzivniskola.cz/metodicka-vidoa>.
- Ministerstvo vnitra. (2024). *V České republice je aktuálně 325 tisíc uprchlíků z Ukrajiny*. Ministerstvo vnitra. <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/v-ceske-republice-je-aktualne-325-tisic-uprchliku-z-ukrajiny.aspx>.
- MŠMT. (2021). *Kurikulum češtiny jako druhého jazyka pro předškolní a základní vzdělávání*. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/kurikulum-cestiny-jako-druheho-jazyka>.
- MŠMT. (2022a). *Vzdělávání ukrajinských dětí v ČR*. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. <https://www.edu.cz/methodology/vzdelavani-ukrajinskych-deti-v-cr/#jak-na-vzdelavani-deti-bez-znalosti-ceskeho-jazyka>
- MŠMT. (2022b). *Začleňování ukrajinských dětí do českého vzdělávacího systému*. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. https://cosiv.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Podpora_zaclenovani_ukrajiske-deti_zaci.pdf.
- Národní pedagogický institut. (2023). *Cesta: ukrajinské děti v české škole*. Národní pedagogický institut. <https://ukrajina.npi.cz/files/brozura-cesta-a5-12-05-2023-online.pdf>.
- Národní pedagogický institut. (2024a). *Podpora žáků v základních školách*. Národní pedagogický institut. https://www.npi.cz/images/ukrajina/podpora_zakladni-skoly.pdf.
- Národní pedagogický institut. (2024b). *Cizinci a OMJ*. Národní pedagogický institut. <https://www.npi.cz/cizinci-omj?highlight=Wyj1a3JhamluYSjd>.

- Národní pedagogický institut. (2024c). *Adaptační koordinátoři*. Národní pedagogický institut. <https://cizinci.npi.cz/adaptacni-koordinatori/>.
- Národní pedagogický institut. (2024e). *Webináře*. Národní pedagogický institut. <https://ukrajina.npi.cz/zaznamy-webinaru>.
- Prokopová, Z. (2024). *Pedagogičtí pracovníci z Ukrajiny*. META. <https://inkluzivniskola.cz/pedagogicti-pracovnici-z-ukrajiny>.
- Radostný, L., Titěrová, K., Hlavničková, P., Moree, D., Nosálová, B., & Brychnáčová, I. (2011). *Žáci s odlišným mateřským jazykem v českých školách*. META. https://meta-ops.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/meta_zaci_s_omj_v_ceskych_skolach_metodika.pdf.
- Šafářová, K., Škvrňák, M., Prokop, D., & Kunc, M. (2023). *Vzdělávání a učení dětí ukrajinských uprchlíků v Česku: 7. vlna výzkumu Hlas Ukrajinců: listopad 2023*. PAQ Research. <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/jazyk-skolni-dochazka-uprchlici-listopad2023-2/>.
- Zákon č. 67/2022 Sb., o opatřeních v oblasti školství v souvislosti s ozbrojeným konfliktem na území Ukrajiny vyvolaným invází vojsk Ruské federace*. (2022). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2022-67>.
- Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb., o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon)*. (2004). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-561>.
- Zelinková, O. (2007). *Pedagogická diagnostika a individuální vzdělávací program* (3. vyd.). Portál.

Authors:

Mgr. et Mgr. Kateřina Krupková, Ph.D.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

katerina.krupkova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9002-2777>

Bc. Adéla Kučerová

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

adela.kucerova.2@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7915-4578>

Bc. Aneta Víznerová
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies
The Czech Republic
katerina.krupkova@uhk.cz
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9889-5624>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025
CC-BY-SA 4.0

Social-educational Work with a Problem Pupil in a Czech Primary School

Sociálně-výchovná práce s problémovým žákem v české základní škole
Stanislava Svoboda Hoferková¹, Tereza Matoušková²

Abstract:

This paper presents a problem pupil in a Czech primary school. First, it characterizes problem behaviour and terminology associated with it, touching upon the aetiology and manifestations. It introduces the school counselling system and defines the competences of individual subjects. It touches upon the educational measures that can be applied, including the cooperating organisations involved in the process of working with a pupil with problem behaviour.

Keywords:

Problem pupil; primary school; social-educational action; Czech Republic

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek představuje problémového žáka v české základní škole. Nejprve charakterizuje problémové chování a terminologii s tím spojenou, dotýká se etiologie a projevů. Představuje školský poradenský systém a vymezuje kompetence jednotlivých subjektů. Dotýká se výchovných opatření, která mohou být uplatněna, včetně spolupracujících organizací, které se zapojují do procesu práce s žákem s problémovým chováním.


Klíčová slova:

Problémový žák; základní škola; sociálně-výchovné působení; Česká republika

1 Definition of problem behaviour

Czech terminology is rich in many terms used to describe behaviour that deviates from accepted norms (see, for example, Hoferková, 2015). Individual terms are charged to the specific discipline or field or environment in which they are used. These terms include, for example, risky behaviour, which has become domesticated in the school environment, but equally problem behaviour (or child with problem behaviour, problem pupil, problem class, etc.), conduct disorder (or child with conduct disorder), delinquent behaviour, anomalous and abnormal behaviour, deviant or socially pathological behaviour,

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, stanislava.svoboda@uhk.cz, ORCID 

² Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Charles University, The Czech Republic, matouskova.tereza@email.cz, ORCID 

antisocial, dissociative, criminal behaviour, etc. At this point we will briefly introduce the terminology used in this paper, i.e. problem behaviour.

The term problem behaviour is most often associated with the school environment and the behaviour of the pupil(s); the term is also used in the phrase problem classroom. As the phrase 'problem behaviour' suggests, it is behaviour that is unwanted, undesirable, an obstacle to the educational objectives of the school institution, and that needs to be addressed. Fontana (2014) also understands problem behaviour as behaviour that is unacceptable to educators. However, he adds that a behaviour is only perceived as problematic if a particular teacher evaluates it as such.

Problem behaviour is a terminology that belongs to the special education discipline of etopedics. (Vojtová, 2008b) Compared to a "true" behavioural disorder, problem behaviour is characterised by milder undesirable behavioural manifestations, a limited duration of time and motivation to change. In most cases, problem behaviour can be successfully addressed by conventional pedagogical means. Vojtová (2008a) points out that a pupil who faces behavioural problems is aware of his/her difficulties, perceives them negatively and tries to eliminate them. He unintentionally violates the established norms because of the conflict between external demands and his internal dispositions and possibilities. Problems are short-lived and may occur sporadically or at certain times. The label "problem learner" evokes unpleasant emotions in the individual. According to Presslerová (2013), problem behaviours should be considered in relation to the child's current life situation (e.g., family conflicts) and a developmental perspective, where specific behaviours may be a normal part of development (e.g., a period of defiance in the third year). The developmental aspect is more widely taken into account in pre-school education.

The term problem behaviour is used in a similar or the same sense as **risky behaviour**. Risk behaviour is then defined as behaviour that poses a risk of harm to the health of the pupil or his/her environment, in the biopsychosocial understanding of the word health. Risk behaviour includes a range of phenomena from substance abuse to risky behaviour in transport or risky sports.

The Czech School Inspectorate (Česká školní inspekce, CSI, 2021) has chosen the term **challenging behaviour** as an umbrella term for children's behaviour that deviates significantly from the expected behaviour for a given age and negatively affects learning and relationships at school. "Rather than the more traditional term problem behaviour, this term emphasises the fact that the assessment of a child's behaviour is always a subjective matter, as it is based on the expectations, preferences and experiences of the person assessing the pupil's behaviour... The perception of the challenging behaviour of particular children is based on the individual expectations and personal characteristics of individual teachers. This needs to be reflected in the setting of preventive measures and in the implementation of intervention in the case of already present challenging behaviour." (Česká školní inspekce, 2021, p. 10)

The manifestations of problem behaviour are varied; the common denominator is deviation from the usual and expected standards of behaviour in the school environment. Typical manifestations of problem behaviour include disrespect for authority, failure to follow instructions, classroom disruptions, cheating, discipline problems, lying, stealing, truancy, excessive attention-getting and, last but not least, physical and verbal aggression (e.g. HutYROVÁ, 2013; Presslerová, 2013). Some of these behaviours are rarely registered on school grounds, some more frequently (e.g. lying). Kaleja (2013) points out two types

of pupils with problem behaviour. These are pupils who are disruptive during class, and on the other hand, there are pupils who refuse to work and follow the teacher's instructions during class. Auger and Boucharlat (2005) define four subcategories of pupils who disrupt during class. These are restless, conflicting, provoking and aggressive pupils.

The etiology of problem behavior is multifactorial (e.g., Vágnerová, 2008; Adamus et al., 2016; HutYROVÁ, 2019).

2 Social-educational work and school counselling system

The term social-educational activity/work is not yet so common in the Czech environment, although it seems appropriate. Kraus (e.g., 2014, p. 112) refers to social-educational activity as, among other things, the action of the school and defines it as "helping teachers to orient pupils in contemporary everyday life, to cope with life situations and to actively participate in social life." Among the tasks of social educational activities (Kraus, 2014, p. 114):

- to prevent deviations in pupils' behaviour within the school,
- promote the social competences of children and young people through targeted events and activities,
- to act as an intermediary between extra-curricular work and school activities,
- to look after different groups of pupils in agreement with teachers and pupils,
- and to alert parents of disabled, socially or otherwise disadvantaged pupils to assistance and support programmes.

The common goal of all these activities is "educational assistance for coping with life and self-help" (Kraus et. al., 2001, pp. 58-59). It is clear from the above that social educational work does not have to take place only in schools. Therefore, social-educational work can be understood in the broadest sense as the action of professionals in the school and out-of-school environment in the field of prevention of risky behaviour of children and youth, its early detection and early intervention (Hoferková, 2017).

The term "**preventive educational care**" appears in Czech legislation, specifically in Act No.109/2002 Coll. (zákon č. 109/2002 Sb.), on the performance of institutional education or protective education in school establishments and on preventive educational care in school establishments, and belongs as an activity of educational care centres.

In the Slovak environment, the term /preventive/ social-educational work is used for various activities, especially those of social pedagogues (e.g. Hroncová et al., 2013). We find this designation very appropriate, especially because the position of social pedagogue is slowly but surely becoming established in Czech schools. Preventive educational care can then be understood as part of social and educational work with children and youth.

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEST) plays a crucial role in primary and secondary prevention of risky behaviour. Social and educational work in the school environment is fulfilled by the so-called **school counselling system**, which is regulated by Decree No 72/2005 Coll. (vyhláška č. 72/2005 Sb.), on the provision of counselling services in schools and school counselling facilities, as amended. This system rests on two basic pillars. The first pillar consists of school counselling centres, while the second is represented by specialised teaching staff in schools, who may be assigned to a school counselling centre set up by the headmaster.

School counselling centres include pedagogical-psychological counselling centres (PPP), special education centres (SPC) and, since 1991, educational care centres (SVP). These centres work closely with schools to provide advice and assistance in the field of social and pedagogical counselling, care for pupils with disabilities and help prevent the emergence and development of negative behavioural manifestations in children. The second pillar of the counselling system consists of the teaching staff themselves, who work in primary and secondary schools. Specialized pedagogical workers in schools include an educational counselor, a school prevention methodologist and a school psychologist, or even a school special educator (more e.g. Hoferková, 2016).

For many years now, the need to establish a full-time social care and counselling specialist at the school with a relevant university degree has been intensively discussed. It seems appropriate to follow the model presented in Slovakia - i.e. a social pedagogue in the school environment (e.g. Hroncová et al.). The social pedagogue would thus be a professional - a specialist trained through undergraduate preparation, whose job would be to prevent risky behaviour (Emmerová, 2014). Currently, Czech schools already have dozens of social pedagogues and we can only hope that in the future there will be a legislative anchoring of the social pedagogue in the school environment.

3 Social-educational work with problem pupils

Education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The Education Act, Act No. 561/2004 Coll., as amended, regulates all matters relating to basic education. Compulsory schooling lasts nine years, coinciding with primary education; pupils generally attend primary school between the ages of 6 and 15. For all pupils, and in particular for pupils with special educational needs, the head teacher is obliged to provide counselling services.

Educational measures are a key element of the pedagogical process aimed at addressing and supporting pupils with risky and problematic behaviour. These measures are introduced to improve pupils' behaviour, create an environment for effective learning and contribute to pupils' overall development. According to the Education Act (zákon č. 561/2004 Sb.), disciplinary measures and praise or other awards fall under educational measures. These measures are granted or imposed on pupils of a school depending on their fulfilment of their obligations under the school's regulations.

Disciplinary measures are among the common measures used in connection with problem behaviour of pupils. According to Decree No. 48/2005 Coll., as amended, these disciplinary measures are imposed in the event of violations of school rules. The measures include a reprimand by the class teacher, a reprimand by the class teacher and a reprimand by the school principal.

The school also has measures to curb aggressive behaviour and violence by pupils, some of which are relevant in the case of bullying. These remedial measures include the establishment of an individual educational programme, the reduction of the pupil's behavioural grade, the transfer of the pupil to another class, and the recommendation to the parents for the voluntary placement of the pupil in a residential unit of an educational care centre or a diagnostic institute. In case of serious bullying, it is also possible to consider expulsion from school, which can only be implemented in a situation where the pupil is no longer attending compulsory school and is therefore in secondary education (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy ČR, 2016).

Mertin, Krejčová et al. (2013) state that the concept of the **Individual Educational Programme** (hereinafter IVýP) was created in 2010 by transforming the original concept of "contracts with parents." This approach is based on parallels with the individual education plan implemented by educational care centres and the individual education plan for pupils with special educational needs. The IVýP focuses on the prevention of problem behaviour and the intervention of undesirable behaviour that has already occurred. The formal development of an IEP occurs when standard methods of dealing with educational problems are not effective. According to the Czech School Inspectorate (Česká školní inspekce, 2017), the IVýP is one of the intervention tools aimed at addressing risky and problematic behaviour, which was developed in response to the increasing manifestations of such behaviour. It is applied when the educational process is significantly disrupted. This concept involves a complex cooperation between the educational institution, the pupil himself, the pupil's legal representative or other interested parties. The main objective of IVEP is to eliminate risky behaviour and prevent potential negative consequences of such behaviour.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2013) points out that the individual educational programme provides "a space for mutual dialogue and the opportunity to seek and set up appropriate support for the pupil/legal representative to acquire the necessary competences..." (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2013) The cooperation of the parties involved is based on commitment, in contrast to the aforementioned interviews, and thus increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Parents are not obliged to sign the IEP, but the school has the right to create individual educational programmes without parental consent, however, only those measures that fall within the exclusive competence of the school will be implemented. The plan should include a commitment to regular progress review meetings with a frequency of days or weeks at most. The development is a one-off exercise, but the final effectiveness will be judged mainly in the subsequent systematic care of all stakeholders (Mertin & Krejčová et al., 2013).

In 2002, the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic issued a guideline for dealing with high and unexcused absenteeism and truancy, which mentions the so-called **educational committee** as one of the corrective measures. (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2002) The Czech School Inspectorate (Česká školní inspekce, 2017) states that the reasons for the application of this instrument are nowhere officially defined. The thematic report shows that schools address not only high absenteeism, but also educational problems and other manifestations of problem behaviour in the form of an educational committee. The main and unquestionable advantage of using this form of measure is the direct contact of all relevant stakeholders. It also has the advantage of immediately agreeing on proposals for further procedures. The educational committee functions as an optional body of the school, whose meetings are convened by the headmaster as necessary. The educational committee consists of the aforementioned headmaster, the legal representative of the minor pupil, the class teacher, the school counselling centre, a representative of the OSPOD (Orgán sociálně-právní ochrany dítěte, Social and Legal Protection of Children) and, where appropriate, representatives of other authorities and organisations (e.g. the Police of the Czech Republic).

The educational committee may be convened before the individual educational programme is drawn up or after it has been drawn up. Typically, however, it takes place

after an interview with the pupil and his/her legal representative (Asociace sociálních pedagogů, 2023).

Support measures for pupils with problem behaviour are based on the concept of non-specific prevention of risky behaviour. These measures may be preventive in nature or respond to emerging problem behaviour as intervention measures. According to Zapletalová and Mrázková (2016), support measures are designed with regard to the manifestations of the pupil's problem behaviour and the goal to be achieved through the measures. The measures then take place not only at the school level, but also at the family level. The school is able to provide adjustments to the environment, teaching style or even the ratio of workload and rest. The family should, first and foremost, ensure that communication styles are adjusted, that time for work and play is structured appropriately and that homework is assisted. The family also provides significant support and control for the pupil. By working together, the school and the family can set up a consistent system of motivation and assessment to be used in working with the pupil.

The school may support a pupil with challenging behaviour through **Tier I. support measures**, which do not have to be approved by the school counselling centre. The application of these support measures should begin early. In the first level of support, according to Zapletalová and Mrázková (2016), measures focus on correcting common deviations from expected behaviour. However, it is essential to find the causes that trigger the undesirable behaviour. In case of suspicion of more serious risky behaviour, school counselling staff refer to other institutions and specialists such as psychologists, psychiatrists and others.

Different strategies can be chosen in response to specific manifestations of challenging behaviour. Brodská, Dubec and Vaníčková (2015-2024) describe the first option as increasing supervision during breaks, then avoiding situations that have previously triggered problematic behaviour in a given pupil. Organisational adjustments to the environment, workplace and learning conditions are also among the effective measures, including temporarily moving the pupil away from other classmates, thus eliminating a potential source for the emergence of undesirable behaviour. The use of praise and rewards encourages desirable behaviour, while the use of warning signals and sanctions dampens undesirable behaviour. Elements of relaxation, physical release, self-reflection and expressing one's own feelings are also important. Group and individual interventions can be used (see, e.g., Kucharská & Mrázková, 2014), or social skills training during and outside of class (Vaňková, 2015-2024).

In the United States, schools use, for example, "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports" (PBIS), an approach that can be loosely translated as "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports," for which a key component is to teach students positive and desirable behaviors and, conversely, to minimize the learning of problem behaviors. (Horner, Macaya, 2018) This set of methods has recently been implemented in Czech schools, which are applying the method under the supervision of Society for All (Society for All, 2023).

There is a wide range of techniques, methods and approaches that can be used when working with a student with problem behaviour. However, it is important to take into account the specific needs of each individual and then tailor the course and process of interventions to the needs and goals of the pupil.

4 Research probe focused on intervention of problem behaviour of pupils

In this section, we present a research probe that aimed to look into the work of a particular primary school with troubled pupils (more Matoušková, 2024). For the purpose of the probe, it was mapped what behaviours are assessed by teachers as problematic, how the cooperation between the school counselling staff and teachers takes place, how prevention and intervention of problematic behaviour takes place and what educational measures are most used in the selected primary school. The method of data collection was a semi-structured interview. The informants were five employees of the selected primary school (about 600 pupils). Specifically, they were an educational counsellor and a teacher at the second level of the primary school, a school special education teacher, a school prevention methodologist and also a class teacher at the second level, a school psychologist and a class teacher at the first level who identifies three pupils in her class as having problematic behaviour. The informants were female, aged 34-52 years, with varying lengths of teaching and professional experience. The school psychologist has been working at the selected primary school for the shortest period of time (2 years), while also working in her private practice; she works two days a week at the selected primary school. The educational counsellor and the school special education teacher are currently on maternity leave; their working hours at the selected primary school are now reduced. The results of the investigation showed, among other things:

- Despite the different professions within the selected primary school, it is possible to find a common definition of a pupil with problematic behaviour: a pupil whose behaviour deviates from the norm and disrupts the smooth course of the educational process. The results obtained are consistent with, for example, the results of the research by Petrek and Pavlas Martanová (2020), who investigated how prevention methodologists perceive pupils' problem behaviour.
- Among the most frequent manifestations of problematic behaviour, the informants highlighted disturbance, disrespect for authority, substance abuse and aggressive behaviour.
- The school counselling unit consists of an educational counsellor, a school prevention methodologist, a school special educator and a school psychologist; they meet once a month and communicate via digital technology as needed in urgent cases. Prior to the departure of some staff members on parental leave, the unit met once a week.
- The school psychologist (before her arrival, no one was strictly in charge of working with these pupils), in cooperation with the school special educator and the school prevention methodologist, most often works with pupils who have already registered signs of problematic behaviour. Most of her time is devoted to individual interventions with pupils, followed by consultations with parents and then work with the class collective. This division of work activities is confirmed by a study by Palová and Šmahaj (2020). The school psychologist's "favourite" methods are understanding one's own emotions with the help of emotional cards, training in social behaviour and using elements of art therapy. As a supportive measure, we can also understand the increased surveillance in the corridors, which has been significantly intensified during the Blackout challenge trend that has occurred in the school (note: the Blackout challenge is a challenge on social media, especially on TikTok, encouraging users of the platform to strangle themselves or each other to the point of unconsciousness).

- The class teacher most often cooperates with the school psychologist and the school special educator in dealing with problem behaviour, but does not hold regular meetings with them, but deals with everything "as needed". Instead of the class teacher, the teaching assistant, who is present in the classroom with the problem pupil, has regular consultations. The class teacher also does not participate in the interventions and is not informed about their progress. (The informant points out that she has never received any reports or recommendations from the psychologist on how to work further with the pupil; she would like to establish closer cooperation with the psychologist, which could be beneficial for all in the future.)
- In case of manifestations of problematic behaviour in the classroom, the class teacher conducts a group intervention with the children (pupils sit in a circle and together discuss inappropriate behaviour and the possibilities of solving it). The initiators of solving pupils' problems in a selected primary school class are the class teacher, the teaching assistant and occasionally the parents of the pupils.
- Classroom lessons are not implemented, the teacher includes them in a modified form during the course of teaching (according to their words, classroom lessons are used especially at the second level).
- Schools often use common disciplinary sanctions according to school rules, as confirmed by Houšť'ovová's research (2021). Before or after a disciplinary sanction is given, school staff try to establish a conversation with the pupil and find out the reasons. Staff seek to understand the pupil and understand the reasons for the problem behaviour. For more serious problems, school staff initiate contact with the pupil's parents.
- Educational commissions are held for more serious offences. Educational committees are attended by the school principal, first/second grade representative, classroom teacher, guidance counselor, parents of the student, and others as needed. There is no retrospective check on whether the objectives set by the education committee are being met. Other professionals are involved when there are repeated behavioural problems.
- Most of the informants do not know the individual education programme. The selected primary school previously used agreements with the pupil and parents. However, the school does not use them now, and there is no interest on the part of the school in reintroducing an individual education programme.
- The school psychologist, as well as other members of the school counselling centre, actively cooperate with PPP, SPC, OSPOD and the Police of the Czech Republic. The informants would welcome the establishment of social activation services or low-threshold facilities.
- The selected primary school regularly invites external organisations (e.g. Christian Youth Academy). Long-term intervention programmes of external organisations are not used by the school.

Conclusion

The paper focused on the issue of primary schools working with pupils exhibiting problem behaviour. The theoretical part of the paper defined the nature of this behaviour, characterised the social-educational action and defined the role of the school counselling centre as a key actor in the work with these pupils. Furthermore, the topic of educational measures used by schools was examined.

In the final part, a small research probe was presented to map how the selected primary school works with pupils who exhibit problem behaviour. The results show that the biggest role in working with these pupils is played by the teacher, who has to influence the child during the lessons, and also by the school psychologist, who most often works with them in the form of individual intervention. The importance of establishing communication and a relationship with the pupil is at the heart of the work, as is the effort to understand the problem and look for possible solutions. If even these methods are not effective, it is necessary to involve parents or guardians, to convene an education committee and, if necessary, to contact external experts. The contribution of the school psychologist's work is considerable and essential, which points to her irreplaceable role in the school counselling team. In this respect, the school counselling centre is an important support and an opportunity to provide assistance to pupils in dealing with problematic situations. Their presence and interdependence are central to effectively supporting the emotional and psychological development of pupils, which contributes to the overall mental well-being not only of pupils but also of teachers and other staff.

We cannot generalize the results of the research probe, but we can draw some generalizations and **recommendations for social-educational work with students with problematic behaviour:**

- The school counselling centre plays an important role in social and educational work with pupils at risk or with problematic behaviour. The school counselling centre is a great asset, augmented by a school psychologist, a school special educator and ideally a social educator.
- The teaching assistant plays an important role as part of the educational process of a student with special educational needs. It is essential that he/she actively collaborates with members of the school counseling staff, especially the school psychologist and special education teacher (if present).
- It is evident that the school psychologist plays the most important role in the prevention and intervention of problem behaviour. Here again, communication between all those involved and subsequent cooperation with the entire teaching staff is essential for effective social-educational work with a problem pupil.
- Schools have more educational resources at their disposal. In addition to the standard ones used under the Education Act, schools can use adaptation courses, classroom lessons and other similar extra-curricular activities that have strong preventive and depistive potential (helping to detect pupils at risk or those with incipient behavioural problems). For more serious problems, schools have other resources such as an education committee or an individual education plan (formerly an agreement with parents).
- In their own interest, schools should cooperate not only with organisations of the school counselling system (such as pedagogical-psychological counselling centres), but also with external organisations such as the police and the OSPOD, ideally using certified and proven long-term prevention and intervention programmes.
- Low-threshold facilities for children and young people are slowly coming to the forefront of cooperation with schools, which are no longer perceived as a mere "filling" of out-of-school time. The main benefits of cooperation between the school and these facilities are not only the early identification of children at risk, but also the alignment and completion of an effective support plan for each pupil, especially those with behavioural problems. Low-threshold facilities do not only provide tutoring for pupils (as is sometimes wrongly perceived by schools), but they can also be helpful in this area, improving children's performance and ultimately

relieving teachers in the process. Low-threshold facilities can be appropriate protective agents, especially for children at risk or for children who are socially or otherwise disadvantaged.

- We recommend cooperation with organisations providing social activation services (if there are any such facilities in the school's vicinity). These organisations can again help in working with a pupil with behavioural problems and his/her family, as this work cannot be done without the involvement of other organisations and professionals, not only from the state sector. Peer networking and sharing information about the pupil and their family and using the multiple services offered in a particular locality can help to set up the help and support needed effectively.
- Schools have other means of support such as supervision, hospitalization or mentoring, depending on the interest, awareness and possibilities (including financial) of the particular institution. Of course, support for teaching staff in further education on children's risk behaviour and mental health should be a matter of course. It should be remembered that schools should not only look after pupils and their families, but above all their staff.

References

- Adamus, P., Zezulková, E., Kaleja, M., & Franiok, P. (2016). *Inkluzivní vzdělávání v kontextu proměn českého školství*. Ostravská univerzita, Pedagogická fakulta.
- Asociace sociálních pedagogů. (2023). Výchovní komise. <https://asocp.cz/zacinajici-socialni-pedagog/vzory-dokumentu/vychovna-komise/>.
- Auger, M. T., & Boucharlat, Ch. (2005). *Učitel a problémový žák: strategie pro řešení problémů s kázní a učením*. Portál.
- Brodská, L., Dubec, M., & Vaníčková, H. (2015–2024). Zvládání náročného chování. In *Katalog podpůrných opatření: Sociální znevýhodnění*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. <http://katalogpo.upol.cz/socialni-znevychodneni/intervence/4-3-8-zvladani-narocneho-chovani/>.
- Česká školní inspekce. (2021). *Přístupy k náročnému chování dětí a žáků ve školách a školských zařízeních a možnosti jeho řešení – Metodické doporučení*. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2021_přilohy/Dokumenty/Metodicke-doporuceni-pristupy-k-narocnemu-chovani_11-10-2021.pdf.
- Česká školní inspekce. (2017). *Tematická zpráva – Využívání individuálních výchovných programů v základních školách*. https://www.csicr.cz/Csicr/media/Prilohy/PDF_el._publikace/Tematicke%20zpravy/02-F_TZ-Vyuzivani-individualnich-vychovnych-programu-v-ZS-FINAL-9-5-2017_kor.pdf.
- Dulovics, M. (2014). *Špecifika posobenia sociálnych pedagógov v školskom prostredí*. Belianum.
- Emmerová, I. (2014). Pripravenosť učiteľov a sociálnych pedagógov realizovať prevenciu sociálnopatologických javov v školách. In J. Hroncová (Ed.), *Zborník vedeckovýzkumných prác Katedry pedagogiky (10)* (s. 14–23). Belianum.
- Fontana, D. (2014). *Psychologie ve školní praxi: příručka pro učitele*. Portál.

- Hoferková, S. (2017). Riziková mládež a sociálně výchovná práce v českém prostředí. In P. Papšo (Ed.). *Zborník vedeckých štúdií Katedry sociálnej práce Pedagogickej fakulty Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici 1* (s. 33–52). Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, Katedra sociálnej práce.
- Hoferková, S. (2016). Rizikové chování mládeže a školský poradenský systém. In *Acta sociopathologica III* (s. 118–134). Gaudeamus.
- Hoferková, S. (2015). Různé přístupy ke společensky nežádoucím projevům chování mládeže. In *Acta sociopathologica II* (s. 34–52). Gaudeamus.
- Horner, R., & Monzalve Macaya, M. (2018). A Framework for Building Safe and Effective School Environments: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). *Pedagogická orientace*, 28(4), 663–685.
- Houšťavová, S. (2021). *Možnosti řešení výchovných problémů na školách*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. https://www.klus.upol.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/reseni_problemu_houstavova-1.pdf.
- Hroncová, J. a kol. (2013). *Preventívna sociálno-výchovná činnosť v škole. (Metodická príručka pre sociálnych pedagógov a koordinátorov prevencie)*. Belianum.
- Hutyrová, M. (2019). *Děti a problémy v chování: etopedie v praxi*. Portál.
- Hutyrová, M. (2013). *Special Education of Individuals with Psychosocial Risk and Disorder*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Kaleja, M. (2013). *Etopedická propedeutika v inkluzivní speciální pedagogice*. Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě, Pedagogická fakulta.
- Kraus, B. et al. (2001). *Člověk - prostředí - výchova: k otázkám sociální pedagogiky*. Paido.
- Kraus, B. (2014). *Základy sociální pedagogiky*. Portál.
- Kucharská, A., & Mrázková, J. a kol. (2014). *Metodika práce školního speciálního pedagoga zapojeného ve školním poradenském pracovišti*. Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/38982/download/>.
- Matoušková, T. (2024). *Práce základní školy s žákem s problémovým chováním* [Bakalářská práce, Univerzita Hradec Králové].
- Mertin, V., & Krejčová, L. a kol. (2012). *Metody a postupy poznávání žáka: pedagogická diagnostika*. Wolters Kluwer ČR.
- Mertin, V., Krejčová, L., Pekárková, M., Dosoudil, P., Čáp, D., Beranová, A., & Feřtek, T. (2013). *Problémy s chováním ve škole – jak na ně: Individuální výchovný plán*. Wolters Kluwer ČR.
- Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (2013). *Metodické doporučení pro práci s Individuálním výchovným programem v rámci řešení rizikového chování žáků*. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/32879/>.
- Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (2002). *Metodický pokyn k jednotnému postupu při uvolňování a omlouvání žáků z vyučování, prevenci a postihu záškoláctví*. <http://www.atre.cz/zakony/page0332.htm>.

- Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (2016). *Metodický pokyn ministryně školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy k prevenci a řešení šikany ve školách a školských zařízeních*. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/38988/>.
- Nařízení vlády č. 75 ze dne 26. ledna 2005, o stanovení rozsahu přímé vyučovací, přímé výchovné, přímé speciálně pedagogické a přímé pedagogicko-psychologické činnosti pedagogických pracovníků. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-75>.
- Národní ústav pro vzdělávání. (2011–2016). *Střediska výchovné péče*. <http://www.nuv.cz/ramps/svp>.
- Niklová, M. (2014). Možnosti ďalšieho vzdelavania socialnych pedagógov posobiacich v socialno-vychovnej praxi. In *Zborník vedeckovýzkumných prác Katedry pedagogiky (10)* (s. 96–105). Belianum.
- Presslerová, P. (2013). Problémové chování žáků ve škole. In L. Valentová a kol. *Školní poradenství II.* (s. 67–92). Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta.
- Society for All. (2023). Pozitivní podpora chování (PBIS). <https://www.societyforall.cz/pbis>.
- Vágnerová, M. (2008). *Psychopatologie pro pomáhající profese*. Portál.
- Vágnerová, M. (2005). *Školní poradenská psychologie pro pedagogy*. Karolinum.
- Vaňková, S. (2015–2024). Návčik sociálního chování. In *Katalog podpůrných opatření: Narušení komunikačních schopností*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. <http://katalogpo.upol.cz/naruseni-komunikacnich-schopnosti/intervence/4-3-7-nacvik-socialniho-chovani-3/>.
- Vojtová, V. (2008a). *Kapitoly z etopedie I: Přístupy k poruchám emocí a chování v současnosti*. Masarykova univerzita.
- Vojtová, V. (2008b). Úvod do etopedie: Texty k distančnímu vzdělávání. Paido.
- Vyhláška č. 317 ze dne 27. července 2005, o dalším vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků, akreditační komisi a kariérním systému pedagogických pracovníků, ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-317>.
- Vyhláška č. 458/2005 Sb., kterou se upravují podrobnosti o organizaci výchovně vzdělávací péče ve střediscích výchovné péče. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-458>.
- Vyhláška č. 48/2005 Sb., o základním vzdělávání a některých náležitostech plnění povinné školní docházky, ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-48#f2901546>.
- Vyhláška č. 72/2005 Sb., o poskytování poradenských služeb ve školách a školských poradenských zařízeních ve změně 116/2011 Sb., ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2005). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-72>.
- Zákon č. 109/2002 Sb., o výkonu ústavní výchovy nebo ochranné výchovy ve školských zařízeních a o preventivně výchovné péči ve školských zařízeních a o změně dalších zákonů, ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2002). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2002-109>.
- Zákon č. 218/2003 Sb., o odpovědnosti mládeže za protiprávní činy a o soudnictví ve věcech mládeže a o změně některých zákonů (zákon o soudnictví ve věcech mládeže), ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2003). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2003-218>.

Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb., o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů. (2004). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-561>.

Zapletalová, J. & Mrázková, J. (2016). *Metodika pro nastavování podpůrných opatření ve školách ve spolupráci se školskými poradenskými zařízeními*. Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/38983/download/>.

Authors:

Mgr. et Mgr. Stanislava Svoboda Hoferková, Ph.D., LL.M.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

stanislava.svoboda@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3804-1898>

Bc. Tereza Matoušková

Charles University,

Faculty of Education, Department of Special Education

The Czech Republic

matouskova.tereza@email.cz

ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6096-2837>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Bullying in Upper Secondary Schools from the Perspective of Beginning Guidance Counsellors

Šikana na středních školách pohledem začínajících výchovných poradců

Karel Hromadko¹, Martin Knytl²

Abstract:

The contribution deals with bullying in Czech upper secondary schools and focuses on the roles and knowledge of guidance counsellors in this issue. A qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews with novice guidance counsellors provides deeper insight into dealing with bullying. The research findings identify the most common forms, frequency and intensity of bullying, as well as the state of knowledge of guidance counsellors in the theoretical and legislative framework related to bullying. Furthermore, the readiness of guidance counsellors, their colleagues and schools themselves to deal with school bullying is determined. The results suggest that most schools and guidance counsellors have adequate knowledge and are prepared to respond quickly and effectively to bullying.

Keywords:


Bullying; upper secondary school; educational counsellor; legislation


Abstrakt:

Příspěvek se zabývá šikanou na českých středních školách a blíže se zaměřuje na role a znalosti výchovných poradců v dané problematice. Kvalitativní výzkumný přístup za využití polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se začínajícími výchovnými poradci poskytuje hlubší vhled do řešení šikany. Výsledky výzkumného šetření identifikují nejčastější formy, četnost a intenzitu šikany, ale také stav znalostí výchovných poradců v teoretickém a legislativním rámci týkajícího se šikany. Dále se zjišťuje připravenost výchovných poradců, jejich kolegů a samotných škol na řešení školního šikanování. Výsledky naznačují, že většina škol a výchovných poradců disponuje adekvátními znalostmi a je připravena rychle a efektivně reagovat na šikanu.

Klíčová slova:

Šikana; střední škola; výchovný poradce; legislativa

¹ Department of Education, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Pardubice, The Czech Republic, karel.hromadko@upce.cz, ORCID 

² Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, martin.knytl@uhk.cz, ORCID 

1 Understanding the dynamics of bullying in upper secondary schools

The term *bullying* comes from the French language "*chicane*", which can be understood as aggressive negative acts of harassment towards others. These acts include aggression, violence, hostility or abuse. In general, bullying is characterised as targeted behaviour that enables the physical or psychological abuser to gain a sense of superiority and some advantage over others. Bullying is usually a recurrent and prolonged (Bělík et al., 2017).

Bullying is divided into different stages and each stage is characterized by different behaviours. Kolář (2011) mentions peaceful, medium and third stage bullying. Mild stage behaviours may include teasing, name calling or exclusion from the group. This stage is not considered as severe and is often resolved by verbal agreement. Mild bullying behaviour includes physical acts such as hitting, pushing or harassment. This stage can have an impact on the victim's mental and physical well-being. The moderate level is addressed through disciplinary sanctions or counselling. Finally, there is the highest level, which may include physical violence, sexual violence or other forms of abuse. For this level, law enforcement or other professional services are used.

Understanding the extent of bullying is an important step in preventing and addressing the behaviour. By recognising the different levels of severity, individuals and communities can take appropriate steps to address bullying behaviour and create a safe and supportive environment for all.

Today's modern age brings many positive innovations, but unfortunately, it also brings other dynamic negative trends. A phenomenon of today's negative trend in the high school environment is bullying taking place on social media, in other words, it is cyberbullying. Through digital technology and social media, "traditional" bullying is often escalated. Most of all, one can encounter gossip, insults or threatening messages or emails (Chromý, 2010).

Although online bullying is on the rise, physical and psychological bullying is still a hot topic. In high schools, there is a certain social status for every student. If someone wants to "boost" their social status, they often choose a potential victim who is different in some way, whether it is the visual or intellectual side of the individual. Aggressors use methods such as blackmail or threats of bodily harm. The psychological side of bullying may include verbal attacks that are used to gossip or rumor, it also includes manipulation, exclusion, intimidation, ignoring, or humiliation (Bendl et al., 2016).

Another significant element that greatly influences bullying today is anonymity and lack of surveillance of cyberspace. As a result, aggressors often feel safe and unpunished, which can lead to even more aggressive behaviour and an escalation of bullying behaviour. At the same time, new forms of bullying are on the rise, such as doxing, where the victim's personal details are published online, or bullying through photos and videos.

The consequences of bullying can be extremely serious, as victims often face psychological and physical problems such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and, in the worst cases, suicide attempts. These effects can be felt over the long term and are detrimental to the victim's personal well-being (Hutyrová, 2019).

Given these dynamic impacts, society and educational institutions must be actively involved in preventing and addressing bullying. This requires not only the introduction of effective prevention programmes in schools, but also greater public awareness of bullying and support for victims in the coping and recovery process. This is the only way not only to reduce the incidence of bullying and create a safer and more welcoming environment

for all individuals, but also to improve the classroom and school climate in secondary schools (Miovský et al., 2010).

However, it is not only technological advances that are responsible for the escalation of bullying, but also the lack of qualified professionals in the school environment. According to the annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate (Czech School Inspectorate, 2023a) for the school year 2022/2023, all secondary schools in the Czech Republic have only 28.9% of school psychologists, 7.5% of special educators and 0.8% of social educators. This figure was calculated from the total number of secondary schools, which in 2023 was 1,316.

In educational institutions, it is still possible to encounter the views of school principals who claim that nothing of the kind can happen in their schools and, if something potentially does occur, attribute it to mere "play". The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports imposes a duty on schools to ensure the safety and health of children and they are obliged to address bullying to avoid escalation of problems (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2016).

It can be very difficult to identify bullying, especially in a school setting. Bullying often takes place covertly or in situations where it is not sufficiently monitored by school staff. Victims may be afraid to share their experiences and may fear repercussions, which can lead to underestimating or hiding the situation. As a result, many cases of bullying go undetected or unreported, which can have serious consequences for the health and well-being of victims. However, educators sometimes consider behaviour that should not be considered bullying. There is a distinction between bullying and teasing. Teasing is very similar to bullying and closely resembles it. Teasing can be characterised as innocent teasing between children, most often occurring in the second year of primary school when, for example, boys tease girls because they like them. If educators or parents are unsure whether bullying is taking place, they need to consider whether the behaviour is met with a preponderance of power over the victim (either physical or psychological), whether the victim perceives the attack as unpleasant (derogatory name-calling or remarks) and whether the attack is prolonged. (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014)

An investigation by the Czech School Inspectorate in 2023 shows that cases of bullying are increasing (Czech School Inspectorate, 2023b). For this reason, there are a number of documents addressed to schools, educational counsellors, school prevention methodologists and teachers that provide procedures and recommendations on how to deal with these situations (Czech School Inspectorate, 2016).

The most important thing is that educational staff pay attention not only to the aggressor and the victim, but to the whole group. Bullying does not always have to concern just one person, but the whole class. Therefore, educators have methodological guidelines, but also legislation, methods and training programs that can better prepare them and inform them about modern ways of working with aggressors, what methods they use, but also help them to better work not only with the victim, but also with the whole group (Bělík & Hoferková, 2018).

2 Dealing with bullying: Insights from theoretical and legal framework

In recent years we have witnessed a growing trend of aggressive behaviour, particularly in the form of bullying in educational institutions. Increased manifestations of aggressive

behaviour occur mainly among classmates. Addressing these problems should be the responsibility of educational staff, psychologists and other professionals (Černý, 2023).

However, there is a situation when even pedagogical or therapeutic approaches do not provide an effective solution and therefore the school and teachers have to turn to law enforcement authorities. Unfortunately, at present, bullying is not a separate criminal offence as the concept is complex and takes many forms. The absence of a specific legal framework for bullying means that no law or legal norm explicitly defines or criminalises it. Another important issue is Act No 40/2009 Coll., the Criminal Code. According to Article 25 of this law, in order to prosecute an aggressor (perpetrator), the aggressor must have reached the age of 15. Other circumstances of liability are set out in Section 109 of the Criminal Code (Antl, 2022).

The treatment of bullying within the legal system can be based on several legal bases and paragraphs that reflect the relevant aspects of the issue. Within the Czech legislation, schools and parents can rely, for example, on the following laws, decrees and paragraphs:

- a) Act No. 40/2009 Coll., Criminal Code:
 - § 122 - Bodily injury and grievous bodily injury,
 - § 171 - Restriction of personal liberty,
 - § 173 - Robbery,
 - § 175 - Extortion,
 - § 186 - Sexual coercion,
 - § 228 - Damage to property,
- b) Act No. 89/2012 Coll., Civil Code:
 - § 865 - Parental responsibility
- c) Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (Education Act), as amended:
 - § 22a - Rights of teaching staff (in particular point a),
 - § 22b - Duties of teaching staff (in particular point c),
- d) Decree No. 72/2005 Coll., on the provision of counselling services in schools and school counselling centres, as amended:
 - § 2 - Purpose of counselling services: a) creating appropriate conditions for the healthy physical and mental development of pupils..., d) preventing and solving educational and educational difficulties, preventing various forms of risky behaviour.

Dealing with bullying under the law requires a careful assessment of the specific situation and the application of the relevant legal norms to the case. At the same time, it is important to ensure that victims of bullying are protected and provided with appropriate legal and social assistance (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2014).

The protection of the rights and interests of the child is the responsibility not only of the school counselling centre but also of the OSPOD (Orgán sociálně-právní ochrany dětí in Czech), i.e. the Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children (in short DSLPC). This service is responsible for protecting the rights and interests of children and adolescents. Its main mission is to prevent and resolve situations that may endanger their safety, health or development.

In the context of bullying, which can have serious consequences for the psychological and physical well-being of children and young people, the DSLPC can play a key role. This department is very important because it can work with both the school and the family.

DSLPC focuses on prevention, intervention, family support and legal procedures, but also on education, which can serve not only parents and schools, but also the children themselves (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2020).

3 Results of the survey - the view of novice guidance counsellors on bullying

The research inquiry (see Hromadko, 2024) was designed around four sub-research questions. The first sub-question focused on the basic characteristics of bullying in the school environment, specifically identifying the most common forms and causes of bullying, as well as the intensity and frequency of bullying in the respondents' schools. The second sub-question aimed to determine the level of knowledge of educational counsellors about theoretical and legislative aspects of bullying. The survey covered awareness of relevant documents and laws related to bullying, teachers' obligation to report cases of bullying, their attitudes towards dealing with such cases, and cooperation with external institutions outside the school, such as the police, the Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children, or NGOs. The third sub-question focused on identifying the characteristics of aggressors and victims of bullying. The aim was to determine whether aggressors and victims exhibit any common characteristics and whether recognizable patterns of behaviour may indicate their role in bullying. The final, fourth sub-question served to assess the practices of schools and informants themselves in dealing with bullying. The questions focused on their preparedness, assessment of counselling centers, and assessment of colleagues' preparedness.

All interviews revealed that cyberbullying is the most common form of bullying and is much more challenging to address nowadays. It often involves the distribution of inappropriate photos, messages or even verbal attacks on the person. The informants' statements also coincide with research by the Czech School Inspectorate, where the results showed that cyberbullying is the most common form of bullying. The difficulty in dealing with bullying lies in the maturity of information technology, where anyone can create an account under a false name and details, making it difficult to track down the aggressor.

Informants identified any kind of disadvantage as the most common cause that leads to bullying. For example, it could be poor financial security or poor family relationships. They also take into account age, gender, as well as appearance and, for example, how they dress. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the reason for this is the lack of time for prevention programmes and, above all, the lack of qualified methodologists.

The intensity and frequency of bullying varies, as the informants come from different types of secondary schools. Based on the information provided by one informant, it appeared that between ten and twelve cases of bullying occurred during one semester. According to the annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate, it was found that in the last two years, an average of around 80 per cent of cases of any form of bullying had been detected in all secondary schools.

Knowledge of theoretical and legislative anchoring is, in the authors' opinion, below average. Although the informants know important school laws, many of them did not mention, for example, the Criminal Code, the Civil Code or the relevant decree of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. On the other hand, however, all informants knew

that they were legally obliged to report bullying or any indication that pupils might be involved in it.

As already mentioned, bullying is a very difficult and challenging process for schools and their staff. Therefore, whistleblowers often turn, for example, to non-profit organisations that are dedicated to the prevention of risky behaviour. They also contact the Police of the Czech Republic, which also organises a number of prevention programmes for pupils, or the DSLPC, which can help the family, the school and its staff.

Naming the common characteristics of an aggressor was quite challenging for novice educational counsellors. All informants, except one, agree that aggressors are often those who are more vulnerable, have low self-esteem or are excluded from the collective. The common characteristics of victims were even more challenging. Many informants did not know, some attributed the role of victim to a quieter type, some to a good and reliable student, or simply to anyone who appeared in the wrong place with the wrong people. Despite all the associations, it always ended up making a difference. Be it a difference in appearance, nationality or character. Beginning guidance counsellors often agreed that attributions are often based on past experiences. The aggressor was a "somebody" and there was also something typical for the victim and therefore he takes his past experiences.

Self-assessment is one of the most important elements for teachers and guidance counsellors. The informants' responses suggest that some see themselves as competent to deal with bullying and some need more experience. All informants agreed that if it were possible and they had more colleagues, it would be much better and they would have more confident support in situations where their competence was not sufficient. However, despite these statements, informants responded unequivocally that they were able to deal with bullying or any risky behaviour. Unfortunately, the informants' assessment of their colleagues was more negative. Although the procedures and duties of teaching staff are enshrined in school ordinances and laws, in many schools they do not address this and rather, according to informants, "hand it over" to educational advisors.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, which deals with bullying in secondary schools, it is necessary to stress the importance of a concerted effort to build respect, solidarity and safety in the school environment. Understanding the reasons why bullying occurs and how it affects the lives of young people is key to effective prevention and intervention.

Children may bully for many reasons, including a lack of self-esteem, a desire for power, a lack of understanding of the consequences of their actions or the influence of their environment. Bullying can also be driven by group dynamics and pressure to conform to social norms.

Why do children sometimes not fight back or report bullying? Reasons can range from fear of retaliation to fear of isolation in the collective to lack of trust in the institutions that are supposed to deal with the situation, such as teachers or school administrators.

It is not uncommon for adults, including teachers, to overlook bullying or not consider it a serious problem. This may be due to a lack of appropriate tools to identify bullying behaviour, a lack of awareness of the consequences of bullying or a fear of confronting difficult situations.

It is important not only to focus on anti-bullying interventions, but also on prevention and building a supportive environment in schools. This includes strengthening social and emotional skills, fostering trusting relationships between pupils and adults at school and creating an environment where every pupil feels listened to and respected. It is also important to have competent and qualified professionals in the school.

References

- Antl, M. (2022). Právní aspekty ohrožení pedagogů a jejich odpovědnost [Legal Aspects of Teacher Endangerment and Liability]. In V. Bělík, S., Svoboda Hoferková, B., Kraus, M. Antl, & M. Herynková. *Sociální patologie: vybraná ohrožení pedagogů* [Social Pathology: The Selected Threats to Teachers] (s. 47–56). Pavel Mervart.
- Bělík, V., & Hoferková, S. (2018). *Prevence rizikového chování žáků z pohledu pedagogů* [Prevention of Risky Behaviour of Pupils from the Perspective of Teachers]. Gaudeamus.
- Bělík, V., Hoferková, S., Kraus, B., Antl, M., Hubert, J., Jedličková, I., Kasal, J., Kučírek, J., Pelcák, S., Raszková, T., Šimková, E., & Špráchalová, L. (2017). *Slovník sociální patologie* [Dictionary of Social Pathology]. Grada.
- Bendl, S., Hanušová, J., & Linková, M. (2016). *Žák s problémovým chováním: cesta institucionální pomoci* [Pupils with Behavioural Problems: The Path of institutional help]. Triton.
- Černý, P. (2023). Když si ubližují děti [When Children Hurt Themselves]. In Český statistický úřad. *Statistika a my: časopis českého statistického úřadu*. Český statistický úřad. <https://statistikaamy.csu.gov.cz/kdyz-si-ublizuji-deti>.
- Česká školní inspekce. (2016). *Tematická zpráva: prevence a řešení šikany a dalších projevů rizikového chování ve školách* [Thematic Report: Preventing and Tackling Bullying and Other Forms of Risky Behaviour in Schools]. https://www.csicr.cz/Csicr/media/Prilohy/PDF_el._publikace/Tematicke%20zpravy/2016_TZ_prevence_a_reseni_sikany.pdf.
- Czech School Inspectorate. (2023a). *Kvalita vzdělávání v České republice: výroční zpráva 2022/2023* [The Quality of Education in the Czech Republic: Annual Report 2022/2023]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Elektronicke-publikace/2023/Vyrocnizprava_CSI_2022_2023/html5/index.html?pn=1.
- Czech School Inspectorate. (2023b). *Tematická zpráva: Hodnocení rizikového chování žáků základních a středních škol se zaměřením na oblast kyberšikany* [Thematic Report: Assessment of Risky Behaviour of Primary and Secondary School Pupils with a Focus on Cyberbullying]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2023_přilohy/Dokumenty/TZ-Hodnoceni-rizikoveho-chovani_FINAL.pdf.
- Hromadko, K. (2024). *Šikana v prostředí středních škol* [Bullying in the Secondary School Environment] [Bachelor Thesis, University of Hradec Králové]. Theses.cz. <https://theses.cz/id/ugpp12/STAG100346.pdf>.
- Chromý, J. (2010). *Kriminalita páchaná na mládeži: aktuální jevy a nová právní úprava v České republice* [Crime Against Youth: Current Phenomena and New Legislation in the Czech Republic]. Linde.

- Hutyrová, M. (2019). *Děti a problémy v chování: etopedie v praxi* [Children and Behavioural Problems: Etopedy in Practice]. Portál.
- Kolář, M. (2011). *Nová cesta k léčbě šikany* [A New Way to Treat Bullying]. Portál.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. (2014). *Využití právních opatření při řešení problémového chování* [Use of Legal Measures to Address Problem Behaviour]. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/33233/>.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. (2016 & 2020). *Metodická doporučení a metodické pokyny* [Methodological Recommendations and Guidelines]. MŠMT. <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/socialni-programy/metodicke-dokumenty-doporuceni-a-pokyny>.
- Miovský, M., Skácelová, L., Zapletalová, J., & Novák, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Primární prevence rizikového chování ve školství* [Primary Prevention of Risky Behaviour in Education]. Sdružení SCAN, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 1. lékařská fakulta, Psychiatrická klinika 1. LF a VFN a Centrum adiktologie.
- Schott, R. M., & Søndergaard, D. M. (Eds.). (2014). *School bullying: New theories in context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zákon č. 40/2009 Sb., trestní zákoník* [Criminal Code] (2009). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2009-40>.
- Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb., o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání* [on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (Education Act)] (2004). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-561>.

Authors:

Bc. Karel Hromadko

University of Pardubice,

Faculty Arts and Philosophy, Department of Education

The Czech Republic

karel.hromadko@upce.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5542-638X>

PaedDr. Bc. Martin Knytl, Ph.D., MBA, MCS

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

martin.knytl@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8095-168X>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

The Correlation Between Suicidal and Self-harm Tendencies in Grammar Schools Students and Their Level of Resilience

Suicidálne a sebapoškodzujúce tendencie u žiakov gymnázií v súvislosti s mierou reziliencie

Jana Stehlíková¹

Abstract:

The presented study provides an insight into the issue of suicidal and self-harm tendencies and resilience in 127 Slovak adolescents – grammar school students. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003) and the risk-taking and self-harm inventory for adolescents (Vrouva et al., 2010) were used for the purpose of data collection. Gender differences in self-harm and suicidal tendencies were identified in the factors of risk-taking and self-harm, but also in some resilience factors – trust in one's instincts, tolerance of negative affect, and strengthening effects of stress. A negative correlation between suicidal and self-harm tendencies, and the level of resilience was confirmed.

Keywords:


Suicidality; self-harm; resilience; adolescent; risk behaviour

Abstrakt:

Naša štúdia ponúka vhl'ad do problematiky suicidálnych a sebapoškodzujúcich tendencií a reziliencie u 127 adolescentov navštevujúcich bilingválne, cirkevne a všeobecné gymnázium. Na zber dát bola využitá Connor-Davidsonovej škála reziliencie (Connor & Davidson, 2003) a Inventár podstupovania rizika a sebapoškodzovania pre adolescentov (Vrouva et al., 2010). Výsledky poukazujú na neexistenciu štatisticky významných rozdielov medzi tromi druhmi gymnázií, no v jednotlivých dimenziách premennej reziliencie boli zaznamenané štatisticky významné rozdiely, pričom išlo o dimenziu osobná kompetencia, vysoké štandardy a húževnatosť, dimenziu kontrola a dimenziu duchovné vplyvy. Medzirodové rozdiely v sebapoškodzujúcich a suicidálnych tendenciách boli zistené v dimenzii podstupovanie rizika a dimenzii sebapoškodzovania, rovnako boli zistené aj v niektorých dimenziách reziliencie – dimenzia dôvera vo vlastné inštinkty, tolerancia negatívneho vplyvu a posilnenie efektov stresu. Preukázala sa negatívna korelácia medzi suicidálnymi a sebapoškodzujúcimi tendenciami a úrovňou reziliencie.

Kľúčové slová:

Samovražednosť; sebapoškodzovanie; odolnosť; adolescent; rizikové správanie

¹ Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, jana.stehlikova@umb.sk, ORCID 

1 Method and forms of self-harm, and suicidal tendencies during adolescence

Suicidal and self-harm behaviours represent a serious global problem which attracts attention from various experts. They can occur at any age, but adolescence, accompanied by many positive as well as negative changes, is one of the most vulnerable periods. To deal with these difficult changes, many adolescents develop inappropriate coping strategies, and the “popularity” of self-harm has been increasing recently. Statistics from the National Center for Health Information indicate that in 2022, the incidence of reported suicide attempts among Slovak adolescents aged 15–19 increased by 33 attempts compared to 2021, with females predominating. At this point within the reporting period beginning in 2008, the incidence of suicide attempts in this age bracket peaked (148 attempts), which means that adolescents represented the group that most frequently attempted suicide.

Self-harm may bring a temporary feeling of release from negative emotions. According to Ryšánková (2008), this phenomenon can be referred to as “a new, contemporary pathology”.

The forms and methods of self-harm practised by adolescents are diverse. Koutek and Kocourková (2003) adds more methods of self-harm used by adolescents while pointing out that self-harm is a frequently repeated deliberate behaviour without the presence of suicidal ideation. The deliberate self-harm syndrome encompasses repeated deliberate self-harm more broadly. Wrist or forearm cutting and slashing as well as self-poisoning by, or overdosing on, prescription drugs obtained illegally without suicidal motivation are also considered forms of self-harm.

In recent years, experts have started researching digital self-harm, which is also typical for adolescence, and defined as “anonymous online posting, sending, or otherwise sharing of hurtful content about oneself” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2017, p. 761). Individuals have certain reasons to perform such actions.

Bywaters and Rolfe (2002) investigated the motives for self-harm, for example: the desire to shock people around them, difficulties with self-forgiveness – severe feelings of guilt, self-punishment, self-hatred, severe stress, traumatic events, difficulties with stress management, anger turned inwards, venting negative emotions, depression, discrimination, exclusion, bullying, lack of attention, desire to attract attention, craving for novelty, testing limits, no one to talk to, loneliness, despair, desire for hospitalisation, as a coping strategy, but also suicidal ideas and behaviour.

Suicidal tendencies represent the behaviour resulting from initial thoughts about suicide and how it could be committed in reality, followed by planning and obtaining the necessary tools to commit suicide, e.g., accumulating prescription drugs or obtaining a gun (Bulíková, 2010).

Koutek and Kocourková (2003) define suicidal behaviour as a broad concept, which also includes ideas, thoughts, and verbal statements without ever attempting suicide as such. Hóschl (2002, in Bulíková, 2010, p. 26) defines suicide as a “deliberate and intentional ending of one’s own life”. By behaving suicidally, a person causes their own death or intends to do so.

1.1 Resilience as a form of prevention of adolescent self-harm and suicidal behaviour

Resilience as a construct represents the individual's ability to retain positive adaptation despite experiencing significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). In his theoretical framework of resilience, Komárik (2010) explains that every person has a certain potential (various skills, competences, and capabilities), which gives them the ability to resist adverse and risk factors generated by their environment. Gruhlová and Körbächer (2013) use a synonymous term – mental endurance. According to these authors, it “encompasses all the forces that allow the person to cope with life in both good and bad times” (Gruhl & Körbächer, 2013, p. 10). In the wake of stressful or difficult situations, resilient individuals can, whether quickly or slowly, return to normal life, also thanks to the support of their close ones. By overcoming such situations, the resilient person becomes more confident, courageous, and their trust in self and their own abilities is increased.

According to Bernard (1993), resilient adolescents show four typical traits: social competence as the ability to elicit positive reactions from the surroundings, which is related to sense of humour, well-developed communication skills, and empathy.

Adolescence is one of the more sensitive developmental periods. The individual is affected by numerous factors, mainly social ones. Therefore, early prevention and intervention are of key importance. Babáková (2003) specify the main factors that provide protection from suicidal behaviour: family examples – harmonic relationships and support within the family; cognitive style and personality traits – e.g., self-confidence, knowledge, openness to learning, gaining experience, and solutions proposed by others, asking for help and seeking advice; cultural and sociodemographic factors –e.g., good relationships in school (with teachers and peers), social integration (e.g., participation in sporting events and youth clubs).

Huang and Mossige (2015) researched the correlation between resilience and mental problems among young people who claimed to survive violence and at the same time, self-harm. They found that resilience measured by the Resilience Scale for Adolescents strongly negatively correlated with mental problems among all young people who participated in the research. This correlation was more significant among young people who claimed experience with violence and self-harm. Another, international research focused on suicidal thoughts and attempts among adolescents and involved data from 45,806 high school students aged 15 to 16 from 17 countries. In the participating countries, the median prevalence of suicide attempts was 10.5%. The median rate of frequent self-harm thoughts (a minimum of 5x) was 7.4%. Suicidal behaviour and thoughts showed significant correlation with gender, use of addictive substances, family integrity, and socioeconomic background (Kokkevi, 2011). These studies inspired the presented research into this extremely topical and challenging issue.

1.2 Differences in the prevalence of suicidal and self-harm tendencies in Slovak adolescents in the context of resilience

This research aimed to identify 1) any statistically significant differences in resilience and its individual factors among adolescent students, and 2) possible correlation between resilience and self-harm and suicidal tendencies in adolescent students in grammar schools. Two research methods were used to identify the prevalence of suicidal and self-

harm tendencies in adolescents: the Risk-Taking and Self-Harm Inventory for Adolescents (RTSHIA, Vrouva et al., 2010), while the level of resilience was measured by CD-RIDC (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The research sample consisted of 127 respondents in total – 49 boys (49%) and 78 girls (61%).

Table 1 shows a descriptive analysis of the variables identified, which was processed using the JASP statistical program.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for the variables measured by CD-RISC and Risk-Taking and RTSHIA (N=127)

	R	S	PC	T	A	C	SI	RT	fSP
Mean	65.73	18.13	21.79	16.42	14.62	7.54	5.36	8.32	9.8
SD	14.26	10.56	5.56	4.46	3.17	2.67	1.99	4.4	8.67
Median	67	20	22	16	15	8	6	12	9
Skewness	-0.6	0.85	-0.87	0.09	-1.01	-0.48	-0.61	0.05	1.15
Kurtosis	0.98	0.39	1.2	0.08	1.38	-0.19	-0.22	-0.93	1.19
Minimum	19	2	4	6	4	0	0	0	0
Maximum	98	51	32	28	20	12	8	17	41
KS test statistics	0.094	0.123	0.105	0.084	0.138	0.104	0.154	0.091	0.134
KS test p-value	0.216	0.042	0.121	0.337	0.016	0.130	0.005	0.248	0.022

Notes: SD – standard deviation; R – resilience; S – self-harm PC – personal competence, high standards, tenacity T – trust in one’s instincts, tolerance of negative affect, strengthening effects of stress; A – positive acceptance of changes and safe relationships; C – control; SI – spiritual influence; RT – risk-taking, fSP – self-harm factor

To identify gender differences in the prevalence of suicidal and self-harm tendencies, a two-sample Students t-test was used; however, it showed no statistically significant differences between boys and girls, see Table 2.

Table 2 Gender differences in self-harm as a variable

	Self-harm	
	Boys	Girls
N	49	78
Mean	22.25	22.26
SD	11.76	11.37
t-stat.		0.68
p-val.		0.996
Cohen’s D		0.00

Notes: N – number; SD – standard deviation; t-stat. – t-statistics, p-val. – p-value

However, boys scored higher in the factor of risk-taking with a statistically significant difference.

Table 3 Gender differences in risk-taking as a variable

	Factor of risk-taking	
	Boys	Girls
N	48 h.	79
Mean	14.06	11.17
SD	5.33	5.11
t-stat.		3.06
p-val.		0.003
Cohen's D		0.56

Notes: N – number; SD – standard deviation; t-stat. – t-statistics, p-val. – p-value

The two-sample Student' t-test was used to identify the gender differences in the level of resilience. No statistically significant difference between boys and girls was identified.

Table 4 Gender differences in resilience as a variable

	Resilience	
	Boys	Girls
N	49	78
Mean	66.81	65.05
SD	13.23	14.91
t-stat.		0.68
p-val.		0.449
Cohen's D		0.12

Notes: N – number; SD – standard deviation; t-stat. – t-statistics, p-val. – p-value

Based on the research findings yielded by the two-sample Student's t-test, it can be concluded that in the factor "trust in one's instincts, tolerance of negative affect, and strengthening effects of stress", which had normal distribution, there were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls, although boys scored higher than girls. In the factor of "personal competence, high standards, and tenacity" and the factor of control, there were also no statistically significant differences.

Table 5 Gender differences in the factor of resilience

	PC		T		C	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
N	49	78	49	78	49	78
Mean	21.96	21.68	17.59	15.68	7.71	7.44
SD	5.05	5.88	4.6	4.24	2.76	2.62
t-stat.	0.28		2.4		0.57	
p-val.	0.784		0.018		0.569	
Cohen's D	0.05		0.44		0.104	

Notes: N – number; SD – standard deviation; t-stat. – t-statistics, p-val. – p-value PC – personal competence, high standards, tenacity T – trust in one's instincts, tolerance of negative affect, strengthening effects of stress; C – control

In the factor of spiritual influence, statistically significant gender differences were identified – girls scored higher than boys. However, no statistically significant gender differences were identified in the factor of “positive acceptance of changes and safe relationships”.

Table 6 *The results of a Mann-Whitney U-test for the factor of “positive acceptance of changes and safe relationships” and the factor of spiritual influence according to gender*

	A		SI	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
N	49	78	49	78
Mean	14.74	14.55	4.82	5.71
SD	2.94	3.22	2.13	1.83
p-val.	0.823		0.019	

Notes: N – number; SD – standard deviation; t-stat. – t-statistics, p-val. – p-value A – positive acceptance of changes and safe relationships; SI – spiritual influence

A correlation analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient was performed; it showed a medium strong negative correlation between the variables of self-harm and resilience, which means that the lower resilience, the higher suicidal and self-harm tendencies. The value of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was -0.291 and the p-value was <0.001.

The most frequent motives for suicidal and self-harm tendencies were analysed (see numbers in brackets). Family as the stress factor was the most frequent one (38), further motives claimed by adolescents are: lack of experience with problem-solving (23), interindividuality – lack of mutual understanding (21), negative self-image, low self-confidence (19), popularisation of self-harm and suicide(16), unfulfilled romantic relationships (15), school as a stress factor (14), a cry for help (11), self-punishment (9), current events in society (8), inability to open and confide in someone (6), need for attention (4).

Conclusion

There is little knowledge about the gender differences in self-harm and suicide and the results are ambiguous so far (Ohlis et al., 2020). Hawton, Saudner (2012) points out that this kind of behaviour is more connected to stereotypical female attributes. In the research of Poudel et al. (2020) into gender differences, women showed significantly higher values in the life-long prevalence of suicidal behaviour than men, which supports this claim. The presented research showed no gender differences in the prevalence of suicidal and self-harm tendencies among the students in grammar school. However, a statistically significant gender difference was identified in the factor of risk-taking in favour of boys. The research of Reniers et al. (2016) also showed that boys aged 13 to 20 were less sensitive to bad academic performance and less socially anxious, while taking more risks than their female peers.

Therefore, it was assumed that the level of resilience in adolescent female students in grammar schools would be different. Some research (e.g., Deng et al., 2016) indicates that women are more inclined to show their emotions than men. This may lead women to be more open and inclined to seek help in times of crisis, which could increase their level of

resilience. Contrary to the assumptions relevant for the presented study, Gök & Koğar's (2021) quantitative summary of the findings related to the gender differences in mental resilience among individuals shows that gender does not have any statistically significant impact on the level of mental resilience, although men scored better. The presented research findings indicate there is no gender difference in the overall level of resilience between male and female students in grammar schools. However, gender differences were confirmed in specific factors of resilience – “trust in one’s instincts, tolerance of negative affect, and strengthening effects of stress” in favour of boys, and in the factor of spiritual influence in favour of girls.

Şahin & Hepsöğütü’s study (2018) points out that low resilience negatively affects coping strategies, which are important for dealing with stress, negative events, and overall mental load. It was initially assumed that resilience will have some impact on the self-harm and suicidal tendencies as indicated by Huang and Mossige (2015) who researched resilience as a trait defined by the ability to prevent mental health issues in adolescents. Their research shows a significant negative correlation between resilience and the incidence of mental health issues in young people in general. The presented research also identified a significant, strong negative correlation between self-harm and suicidal behaviour, and the level of resilience in adolescents.

Weintraub et al. (2017) point out that self-harm and suicidal ideation can be a strong indicator of an individual’s ability to function in everyday life, and the personality traits which are typical for people with mood disorders (e.g., depression or bipolar disorder). In the study conducted by Laye-Gindhu et al. (2005), adolescents showed significantly more antisocial behaviour, emotional tension, anger issues, risk behaviour, and lower self-respect. The respondents in this study also claimed they had low self-respect and self-confidence.

In future research, it would be appropriate to focus on topics such as performance pressure, experiencing emotions, stress management strategies, comorbidity with mental disorders, and level of self-respect. It is also important to focus on the development of resilience in schools. Last but not least, these topics deserve long-term attention in the form of longitudinal studies as well as deeper investigation, e.g., in the form of qualitative research, which can provide valuable knowledge about subjective experience and personal stories with regard to cultural and social factors.

References

- Babáková, L. (2003). Sebepoškození v dětství a adolescenci. *Psychiatrie pro praxi*, 4, 165-169. <https://www.psychiatriepropraxi.cz/pdfs/psy/2003/04/05.pdf>.
- Bernard, B. (1993). Fostering Resiliency in Kids. *Educational Leadership*, 44-48. <https://kaching.socialwork.hku.hk/Workshop%20Notes/Resiliency/Foster%20Resiliency.pdf>.
- Bywaters, P., & Rolfe, A. (2002). *Look Beyond the Scars: Self Harm Report*. NCH Action for Children.
- Bulíková, T. (2010). Suicidálny pacient v prednemocničnej starostlivosti. *Via practica*, 7(1), 26-29.

- Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety, 18*(2), 76–82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>.
- Deng, Y., Chang, L., Yang, M., Huo, M., & Zhou, R. (2016). Gender Differences in Emotional Response: Inconsistency between Experience and Expressivity. *PloS One, 11*(6), e0158666. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0158666>.
- Gök, A., & Kogar, E. Y. (2021). A meta-analysis study on gender differences in psychological resilience levels. *Kıbrıs Türk Psikiyatri ve Psikoloji Dergisi, 3*(2), 132–143.
- Gruhl, M., & Körbächer, H. (2013). *Psychická odolnosť v každodenním živote*. Portál.
- Hawton, K., Saunderson, K. E., & O'Connor, R. C. (2012). Self-harm and suicide in adolescents. *Lancet, 379*(9834), 2373–2382. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)60322-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60322-5).
- Huang, L., & Mossige, S. (2015). Resilience and Poly-Victimization among Two Cohorts of Norwegian Youth. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(12), 2852. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15122852>.
- Koutek, J., & Kocourková, J. (2003). *Sebevražedné chování: Současné poznatky o suicidalitě a její specifika u dětí a dospívajících*. Portál.
- Komárik, E., Jenčová, A., Krajčovičová, K., Lamošová, J., Repčík, R., Šandorová, D., & Hučeková, D. (2011). *Kontexty reziliencie*. PF UKF.
- Kokkevi, A. (2011). Adolescents' self-reported suicide attempts, self-harm thoughts and their correlates across 17 European countries. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 53*(4), 381–389. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02457.x>.
- Laye-Gindhu, A., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2005). Nonsuicidal Self-Harm Among Community Adolescents: Understanding the “Whats” and “Whys” of Self-Harm. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34*(5), 447–457. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-7262-z>.
- Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: a critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543–562. <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-8624.00164>.
- Národné centrum zdravotníckych informácií. (2022, 26. mája). *Samovraždy a samovražedné pokusy v Slovenskej republike v roku 2021*. <https://www.nczisk.sk/Aktuality/Pages/Samovrazdy-a-samovrazedne-pokusy-v-Slovenskej-republike-v-roku-2021.aspx>.
- Ohlis, A., Bjureberg, J., Lichtenstein, P., D'Onofrio, B. M., Fruzzetti, A. E., Cederlöf, M., & Hellner, C. (2020). Comparison of suicide risk and other outcomes among boys and girls who self-harm. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 29*(12), 1741–1746. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-020-01490-y>.
- Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2017). Digital self-harm among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 61*, 761–766. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X17303130?ref=pdf_download&fr=RR-2&rr=826a3b378d01c26e.
- Renier, R. L. E. P., Murphy, L., Lin, A., Bartolomé, S. P., & Wood, S. J. (2016). Risk Perception and Risk-Taking Behaviour during Adolescence: The Influence of Personality and Gender. *PLOS ONE, 11*(4), e0153842. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0153842>.

- Ryšánková, M. (2008). Proč se dospívající sebepoškozují?. *Pediatric pro praxi*, 9(6), 383–387. <https://www.pediatricpropraxi.cz/pdfs/ped/2008/06/07.pdf>
- Şahin, S., & Hepsöğütü, Z. B. (2018). Psychological Resilience and Coping Strategies of High School Students Based on Certain Variables. *Journal of Educational Sciences Research*, 8(2), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.22521/jesr.2018.82.2>.
- Weintraub, M. J., Van De Loo, M. M., Gitlin, M. J., & Miklowitz, D. J. (2017). Self-Harm, affective traits, and psychosocial functioning in adults with depressive and bipolar disorders. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 205(11), 896–899. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000000744>.
- Vrouva, I., Fonagy, P., Fearon, P. R. M., & Roussov, T. (2010). The risk-taking and self-harm inventory for adolescents: Development and psychometric evaluation. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(4), 852–865. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020583>.

Author:

PaedDr. Jana Stehlíková, PhD.

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica,

Faculty of Education, Department of Psychology

The Slovak Republic

jana.stehlikova@umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6561-296X>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

**Section III:
Risk and Social Pathological
Phenomena in Selected
Contexts**

Prevention of Drug Addiction Among Children and Youth

Prevence drogových závislostí u dětí a mládeže

Adéla Marešová¹, Nikol Vavříková²

Abstract:

While the results of the ESPAD 2019 survey suggest that adolescents are shifting their first experiences and experimentation with addictive substances to later in life, we are seeing some new phenomena in use, such as e-cigarettes, etc. The paper aims to investigate the experience of pupils and students with drug prevention activities in selected primary and secondary schools in the context of their experience with addictive substances. The data showed that drug addiction prevention activities are more frequently implemented in the selected primary schools. More than half of the respondents rate the implemented drug addiction prevention as insufficient. One positive finding, however, is that more than half of the respondents are interested in broadening their knowledge about drug issues. The results can serve as a basis for further research in this area.

Keywords:


Drug addiction; children and youth; prevention


Abstrakt:

Výsledky výzkumu ESPAD 2019 sice naznačují, že u dospívajících dochází k odsunu prvních zkušeností a experimentování s návykovými látkami do pozdějšího věku, nicméně zaznamenáváme některé nové fenomény v užívání, jako např. elektronické cigarety aj. Cílem příspěvku je zjistit, jaká je zkušenost žáků a studentů s preventivními aktivitami drogových závislostí na vybraných základních a středních školách v kontextu jejich zkušeností s návykovými látkami. Data ukázala, že prevence drogových závislostí je častěji realizována na vybraných základních školách. Více než polovina respondentů hodnotí realizovanou prevenci v oblasti drogových závislostí jako nedostatečnou. Jedním z pozitivních zjištění je však skutečnost, že více jak polovina dotázaných má zájem rozšířit své znalosti o drogové problematice. Výsledky mohou posloužit zejména jako východisko pro další zkoumání v této oblasti.

Klíčová slova:

Drogová závislost; děti a mládež; prevence

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, adela.maresova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

² Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, nikol.vavrikova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

The prevention of addictive behaviour among children and youth is still a necessary activity that should be given attention at the level of theory and practice. Addiction to addictive substances negatively affects the life not only of the user but also of his/her family and friends. Therefore early and effective prevention activities are a necessary tool to positively influence the life of the individual, especially young people. In the first part of the paper, the theoretical background mapping childhood and adolescence in the context of addictive behaviour is presented, followed by a theoretical definition of addiction with emphasis on the results of the ESPAD 2019 research. The theoretical part also describes the issue of prevention of addictive behaviour. Subsequently, the results of a research investigation are presented that maps the experiences of 9th-grade primary school students and 1st-grade secondary school students with addictive behaviour prevention activities in the context of their experiences with addictive substances.

Theoretical background of childhood and adolescence in relation to risk behavior

This chapter focuses on childhood and adolescence in the context of risk behaviour. The terminological definition of childhood and adolescence is based on the different perspectives of the disciplines. However, only the basic theoretical framework of this issue is presented in the text.

According to Průcha, Mareš, and Walterová (2013), childhood can be characterized as a period that begins at birth and ends with the child's transition into an adolescent (approximately 14–15 years of age). In this life stage, significant physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development occurs. The decisive features of a personality are thus naturally formed. In particular, the child's family, social environment, and school are crucial determinants. Each stage of childhood is characterized by specific features. However, the start of compulsory schooling, when the child takes on the role of pupil, can be considered an important factor in this period. Jandourek (2001) writes that childhood ends biologically with puberty and socially with the possibility to lead one's own responsible life. From the perspective of law, the fifteenth or eighteenth year of an individual's life is a crucial milestone. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, "every human being under the age of eighteen years is considered a child unless, under the legal system applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." (Communication No. 104/1991 Coll., Communication of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Negotiation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

It is clear, however, that we must regard the chronological age of each individual with some reserve because each being has different personality predispositions. Even Kraus (2016) writes that the upper limit of childhood is defined differently. From a legal point of view, an individual acquires criminal responsibility at the age of fifteen and thus falls into the category of a juvenile, while the social perspective mainly takes into account the ability to live one's own responsible life.

Adolescence is a period in which an individual searches for his or her own identity. Experimentation itself, especially with alcohol and other drugs, can serve as a means of doing so. A significant part of the adolescent's leisure time is naturally spent with his peers, who undoubtedly have a major influence on him. Adolescents may treat experimentation with addictive substances in a peer group as a form of entertainment.

Even in the face of peer pressure, it is to be expected that the adolescent will join his or her friends in substance use, and the chances of developing a drug addiction naturally increase during this period (Elliott & Place, 2002).

Nielsen Sobotková et al. (2014) add that experimentation with risky behaviours can to some extent be considered a normal part of development. As a rule, it should only be a temporary period that will subside naturally with age. In most cases, there will be no crossing over into criminal activity. This behaviour is purposeful and, in this sense, functional in the life of an adolescent. Risky behaviours (including substance use) help to meet the adolescent's current needs, which may be, for example, an increase in self-esteem or involvement in a peer group. According to the World Health Organization, adolescents are a separate risk group associated with the so-called syndrome of risk behaviour in adolescence (SCHR-D), which includes the following three areas:

1. **Substance abuse,**
2. Negative phenomena in the psychosocial area,
3. Reproductive risk behaviour (Nielsen Sobotková et al., 2014).

Addictive behaviour of children and adolescents in the context of the ESPAD 2019 study results

According to Kudrle (In Kalina et al., 2003), a broader spectrum of causes is involved in the development of alcoholism and other drug addictions. Addiction can develop through the excessive use of an addictive substance as a result of psychological problems, while in other cases genetic, innate dispositions and socio-cultural factors may play a role. The emergence of addiction also depends on specific reactions at the level of a person's neurobiology.

Kumpfer, Trunnell and Whiteside (2003 in Miller, 2011) explain the different components of the bio-psycho-social model of addiction as follows: The biological side is conditioned by genetically determined traits, intrauterine impairments, character or physiological differences. In the context of psychological and social factors, we consider the interactions of a particular individual with his or her family, peers, local community, occupation and social factors. This model allows very well for an individual assessment of a specific addiction condition, as different contributions are attributed to different groups of causes. Therefore it is a comprehensive yet individualised understanding of the specific causes of an individual's addiction. Kalina (In Kalina et al., 2003) adds that in the context of the bio-psycho-social model of addiction, treatment must focus on detoxification, pharmacotherapy and psychosocial therapies.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, an addicted person may experience a growing tolerance to the drug, taking the drug for a longer period of time than the individual intended, withdrawal symptoms, a gradual increase in dosage and neglect of other pleasures and interests that previously gave the user pleasure, spending more time using and procuring the addictive substance, and a long-term effort to reduce and control the intake of the substance. The addicted individual continues to use the substance despite clear evidence of harmful consequences. It should be added that an individual does not need to meet all of these criteria, only three during the last year of a particular user's life are sufficient to identify addiction (Nešpor, 2007).

The European School Study on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) is the largest pan-European study on the extent of substance use and other risk behaviours among 15–16 year olds. In 2019, the seventh wave of this study was conducted, mapping measures such as cigarette, e-cigarette and heated tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, illicit drug use, first experience of drugs and subjective perceived availability of addictive substances. Attention was also paid to the issue of some non-substance addictions. In 2019, 2 778 Czech respondents participated in the survey. The research sample was almost balanced in terms of gender, with boys representing 51.3% and girls 48.7% (Chromynová, Csémy & Mravčík, 2020).

We now present some key findings from the ESPAD 2019 study. Between 2016 and 2019, we see higher rates of e-cigarette use experience. In 2016, 43.7% of respondents had tried an e-cigarette at least once, while in 2019 the number increased to 60.4%. In the case of current use, i.e. use of an e-cigarette within the last month, there was only a slight increase. However, when considering the rate of e-cigarette use in the aggregate nicotine product category, the prevalence of current use remains stable. A total of 54% of respondents had experienced cigarette smoking at least once in their lifetime (Chromynová, Csémy & Mravčík, 2020).

According to the results, 95.1% of the respondents drank alcohol. 45.5% of boys and 38.4% of girls admitted to having consumed alcohol more than 20 times in their lives. Thus, this group can be considered as regular consumers of alcoholic beverages. In the last 30 days, 62.7% of students have consumed alcohol (Chromynová et al., 2020).

A total of 29.3% of respondents reported at least one experience with the use of illegal drugs, the most common being cannabis, i.e. marijuana or hashish. 28.4% of students had tried these substances at least once in their lives. The results show that the use of illicit drugs is balanced in terms of gender. In the case of non-cannabis drugs, the experience of girls is slightly predominant, but the differences in the prevalence of use cannot be considered statistically significant. In the case of the specific type of school studied, the lowest rates of use of non-cannabis substances appeared to be among students in grammar schools. (Chromynová et al., 2020) Lessem et al. (2006 in Miovský et al., 2015) add that the likelihood of illicit drug use increases significantly (almost twofold) for those individuals who have already used marijuana in adolescence, compared to those who have not such experience.

Prevention of addictive behaviour

When designing prevention programmes, it is necessary to take into account all the specific factors that contribute to the development of risky behaviour. Taking these factors into account helps to design a prevention programme that incorporates a greater number of variables. The multifactorial theory of risk behaviour can then serve as a theoretical basis (Miovský et al., 2015).

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2005 in Miovský et al., 2015) defined 10 principles of effective primary prevention, which include:

1. **Comprehension and combination of multiple strategies:** this includes the influence of family, school, peers, local community and mass media. With regard to the bio-psycho-social model of risk behaviour (including addictive behaviour), we consider multiple causes. Prevention programmes need to take these factors into account and inter-institutional cooperation is also a prerequisite.

2. **Continuity of action and systematic planning:** prevention programmes must complement and build on each other. One-off activities are proving to be counterproductive. Unilateral and simplistic information has a negative impact on programme participants and damages the credibility of the prevention activity itself.
3. **Targeting and adequacy of information and forms:** prevention activities should be adapted to the specific age, demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the target group. The level of knowledge about the phenomenon, specific attitudes and the level of risk should also be taken into account. At the same time, the programme should be designed to be sufficiently attractive to the participants to hold their attention.
4. **Early start:** Preventive action should ideally start as early as pre-school age. There is clear evidence that the earlier prevention starts, the more effective the results. The rule of thumb here is that the younger the target group, the more rigorous the supervision and interviewing of the programme should be.
5. **Positive orientation:** this is mainly about promoting a healthy lifestyle, offering positive models and alternatives that are attractive to the target group.
6. **Use of the "KAB" model:** Preventive action should not only aim at transmitting information but should also seek to influence the behaviour and attitudes of participants. Examples include training in assertiveness and refusal skills, social communication, and strengthening self-esteem, which can be linked to the ability to resist pressure to engage in risky behaviour, e.g. in a peer group, etc.
7. **Use of the peer element, emphasis on interaction and active involvement:** for children and adolescents, their peers are very often more of an authority than parents and teachers themselves, and it is, therefore, appropriate to use this peer pressure in the prevention of risky behaviour. Programme implementers should take on more of an initiator and facilitator role.
8. **Denormalisation:** primary prevention programmes aim to create a social climate in which risky behaviour is explicitly rejected. The term "denormalisation" therefore indicates that in the course of prevention activities, the values and norms of the target group are changed so that they do not consider risky behaviour desirable and do not have only a neutral attitude towards it.
9. **Promoting protective factors:** prevention programmes should create conditions for socially acceptable activities within a supportive environment that enables children to establish optimal relationships. Primary prevention may also include the offer of other specialised services for possible crisis of the participants.
10. **Not using ineffective means:** simply providing health or other information about the risk phenomenon appears to be an ineffective way of carrying out primary prevention. Intimidation, prohibition, exaggeration of the consequences of use, moralising and affective education based only on strong emotions and feelings can be considered ineffective preventive measures.

Course and methodology of the research investigation

The quantitative research investigation aimed to explore pupils' experiences of drug prevention activities in the context of their experiences with addictive substances. According to Hendl and Remr (2017, p. 137), "quantitative research focuses on measuring the assessment of statistical variability and interdependence of variables. One of the main goals of the researcher is to collect highly structured data."

The research problem was formulated as follows:

- ✓ Prevention of drug addiction of 9th grade primary school pupils and 1st year secondary school pupils in the context of their experience with addictive substances.

In relation to the research problem, the main goal of the research investigation was formulated in this way:

- ✓ The main goal of the empirical investigation is to find out the experience of pupils with drug prevention activities in selected primary and secondary schools and also to find out their experience with addictive substances.

In the research investigation, an additional sub-goal was set, which was formulated as follows:

- ✓ The sub-goal is to determine whether more substance abuse experiences occur among students in matriculated or non-matriculated high school.

Subsequently, five research hypotheses were formulated, which according to Gavora (2002) are defined as scientific assumptions based on scientific theory. The hypotheses are conceived in relation to knowledge that is already known about the phenomenon under study or based on the researcher's practical experience.

The hypotheses of this research investigation are formulated as follows:

- **Hypothesis 1: More than 75% of the respondents stated that they are sufficiently informed about drug issues.**

According to the principles of effective prevention according to Nešpor, Csémy and Pernicová (1999), a prevention programme should include the topic of legal and illegal substances. According to the methodological recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science dealing with the issue of addictive substances, the school should comply with the following points:

- ✓ "To provide pupils and legal representatives of underage pupils with the necessary relevant information.
- ✓ To provide pupils factual and truthful information about addictive substances in a form that is appropriate to their intellectual and personal development.
- ✓ To prevent pupils from using substances.
- ✓ Include information about the risks of substance use and the prohibition of substance use in all school-related activities in all health education." (Gabrhelík et al., 2010, p. 15–16)

Ideally, even taking into account the schools' efforts to prevent substance use, pupils' knowledge should be 100%, but the risks of pupils missing out on prevention activities or subjective assessment of lack of knowledge must be taken into account. Therefore, a threshold of 75% was set under this hypothesis (Vavříková, 2024).

- **Hypothesis 2: More than 50% of respondents consider the prevention provided in the selected schools to be sufficient.**

Hypothesis No. 2 was established on the basis of a SWOT analysis that evaluates the situation in the field of primary prevention of risky behaviour for the period of the 2013–2018 strategy. The hypothesis threshold was set at 50% due to the balance of weaknesses and strengths of the implemented primary prevention. (Vavříková, 2024) Strengths include, for example, more stable multi-year funding for prevention of risky behaviour, the existence of regional plans and strategies (also at the national level) or an increasing number of certified programmes. Weaknesses include e.g. lack of interest in risk

behaviour prevention on the part of parents, lack of school psychologists, child psychiatrists and other professionals, lack of support from school principals or downplaying of risk behaviour at the public level.

- **Hypothesis 3: More respondents have experience of drinking alcohol than smoking cigarettes.**

Hypothesis 3 is based on the results of the ESPAD 2019 study. 2 778 respondents participated in the study. Some of the areas addressed in the ESPAD research are the issue of drinking alcohol or the issue of cigarette smoking. It was found that 54% of the respondents have experienced cigarette smoking in their lifetime. In the case of alcohol consumption, up to 95.1% have this experience (Chromynová et al., 2020).

- **Hypothesis 4: More than 60% of the respondents drank alcohol in the last 30 days.**

Hypothesis 4, like hypothesis 3, is based on the ESPAD 2019 study. The results show that 62.7% of the respondents drank alcohol in the last 30 days and therefore the threshold for this hypothesis was set at 60% (Chromynová et al., 2020).

- **Hypothesis 5: Marijuana is a more frequently used substance by respondents than ecstasy.**

According to the ESPAD 2019 study, 28.4% of respondents said they had experience with cannabis substances, while 3.6% admitted to having used ecstasy. In the context of these results, cannabis substances appear to be the most widely used addictive substance (Chromynová et al., 2020).

Research technique and research set

To obtain data, a questionnaire of our own design was used, which was distributed in paper form in selected primary and secondary schools in Hradec Králové. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is devoted to the items that collect basic information about the respondent (gender, year studied). In the next part, 14 closed questions are formulated. For four of them (namely questions 2, 4, 13, 14) it is possible to select multiple answers or to formulate one's own answer. In a footnote, the terms "drug problem" and "K-centre" are introduced to avoid misinterpretations by the respondents. (Vavříková, 2024)

Tables 1 and 2 present the composition of the research population in terms of gender and type of school studied.

Table 1 *Research population in terms of gender*

Total frequency of respondents	Boys	Girls	Other gender
196	92	99	5

Table 2 *Research population in terms of type of school studied*

Type of school studied	Primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Elementary school „A“	Elementary school „B“	Matura specialisations	Non-matriculated disciplines
	73	31	49	43

Overview of the main results of the research investigation

According to the results of the survey, 69.4% of respondents believe that they are sufficiently informed about drug issues. There were no significant differences between first year matriculants (74.4%) and non-matriculants (77.6%). 63.5% of 9th grade respondents considered themselves sufficiently informed. The results showed that respondents most often learn about drug problems from television and the Internet (67.3%). The second most frequent source of information is a lecture by a professional in the context of education (psychologist, police officer, etc.) with 57.1%. With a minimal difference, respondents are informed by teachers (45.4%) and parents (44.9%). Friends appear as a source of information in 36.7%. **Based on the data, hypothesis 1 is rejected.** (Vavříková, 2024)

63.8% of the respondents would like a lecture on the topic of "drug issues" and therefore it can be assumed that these respondents would like more information. 73.5% of the respondents admitted that they would like a lecture with a former or currently addicted individual. The higher percentage is not surprising; despite the ineffectiveness of these "intimidating" prevention activities, children and adolescents are likely to perceive the experience as an attractive one. (Vavříková, 2024)

68.4% of respondents believe that not enough attention is paid to drug prevention in their school. The lack of drug addiction prevention activities is perceived the most by respondents of the first grade of non-matriculated subjects (83.7%). The lowest frequency was recorded among the ninth grade students of selected primary schools (60.6%). **Based on the data, hypothesis 2 is rejected.** (Vavříková, 2024)

The most frequent preventive activities related to drug addiction (prevention programme from external organisations, lecture, discussion from teachers, projects, etc.) are implemented in the selected primary and secondary schools once a year (43.4%). For pupils of 9th grade, the most frequent implementer of these preventive activities seems to be an external worker/organisation. Students in the first year of matriculation most often have experience with preventive activities implemented by teachers during lessons (e.g. civic education) and classroom lessons (31.25%). For students in the first year of non-matriculation, as with students in the 9th grade of primary schools, the most frequent preventive activities are implemented by an external employee/organisation. (Vavříková, 2024)

The survey also found that 36.2% of respondents had experience of smoking cigarettes. A significant difference can be noticed between matriculated and non-matriculated students. 72.1% of the non-matriculated respondents have experience of smoking cigarettes, while the corresponding figure for matriculated students is 36.7%. The lowest frequency of experience with cigarette smoking can be observed among 9th grade students (21.2%). The survey showed that the respondents' experience with alcohol consumption compared to cigarette smoking is generally higher (70.4%). **Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted.** The frequency of experience of alcohol consumption in terms of graduating (85.7%) and non-graduating (86%) classes is almost identical. Among the 9th graders of primary school, 56.7% admitted to having experience of drinking alcohol. A total of 41.4% of respondents had drunk alcohol at least once in the last 30 days. **H4 is therefore rejected.** (Vavříková, 2024)

Question 13 asked which specific illicit drug the respondents had experience with. According to the results, the most commonly used substance was marijuana (18.9%). In the case of ecstasy, only 1% of respondents used it. **H5 was therefore accepted.** In the

case of marijuana, the most frequent experience can be noted for 1st year non-matriculated students (46.5%). In the case of 1st year matriculated students, the experience of marijuana use was admitted by 16.3% of respondents. Elementary 9th graders had this experience at 8.7%. However, it should be added that 79.1% of respondents have no experience of using an illegal drug. (Vavříková, 2024)

Conclusion

The paper aimed to find out what is the experience of pupils and students with drug prevention activities in selected primary and secondary schools in the context of their experience with addictive substances. A sub-objective was to find out whether there is more experience of substance abuse among pupils in matriculated or non-matriculated subjects. From the results, it is clear that more than half of the respondents are interested in expanding their knowledge about drug issues. More than half of the respondents believe that not enough attention is paid to drug prevention at school. This fact is perceived most by pupils in the first year of selected non-matriculation courses. The research survey showed that more than a third of respondents have experience of smoking cigarettes. However, this experience significantly exceeds that of 1st year non-matriculated students. The survey also showed that the respondents' experience of alcohol consumption compared to cigarette smoking is significantly higher. The most commonly used illicit drug by the selected respondents is marijuana. The results show that first year non-matriculated secondary school students generally have more frequent experiences with substance use. Based on the research investigation conducted, the defined objectives can be considered to have been met. It is important to add, however, that the findings should be treated with some caution. These findings cannot be generalized and, based on them, conclusions that would be valid for the selected target groups of our entire society cannot be drawn. The research could be repeated with the same target group (in particular, primary school pupils in Year 9) to see whether their experience of substance abuse generally increases as they move on to secondary school.

References

- Elliot, J., & Place, M. (2002). *Dítě v nesnázích: prevence, příčiny, terapie*. Grada Publishing.
- Gabrhelík, R., Orlíková, B., & Šejvl, J. (2010). *Rizikové chování ve školním prostředí – rámcový koncept, Příloha č. 1: Název: Návykové látky*. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky.
- Gavora, P. (2000). *Úvod do pedagogického výzkumu*. Paido.
- Hendl, J., & Remr, J. (2017). *Metody výzkumu a evaluace*. Portál.
- Chomynová, P., Csémy, L., & Mravčík, V. (2020). Evropská školní studie o alkoholu a jiných drogách (ESPAD) 2019. *Zaostřeno*, 6(5), 1–20.
- Jandourek, J. (2001). *Sociologický slovník*. Portál.
- Kalina, K. (2003). Modely závislosti a přístupy v pomoci uživatelům drog. In K. Kalina (Ed.), *Drogy a drogové závislosti: mezioborový přístup* (s. 91–95). Úřad vlády České republiky.
- Kraus, B. (2017). Co ohrožuje dětství na počátku 21. století. In *Acta sociopathologica* (s. 7–18). Gaudeamus.

- Kudrle, S. (2003). Úvod do bio-psycho-socio-spirituálního modelu závislosti. In K. Kalina (Ed.). *Drogy a drogové závislosti: mezioborový přístup* (s. 91–95). Úřad vlády České republiky.
- Millerová, G. (2011). *Adiktologické poradenství*. Galén.
- Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (2019). *Národní strategie primární prevence rizikového chování dětí a mládeže na období 2019–2027*. https://msmt.gov.cz/uploads/narodni_strategie_primarni_prevence_2019_27.pdf
- Miovský, M. (Ed.). (2015). *Prevence rizikového chování ve školství*. Univerzita Karlova v Praze: 1. lékařská fakulta, Klinika adiktologie.
- Nešpor, K. (2007). *Návykové chování a závislost*. Portál.
- Nešpor, K., Csémy, L., & Pernicová, H. (1999). *Zásady efektivní primární prevence*. Sportprag.
- Nielsen Sobotková, V. (2014). *Rizikové a antisociální chování v adolescenci*. Grada Publishing.
- Průcha, J., Walterová, E., & Mareš, J. (2013). *Pedagogický slovník*. Portál.
- Sdělení č. 104/1991 Sb. Sdělení federálního ministerstva zahraničních věcí o sjednání Úmluvy o právech dítěte*. (1991). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1991-104>.
- Vavříková, N. (2024). *Prevence drogových závislostí u dětí a mládeže*. [Bakalářská práce, Univerzita Hradec Králové]. Theses.cz. <https://theses.cz/id/vkkkhe/STAG100415.pdf>.

Authors:

Mgr. Adéla Marešová

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

adela.maresova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2018-3939>

Bc. Nikol Vavříková

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

nikol.vavrikova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5051-7801>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Sociocultural Aspects of Sexualized Violence Against Women

Sociokulturní aspekty sexualizovaného násilí na ženách

Magdaléna Hrdinová¹

Abstract:

The paper focuses on the issue of sexualized violence against women with regard to its selected social aspects. The paper works with the latest knowledge on the nature and perpetrators of the crime of rape and approaches sexualized violence against women as a consequence of gender inequality in society. The starting point for this paper is the theoretical concept of rape culture, which summarizes and specifies the social conditions contributing to the presence of all types of gender-based violence. Special emphasis is placed on subtle manifestations of rape culture, such as various types of sexist behaviour (clinging to traditional gender roles, sexist remarks, etc.).

Keywords:

Sexualized violence; gender-based violence; rape; rape culture

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek se zaměřuje na problematiku sexualizovaného násilí na ženách s ohledem na jeho vybrané společenské aspekty. Text pracuje s nejnovějšími poznatky o povaze a pachatelích trestného činu znásilnění a přistupuje k sexualizovanému násilí na ženách jako k důsledku genderové nerovnosti ve společnosti. Teoretickým východiskem je koncept kultury znásilnění, který shrnuje a blíže specifikuje společenské podmínky přispívající k výskytu všech typů genderově podmíněného násilí. Zvláštní důraz je kladen na subtilní projevy kultury znásilnění, jako především různé typy sexistického chování (lpění na tradičních genderových rolích, sexistické komentáře apod.).

Klíčová slova:

Sexualizované násilí; genderově podmíněné násilí; znásilnění; kultura znásilnění

Introduction

The topic of sexualised violence against women has recently been given more and more space in the Czech public debate. The term *sexualised violence* refers to “any violation of an individual's right to self-determination in the area of sexual expression.” (Čírtková, 2023, p. 311) The term *sexualized violence* is now slowly replacing the previously exclusively used expression *sexual violence*, because the new term – according to experts

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, magdalena.hrdinova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

– better captures the true nature of this type of violence: i.e. the fact that the primary motivation of perpetrators of sexualized violence is not sexual desire, but the desire for a sense of power, and sexual intercourse is abused as a means to satisfy the desire. (Kutálková & Kobová, 2014)

Depending on the presence of physical contact, sexualized violence includes contact forms (primarily rape, unwanted touching, kissing or forced sexual practices) and non-contact forms (public exposure, non-consensual taking and dissemination of intimate photographs, etc.). (Pokorná & Ježková, 2021)

Social aspects of rape

Rape is the most frequently mentioned and most researched form of sexualised violence. This article works exclusively with the conception of rape as any sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim. (e.g. Konsent, 2021)

According to police statistics, women are the most frequent victims of rape (taking into account the high latency rate of this type of crime, which may distort not only the quantity but also the most frequent form of reported rape cases), while men are the most frequent perpetrators. For example, in 2021, 460 cases of rape were officially registered, of which 454 were perpetrated by men. (Policie ČR, 2022) Sexualized violence can therefore be seen as the most significant example of gender-based violence - i.e. violence that is based on the gender of the victim. (Úřad vlády ČR, 2023)

Rape is associated with a number of misinformation and myths that are influencing the Czech public's perception of this type of violence, leading to distrust of victims and advocacy for perpetrators. From the most common misconception, i.e. that rape is primarily motivated by an uncontrollable sexual drive and lust (see below), and the related misconception that women can somehow “ask” for rape (by their appearance, lifestyle, clothing or age), to the mistaken assumption that the perpetrator of rape is usually a stranger with some sexual deviation, to the opinion that most rapes are fabricated and that reporting them to the police is intended to harm the perpetrator. (Benedict, 2003; Ciprová, 2010; Pokorná & Ježková, 2021)

Recently, however, the issue of sexualized violence against women has been quite significantly publicized and thanks particularly to the courage of survivors to share their experiences in the public sphere (and also the work of various initiatives), real information about what rape most often looks like and who are the perpetrators of such acts is gradually becoming available to ordinary members of Czech society.

Thanks to this, the definition of the crime of rape in the Czech Penal Code was changed in June this year, redefining rape as non-consensual sexual intercourse instead of prior “forced sexual intercourse”. This redefinition is for several reasons a very important step in improving the situation of rape victims.

Real forms of rape

In most cases, rape does not occur as it is generally presented in popular films and TV shows. In practice, according to Čírtková (2019), a distinction can be made between two types of rape: *stranger rape* (rape by an unknown perpetrator; also referred to as “true rape”) and *acquaintance rape* (relationship rape). The second type is much more common, and the most common perception of rape as a stranger assault out on the street is

therefore highly distorted. “Most rapes take place between people who know each other. The perpetrators tend to be otherwise normal men who do not suffer from sexual deviance or can be diagnosed as psychopaths, i.e. they do not show signs of specific personality and behavioral disorders. In various studies, up to 90% of victims report that they knew their perpetrator.” (Čírtková, 2019, p. 11)

The perpetrator is not usually a stranger, suffering from an uncontrollable desire for sexual intercourse and who “waits” for a careless, scantily clad victim in the park at night to satisfy his urgent physiological need. In the vast majority of cases, rape perpetrators also do not suffer from sexual deviation, which is another common misconception. (Blatníková a kol., 2014) Again, victims are not exclusively young, pretty women who have “asked for it” by their appearance or clothing. This is because – as already mentioned – the perpetrator is not primarily motivated by sexual desire and therefore cannot be “provoked” by appearance. (Ciprová, 2010) According to surveys, the perpetrator of rape is most often a person known to the victim – it is a partner, family member, colleague, neighbour or acquaintance. (e.g. RAINN, 2024, online) In most cases, the act is premeditated and planned in advance, and if it is a relationship rape, it is also repeated and long-term. The perpetrator's goal is to attack the victim's most sensitive areas and uses sexual intercourse as a means to achieve his goal (Benedict, 2003; Ciprová, 2010; Pokorná & Ježková, 2021). Moreover, a large number of victims are unable – or incapable – of defending themselves against rape, either because they are frozen, but often also because they know that defending themselves would not help them or it might provoke the perpetrator to even more dangerous actions. Therefore, according to Čírtková (2019), they may not even have visible physical marks or injuries left on their bodies after the act, which are often sought as “confirmation” of the act by doctors and forensic experts. (Čírtková, 2019)

Having summarised all the above-mentioned findings on rape, it is evident that the existing definition of the crime of rape was far from reflecting the reality of most rapes and therefore did not provide sufficient protection for victims, which is expected to change with the new definition.

Prevalence of rape in the Czech Republic and its conditions

What the new definition of the crime of rape itself cannot change is the fact that such acts occur in Czech society at all. As many as 12 000 rapes are committed in the Czech Republic each year, while only 5% of such acts are reported to the police. (Šimáčková et al., 2020) According to a survey accomplished for Czech organisation Persefona, 9% of respondents have experienced some serious form of sexual violence (especially various types of forced sexual intercourse) at some point in their lives. (Persefona, 2016) The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights reports that up to 22% of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner, and one in three has been a victim of physical or sexual violence. (FRA, 2014)

Several questions arise, perhaps the most pressing of which is: how is it possible that in a modern, civilized country one in ten women will experience rape in her lifetime? Why is it so little known and talked about? Why is the gender of rape victims and perpetrators so clearly unbalanced? And perhaps the most controversial question – is anyone who commits sexualized violence against another person always just an evil, twisted, and deplorable person, or could they be just trying to meet societal expectations with their behavior?

Is it possible to talk about rape as a result of inequality between men and women in society? From the above information it is evident that the answers to these questions can no longer be sought only in terms of individuals, their faults or pathologies: it is also necessary to measure the socio-cultural settings of Czech society.

Rape culture

The ability to effectively prevent a specific problematic phenomenon requires a thorough knowledge of its causes. According to the available information, sexualised violence can be considered primarily a social problem, not an individual one. However, a similar conception of rape is still significantly lacking in Czech society.

Efforts to sort out the knowledge and seek explanations for the alarming situation regarding women's widespread experience of sexualised violence emerged as early as the 1970s in the USA. (Jakalová & Valkovičová, 2020) Out of these efforts grew the concept – and at the same time the theoretical concept – of “rape culture”.

The term *rape culture* refers to the societal conditions (or sociocultural environment) in which a variety of circumstances promote the occurrence of sexualized violence against women. (Buršová, 2024) The term can therefore be used to refer to the sociocultural aspects of rape. In such a society sexualised violence is trivialized, normalised and justified, and there is also a heightened tolerance of its various manifestations, which encourages its occurrence. (Buršová, 2024) Members of the culture tend to defend and excuse the perpetrator and to justify the act of rape by the inappropriate behavior of the victims. At the same time, this society is characterized by a high incidence of sexist expressions and gender stereotyping regarding desirable characteristics, roles and behaviours of women and men.

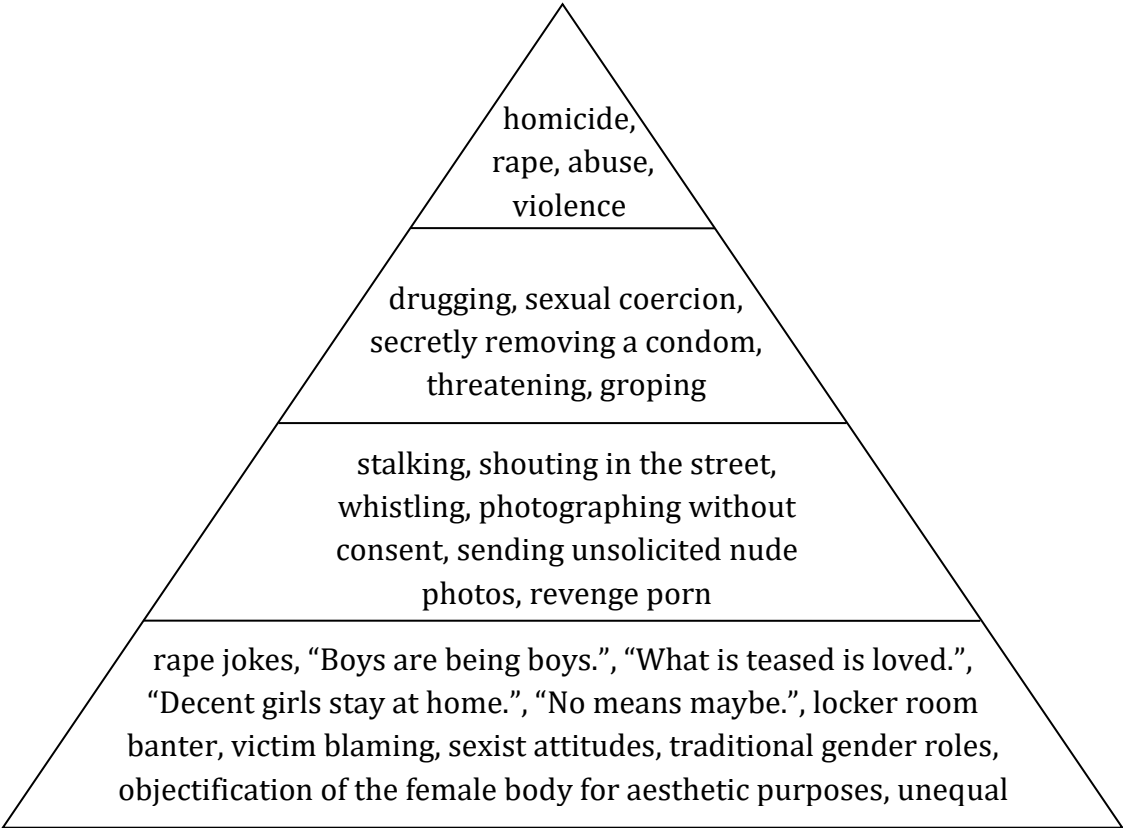
Sometimes the term *rape culture* can be used in connection with the expression “fertile ground” or the term “subsoil”. It is a system made up of many different elements that interact and build on each other. As Laura Bates, author of *Everyday Sexism* book, says: everything is connected. Inequality is a continuum in which every attitude and every idea is related, and one influences the other. All the small, seemingly innocuous discriminatory acts, comments, sexist jokes, or consistent demands for gender-stereotyped roles create a solid foundation for everything else to grow. As Bates says: everything is part of the same problem. (Bates, 2015)

Manifestations of rape culture

Rape culture manifests itself in society in a variety of ways. Buršová (2024) places victim blaming (i.e. blaming the victim for having been raped) at the top of the list and mentions also downplaying of the seriousness of rape and denial of its prevalence (e.g., rape jokes or labeling the act as “rough” or just “bad” sex). The author also mentions the objectification of the female body, which is related to the use of naked female bodies for advertising purposes. (Buršová, 2024) Sexist jokes are also problematic, because they usually reinforce traditional gender roles in society. (Jakalová & Valkovičová, 2020) Different standards for male and female sexuality (dominance versus submissiveness, activity versus passivity, emphasis on the “chastity” and “purity” of women, etc.) are also a crucial part of rape culture. (Buršová, 2024) Important and no less problematic elements of rape culture are also the products of popular culture (films, TV shows, music, but also literary works), which again reinforce the traditional gender roles and gender

stereotypical assumptions about the characteristics, behaviours and opinions of women and men. Jakalová and Valkovičová (2020) are even more specific in their publication and among the direct manifestations they mention, for example, teaching girls and young women how to avoid sexual violence without teaching boys respect and consent in sexual encounters. (Jakalová & Valkovičová, 2020)

For a better idea, a pyramid scheme is often used to illustrate what rape culture encompasses. It is a simple tool for understanding how it works in practice and for sorting out all the elements that make it up. The lower tiers form the base, the “fertile ground” for the higher tiers, which often include very serious crimes that significantly disrupt the social order.



Picture 1 *Pyramid scheme of rape culture*

Source: Jakalová & Valkovičová, 2020 (modified)

Conclusion

These days we already have much more information about rape than before, and thanks to all the available knowledge it is almost clear that it is no longer possible to look at the act and its causes through the same lens as before. Exploring the concept of rape culture and the problematic phenomena it encompasses seems to be a crucial step towards improving the lives of all women (not only) in Czech society. As separate elements, the manifestations of rape culture may look like harmless trifles, but together they create a system of socio-cultural inequalities and cause numerous experiences of Czech women with gender-based violence, that considerably affect quality of their lives.

References

- Bates, L. (2015). *Everyday Sexism*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.
- Benedict, H. (2003). *To není vaše vina! Rádce pro ženy, muže, dospívající, jejich přátele a rodiny: jak se vyrovnat se sexuální napadením*. One Woman Press.
- Blatníková, Š., Faridová, P., & Zeman, P. (2014). *Násilná sexuální kriminalita – téma pro experty i veřejnost*. Institut pro kriminologii a sociální prevenci.
- Buršová, I. (2024). Feministický slovník: Rape Culture. Heroine: způsobuje nezávislost. <https://www.heroine.cz/slovník/rape-culture>
- Ciprová, K. (2010). *Pod hladinou: fakta a mýty o znásilnění*. Gender Studies.
- Čírtková, L. (2019). Je třeba rozlišovat různé typy znásilnění?. *Právo a rodina*, 21(6), 11–19.
- Čírtková, L. (2023). *Právní psychologie v aktuálních tématech*. Galén.
- FRA. (2014) *Násilí na ženách: průzkum napříč EU*. Stručně o výsledcích. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_cs.pdf.
- Jakalová, Z., & Valkovičová, V. (2020). *Bez souhlasu.txt*. Display – Sdružení pro výzkum a kolektivní praxi.
- Konsent. (2021). *Změna definice znásilnění*. <https://konsent.cz/souhlas/>.
- Kutálková, P., & Kobová, L. (2014). *Sexuální násilí: proč se nikdo neptá?*. In Iustitia.
- Persefona. (2016). *Sexuální násilí očima české veřejnosti: Prezentace hlavních závěrů z výzkumu*. <https://www.persefona.cz/source/pdf/Persefona%20Sen%C3%A1t%20prezentace.pdf>.
- Pokorná, D., & Ježková, V. (2021). *Nejste na to sama: informace pro oběti sexuálního násilí a jejich blízké*. proFem.
- Policie ČR. (2022). *Trestný čin znásilnění – statistika r. 2019 až 2021*. <https://www.policie.cz/clanek/trestny-cin-znasilneni-statistika-r-2019-az-2021.aspx>
- RAINN. (2024). *Perpetrators of Sexual Violence: Statistics*. <https://rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence>.
- Šimáčková, K., Havelková, B., & Špondrová, P. (2020). *Mužské právo: jsou právní pravidla neutrální?*. Wolters Kluwer.
- Úřad vlády ČR. (2023). *Akční plán prevence domácího a genderově podmíněného násilí na léta 2023–2026*. https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/AP_DGPN-2023_final.pdf.

Author:

Bc. Magdaléna Hrdinová
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies
The Czech Republic
magdalena.hrdinova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9137-4487>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Selected Theoretical Foundations of The Current Form of Homonegativity and Transnegativity

Vybraná teoretická východiska současné podoby homonegativity a transnegativity

Martina Pacltová¹

Abstract:

This contribution explores homonegativity and transnegativity, highlighting ongoing prejudice against LGBT+ people. Despite advancements in human rights, negative attitudes towards non-heterosexual orientations and gender nonconformity persist, impacting individuals and society. Homonegativity targets not only gays and lesbians but also other queer individuals and allies. Similarly, transnegativity affects not only those with non-cisgender identities. The article examines how heteronormativity and cisnormativity reinforce these biases and discusses their harmful effects, including mental health challenges, societal exclusion, and the restrictive impact of gender stereotypes.

Keywords:


Homonegativity; transnegativity; heteronormativity; cisnormativity

Abstrakt:

Tento příspěvek se zabývá koncepty homonegativity a transnegativity a upozorňuje na přetrvávající předsudky vůči LGBT+ osobám. Navzdory pokroku v oblasti lidských práv přetrvávají ve společnosti negativní postoje vůči osobám s neheterosexuální orientací a genderově nonkonformním osobám, což má dopad na jednotlivce i společnost. Homonegativita zasahuje nejen gaye a lesby, ale i další queer jedince a podporovatele jejich práv. Podobně transnegativita postihuje nejen osoby s jinou než cisgender identitou. Článek zkoumá, jak heteronormativita a cisnormativita posilují a podmiňují tyto předsudky, a rozebírá jejich škodlivé dopady, včetně problémů v oblasti duševního zdraví, společenského vyloučení a omezujícího vlivu genderových stereotypů.

Klíčová slova:

Homonegativita; transnegativita; heteronormativita; cisnormativita

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, martina.pacltova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

Homonegativity and transnegativity, two concepts that reflect persistent societal prejudices against people from the LGBT+ community, are still deeply rooted in mainstream approaches to sexuality and gender identity today. Despite significant progress in the areas of human rights and equality, prejudice and negative attitudes towards people with minority sexual orientation or gender identity continue to affect their lives, both at an individual and institutional level. So what is the current shape of homonegativity and transnegativity? And where do they come from?

In general, it is known that non-heterosexual orientations and various deviations from the perception and experience of the female-male gender divide based on bodily qualities have appeared in various forms in all cultures known to us. Some have found it easier to accept these deviations from the currently perceived norm, others more difficult, and in many they have been and continue to be severely sanctioned. In the European context, we are currently seeing more respect... or rather "lenient" tolerance in the legislative sphere, but this is not the rule either. In the field of real interpersonal relations, then, the situation is usually even further away from respect.

Let us first look at the phenomena of homonegativity and transnegativity themselves, by describing their possible victims, manifestations and impacts, and their connection to heteronormative and cisnormative approaches.

Homonegativity or homophobia?

A better known and more familiar term than homonegativity is homophobia. It can be defined as hostile attitudes and negative prejudices towards people with non-heterosexual preferences (Čechová & Hajdíková, 2016, p. 6). The reason why, for example, Pitoňák prefers the term homonegativity (binegativity, transnegativity) is that it is more appropriate from a professional point of view. The suffix "-phobia" suggests the presence of fear, which causes inaccuracy (Pitoňák, 2022). In fact, homonegativity and transnegativity are more likely to be associated with an attitude, whose components do include an emotional component, but logically this alone is not the only determinant.

Possible victims of homonegativity: not just gays and lesbians

The victims of homonegativity, although the name would suggest it, are not only gays and lesbians, but also people with a different queer orientation (bisexual, pansexual) or people who are associated with queer or are considered queer by their surroundings as a result of (gender) stereotypical thinking (cf. Čechová & Hajdíková, 2016; Fafejta, 2016). Thus, they may be supporters of LGBT+ rights or anyone else who reminds people of gay or lesbian people by their appearance or behaviour. In a gender-stereotyped society, this can also be a feminine-looking man/masculine-looking woman, a transgender person, and others (cf. Fafejta, 2016).

Blumenfeld points out that homonegativity and sexism do not only harm their targets. Hating LGBT+ people remains an "acceptable" prejudice in our society, even though it causes widespread damage in everyone's lives. Sexism, along with homonegativity, forces individuals into rigid gender roles and exerts an oppressive force (Blumenfeld, 1992). This, in turn, naturally stifles freedom to choose and develop personal interests and talents, can negatively affect the development of an individual's emotional skills, and

interferes with the establishment of authentic relationships. As a result, the full potential of individuals is not realized and used, which can and does negatively affect social progress.

Forms and shades of homonegativity

Homonegativity manifests itself in many different forms and levels, from the individual to social structures. In recent years, the term **internalized homonegativity** (or homophobia), which is a manifestation of disgust or fear of non-heterosexual preference in the self, has been most widely used. It stems from the belief that a heterosexual preference is superior to a gay, lesbian or other preference. As a result, the individual suffers and hides their sexuality from the outside world, sometimes not even admitting it to themselves. This may or may not also manifest itself in **interpersonal homonegativity** that is oriented towards other people (cf. Blumenfeld, 1992; Fafejta 2016; Lyong, 2019; Pitoňák, 2022).

Blumenfeld also distinguishes between **institutionalised** and **cultural homonegativity**. Institutionalized refers to discriminatory attitudes and policies embedded in formal institutions, typically in legal frameworks or even in the structures and rules of social subsystems (Blumenfeld, 1992). Cultural homonegativity is also found in societies where its institutionalized form does not occur – it is present in everyday interactions between people, in customs, norms, media, language, and manifests itself in the reproduction of stereotypes, negative innuendo (Blumenfeld, 1992) or microaggressions, which are characterized by their unobtrusiveness, cumulative nature and, when exposed over a long period of time, have a negative impact on the mental health of individuals (Nadal, 2023).

Another seven "shades" of homonegativity are presented by Lyong based on his research on the analysis of scholarly texts dealing with this issue. These seven shades are:

- **radical;**
- **prohibitionist;**
- **denialist;**
- **avoidant;**
- **morbidity;**
- **tepid;**
- and **veiled** (Lyong, 2019).

The radical form includes direct physical and non-physical violence or calls for it. In some countries, it goes as far as stoning or executions or "corrective rape" as a way of "curing" lesbianism in some cultures; elsewhere, it is about laws against homosexuality involving the sanctioning of their violation through physical punishment; and elsewhere, it is "just" hate-speech, literally translated as hate speech that takes on a dehumanizing character (Lyong, 2019). Although this form of physical violence tends not to appear in European culture, it is not entirely absent. An example from recent years is the media-famous hate-motivated murderous attack in a gay bar in Bratislava (Český rozhlas, 2022). **The prohibitionist** form is characteristic of regulatory and value-based social systems that reject or condemn same-sex relationships but, unlike radical homonegativity, do not use physical violence as a means to enforce this prohibition (Lyong, 2019). This and the radical form could be classified as Blumenfeld's institutionalized form.

As Lyong goes on to write, the **denial and avoidance** forms are both typical of individuals whose same-sex preference is latent, and at the same time internalized

homophobia is present. The denial form involves a refusal to acknowledge the existence of homosexuality in a given society or culture, or a refusal to recognize homosexuality as possibly innate. Avoidant is characterized by a strong desire to avoid physical contact/interaction with homosexual individuals. The degree of avoidance can range from a gross unwillingness to discuss the topic of homosexuality at all to a more restrained effort to limit contact. **Morbidity** homophobia is related to the perception of homosexuality as a disease or the cause of a disease. In the case of **the tepid** form, society or the individual is not opposed to the practice of homosexuality but is opposed to the extension of gay rights traditionally associated with heterosexuality, such as marriage and adoption rights. Thus, homophobes in this form recognize the rights of non-heterosexual individuals, but only to a certain extent. The extent of rights allowed may vary context by context depending on what the heteronormative individual or society is comfortable allowing at the time. **Veiled** homophobia refers to disguised, latent forms of prejudice against gays and lesbians. Homophobia that falls into this category is often subtle and may go unnoticed because it is cloaked in some excuse or justification that can range from flimsy to elaborate. This type is more likely to manifest in contexts where anti-discrimination laws exist and where expressions of homophobia are frowned upon (for example, in the workplace or in politics); as a result, people or institutions here are more tactful in their prejudices against non-heterosexuals (Lyong, 2019).

Heteronormativity and minority stress

It is clear that although homonegativity manifests itself in different ways, it often stems largely from the belief and is defended by the argument that heterosexuality is the only natural and therefore the only normal one. In addition to the fact that we have known about the occurrence of non-heterosexual behavior since the ancient history of man, we also know about the occurrence of such behavior in various species of animals. So much for naturalness... As Piton explains, for example, this normative system of understanding that heterosexual orientation (and cisgender identity) is the only normal, and expected, one on that basis is called heteronormativity. Such an approach thus condemns non-heterosexual preferences as unnatural, inferior, even undesirable, and conditions stigmatization and discrimination (Pitoňák, 2022).

(Not only) from the heteronormative setting of society then arises **minority stress**, which Pitoňák defines as *"the unnecessary stress to which individuals from stigmatized groups are exposed as a result of their minority position."* (Pitoňák, 2022, p. 9) Excessive minority stress is then experienced by those who belong to different minorities at the same time. Nadal calls this phenomenon intersectionality. It typically affects people who are both non-white and LGBTQ+ (Nadal, 2023).

Specifics of transnegativity

Although some of the specifics of transnegativity are essentially the same as those of homonegativity – as its forms and actors; and some authors even mention the possibility of classifying transnegativity under homonegativity (e.g. Pitoňák, 2022), we find among them, besides the obvious differences in the affected group of persons, there are some other fundamental differences.

In the Czech Republic, according to research from 2022, non-binary and other gender non-conforming people most often feel discriminated against or harassed (e.g., by insults,

threatening gestures, or inappropriate stares) on the basis of their non-heterosexual orientation or gender, 52 % of these people in the research sample, compared to 36 % of lesbians and 28 % of gays (Pitoňák & Macháčková, 2022). It is clear from this that transnegativity appears to be a more widespread problem – and this statement does not represent an attempt to downplay homonegativity in any way. This difference could be justified by the different length of time these topics have been present in public discourse and, among other things, the resulting different levels of public awareness of sexuality and gender issues.

As a result of fear of harassment, assault and threats, the respondents of the above-mentioned research most often hid their sexual orientation at school and in public space, i.e. in public transport, streets, squares, parks or public buildings (Pitoňák, Macháčková, 2022). We can surmise the effects of feeling the need to hide part of one's identity in public on establishing and maintaining relationships, stress levels, feelings of life satisfaction, and more.

Trans*parent writes that **transnegativity** (they use the term transphobia) is discrimination, dislike, or irrational fear of non-cisgender identity or gender diverse people (Trans*parent, 2023). Čechová and Hajdíková define the term as hostile attitudes and negative prejudices toward trans persons or people who transcend the stereotypical image of men or women (Čechová & Hajdíková, 2016).

Transnegativity can manifest itself in identical forms as homonegativity, under which it falls according to some sources (e.g. Pitoňák, 2022), but it also has some specific forms. Trans*parent mentions, for example, **dead-naming**, i.e. the inappropriate use of a name that is no longer used by the person in question, usually by a trans person. Also **misgendering**, which is the use of inappropriate pronouns, e.g. "he" when referring to a person who identifies as a trans woman. Both of these phenomena can be a manifestation of misgendering, but also of indifference or a deliberate attempt to offend (Trans*parent, 2023).

Westbrook and Schilt point to the often-occurring paradox whereby people can only be recognised by society as belonging to the gender category with which they identify if their claim of identity is accepted as legitimate by other people determining their gender - rather than being recognised as legitimate on the basis of the person's claim (Westbrook and Shilt, 2014).

Possible victims of transnegativity; reflection on changes in the concept of transgender and transsexuality

Transgender people, unlike cisgender people, are all gender non-conforming people, that is, people whose gender (identity) or gender expression at some point does not match the gender they were assigned at birth or the gender (identity) society assigns to them. However, it is not the rule that all such persons are targeted for transition, i.e. hormonal or surgical interventions leading to a change in primary and/or secondary sex characteristics (cf. Cannoot, 2022; Čechová & Hajdíková, 2016; Doležalová et al., 2021; Trans*parent, 2023).

It is important not to confuse the term transgender with the term **transsexual**. Trans*Parent says this term is an outdated and inappropriate concept that is tied to diagnosis, and gender identity is not related to sexuality (Trans*parent, 2023).

As written, for example, by Čechová and Hajdíková, who add to this statement, the latter term is used only for people who, as a result of the discrepancy between their gender and biological sex, are seeking or have already achieved a change in primary or secondary sex characteristics (Čechová, Hajdíková, 2016). Cannoot classifies these individuals as a subgroup of transgender people who experience gender dysphoria (Cannoot, 2022). All of these sources comment on the term transgender but tend to distance themselves from it. In fact, the term transgender captures multiple individuals; both those who experience discomfort associated with their anatomical sex and/or who seek gender reassignment, and those who do not experience said discomfort or seek gender reassignment. At the same time, it is a label that is more correct and up-to-date.

Non-binary (or genderqueer) **persons** are people whose gender (identity) is neither male nor female, or who identify as both male and female at the same time, as different genders at different times, as neither gender, or who deny the very idea of only two genders (Cannoot, 2022). **Intersex persons** are people who are difficult to clearly identify at birth as male or female (Trans*parent, 2023). These are all congenital conditions in which there is a mismatch between a person's genetic (i.e. chromosomal) sex and the appearance of internal and external reproductive structures, on the basis of which the sex of the child is usually determined in the delivery room (Fafejta, 2016). Thus, some authors have raised the question of whether it might be appropriate for us as a society to stop clinging so much to binary perceptions of the various components of sexual identity (e.g., Cannoot, 2022; Fafejta, 2016). This is because, among other areas, it is not sufficient or helpful in determining the gender of those children in hospital whose chromosomes and genitalia are not clearly male or female, and so corrective surgeries occur that may have consequences for the person's health (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2017). This too is a manifestation of the impact of applying cisnormative principles.

Again, we can anticipate that not only the individuals explicitly mentioned may become victims, but also those who are perceived to belong to these groups.

Gender dysphoria

Manifestations of homonegativity and transnegativity do not, of course, remain without consequences for those who are their targets. Gender dysphoria in trans, non-binary, and intersex individuals involves social rejection of their gender identity and physical distress over their sex characteristics. Social or physical barriers during gender transition can exacerbate this distress (Cannoot, 2022). Trans*parent defines dysphoria as negative feelings triggered by inconsistencies between physical traits or social roles and perceived gender. In therapy with transgender clients in the Czech Republic, according to research by Doležalová et al., this is the sixth most common topic, alongside issues like social acceptance, body dysphoria, and emotional pain, often linked to homonegativity and transnegativity (Doležalová et al., 2021). Many of these themes are then closely related to homo/transnegativity. It is clear that the attitude of those around trans people is a crucial factor in their process of coming to terms with their own situation.

Cisnormativity

Just as heteronormativity is rooted in the subsoil of homonegativist thinking, so it is with transnegativist thinking and cisnormativity. **Cisnormativity**, as Cannoot writes, is an essentialist principle that assumes that all persons born with male sex characteristics

have a male gender/identity, and all persons born with female sex characteristics have a female gender/identity (Cannoot, 2022).

Gender stereotypes impose expectations on individuals based on the gender binary. Men are expected to be rational, emotionally reserved, and interested in masculine activities, while women are expected to show empathy, engage in feminine activities, and prioritize caregiving and appearance (cf. Jarkovská, 2013; Fafejta, 2016; Cannoot, 2022). As soon as a person breaks out of these stereotypes, he or she can easily become, as mentioned above, a target of homophobic or transphobic slurs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, even today, when most European countries are making improvements in the area of sexual minority equality legislation, homonegativity and transnegativity are still rooted in our society, and much more deeply than it might seem at first glance. In social systems, homonegativity may be most evident in legal subsystems, but it is most prevalent in culture. It can be harmful not only in its more radical forms, but also in hidden forms that are dangerous in their cumulative nature and more difficult to detect and convict. Transnegativity is in many ways similar to homonegativity, but it can manifest itself specifically in dead-naming or misgendering. At the same time, it is more widespread, which we can try to justify by the shorter period of presence of this topic in informed discourse.

Ultimately, it is not only lesbians, gays and transgender people who are victims of transnegativity and homonegativity, but all those who somehow deviate (or, out of fear, do not deviate) from the stereotypical expectations that gender stereotypes place on people, in this case manifested by heteronormativity and cisnormativity. Let us therefore consider it important to again and again reopen this topic and look at it critically, with respect and open mind.

References

- Blumenfeld, W. J. (1992). *Homophobia: How we all pay the price*. Beacon Press.
- Čechová, H., & Hajdíková, L. (2016). *Duhová příručka pro vyučující: Jak přispívat k bezpečnému a zdravému klimatu v prostředí školy na příkladu prevence homofobní šikany*. Proud.
- Cannoot, P. (2022). *The Right to Personal Autonomy Regarding Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation: The Case of Belgium*. Eleven.
- Český rozhlas. (2022, 14. října). *Střelbu u gay baru v Bratislavě bude policie vyšetřovat jako čin z nenávisti, nevylučuje ani terorismus*. Český rozhlas. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-svet/gay-bar-strelba-bratislava-terorismus_2210141501_mfk.
- Doležalová, P., Heumann, V., Orlíková, B., Hull-Rochelle, G., Pavlica, K., Procházka, J., Escotorin-Soza, P., Graglia, M., Baione, M., Bonvicini, F., Malkova, M., Brando-Garrido, C., Cardoner, N., Casoni, C., Catilino, F., Espelt, C., Giuliani, S., Goldberg, X., Marino, M., ..., & Salzillo, S. (2021). *Rozvoj duševní pohody u transgender klientů: Poznatky a holisticky orientovaný terapeutický přístup*. Národní ústav duševního zdraví.
- Fafejta, M. (2016). *Sexualita a sexuální identita: sociální povaha přirozenosti*. Portál.

- Human Rights Watch. (2017, July 25). *I Want to Be Like Nature Made Me: Medically Unnecessary Surgeries on Intersex Children in the US*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/07/25/i-want-be-nature-made-me/medically-unnecessary-surgeries-intersex-children-us>.
- Jarkovská, L. (2013). *Gender před tabulí: Etnografický výzkum genderové reprodukce v každodennosti školní třídy*. Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Lyong, F. (2019). Shades of Homophobia: A Framework for Analyzing Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(10), 1664–1684. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1702352>.
- Nadal, K. L. (2023). *Dismantling Everyday Discrimination: Microaggressions Toward LGBTQ People*. American Psychological Association.
- Pitoňák, M. (2022). *Standardy a doporučení pro zjišťování společenského postavení, diskriminace a násilí vůči neheterosexuálním a genderově rozmanitým osobám*. Národní ústav duševního zdraví.
- Pitoňák, M., & Macháčková, M. (2022). *Být LGBT+ v Česku: Výzkumná zpráva*. Národní ústav duševního zdraví.
- Trans*parent z. s. (2023). *Jak pečovat o trans talenty*. Nadační fond Pride Business Forum.
- Westbrook, L., & Schilt, K. (2014). Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System. *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213503203>.

Author:

Bc. Martina Pacltová
University of Hradec Králové,
Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies
The Czech Republic
martina.pacltova@uhk.cz
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8036-4368>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025
CC-BY-SA 4.0

Life of Convicted Men in a Late-modern Prison

Život odsouzených mužů v pozdně-moderním vězení

Jan Drahoňovský¹

Abstract:

This paper is a review study of research on the lives of male prisoners in a post-2010 prison environment in the developed Western world. The study first briefly introduces classical backgrounds and theories and then focuses on the most important contemporary research themes in sociology, anthropology, and psychology that relate to the lives of male prisoners. Emphasis is also placed on research in the Czech Republic. The study summarizes this knowledge, draws the most important conclusions, and suggests possibilities for further research in this area, especially concerning the needs of penitentiary practice.

Keywords:

Overview study; convicted men; prison

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek je přehledovou studií výzkumu života odsouzených mužů ve vězeňském prostředí po roce 2010 ve vyspělém západním světě. V této stati jsou nejprve stručně představeny klasická východiska a teorie. Dále se studie zaměřuje na nejdůležitější současná témata výzkumů z oblasti sociologie, antropologie a psychologie, které se týkají života odsouzených mužů. Důraz je kladen i na výzkumy v České republice. Práce toto poznání shrnuje, vyvozuje nejdůležitější závěry a navrhuje možnosti dalšího výzkumu v této oblasti, zejména s ohledem na potřeby penitenciární praxe.

Klíčová slova:

Přehledová studie; odsouzení muži; vězení

Introduction

Life behind prison walls has always attracted the attention of novelists and poets and has been shrouded in many romantic images. It became a regular subject of scientific investigation in the 1930s in the USA when graduates of the famous Chicago School entered prisons and described the way of life of the convicts. In the 1950s and 1970s, sociologists produced many studies on incarcerated men and formulated two influential theories of prison subcultures. Current research on the lives of convicts in prison settings

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, jan.drahonovsky@uhk.cz, ORCID 

is now relatively broad and includes studies within sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The results of these recent studies bring new topics far beyond the study of prison subcultures.

According to some authors, the late-modern prison system is at a crossroads because it is not fulfilling the hopes placed in the institution (Milhaud, 2015). Currently, not only in the Czech Republic, there is a professional debate, especially regarding the change of approach to convicts and the introduction of new methods of treatment (Novopacká et al., 2023). At the same time, it should be noted that in the current prison system, many remnants of traditional settings persist, which makes this action minimally difficult (Koncepte vězeňství do roku 2025, 2016). On the one hand, there is the influence of a large formal organization (the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, hence the organizational units), their components and institutions. On the other hand, it is the action of informal social groups of convicts, of which the convict is also a member. To have a better impact on the prisoner, it is good to understand all these influences, preferably in interdependence.

This study presents research papers that deal with different aspects of a convicted person's life during his sentence. It then summarizes this knowledge and suggests a possible future direction for research that would not only help to expand theoretical knowledge but could also have implications for penological practice.

What are we building on?

The study of the lives of male convicts was a classic topic for sociologists in the 1950s-1980s in the United States and was framed by the theme of prison subcultures. Researchers of the time, beginning with Donald Clemmer (1958)², went into prisons and sought to describe various aspects of this subculture and, in turn, to explain its origins. In the 1960s, two influential theories competed. The first (deprivation) explained the specific subculture of convicts as a natural reaction to the organizational environment of the prison, the essence of which is general deprivation. The foremost representative is Gresham Sykes (1958). The second theory (importation) builds on the socialization of the individual in the environment of criminal street gangs, whose subculture is then transferred inside the prison. A representative of this theory is, for example, James Jacobs (1974). During the 1970s, a series of research studies were carried out that confirmed that institutional influences are better predictors of prisoners' subcultural manifestations than importational influences. The exception to this is the age factor, especially as it relates to near-adolescents (Akers et al., 1974; Thomas, 1977; Ellis et al., 1974). This conclusion was later confirmed by Paweł Moczydłowski (1992) in Polish prisons. Classical studies have also focused on socialization in the prison environment from a time perspective, which is different for long sentences (Toch, 1992; Flanagan, 1995) compared to shorter sentences (Schmid & Jones, 1991). A significant factor influencing the life of a convict is the phase of his conviction and the anticipation of possible future events (Wheeler, 1961).

² Prison Community was first published in 1940 and summarizes the author's field research during the 1930s.

Contemporary research

There is already an extensive literary production touching on convicts' lives. In addition to the traditional approach from the position of penitentiary sociology, there are many contributions from anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy, etc., not only traditionally from the USA and Canada but also from several European countries, including Eastern Europe. The focus is partly related to classical research. Still, new themes abound, primarily oriented toward the psychological concept of prison well-being, convicts' relations with staff, and the prison climate.

The current form of prison society

New research has reopened the old question of the shape of the prison community. Most American authors lean towards the importation model. They believe that a violent predatory code based on gang affiliation has become prevalent in American prisons due to the multiplication of the prison population. David Skarbek (2014) is the leading proponent of this approach. Other authors also subscribe to this notion (Trammell, 2012; Fredman, 2013, etc.). Gangs primarily serve the function of keeping white prisoners safe from assault by black and Hispanic inmates (who are the majority in American prisons), as well as making the environment more predictable and giving the individual some symbolic prestige (Trammell, 2012). However, these gangs are more a matter of maximum-security prisons; in medium-security prisons, there is no firm evidence of their existence (Wills, 2014).

In contrast, Derek A. Kreager and his team (2017) argue against the importation model in favor of a much more cohesive system, finding that despite the high numbers of inmates in US prisons, a kind of informal system has developed, with "old heads" at the center, i.e., inmates who are familiar with the conditions in jail and prisons in general. They are generally respected and become mentors, especially to new prisoners, and surprisingly have good relationships with the wardens (Kreager et al., 2017).

In the countries of the former Soviet Union, the rigid prison subculture of the socialist era, which was based on the rejection of the formal system and the division of convicts into several classes, probably persists in some form (Przybyliński, 2016). However, it no longer seems to retain its rigidity based on loyalty to fellow inmates and resistance to the official institution. Also, the enforceability of compliance with unwritten rules is much more limited (Symkovych, 2018). The reasons are the same as in the Western world: 1) many prisoners have a real chance to get home early on parole, and it is a priority for them; 2) regional, ethnic, and especially economic conditions among prisoners come into play, which makes the traditional stratification of prisoners more complex (Vaičiūnienė & Tereškinas, 2017). This is also confirmed by Polish researcher Andrzej Uhl (2022). He states that prison counterculture is instead something that prisoners would like to exist, but in reality, it is a "theatre," obscuring the fact that the individual is incarcerated. Economic capital is more critical than subcultural norms and practices (Uhl, 2022).

The process of adaptation to imprisonment

Several studies have examined how convicts adapt to the specific conditions of imprisonment. According to Yvonne Jewkes (2011), it is primarily about constructing a proxy identity that enables prisoners to act in prison. For men, work is one of the most critical status conveyors, and thus, men in jail lose the markers through which they can

position themselves in the social world. Since there is no backstage in prison, the prisoner is constantly forced to play a role, so he cannot be himself. These proxy identities can sign good adaptation to the prison environment. However, the repertoire of these identities is limited and largely depends on the specific prison (Jewkes, 2011). However, identity can also be defined by what an individual is not, which explains the prisoners' hatred towards certain groups, especially towards specific crimes (Wills, 2014). Michael Gibson-Light (2020) has shown that identity in prison is primarily derived from an inmate's job position. There is a specific hierarchy in this regard, with the most valued work on the outside being amongst "normal people". Prison work is, therefore, a significant factor in socialization and self-concept (Gibson-Light, 2020).

Adapting to imprisonment is undoubtedly different for shorter and longer sentences. This has been shown in some earlier research. Yvonne Jewkes (2011) found that prisoners with longer sentences tend to form not groups but relatively stable pairs (rarely trios) with closer bonds. She found that the media also plays a significant role in their socialization process (Jewkes, 2011). Interestingly, extended prison stays may not only have adverse effects; according to Polish researchers (2020), these convicts paradoxically showed more excellent psychological stability and appeared even younger than age-appropriate. As a rule, long-term prisoners did not care much about contact with peers, distanced themselves from the prison subculture, and focused on independent activities in the cell. Thus, long-term incarceration may benefit some prisoners (Miszewski & Miałkowska-Kozaryna, 2020).

Adaptation to prison is also related to the relative length of time in prison. This has already been demonstrated by Stanton Wheeler (1961) and actively confirmed by Daniel H. Butler (2019). Results have shown that prisoners orient to different problems at different stages of their sentences. Fear of assault dominates early on, which is reflected in more frequent stays in correction. In the middle phase, the prisoner focuses on relationships with fellow prisoners and people outside the prison. In the last phase, he is already preparing to leave the prison and is most open to contact with staff. These conclusions align with Wheeler but with a refinement in the middle phase, when the prisoner may not only orient himself to the prison subculture but also to people outside the prison world. According to the author's findings, the magic line between short and long sentences is five years (Butler, 2019).

Manifestations of the hidden life of prisoners

One of the manifestations of the life of convicts in the depriving conditions of a prison, where there is a large number of people in a small space, is, of course, violence. However, according to British researcher Joseph H. Michalski (2015), convicts perceive violence with ambivalence. On the one hand, they admire such people; on the other, they fear them or regard them as troublemakers who threaten the established order. For violence to be justified, it must meet one of the following requirements: 1) punishment of disrespect, 2) self-defense against victimization, and 3) a means of conflict resolution (Michalski, 2015). German Anke Neuber (2011) reports in a similar vein. According to her research, violence is predominantly a means of struggle for recognition, reputation, honor, and respect. According to Francesco Wills (2014), "redemptive" violence is directed against specific crimes. Such actions allow one to put personal guilt aside and focus on another problem,

thus feeling like a better person.³ According to Polish researcher Dariusz Sarzała (2015), violence is more associated with closed prisons, without a view of the green, where time is not structured, for example, by work (Sarzała, 2015).

Drugs play an inherent role in today's late-modern prison system. These can serve multiple functions, most notably as an escape from a generally inhospitable environment and a way to structure time (Jewkes, 2011). Drugs are often associated with gang activity (Skarbek, 2014; Fredman, 2013; Tetrault et al., 2020). Surprisingly, in Norwegian prisons, a completely different distribution model based on a sharing culture has been found (Mjåland, 2014).

One of the manifestations of the hidden life of prisoners is gambling. Gambling then represents 1) a means of structuring time (it passes better), 2) an exciting activity to distract boredom, and 3) a means of socialization, especially for prisoners who want to integrate quickly and seek protection. However, gambling is not an essential feature of the prison subculture, as smoking is far more prevalent than gambling (Beauregard & Brochu, 2013).

The impact of the organization on the life of convicts

Much of the current research is concerned with prison staff (particularly warders) and their relationship with prisoners or the role of the organization in the lives of prisoners. In Rebecca Trammell's (2018) study, the wardens reported mutual respect as essential to their relationship with inmates. According to them, prisoners are sensitive to acts of arrogance. It is estimated that the warden's arrogant attitude causes about a quarter of conflicts. On the other hand, guards are often faced with the dilemma of whether they would withdraw and lose authority or behave authoritarian and risk escalating conflict (Trammell et al., 2018). Sarah Shannon and Joshua Page (2014) conducted extensive research among guards and concluded that negative attitudes toward prisoners are not entirely commonplace. These attitudes depended on how wardens rated the prison regarding the sufficiency of staff and the quality of rehabilitation programs for prisoners. Where they believe this works, they report less stress and display less punitive attitudes towards prisoners (Shannon & Page, 2014).

Similar research has been conducted in the Netherlands (2020). This study compared the work climate of guards to prisoner satisfaction. These two variables correlate with each other. Higher perceived staff workload is significantly associated with a low sense of security and poorer peer relationships among prisoners. However, a higher number of guards led to a lower sense of autonomy and generally lower satisfaction among prisoners, undoubtedly due to a higher risk of disciplinary action. To the extent that staff perceived peer cooperation as good, this was reflected in prisoners' overall good assessment of the organization. The length of work experience of guards or the percentage of female representation played no role (Ginneken et al., 2020). Looking from the other side - from inmates - Rebecca Trammell's (2012) study showed that prisoners universally viewed warders (and other prison staff) through a system of widespread prejudice. They see guards as lazy, stupid, and sometimes even sadistic. These findings are not dissimilar to earlier findings (Trammell, 2012).

³ This aspect is also well known to the staff of our prisons; convictions for certain crimes are a source of general contempt among fellow prisoners, and this view is also shared by the guards (Imříšková, 2013).

The prison climate, as seen through the lens of the inmates, has been of long-standing interest to British criminologists led by Ben Crewe. Their MQPL scale (Liebling et al., 2011) is based on the psychological concept of Quality of Life. It captures five dimensions: 1) harmony (humanity, respect, helpfulness from staff), 2) professionalism of the staff (fairness, consistency, bureaucratism), 3) safety (drugs, ease of adaptation, protection from staff), 4) contact with the outside (visiting conditions, etc.), and 5) personal well-being and self-development (autonomy, well-being, opportunity for development). As we can see, this scale is primarily set to the effect of the organization (especially the guards) towards the convicts.

There is considerable variation between prisons in this regard, most markedly in the ratings of warders (Liebling et al., 2019; Johnsen et al., 2017; Bullock & Bunce, 2020, etc.). It is worth noting that, particularly in private prisons, inmates value the helpfulness and humanity of warders (e.g., addressing them by their first name). Simultaneously, there is a low rating for warden professionalism and prison safety. This indicates a failure on the part of the wardens, who do not feel supported by prison management when they should intervene (Crewe, 2015).

While prison climate captures the overall atmosphere between prisoners and staff, prison culture can be considered a broader concept, including sentencing philosophy and general attitude towards prisoners. A study by Ben Crewe (2007) suggests that the culture of late modern prisons in the UK has shifted significantly. According to the convicts, the current prison system is soft, devious, and inhumane. This inhumanity, even monstrosity, of the modern bureaucratic system means that prisoners not only have to do the things they are expected to do but also demonstrate that they are doing them and proclaiming a change of attitude during formal interviews with specialists. These specialists are seen as part of a vast network of disciplinary knowledge.

In contrast, prisoners perceive wardens as relatively powerless and have an utterly peripheral role in decision-making about the inmate. The system is set up so that a convict's life revolves around the possibility of getting out of prison on parole. Even those not in a hurry to get out discuss this topic extensively. Thus, prisoners have to participate in activities and proclaim attitudes that are not their own (Crewe, 2007).

A similar phenomenon also appeared in the British research of Deborah Drake (2012). Prisoners are very skeptical about rehabilitation programs. According to them, they are not there for the prisoner but for the organization; they force prisoners to be what they are not and to behave according to a standard. Some inmates stated that the psychologist is the most dangerous person in prison, as he induces feelings of guilt and self-questioning in prisoners, which can lead to a mental breakdown (Drake, 2012). It is clear that even in the US, a traditional bastion of repressive treatment of prisoners, this narrative has changed, and the role of the warden has shifted towards that of a "low-level street bureaucrat" who enables or prevents prisoners from accessing social services (Shanon & Page, 2014).

Based on a phenomenological exploration of the experience of imprisonment, Ben Crewe (2015) constructed a model of the four basic dimensions in which imprisonment is experienced:

- *depth* – impenetrability of walls, physical and psychological distance from the outside world;

- *weight* – the strictness of the regime, the unforgivingness of the guards, the amount and rigidity of the rules (however, prisons with a soft regime may not be evaluated positively, as prisoners do not feel safe there);
- *tightness* – responsiveness of prisoners for the rehabilitation process or monitoring and documentation of prisoners in terms of participation in programs, their performance for parole purposes;
- *breadth* – the effect of incarceration on the individual after release (physical, financial, social, etc.) (Crewe, 2015).

According to him, the prison regime is mainly influenced by the dimensions of rigidity and responsiveness. Combining them gives us four regimes: supportive, tight, loose, and inconsistent. Especially vague evaluation criteria are perceived very negatively by prisoners (Crewe & Ievins, 2021).

Research on the life of convicts in the Czech Republic

Research directly from the male prison environment is not abundant in our country. The first such work was a study on prison speech by Hála and Soudková (2002), followed by Lucie Radková (2012) with an updated report on the state of prison speech.

Sociologist Lukáš Dirga has the highest publication activity in his efforts to capture the contemporary social world behind prison walls. In his 2015 ethnographic research, he examined the structure of the prison population. He came to a similar conclusion to some of his predecessors of the past generation (Netík et al., 1997), namely that the prison population is vertically structured into classes, with "physical capital" being the primary key to division (Dirga et al., 2015).⁴ Masculinity also plays a crucial role in another of his contributions. The building of muscularity is emphasized primarily to intimidate potential aggressors (Dirga, 2017b). In another study, he discusses prison language, finding that it has a cryptic function in addition to its communicative and socializing function (Dirga, 2016a). Another project focuses on the religiosity of inmates during incarceration, particularly the use of the institution of the prison chapel. There are skeptical findings regarding the convicts' beliefs, as the chapel is often used to meet with other convicts and exchange goods with them (Váně & Dirga, 2016). Lukáš Dirga concludes his research in his dissertation thesis, where he compares the perception of the prison system's humanization policy from the perspective of convicts and selected groups of employees of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic. He concludes that each group perceives the current prison politics differently; in particular, convicts are not at all satisfied with the current state of affairs (although changes are paradoxically happening in the interest of humanizing the conditions of prisoners) (Dirga, 2018).

Alena Lochmannová first focused on the informal market among prisoners, which takes the form of barter, i.e., exchanging scarce goods for other payment (most often tobacco) or services (Lochmannová, 2016). Later, in her monography, she focused on prison tattoos. This work also provides a wealth of information about the hidden life of convicts, including a discussion of norms of behavior among convicts (Lochmannová, 2020). The perspective of convicts on the resocialization institution was addressed by Jiří

⁴ The kings represent the ruling class, particularly distinguished for their muscularity. The workhorses represent servants who must serve others and have few rights. The fools are a class that neither dominates nor is dominated (Dirga et al., 2015).

Mertl (2020). The findings gathered from released prisoners sound critical of the current prison setup and the possibilities for the socialization of prisoners (Mertl, 2020).

Jan Drahoňovský is another author systematically dealing with the prison system. The core of his interest is the experience of prisoners with the execution of imprisonment (Drahoňovský, 2016). Among the most important research findings are the importance of self-esteem derived from success in the prison environment and ambivalent attitudes toward fellow inmates. Furthermore, he and his collaborator focused on the issue of prison tutors through the lens of the inmates entrusted to them (Drahoňovský & Bulavová, 2020). Here, the cardinal importance of these workers for the convict was confirmed. At the same time, it turned out that convicts perceive their tutors in a somewhat different light than intended. Finally, in his quantitative investigation, he addressed the issue of the attitudes of convicts. Here, it was found that the perception of one's sentence is inextricably linked to the prison in which the convict is currently held. There was a remarkable consensus across different groups of convicts in their attitudes towards serving their sentence and the prison (Drahoňovský, 2022).

A summary of the most important findings about the lives of male convicts

- The prison subculture retains a particular existence but is a more implicit, constantly changing, and difficult-to-capture phenomenon. Its characteristics can be seen, for example, in attitudes towards violence or drug use.
- Economic and social capital are critical sources of status in prison. Lack of social capital is an intense vulnerability factor.
- It is not only socialization factors from fellow prisoners that play a role in the life of a convicted person; the possibility of parole and the institutions associated with it can be of great importance. This factor can significantly influence his strategic orientation during his sentence.
- Work is one of the main socialization factors in prison. It allows for structuring time, gaining social status and roles, and significantly influencing well-being.
- Drugs are also a way to structure time in prison. Given the demand for this commodity, prisons are flooded with drugs, and this has significant implications for prison security levels.
- The role of officers has changed, even in the traditionally authoritarian US. The warden either approaches the role of a social worker or acts passively. It has to be said that the prisoners view this rather negatively, as it reduces their sense of security in the prison.
- Imprisonment need not only represent misery (although it is undoubtedly associated with a lower quality of life). Instead, long-term incarceration has a stabilizing effect on the prisoner's well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, the life of convicts in the late-modern era becomes very complex as many factors come into play, and prisons vary significantly. The spatial and organizational conditions determine these factors, the composition of the prison population, the prevalence of drugs, as well as the actual opportunities and facilities offered by the

institutions during the course of the sentence (of which parole plays the most critical role). The staff and their attitude towards the convicts also play a crucial role.

The few domestic studies published do not fundamentally contradict these research findings. They show a multi-layered and sometimes contradictory picture of late-modern prison life in the Czech Republic. On the one hand, we have reports of intense prison subculture manifested in language and customs (tattoos, weight training, slang, black market, and class divisions). On the other hand, there are reports of solid interconnection between convicts and official institutions within the prison, which probably stems not only from the orientation towards parole and obtaining other benefits but also from the need to spend time in a meaningful way and to establish relationships outside the circle of fellow convicts. One of the most critical people in prison for a convict is his tutor. This institution (which is not found in Western prisons) certainly deserves more attention, especially since these professionals are the primary agents of the prisoners' resocialisation during their sentence. The role of guards is perceived rather passively (as in the Western world).

We must state that these domestic studies often provide findings of a difficult-to-generalize nature, sometimes even contradicting each other, which is probably due to the differences between prisons of the same type and the narrow profile of some studies. In this respect, there still needs to be more research that attempts to grasp this complex experience of male prisoners in their sentencing in-depth and at the same time in all contexts. There is also a lack of comparative studies within a quantitative framework that compare aspects of the lives of convicts in different prison settings. In this regard, there are ample opportunities for aspiring researchers. The need for such research stems not only from gaps in theoretical knowledge about convicts' lives but also from everyday practice's needs. There is a growing call from experts for at least partial reforms in the Czech prison system. This debate, conducted mainly in the discourse of restorative justice, puts prisoners at the center of the discussion (Tomášek et al., 2022). In that case, it makes good sense to understand what influences affect and shape a convicted person during his stay in a prison facility.

References

- Akers, R. L., Hayner, N. S., & Gruninger, W. (1974). Homosexual and drug behavior in prison: a test of the functional and importation models of the inmate system. *Social problems*, 21(3), 410–422.
- Beauregard, V., & Brochu, S. (2013). Gambling in prison: addiction or leisure activity?. *International Gambling Studies*, 13(2), 160–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2012.745162>.
- Bullock, K., & Bunce, A. (2020). 'The prison don't talk to you about getting out of prison': On why prisons in England and Wales fail to rehabilitate prisoners. *Criminology & criminal justice*, 20(1), 111–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895818800743>.
- Butler, D. H. (2019). An examination of inmate adjustment stratified by time served in prison. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 64, 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2019.101628>.
- Clemmer, D. (1958). *The prison community* (2. ed.. Rinehart & Company.

- Crewe, B. (2007). Power, adaptation and resistance in a late-modern men's prison. *The British journal of criminology*, 47(2), 256–275. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azl044>.
- Crewe, B. (2015). Inside the belly of the penal beast: Understanding the experience of imprisonment. *International journal for crime, justice and social democracy*, 4(1), 50–65.
- Crewe, B., & Ievins, A. (2021). 'Tightness', recognition and penal power, *Punishment & Society*, 23(1), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474520928115>.
- Dirga, L., Lochmannová, A., & Juříček, P. (2015). The structure of the inmate population in Czech prisons. *Sociológia*, 47(6), 559–578.
- Dirga, L. (2016a). Jak se mluví za mřížemi: (tajná) mluva odsouzených v českých věznicích. *Acta: Fakulty filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni*, 8(1), 7–24.
- Dirga, L. (2017b). Body as a project: the relationship Czech prisoners have to their bodies. *Sociológia*, 49(6), 636–657.
- Dirga, L. (2018). *Humanizace po česku: analýza humanizace na úrovni psaných pravidel a reálné praxe v českých věznicích* [Disertační práce, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci].
- Drahoňovský, J. (2016). Vězení z perspektivy odsouzených. *Bezpečnostní Teorie A Praxe: Security Theory And Practice*, 2016(3), 25–45.
- Drahoňovský, J., & Bulavová, H. (2020). Vězeňský vychovatel očima svých svěřenců. *Bezpečnostní teorie & praxe*, 2020(3), 25–46.
- Drahoňovský, J. (2022). The attitudes of Czech inmates towards incarceration. *Bezpečnostní teorie & praxe: Security theory & practice*, 2022(3), 3–30.
- Drake, D. H. (2012). *Prisons, punishment, and the pursuit of security*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ellis, D., Grasmick, H. G., & Gilman, B. (1974). Violence in prisons: a sociological analysis. *American journal of sociology*, 80(1), 16–43.
- Flanagan, T. J. (1995). Adaptation and adjustment among long-term prisoners. In T. J. Flanagan (Ed.). *Long-term Imprisonment: policy, science and correctional practice*, 109–116. SAGE.
- Fredman, J. (2013). The hate factory: a glimpse into the effects of the prison gang subculture on Non-violent offenders. *Research Papers*, 1–27.
- Gibson-Light, M. (2020). Sandpiles of dignity: labor status and boundary-making in the contemporary American prison. *Journal of the social sciences*, 6(1), 198–216.
- Ginneken, E. F. C. J. van, Bosma, A. Q., Pasma, A., & Palmén, H. (2020). Unhappy staff, unhappy prisoners?: the relation between work climate and prison climate in Dutch prisons. *Kriminologie: das Online-Journal*, 2020(2), 182–200. <https://doi.org/10.18716/ojs/krimoj/2020.2.5>.
- Hála, J., & Soudková, P. (2002). *Jak mluví čeští vězni: místo a úloha vězeňského argotu*. Vězeňská služba České republiky.
- Imříšková, R. (2013). *Percepce vězňů u pracovníků Vězeňské služby* [Diplomová práce, Univerzita Karlova v Praze].
- Jacobs, J. B. (1974). Street gangs behind bars. *Social Problems*, 21(3), 395–409.
- Jewkes, Y. (2011). *Captive audience* (2. ed.). Routledge.

- Johnsen, B., Rokkan, T., Liebling, A., Beyens, K., Boone, M., Kox, M., Schmidt, B., & Vanhouche, A. S. (2017). *Climate survey: measuring the quality of life at Norgerhaven prison*, 1–21.
- Koncepce vězeňství do roku 2025, schválená schválena vládou ČR dne 3. února 2016, usnesením č. 79* (2016). Ministerstvo spravedlnosti ČR.
- Kreager, D. A., Young, J. T. N., Haynie, D. L., Bouchard, M., Schaefer, D. R., & Zajac, G. (2017). Where “old heads” prevail: inmate hierarchy in a men’s prison unit. *American sociological review*, 82(4), 685–718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417710462>.
- Liebling, A., Hulley, S., & Crewe, B. (2011). Conceptualising and measuring the quality of prison life: this book chapter describes the initial and on-going development of the MQPL surveys. In D. Gadd, S. Karstedt, & S. Messner (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of criminological research methods* (pp. 358–372). SAGE.
- Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B. E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D., & Morey, M. (2019). Are hope and possibility achievable in prison? *The Howard journal of crime and justice*, 58(1), 104–126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12303>.
- Lochmannová, A. (2016). Vězeňský trh: hybridní barter a komoditní peníze v prostředí českých věznic. *Acta: Fakulty filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni*, 8(1), 25–42.
- Lochmannová, A. (2020). *Tělo za katrem*. Academia.
- Mertl, J. (2020). „Musíte makat a poslouchat, no“: vězení, potlačování autonomie a rezonibilizace u vězněných a propuštěných osob v ČR. *Sociologický časopis*, 56(4), 523–553. <https://doi.org/10.13060/csr.2020.017>.
- Michalski, J. H. (2015). Status hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity: a general theory of prison violence. *British journal of criminology*, 57(1), 40–60. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azv098>.
- Milhaud, O. (2015). L'enfermement ou la tentation spatialiste: de « l'action aveugle, mais sûre » des murs des prisons. *Annales de géographie*, 124(702/703), 140–162.
- Miszewski, K., & Miałkowska-Kozaryna, M. (2020). Discussion about the problem of prisonization based on our own research. *Polish Journal of Social Rehabilitation*, 2020(19), 309–324. <https://doi.org/10.22432/pjsr.2020.19.19>.
- Mjåland, K. (2014). ‘A culture of sharing’: drug exchange in a Norwegian prison. *Punishment & Society*, 16(3), 336–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474514527149>.
- Moczydłowski, P. (1992). *The hidden life of Polish prisons*. Indiana University Press.
- Netík, K., Hájek, S., & Netíková, D. (1997). *Psychologie v právu: úvod do forenzní psychologie*. C.H. Beck.
- Neuber, A. (2011). Understanding violence in the ‘society of captives’: Sykes meets Bourdieu in prison. *The Howard journal of criminal justice*, 50(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2010.00645.x>.
- Novopacká, M., Podaná, Z., Buriánek, J., Jiříčka, V., Hůrka, J., & Petras, M. (2023). Úspěšnost a selhání ve vězeňských programech. *Česká Kriminologie*, 2023(1), 1–25.
- Przybyliński, S. (2016). On the edge of prison existence: convicted “dodgers” in the lens of the subcultural look. *Resocjalizacja polska: Polish journal of social rehabilitation*, 2016(11), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.22432/pjsr.2016.11.04>.

- Radková, L. (2012). *Jak se mluví za zdmi českých věznic*. Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě.
- Sarzała, D. (2015). Aggression and violence in Polish prisons: symptoms and the causes of the phenomenon. In S. Hoferková & T. Raszková (Ed.), *III. Kriminologické dny: sborník z konference konané v Hradci Králové ve dnech 19. a 20. ledna 2015* (pp. 347–358). Gaudeamus.
- Shannon, S. K. S., & Page, J. (2014). Bureaucrats on the cell Block: prison officers' perceptions of work environment and attitudes toward prisoners. *Social service review*, 88(4), 630–657.
- Schmid, T. J., & Jones, R. S. (1991). Suspended identity: identity transformation in a maximum security prison. *Symbolic interactions*, 14(4), 415–432.
- Skarbek, D. (2014). *The social order of the underworld: how prison gangs govern the American penal system*. Oxford University Press.
- Sykes, G. M. (1958). *The society of captives: a study of a maximum security prison*. Princetown university.
- Symkovych, A. (2018). The 'inmate code' in flux: a normative system and extralegal governance in a Ukrainian prison. *Current Sociology*, 66(7), 1087–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117744596>.
- Tetrault, J. E. C., Bucierius, S. M., & Haggerty, K. D. (2020). Multiculturalism under confinement: prisoner race relations inside western Canadian prisons. *Sociology*, 54(3), 534–555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519882311>.
- Thomas, C. W. (1977). Theoretical perspectives on prisonization: a comparison of the importation and deprivation models. *The journal of criminal law & criminology*, 68(1), 135–145.
- Toch, H. (1992). *Living in prison: the ecology of survival* (2. revised ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Tomášek, J., Krulichová, E., & Masopust-Šachová, P. (2022). Restorative justice programs in Czech prisons: The role of perceived usefulness and familiarity with the program. *The Prison Journal*, 102(6), 694–717.
- Trammell, R. (2012). *Enforcing the convict code: violence and prison culture*. Lynne Rienner.
- Trammell, R., Cook, A. R., Marquez, M. V. D., Hinkle, P., Protze, L. M., & Rodriguez, N. (2018). From procedural justice to procedural injustice: understanding prison staff and inmate conflict. *The Howard journal of crime and justice*, 57(4), 537–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12285>.
- Uhl, A. (2022). Carceral experiences of white-collar offenders: qualitative research design utilising the offender-based definition and Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory. *Crime, law and social change*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-022-10038-x>.
- Vaičiūnienė, R., & Tereškina, A. (2017). Transformations in prison subculture and adjustment to imprisonment in post-Soviet Lithuanian penitentiary institutions. *East European politics and societies and cultures*, 31(3), 659–679.
- Váně, J., & Dirga, L. (2016). The religiosity behind bars: forms of inmate's religiosity in the Czech prison system. *Sociológia*, 48(6), 641–663.

Wheeler, S. (1961). Socialization in correctional communities. *American sociological review*, 26(5), 697–712.

Wills, F. (2014). The myth of redemptive violence in prison. *Atlantic journal of communication*, 22(1), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2014.860145>.

Author:

PhDr. Jan Drahoňovský

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

jan.drahonovsky@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3242-7722>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Section IV: The Role of Cyberspace and Digital Technologies

Digital Technology: Threat or Opportunity for Slovak Libraries?

Digitálne technológie: hrozba alebo príležitosť pre slovenské knižnice?

Iveta Babjaková¹

Abstract:

Our contribution addresses the impact of social paradigm on education. We outline the effect of digital technologies on the work of librarians in Slovak libraries, with insights on international cooperation, as well as the influence of new technologies on services provided by libraries in the field of education. The core of our contribution deals with the analysis and conceptualization of the theoretical framework, background and trends in non-formal learning. We list specific examples of practice in Slovak libraries. As a result, our work provides a partial overview of the current situation concerning non-formal learning in libraries in Slovakia with an emphasis on digital technologies.

Keywords:

Library; non-formal learning; social paradigms; digital technologies

Abstrakt:


V príspevku sa zameriame na dopady sociálnej paradigmy na edukáciu. Načrtujeme vplyv digitálnych technológií na prácu knihovníkov v slovenských knižniciach s presahom na medzinárodnú spoluprácu, ako aj na účinok nových technológií na poskytované služby knižníc v oblasti edukácie. Jadrom príspevku je analýza a konceptualizácia teoretického rámca, východísk a trendov v oblasti neformálneho vzdelávania. Uvedieme konkrétne príklady z praxe v slovenských knižniciach. Výsledkom práce je čiastkový prehľad o aktuálnej situácii v oblasti neformálneho vzdelávania v knižniciach na Slovensku s dôrazom na digitálne technológie.

Klíčové slová:

Knižnica; neformálne vzdelávanie; sociálne paradigmy; digitálne technológie

Background and definition of terms

The social paradigm encompasses a number dimensions within the society, including social construction, social intelligence, social work, social economy and health inequities. Social construction, as referred to by Longhofer and Winchester (2016), emphasizes the way in which reality is formed through social interactions and interpretations.

¹ Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, iveta.babjakova@student.umb.sk, ORCID 

Within the context of (adult) education/learning, the social paradigm affects how learning is perceived, structured and provided. The social paradigm contains norms and values that affect behaviours and interactions in the society; these norms often determine what is considered acceptable or unacceptable within a specific social context. It comprises social values attributed to education, the role of education in social mobility, as well as expectations concerning the results of adult learners' study efforts. In adult learning and lifelong learning, the social paradigm highlights the importance of continuous learning and improvement of skill sets in response to social changes and technological progress (Krystoň, 2011). It affects the accessibility of adult learning opportunities, recognition of prior learning experience and integration of adult learners in the educational environment.

Paradigms are deeply rooted in the cultural context and they are influenced by historical, political and economic conditions. Cultural values and traditions have a key role in shaping and sustaining the social paradigms. These are not static; they are subject to shifts as a result of new information, technological advancements and social movements. Paradigm shifts may lead to major social and cultural transformations.

Non-formal learning in the form of adult education in libraries

In addition to formal and informal learning, the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) also defines 'non-formal learning' which takes place outside of the traditional educational institutions and vocational training and usually does not involve any official certification. This type of education may be provided, among other, by institutions that have been established to complement the formal education system. This is where libraries in their role of educational institutions come in (Čornaničová, 2011). Within the scope of non-formal learning, personal interest-based adult learning can be identified as part of lifelong learning, comprising activities pursued repeatedly or just once by adults in their leisure time and involving knowledge acquisition, travel, well-being and other aspects (Veteška, 2016). These activities are focused around the meaningful use of leisure time and facilitate acquisition of knowledge and competences outside of the school system (in libraries, for example). Educational activities can take place individually or in groups. It is here that we see a window of opportunity for community learning in libraries in Slovakia. As mentioned further by Veteška (2016), the main functions of personal interest-based adult learning include self-improvement, education, well-being, compensation, popularisation, social integration, and adaptation. Personal interest-based adult learning creates a unique space for personal growth, mainly by meaningfully harnessing individual interests, and helps to shape one's personality and set of values.

The role of libraries as knowledge centres

Libraries have become important knowledge centres that support both formal and non-formal learning (Koncpece, 2020). By means of digital technologies, libraries can offer a broad range of educational programmes and resources adapted to the needs of various groups of users. This role of libraries as knowledge centres is key in the effort to further develop the knowledge-based society. As stated by Zábajník (2022, p. 27):

The status of libraries within the society creates the potential for their involvement in public health promotion. Authors studying these issues consistently identify libraries as suitable institutions since they are: 1) easily accessible to people, especially public

libraries (e.g., COVID-19, n.d.); 2) equipped with technologies and internet access (e.g., Bertot et al., 2006, adapted from Xie – Bugg, 2009); 3) generally perceived as trustworthy and helpful institutions (e.g., Whitney – Keselman – Humphreys, 2017).

Digital skills training in libraries can serve as a positive example, broadened to include education via videogames, even if they are still viewed with certain scepticism by the public... However, verified benefits of videogames have been highlighted, including their potential to educate, for example by presenting various historical events, as well as to enhance players' motor skills and social competences. The impact of videogames on motivation for reading is equally important, especially if a videogame is based on a book, or, reversely, has inspired a book to be written (Struháriková, 2023).

The impact of social paradigm on adult learning

This is a complex issue involving various aspects of teaching and learning. For the purpose of our outputs, we shall use the term *learning*, understood by Krystoň (2011) in a broader sense as education. "The concept of lifelong learning opens the space for a legitimate application of a variety of methods for acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes." (Krystoň, 2011, p. 15) Adult participation in lifelong learning is essential in modern knowledge-based societies, reflecting an important characteristic of these societies (Kalenda, 2021a). The importance of evaluating the quality of instruction in adult learning programmes has been emphasized by research (Lukáč, 2023). In Slovakia, empirical findings on the quality of learning in secondary education are known to be lacking, pointing to the need for a better training of educators in adult education (Lukáč, 2023). According to Vančíková (2011), the boom in information and information technologies affects not only the quality and quantity of education in terms of growing numbers of skilled graduates, but also the duration of their training. Vančíková (2011, p. 57) lists the following reasons:

1. Pressure on information technology competencies introduces a certain inequality and discrimination in the job market.
2. Growing social disparities within the information society are linked to substantial differences in the cost of labour.
3. An increased need for lifelong learning also stems from the ever-growing amount of new findings in all fields of scientific research and human activity.

E-learning plays a key role in adult learning, especially in the context of lifelong learning, adult learning and increased use of information and communication technologies (Feszterová, 2018). The COVID-19 global pandemic presented and continues to present challenges to adult learning across the world, affecting, in particular, adults with lower education levels and those in lower-paying jobs, thus reducing the likelihood of their participation in adult learning (Polonyová, 2021). The decisions of individuals concerning their involvement in lifelong learning activities are greatly affected by their social environment (Kalenda, 2021b).

Selected positive impacts of the social paradigm on the implementation of innovative approaches in the field of non-formal learning in libraries

Digital technologies have produced a significant change in the functioning and roles of libraries in a modern society. Traditional libraries, previously centred mainly around physical media (catalogue units – books, periodicals, and, possibly, recorded media in

their music sections – LPs, CDs, videotapes, etc.), are being transformed into dynamic digital information and service centres. This transformation brings about numerous positive aspects, helping to improve access to education, increase efficiency and broaden the possibilities for the users (Konceptce rozvoje knihoven v České republice na léta 2021–2027, 2020, p. 8) (Libraries Development Concept in the Czech Republic for 2021–2027). The aim of introducing a variety of innovative elements as part of the digital transformation of educational events in libraries is to increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of existing activities which are a key component of librarians' work. Innovation in libraries takes different forms, such as the use of interactive applications, changes in the way content is presented at traditional professional seminars, travel costs reduction by holding shorter events online, greater outreach to users via streaming or uploading educational content online, overhead costs reduction and mitigation of space limits in smaller libraries, emphasis on attractive guests and speakers, internal training of employees for a seamless use of information and communication technologies, etc. (Kianicová, 2023).

Access to digital resources

Progress in information and communication technologies produces various, often conflicting, tendencies in the transformation of libraries. On the one hand, these technologies make it possible for libraries to greatly improve access to their collections and to provide their information services with increased efficiency. Digitized content and online access to databases make searching for and access to information easier for the readers in the comfort of their homes or from any place with internet connection. On the other hand, this progress simultaneously limits the reasons for people to physically visit a library. Whereas in the past the library was the only place for readers' contact with books and specialized literature, many of their needs can now be met through online resources, thus potentially reducing the number of visitors to libraries.

Among their principal goals, libraries aim to create and facilitate access to digital content comprising their own, as well as licensed databases. Consequently, they become not just places for reading books, but also gateways to numerous valuable electronic resources. Digital technologies allow libraries to provide access to a broad range of digital resources, such as e-books, audiobooks, scientific papers and databases (Metodické usmernenie MK SR, Art. 10, 2020) (Methodological Guidance of the Slovak Ministry of Culture). Libraries also provide new services based on the concept of hybrid library with a mix of traditional library services and modern technologies. Interactive and personalized services linked to social networks increase libraries' ability to address a broader community and offer content tailored to individual needs and preferences. This increased outreach makes information more accessible to a broader public, which in turn supports lifelong learning and facilitates peoples' access to current knowledge, regardless of their geographical location. For libraries, this is a global trend, laid down also in the IFLA Public Library Service Guideline which stipulates that a major function of the public library is to bridge the gap between 'the information rich' and 'the information poor'. This role includes providing access to the necessary electronic, computer and audiovisual equipment. Wireless access (Wi-Fi) should be provided throughout the library premises (UNESCO/IFLA, 2010). The IFLA Guideline must, naturally, be viewed in the light of considerable technological progress in Slovakia since 2010, allowing the assumption that a Wi-Fi network is available in all public libraries. Just as in other scientific, industrial and

economic sectors, libraries, too, hold online conferences or videoconferences and work with modern ICTs or library information systems.

Support for non-formal learning

According to Babjaková (2023), libraries are places where people can pause, immerse themselves in silence and understand complex information in a broader context. Indeed, this aspect has become even more important in the digital age with its information explosion resulting from a massive increase in available information. Besides their information potential, libraries can educate on almost every topic and area. The content, forms and methods of such education must be adapted to the target group. According to Zábajník (2022, p. 27) “the status of libraries within the society creates the potential for their involvement in public health promotion.” Furthermore, libraries organize community activities, such as readers’ clubs, discussion groups and cultural events, that support social interaction and community cohesion. Libraries work as digital skills training centres, offering programmes and services to promote digital literacy and skills. These programmes are often designed to offer access to all, regardless of their level of education or technical skills. Libraries run workshops and training aimed at digital skills improvement (basic computer skills, cyber safety and software application use). These programmes are particularly invaluable for the elderly, who tend to be less digitally skilled than younger generations. Libraries thus help reduce the digital divide and ensure that all community members have an equal opportunity to benefit from the digital age. Ultimately, libraries are not just places to borrow books from but dynamic centres of non-formal learning and community life. By employing digital technologies, libraries can broaden their services and contribute to lifelong learning, digital inclusion and social cohesion (Metodické usmernenie MK SR, Art. 14).

Inclusiveness and accessibility

Public libraries also play a key role in supporting social inclusion and community life. They provide a safe and accessible space for all members of the community, including those who may be marginalized or disadvantaged. By providing free access to internet and digital technologies, libraries facilitate their participation in the digital economy and society. Inclusiveness in libraries is enhanced by implementing digital technologies. Voice readers, screen magnifiers and other assistive tools facilitate access to information and learning materials for people with disabilities. In this way, digital technologies help provide equal opportunities for all users (Konceptce rozvoje knihoven v České republice na léta 2021 – 2027, 2020, p. 20). The implementation of the call for proposals by the Slovak Ministry of Culture as the intermediate body for the Integrated Regional Operational Programme “Supporting sustainability and resilience of cultural institutions in response to COVID-19 pandemic” under priority axis 7: REACT-EU can serve as an example of good practice. The aim of the call for proposals was to create a favourable environment with a view to maintaining and increasing the adaptability of the cultural and creative industries following the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds were allocated on procurement and upgrade of the material, technical and technological equipment in cultural institutions, as well as refurbishment aimed at increasing their technological and functional standards (the scope of the call included removal of barriers from library premises). In another example of the use of digital technologies in libraries to increase inclusiveness and accessibility, Verejná knižnica Mikuláša Kováča (Mikuláš Kováč Public

Library) used its projects supported by the SPP Foundation or the Orange Foundation to purchase voice readers, transistors and digital magnifiers for its visually impaired and blind readers. This improves the inclusiveness and accessibility of libraries for people with disabilities.

Innovation and creativity

Digital technologies are used by libraries to foster innovation and creativity. By providing access to technologies such as 3D printers, virtual reality and creative software, libraries make it possible for their users to build their own projects and develop new skills. These technologies open up new possibilities for learning and creativity, helping to boost the innovation potential of the community. The ongoing CVTI Smart Library project can serve as an example, bringing together libraries that will offer courses on Micro:bits and Ozobots under the umbrella of non-formal learning. In response to the need for digital skills training, Hornozemplínska knižnica vo Vranove nad Topľou (Upper Zemplín Library in Vranov nad Topľou) offers its Fablabik club where anyone can learn to use the 3D pen, 3D scanner or laser engraver. (Struháriková, 2023)

Digitization as a way to preserve the cultural heritage

Digitization of library materials is a key feature of modern libraries. Following their digitization, historical and cultural documents can be readily stored and accessed in digital format, which ensures their long-term preservation and accessibility for future generations. This process supports cultural heritage protection and facilitates access to important historical materials to a broader audience. Many libraries across the world have successfully implemented digital technologies and shown the ensuing benefits. The National Library of the Czech Republic, for example, partnered with Google to carry out a major project of digitizing its historical documents, which are now widely accessible and preserved for future generations.

Digital technologies improve cooperation between libraries and other institutions and organisations. Using digital platforms, libraries can share information, resources and best practice with partners across the world. This cooperation fosters innovative projects and initiatives which benefit the communities (Struháriková, 2023). To give a positive example of the digital technology paradigm applied by libraries in digitizing and preserving cultural heritage we can point to the digitization effort of Slovenská národná knižnica v Martine (Slovak National Library in Martin, SNK) and its modern digitization centre where the content of the SNK library materials is digitized every day by 20 employees. So far, 1 million catalogue units have been digitized.

Digital technologies (AI, VR, AR...) as a way to support non-formal learning

Digital technologies are constantly evolving and libraries must be prepared to accommodate these changes. Investment in new technologies, library staff training and permanent adaptation to new trends are indispensable for maintaining the relevance of libraries in the digital age. The future of libraries rests on their ability to innovate and respond to the changing needs of their users (Konceptce, 2020). Artificial intelligence (AI) has shown great potential in this context. AI can help personalize the learning experience

by tailoring the content to each reader's individual needs and capabilities. These technologies can also analyse large data sets and identify trends and patterns that may be useful for developing effective educational programmes. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are equally relevant as important innovations. They provide new opportunities for education and for presenting information: using VR, libraries can offer interactive visits to historical sites or facilitate the study of complex scientific concepts in a 3D environment. Such experiences greatly enrich the learning process and make it more engaging and effective. Examples of their use in practice can mostly be found abroad, in libraries in the US, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore or Denmark.

Innovation in operational processes

By implementing digital technologies, such as Google Workspace, libraries can improve their operational processes. These tools enhance efficiency and transparency in the management of public resources and improve the quality of services provided to readers. When routine tasks, such as emailing and email processing or lending data analysis, are automated, librarians can spend the saved time in personal contact with the readers, responding to their specific needs. In 2002, Verejná knižnica Mikuláša Kováča was the first library in Slovakia to introduce and implement the Google Workspace system and it has been using it successfully on daily basis. To embrace AI in their work, librarians had to change their way of thinking, topple their prejudices and find courage to replace ingrained work routines. For example, instead of being mailed between staff members, information is now shared.

Ethical aspects and critical thinking

Digital technologies in libraries also give rise to important ethical questions. Libraries have an important role in educating the public in the area of critical thinking and working with information. At a time when seemingly clear information can in fact be disinformation, the role of libraries in providing verified and reliable information is crucial. By promoting critical thinking and meticulous verification of sources, libraries help reduce the spread of disinformation. Disinformation, proliferating massively on social networks or some websites in particular, often has a great impact on society (Valko, 2021). Čuchor (2023) highlights the imperative need for verifying large amounts of information (not just on the web), together with simple ways for readers to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate information contained in any text. He also emphasizes the need for libraries as a source of relevant information for the society not just in the 21st century. Workers of the I-Services Department at SNK (Čepčányová, Kytková, 2023, p. 7) emphasize: "Combining librarianship with non-formal education of the public opens up many possibilities for promoting critical thinking while also increasing readers' interest in reading and listening with comprehension."

Conclusion

The answer to the question of digital technologies being either a threat or an opportunity for Slovak libraries is clear. Digital technologies (as a component of the Fourth Industrial Revolution with the advent of AI) pose a challenge to libraries. If libraries fail to understand them, they will become a threat, but if they see them as helpful, they will produce numerous positive changes even beyond the area of social effects on education.

The task for the libraries is to actively respond to the changing needs of our times. They should find and preserve their place in today's dynamic world through their support of both formal and non-formal lifelong learning. Furthermore, they should focus on increasing their clients' reading and information literacy as a key competence in our age of information overload, when it is often difficult to distinguish relevant and quality information from unreliable information. Society-wide, we cannot afford to lose continuity in thinking and information verifiability – sources and ethics are essential.

Modern innovations and different projects have one common goal: to increase the number of satisfied registered readers. Libraries should focus on meeting the needs of their users while constantly striving to adapt to new trends and challenges. Their goal is to motivate as many people as possible to become members and actively use library services, and they can do so by offering relevant and attractive opportunities for personal development and meaningful spending of leisure time.

References

- Babjaková, I. (2023). Vízia knižnice. In P. Klinec, K. Donovalová, & S. Šóky. *50 rokov Verejnej knižnice Mikuláša Kováča v obrazoch a dokumentoch 1973–2023* (p. 189–198).
- Bertot, John Carlo et al. (2006). *Public Libraries and the Internet 2006: Study Results and Findings*. Information Use Management and Policy Institute, College of Information, Florida State University. Adapted from Xie – Bugg, Julie M. (2009). Public library computer training for older adults to access high-quality Internet health information. In *Library & Information Science Research*, 31(3), 155–162.
- Čepčányová, V., & Kytková L. (2023). Dezinformácie, fake news a hoaxy. *Knižnica*, 24(2), 6–11. https://www.snk.sk/images/Edicna_cinnost/Casopis_Kniznica/2023/2023_07_10_CEPCANYOVA.pdf.
- Čornaničová, R. (2011). Kultúrno-osvetová andragogika. In *Acta andragogica 2* (s. 37–57). Katedra andragogiky.
- Čuchor, A. (2023). Knižnica ako zdroj relevantných informácií. *Knižnica*, 24(4), 74–78. https://www.snk.sk/images/Edicna_cinnost/Casopis_Kniznica/2023/2023_12_15_10_Adam_Cuchor.pdf.
- Feszterová, M. (2018). Interdisciplinary approach and implementation of modern trends into the education in the category waste. *Journal of Technology and Information*, 10(2), 54-64. <https://doi.org/10.5507/jtie.2018.011>.
- Kianicová, N., Skalicová, J. (2023) Skúsenosti pracovníkov knižničného inštitútu SNK s inováciami pri realizovaní vzdelávacích podujatí. In *Knižnica*, 24(3), 12–19. https://www.snk.sk/images/Edicna_cinnost/Casopis_Kniznica/2023/2023_10_20_Mgr_Nikola_Kianicova.pdf.
- Kalenda, J. (2021a). Tři vlny: vývoj teorií účasti dospelých ve vzdelávaní (1960 až 2019). In *Studia Paedagogica*, 26(1), 91. <https://doi.org/10.5817/sp2021-1-4>.
- Kalenda, J. (2021b). *Vratký triumf: vývoj účasti na neformálném vzdelávaní dospelých v České republice v letech 1997 až 2016*. <https://doi.org/10.7441/978-80-7454-986-1>.
- Krystoň, M. (2011). Význam záujmového vzdelávania v systéme neformálnej edukácie. In S. Bendl, & M. Zvírotsky (Eds.). *Místo vzdelávaní v současné společnosti: paradigmaty - ideje - realizace*. Tribun EU.

- Polonyová, S. (2021). Adult education in the eu and the main challenges in response to the covid-19 pandemic. *Lifelong Learning*, 11(1), 75–95. <https://doi.org/10.11118/lifele20211101075>.
- Struháriková, Z. (2023). Bibliosféry 2023. Knižnice reagujú na požiadavky digitálnej revolúcie. In *Knižnica*, 24 (4), 27–30. https://www.snk.sk/images/Edicna_cinnost/Casopis_Kniznica/2023/2023_10_20_Mgr_Zuzana_Struharikova_PhD_2.pdf.
- Koncepcie rozvoje knihooven v České republice na léta 2021–2027*. (2020). <https://mk.gov.cz/metodiky-a-koncepce-cs-345>.
- Memorandum o celoživotnom vzdelávaní sa* (2000). Komisia európskych spoločenstiev. https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/2607_2000_memorandum_o_celozivotnom_vzdelavani.
- Metodické usmernenie Ministerstva kultúry Slovenskej republiky, č. MK – 4315/2020-110/11107 z 21. júla 2020 na určenie štandardov pre verejné knižnice*. https://www.culture.gov.sk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/standard-pre-verejne-kniznice_01092_020.pdf.
- UNESCO/IFLA Manifest pre digitálne knižnice ifla-unesco-digital-libraries-manifesto.pdf.
- Valko, J. (2021). Fake news je toxická potrava pre našu myseľ. In *Knižnica*, 22(2), 40–49.
- Vančíková, K. (2011). *Výchova a spoločnosť. Kapitoly zo sociológie výchovy*. Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela.
- Veteška, J. (2016) *Přehled andragogiky*, Portál.
- Zábojník, J. (2022) Možnosti knižníc v oblasti podpory zdravia In *Knižnica*, 23(1), 26–31.

Author:

Mgr. Iveta Babjaková

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

iveta.babjakova@student.umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8461-4466>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Prevalence of Engagement in Online Challenges Among Children and Youth in Institutional Care Settings

Prevalence zapojení do online výzev mezi dětmi a mládeží v zařízeních ústavní péče

Miriam Niklová¹, Helena Slaziníková²

Abstract:

The study aimed to identify and analyse the prevalence of children and young people engaging in online challenges in institutional care settings. The Viral Internet Challenges Scale "VICH-S", aimed at measuring motivation to engage in online challenges (Ortega-Barón et al., 2022) as well as the scale in the EU Kids Online IV in the Slovak Republic (Izrael et al., 2020) were applied to obtain data. The research population consisted of child clients from institutional care aged 10-18 years from the Žilina and Banská Bystrica regions. The results of the research showed an increased level of risk behaviour in child clients attending primary schools. We also found no statistically significant difference between boys and girls engaging in online challenges. The research results indicated that child clients often engaged in online challenges mainly to fit in with a group or collective or to show their courage.


Keywords:

Institutional care; children; youth; online environment; online challenges

Abstrakt:

Cieľom štúdie bolo zistiť a analyzovať prevalenciu zapájania sa detí a mládeže do online výziev v podmienkach inštitucionálnej starostlivosti. Na získanie údajov bola aplikovaná škála Viral Internet Challenges Scale „VICH-S“ zameraná na meranie motivácie zapájania sa do online výziev (Ortega-Barón et al., 2022) ako aj škála v rámci EU Kids Online IV v Slovenskej republike (Izrael a kol., 2020). Výskumný súbor tvorili detskí klienti z inštitucionálnej starostlivosti vo veku 10–18 rokov zo Žilinského kraja a Banskobystrického kraja. Výsledky výskumu preukázali zvýšenú mieru rizikového správania detských klientov, ktorí navštevujú základné školy. Zistili sme tiež, že neexistuje štatisticky významný rozdiel v zapájaní sa do online výziev medzi chlapcami a dievčatami. Výsledky výskumu naznačili, že detskí klienti sa často zapájali do online výziev hlavne z dôvodu zapadnutia do skupiny alebo kolektívu, prípadne, aby ukázali svoju odvahu.

¹ Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, miriam.niklova@umb.sk, ORCID 

² Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, helena.slazinikova@student.umb.sk, ORCID 

Klíčové slová:

Inštitucionálna starostlivosť; deti; mládež; online prostredie; online výzvy

Introduction

In the digital world, we are often confronted with modern ways of speaking and contributing. Because we are social creatures, it is typical and natural for us to need to belong somewhere. Online challenges are based on our sociability and connect with our emotions and needs. Some challenges are innocent, raise the level of fun and awareness and are charitable in nature. On the other hand, others appear to be harmful and dangerous, as they endanger children and young people in particular, both psychologically and physically, and in extreme cases cause fatalities. These appeals aim to act on the emotional side, instilling fear in the individual and, through this, to make him or her do certain things. Fear of missing out, or FOMO, is the fear of missing something. Essentially, this fear encourages children to push and explore their boundaries and have a natural desire to connect, share and embrace experiences with friends and the wider online community. It is one of the most common causes of social media overuse. The risk is also related to likes, as they are invited to challenges by friends and sometimes find it very difficult to say no due to their desire to be accepted among their regular peers (Madro and Juránková, 2022).

Many online challenges are spread on various social media sites and have become a part of many children's and adolescents' lives (Niklová et al., 2022). Online challenges are differentiated depending on the goal, which is primarily thematic and may pose particular risks to the user. An essential part of the given challenges is their uploading and subsequent posting on various social networks (Grant-Alfieri et al., 2013; Kopecký et al., 2020, 2021, among others). In the literature, online appeals are categorised according to different ways, through time duration (long-term or short-term), riskiness (safe, e.g. fun or helpful, or dangerous), or in some cases, they can also bring a positive idea (Bonifazi et al., 2022). Challenges can be categorised into:

- social, which do not pose a danger and have a family or social element, i.e. they represent an interactive challenge,
- solidarity-based, whose primary aim is to draw attention to the issue at hand while encouraging helpful behaviour and helping others,
- non-sociable, which are more likely to be considered rude but should not pose a risk to the user,
- dangerous, which may endanger a person's physical or psychological life while revealing the user's privacy (Ortega et al., 2020).

In most cases, as Kopecký (2019) states, the challenges are harmful, risky and, in some cases, even destructive. The type of these prompts is mainly associated with dangerous activities, behaviour and actions in which children are primarily encouraged to engage.

Střílková (2020) points out that the challenges consist of the distribution of dangerous instructions, recommendations and advice that encourage the imitation of risky behaviour, the subsequent creation of videos, i.e. evidence of the completion of the designated task, and the subsequent sharing through social media.

Risk challenges or risky behaviour have also been outside the virtual world, but through social media and the Internet in general, they are spread en masse to a large number of its users (Kopecký, 2020). Students often engage in risky challenges under the

influence of peer groups and in an attempt to engage them. Further, they may be motivated by a large social media following. The more daring and dangerous the challenge, the more it increases the pupils' popularity among subscribers and followers (Kollárová, Majerčáková, 2024).

Considering the above taxonomy, as stated by Dulovics et al. (2023), it is important to differentiate the goals of the diverse types of online challenges that children and youth may come into contact with. It is also important to highlight the risks of these dangerous challenges that threaten and subsequently impact individuals' physical and mental health.

1 Methodological background and characteristics of the research sample

Given the recognition that several projects are implemented in "ordinary" households, we anticipate that mapping risky online behaviour could also be implemented in institutional care. The research aimed "to identify and analyse what forms of risk behaviour are experienced in the online environment by children in institutional care".

RQ1 - What is the frequency of respondents' involvement in online challenges and their motivation?

The research population consisted of child clients from the Centres for Children and Families of the Žilina Region and the Banská Bystrica Region. We asked the Slovak Statistical Office, Department of Information and Marketing in Bratislava, to provide a list of current centres for children and families in the Slovak Republic. The list consisted of 68 centres for children and families, of which seven were from the Žilina Region and 12 from the Banská Bystrica Region. As a result, 11 centres for children and families participated in our research, of which three were from the Žilina region, and eight were from the Banská Bystrica region. The participating centres signed an informed consent on behalf of their director to participate in the research, as this is a specific research sample. The consent evidenced voluntary participation and informed consent to anonymity and use of the results for research purposes. The research population consisted of 97 intact respondents from Žilina and Banská Bystrica regions, of which 51 were girls (52.6%) and 46 were boys (47.4%). The average age of the respondents was 14.49 years.

The research was conducted using an electronic questionnaire constructed in Google Forms. The scale from the EU Kids Online IV project in the Slovak Republic was used in the research (Izrael et al, 2020), which was conducted on a research sample of the population of children aged 9-17 years in 2018, as well as the Viral Internet Challenges Scale "VICH-S" aimed at measuring motivation to engage in online challenges (Ortega-Barón et al., 2022); closed and open-ended questions of our construction aimed at monitoring pupils' engagement in online challenges. We supplemented the questionnaire with demographic items. The research instrument consisted of 30 items aimed at identifying key variables. We tested the statistical significance of differences at a significance level of $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$. Before analysing the data through selected tests, we verified the normal distributions of the data variables and used the Mann-Whitney U-test based on the results. We also used the methods of logical analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparison, generalisation, and abstraction.

2 Results and discussion

The online environment is one of unlimited possibilities and where risky behaviour, such as online challenges, can occur. Not all online challenges are dangerous. Some are viral, targeting the individual and using different types of motivation to get as many children, young people, and adults to participate. In Table 1, we present ascending ranked statements in the form of arithmetic mean and median regarding the prevalence of engagement in online challenges. Respondents expressed individual responses using a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1 Prevalence of respondents' involvement in online challenges

Engaging in online challenges	Gender	N	AM	Mdn	MD	SD
I feel good about it when I dare to participate in a challenge.	Girls	51	2.47	2.00	1	1.515
	Boys	46	2.98	3.00	1	1.468
	Total	97	2.71	3.00	1	1.507
I like to hear what others think about my courage and the challenges I participate in.	Girls	51	2.78	3.00	1	1.604
	Boys	46	2.56	2.50	1	1.454
	Total	97	2.69	3.00	1	1.530
I like to show off my courage or participate in a challenge with more people to make me feel part of a group.	Girls	51	2.59	2.00	1	1.663
	Boys	46	2.35	2.00	1	1.449
	Total	97	2.47	2.00	1	1.562
When I show my courage and participate in an online challenge, I am happy for others to emulate me.	Girls	51	2.31	1.00	1	1.543
	Boys	46	2.48	2.00	1	1.602
	Total	97	2.39	2.00	1	1.565
I like to comment on a daring challenge others are participating in.	Girls	51	2.20	1.00	1	1.536
	Boys	46	2.52	2.00	1	1.545
	Total	97	2.35	2.00	1	1.541
I will join a daring challenge that is fashionable without considering whether it is good for me or not.	Girls	51	2.24	2.00	1	1.505
	Boys	46	2.26	2.00	1	1.357
	Total	97	2.25	2.00	1	1.429
I will join a daring challenge because I don't want to feel left out of my group of friends.	Girls	51	2.04	1.00	1	1.483
	Boys	46	2.37	2.00	1	1.540
	Total	97	2.20	1.00	1	1.511
If my friends insist that I should be brave and join a challenge I don't want to, I will eventually do it anyway.	Girls	51	1.96	1.00	1	1.455
	Boys	46	2.33	2.00	1	1.506
	Total	97	2.13	1.00	1	1.483
When asked to participate in a dangerous or other challenge, I am encouraged and will do it.	Girls	51	2.02	1.00	1	1.503
	Boys	46	2.26	2.00	1	1.324
	Total	97	2.13	1.00	1	1.419
I do challenges that my friends or social media contacts ask me to do.	Girls	51	1.98	1.00	1	1.449
	Boys	46	2.13	2.00	1	1.327
	Total	97	2.05	1.00	1	1.387

Source: authors' own

Legend: N-number, %-Percentage, AM-arithmetic mean, Mdn-median, MD-modus, SD-standard deviation. Likert 5-point scale: 5-totally applies to me, 4-somewhat applies to me, 3-don't know, 2-somewhat doesn't apply to me, 1-doesn't apply to me at all.

Respondents most frequently indicated the statement "I feel good about it when I dare to participate in a challenge" (AM=2.71; Mdn=3.00), with Boys indicating this more often than Girls. Further, respondents indicated the statement: "I like to hear what others think about my courage and the challenges I participate in" (AM=2.69; Mdn=3.00), with Girls indicating this more often; "I like to show off my courage or participate in a challenge with more people to make me feel part of a group" (AM=2.47; Mdn=2.00); "When I show my courage and participate in an online challenge, I am happy for others to emulate me" (AM=2.39; Mdn=2.00); and also "I like to comment on a daring challenge others are participating in" (AM=2.35; Mdn=2.00). Less indicated "I will join a daring challenge that is fashionable without considering whether it is good for me or not" (AM=2.25; Mdn=2.00); "I will join a daring challenge because I don't want to feel left out of my group of friends" (AM=2.20; Mdn=1.00); "If my friends insist that I should be brave and join a challenge I don't want to, I will eventually do it anyway" (AM=2.13; Mdn=1.00); "When asked to participate in a dangerous or other challenge, I am encouraged and will do it" (AM=2.13; Mdn=1.00); and "I do challenges that my friends or social media contacts ask me to do" (AM=2.05; Mdn=1.00).

In Table 2, we present the prevalence of participation in risky online challenges when gender differences are found.

Table 2 *The difference between boys and girls when engaging in online challenges*

Motivation for joining the online challenge	Boys (N=46)		Girls (N=51)		Mann-Whitney U-test		
	Mdn	SD	Mdn	SD	U-test	Z	p
I'm happy if others emulate me.	2.00	1.602	1.00	1.543	1109.500	-0.492	0.623
I show courage; I want to be part of the group.	2.00	1.449	2.00	1.663	1077.000	-0.736	0.462
I like commenting on the challenges others participate in.	2.00	1.545	1.00	1.536	1039.000	-1.039	0.299
I like to hear what others think about my courage.	2.50	1.454	3.00	1.604	1097.500	-0.563	0.573
When I participate, I feel good about it.	3.00	1.468	2.00	1.515	946.000	-1.685	0.092
I participate when I am asked via social media.	2.00	1.327	1.00	1.449	1056.000	-0.928	0.354
I don't want to be left out of my group of friends.	2.00	1.540	1.00	1.483	1043.500	-1.017	0.309
I will participate in a fashionable challenge.	2.00	1.357	2.00	1.505	1143.500	-0.227	0.821
I am encouraged when asked, and I do it.	2.00	1.324	1.00	1.503	1013.000	-1.269	0.204
If friends insist on my getting involved, even if I don't want to.	2.00	1.506	1.00	1.455	1002.500	-1.359	0.174

Source: authors' own

Legend: N-number; Mdn-median; SD-standard deviation; U-test and Z-values of Mann-Whitney U test; p-statistical significance.

The Mann-Whitney U-test did not confirm a statistically significant difference, even at the $p \leq 0.05$ significance level between boys and girls in engaging in online challenges

Conclusion

Many children participate in online risk challenges for the adrenaline rush, because of peers, some for adventure, attention, and success, and even some crave social status. Some challenges provide fun and distraction, but some challenges can put children at risk mentally and physically and, in extreme cases, even cause death. It is also dangerous that pupils do not know how to regulate their decisions sufficiently, do not have enough life experience, and therefore often act recklessly and take risks. Many online challenges are harmless and pose no risk to children or adolescents. Developmentally, adolescence is characterised by young people trying to fit in, needing to assert themselves, and the like. The tendency of adolescents to behave in a risky way is characteristic of adolescence, which is determined by the increased influence of emotions that cause distortions in logical reasoning. Adolescents have difficulty regulating their emotions. Many online challenges can lead to severe damage to physical or mental health or even cause death (Dulovics et al., 2023; Zošáková, 2022).

Children also learn by imitation, which is also true for children from the child and family centres who need support from those around them. They need to see positive role models, which they can find in educators, psychologists, social workers, and social pedagogues, whom they can reach in some centres or schools. It is also up to us, as social educators, to be such role models for children and young people, and not only in the centres for children and families, since in their case, the absence of the closest person, the parent, is at stake. For children in ordinary households, in many cases, it is parents or siblings who are the role models. However, even with them, there is a great deal of room for risky behaviour, as several studies have pointed out.

The research's limitations include the fact that many centres for children and families also housed mentally disadvantaged children who would not understand the meaning of the questionnaire items or intact clients who were in the process of resocialisation. Therefore, the representatives of the individual centres did not agree to their participation in the research, thus reducing the research sample. Another limitation we perceive is the distribution of respondents within the two regions, which may lead to bias in some of the questionnaire survey results.

Project affiliation

The paper is an output of the KEGA project No. 024UMB-4/2022 entitled *Prevention of Risky Online Behaviour*.

References

Bonifazi, G., Cecchini, S., Corradini, E., Giuliani, L., Ursino, D., & Virgili, L. (2022). Extracting time patterns from the lifespans of TikTok challenges to characterize non-dangerous and dangerous ones. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-02200893-w>.

- Grant-alfieri, A., Schaechter, J., & Lipshultz, S. E. (2013). Ingesting and aspirating dry cinnamon by children and adolescents: The „Cinnamon Challenge“. In *PEDIATRICS*, 131(5), 833–835. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3639465/>.
- Dulovics, M., Niklová M., & Zošáková, K. (2023). *Digitálna vulnabilita detí a mládeže*. Belianum.
- Izrael, P., Holdoš, J., Ďurka, R., & Hasák, M. (2020). *Správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV na Slovensku – Slovenské deti a dospelávajúci na internete*. Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku. https://www.ku.sk/images/dokumenty/ff/Sprava_z_vyskumu_EU_Kids_Online_Slovensko_2018_-_2020.pdf.
- Kollárová, S., & Majerčáková, Z. (2024). Rizikové výzvy vo virtuálnom priestore a možnosti ich prevencie v školskom prostredí. In *Direktor*, 2024(3).
- Kopecký, K. (2019). Rizikové výzvy v online prostredí (fenomén online challenges). *E-Bezpečí*, 4(2), 25–29. <https://www.e-bezpeci.cz/index.php/rizikove-jevy-spojene-s-onlinekomunikaci/socialni-site/1618-rizikove-vyzvy-v-online-prostredi-fenomen-online-challenges>.
- Kopecký, K., Strílková, P., Szotkowski, R., & Romero-Rodrigues, J. M. (2020). Dangerous Challenges on the Internet. *Pediatric Pro Praxi*, 21(2), 85–89. https://www.pediatricpropraxi.cz/artkey/ped-202002-0003_rizikove_vyzvy_v_online_prostredi.php.
- Kopecký, K. (2021). TikTokem putuje staronová výzva s názvom Blackout challenge. Jde o variaci na starou poměrně dost rozšířenou výzvu Choking Challenge. *E-Bezpečí*, 6(1). <https://www.e-bezpeci.cz/index.php/kontakt/57-rizikove-jevy/2129-tiktokem-putuje-staronova-vyzva-s-nazvem-blackout-challenge-jde-o-variaci-na-starou-pomerne-dost-rozsirenou-vyzvu-choking-challenge>.
- Madro, M., & Juránková, Z. (2022). *Bez nástrah online. Sprievodca bezpečným internetom pre rodičov*. IPčko.
- Niklová, M., Dulovics, M., & Stehlíková, J. (2022). *Genration Z in the virtual environment. Competencies and risks*. Poldruk.
- Ortega-Barón, J., Machimbarrena, J. M., Montiel, I., & González-Cabrera, J. (2022). Viral internet challenges scale in preadolescents: An exploratory study. *Current Psychology*, 42, 12530–12540. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02692-6>.
- Strílková, P. (2020). *Nebezpečné internetové výzvy pohľadom českých dětí: Výzkumná zpráva*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. <https://ebezpeci.cz/index.php/ke-stazeni/vyzkumne-zpravy/142-nebezpecne-internetove-vyzvy2020/file>.
- Zošáková, K. (2022). Prevencia virtuálnych ohrození v prostredí slovenských škôl. In *Zborník Socialia 2022* (s. 297–304). Belianum.

Authors:

prof. PhDr. Miriam Niklová, PhD.

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica,

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

miriam.niklova@umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0463-8322>

Mgr. Helena Slaziníková

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica,

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

helena.slazinikova@student.umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8072-7732>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Motivation to Engage in Online Challenges Among Cyberbullying Actors in Primary School Settings and Their Risks

Motivácia zapájania sa do online výziev u aktérov kyberšikanovania v podmienkach základných škôl a ich riziká

Mário Dulovics¹, Michaela Riapošová²

Abstract:

The paper aims to analyse the motivation of primary school pupils in the roles of cyberbullying actors (aggressors, victims) engaging in online challenges and to bring to light other risks associated with online challenges. As part of empirical research, we used the questionnaire method to address 2,768 primary school pupils in the Slovak Republic. In the research set, we identified 256 (9.3%) aggressors and 322 (11.6%) victims of cyberbullying. Based on the inferential analysis of the data, we identified a statistically significant weak positive relationship between the Cyberaggression Scale and the Social Motivation subscale of the Viral Internet Challenges Scale VICH-S ($p= 0.040$, $rs=128$) and also a statistically significant weak positive relationship between the Cyberspace Victimization Scale and subscale Social motivation ($p= 0.001$, $rs=166$).


Keywords:

Cyberbullying; online challenges; aggressor; victim

Abstrakt:

Cieľom príspevku je analyzovať motiváciu žiakov základných škôl v roly aktérov kyberšikanovania (agresori, obeť) pri zapájaní sa do online výziev a priblížiť ďalšie riziká, ktoré sa s online výzvami spájajú. V rámci empirického výskumu sme oslovili 2 768 žiakov základných škôl v SR prostredníctvom dotazníkovej metódy. Vo výskumnom súbore sme identifikovali 256 (9,3%) agresorov a 322 (11,6%) obetí kyberšikanovania. Na základe inferenčnej analýzy dát sme identifikovali štatisticky významný slabý pozitívny vzťah medzi Škálou kyberagresie a subškálou Sociálna motivácia meracieho nástroja Viral Internet Challenges Scale VICH-S ($p= 0,040$, $rs=128$) a tiež štatisticky významný slabý pozitívny vzťah medzi Škálou viktimizácia v kyberpriestore a subškálou Sociálna motivácia ($p= 0,001$, $rs=166$).

¹ Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, mario.dulovics@umb.sk, ORCID 

² Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, michaela.riaposova@student.umb.sk, ORCID 

Kľúčové slová:

Kyberšikanovanie; online výzvy; agresor; obeť

Introduction

The image of society has changed dramatically in recent decades. The dominant factor in this change has been the advent of information and communication technologies, which have made everyday life much easier for people. However, in addition to their positive aspects, they also carry considerable risks, which have been increasing in intensity over the years. It is therefore necessary to pay close attention to them.

The problem of risky online behaviour is most acute in the age group of children and adolescents. Especially during the period of pubescence, adolescent individuals are considerably determined by their own, often stormy, physical and mental changes characteristic of the period of human development. The emotional instability and impulsivity inherent in this age increase the risk of any form of risky behaviour, including risky behaviour in the online environment. For this reason, selected forms of risky online behaviour - cyberbullying and online risk challenges among primary school pupils in grades 6-9 in Slovakia - became the focus of this study.

Thanks to the Internet, cyberbullying has spread to almost all corners of the world in recent years, not excluding Slovakia. Therefore, many foreign and domestic authors have contributed to its theoretical anchoring (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Kopecký, 2016; Hollá, 2017; Strohmeier & Gradinger, 2022; Niklová et al., 2022 and others). Cyberbullying has also become the focus of much empirical research (Vogels, 2022; Izrael et al., 2020; Ševčíková & Šmahel, 2009), which only demonstrates the urgent need to address this exponential socio-educational problem. The above is not a new phenomenon. Cyberbullying has been transformed from bullying, which, owing to information and communication technologies, has been transposed from everyday life to virtual space.

Balsey (2019) defines cyberbullying as an activity involving the use of information and communication technologies to promote deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group intended to harm others. According to Kolář (2011, p. 83), cyberbullying is "deliberate violent behaviour through modern means of communication, especially the Internet and mobile phones". Cyberbullying takes place in a seemingly anonymous environment. It is a premeditated act on the part of the aggressors.

Janková (2020) states that cyberbullying occurs in the majority (73.6%) of Slovak schools. The forms of cyberbullying are varied. According to the nature of the attacks, they can be divided into:

- *social* – excluding Internet users from online groups, stealing and misusing passwords, identity theft;
- *verbal* – takes place through communication programs and applications supporting online calls and voice messaging (e.g. Skype, Messenger, Telegram, and others) and includes slander, insults, gossiping and the like;
- *non-verbal* – takes place in written form by sending offensive texts, defamatory images and photographs (Hollá, 2017).

In domestic and foreign sources, we can encounter different typologies of cyberbullying actors, most often classified based on their motivation to participate in this pathological behaviour. Hollá (2013) divides cyberbullying actors into:

- *cyber-aggressor* (or also cyberbully) - carries out online bullying;
- *combined aggressor* - carries out both offline and online bullying;
- *aggressive cyberbully* - can be a cyber-aggressor and a cyberbully at the same time;
- *passive cyberbully*;
- *fake cyber-victim*, this is not a victim in the true sense of the word, but a person who is the aggressor pretending to be a victim;
- *bystanders and supporters* - they are characterised by inaction.

Alarming in this regard is the empirical finding (Hollá, 2017, p. 97) that many "*cyber-aggressors were first cyber-victims and use the forms of cyberbullying they themselves have been subjected to to bully*". For this reason, it is imperative to work with all actors involved in cyberbullying as part of school-based prevention.

Risky online challenges are another form of risky behaviour we focus on in the study. The Internet and social media have led to the emergence and development of a relatively new form of risky online behaviour—the so-called online challenges. These challenges can not only be a fun way for children and young people to escape boredom but also extremely harmful, and in some cases even health- and life-threatening.

For example, online challenges such as *Blue Whale* have made the list of the most dangerous online challenges on the Internet. It is a perilous game in which participants complete set tasks for 50 days (one per day). The intensity and danger of the challenges escalate from humiliating tasks to self-harm and, on the last day of the challenge, to participants committing suicide. A considerably dangerous online challenge is also *The Hot Pepper Challenge*, which appears in various forms worldwide. The challenge tasks participants with eating as much of the spicy food as possible in large quantities. Another dangerous online challenge has been the *Sunburn Art Challenge*, where participants apply various objects or sunscreen to their exposed skin to get the rest of their untreated skin sunburned, creating a visible pattern on their skin. Also hazardous is the 2022 *NyQuil Chicken* online challenge, in which participants cook and consume chicken breasts cooked in a blue syrup designed to treat NyQuil colds and rhinitis, which contains acetaminophen, dextromethorphan, and doxylamine. This activity can significantly harm the participants' health in the challenge because even if they do not consume the food, cooking the food results in inhaling harmful fumes from the medication in question. Other risky online challenges are the *Cinnamon Challenge*, *Swatting*, and many others.

1 Methodological background and characteristics of the research sample

For the study, we will work with two scales of our construction that are aimed at measuring cyberaggression and victimisation in cyberspace and the *Viral Internet Challenges Scale - VICH-S* (Ortega-Barón et al., 2022), which measures motivation to engage in online challenges.

The Cyberbullying Scale consists of 19 items and measures the frequency of cyberbullying perpetrated by the pupils in the last three months. The scale's reliability, measured using Cronbach's alpha, has a value of $\alpha = 0.904$. The Cyberbullying Victimization Scale consists of 17 items and measures the frequency of the respondent's contact with cyberbullying in the past three months. The internal reliability of the scale has a value of $\alpha=0.789$. In establishing the construct validity of the cyberbullying scales,

we did not identify any hidden factors through exploratory factor analysis so that we will work with the scales as single-factor instruments.

We used the *Viral Internet Challenges Scale - VICH-S* (Ortega-Barón et al., 2022) to measure pupils' motivation to engage in online challenges. It is a 10-item scale in which pupils were given the opportunity to express their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. Through exploratory factor analysis and the principal components method, we also identified two latent factors in the VICH-S scale in our setting: *Psychological Motivation and Social Motivation*. The minimum factor loading of an item for its inclusion in one of the factors was 0.50. Cronbach's alpha for the entire VICH-S scale has a value of $\alpha = 0.876$.

We also asked the pupils dichotomous questions in which they could indicate whether they had participated in each online challenge and an open-ended question in which they could indicate other challenges in which they had participated.

The implementation of the empirical research took place at the end of 2022. The target group was pupils in grades 6 to 9 in primary schools in Slovakia. After data collection and cleaning, the research sample consisted of 2,768 pupils. We used the available sample in the research intentions. To identify aggressors and victims, we used the mean scores achieved by the respondents on the Cyber Aggression Scale and the Victimization in Cyberspace Scale. The cutoff mean score at which we identified pupils as aggressors or victims was $AM=1.4$ or higher. That mean score indicated repeated exposure to one or more forms of cyberbullying as a victim or aggressor. Subsequently, within the subgroup of aggressors and victims, we identified those pupils who engaged in one or more risky online challenges simultaneously.

2 Results and discussion

Cyberbullying dramatically affects the school climate, achievement, well-being of pupils and ultimately, the educational process itself. Theoretical attention has been paid to the forms (Vagaská et al., 2023; Nazir & Thabassum, 2021), causes (Nuray et al., 2019), and consequences of cyberbullying (Fan et al., 2019; Gardella et al., 2017). The ambition of the authors of this paper is to highlight the possible comorbidity of risky online behaviour, i.e. to identify the correlation between cyberbullying and the motivation to engage in online challenges in pupils. Also, to further analyse the prevalence of cyberbullying actors who participated in risky online challenges.

We identified 256 (9.3%) aggressors and 322 (11.6%) victims of cyberbullying in the study sample. In terms of gender structure, boys (169/66%) were more likely to be aggressors than girls (87/34%). In the case of victims, the gender difference is not so marked, but there is still a higher prevalence of victims among boys (166/51.6%) than among girls (156/48.5%). Also, Cava et al. (2022) point out that boys are more likely to commit cyberbullying than girls. Similar trends are confirmed by research on victims of cyberbullying. Agus et al. (2021), in a research sample of 650 pupils aged 12 to 16 years, identified 53% of boys and 47% of girls among the victims.

Cyberbullying from the perspective of aggressors is a multifactorial phenomenon. Based on the current scientific knowledge, we can include among its causes, without claiming completeness, e.g. boredom, reduced social control in cyberspace, or the desire to attract attention (Hollá, 2016). In the context of victims, rather negative consequences of cyberbullying are logically discussed, which include social isolation, difficulties in establishing relationships, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, sleep disturbances or even self-

harm and suicidal thoughts (Ju, 2023; Šmahaj, 2014). Several of these factors associated with cyberbullying can also be seen as a motivating factor in engaging in (risky) online challenges. Abraham et al. (2022) report that engaging in online challenges is both a source of fun for young people and a way of gaining attention from those around them and being part of a community. A strong desire to be part of a peer group, especially during adolescence, often leads to acceptance and embracing of some form of risk. Engaging in (risky) online challenges can be influenced by several factors on the part of both aggressors and victims, e.g. the desire to draw attention to oneself or to gain the admiration of peers.

In this context, we were interested in whether there is a relationship between the motivation to engage in online challenges and cyberbullying from the perspective of aggressors and victims.

We present an inferential analysis of the relationship between scales measuring cyberaggression and victimisation in cyberspace and the *Viral Internet Challenges Scale VICH-S* measuring motivation to engage in (risky) online challenges in Table 1. When analysing motivation, we worked with the total number of aggressors and victims, regardless of whether they engaged in risky online challenges or not. We find significant relationships at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 1 *Inferring significant relationships between scales measuring the prevalence of cyber-aggression/victimisation and the VICH-S scale*

Cyber-Aggression Scale	Factors of VICH-S scale	
	Psychological motivation	Social motivation
Spearman's rho	0.030	0.128
p value	0.636	0.040
Victimisation in Cyberspace Scale		
Spearman's rho	0.046	0.166
p value	0.416	0.003

Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant weak positive relationship between the *Cyber-Aggression Scale* and the *VICH-S Social Motivation* subscale ($p=0.040$; $r_s= 0.128$). Similarly, we identified a statistically significant weak positive relationship between the *Cyberspace Victimization Scale* and the *VICH-S Social Motivation* subscale ($p=0.003$; $r_s= 0.166$). The higher the pupils scored on scales measuring the prevalence of cyberbullying, the higher they scored on the subscale focusing on social motivation to engage in online challenges. For Psychological Motivation, there was no statistically significant relationship with scales measuring the prevalence of cyberbullying. The above suggests that the influence of the social environment plays a more dominant role in the engagement of cyberbullying actors in online challenges.

In the following, we focus on describing cyberbullying actors who engage in one or more risky online challenges simultaneously. Of the aggressors, 118 (46.1%) and 156 (48.5%) of the victims engaged in risky challenges, indicating a tendency for young people to engage in risky behaviour in multiple domains at the same time. Širůčková (in Miovský et al., 2010, p. 31) states in this context that: 'A person who behaves riskily in one

way also tends to behave riskily in other areas. It is the interconnectedness of certain manifestations of risk behaviour that takes the form of a lifestyle". This phenomenon can be referred to as the risk behaviour syndrome (Jessor & Jessor, 1977).

We present the structure of cyberbullying actors in terms of their involvement in selected risky online challenges in Table 2.

Table 2 *Engaging cyberbullying actors in risky online challenges*

Risky online challenges	Aggressors		Victims		Total	
#Ghost Pepper Challenge	72	61.0%	92	59.0%	164	59.9%
#Cinnamon Challenge	69	58.5%	95	60.6%	164	59.9%
#Choking Challenge	49	41.5%	67	43.0%	116	42.3%
#Eyeballing Challenge	40	33.9%	47	30.1%	87	31.8%
#Until Tomorrow	53	44.9%	33	31.1%	86	31.4%
Total	118	100%	156	100%	274	100%

The findings presented above are alarming, especially with risky challenges such as the #Cinnamon Challenge, #Choking Challenge or #Eyeballing Challenge, which can cause serious health problems and even death. Another issue arising from the findings is the fact that many pupils were engaging in multiple challenges at the same time.

We did not observe significant percentage differences between aggressors and victims when engaging in risky online challenges. The exception is the #Until Tomorrow challenge, which involved a much higher number of cyberbullying aggressors (44.9%) than victims (31.1%). The essence of the challenge is to post an embarrassing or unflattering photo. The risk of this challenge lies primarily in the possibility of such a photo being misused or in the fact that the individual will be targeted by cyber aggressors, which may have acted in particular as a deterrent in the case of the victims.

In the open-ended questions, rather innocuous online prompts were given, with the exception of prompts such as 'jump out of a first-floor window' and 'blue whale', which were given by pupils in the role of cyberbullying aggressors.

Conclusion

The research results presented here confirm how dangerous virtual environments can be for children and adolescents. They also declare that risky behaviour often does not occur in isolation. The knowledge that a child can be at risk of several risks at the same time is essential in creating prevention projects and strategies in the school environment and in the setting of proper family education in relation to digital technologies.

Project affiliation

The paper is an output of the KEGA project No. 024UMB-4/2022 entitled *Prevention of Risky Online Behaviour*.

References

- Abraham, J., Roth, R., Zinzow, H. M., Madathil, K. C., & Wisniewski, P. J. (2022). Applying Behavioral Contagion Theory to Examining Young Adults' Participation in Viral Social Media Challenges. *Transactions on Social Computing*, 5(1–4), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3538383>.
- Agus, M., Mascia, M. L., Zanetti, M. A., Perrone, S., Rollo, D., & Penna, M. P. (2021). Who Are the Victims of Cyberbullying? Preliminary Data Towards Validation of "Cyberbullying Victim Questionnaire". *Contemporary educational technology*, 13(3), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.30935/cedtech/10888>.
- Belsey, B. (2019). *Cyberbullying: An Emerging Threat To The "Always On" Generation*. <https://billbelsey.com/?cat=13>.
- Cava, M. J., Buelga, S., & Carrascosa, L. (2022). Cyber-control and cyber-aggression toward the partner in adolescent students: Prevalence and relationships with cyberbullying. *Revista de Educación*, 397(8), 179–205. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2022-397-544>.
- Cruz, B., & Turner, G. (2024). *Top 10 Most Dangerous Online Challenges*. <https://www.security.org/digital-safety/most-dangerous-online-challenges/>.
- Fan, C. Y., Chu, X. W., Zhang, M., & Zhou, Z. K. (2019). Are narcissists more likely to be involved in cyberbullying? Examining the mediating role of self-esteem. *J. Interpers*, 34, 3127–3150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516666531>.
- Gardella, J. H., Fisher, B. W., & Teurbe-Tolon A. R. (2017). A systematic review and meta-analysis of cyber-victimization and educational outcomes for adolescents. *Rev. Educ. Res*, 87(2), 283–308. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465431668>.
- Hollá, K. (2013). *Kyberšikana*. IRIS.
- Hollá, K. (2016). *Sexting a kyberšikana*. IRIS.
- Hollá, K. (2017). *Detekcia kyberagresie – kyberšikanovania a sextingu*. Pedagogická fakulta UKF v Nitre.
- Izrael, P., Holdoš, J., Ďurka, R., & Hasák, M. (2020). *Správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV na Slovensku – Slovenské deti a dospelávajúci na internete*. Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku. https://www.ku.sk/images/dokumenty/ff/Sprava_z_vyskumu_EU_Kids_Online_Slovensko_2018_-_2020.pdf.
- Janková, M. (2020). *Prevenia a riešenie šikanovania a kyberšikanovania v základných a stredných školách z pohľadu koordinátorov prevencie*. Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR.
- Jessor, R., & Jessor, S. L. (1977). *Problem behavior and psychosocial development: A longitudinal study of youth*. Academic Press.
- Ju, B. (2023). Impacts of Cyberbullying and Its Solutions. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 29, 254–258. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/29/20231521>.
- Kolář, M. (2011). *Nová cesta k léčbě šikany*. Portál.
- Kopecký, K. (2016). Cyberbullying in the population of Slovak teenagers (quantitative research). *Human Affairs*, 26(2), 117–127. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2016-0013>.

- Miovský, M., Skácelová, L., Zapletalová, J., & Novák, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Primární prevence rizikového chování ve školství*. Sdružení SCAN.
- Nazir, T., & Thabassum, L. (2021). Cyberbullying: Definition, Types, Effects, Related Factors and Precautions to Be Taken During COVID-19 Pandemic. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(4), 480–491. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0904.047>.
- Niklová, M., Dulovics, M., & Stehlíková, J. (2022). *Generation Z in the virtual environment. Competencies and risks*. Poldruk.
- Nuray, Ş., Derya, Ş., & Mahmut, E. (2019). Internet Addiction, Cyberbullying, and Victimization Relationship in Adolescents: A Sample from Turkey. *J Addict Nurs*, 30(3), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JAN.0000000000000296>.
- Ortega-Barón, J., Machimbarrena, J. M., Montiel, I., & González-Cabrera, J. (2022). Viral internet challenges scale in preadolescents: An exploratory study. *Current Psychology*, 42, 12530–12540. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02692-6>.
- Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2012). *Cyberbullying Prevention and Response: Expert Perspectives*. Routledge. <https://lnk.sk/egvn>.
- Strohmeier, D., & Gradinger, P. (2022). Cyberbullying and cyber victimization as online risks for children and adolescents. *European Psychologist*, 27(2), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000479>.
- Ševčíková, A., & Šmahel, D. (2009). Online harassment and cyberbullying in the Czech Republic: Comparison across age. *Journal of Psychology*, 217(4), 227–229. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0044-3409.217.4.227>.
- Šmahaj, J. (2014). *Kyberšikana jako společenský problém*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Vagaská, Z., Burgerová, J., & Piskura, V. (2023). *Online prostredie a rizikové správanie v mladšom školskom veku*. Prešovská univerzita v Prešove vo Vydavateľstve PU.
- Vogels, A., E. (2022). *Teens and Cyberbullying 2022*. Pew Research Center.

Authors:

doc. PhDr. Mário Dulovics, PhD.

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica,

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

mario.dulovics@umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9860-4376>

PhDr. Michaela Riapošová, MBA

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica,

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

michaela.riaposova@student.umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5417-1147>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Activating Methods in Prevention of Online Risky Behaviour

Aktivizujúce metódy v prevencii online rizikového správania žiakov

Zuzana Hrabovská¹

Abstract:

More often occurring risky online behaviour of children and youth currently represents a severe problem manifesting in excessive usage of the internet, cyberbullying, risky online sexual behaviour and many other negative manifestations. Schools play an important role in the process of solving this issue. By their competent influence, they ensure not only educational but also primary and secondary preventive process. The usage of suitable didactic methods enabling the active involvement of pupils in preventive educational process have appeared highly effective in eliminating risky online behaviour. The aim of this theoretical study is to approach the problem of risky online behaviour of children and youth, to reflect on current prevention in schools and to point out the possibilities of implementing activating didactic methods in the preventive-educational process of schools.

Keywords:


Risky online behaviour; pupils; prevention; activating methods

Abstrakt:

Čoraz častejšie vyskytujúce sa online rizikové správania detí a mládeže predstavuje v súčasnosti závažný problém, ktorý sa prejavuje v excesívnom využívaní internetu, kyberšikanovaní, v online rizikovom sexuálnom správaní a mnohých iných negatívnych prejavoch. Školy zohrávajú dôležitú úlohu v riešení uvedenej problematiky. Svojim kompetentným pôsobením zabezpečujú nielen vzdelávací proces, ale aj primárny a sekundárny preventívny proces. Použitie vhodných didaktických metód umožňujúcich aktívne zapojením žiakov v preventívno-výchovnom proces sa javí vysoko efektívne v eliminácii online rizikového správania. Cieľom teoretickej štúdie je priblížiť problematiku online rizikového správania detí a mládeže, reflektovať súčasnú prevenciu na školách a poukázať na možnosti implementácie aktivizujúcich didaktických metód do preventívno-výchovného procesu škôl.

Kľúčové slová:

Online rizikové správanie; žiaci; prevencia; aktivizujúce metódy

¹ Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, The Slovak Republic, iveta.babjakova@student.umb.sk, ORCID 

Introduction

Digitalisation and the Internet have brought speed, simplicity and accessibility of information into our lives, but they have also become a means of communication, entertainment and relaxation. On the other hand, the increasing incidence of risky online behaviour among children and young people is now a severe problem, manifesting itself in excessive use of the Internet, cyberbullying, risky online sexual behaviour and many other negative manifestations. Schools have an essential role to play in tackling this issue. Through their competent action, they provide an educational and upbringing process and a primary and secondary prevention process. Experts attach great importance to preventing risky online behaviour, the effectiveness of which depends, among other things, on the choice of didactic methods. Activating didactic methods appear to be an effective tool in eliminating risky online behaviour. The present paper tries to present the issue of risky online behaviour of children and young people, reflect on the current prevention in schools, and point out the possibility of implementing activating didactic methods in the preventive-educational action of schools.

Selected types of risky online behaviour

A view of risky online behaviour of individuals is reported by Dulovics (2018, p. 7), who characterises it as "an individual's behaviour in virtual space by which he or she knowingly or unknowingly endangers himself or herself and those around him or her". In the intentions of scientific-empirical research, the following types of risky online behaviour are currently receiving particular attention. Excessive Internet use: (Blinka, 2015; Dulovics, 2020, 2023; Kuss et al., 2013; Northrup et al., 2015; Whang & Chang, 2004). Cyberbullying: (Domonkos, 2014; Hollá, 2017; Willard, 2007). Risky online sexual behaviour: (Hinduja & Patchin, 2022; Jaishankar, 2009; Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011).

Excessive Internet use is now coming to the forefront of professional attention as the primary trigger for all online threats to children and youth. Although the term is predominantly associated with excessive time spent on the Internet, it is not necessarily the only trait associated with potential problems - the risks of Internet use in children and youth. The term 'excessive' in the abovementioned issue is not only related to an increased likelihood of online threats but also indicates patterns of Internet use such as repetitiveness-cyclicity, compulsiveness and uncontrollability. Excessive Internet use can negatively affect several aspects of adolescents' lives: health and physical fitness, poor school performance, disinterest in hobbies, increased strain in social interactions, as well as psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Šmahel et al., 2012).

Cyberbullying is characterised by Hollá (2016, p. 15) as: "aggressive behaviour that involves harassing, threatening, stalking, humiliating and other negative behaviour of a child or adolescent towards the victim or victims, through repeated attacks via computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices whose content causes emotional harm". Hollá (2016) adds that anonymity, pseudonymity, deindividuation, inhibition and loss of control are characteristic factors for cyber environments and are closely linked to aggression. Hollá (2017) adds to the above the risks of cyberbullying, which can cause, among other things, significant emotional stress, trauma, psychological discomfort, anxiety, frustration, a feeling of being in an intractable situation, and loss of self-esteem and self-worth.

Authors such as Dulovics, 2018; Emmerová, 2022; Hollá, 2016; Livingstone & Smith, 2014 include sexting, sextortion - sexual blackmail, sexual abuse and child pornography in the category of risky online sexual behaviour. For our paper, we will introduce the reader to the issue of sexting, which Hinduja and Patchin (2022, p. 2) define as "the sending or receiving of sexually explicit or sexually suggestive images or videos over a mobile phone". Currently, different forms of sexting are defined, which mainly refer to consensual and non-consensual sexting. Consensual sexting is seen as an evolving form of contemporary sexual communication between adolescents, which, although considered a risky practice, is generally not such a serious social problem. Non-consensual sexting, on the other hand, takes place without the consensual disclosure of sexually explicit content. Zetterstron Danlqvist & Gilander Gadin (2018) found that (35%) of adolescent girls received unsolicited sexual requests, with one of the most common forms being a request to meet outside of a virtual environment. Sexting can result in coercion or blackmail of the person involved and is a severe problem that can have serious consequences for the person concerned (Dodaj & Sesar, 2020; Molla Esparza et al., 2020; Mori et al., 2019). According to EU Kids Online Slovakia IV (2018), (67.6%) of children and adolescents have received a message with sexual content over the Internet several times in the last year.

Prevention in schools

In Slovakia, the prevention of risky behaviour in primary and secondary schools is carried out by pedagogical staff (coordinator in education and training, teacher) and professional staff (social pedagogue, school psychologist, and the like). The social pedagogue is exceptionally competent in preventing risky online behaviour in schools. Niklová (2019) explains that primary prevention is primarily about providing essential information on the safe use of the Internet, in particular:

- the importance of observing the rules of decent behaviour in virtual communication,
- familiarising with the possible negative consequences of anti-social behaviour in virtual space and, last but not least,
- informing pupils how to prevent various forms of risky behaviour.

Hollá (2016) adds that schools pay much attention to diagnosing, preventing, and eliminating various educational problems, including bullying. On the other hand, teachers and school administrators are insufficiently aware that harassment also takes place through information and communication media.

We agree with Hollá (2016) that reducing the risks associated with sexting and cyberbullying is also crucial in education and upbringing, especially in the subjects of media education and ethics education. Media education is coming to the forefront in primary prevention education due to the pitfalls of particular media. In the same way, ethics education, by its fundamental nature, plays a vital role in the primary prevention of risky behaviour in schools. Hollá (2016, p. 141) further adds that ethics education enables, among other things, "to guide pupils' behaviour so that they can manage their emotions, resolve conflicts effectively, use effective communication, develop a positive self-image, self-esteem and appropriate self-confidence". We also add that a cross-cutting theme, Social and Personal Development, can be included in civics lessons and offers many benefits in preventing risky behaviour. Čerešník (2021) further states that in the prevention of risky behaviour, schools should focus more on the development of pupils'

meta-skills and abilities by engaging in pro-social activities in the educational process and less on school talks and lectures that introduce pupils to the primary negative consequences of risky behaviour. According to Čerešník (2021), adolescents are often aware of the consequences of their behaviour, but the benefits of risky behaviour are often much stronger for them. A similar view is expressed by Dulovics et al. (2023), who also view current prevention in terms of its effectiveness, considering lectures, talks, intimidation and passive transfer of information without follow-up activity by pupils to be ineffective in preventing risky behaviour. At the same time, these authors stress the importance of early primary prevention of risky online behaviour in schools, which they see as effective in prevention programmes, projects and long-term training with active involvement of pupils.

The views mentioned above on effective prevention of risky behaviour are also demonstrated by research meta-analyses of long-term school-based prevention programmes (Carr, 2002; Gaffney et al., 2019). From their results, we learn not only about the prerequisite for effective prevention, which is the long-term implementation of a prevention programme but also about the strategies and methods that are highly effective in preventing not only risky online behaviour. Carr (2002) expresses the belief that effective school-based prevention programmes for the prevention of risky behaviour should target training in the development of behavioural skills by using a range of didactic methods such as didactic teaching coupled with discussion and modelling, rehearsal, role-play, social reinforcement, corrective feedback and extended practice. The author adds that the prevention methodology implemented this way is oriented towards individuals and requires active involvement in the cognitive, emotional and behavioural planes.

Pupil activity and the essence of the activating method

As we mentioned above, contemporary approaches to prevention emphasise the validity of the individual's active participation in preventive-educational action. However, what is meant by activity in the educational process and the essence of the activating method will be explained in the next section.

In the educational process, the concept of activity is attributed only to those activities in which the pupil has to engage in and display a certain level of independent and initiative activity. It is also assumed that the pupil puts in a certain amount of effort and endeavour, and at the same time, the activity in question requires the pupil to be efficient and effective (Fulková, 2011).

Tomengová (2012) further discusses active learning in which the teacher tries to avoid passive information delivery as much as possible while teaching methods and strategies are aimed at skill development as much as possible. However, the learner activity itself should be designed to require the learner to engage in higher-order thought operations such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. It is considered crucial that the learner simultaneously reflects on what he/she is doing during the activity.

The essence of the activating method lies in a specific process that takes the learner out of his or her comfort zone, so to speak, and into the learning zone. This zone is characterised by an encounter with a new stimulus to which we do not have a learned pattern of behaviour or do not know the correct response.

Tej et al. (2017) were inspired by Tucson's model of learning, which distinguishes three learning zones:

1. A comfort zone in which the pupil feels safe and free from fear and anxiety. This zone is based on the assumption that each individual acquires specific knowledge, skills and experience throughout his/her life, which can be both positive and negative. In the same way, he or she maintains his or her patterns of behaviour, forms his or her value system, achieves new goals and discovers the meaning of life. This acquired experience becomes a safe comfort zone through repetition because the individual has assimilated and internalised these contents. In doing so, it does not matter at all what his or her age is.
2. The learning zone presents appropriate challenges for the individual and, as mentioned above, is an encounter with a new educational situation. The authors further add that the so-to-speak, necessary transfer from the comfort zone to the learning zone has a stimulating, disruptive and proactive effect on the pupil. At this stage, the learner is not convinced of the correctness of his/her reaction, response, behavioural expression or decision. Thus, it is a risk of an unknown outcome. The educator is naturally in a vital position at this stage, because under the influence of his/her challenge, whether it is a question, a problem-solving, a behavioural expression or a logical conclusion, the individual's learning zone expands in the given educational areas. The result is an active learner who thinks, finds solutions, analyses, connects, evaluates and relates prior knowledge to the new stimulus. Last, if the stimulus is interesting for the pupil and the teacher's action is correct, the pupil's intrinsic motivation is awakened.
3. The panic zone is detrimental or even threatening to the individual in any sphere of human life, not excluding the educational process. However, this phase is not the subject of our work, so we will not deal with it in depth.

We consider the knowledge of activating methods and their subsequent correct use in preventive practice to be crucial in the didactic work of the social pedagogue/educator in the effective prevention of risky behaviour.

Selected types of activating methods in preventive-educational action

Activating methods represent an unlimited group of methods in the didactic system. Often, teachers and experts create and design innovative and activating methods themselves based on their own creativity, experience and discovery. The methods thus created become an integral part of quality practice through successful implementation over time. Our aim in this section is to introduce the reader to some activating methods that can be used in the preventive-educational process.

As in the past, **discussion** continues to enjoy its popularity today and is still a widely used activating method. Discussion has an irreplaceable place in the prevention of risky online behaviour. Thanks to it, pupils can express their attitudes, opinions and perceptions of virtual threats but also not express their attitudes or feelings (fear, tightness). For the social pedagogue/educator, discussion is a valuable source of information about the class as a group but also about individuals and possible risks.

Situational-problem methods, the essence of which is the triggering process of social-moral learning in which pupils learn to develop evaluative judgement, critical thinking, attitudes and authentic decision-making. Emphasis is placed on selecting actual life situations as authentic as possible to real-life situations (Podmanický, 2012). The above can include, for example, solving moral dilemmas, problem-solving, case-based methods, and conflict resolution (Petlák, 2004). The above methods can equally be part

of the primary prevention of risky online behaviour. They allow the creation of similar situations that pose a potential threat or problem online. This group of methods includes, for example:

- *The case method* (inducing a particular situation that has happened or may happen - helping a friend in need - cyberbullying).
- *Problem-solving* (pupils are researchers looking for answers to various negative factors of online risky behaviour, with the predominant questions being why? how? and what is the cause?).
- *Conflict-solving* (inducing a particular online conflict that pupils have to resolve).

In this context, we particularly highlight the method of solving moral dilemmas. This method is suitable for solving actual life problems, moral dilemmas and situations. Kulišt'ák (2011) states that in education for ethical, non-threatening behaviour and actions, it is necessary to engage also the influences of feelings, ideas, intuitions and experiences. These are subjective emotional experiences that are processed by the right hemisphere. Therefore, pupils should not only hear about rules, morals and ethics but also solve, judge and experience teacher-mediated situations involving both brain hemispheres.

Experiential methods build on interactions with others or perceiving different model situations. According to Hahn (in Podmanický, 2012, p. 62), the founder of experiential pedagogy, "the desired educational effects are fulfilled when the educator organises and directs educational situations for his/her pupils in such a way that, symbolically speaking, he/she brings together the head (cognitive abilities), the heart (axiological and emotional side) and the hands (practical doing of good, cooperation)". The situation thus handled affects the whole personality, and the knowledge gained is thus validated by the personal experience of the individual, who then perceives it as his or her own and credible.

Experiential methods include the pupils' experience of practising various model situations, which they then reflect upon and transfer to real-life situations. We divide experiential methods into short-term methods, which include skits, role-playing, modelling situations, and didactic games, and long-term methods, which include, for example, social-ecological projects (Podmanický, 2012).

Unlike skits, which have a pre-prepared scenario, **role-playing and modelling situations** are accompanied by spontaneous speech. A role play is given on the spot and requires unprepared, quick reactions from pupils. It is essentially an open-ended experiment that most closely resembles a life situation. Their great advantage is that they develop pupils' decision-making processes and moral judgement. At the same time, pupils learn to manage and solve problems and conflicts and eliminate prejudices and discrimination. The given methods in the hands of an educator are effective tools in practising various situations, such as a model of assertive or aggressive behaviour or in solving moral dilemmas (Podmanický, 2012). In the same way, in the primary prevention of risky online behaviour, we add that they represent an effective method in practising how to cope with various models of risky online situations.

Play as a didactic method represents emotional satisfaction with a robust mobilising charge. Although the method is mainly recommended for younger school-age pupils, it is not harmful in higher grades. A well-chosen didactic game for the pupils we know has many advantages: it develops manual and social skills, promotes creativity and spontaneity, a friendly atmosphere, joy and good group relations (Podmanický, 2012). We add that didactic play that is not focused on competitiveness can be very helpful, for

example, in preventing cyberbullying and developing a positive social climate in the group.

Project-based methods allow pupils to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired and, at the same time, to test them in practical experience. Also, their advantage is that pupils learn to perceive the current problems of society and nature and thus develop their pro-social attitude towards the outside world (Podmanický, 2012). In preventive-educational action, the given method can be used, for example, with older pupils, who can independently, in groups or under the guidance of a social pedagogue/educator, implement and present a variety of posters, projects and presentations of online risky behaviour within the school, thus contributing to the overall awareness of risky online behaviour.

Conclusion

The increase in risky online behaviour among children and young people is now a serious problem. Ideas for effectively preventing risky behaviour, not only online, are now a global consensus. The current expert community emphasises the importance of implementing activating methods in the educational and preventive process. At the same time, these methods are attributed important characteristics that make pupils the subjects of their own active learning and education process. In parallel with the pupil's active activity, other important skills, abilities, and personal variables are developed and considered beneficial predictors for preventing risky online behaviour. Potential activation methods in preventive action can be implemented in school prevention programmes and projects and in media education, ethics education, and civics classes.

References

- Blinka, L., Škařupová, K., Ševčíková, A., Licehammerová, Š., & Vondráčková, P. (2015). *Online závislosti*. Grada.
- Carr, A. (2002). *Prevention: What Works with children and adolescents? A critical review of psychological prevention programs for children, adolescents and their families*. Routledge.
- Čerešník, M. (2021). *Rizikové správanie, blízke vzťahy a osobnostné premenné dospievajúcich v systéme nižšieho sekundárneho vzdelávania*. Togga,
- Dodaj, A., & Sesar, K. (2020). Sexting categories. *Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 8(2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.6092/2282-1619/mjep-2432>.
- Domonkos, K. (2014). Cyberbullying: Zaklatás elektronikus eszközök használatával. In *Alkamazott pszichologia*, 14(1), 59 – 70 Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275038397_Az_online_zaklatas_mediare_prezentacioja
- Dulovics, M. (2018). *Online rizikové správanie u detí a mládeže a možnosť jeho prevencie prostredníctvom mediálnej výchovy*. Belianum.
- Dulovics, M. (2020, 16. mája). *Online rizikové správanie u detí a mládeže*. <https://www.direktor.sk/sk/riadenie-skoly/online-rizikove-spravanie-u-deti-a-mladeze.zs-1451.ht>.

- Dulovics, M., Niklová, M., & Zošáková, K. (2023). *Digitálna vulnabilita detí a mládeže*. Belianum.
- Emmerová, I. (2022). Sexting a sextortion. Riziká a prevencia. *Sociálna prevencia*, 8(1), 20-21.
- Fulková, E. (2011). Teoretické východiská využitia aktivizujúcich metód vo vyučovacom procese. In *Aktuálne otázky pedagogiky* (s. 199–217). UK. http://msp1.wbl.sk/zbornik_aktualne_otazky_pedagogiky.pdf.
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Examining the Effectiveness of School-Bullying Intervention Programs Globally: a Meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 1, 14–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-0007-4>.
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2022). Teem sexting: A brief guide for parents and educators. In *Cyberbullying Research Center*. <https://cyberbullying.org/sexting-research-summary-2022.pdf>.
- Hollá, K. (2016). *Sexting a kyberšikana*, Iris.
- Hollá, K. (2017). *Detekcia kyberagresie – kyberšikanovania a sextingu*. PF UKF.
- Izrael, P., Holdoš, J., Ďurka, R., & Husák, M. (2020). *Správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV na Slovensku – Slovenské deti a dospelávajúci na internetu*. Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku. https://euko.ku.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EU-KidsOnline-Slovenskospravy-z-vyskumu_ed_J_Holdos.pdf.
- Jaishankar, J. (2009). Sexting: A new form of victimless crime? *Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 3(1), 21–25. <https://www.cybercrimejournal.com/pdf/editorialijccjan2009.pdf>.
- Kulišťák, P. (2011). Neuropsychologické základy morálky. In P. Weiss et. al. *Etické otázky v psychológii*. Portál.
- Kuss, D. J., Griffiths, M. D., & Binder, J. F. (2013). Internet addiction in adolescents: Prevalence and risk factors. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 959–966. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.024>.
- Livingstone, S., & Smith, P. K. (2014). Annual research review: Harms experienced by child users of online and mobile technologies: the nature, prevalence and management of sexual and aggressive risks in the digital age. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 55(6), 635–654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12197>.
- Molla Esparza, C., Nájera, P., López-González, E., & Losilla, J. M. (2020). Development and validation of the adolescent sexting scale (A SextS) with a Spanish samle. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public health*, 17(21). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17218042>.
- Mori, C., Temple, J. R., Browne, D. T., & Medigan, S. (2019). Association of sexting with sexual behaviors and mental health among adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 173(8). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1658>.
- Northrup, J. C., Lapierre, C., Kirk, J., & Rae, C. (2015). Internet process addiction test screening for internet facilitated process addictions. *Behavioral Sciences*, 5(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs5030341>.

- Niklová, M. (2019). Prevencia online rizikového správania zo strany sociálneho pedagóga a pedagogických zamestnancov v krajinách V4. *Edukácia*, 3(1), 134–141. <https://www.upjs.sk/public/media/20805/Niklova.pdf>.
- Petlák, E. (2004). *Všeobecná didaktika*. Iris.
- Podmanický, I. (2012). *Teória a prax etickej výchovy 1*. Trnavská univerzita v Trnave.
- Šmahel, D., Helsper, E., Green, L., Kalmus, V., Blinka, L., & Ólafsson, K. (2012). Excessive internet use among European children. EU Kids Online. *The London School of Economics & Political Science*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261316716_Excessive_internet_use_among_European_children,
- Tej, J., Taha, A., & Sirková, M. (2017). Využívanie aktivizujúcich edukačných metód vo vyučovaní ekonomických predmetov na stredných školách. *Journal of Global Science*, 1–8. https://jogsc.com/pdf/2017/3/vyuzivanie_aktivizujucich.pdf.
- Tomengová, A. (2012). *Aktívne učenie sa žiakov – stratégie a metódy*. Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Bratislave. https://mpc-edu.sk/sites/default/files/publikacie/aktivne_ucenie_tomengova_web.pdf.
- Whang, L., & Chang, G. (2004). Lifestyles of virtual world residents: Living in the on-line game "Lineage". *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 7(5), 592–600. <https://doi.org/10.1089/1094931042403091>.
- Willard, N. E. (2007). *Cyberbullyin and cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social aggression, threats, and distress*. Research Press.
- Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2011). *Crimes against children. sexting: A typology*. Durham. <https://scholars.unh.edu/ccrc/48/>.
- Zatterstrom Dahlqvist, H., & Gillander Gádin, K. (2018). Online sexual victimization in youth: Predictors and cross-sectional associations with depressivesymptoms. *European Journal of Public Health*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky102>.

Author:

Mgr. Zuzana Hrabovská

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy

The Slovak Republic

zuzana.hrabovska@umb.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0817-8633>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Attitudes of High School and University Students Towards AI

Postoje středoškolských a vysokoškolských studentů k umělé inteligenci

Eva Hašek Dóšová¹, Ondrej Gergely²

Abstract:

This article addresses the current topic of high school and university students' attitudes towards artificial intelligence (AI), with a focus on generative language models such as ChatGPT. We are interested in how high school and university students perceive the use of AI in everyday life, education, and society in general. Understanding students' attitudes, biases, and expectations regarding this innovative technology contributes to a deeper understanding of its role and relevance in today's digital environment.

Keywords:

Artificial intelligence; attitudes; high school students; university students

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek se zabývá aktuálním tématem postojů středoškolských a vysokoškolských studentů k umělé inteligenci (AI) se zaměřením na generativní jazykové modely, jako je například ChatGPT. Zajímá nás, jakým způsobem vnímají studenti středních a vysokých škol využití umělé inteligence v běžném životě, ve vzdělávání a ve společnosti obecně. Pochopení postojů, předsudků a očekávání studentů k této inovativní technologii přispívá k hlubšímu porozumění její role a významu v současném digitálním prostředí.


Klíčová slova:

Umělá inteligence; postoje; středoškolští studenti; vysokoškolští studenti

Introduction

As with many revolutionary inventions, AI was developed to advance human innovation, simplify tasks, and meet the growing demand for capabilities that align with the complexity of our world. Just as there was once a need to automate manual labour, today's world, characterised by an overwhelming amount of information, requires tools to filter, interpret, and effectively utilise these data. For instance, writing a bachelor's thesis has changed significantly over the years. In the past, students relied primarily on books that

¹ Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, The Czech Republic, eva.hasekdosova01@upol.cz, ORCID 

² Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, The Czech Republic, ondrej.gergely@upol.cz, ORCID 

were considered sufficient sources. However, with the advent of the Internet and the increased availability of foreign periodicals, a visit to the university library is no longer adequate without access to online resources. Language models like ChatGPT open up new possibilities for communication and interaction between man and machine. They enrich virtual environments where they are used to solve a wide range of tasks. Their ability to adapt to different situations and users and to communicate like a human raises a number of questions about human communication itself, the trustworthiness of responses, ethics, the shape of the labour market, and the future of society and human interaction in general. The aim of this research is to explore how high school and college students view these issues, how they integrate them into their lives, and what this means for them in their daily school, academic, and even professional lives. We draw on the theoretical background and research findings obtained during the implementation of the bachelor's thesis (see Hašek Dóšová, 2024).

1 Attitudes

Attitudes play a key role in our perception of the world. They are essential in decision making and have a direct influence on human behaviour. Through attitudes we evaluate objects, phenomena, or ideas from positive to negative. These evaluations are a combination of affective, cognitive, and behavioural elements that interact with each other (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014). Attitudes are dynamic in nature. They can change in response to new information, experiences, and learning. They emerge as part of the socialisation process (Oskamp & Schultz, 2014). One of the basic functions of attitudes is to adapt to the environment. Katz (1960) associates different attitudes with different functions. The four basic functions are: knowledge function, instrumental function, value-expressive function and ego-defensive function.

Hogg and Vaughan (2014), as well as Řehan (2007), provide three basic divisions of the attitude structure:

- **One-component structure:** the main role is played by emotions and feelings. In Thurstone's conception, attitudes are defined by affect for or against a psychological object (Thurstone, 1931). Thus, the key question is whether we like the object or not.
- **Two-component structure:** to Thurstone's model, (Allport, 1935) added another component, which is mental readiness. This is a predisposition that has a fairly consistent influence on our decisions about right and wrong. The two-component model was also discussed by Bagozzi (1981). In his conception, attitude is not shaped by the affective (emotional) or cognitive component alone, but by a combination of the two.
- **Three-component structure:** assumes that attitudes consist of three basic components: affective, cognitive (thoughts and beliefs about the object), and conative (behavioural). The three-component structure of attitudes was discussed by Ostrom (1968), who emphasised the importance of these components, their interactions, and their influence on behaviour. Martin Fishbein, together with Icek Ajzen, developed a number of theories based on a multidimensional conception of the components of attitudes. Among the best known are the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 2012).

Measuring attitudes is a complex task. We should ideally capture all their components - affective, cognitive, and behavioural (Ajzen, 2012). The exploration of attitudes is

strongly related to the ways in which they are measured. Quantitative methods offer two different ways, explicit and implicit. Traditional explicit scales rely on self-assessment. Implicit measures of attitudes offer indirect methods such as evaluative priming or the Implicit Association Test (IAT). These methods focus on reaction time and associations, which are not as easily consciously influenced compared to explicit methods. Qualitative approaches in measuring attitudes, such as interview and observation, offer a more detailed view of attitudes and can better capture their different layers. Using them, interpretations can be better explored and attitudes explained. An additional advantage of qualitative methods is their ability to place attitudes within a broader context (Šafránková & Kocourková, 2011).

2 Artificial intelligence (AI)

The understanding of *artificial intelligence* (AI) has evolved over time. The first to use the term was John McCarthy in 1955, who described it as the science and technology of creating intelligent machines. It is common to compare the nature of AI with human intelligence; however, it is important to remember that human intelligence is inherently fallible. The description to which science leans is the quality of artificial intelligence understood through the key concept of rationality. Russel and Norvig (2022) describe two approaches. One understands intelligence as thought processes and reasoning, i.e., it is internal. The other focusses on behaviour, and hence is an external characteristic. It is also important to distinguish the terms artificial intelligence and machine learning. Machine learning is a subfield that falls under AI that deals with the ability to improve performance based on experience (Domingos, 2015).

The history of artificial intelligence dates back to the 20th century. The earliest work on AI, though not the most well known, was McCulloch and Pitts' 1943 theory of neural networks, which continues to serve as the foundational concept for neural networks in AI. The popularisation of AI at its beginning is mainly associated with the names of Alan Turing, John McCarthy and Marvin Minsky. They are among the pioneers who laid the foundations of AI. The Turing test remains a current tool through which machine and artificial intelligence is evaluated. John McCarthy's definition laid the foundation for the development of the field of AI, as did Marvin Minsky's exploration of simulating human thought. In 1969, Minsky published research with Papert focussing on neural networks and machine learning, building on the work of McCulloch and Pitts (Minsky and Papert, 2017). Another major breakthrough was the finding of Newell and Simon, who in 1976 formulated the physical symbols system hypothesis, which states that any system exhibiting general intelligence, human or machine, must operate on data in terms of being symbols (Gugerty, 2006). In the following years, attention turned to connectionism, focussing on the simulation of neural networks and the learning process, as is the case with the human brain. Its goal is to create an artificial network without direct programming for specific tasks. It is also key to the development of *deep learning*.

A significant development was the advent of the Internet, which made it possible to create huge data sets (a phenomenon known as *big data*). This data includes billions of words, images, hours of spoken language and video, social media content, and other conceivable forms of information. Although deep learning has played a role since the 1970s (LeCun et al., 1995), it was not until 2011 that the first language and visual object recognition emerged (Krizhevsky et al., 2012). Deep learning has outperformed humans in visual tasks, language recognition, machine translation, medical diagnoses, and gaming

abilities (LeCun et al., 2015). These significant advances have popularised AI in society, science, among students, and have attracted the attention of companies and countries. Deep learning has pushed programming towards self-learning and is of great importance for the development of *large language models* (LLM), which include ChatGPT3 (and later versions) and other models. The ability to generate and understand natural language is crucial to their development. Large language models, such as ChatGPT, have revolutionised natural language processing. The text generated by them is, with few exceptions, indistinguishable from human language; LLM can understand context, conversation styles, and can search for information, synthesise, draw conclusions, and reason abstractly.

3 Attitudes towards AI

Attitudes towards AI and attitudes towards technology could easily be confused, and the assumption is that methods for measuring attitudes towards technology apply to AI. However, AI is specific in some ways and, especially in the area of concerns, as a relatively recent innovation, it currently has more relevance than the existence of computers, the internet, or mobile phones. Within a few years, AI has penetrated many areas of everyday life without our consent or choice. The term *Artificial intelligence anxiety* (AIA) has emerged - a phenomenon that had to follow logically with the advent of AI. Wang and Wang (2019), building on previous studies, identified four areas of concern: concern about having to learn to work with AI; concern about AI replacing jobs; concern about AI being too powerful or misused; and last but not least, concern about the possible future form of AI (e.g., humanoid robots).

How we perceive AI and what we imagine it to be, or what information we have about it and who gives it to us, fundamentally influences our attitudes. As with technology acceptance and success, we evaluate the success of AI based on its acceptance and use (Dillon & Morris, 1996). At the most general level, it can be assumed that if an individual has a positive attitude towards technologies and innovations such as AI, he or she will use them more often and incorporate them more easily into his or her everyday life. Negative attitudes are likely to lead to resistance or hesitation in adopting them. Similar to research on attitudes and technology adoption, the recognition and measurement of attitudes towards AI is done using different methods and tools, questionnaires, scales, and interviews that assess different aspects of attitudes. Through these, we should be able to better identify the key factors that influence attitudes towards AI, i.e., its acceptance and use. At the same time, they can offer valuable information on how to improve these attitudes, how to formulate positions towards AI or how to define oneself in relation to it.

4 Exploring attitudes of high school and university students towards AI

The development and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into everyday life raises a number of issues in the context of psychology. These concern attitudes, perceptions, expectations, but also implications for society and academia (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Cotton et al., 2024). To date, there has been no qualitative study in the Czech Republic that examined how students navigate this new reality, their approach to the use of AI in both everyday and academic contexts, their motivations for using AI, and the extent to which

the absence of clear regulations³ influences or constrains their decisions. Innovations in the field of AI and its continuous development open up new topics and areas for research.

The aim of the research is to map the attitudes of high school and university students in the Czech Republic towards AI, with a focus on large language models (LLM) such as ChatGPT and its variants, and to provide insight, deeper understanding, and connection of their experiences with the use of AI tools through an overview of topics that resonate among students. For the purposes of the research presented here, semi-structured interviews with ten participants (five in each group) on attitudes toward AI, either through face-to-face interviews or through an online platform, were chosen for data collection and production. Direct experience with language models was not required for participation in the research, as even limited or no experience in this area is considered a valuable contribution to the general understanding. **A key factor** in the selection of participants was familiarity with language models such as ChatGPT and others. The age range of the participants from high school students was 16-19 years, while for university students the age range was 26-38 years (both full-time and combined students were represented). Before the interviews started, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the interview process, and the principles of processing and protecting the collected data. At the same time, participants were guaranteed anonymity, voluntary participation, and the possibility to terminate the interview at any time without giving any reason. Participation in the research did not involve any financial compensation. Informed consent was obtained verbally.

5 Results of research on attitudes of high school and university students towards AI

Based on the **thematic analysis** of the interviews with participants, nearly twenty main themes emerged, reflecting the individual attitudes of each respondent and their general perception of AI as a positive, neutral, or negative tool. We identified the following themes **as positive**: simplifying and speeding up work in a school or work environment, saving time in gathering and sorting information, facilitating routines, ease of adaptation and integration into life, innovation and technological breakthrough, part of a historical moment, and fascination with the discovery of AI. Among the **negative** themes we included: over-delegation of competencies, rapid and uncontrolled development, limitations of AI competencies, non-transparent investment in AI, underestimation of ethical regulation, production of manipulative misinformation content, and misuse of AI. **Neutral** themes also emerged, namely: the need for education, the importance of understanding, correct use, the legislative framework, and trademarks.

AI as both a potential risk and a tremendous benefit to society captures well the **central theme** for most respondents - finding a balance between the risks and positive aspects of AI. These responses allow us to track broader social and cultural trends in the adoption of AI tools. We also looked at the broader context of **perceptions of AI** and **LLM**. The four main themes emerging from the analysis are communication with AI, AI, as an entity, trust in AI and understanding how AI works. Based on the research conducted, it can be inferred that the interactions with LLM, their methods of addressing them, and their levels of trust or emotional attachment are interconnected aspects that influence each other. As the interviews revealed, it is not uncommon for participants to treat AI as an entity that

³ At the time of the study.

"deserves" respect and courtesy compared to search engines such as Google Search. Common human modes of communication, such as addressing, asking, and thanking, proved to be a valid form of communication towards AI as well. However, this also carries with it certain characteristics of behavioural advocacy on the part of the participants, in both directions - positive and negative behaviour. From the interviews, there is a sense that even the participants themselves are not sure what the right, individually and socially positive response is.

LLM are tools that, by their very nature, do not always provide reliable or truthful answers. The experiences of our participants with these tools confirm this issue. LLM sometimes generates responses that are fabricated or not based on accurate information, which can lead users to temporarily lose interest and foster resentment among participants. In contrast, this imperfection highlights the need to validate the outputs provided by LLM. Paradoxically, this characteristic can be beneficial, as the ability to error is perceived as 'human,' which helped build trust among participants. This leniency toward AI-generated inaccuracies is also linked to participants' understanding of how LLM operates. Those who had even a superficial grasp of LLM and generative AI principles understood the reasons behind such responses. The interviews revealed a consensus on the importance of critical thinking and the need to compare AI results with reality.

With one exception, all of our participants had **direct experience** using AI (LLM) tools. The frequency and extent of their use appear to be related to their field of study and the associated demands. Both high school and university students incorporate AI into their daily routines. We observed that their usage patterns were influenced by periods of increased demand, such as exam times, deadlines for term papers, or attendance at specialised AI-related training sessions. The intensity of use was also related to the novelty of tools such as ChatGPT. The participants mainly used ChatGPT as their LLM of choice. The popularity and usage of LLM were often tied to new releases or updates (e.g., Gemini), work-related requirements, or a desire to explore alternatives to ChatGPT, such as Perplexity AI, Bing Chat, DeepL, Snapchat's My AI, or Midjourney for image creation. Among the participants, the unpaid version of ChatGPT 3.5 was the most frequently used, despite the availability of version 4.0 at the time of the research.

A major topic discussed was the **ethical, security, and regulatory aspects of AI**. According to the participants, addressing these issues is crucial to ensure that the benefits of AI outweigh its potential risks. The participants considered ethical issues from various perspectives. These included the use of AI tools to improve efficiency in study and work, concerns about copyright, the enforcement of ethical standards, and the potential misuse of AI to spread misinformation, political manipulation, and in conflict situations. Participants also noted a clear solution to the dilemma of using AI in education: integrating AI as a legitimate and effective tool within educational settings. They emphasised that the ability to work effectively with AI tools is **a significant value in itself**, potentially even surpassing the importance of the content-related aspects of tasks. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that teaching staff receive proper training in these areas.

Although AI tools have the potential to positively impact society, they also pose significant risks, particularly in the absence of adequate control, regulation, and accountability. Participants expressed **concerns about several issues**, including diminished critical thinking leading to susceptibility to manipulation, data misuse, and unchecked advancements in AI technology. They also worried about the creation of artificial consciousness and the deterioration of interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, participants speculated about the future development of AI, particularly the possibility of interacting with anthropomorphised AI or AI as a distinct entity, which could introduce numerous moral and legal dilemmas.

Conclusions

Most research on attitudes toward AI is quantitative, focussing on specific aspects of AI usage (compare Biswas, 2023; Peters et al., 2023; Rane & Choudhary, 2024). However, qualitative methods also play a crucial role in AI research. They provide insights into the current state and mood, capturing opinions and attitudes in a deeper way. In the Czech Republic, research on students' attitudes toward AI is minimal. Despite an active public debate on this topic, we found no relevant studies in the Czech context.

The aim of this research was to map the current attitudes of high school and university students toward AI and to identify and present specific themes that resonate with them. Attitudes are central to AI research, especially as technology evolves and becomes integrated in both personal and commercial spheres, impacting millions of people globally and within the Czech Republic on a daily basis. This mapping revealed a variety of topics, underscoring their urgency, priority, or, conversely, marginal interest. We identified six main themes, each with additional sub-themes:

- Individual attitudes towards AI (positive; negative; neutral).
- Perceptions of AI (communication with AI; trust in ChatGPT and other LLM; understanding how AI works).
- Mode of use and experience with AI (experience and frequency of use of AI and LLM; types of LLM used; mode of use - efficiency and time saving, access to information and educational tool; inspiration and entertainment; coding and programming tool; AI in therapy).
- AI education (education gaps; institutional attitudes towards education; student attitudes toward using AI tools).
- Concerns and threats from AI (loss of self-reason; lack of critical thinking; manipulation and misuse of data; unstoppable progress; deterioration of interpersonal relationships; aggression and war).
- Ethics and regulation (copyright; regulation and transparency; individual responsibility; AI abuse; AI as an entity).

Based on the nature of the topics, we identified two areas:

- Topics related to your own experience and your personal experience with AI.
- Topics related to AI and society and its direction.

In general, our research shows that older studies that pre-date 2022 often make claims that are inconsistent with current knowledge. The fluid nature and speed of change that the new world brings with it, with the presence of AI in daily life, raises the question of how long the results of these studies will be valid in the future. However, we achieved the primary objective, which was to capture and map student attitudes and capture a moment in the historical development of AI, with a particular focus on LLM such as ChatGPT. Mapping the current attitudes of high school and university students is also important with respect to the future direction of human-AI collaboration. It is this generation that will be responsible for the future outcomes and future direction of humanity. Only the future will tell us which direction we will take.

Project affiliation

The funding for the present publication was provided by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for specific research (IGA_FF_2024_016).

References

- Ajzen, I. (2012). Martin Fishbein's Legacy: The Reasoned Action Approach. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 640, 11–27.
- Allport, G. W. (1935). Attitudes. In C. Murchinson (Ed.). *A handbook of social psychology* (pp. 798–844). Clark University Press.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1981). Attitudes, intentions, and behavior: A test of some key hypotheses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41(4), 607–627. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.41.4.607>.
- Biswas, S., (2023). ChatGPT and the Future of Medical Writing. *Radiology*, 307(2). <https://doi.org/10.1148/radiol.223312>.
- Cotton, D. R. E., Cotton, P. A., & Shipway, J. R. (2024). Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(2), 228–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2190148>.
- Dillon, A., & Morris, M. G. (1996). User Acceptance of Information Technology: Theories and Models. *ARIST*, 31, 3–32.
- Domingos, P. (2015). *The master algorithm: How the quest for the ultimate learning machine will remake our world*. Basic Books.
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., Slade, E. L., Jeyaraj, A., Kar, A. K., Baabdullah, A. M., Koohang, A., Raghavan, V., Ahuja, M., Albanna, H., Albashrawi, M. A., Al-Busaidi, A. S., Balakrishnan, J., Barlette, Y., Basu, S., Bose, I., Brooks, L., Buhalis, D., ... Wright, R. (2023). Opinion Paper: "So what if ChatGPT wrote it?" Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management*, 71, 102642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2023.102642>.
- Gugerty, L. (2006). Newell and Simon's Logic Theorist: Historical Background and Impact on Cognitive Modeling. *Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting*, 50, 880–884. <https://doi.org/10.1177/154193120605000904>
- Hašek Dóšová, E. (2024). *Postoje a zkušenosti s AI u českých středoškoláků a vysokoškoláků* [Bakalářská práce, Palacký University Olomouc]. Theses.cz. <https://theses.cz/id/5gm72h/?lang=en>.
- Hogg, M. A., & Vaughan, G. M. (2014). *Social Psychology* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Katz, D. (1960). The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24(2), 163–204. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266945>.
- Krizhevsky, A., Sutskever, I., & Hinton, G. E. (2012). ImageNet Classification with Deep Convolutional Neural Networks. In F. Pereira, C. J. Burges, L. Bottou, & K. Q. Weinberger (Eds.), *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 25 (NIPS 2012)*. Curran Associates.

- Lecun, Y., Jackel, L. D., Bottou, L., Brunot, A., Cortes, C., Denker, J. S., Drucker, H., Guyon, I., Muller, U. A., Sackinger, E., Simard, P., & Vapnik, V. (1995). Comparison of learning algorithms for handwritten digit recognition. In F. Fogelman, & P. Gallinari (Eds.), *International Conference on Artificial Neural Networks, Paris* (pp. 53–60). EC2 & Cie.
- LeCun, Y., Bengio, Y., & Hinton, G. (2015). Deep learning. *Nature*, *521*, 436–444. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature14539>.
- Minsky, M., & Papert, S. A. (2017). *Perceptrons: An Introduction to Computational Geometry*. The MIT Press.
- Oskamp, S., & Schultz, P. W. (2014). *Attitudes and Opinions* (3rd ed.). Psychology Press.
- Ostrom, T. M. (1968). 1 - The Emergence of Attitude Theory: 1930–1950. In A. G. Greenwald, T. C. Brock, & T. M. Ostrom (Eds.). *Psychological Foundations of Attitudes* (pp. 1–32). Academic Press.
- Peters, M. A., Jackson, L., Papastephanou, M., Jandrić, P., Lazaroiu, G., Evers, C. W., Cope, B., Kalantzis, M., Araya, D., Tesar, M., Mika, C., Chen, L., Wang, C., Sturm, S., Rider, S., & Fuller, S. (2023). AI and the future of humanity: ChatGPT-4, philosophy and education – Critical responses. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *56*(9), 828–862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2023.2213437>.
- Rane, N., & Choudhary, S. (2024). Role and challenges of ChatGPT, Google Bard, and similar generative Artificial Intelligence in Arts and Humanities. *Studies in Humanities and Education*, *5*(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.48185/she.v5i1.999>.
- Řehan, V. (2007). *Sociální psychologie: studijní texty pro distanční studium*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P. (2022). *Artificial intelligence: a modern approach* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Šafránková, A., & Kocourková, V. (2011). Kvantitativní a kvalitativní rozměr výzkumu postojů učitelů ve vztahu k sociálnímu znevýhodnění žáků. In T. Janík, P. Knecht, & S. Šebestová (Eds.), *Smíšený design v pedagogickém výzkumu: Sborník příspěvků z 19. výroční konference České asociace pedagogického výzkumu* (s. 416–420). Masarykova univerzita. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PdF.P210-CAPV-2012-53>.
- Thurstone, L. L. (1931). The measurement of social attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *27*, 249–269.
- Wang, Y. Y., & Wang, Y. S. (2019). Development and validation of an artificial intelligence anxiety scale: An initial application in predicting motivated learning behavior. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *30*(4), 619–634. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1674887>.

Authors:

Bc. Eva Hašek Dóšová
 Palacký University Olomouc,
 Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology
 The Czech Republic

eva.hasekdosova01@upol.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7739-8098>

Mgr. Ondrej Gergely

Palacký University Olomouc,

Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology

The Czech Republic

ondrej.gergely@upol.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6230-9375>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Subjective Attitudes of Student Teachers Towards Undergraduate Training in the Issue of Risk Phenomena in Cyberspace

Subjektivní postoje studentů učitelství k pregraduální přípravě v problematice rizikových jevů v kyberprostoru

Martin Knytl¹

Abstract:

The contribution focuses on the subjective attitudes of student teachers towards undergraduate training in the issue of risk phenomena in cyberspace. The text briefly covers the topic of online risk phenomena and their position in education. The following are partial results of a quantitative investigation that focused on the subjective attitudes of student teachers towards the topic. Self-assessment scales were used to obtain and interpret the data with the help of Likert scale.

Keywords:

Online risk phenomena; cyberspace; teacher training students; undergraduate training

Abstrakt:


Příspěvek se zaměřuje na subjektivní postoje studentů učitelství k pregraduální přípravě v problematice rizikových jevů v kyberprostoru. Text stručně zahrnuje téma online rizikových jevů a jejich pozici ve výchově a vzdělávání. Následují dílčí výsledky kvantitativního šetření, které se zaměřilo na subjektivní postoje studentů učitelství k danému tématu. Ke získání a interpretaci dat byly využity sebesuzovací škály s pomocí Likertovy škály.

Klíčová slova:

Online rizikové jevy; kyberprostor; studenti učitelství; pregraduální příprava

Introduction

In today's information age, life in society is characterised using digital technologies and social networks, which are supposed to make various areas of life easier for people, although this is not always the case. The closest relationship with technology is certainly with those who work with it extensively, whether in their studies, profession or leisure time. College students, who can be characterized as an older Generation Z group (e.g. Seemiller & Grace; Knytl, 2024), among others, are certainly among the leading users

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, martin.knytl@uhk.cz, ORCID 

of digital technologies and cyberspace. This is one of the reasons why it is necessary to address the risks of digital technology use among the aforementioned target group as well.

1 Risk phenomena in cyberspace and their place in the field of education

Risk phenomena in cyberspace do not arise on their own, i.e. through the influence of digital technologies, the Internet and cyberspace itself. As Geerts (2022) argues, the problem is not the technology, but its users, i.e. people using modern technology, existing in a global world or cyberspace.

People themselves as creators and inhabitants of the online world are responsible for the fact that their cyberpersonality and even their personality in the real world comes or can be connected with online risks, i.e. with other personalities and cyberpersonalities and their negative motives and intentions. Indeed, one cannot ignore the psychosocial aspects of cyberspace that influence individuals and give them imaginary negative and positive power in online behaviour. Suler (2016) makes a similar point, suggesting that deviant people are finding clever ways to exploit dramatically changing technology to their advantage. This occurs primarily through their behaviour and psychological motives, which remain inherently negative and constant. The speed of change in technology, together with the psychosocial aspects of cyberspace, reinforces the motives of deviant people.

The very notion of risk phenomena in cyberspace is offered from the connection among risk, cyberspace and humans. They are available to be interpreted as phenomena that violate accepted social norms, arouse feelings of threat, and as a result can result in a demonstrable increase in social, educational, health and other risks to the individual, the group, and society (Urban, 2022).

The risk phenomena associated with cyberspace may be distinguished individually, but also according to the basic three areas in which they fall. Those mentioned are addictive behaviour, negative psychosocial phenomena and risky sexual behaviour (cf. Hamanová & Csémy, 2014).

However, regarding to possible risks, risk phenomena in cyberspace appears to be divided according to the existence of risks, which are defined in the 4C classification of online risks (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). In their classification, the authors distinguish aggressive, sexual and value risks in conjunction with the risk elements of content, contact, behaviour and contract. All online risks arise when a user of cyberspace:

- encounters and/or is exposed to potentially harmful content;
- experiences and/or is the target of potentially harmful contact;
- is a witness, participant and/or victim of potentially harmful behaviour;
- is a participant and/or is exploited by a potentially harmful contract, agreement or other commercial interest (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021).

The interplay of risk types and risk elements might be used to distinguish different risk phenomena such as violent or hateful forms of communication, cyber harassment, cyberbullying, phishing attacks, harmful pornography, cyberbullying, online sexual coercion, online human trafficking, misinformation, online manipulation, harmful online communities, online gambling, and others. However, cross-cutting risks are also integral, which include privacy violations, risks to physical and mental health, and risks related to inequality and discrimination (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021).

The topic of risk phenomena in cyberspace or online risk behaviour has taken part in strategic and conceptual materials in the field of education and training for many years. Since 2020, among other things, there have been gradual amendments and modernisation of the framework education programmes in regional education, which are based on the *Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2020), in which the topic of online risk phenomena also appears, but to a small extent. In relation to the changes in education, i.e. at the level of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, it is disappointing that teacher education programmes at universities also show a very low level of the topic. It is also in those degree programmes that the changes are taking place at the lower levels of the education system need to be properly reflected.

As far as strategic and conceptual materials are concerned, in the Czech environment, one of the essential documents is the *National Strategy for the Primary Prevention of Risk Behaviour in Children and Youth for the period 2019-2027* (hereinafter also referred to as the National Strategy), which names specific risk phenomena in cyberspace in contrast to the framework educational programmes. In accordance with the National Strategy, these phenomena include cyberbullying and other risky forms of communication through multimedia, threats, online addictive behaviour and online risky sexual behaviour. Other online risks can also be found, but are not explicitly expressed in the National Strategy. They can be partly found in the individual annexes of the *Methodological Recommendation on Primary Prevention of Risky Behaviour among Children, Pupils and Students in Schools and Educational Institutions* (hereinafter also referred to as the Methodological Recommendation), which was issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic in 2010 and is gradually updating and supplementing its annexes. Examples include the posting of intimate photographs on the Internet or sending them by mobile phone, or sexting (Jonášová, 2015).

2 Subjective attitudes of student teachers towards undergraduate training in the issue of risk phenomena in cyberspace

The following text contains partial results from a research investigation that was conducted in 2021. The research problem of the investigation was the attitudes and experiences of student teachers with selected forms of risk phenomena. Regarding to the content of the investigation, several sub-objectives were set, and the results presented relate to the objective through which the attitudes from a subjective point of view of the teacher education students approached towards their undergraduate preparation in the context of the issue of online risk phenomena.

A quantitative approach was chosen for the research investigation. The research technique was in the form of an online questionnaire where data was collected through Google Forms. The research instrument contained 26 items, but for the purpose of the present paper, 14 items are presented. Partial results are analysed using the statistical software JASP.

2.1 Brief characteristics of the research population

The research study is represented by 436 respondents, respectively full-time and combined students of teaching. A total of 267 females (61.2%) and 169 males (38.8%) from 8 the Czech universities participated in the survey. The average age of the

respondents was 24 years. Bachelor, Master and post-master teacher training programmes are represented in the research population.

2.2 Survey items

The results, which are presented in the following section, are consisted of of 14 items or statements related to the issue of risk phenomena in cyberspace. Respondents were given the opportunity to respond through a Likert scale as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = rather disagree, 3 = neutral attitude, 4 = rather agree, 5 = strongly agree. The statements were worded as follows:

- a) I have ICT subject(s) in my study plan.
- b) My study plan includes a course focused on communication and risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- c) I am educated about risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- d) I am educated about prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet.
- e) Through my studies, I am prepared to explain what risk phenomena in cyberspace are.
- f) Through study, I am prepared to identify risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- g) Through my studies I am prepared to prevent and inform students about safe behaviour on the Internet.
- h) Through my studies I am prepared to solve problems related to risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- i) Through my studies, I am prepared to inform about follow-up services that address risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- j) During my studies I have attended an educational event on risk phenomena in cyberspace.
- k) I see risk phenomena in cyberspace as an important topic in my teacher education studies.
- l) I perceive prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet as important topics in the study of teaching.
- m) I see risk phenomena in cyberspace as an important topic for teaching practice.
- n) I perceive prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet as important topics for teaching practice.

2.3 Partial results of the research investigation

The following table (see Table 1) contains descriptive results for each item using the indicators of mean (average, median), minimum and maximum.

Table 1 *Descriptive results of the research investigation*

Items	Mean	Median	Min	Max
a) I have ICT subject(s) in my study plan.	2.6	2.0	1	5
b) My study plan includes a course focused on communication and risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.1	2.0	1	5
c) I am educated about risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.4	2.0	1	5
d) I am educated about prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet.	2.6	2.0	1	5

Items	Mean	Median	Min	Max
e) Through my studies, I am prepared to explain what risk phenomena in cyberspace are.	2.5	2.0	1	5
f) Through study, I am prepared to identify risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.8	3.0	1	5
g) Through my studies I am prepared to prevent and inform students about safe behaviour on the Internet.	2.7	2.0	1	5
h) Through my studies I am prepared to solve problems related to risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.4	2.0	1	5
i) Through my studies, I am prepared to inform about follow-up services that address risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.4	2.0	1	5
j) During my studies I have attended an educational event on risk phenomena in cyberspace.	2.1	5.0	1	5
k) I see risk phenomena in cyberspace as an important topic in my teacher education studies.	4.2	5.0	1	5
l) I perceive prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet as important topics in the study of teaching.	4.3	5.0	1	5
m) I see risk phenomena in cyberspace as an important topic for teaching practice.	4.3	5.0	1	5
n) I perceive prevention and safe behaviour on the Internet as important topics for teaching practice.	4.5	5.0	1	5

N = 436

The selected items show a varying breadth of results. According to item (a), respondents mostly do not have ($M = 2.6$) items related to ICT. However, this result may be influenced by the research population from the first-year student teachers. In item (b), respondents expressed that they mostly do not have courses on communication and risk phenomena in cyberspace. The average is 2.1, with 309 (70.9%) respondents expressing that rating. Already in this case, the situation can be considered insufficient, since Internet communication and its risks have a firm place today not only in communication as such, but also in education.

The respondents' attitudes towards education about online risk phenomena [see item c)] differ slightly from the previous item. Although the average (2.4) is slightly higher, 271 respondents (62.1%) said that they do not educate themselves about risk phenomena during their schooling. A similar result holds for item (d), where negative attitudes towards education on prevention and safe online behaviour prevail [$M = 2.6$; 232 (53.2%) respondents], which is closely related to education on the risks of cyberspace.

Items (e)-(i) were related to respondents' preparedness in relation to risk phenomena in cyberspace. Trends in respondents' negative attitudes continued in these items as well. Most respondents [$M = 2.4$; 263 (60.4%) of respondents] perceived themselves unprepared to deal with online risks [item (h)]. Respondents also have similar attitudes or unpreparedness towards awareness of follow-up services [item (i)] that address the topic [$M = 2.4$; 239 (54.8%) of respondents]. Slightly higher mean values can be observed for readiness to explain, identify and prevent. Although 260 (59.6%) of respondents do not feel prepared to explain online risk phenomena, negative attitudes are lower for

identify [M = 2.8; 158 (36.3%) of respondents] and preventive action towards risk phenomena in cyberspace [M = 2.7; 201 (46.1%) of respondents].

Unfortunately, the low readiness of respondents is supported by low engagement in attending a particular educational event that addresses the research subject. The mean is 2.1, in other words, 295 (67.6%) respondents expressed a negative attitude, 45 (10.3%) respondents expressed a neutral attitude, i.e., they were likely to attend an educational event on the subject in the past; further, 96 (22.1%) respondents had ever attended an educational event on risk phenomena in cyberspace.

The last four items are dedicated to the topic of online risk phenomena in relation to teaching. 339 (77.8%) of the respondents perceived the importance of the topic when studying teaching [item (k); M = 4.2]. The remaining 97 (22.2%) respondents have a neutral or disagreeing attitude towards the topic. However, in terms of attitude towards prevention and safe online behaviour, 364 (83.5%) respondents perceive it as important. Also, 364 (83.5%) respondents have an agreeing attitude towards the importance of the topic for teaching practice. Even 409 (93.8%) respondents perceive the positive importance of prevention and safe online behaviour.

Conclusion

The issue of risk phenomena in cyberspace plays an important role not only in everyday life, or in the use of digital technologies, but also in the educational process at all levels of the education system. It needs to be given due attention so that all users of digital technologies are capable of protecting themselves, their rights, their money and, for example, their time.

It is clear from the sub-results of the research that there is a need to link pre-service teacher training more closely with the development of digital competences in such a way that not only future teachers themselves use technology in a critical and safe way. This is because their development creates an opportunity to develop and strengthen the digital competences of future generations. In most cases, respondents acknowledge the importance of the topic, but do not perceive that they are sufficiently prepared in it. Of course, the results should be taken with a grain of salt, as this is a presentation of data from 2021. Since then, teacher education programmes have been gradually updated to align with innovations and trends in digital education.

Project affiliation

This article is supported by financial resources allocated by the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové to the project of specific research No. 2115/1260/1210 entitled *Cyber Threat in the Context of Undergraduate Teacher Training*.

References

- Geerts, T. (2022). *Homo Digitalis: How digitalisation is making us more human*. Lannoo.
- Hamanová, J., & Csémy, L. (2014). Syndrom rizikového chování v dospívání – teoretické předpoklady a souvislosti [Adolescent Risk Behavior Syndrome - Theoretical Assumptions and Context]. In P. Kabíček, L. Csémy, J. Hamanová, V. Benešová, S. Břichcín, M. Budinská, D. Čáp, L. Čírtková, P. Hellerová, L. Hulanová, P. Chomynová,

- H. Imlaufová, M. Koranda, J. Koutek, L. Machala, K. Nešpor, H. Papežová, P. Sadílek, & L. Teslík. *Rizikové chování v dospívání a jeho vztah ke zdraví* [Risk Behaviour in Adolescence and its Relationship to Health] (pp. 32–48). Triton.
- Jonášová, I. (2015). *Metodické doporučení k primární prevenci rizikového chování u dětí, žáků a studentů ve školách a školských zařízeních – Příloha č. 18: Rizikové sexuální chování* [Methodological Recommendation on Primary Prevention of Risky Behaviour in Children, Pupils and Students in Schools and Educational Institutions - Annex 18: Risky Sexual Behaviour]. <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/socialni-programy/metodicke-dokumenty-doporuceni-a-pokyny>.
- Knytl, M. (2024). *Kyberohrožení generace Z v sexuální oblasti* [Sexual-based Cyber Threats of the Generation Z]. [Dissertation Thesis, University of Hradec Králové].
- Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. (2021). *The 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children. (CO:RE Short Report Series on Key Topics)*. Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung, Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI) & CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence. <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.71817>.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. (2020). *Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+*. https://www.msmt.cz/uploads/brozura_S2030_en_fin_online.pdf.
- Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2019). *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*. Routledge.
- Suler, J. R. (2016). *Psychology of the Digital Age: Humans Become Electric*. Cambridge University Press.
- Urban, L. (2022). *Sociologie: klíčová témata a pojmy* (2., dopl. a aktualiz. vyd.) [Sociology: key topics and concepts (2nd, supplemented and updated edition)]. Grada.

Author:

PaedDr. Bc. Martin Knytl, Ph.D., MBA, MCS

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

martin.knytl@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8095-168X>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

Selected Determinants of the Digital Divide Among Seniors

Vybrané determinanty digitální propasti mezi seniory

Eva Janouchová¹

Abstract:

This theoretical-empirical study examines the level of the digital divide with a focus on seniors, based on data obtained from a survey of University of the Third Age (U3V) Hradec Králové (UHK) students. The results of the survey showed that while most of the participants have a high level of digital literacy, significant differences persist in advanced digital skills, especially in the use of social networks and other digital platforms. Social context is a strong predictor of internet and digital technology use, with help from family and friends being as important as course instruction. These findings point to the need for targeted training programs that develop advanced digital skills and take into account the specific needs of older adults.

Keywords:


Digital divide; seniors; determinants of the digital divide; internet access; university of the third age

Abstrakt:

Teoreticko-empirická studie zkoumá úroveň digitální propasti se zaměřením na seniory, přičemž se opírá o data získaná z výzkumné sondy mezi posluchači Univerzity třetího věku Univerzity Hradec Králové (U3V UHK). Výsledky šetření ukázaly, že zatímco většina účastníků vykazuje vysokou úroveň digitální gramotnosti, přetrvávají značné rozdíly v pokročilých digitálních dovednostech, zejména v oblasti využívání sociálních sítí a dalších digitálních platform. Sociální kontext je silným prediktorem pro používání internetu a digitálních technologií, přičemž pomoc ze strany rodiny a přátel je stejně důležitá jako výuka v kurzech. Tato zjištění ukazují na potřebu cílených vzdělávacích programů, které by rozvíjely pokročilé digitální dovednosti a zohledňovaly specifické potřeby starších dospělých.

Klíčová slova:

Digitální propast; seniory; determinanty digitální propasti; přístup k internetu; univerzita třetího věku

¹ Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, eva.janouchova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

Introduction

The aging population and the digital divide are two key global challenges that affect today's society. The proportion of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase globally between 2022 and 2050. Projections suggest that by 2050, one in four people in Europe and North America could be 65 or over (United Nations, 2022). This trend is not avoiding the Czech Republic either. During 2022, the number of seniors will increase by 1.8 %, with the latest data on the age composition of the population at the end of 2022 showing 2.21 million people aged 65+ in the Czech Republic, 38.7 thousand more year-on-year (Český statistický úřad [ČSÚ], 2023a).

Demographic changes, characterized by the growing proportion of older people in society, are accompanied by the rapid development of digital technologies that increasingly affect everyday life. While digital technologies offer new opportunities to improve quality of life and access to information, services, and social networks, the older population often faces barriers that prevent them from fully exploiting the potential of these technologies.

The digital divide, i.e. the difference in access to and use of digital technologies between different population groups, is particularly pronounced among older people. This phenomenon is caused by several factors, including low digital skills, low technological literacy, economic barriers, and sometimes psychological resistance to new technologies. As a result, older people are often excluded from digitally mediated services and information, which can lead to social isolation, limited access to health services, and even economic disadvantages. The digital divide can also manifest itself in access to AI-based technologies such as virtual digital assistants etc. (Lutz, 2019).

Current research is increasingly focused on identifying the factors that contribute to this digital divide and finding ways to bridge the gap. When designing and implementing solutions, it is important to take into account the specific needs of the older population. The chosen issue is therefore not only a technological challenge but also a major social problem that requires a comprehensive approach.

The present study focuses on identifying the main factors that contribute to the digital divide among seniors. Although the research part of this paper focuses on the audience of a specific third-age university and the results obtained cannot be fully generalized, they can nevertheless serve as a valuable source of inspiration for adult educators and also provide suggestions for further research on the digital divide in this target group.

1 The digital divide

The digital divide is a multidimensional term and we can encounter different variants of this term in the literature, e.g. digital exclusion, digital divide, digital exclusion. Regardless of its negative or positive connotations, it is by its very nature closely linked to information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet. Broadly speaking, the concept of the digital divide is always related to unequal access to or use of technology from the perspective of individuals or groups of people. Van Dijk (2006) defines this concept as the gap between those who have and those who do not have access to new forms of information technology. In the Czech context, Jiří Zounek (2006) was among the first to use this term. It can be assumed that the definition of the digital divide is evolving along with the digital transformation that accelerated during the coronavirus crisis and the emergence of artificial intelligence (Van Dijk, 2012).

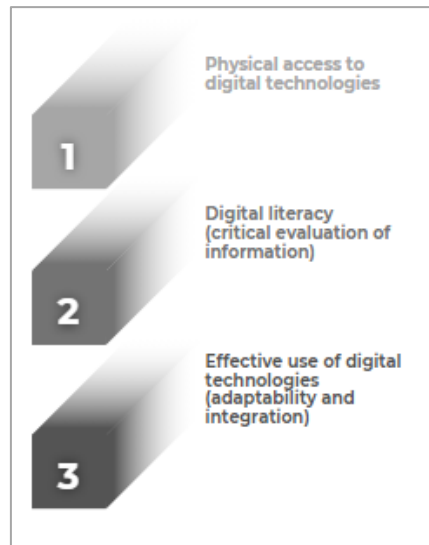


Diagram 1 *Three levels of the digital divide (own elaboration)*

Diagram 1 vividly summarizes and articulates the continuum of the digital divide into three levels. **The first level** focuses on access to digital technologies, particularly the Internet and computers. Differences in access to these basic technologies lead to the primary form of the digital divide. Given the current availability of the Internet and technology, the expert community assumes that this level is beginning to close.

The **Level 2** digital divide can include people's limited ability to use available digital technologies (Attwel, 2001). It includes basic digital literacy, such as the ability to use the Internet, operate software and applications, and the ability to critically evaluate information available online. Gaps in digital skills are often the result of differences in education, age and socioeconomic status, further widening the digital divide even for those who have physical access to technology.

The tertiary gap represents the level of effective use of digital technologies. It deals with the ability to use digital technologies effectively and productively to achieve specific goals such as education, employment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. This level of the digital divide includes not only technical skills, but also the ability to adapt to new technological changes, creatively use digital tools, and integrate technology into daily life and work (Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015).

It is clear from the above that the original indicator of the digital divide, which was physical access to digital technologies, is no longer relevant. Most noticeable are the differences between groups of people who differ in their level of skill in using the available digital technologies (Van Dijk, 2012). In this context, it becomes crucial to examine the information needs of specific segments of the population and then apply these findings to the structure of lifelong learning, with a particular focus on the development of digital literacy. One of the most disadvantaged groups is the elderly. Foreign research that has focused on this target group (Choi et al., 2014) suggests that the issue lies more in the effective use of these technologies. The greatest difficulties are not related to basic computer skills, but to navigating the wide range of available services, searching for relevant information, evaluating the data obtained, and using online tools (e.g. internet banking, online shopping, distance learning, navigating health information, or using e-government).

1.1 Selected determinants of the digital divide

The key determinants of the digital divide, based on available studies and research surveys, include the following factors:

Economic factors: access to digital technologies is often influenced by economic conditions such as household income. Lower incomes limit the ability to buy computers, and smartphones or pay for internet access. Among other things, it appears that higher-income earners use the internet more efficiently and productively, while lower-income earners tend to use the Internet more generally and superficially (Van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014).

Education: education level plays a key role in the development of digital skills. People with higher education are more likely to be proficient in modern technologies and to use them effectively. The positive relationship between educational attainment and internet use stems from greater awareness, higher and better ability to evaluate content (Van Deursen et al., 2015).

Age factors: older generations often face difficulties in adopting new technologies, contributing to the digital divide. This factor is associated with lower digital literacy and lower levels of adaptation to technological change. Seniors are the least likely of all age groups to use the Internet. A survey conducted by the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ, 2023b) recorded a dynamic shift in the last five years from button mobile phones to smartphones in the 65-74 age group from 21% to 56%, and the share of internet users in the Czech Republic has also increased for people aged 65+ from 13% in 2010 to 52% in 2023.

Geographical location: Access to digital technologies is often limited by geography. Rural and remote areas may have poorer access to the internet and digital infrastructure, making the situation worse than in urban areas.

Socio-cultural factors: cultural and social norms can influence individuals' willingness and ability to adopt and use digital technologies. For example, in some societies, women or certain social groups may be less exposed to technology because of traditional roles and expectations. Generational differences can also be observed, with older generations often being less digitally savvy. This may be due to both less exposure to technology during their lifetime (e.g. working age employment patterns) and physical or cognitive barriers that prevent them from adapting to new technologies. Support from family, friends, or the community, as well as access to training and development programs can greatly facilitate an individual's ability to bridge the digital divide.

Technology infrastructure: the availability and quality of digital infrastructure, such as broadband and mobile networks, are key to bridging the digital divide. Inadequate infrastructure can limit access to technology even in developed areas.

These determinants are intertwined and together form a complex web of factors that contribute to differences in access to digital technologies. The professional community views the issue through a broader lens toward the gap in knowledge, interpretation, and understanding of the information presented (Graham, 2011). This shift in the focus of current research confirms that the study of the digital divide has expanded beyond a purely technological approach and moved beyond the primary level of the digital divide.

2 Empirical survey

The sub-objective of the research project "Digital Literacy of seniors in the Context of Universities of the Third Age" was to analyze the factors influencing the digital divide of seniors in terms of the use of digital technologies and the Internet. The analysis of social context as a predictor of digital technology and internet use, the influence of family and friendship support including the role of teaching in University of the Third Age courses. The motivation for the choice of the topic is the relevance of the issue of educating seniors against the background of demographic aging with an emphasis on the changing demands of today. This allows for the development and implementation of targeted educational programmes and strategies that reflect the specific needs and challenges associated with strengthening digital competences in this demographic group.

Given the complex and multifaceted topic, a mixed research design was chosen. A focus group was chosen for data collection in the pilot phase of the research, followed by a questionnaire survey in an attempt to contribute to the validity of the research instrument. This paper presents selected outputs of the qualitative part of the research project.

The research sample consisted of students of the University of the Third Age of the University of Hradec Králové (U3V UHK) in the academic year 2023/2024. Universities carry out accredited study programs and lifelong learning programs, which include the activities of the so-called universities of the third age, focused on the education of seniors² (Zákon č. 111/1998 Sb., o vysokých školách). These educational activities are intended for citizens of the Czech Republic of retirement age.

A total of 294 seniors participated in the survey, i.e. 44 % of the total number of 665 participants in lifelong learning. Table 1 presents the overall demographic profile of the research sample. These data offer insight into the gender structure, age stratification, level of educational attainment, place of residence, and pre-retirement economic activity of the audience who participated in the survey.

The research group was predominantly female 93.9 %, while men were represented in only 6.1 %. This significant **gender imbalance** suggests that the program is much more popular among women, which could reflect broader societal trends in preferences for further education or opportunities among older adults. **The age distribution of respondents** was heavily weighted towards older adults, with the majority aged between 65 and 74 (52.4 %) and over 75 (46.3 %). Only a very small proportion (1.4 %) fell into the 55-64 age group. This reflects the program's focus on education for the elderly, which is characteristic of U3V initiatives.

There were no students with only primary or incomplete education. The data obtained show that the research participants are relatively well educated, with a significant proportion having undergone higher education.

² In demographic statistics, a senior citizen is commonly defined by the criterion of his or her age, i.e. a person aged 65 or over.

Table 1 Demographic profile of the research group of U3V UHK students

Demographic profile of the research group of U3V UHK students		
Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender structure	Female	93,90%
	Male	6,10%
Age stratification	Less than 50	0,00%
	55 - 64	1,40%
	65 - 74	52,40%
	More than 75	46,30%
Highest level of education	Basic incl. incomplete	0,00%
	Secondary, incl. apprenticeship (not matriculated)	12,90%
	Full secondary education and higher voc. education	59,90%
	Higher education	27,20%
Settlement units by number of inhabitants	Village/municipality up to 3 thousand	12,20%
	Small town up to 10 thousand	33,30%
	City up to 100 thousand	46,30%
	Large town over 100 thousand	8,20%
Pre-retirement economic activity	Technical and professional staff	23,10%
	Occupations in the health sector	15,00%
	Education and training	15,60%
	Officials (public administration)	24,50%
	Service and sales workers	9,50%
	Other	12,20%

A third (33.3 %) live in small towns with a population of less than 10 thousand, and 12.2 % are from villages or towns with a population of less than 3 thousand. Only a small fraction (8.2 %) come from large cities with a population of over 100 thousand. The U3V programme at UHK attracts students from a variety of backgrounds, with the most popular being in medium-sized urban areas. **The economic activity of respondents before retirement** was varied. The largest groups worked in public administration (24.5 %) and technical and professional roles (23.1 %). Other significant areas included education and training (15.6 %) and health care (15.0 %). Service and sales workers made up 9.5 %, while 12.2 % were engaged in other activities. This range of professional backgrounds highlights the diverse expertise and life experience that students bring to the U3V programme.

In summary, the demographic profile of the research cohort suggests that the UHK U3V programme attracts predominantly older, educated women from urban areas, particularly those with previous work experience in public administration or technical professions. This demographic information is important for tailoring the content and structure of the programme to better meet the needs and interests of its participants.

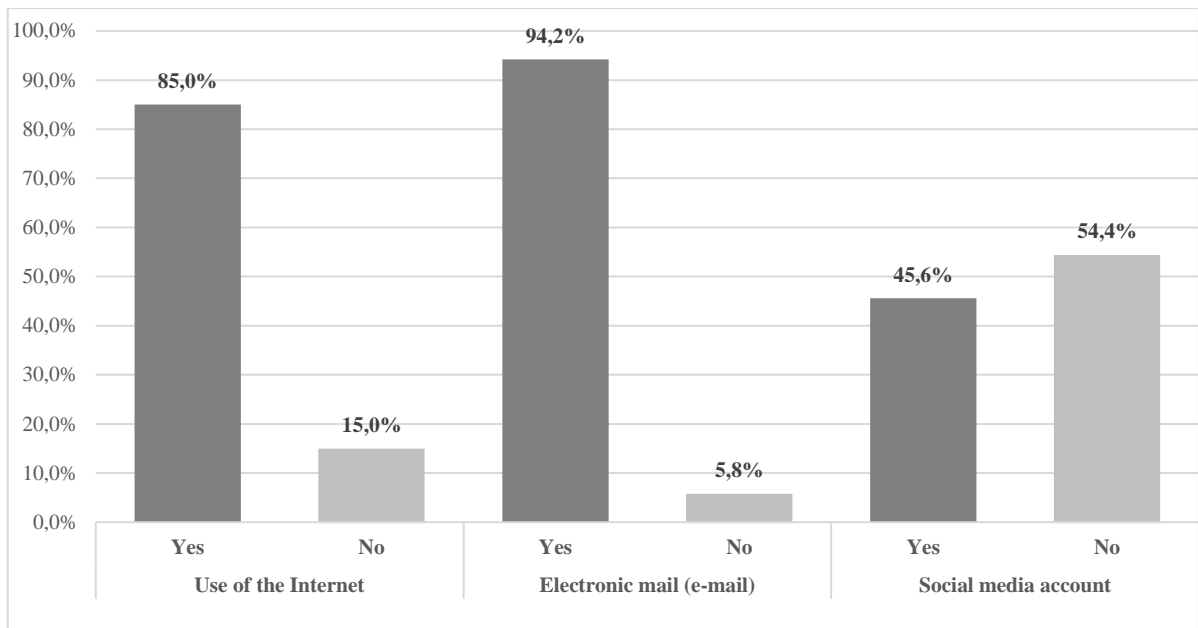


Chart 1 *Digital literacy and online activities*

Chart 1, entitled "Digital Literacy and Online Activities", provides an overview of digital engagement in the U3V UHK student research group. The data focuses on three main areas: internet use, electronic mail (email) use, and social media account ownership. A substantial majority of participants (85.0 %) reported **using the internet**, indicating a high level of digital engagement among students. A strong foundation in digital literacy can be interpreted as essential for participation in many modern educational and communication platforms. However, 15.0 % of students do not use the internet, indicating a segment of the population that may be at risk of digital exclusion, especially in an increasingly online world. The highest level of engagement is observed **in the use of email/e-mail**, with 94.2 % of students using this form of communication. Email is an essential tool for personal and educational communication and its widespread use among students highlights their ability to work effectively with digital communication tools. Only a small fraction, 5.8 %, do not use email. This points to barriers such as lack of access, skills, or preference for other forms of communication. In contrast to internet and email use, **engagement with social media** is significantly lower. Only 45.6 % of participants have a social media account, while the majority (54.4 %) do not engage on social media platforms. This could reflect generational preferences, where older adults may prefer other forms of online communication to social media, or it could indicate a conscious decision to avoid these platforms due to concerns about privacy, complexity, or relevance. Overall, the data show a high level of digital literacy among U3V UHK students, especially in the use of the Internet and e-mail communication. However, lower engagement with social media suggests a selective approach to online activities, which may be influenced by the specific needs and preferences of the demographic group. Understanding these patterns is essential for developing educational strategies and support systems that accommodate the different levels of digital proficiency within this group.

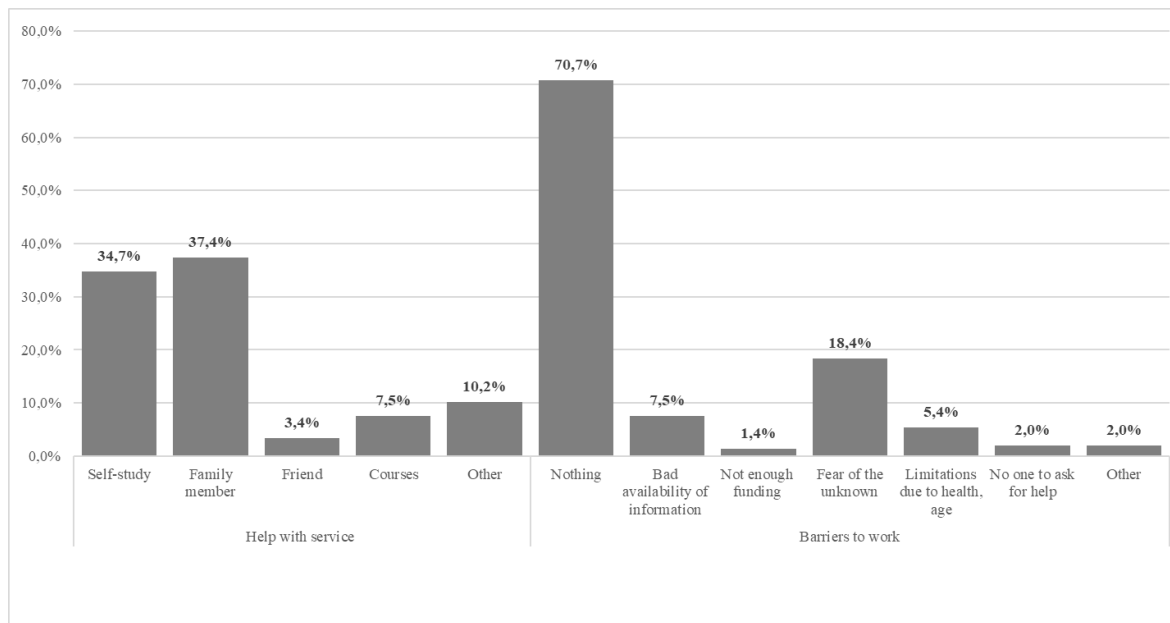


Chart 2 *Supporting and challenging the use of digital technologies*

The analysis and evaluation of the data presented in Chart 2 "Supporting and challenging the use of digital technologies" focuses on the interpretation of the results and their contextualisation within the framework of digital technologies. The chart presents two groups of data: the **first part** focuses on how individuals were supported **in their use of digital technologies**. A significant proportion of respondents acquired digital technology skills through **self-study** (34.7 %). This figure suggests a high level of autonomy and independence among users, which may reflect access to online resources and tutorials. **Support from family** plays a key role in the presented (37.4 %), even more than self-study. This result may indicate the importance of interpersonal relationships in learning new technologies, especially in a family environment. The low proportion of help from friends (3.4 %) suggests that friends are not the main source of support, perhaps due to the availability of other more effective resources. Structured courses (7.5 %) are also less preferred, perhaps due to cost or lack of availability. The research survey indicated that there is a smaller (10.2 %) but significant group that gets support from other sources, which could include online communities, professionals or other informal avenues.

The second part of the data set in Figure 2 focuses on the **barriers that prevent individuals from working with digital technologies**. An overwhelming majority of respondents reported **no barriers** at 70.7 %, which may indicate a high level of adoption of digital technologies or a sufficient level of support and knowledge. **Fear of the unknown** was identified as a **fear of the unknown** by 18.4 % of the U3V audience. This proportion suggests a psychological barrier where fear of the unknown prevents individuals from using digital technologies. In practice, this implies a need for greater emphasis on educational initiatives including psychological support in the adoption of new technologies. The problem of **accessibility of information** (such as unclear interfaces etc.) was identified by 7.5 % and **health and age** emerged as relevant barriers by 5.4 %. This points to the need to adapt technology to older or disabled users. Financial resources (1.4 %) and lack of help from others (2.0 %) emerged as the least represented barriers to working with digital technologies.

The results of the charts provide important insights for designing interventions and strategies to promote wider adoption of digital technologies. For example, the high proportion of respondents facing fear of the unknown suggests the need for educational programs that reduce this fear, providing clear and easily accessible information. Support from family members and self-study as the main avenues in the process of acquiring digital skills highlight the importance of the availability of quality educational materials and social context. The somewhat low proportion of respondents who cited funding as a barrier may be related to the higher social status with respect to higher education attainment of the research sample.

Conclusion

Research work on the determinants of the digital divide is crucial in the context of accelerated digitization and in response to the challenges of demographic change. The elderly population is a heterogeneous group with diverse specific needs and learning experiences, which is clearly evident from the research study presented here. It should be noted that the advent of digital technologies has affected different generations and years at different stages of their lives, particularly in relation to their educational or professional activities. The partial results of the empirical investigation showed that female students of the University of the Third Age of the University of Hradec Králové have a high level of digital literacy. Key elements such as social context, family and peer support, and the role of educational courses are crucial in shaping this behaviour. However, it is important not to forget the smaller subset of seniors who do not yet use digital technologies, have no internet connection or use email communication. For organisers of educational programmes for the elderly, these differences represent a significant challenge that requires the adaptation of educational approaches and content.

The presented research probe highlights the self-confidence of U3V UHK students in the field of digital literacy, which refutes the prejudices of ageism. Although respondents overwhelmingly declared independence and ease of use with digital devices, we can analyze social context as a significant predictor of Internet use. Family members, especially the younger generation, often act as facilitators and help older adults navigate the complexities of digital technologies. This support is essential not only for initial adoption but also for continued engagement, making it an important factor for sustained use of the Internet and digital devices. Overall, it appears that educational programs but also other initiatives are important to bridge the digital divide.

Respondents to the survey show a significantly higher level of digital literacy. However, it is important to note that while basic digital skills such as the use of the internet and email are relatively well developed among students in these programs, more advanced skills such as the use of social networking sites remain less widespread. This lack may be due to the content of basic-level digital literacy courses and the lower level of focus on specific but key applications of digital technologies that have the potential to significantly improve the quality of life of seniors. "The digital divide cannot be understood as a deviation in the development of a social order in which social participation is conditioned by access to the infrastructure of information and communication technologies" (Lupač, 2015, p. 210). The issue of the digital divide cannot be reduced only to the question of material ownership of digital technologies or internet connectivity;

however, the results of the research show that seniors are already using digital technologies and it can be assumed that the primary first-level divide is closing.

Understanding these dynamics of the digital divide is crucial to designing measures that can further enhance the digital inclusion of older adults and ensure that they can fully engage in the digital age or respond to the ever-changing challenges of the day. The results of this study show that targeted educational interventions that take into account the social context and individual needs of older people have the potential to make a significant contribution to bridging the digital divide. Third Age Universities play an important role in this process.

Project affiliation

The project was implemented within the specific research ID 1/III_23 of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové.

References

- Attewell, P. (2001). Comment: The First and Second Digital Divides. *Sociology of Education*, 74(3), 252–259. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673277>.
- Český statistický úřad. (2023a). Senioři v datech – 2023. <https://csu.gov.cz/produkty/seniori-v-cr-v-datech-ajnoatmxkq>.
- Český statistický úřad. (2023b). Využívání informačních a komunikačních technologií v domácnostech a mezi osobami – 2023. <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/3-pouzivani-mobilniho-telefonu-a-internetu-na-mobilnim-telefonu-kyi27xljd6>.
- Graham, M. (2011). Time machines and virtual portals: The spatialities of the digital divide. *Progress in Development Studies*, 11(3), 211–227. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf>.
- Choi, J. H., Kim, S., Moon, J. Y., Kang, J., Lee, I., & Kim, J. (2014). Seek or provide: Comparative effects of online information sharing on seniors' quality of life. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 34(1), 27.
- Lupač, P. (2016). *Za hranice digitální propasti: nerovnost v informační společnosti*. Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON).
- Lutz, C. (2019). Digital inequalities in the age of artificial intelligence and big data. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 1(2), 141–148.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2022). *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. United Nations. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/wpp2022_summary_of_results.pdf.
- Van Deursen, A. J., & Van Dijk, J. A. (2014). The digital divide shifts to differences in usage. *New media & society*, 16(3), 507–526.
- Van Deursen, A. J., Van Dijk, J. A., & Ten Klooster, P. M. (2015). Increasing inequalities in what we do online: A longitudinal cross sectional analysis of Internet activities

among the Dutch population (2010 to 2013) over gender, age, education, and income. *Telematics and informatics*, 32(2), 259–272.

Van Dijk, J. A. (2006). Digital divide research, achievements and shortcomings. *Poetics*, 34(4–5), 221–235.

Van Dijk, J. A. (2012). The evolution of the digital divide-the digital divide turns to inequality of skills and usage. In *Digital enlightenment yearbook 2012* (pp. 57–75). IOS Press.

Zákon č. 111/1998 Sb., o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách). (1998). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1998-111>.

Zounek, J. (2006). ICT, digitální propast a vzdělávání dospělých: Socioekonomické a vzdělávací aspekty digitální propasti v České republice. *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, Studia Paedagogica* (s. 101–118). Masarykova univerzita.

Author:

Mgr. Eva Janouchová

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

eva.janouchova@uhk.cz

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6041-3843>

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

CC-BY-SA 4.0

ACTA SOCIOPATHOLOGICA VIII

The Contemporary Topics in Social Pathology and Social Pedagogy

Editor:

PaedDr. Bc. Martin Knytl, Ph.D., MBA, MCS

Year of publication: 2025

Place of publication: Hradec Králové

Publisher: Gaudeamus

Number of pages: 207

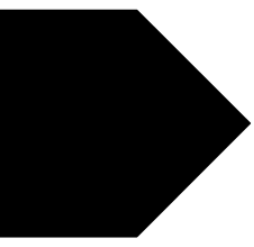
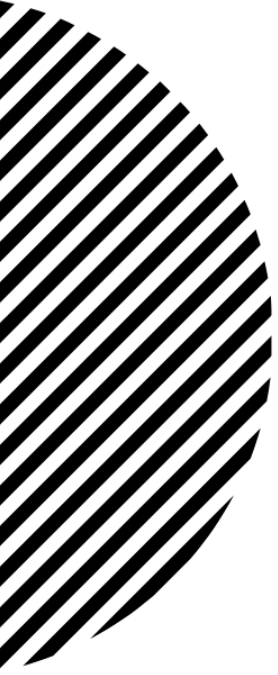
Edition: 1st edition

© University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies, 2025

Published by the University of Hradec Králové, Gaudeamus as its 1876. publication.

DOI: 10.36689/uhk/978-80-7435-942-2.000

e-ISBN 978-80-7435-942-2



WIUNERWTFDPOUJMAHFU
 RELLECIKACTALPQWCTQIU
 ARZXPNCNBYPERUEVFSQV
MSOCIOIAJIPATHOLOGICAP
 FEYMVNBYZWIRKJHJNCVE
 HFJRKEFKJVIIWOFWQPY

