Issues of bullying and cyberbullying in primary and secondary schools in Slovakia

Problematika šikanovania a kyberšikanovania na základných a stredných školách na Slovensku

Zuzana GEDEONOVÁ[1]

[1] *University of Security Management in Kosice*

Abstract:

The article deals with the issue of bullying and cyberbullying at primary and secondary schools in Slovakia. It approaches cyberbullying as a problem of today's modern world, which is difficult to face with the availability of modern information and communication technologies. Nowadays, it is becoming easier to access information, to get closer to people through social networks that we would never have met under other circumstances. However, this poses a certain risk that children and adolescents in particular are unaware of. That is why it is important to constantly prevent and make young people aware of the risks posed by these modern technologies. The article contains a summary of the statistical survey "Prevention and solution of (cyber) bullying in primary and secondary schools from the perspective of prevention coordinators", which in 2020 was implemented by the questionnaire method as a research task CVTI SR. This survey has yielded interesting results, which are not surprising given today.

Keywords: *bullying, cyberbullying, prevention*

Abstrakt:

Článok sa zaoberá problematikou šikanovania a kyberšikanovania na základných a stredných školách na Slovensku. Približuje kyberšikanovanie ako problém dnešného moderného sveta, ktorému je pri dostupnosti moderných informačných a komunikačných technológií ťažké čeliť. V dnešnej dobe je čoraz ľahšie sa dostať k informáciám, prostredníctvom sociálnych sietí sa priblížiť k ľuďom, ktorých by sme za iných okolností nikdy nestretli. To však predstavuje určité riziko, ktoré si hlavne deti a dospievajúci neuvedomujú. Preto je dôležitá neustála prevencia a upovedomovanie mladých ľudí o rizikách, ktoré tieto moderné technológie skrývajú. Článok obsahuje zhrnutie štatistického skúmania ,,Prevencia a riešenie (kyber)šikanovania v základných a

Issues of bullying and cyberbullying in primary and secondary schools in Slovakia
Zuzana GEDEONOVÁ

stredných školách z pohľadu koordinátorov prevencie", ktoré v roku 2020 pomocou dotazníkovej metódy realizovalo ako výskumnú úlohu CVTI SR. Toto zisťovanie prinieslo zaujímavé výsledky, ktoré však nie sú vzhľadom na dnešnú dobu prekvapujúce.

Kľúčové slová: *šikanovanie, kyberšikanovanie, prevencia*

Introduction

Currently, bullying and cyberbullying are among the most serious negative phenomena. Its growing incidence is confirmed by research, which also confirms the lowering of the age limit of victims and aggressors, increased brutality and sophistication of bullying. In the 21st century, modern technologies that are present everywhere have meant that most societies cannot imagine existence without the media. Unrestricted access to information, social networks, the people we get to know about them brings risks that people are usually unaware of. These risks include cyberbullying and sexting. Bullying has occurred in the past, but with the help of new technologies, its manifestations are shifting to cyberspace. Cyberbullying uses information and communication technologies that give room to intentional, hostile behavior, of an individual or group that is often repeated with the intent to harm. Despite the fact that anyone, regardless of age, can be a victim of cyberbullying, the most frequent victims but also the perpetrators are children and adolescents. [1]

1. Crime as a social problem

Crime is a daily problem not only in our society but around the world. We can say that it is one of the main problems of every company. The largest share of crime is occupied by criminal activity of children and juveniles, for whom the age of the perpetrator decreases with the gradual development of society, but on the contrary, aggression increases.

We use the term socio-pathological phenomenon as the broadest designation of negative phenomena that deviate from the set standards and values accepted by a given society. These phenomena mainly include crime and delinquency, pathological addictions, suicide, prostitution, racism and bullying. [2.3]

Since the beginning of the 1990s, crime has been referred to as one of the most serious socio-pathological phenomena, which also belongs to Slovakia. The determination of the extent of the crime is based on the criminal law classification of the crime, given its relevant definition as well as the legitimacy of this criterion. The structure, status and dynamics of crime are based on statistical data collected and processed by crime institutions. [4]

Crime is a collection of crimes, usually in one year, and this is what the state of crime expresses. [2] In our country, this situation is determined by the Presidium of the Police Force in the form of statistics, which serve as a basic source of information on crime. These statistics reflect the number of crimes and offenders documented by the police over a period of time. Only detected crimes are included in the statistics, ie crimes detected by the police, i.e. j. registered crime. It follows that, in fact, real crime is much higher than statistics show, because there is still latent crime, hidden crime. [5] On this basis, we know real, state-registered and latent crime.

Actual crime shows all crimes committed in a certain period of time and in a certain territory. Real crime is created by a combination of registered and latent crime. We can talk about it as well as about general crime. The registered person shows the part of the crime that was discovered, reported or otherwise clarified by the law enforcement authorities. Various sources of information, mostly of a research nature, are used abroad to supplement, clarify or find out an approximate estimate of actual crime. self-reports, victimization research, expert estimates based on the Delphi method. [2]

Latent represents a crime that has not been recorded, clarified, or visible, as only the perpetrator or witnesses who did not report the crime knew about the crime. However, this also includes acts which the authorities have learned but have not registered for various reasons, e.g. artificial improvement of criminal statistics.

It is important to realize that crime is considered to be a priority, a violation of a company-accepted standard that is sanctioned. The term crime is also associated with a more sociologically acceptable term, which is used mainly abroad, namely delinquency. [6]

2. Cyberbullying

The concept of cyberbullying is a modern technological phenomenon that is happening in the online world. We encounter this on a regular basis, even though we often don't realize it. The largest number of them make up the most vulnerable part of humanity, and that is children. They come into contact with it at a pre-school age, where they get to know the Internet and social networks for the first time. The youngest ones are thus unknowingly exposed to the possibility of threat from other people, who may be their peers or even older. Is exposing children to Internet risks really dangerous? The younger they are, the more active they are on the Internet, the more risks they expose themselves to, the more often they encounter negative phenomena. This does not mean that they cannot cope with the given negative phenomenon. The more active often have more effective strategy management, more technological skills and competencies, thus reducing their online vulnerability. [7]

Cyberbullying is conduct that involves harassment, threats, harassment, humiliation or other negative behavior by an individual or group using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. The purpose of this behavior is to harm victims (whether ridicule, humiliation, etc.), in the form of general insults, homophobic, sexist, racist and other discriminatory prejudices, with a significant imbalance in ICT skills between the aggressor and the victim and the victim being exposed to negative online material. [8]

Cyberbullying can, in terms of the nature of the attacks, be carried out through direct attacks or indirect contacts, i. j. mediated attacks causing social isolation and exclusion. Direct attacks are carried out in such a way that the aggressor attacks his target (victim) through online provocation, harassment, slander, imitation, detection, cheating, social exclusion and persecution through instant messages, e-mails, websites, etc. The actor or actors of the attack and the victim are directly involved in the process of cyberbullying. The second method is brokered attacks, which are harassment through a broker. This is the case when a person has "dirty work" done by others, such

as the victim's ex-friends. Most children "addressed" in this way do not even realize that they are involved in bullying and doing someone a favor. In this way, the aggressors can very easily get the people who will do their work for them. [9]

2.1. Cyberbullying in Slovakia

Text According to the Institute for Public Affairs, Slovak children cannot imagine life without the Internet. Without computers, the Internet and mobile phones, 85% of children will only survive for a few days, and a third of schoolchildren cannot imagine life without them. [10]

In Slovakia, the mapping of the issue of bullying in schools has long been carried out at the Department of Prevention and Research of Youth CVTI SR. The implementation of several sociological researches and surveys on the topic resulted from the goals of state policy in relation to children and youth.

In 2020, CVTI SR carried out the research task "Prevention and solution of (cyber) bullying in primary and secondary schools from the point of view of prevention coordinators". This task focused on the areas of research examined, namely: occurrence and manifestations, methods of solution, cooperation with individual actors and preventive activities / programs. The necessary data were collected throughout Slovakia through an online questionnaire. All primary and secondary schools were involved in the survey. 553 questionnaires were processed, the results of the survey were presented using descriptive statistics. In the school year 2019/2020, up to 86.3% of schools encountered the issue of bullying. The remaining percentages of coordinators confirmed that they had not yet faced the problem of bullying at school. Bullying occurred more frequently in primary than in secondary schools. At secondary schools, depending on the type of school, bullying took place at grammar schools rather than at secondary vocational schools. The issue of bullying by region was less widespread in the Košice, Banská Bystrica and Trnava regions. The results show that the bullying rate has increased compared to 2016. [11]

More serious forms of bullying, such as intimidation and threats, occurred in up to 45.4% and physical assaults in up to 40.1% of the schools surveyed. The situation in primary schools is worse than in secondary schools, where all forms of violent behavior occurred to a greater extent than in secondary schools. Profanity, physical attacks as well as threats / intimidation were most common in public schools, followed by church schools and least in private schools. With a higher population at the school's headquarters, the incidence of vulgar swearing and irony also declined. In smaller municipalities and small towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants, physical attacks were present to the greatest extent, slightly less so in cities with less than 100,000 and the least in the largest cities - Bratislava and Košice. Sexual innuendos or harassment were above average in smaller villages, small towns, but also in the largest cities. Significantly less in schools located in medium-sized cities with 10 to 100,000 inhabitants. Compared to the 2016 statistical survey, the situation has deteriorated. The incidence of all observed manifestations of violent behavior increased. Most notably in threats / intimidation, ignoring / exclusion from the team, ridicule / insults, but unfortunately also in physical attacks. [11]

Cyberbullying also occurred in most schools, but to a slightly lesser extent, at 73.6%. The occurrence of these phenomena is related, in schools where classical

bullying occurs, cyberbullying usually also occurs, and to a very significant extent. Cyberbullying, like bullying, is most prevalent in primary schools. There was no significant difference in the frequency between primary and secondary schools. Schools most often encounter slander / dissemination of false information and insult / humiliation. Threats or intimidation were dealt with in 26.4% and sexual harassment in 2.5% of schools. Depending on the level of education, only insulting / humiliation is more common, in primary schools, other forms of cyberbullying are similarly represented. [11]

Bullying in schools is usually addressed by contacting the parents of the victim and the aggressor, identifying and interviewing bullying witnesses, examining it immediately, making written records of individual cases, ensuring the presence of two professionals in interviews with the victim, the aggressor, witnesses and parents, keeping evidence at suspected cyberbullying, victim assistance, surveillance and isolation of the aggressor.

About half of the schools create a professional team of employees when bullying occurs, which further determines the procedure for dealing with bullying and also carries out an anonymous questionnaire survey. Some schools report the occurrence of such a problem as a suspected offense or crime to the police or contact the CPPPaP.

In primary schools, the specialist team for dealing with bullying is set up more often than in secondary schools. In secondary schools, records are more frequently made and the CPPPaP is contacted. Public schools contact the police most often with problems with bullying, followed by private schools and the least church schools. The expert team for the solution of bullying was most often assembled in the Bratislava region and the Žilina region, the least in the Trnava region.

The school management, school psychologist and other teachers received the best evaluation when evaluating the cooperation of bullying prevention coordinators with individual subjects in solving bullying. The aggressor's parents scored the worst. The difference between primary and secondary schools was found only when evaluating the cooperation with the aggressor's parents and also with the police. This cooperation was more often assessed as good in secondary schools. The difference in evaluation was also in cooperation with the police, it was evaluated better in secondary vocational schools than in grammar schools and cooperation with a school psychologist in public and private than in church schools.

According to the findings, most schools have in their school regulations or in the work plans of prevention coordinators Directive no. 36/2018 on prevention and solutions. Most schools have some aspects of it implemented in the educational counselor's work plan, the school's work plan, the school curriculum and the class teachers' work plans. [11]

The majority of schools stated that they provided all the preventive activities listed in the 2018 directive in schools. A smaller half of schools, 43.8%, stated that the school premises are monitored by a camera system. Some of the preventive activities are again more represented in primary schools, e.g. rules of using mobile phones / tablets / computers in school regulations, supervision in school. "In the work rules, the obligation of school staff to report bullying or even informing pedagogical and

professional staff how to report and verify bullying and, if there is more cooperation with CPPPaP and other professional workplaces." [11]

In the school year 2019/2020, more than half of the schools implemented a prevention program aimed at eliminating and preventing bullying or cyberbullying. They implemented the school's prevention program with the number of pupils from 351 to 450 and from 551 to 650 pupils significantly more often. Most schools carried them in these two size categories. According to individual preventive activities, the most frequent activities were activities to improve classroom relationships, discussions / lectures, anonymous questionnaires and information boards / bulletin boards. Cultural and sports events, activities in cooperation with the CPPPaP, educational concerts, cooperation with the police, competitions / games and experiential learning were also significantly represented.

"In an open-ended question, prevention coordinators were able to comment on the obstacles they face in dealing with bullying or cyberbullying. The majority of respondents mentioned a specific obstacle significantly more often in primary (84.8%) than in secondary schools (64.4%). Only a fifth of schools do not feel any obstacles and barriers to eliminating bullying. They consider the biggest barriers to the problems of exposing bullying, especially the fear and anxiety of victims or trivialization by the environment, especially classmates, but sometimes also teachers. The second most numerous obstacle is the problematic communication of the school with the parents of the aggressors or the aggressor. There is also a lack of time and space for prevention (preventive activities) in the overall activities of the school. Almost every tenth school also mentioned problems in the pupils' family (absence of upbringing / child care, divorce, parents abroad, etc.) and the impact of social networks, use of mobile phones / internet, insufficient parental control. The impact of pupils' social background (social inequality, poverty, socially disadvantaged environment), insufficient institutional support (absence of school psychologist / social teacher, unresolved coordinator work, insufficient CPPPaP staff capacity) were also slightly less represented. " [11]

Conclusion

Both in general and bullying, it is better to prevent unacceptable behavior than to minimize or eliminate its consequences. According to the methodological guidelines, each school should have the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying included in the educational process. It is clear from the survey that students are acquainted with this issue by prevention coordinators, teachers in classrooms, computer science classes, ethical education, etc., also through lectures with experts, but also information on school websites, notice boards, magazines, etc. Information on the school's website, magazine or on notice boards is more common in primary schools. By pointing out the consequences of inappropriate behavior, several negatives in behavior can be avoided, whether in reality or in the virtual world.

References

[1]   HOLLÁ, K. 2016. *SEXTING A KYBERŠIKANA.* Bratislava: Iris. 2016. 166 s. ISBN 978-80-8153-061-6

[2] ONDREJKOVIČ, P. a kol. 2009. *Sociálna patológia*. 3. vyd. Bratislava : VEDA, 2009. 577 s. ISBN 978-80-224-1074-8

[3] KRAUS, B. – HRONCOVA, J. 2007. *Sociální patologie*. 1. vyd. Hradec Králové : Gaudeamus, 2007. 326 s. ISBN 978-80-7435-080-1

[4] HOLOMEK, J. a kol. 2013. *Výskum obetí kriminality v Slovenskej republike*. 1. vyd. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2013. 208. s. ISBN 978-80-8155-014-0

[5] LUBELCOVÁ, G. 2009. *Kriminalita ako spoločenský fenomén*. 1.vyd. Bratislava : VEDA, 2009. 212 s. ISBN 978-80-224-1051-9

[6] POLÁK, P. – KNÁPKOVÁ, D. – TÓTHOVÁ, M. 2013. *Repetitórium kriminológie*. 1. vyd. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2013. 120 s. ISBN 978-80-8155-004-1

[7] LIVINGSTONE, S. et al.. 2011. *Risks and safety on the internet*. Veľká Británia, Londýn: 171s. ISSN 2045-256X

[8] HOLLÁ, K. 2013. *Kyberšikana*. Bratislava: Iris. ISBN 978-80-8153-011-1.

[9] HOLLÁ, K. 2010. *Elektronické šikanovanie : nová forma agresie*. Bratislava: Iris. 2010. 92 s. ISBN 978-80-89256-58-7.

[10] VELŠIC, M. 2015. *Deti a rodičia v kyberpriestore*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky. cit. [2021 – 07- 03]. Dostupné na internete: https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs//publikacie/subory/Deti_a_rodicia_v_kyberpri estore.pdf

[11] JANKOVÁ, M. 2020. Prevencia a riešenie šikanovania a kyberšikanovania v základných a stredných školách z pohľadu koordinátorov prevencie. Bratislava: Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR. cit. [2021 – 07- 09]. Dostupné na internete: https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/17683.pdf

Autors:

[1]**Zuzana Gedeonová –** Internal doctoral student, Univesity of Security Management in Kosice, Košťova 1, 040 01 Kosice, Slovakia, e-mail: zuzana.gedeonova@vsbm.sk