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**PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF YOUTH
(HYPER)ACTIVITY IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD
- RESEARCH STUDY**

**PEDAGOGICZNE IMPLIKACJE (NAD)AKTYWNOŚCI
MŁODZIEŻY W ŚWIECIE WIRTUALNYM
– STUDIUM BADAWCZE**

Abstract

This article presents the theoretical and empirical study of youth activity in the virtual world. Theoretical issues of media pedagogy regarding youth participation in cyberspace were presented. A qualitative study was conducted using a case study method of young people showing excessive activity in the virtual world. A qualitative analysis of research results was carried out, which was presented in the methodological part of the article.

Keywords: *youth, virtual world, cyberspace, upbringing, education, qualitative research, case study, analysis of research results.*

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia studium teoretyczno-empiryczne aspektu aktywności młodzieży w światach wirtualnych. Zaprezentowano teoretyczne zagadnienia pedagogiki medialnej dotyczące uczestnictwa młodzieży w cyberprzestrzeni. Przeprowadzono badanie jakościowe metodą studium indywidualnych przypadków adolescenta przejawiającego nadmierną aktywność w środowisku wirtualnym. Dokonano analizy jakościowej wyników badań, które zaprezentowano w metodologicznym rozdziale artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe: *młodzież, świat wirtualny, cyberprzestrzeń, wychowanie, edukacja, badanie jakościowe, studium przypadków, analiza wyników badań.*

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Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.

Nowadays, children and young people are becoming an alternative to the real world. increasingly active in the virtual world, Young people are active not only in the which is conditioned in many ways and is space of social media but also devote a lot

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of attention to dynamically developing computer games. The impact of all phenomena taking place in the real world on the attitudes and behavior of young people has been relatively well studied and presented in the scientific literature.

The extensive scientific and research achievements in the area of prevention of

dangerous activities of the youngest generation in non-virtual reality allowed for the preparation and application of verified operating procedures in the context of individual threats and social pathologies. However, threats from the virtual world are not yet sufficiently investigated on the scientific, preventive and therapeutic side.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.

Pedagogical context of youth activity in the virtual world

Analyzing the development of digital media, cyberspace and virtual worlds, Maciej Tanaś states "Regardless of the directions and methods of analysis of modern information and communication technologies, their social and pedagogical dimension appears. Reflection on the consequences of technological development and the constructed media civilization cannot underestimate its creator and too often a manipulated and almost defenseless consumer. Digital media have become a factor determining not only social, civilization and cultural transformations, but also (directly or indirectly) the fate of almost every human being, including what is especially important for the educator - lifestyle, social relations and cognitive, creative and even ludic activity of children and youth. In a similar way, information and communication technologies also change the types of scientific, professional, cultural or social activity of adults - although it must be admitted that these changes are not always clearly perceived by them, and rarely assessed positively." (Tanaś, 2015, p. 11) According to the author, "A person entangled in cyberspace, augmented reality and the virtual world, and dependent on them needs knowledge about the functions of digital media, its language, and culture. (Tanaś, 2015, p. 14) Tanaś further emphasizes that

"entering these lands, the teenager has a real influence on them. He can become whoever he wants, not who others want to make him, he is a free man. He decides about the types of online activities, creates and learns, listens and watches, is a passive or active Internet user." (Tanaś, 2016, p. 8) Virtual worlds are one of the most developed forms of three-dimensionality in cyberspace. "The cyber-world is characterized by more liberal rights, greater freedom of expression and almost unrestricted freedom of the individual. Anonymity in cyberspace mitigates the risk associated with activities undertaken in it. This is conducive to freer and less controlled behavior than in the real world." (Bębas, Plis, Bednarek, 2012, p. 13) Activity in cyberspace, especially the activity of the youth, concerns "almost all spheres of human life (...) it is increasingly difficult to draw a demarcation line dividing virtual life from life real. We are witnessing an incredible development of technology and ICT." (Bębas, Plis, Bednarek, 2012, p. 13-14)

As Józef Bednarek rightly observes "(...) A real digital revolution and its effects are creating new opportunities, especially in teaching-learning creative attitudes, they bring about next, great opportunities and challenges that education must meet, but also create extraordinary dangers with manipulation of attitudes.

There is no doubt that the progressing computerization, automation, and robotization will further threaten identity - both personal and cultural." (Bednarek, 2014, p. 10)

In the opinion of Anna Andrzejewska, a special area of youth activity are computer games that have become an integral part of their lives. "Games introduce an interesting, dynamic, adventurous and surprising virtual world." (Andrzejewska, 2014, p. 61) Computer games have many advantages. They usually play the role of entertainment, allowing to relax and feel up free time. The use of computer games as tools for improving the acquisition of new skills and supporting the therapy of various disorders is becoming more and more popular. It is pointed out that these types of computer programs are very effective, which is related to triggering internal motivation for players to repeat tasks, getting better results and going through subsequent stages of the game. The activity of young people in cyberspace and the sphere of computer and network games caused a dissonance between the scale and range of pathological

behavior of children and young people and the current state, not only of prevention or therapy, but also education in the area of safe and responsible use of new media opportunities and digital technologies.

In the situation of new, extremely dangerous digital threats related to the activity of the young generation in the virtual world, there is a need to learn and apply preventive and therapeutic measures. It is worth noting that the competences of parents and teachers, as well as people dealing with prevention and therapy, are still insufficient in the face of the dynamics of the development of the virtual world and the threats it generates. The problems generated by the digital world are not sufficiently recognized in the social sciences, humanities, and pedagogy in Poland. Despite numerous comprehensive and at the same time interdisciplinary scientific research in this field, taking into account the negative effects of the individual affected by the threat from the virtual world, the problem of pathologies that occur in cyberspace is still not publicized and widespread.

Aims of paper. Methods

Methodological assumptions of the research procedure

In every scientific discipline, the question about the subject of research belongs to central theoretical and methodological problems.

The subject of pedagogical research is a conscious pedagogical activity, i.e. the processes of upbringing, self-education and learning, teaching, goals, content, course, methods, resources and organization. (Skorny, 1984, p. 29)

According to Tadeusz Pilch, "the goal of the research is to learn about effective action." (Pilch, 2001, p. 35) Zbigniew Skorny points out that before starting research, the

purpose and subject of the research should be clearly defined.

This requires realizing why research is being undertaken and what the results may be needed for. (Skorny, 1984, p. 20) Following the concept of Janusz Sztumski, the aim of the research is to learn scientifically the studied reality. In addition to achieving the cognitive goal, it is also important to shape social reality, therefore forecasting and planning its transformations, which allows the stimulation of social processes. (Sztumski, 2005, p. 19) The subject of research in the publication is educational problems arising from excessive child activity in the virtual world.

Based on the subject of the research, the following research objectives were specified: Diagnostic purpose of the research: determining the conditions of excessive child activity in the virtual world and educational consequences in the real world.

Prognostic goal: proposing a model of practical activities aimed at improving the educational situation of the child and the functioning of the family.

Forecast of negative consequences for the child and family when no specific pedagogical actions are taken.

The research problem is a question about the nature of the phenomenon being studied, about the essence of the relationship between events or beings and features of processes, features of the phenomenon. In other words, a research problem is realizing the difficulty of explaining and understanding a specific fragment of reality, and in other words a declaration of our ignorance contained in the grammatical form of the question. (Pilch, 2001, p. 43)

For the purposes of the research contained in the publication, the following research problem was formulated: What are the conditions, specificity and educational consequences of excessive child activity in the virtual world?

In order to emphasize the basic features of the studied phenomenon, an individual case

study was also used, also called the individual case method, which is "(...) a method of research consisting in analyzing individual human fate involved in specific educational situations, or analyzing specific educational phenomena through the prism of individual human biographies, focused on developing a diagnosis of a case or phenomenon in order to undertake therapeutic actions." (Kotarbiński, 1961, p. 48). It can be considered as a comprehensive study describing one or several people based on observation of the analysis of environmental conditions and behavior of the unit covered by the study. As a qualitative method, it is successfully implemented in pedagogical diagnosis. Test results are usually generalized to other similar cases. Research techniques are practical activities, governed by carefully elaborated directives, allowing for obtaining optimally verifiable information, opinions and facts. (Wroczyński, 1985, p. 42)

Techniques used in the research were observation and interview.

A research tool is a tool used to implement the selected research technique.

Research tools are materials or devices that can be used to conduct research and develop its results. (Pilch, 1995, p. 42) In the research, an interview questionnaire and an observation sheet were used as the research tool.

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion.

Case study of an overactive in the virtual world boy

Case genesis:

Name: Marek

Age: 16 years old

Status: student

The boy is the only child in the family. His mother is 46 years old and father is 50.

Parents are lawyers, professionally active, they carry out many projects to regulate financial obligations and ensure the high material well-being of the household members. Due to their dedication to their careers, they decided to have a child late.

From an early age the boy was active in virtual space and for some time began to man-

ifest problems that can be classified as addiction to computer games and escape into the virtual world.

The excessive activity of the boy in the world of computer games caused his alienation from the real world and the deterioration of previous results in education.

His dream was to get to a mechanical vocational high school, but parents thought about a different, better future for their son.

Problem identification:

Marek - mechanical vocational high school. For a long time, parents have been receiving signals from teachers about problems and a lack of learning progress. Since escaping into the world of virtual online games of the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) genre, MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) and FPS (First-Person Shooter), he has become haughty towards his relatives, family and colleagues and neglected school duties. So far, this always smiling boy, willingly participating in family meetings, began to avoid them. He isolated himself in situations when anyone wanted to visit him in his room, reacting then with anger and even aggression.

The good results achieved so far have deteriorated significantly, from a good student he became one of the worse. His school absence also increased as well as the number of late arrivals at school for the first periods. Peer relationships have been severely limited. He stopped hanging out with his friends and preferred to contact them only via social media.

For the purposes of the study, a background survey and observation of the boy were conducted to describe his case, diagnose the problem and indicate corrective actions.

The origin and dynamics of the problem:

Marek and his parents live in Warsaw in a detached house.

His parents decided to have a child quite late because of their developing career. They are both lawyers and have a law office.

The lawyer's work absorbed them to a great extent. Busy parents did not have much time for their son and therefore did not show him emotional support. They were often away from home, conversations were limited to basic questions and short answers. In retrospect of the educational process, when the boy turned 3 years old, parents hired a babysitter for him - Mrs. Maria, a 40-year-old woman with a pedagogical degree, who moved in with the family and took care of the boy most of the day. During the weekends she also spent time with him, while parents were able to socialize.

Over time, the child began to treat her as a very close person, which allowed parents to devote themselves to work even more. Parents were trying to compensate for lack of their presence to their son with designer clothes, expensive gifts, and trips abroad. When the boy turned 16, he faced the choice of an educational. Parents wanted their son to get to one of the best high schools in the city.

However, reality has shown that the boy had completely different dreams and beliefs in this matter. Despite the fact that the parents were convincing their son to choose another school, he decided to choose a mechanical vocational high school. When he started the school year, Maria got seriously ill and died soon after.

The boy became apathetic, easily irritable and began to isolate himself from people. The parents thought that their son was old enough to handle this separation and would not need any special support. Unfortunately, the boy could not find himself in the reality surrounding him. After some time he found solace and consolation in the world of cyberspace. He spent so much time in the

cyberspace that he gave up training his beloved basketball, forgot about his friends, he did not have time for anyone. He devoted himself to games as well as social media activities. His absence from school increased day by day. He lost his previous interests. He did not feel the need to maintain peer relations with his friends. He became indifferent to the orders of parents, their requests and requirements were ignored, even those related to maintaining a good level in education. He neglected homework and preparation for tests, his grades deteriorated. After one parent-teacher meeting, there was a quarrel between the boy and his mother, which blocked his access to the Internet.

The boy pushed the mother and she fell and broke her arm. Mark's outbreaks of anger and aggression were increasingly common. Parental conversations in an educational manner did not bring any results, the boy was increasingly locked in the world of online games and social media. He left school more and more often. He stopped communicating with classmates in favor of virtual acquaintances. As a result of alienation and neglect of school duties, the boy did not get a promotion to the next class. After the end of the school year, he spent the whole vacation in his room playing games without letting anyone in. The scale of addiction to online activity and online games was increasing. Despite this, parents did not take any action to interrupt this process. From observations, it seems that they did not notice the scale of the problem. Professional work was more important to them than the fate of their son. Marek did not feel support and didn't have the opportunity to talk about problems that troubled him. Observations show that parents have underestimated their son's problems and behavior. They explained that the son has his interests, is very secretive and needs privacy.

They both did not feel responsible for what happened to their son.

Conclusion

The boy was addicted to online games and conversations with virtual friends.

His family situation probably had an impact on his educational difficulties and, as a consequence, his addiction to computer games and social media. Parents devoted very little time to the child, they were not interested in the son's activity in the virtual world. They were busy pursuing their careers. Marek didn't have enough friends in the real world, that's why he sought support in the virtual world. Alienation from real contacts, learning failures, and low grades have contributed to the fact that he was increasingly losing contact with reality. As a consequence, he did not receive a promotion to the next class and did not fulfill his goals and dreams.

Leaving him without pedagogical and therapeutic support can result in the boy deepening his addiction to games, thus isolating himself from the real world. If his problem is not diagnosed, the young man may have serious problems. It may lead to a disorder of his personality, deepening his dependence on the virtual world, the appearance of risky behaviors and deterioration in relations with people in real life. All these repercussions can result in poorer academic performance and neglect of school responsibilities. This deficit of social competences, caused by escaping from the real world, may prove to be an obstacle in establishing satisfactory social relations and the development of future professional careers. In the absence of parents' support for the boy, he might be unable to live on his own in the future.

Analysis of the results

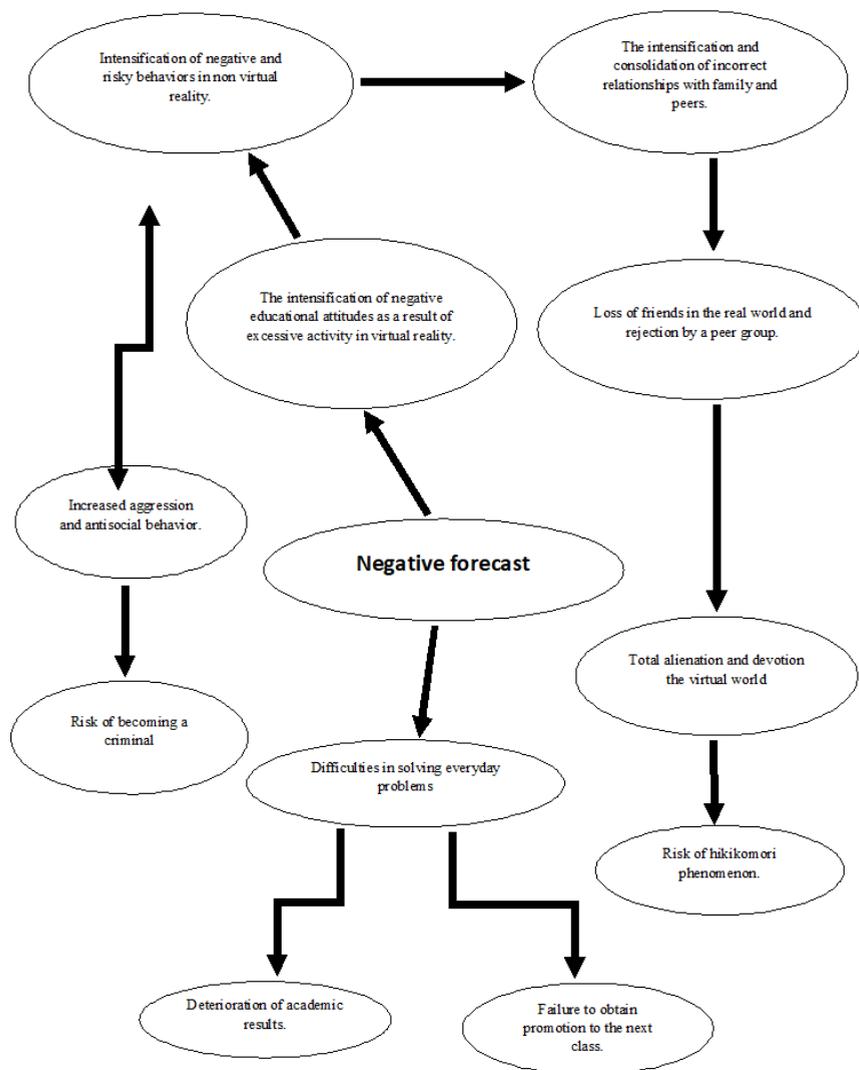
Below presented a graphic model containing positive and negative forecasts result-

ing from the qualitative analysis of the re-
search material.

The analysis was carried out using
MAXQDA software and the open, axial

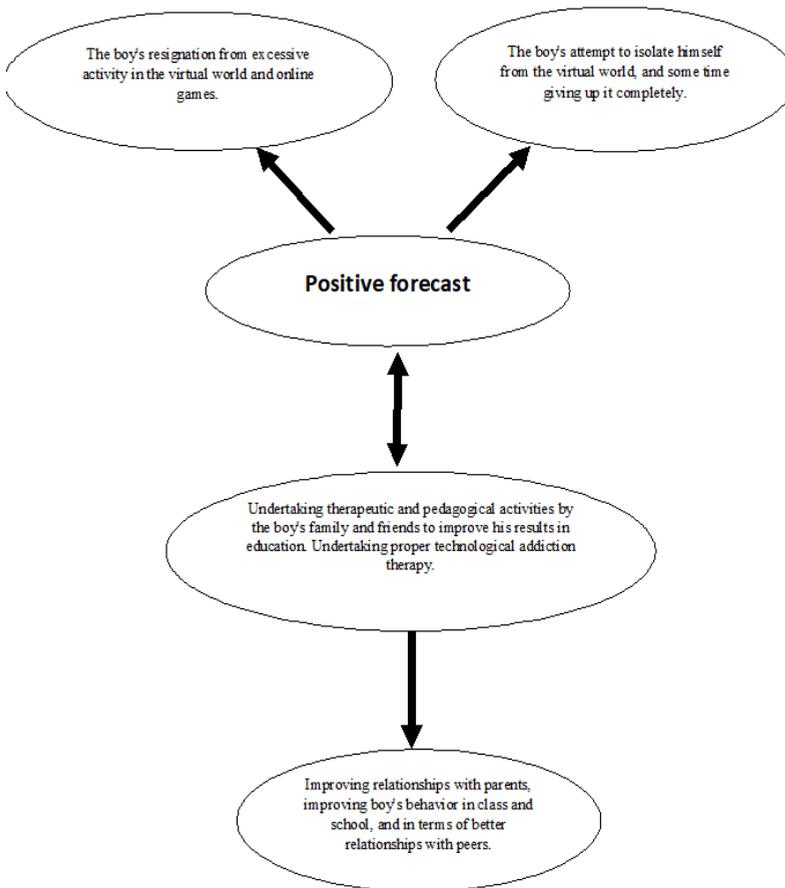
and selective collected text coding system,
after transcribing the content of interviews
and the observation log.

Figure 1. Negative forecast.



Source: Authors' compilation

Figure 2. Positive forecast



Source: Authors` compilation

Conclusions.

Summary - A proposition of pedagogical impacts

The above analysis of the research results showed an increased need for cooperation and agreement of parents for the common purpose of helping Marek and striving to parents and their son compromise as well as spending more time together.

In the face of the boy's case study, it seems necessary for parents to cooperate with a

psychologist and school counselor. In educational terms, it is necessary for parents to introduce rules for using the Internet and mobile devices by the boy, motivating him to education and strengthening his strengths in learning. It is necessary for the boy to undergo therapy, which may also involve the need to extend psychotherapeutic interactions to the whole family.

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