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Cyberbullying and Sexting between Children and Adolescents - Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper focuses on cyberbullying as a specific form of risky behaviour in the Internet environment, which occurs both at pubescents and adolescents, as well as in the adult population. The paper analyses various manifestations and forms of cyberbullying, it focuses both on extortion, threats, humiliation, and various forms of harm to victims through photographs, video or audio materials. It also describes cyberbullying with sexual subtext, within which sexually explicit materials are used to harm the victims. The paper compares the differences between cyberbullying of children and adults, follows different motives for its implementation. The paper uses data from the national research Risks of Internet Communication IV, which was carried out in 2013 throughout the Czech Republic by our team. The research was performed on target group of Czech teens (n=21 000, 11–17 years old). One of the goal of the research was to determine respondents' experience with cyberbullying from the point of view of victims and aggressors and their will to involve other people in a process of dealing with their problems. The research REC 3 is in its nature mainly descriptive, determined data are mainly quantitative. On-line questionnaire survey was chosen as the basic research method. The questionnaire contained 71 questions of various kinds.

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1. Introduction

In our text, we will focus on comparison of the results of two research studies on the incidence of cyberbullying and other risk communication phenomena associated with the use of ICT in population of children and adults.

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Detailed results of both studies have been published in the form of texts in professional journals as well as monographs. In the following text we will compare the results of Research of risky behaviour of students of the Pedagogical Faculty, Palacky University in Olomouc (Kopecky, 2013) and research Risks of Internet communication 4 (Sztokowski, Kopecky, Krejci, 2013). Both researches were implemented by Centre for the Prevention of risky virtual communication, Palacky University in Olomouc (www.prvok.upol.cz) within the project OP VK E-Synergie - Scientific Network for risk of electronic communication (CZ.1.07/2.4.00/17.0062) in 2013.

The research studies are focused on monitoring of basic risk communication phenomena associated with the use of the Internet and mobile phones, namely:

a) cyberbullying (various forms of cyberbullying linked to the Internet services - verbal aggression, blackmail, threats and attacks on the account)

b) establishing of virtual contacts (communications with unauthorized Internet users, personal meetings, so called cybergrooming or social engineering)

c) sexting (public sharing of intimate materials on the Internet, providing these materials without verifying the person's identity, connection of sexting with other risk communication phenomena)

d) sharing of personal data on the Internet (with a focus on sharing facial image)

e) use of social networks (with relation to the occurrence of different risk communication phenomena)

f) other related phenomena.

Cyberbullying is defined here as a form of aggression that is carried out against individuals or groups using information and communication technologies. This act is performed repeatedly (Belsey, B., 2004 and others). Cyberbullying is similarly perceived by Hinduja and Patchin, (2008) who define it as a deliberate, often repetitive and hostile behaviour, which aim is to harm the victim by using information and communication technologies, mostly via a mobile phone and the Internet. The definition is then developed and refined, for example, by Kowalski, Limber and others (2007-2008), who perceive cyberbullying as bullying carried out via e-mail, ICQ, mobile phones (SMS, MMS, phone calls), chat, websites, and other ICT.

Researches of cyberbullying prevalence are realized both in Europe and beyond. Interesting results can be found in the researches of Gámez - Guadix, Orue, Smith, (2011), who point out the relationship between cyberbullying and depression in adolescents. The relationship between cyberbullying and victimization in the form of so-called Cyclic Process Model is mentioned e.g. by Hammer, Konijn, Keijer (2013).

Within the comparison we further focus on so-called sexting. The term sexting is used for electronic distribution of text messages, own photos or own videos with sexual content (Kopecky, 2010, Mitchell, KJ, 2010, and others), which occurs in the virtual environment of electronic media - especially the Internet. One of the first widely used definitions of sexting perceives it as an act of sending nude photos between mobile phones or other electronic media such as the Internet (Streichman, 2009). Sexting is defined by other authors as sexual materials produced by young people (the youth -produced sexual images) that are further distributed (Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, 2011-2012). Sexting is also defined by Sullivan (2010), who adds in sexting suggestive text messages and images depicting naked or partially naked photos that are disseminated by telephone or the Internet. Social networks are included by Streichman (2009-2011) in the number of platforms and tools that enable the dissemination of these materials.

In recent years, sexting and sexual behaviour of teenagers and adolescents in the Internet environment, has been described by a number of studies (Horvath, M., et al, 2013 Phippen, 2012 Dake, et al, 2012, and others); all of them point out a relatively high prevalence of sexting in the population of pubescents and adolescents.

2. Methods

Within our compared researches we used the methodology verified in the research Risks of Internet communication 3 and 4 (Kopecky, 2011, Sztokowski et al., 2013) and in the Research of risky behaviour of students at the Pedagogical Faculty, Palacky University in Olomouc (Kopecky, 2013). In the description of the methodology we focus only on the areas associated with cyberbullying and sexting.

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